

Reclaiming Warrior Spirit:  
Foundations for a Holistic First Nations Education Program

By

Corrine Michelle Zamluk  
B.Ed., The University of Victoria, 1993

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### ABSTRACT

More than 70% of First Nations youth feel pushed out of the mainstream public school system because their ways of being, knowing, and doing are not reflected in the curricula. This issue is compounded by 'the disconnect known as deculturation' that exists between Indigenous culture and Indigenous peoples. This thesis addresses two questions in an effort to find an alternative curriculum that works for First Nations youth. The questions include: 1. What are traditional knowledge and teaching methods that can serve as the basis for the expression of an Indigenous philosophy and environmental ethic within an urban environmental education program? 2. What themes can be identified that could aid in the creation of a framework for an environmental education program based on traditional ways of teaching and learning?

This study used a hermeneutic phenomenology and Indigenous research methodology. Six First Nations educators were interviewed and four major themes were synthesized during the analysis of the textual data: the importance in Aboriginal education of discovering one's identity; placing the human being at the centre of education; relationship (including spirituality); and community involvement. The resulting curriculum is not designed to meet provincially prescribed learning outcomes, but outlines a way to deliver an Indigenous education that is rooted in Indigenous epistemologies, ontologies, and methodologies.

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**A Note on Terminology:** Within the context of this thesis Indigenous, Native, and First Nations are used interchangeably and are inclusive of the Metis and the Inuit.

## **Chapter 1: Introduction: “Memory as Motivation”**

*I began this journey five years ago in a world with which we are all familiar: the public school system, where I worked with First Nations youth. In this chapter, written four years ago when I was teaching at a local high school, I had become disillusioned with the education system. As you will see, my discontentment is great, and my mood bitter as I write in mainly negative prose expressing my frustration with the mainstream school system in which I perceived as having a lack of respect for Indigenous knowledge and for youth in general. I began to realise a Western worldview decontextualizes content and experience so that meaning is lost. Human beings are predisposed to search for meaning. This search becomes more pronounced during certain times in human development, and adolescence is one of those times; thus, it is critical that we provide students with experiences that provide opportunities to search for existential meaning.*

*Upon reflection of my ‘travels’ throughout this process, I recognized that this journey has changed me in myriad ways (spiritually, emotionally, physically, and intellectually). I have woven vignettes of personal transformation throughout this thesis in recognition of the role I play as the synthesizer of ideas and themes, and to acknowledge the change evoked within me through my engagement with this work.*

## ***Motivated to Enact Change***

### **Some Observations in the Schools**

Under the subtle influence of cognitive imperialism, modern educational theory and practice has, in large part, destroyed or distorted Indigenous knowledge and heritage... There are two different points at issue here. The first is the right of Indigenous peoples to exercise and transmit their own knowledge and heritage as they see fit. The second is the benefit the Western world can derive from this knowledge and heritage. Some European and Canadian scholars are beginning to realise how important Indigenous knowledge may be to the survival of our world.

(Battiste & Henderson, 2000, p. 87)

Daily, we send First Nations youth to an outdated, outmoded bureaucratic institution that does nothing to feed their spirit. Colonial methodologies encompass and perpetuate the presence of a scientific method that claims to be objective, able to separate itself from the spirit of nature and the mystery of the cosmos. The role of teacher belongs to the adults, and the youth are the learners, as though adults do not learn, and youth have nothing to teach. Youth have a passionate, vibrant energy and they are bursting with creative ideas and a desire to contribute, and we shut them out. Where is the intelligence, the compassion and the wisdom in all of this?

Are we condemning our future generations to a bleak existence, because we refuse to take an honest look at 'the way things have always been done'? Students in mainstream schools feel marginalized, and some attribute their placement in a remedial program to being First Nations. I have heard students make comments like, "They stuck me in this class because I'm Native". They hear racist comments and see racist actions from both students and teachers. These students come to me feeling very upset at the



racism and very ashamed of themselves for not speaking out against it. I explain to them that it is extremely difficult to speak out. This requires a confidence that a person can handle the situation, but the power differential between a teacher and a student is too great for the student to feel safe to challenge.

### ***Introduction***

All intellectual movements are inspired and to a certain extent defined by certain texts (consider Machiavelli's realism, Weber's bureaucracy, Marx's socialism). Among Indigenous peoples, the basic 'texts' are the traditional teachings that form the narrative backbone of each culture. These are the sources of wisdom. But guidance is needed in interpreting and implementing the messages they convey...thus contemporary scholars, writers, and artists must take on the responsibility of translating the meaning of traditions and providing the guidance required to make those traditions part of the contemporary reality.

(Taiaiake Alfred, 1999, p. 135)

This thesis reflects a collaborative effort between local Coast Salish educators, and Indigenous educators from other nations who are living in Coast Salish territories. The role of the Indigenous participants is to identify culturally relevant knowledge and teaching methods that can be used to create a framework for an environmental education program based on traditional ways of teaching and learning. My role is to pull themes from the local knowledge collected and report back to the community with a basic framework for an educational program. The framework for the program is based upon traditional knowledge rooted in Coast Salish and other Indigenous territories, in combination with theoretical knowledge gleaned from published Indigenous scholars, including Martin Brokenleg, Gregory Cajete, Marie Battiste, and Eber Hampton.

My interest in answering the question "What are culturally relevant knowledge and teaching methods that can be used to create a framework for an environmental education program based on traditional ways of teaching and learning?" comes from my

experience as an educator of First Nations youth in an inner city school where I work with students who live both on and off-reserve. It also stems from my personal history as a Native adoptee. Like me, the majority of the urban Native population has never lived in ancestral communities, have never walked in their own territory. The percentage of Native people living in cities is growing, thus, an ever increasing number of First Nations youth are experiencing disconnection from their land, culture and heritage:

A lot of the young people are second-or third-generation urban and a lot have blended Indigenous heritage, so they don't identify with one particular First Nations or reserve. They're disenfranchised from treaty settlements and status benefits if they don't have a relationship with their home band; and if they're in the city, they are being told they don't have any more rights and benefits than non-natives. They live with the legacy of generations of grief and pain, parents damaged by residential schools and foster care, but they don't qualify for education or housing assistance, or even counseling. No wonder they're angry (Fournier, 1997, p. 214).

Not only are they angry, they are confused and lonely. The public school system is, for the most part, ineffective in its attempts to deal with these emotional issues, as well as social issues. This is true for urban youth living off-reserve, as well as many on-reserve youth who, due to the proximity of local Native communities to large urban centres are going through the same issues that arise from a disconnection to the land. The loss of plant and animal habitat due to encroachment has diminished material resources and has led to the loss of spiritual places and historically significant sites.

For First Nations youth these issues are compounded by a disconnection from land and nature in general, and specifically through a disconnection from their territories and communities. Alternative educational methods are necessary to manage these complex challenges effectively, and I am especially interested in viable alternatives that

will assist First Nations youth in creating connection with the self, community and the environment.

### ***Rationale***

The commission's report (Royal Commission on Indigenous Peoples) charts paths by which education under Indigenous control can break through current barriers to learning and achievement encountered by children, youth, and adults. For Indigenous people the challenge is to translate the well-honed critique of colonial institutions into initiatives that go beyond deconstruction of oppressive ideologies and practices to give expression to Indigenous philosophies, worldviews, and social relations.

(Castellano, 2000, p. 23)

This thesis presents the words and wisdom of six leaders in First Nations education as gathered through in-depth interviews. The purpose of conducting interviews with these community members is to lay the groundwork for the representation of Indigenous philosophies within a locally developed urban environmental education program. The analysis of these data, in combination with the educational theories of Indigenous scholars, provides a theoretical framework that is used to tailor an environmental education program grounded in academic research and traditional Indigenous knowledge. For First Nations people, the foundation of education has always been rooted in ancestral teachings and is thus connected to tribal territories. Learning to live in a sustainable way within a particular geographic environment, discovering and nurturing individual gifts, and learning how to function and contribute as a community member have been the basis of Indigenous education models.

This way of teaching and nurturing, of learning through the discovery of innate gifts and talents can be rekindled; students can be encouraged to extend themselves with their contributions. Doing so strengthens them as individuals and thus strengthens our nations. To teach in this way is to honour an Indigenous worldview. There have been

many attempts to integrate First Nations education within the public school system, but they have met with limited success. For example, despite the hard work and dedication of the exemplary staff in the Greater Victoria School District, 73% of First Nations students do not graduate from high school

## ***Statement of Purpose***

This thesis will:

- ~ identify culturally relevant knowledge and teaching methods that can serve as the basis for the expression of Indigenous philosophies within an environmental education program
- ~ identify themes from the participants' knowledge that informed the creation of a framework for an environmental education program based on traditional ways of teaching and learning
- ~ create a basic framework for an environmental education program based upon a combination of the following factors:
  - traditional teachings that focus on theoretical knowledge from a sampling of First Nations educators and cultural leaders residing in Coast Salish Territory
  - theoretical knowledge gleaned from published Indigenous scholars
- ~ present the analysis and framework to the participants for validation in preparation for the future development of an urban environmental education program

## ***Research Questions***

The following are the questions the researcher set out to answer:

1. What are traditional knowledge and teaching methods that can serve as the basis for the expression of an Indigenous philosophy and environmental ethic within an urban environmental education program?

2. What themes can be identified that could aid in the creation of a framework for an environmental education program based on traditional ways of teaching and learning?

In order to answer these research questions the following set of interview questions was devised. The questions were tested with one of the participants and then revised.

### ***Interview Questions***

The following are the set of questions posed to each educator:

1. What are the values and beliefs that guide your vision of Indigenous education?
2. What is important for Indigenous youth to learn, in general?
3. What is important for FN youth to learn about the/their land and themselves?
4. How do people learn to:
  - ~ Listen
  - ~ Observe
  - ~ Experience with all one's senses
  - ~ Develop intuitive understanding
5. Do you see a role for spirituality in Indigenous education? If not why not? If yes, explain.
6. How does a teacher know when someone is ready to learn a particular skill, or understand a concept?
7. What are the key factors any program for Indigenous youth must include?

### ***Study Site/Location***

It is still beautiful on our Saanich Peninsula, but we must all learn to follow the ways of our ancestors. If we bring back a deep respect for nature we can be an example to everyone and prevent our beautiful land from being destroyed.

Dave Elliot Sr. W'SANEC Elder

During the program students and staff will explore each of the following regions.

The study was conducted in Coast Salish territory, the home of the Lekwammen, Esquimalt, T'souke, Scia'new, and W'SANEC First Peoples. The area, also known as the Greater Victoria region, is located on the southern tip of Vancouver Island, off the southwest Pacific Coast of British Columbia, Canada. The territory is blessed with a magnificent hinterland that sustained the First Peoples for over 10,000 years (Crocker, 1999, p.4). According to research conducted by the Georgia Strait Alliance "The Coast Salish people have lived here, sustainably, since the glaciers retreated. They called the region "SQELATSES", which means "homeland". It is now becoming widely known as the Salish Sea" (<http://www.georgiastrait.org/Articles2002/NEBsub.php>). To the south the Lekwammen lived along the shores of SQELATSES taking their food from the bounty of the sea, the intertidal zone, the freshwater streams, the Garry Oak meadows, and the forests. On the island archipelago to the east (the San Juan and the Gulf Islands), and all along the Saanich Peninsula to the north, the W'SANEC gathered plants for food and medicine, stripped the bark of the red cedar for clothing, and hewed red cedar planks to make the longhouses that served as shelter. The W'SANEC people relied heavily on salmon and shellfish from the sea, including the Saanich Inlet. The green belt of the Highlands and the Sooke Hills to the west are the traditional territories of the T'souke and Scia'new Nations.

An area that is known as the Sea to Sea Greenbelt encompasses the traditional territories of the aforementioned nations of Coast Salish peoples. Currently, there is an effort being made by The Land Conservancy in British Columbia to save this greenbelt from urban sprawl. If the proposal is successful, it would provide an almost uninterrupted zone of green space from the Western shore of Saltspring Island in the northeast, to Sooke Basin in the southwest.

### ***Participants***

The participants in this study are First Nations people who understand the application of traditional ways of teaching and learning, including teachings about our relationship with the environment. The six educators contributing to this thesis represent the following nations: Anishnabek, Coast Salish, Cree/Blackfoot/Mohawk, Cree/Dene, Kwakwakaw'akw, and Lil'wat.

Community consultation, in the form of an initial interview and one follow-up per participant with Indigenous educators who had an interest in the research question and who have some expertise in Indigenous ways of teaching and learning formed the knowledge base for this research project. Subsequent interviews and consultations were done in order to confirm the accuracy of the information presented.

### ***Methodology***

The study was conducted using a qualitative methodology that combined hermeneutic phenomenology with an Indigenous methodology. The methodology is consistent with the *Protocols and Principles for Conducting Research in an Indigenous Context* (2003) as determined by the University of Victoria's Faculty of Human and Social Development (HSD). In accordance with the suggestions outlined in the *Protocols*



*and Principles* document, an approach consistent with Indigenous self-determination is used and every effort to “honour the principles of partnership, participation, and protection” is made (Faculty of Human and Social Development, 2003, p. 3). Indigenous faculty and community leaders help guide the research process, and all participants were provided a copy of the HSD protocols and procedures document in coherence with section 3.1.11 of that policy.

### ***Significance of the Study***

This study is intended to provide a philosophical and theoretical base for the development of a culturally relevant environmental education program. It will contribute to community development, program planning, and curriculum development. Through this thesis the wisdom provided by local First Nations educators will be available to the local communities to utilize in the development of education programs.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### ***Introduction***

A Memory...

It's the week the Foundational Skills Assessment (FSA)<sup>1</sup> results come out. An administrator calls *the* (one/only...lonely) First Nations staff person to his/her office.

Administrator: "First Nations students are not succeeding in the public schools. Do you know why?" (Just don't say anything I don't want to hear)

*Well, I believe it has to do with the fact that you/we are teaching them a colonial curriculum that does not resonate with them on a philosophical or spiritual level. In other words, their reality is not reflected in what they are learning. Compulsory, formalized education excludes youth from the life of the community. They need contextual learning... real life problems to solve. They are intelligent and capable, and they have real contributions to make. We must involve the community in the education of our youth. They will help us make the teaching and learning more relevant ...maybe even help us come up with a different definition of success. In fact if you look at it in a different way, we are failing them... and not the other way around.*

SILENCE!

---

<sup>1</sup> The Foundational Skills Assessment is a standardized test written by all Grade 4 and Grade 10 students in British Columbia to assess their levels of literacy and numeracy.

Administrator: “No need to bring up the dead past and become political on this issue. We are not in a position to revamp the entire school system. Do you have any realistic solutions”?

Silenced.

One year later...it's the week the FSA results come out. Once again an administrator calls the First Nation staff person to his/her office.

Administrator: “First Nations students are not succeeding in the public schools. We really need your input. Do you have any suggestions?” (Interpretation: suggestions that won't cost us anything, or require us to view things differently)

*There is a shortage of First Nations role models. I suggest we hire more First Nations teachers and assistants at the school, particularly in the areas where we are over-represented such as the remedial courses, pre-employment, and behaviour programs. A long hard look at why there are so many First Nations youth in these programs may reveal a bias in your psychometric instruments...I believe all students are gifted in some way, and not deficient as your tests suggest.*

SILENCE!

Administrator: “Hmmm, really...well, the tests are scientifically proven to work so I think they're fine.” Silenced.

“As far as hiring more FTE teachers and assistants...we just don't have the money.”

Silenced.

*But what if, instead of hiring non-Native people for the spare blocks that come up in Special Education, you hired First Nations educators instead?*

SILENCE!

Administrator: "The unions would have something to say about that."

Silenced.

One year later...it's the week the FSA results come out...

Around and around we go not in a way that suggests holism, growth, and a deepened understanding of one another; but around in circles that cause dizzy confusion and nauseating frustration as First Nations educator resists Western educator resists First Nations educator. Onieda healer/psychologist Dr. Roland Chrisjohn writes: "The circle is a metaphor much used by various North American Indigenous Nations. The sun; unity; wholeness; the change of seasons...And for the non-Indian inhabitants of North America, the circle, too, is a symbol: the empty nonexistence of zero; the vacuity of circular definitions or circular arguments; the endless loop of the carousel" (Chrisjohn and Young, 1997, p. 115). In Western culture when something is said to be 'timeless' it means it is accepted as a truth, as something that will affect us, in a positive way, forever...it is something to hold onto. It is these timeless lessons, of how to relate to one another and the natural environment, which have evolved and survived in the oral education of Indigenous cultures.

Eber Hampton suggested that Indigenous education is in its winter (Hampton, 1995, p. 33). In this chapter Hampton's (1995) seasonal metaphor is used to outline the

history of First Nations education in North America beginning with summer, to represent traditional Indigenous education. Autumn signifies early contact with the harvesting of fur by traders, and souls by missionaries. In addition, fall denotes the first attempts to impose an Imperial education. A cold, harsh winter ensued. Introduced diseases decimated the Indigenous populations destroying much of our past (recorded in the minds of the Elders) and our future (alive in the potential of the children). Government policies abolished our economy, our creativity, and our spirituality - the essence of our education. Spring is about awakening.

This thesis is written with the needs of Indigenous youth in mind; therefore, in addition to a survey of literature on Indigenous education some background research on the creation of a welcoming environment for youth is presented. The intention is to assist in the development of a philosophy that will underpin the creation of a learning space that encourages and enhances healthy relationships among the students, the community, and the natural environment.

In consultation with local First Nations educators who have some expertise/experience with traditional and Western forms of education, the aim is to formulate an environmental education approach based on the teachings of the ancestors. These teachings run so deeply and so powerfully that a 500-year attempt to obliterate an Indigenous philosophy and worldview was unsuccessful. Their essence resides within each First Nations teacher and student.

From these essences I will draw out a program that combines outdoor experiences such as plant identification, harvesting of plant medicines, pit cooking, hiking, and camping. Opportunities for spiritual growth will be provided such as spending time with

elders, spending time in solitude, in sweat lodges, canoe pulling, and talking circles. The activities outlined above are starting points...the First Nations community planning the program must decide for themselves the kinds of activities that would best serve their youth and their community.

Pueblo educator and visionary Gregory Cajete encourages us to keep in mind that ...the cultural roots of Indian ways of life run deep. Even in communities where they seem to have totally disappeared, they merely lie dormant, waiting for the opportunity and the committed interest of Indian people to start sprouting again. Indigenous education is one of those dormant roots. The tree may seem lifeless, but the roots still live in the hearts of many Indian people” (Cajete, 1994, p. 192).

What follows is a discussion of the ‘summer’ of traditional Indigenous education...the source of the ancestral roots in my heart.

### **Summer**

Traditional Native American child-rearing philosophies provide a powerful alternative in education and youth development. These approaches challenge both the European cultural heritage of child pedagogy and the narrow perspectives of many current psychological theories. Refined over 15,000 years of civilization and preserved in oral traditions, this knowledge is little known outside the two hundred tribal languages that cradle the Native Indian cultures of North America (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 1990, p.34).

Indigenous people had a system of education in place that was designed to help each individual recognize his/her gifts so they could be shared with the rest of the community. Education was “at its essence, learning about life through participation and relationship in community, including not only people, but plants, animals, and the whole of Nature” (Cajete, 1994, p.26).

An Indigenous education was an environmental education:

Nature is a sacred reality for American Indians. Relationships to the natural world formed the basis for their expression of traditional education. The key questions that each cosmology (reflection of the sacred and elemental expressions of life on earth and in the cosmos) addressed included: how the Tribal community

might ecologically integrate into the place they lived; and how a direct relationship among the individual, the community, and the natural world could be established and maintained (Cajete, 1994, p.74).

It was through this worldview, this connection to a sense of place that Indigenous peoples lived in harmony with nature for millennia. There was a great respect and reverence of Nature and Spirit. Victoria herbalist Carol McGrath shared that Snuneymuxw Elder and Healer Ellen White taught her to talk to the plants while she is harvesting for medicine. Carol was told that the plants would talk back, if she took the time to listen. She has learned to listen, and is now able to find the plants she needs by asking them to show themselves to her. Finding Camas in a Garry Oak ecosystem is no great accomplishment, but she has found plants she has needed in places they are not expected to grow! It was/is believed that all plants and animals have intelligence and a spirit that had to be treated with respect, or they may not agree to give their lives so that the people may live.

The proper forms of human conduct are set forth in an elaborate code of rules and deference is shown for everything in the environment, partly through gestures of etiquette and partly through avoiding waste or excessive use. Humanity, nature, and the supernatural are not separated, but are united within a single cosmos” (Snively & Corsiglia, 2000, p.14).

The connection between First Nations communities and Nature is expanded in the Spring Thaw section of this chapter in a discussion on contemporary models of Indigenous education that have returned to the traditional ways. I turn to a discussion on effective methods that may be employed to respect and empower First Nations youth.

The reverence the people had for their children as conveyed through their philosophy and deliverance of education is remarkable. Larry Brendtro states that “Native American philosophies of child management...emerged from cultures where the

central purpose of life was the education and empowerment of children (Brendtro, Brokenleg & van Bockern, 1990, p.35). Lakota scholar, Dr. Martin Brokenleg applied the following approach, which is based on traditional teachings, in his work with at-risk youth. He utilized the Medicine Wheel to outline this traditional approach: beginning in the East, the family and community create a sense of **belonging** for their children; in the South they provided the opportunity to obtain **mastery**; in the East **independence** is encouraged; and in the North is the chance to share what is learned through **generosity**. All four, belonging, mastery, independence and generosity are foundational to healthy self-esteem; a critical component of personal growth.

In *Reclaiming Youth at Risk*, Dr. Martin Brokenleg applied the above approach, which is based on traditional teachings (p. 26). A sense of belonging must be nurtured. If youth do not feel loved, they search for it and they will accept it from anyone who is willing to care for them. In the environmental education program to be created, the curriculum processes will include activities designed to nurture inclusiveness. Through stories and personal experiences they will be encouraged to see plants, rivers, the ocean, birds, stones and mammals as teachers and healers, thereby establishing an appreciation of, and respect for the land and its gifts. Games and challenging activities will provide an opportunity to gain mastery of themselves and their capabilities as well as develop a sense of responsibility to preserve the natural environment. Independence can be attained through the rotation of responsibilities within the program setting. Generosity will be encouraged on a daily basis through the provision of opportunities to compliment one another, to share knowledge and experience, to help others complete a task or an



assignment, to tend to an elder and to provide leadership to the group when ready to do so.

### ***...into Autumn, then Winter***

Much has been written about the effects of colonization on First Nations peoples. Prior to colonization by the Europeans, First Nations people were self-sufficient with our own forms of governance, justice, science, art, and social values. The codes of conduct and system of education as outlined in the previous section were not valued by the newcomers who saw the people as primitive savages; and the land as a spiritless, material resource there for the taking. Introduced diseases decimated the First Nations population. There were trappers trading, and missionaries hunting souls. The colonial government divided the land into sectors and gave them away to those willing to relocate to 'the New World'. Over time, a society based on industrial philosophies replaced a subsistence economy based on sound conservation principles, thereby destroying the balance in the ecosystem. The Indigenous people were left alone until the colonizers began to see them as competition for the resources. The colonial government began to regulate and manage natural resources based upon individual property rights and licensing. Eventually policy was enacted that served to exclude First Nations people from attaining property (Indian land became Crown Land), the requisite licenses and even legal council. All of these formulae were assimilationist in nature, and all of them were damaging to Native peoples, their culture, and their economy on some level, but none were as devastating as the destruction of our education system through Residential School policy. (Battiste & Henderson 2000, Chrisjohn, 1997).

## ***Dead of Winter: Colonial System of Education Residential School***

Eber Hampton (1995) says that, based on the teachings of the medicine wheel, Indigenous education is currently in its winter phase (p. 33). He tells of the winter snow covering the grass while the grass seeds lie, potential and hopeful, within the frozen soil. Native forms of education may have withered under the snow and ice of residential schools and other attempts at cultural genocide, but the seeds remain. It has been a long winter – one that began as a result of the imposed policies of the colonial government, the most devastating of which was compulsory, decontextualized education.

The book replaced the spoken word; strangers from another culture replaced family, elders and community members as teachers; learning through memorization of text replaced learning through observation and by example. Education was no longer a lifelong, organized process, the responsibility of the entire community. In fact, the community was portrayed by the new teachers as backward, ignorant and useless to the children” (Thomas, 2000, p.13).

Indigenous children were taken from their families and forced to attend government funded industrial schools that were operated by various denominational religious orders.

Hampton (1995) asserts that it is important for contemporary educators to consider the Indigenous perspective on the history and politics of a residential school education (p. 7). The effects of colonization physically (Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, material poverty, poor housing, poor nutrition, treaty provisions not met), mentally (erosion of our self-concept, denial of our worth, outlawing of languages), and spiritually (outlawing our worship, imposition of Christian denominationalism, destruction of Native families) must be acknowledged (p. 7). First Nations people live with the effects and many of us agree that:

Education is war. The education system imposed upon us, is a form of warfare. It was designed to destroy. The education system was designed to destroy our language, our religious practices, our spiritual beliefs, our families, our political and economic system, our land, and our very existence as a people. A true education system will enhance, rather than destroy all these basic, fundamental verities of our existence (Brotherhood, 1980, p.14).

Most non-Native Canadians are woefully ignorant of these historical facts. Some who are aware of the facts choose to downplay them, or refuse to consider causal links between history and contemporary issues because it is inconvenient, or it is too painful. This makes conversation with the majority/dominant culture very difficult. When groups of people are unable to communicate, they are unable to establish a relationship. We cannot learn from people with whom we do not relate. For hundreds of years Europeans have tried to assimilate First Nations people, and we have resisted. Some of our languages and traditions and histories are lost forever, but we can salvage what remains, and/or create new ones. This resilience is alive and well in our communities and in education. In fact, Eber Hampton (1995) asserts that “the failure of non-Native education of Natives can be read as the success of Native resistance to cultural, spiritual and psychological genocide (p.7). Rita Bouvier (2001) reminds us that “[w]hen we attend to the education of Indigenous children we cannot be unengaged politically; we must have a clear bias. Their education must be affirming physically, of who they are as a people, it must be intellectually engaging, spiritually embracing and emotionally supportive” (p.53).

### ***Challenges in the Urban Environment***

According to Statistics Canada (2001) 68.5% of Canada’s Indigenous population live off-reserve, and a majority reside in the urban environment (Ontario Federation, 2003, p. 1). The severance from the land perpetuates the social issues faced by many

urban First Nations peoples. "Modern cities with their mechanistic control of the environment cocoon us all from Nature's power. A strong relationship to the land, for survival and spiritual renewal, has been considered a defining characteristic of Indigenous culture (Hampton, 1995, p. 21). Urban First Nation's "may experience further cultural dislocation, economic hardship, discrimination and powerlessness, with disastrous social and political consequences, since the pressures to integrate with mainstream society are more pervasive in the urban milieu, and the resources and structures to support their continued development as Indigenous people are less evident if not non-existent" (Ward & Bouvier, 2001, p.10).

Whether on reserve or in the city the main issue for First Nations teachers and learners in the public school system is one of conflicting worldviews. The damage such incongruity can inflict is exacerbated by the power differential implicit in the imposed colonial structure. The power imbalance exists between children and adults as well: "One of the most patronizing statements that adults make about youth is that 'they are future citizens'. This idea of Western culture is embodied in the educational myth that teaching obedience produces responsible adults" (Brendtro, et al, 1990, p.20). Youth are bright and capable and able to contribute to society in a meaningful way. Age segregated, compulsory education marginalizes our youth. Brendtro (1990) suggests "young people cannot develop a sense of their own value unless they have opportunities to be of value to others...but in contemporary society, this spirit of mutual caring is often lost in the selfish pursuit of individual goals" (p. 26). A traditional education teaches the children to care about themselves, and for others.

### ***Spring Thaw - Contemporary Models***

framework yes we used what the newcomers called frameworks  
to gather our relations the salmon nations  
these were our installations and properties and sets  
molding us to the places of the river which named us  
through our naming of them the land languaged us  
with the breath it gave us we spoke to identity (actually to relate) our  
connecting  
our fishing platforms and scaffolds held us over breakwater  
hairpin bends and back eddies with our three-pronged spears and gaffs harpoons  
basketry traps weirs set lines set-nets dip-nits gillnets  
scoopnets and drying racks ready to enact the prayer

(Cole, 2002, p.455)

‘Ready to enact the prayer’; determining how to ‘frame’ this paper and breathing life into this process has been a battle. Coaxing these words from deep inside, the responsibility to give of myself for the benefit of all seems enormous. A framework, as understood through Cole’s prose, is something to stand on that is solid and keeps one safe as the prayer is enacted. Writing is a solitary process and in traditional education, solitude was valued as it was understood that recognition of a person’s gifts, the development of knowledge, and the arrival at conclusions that would benefit the community as a whole, were arrived at through prayer, dreams and time in isolation to reflect. Some tribes refer to these rituals as ‘vision quests’.

A vision quest requires seclusion, silence, and a reaching inward to the depths of the wisdom that resides within each of us. The intent is to find purpose and direction for some aspect of your life. To do this you are looking to the future, as you remain rooted in your present situation, as you seek direction from the ancestors. Taking care of the self in this way contributes to the greater good of the community. The motivation for

embarking on this quest into 'inner space' is to explore contemporary and traditional models of Indigenous education with the intent to envision and create positive change in the educative process of First Nations youth. Creating a vision for change in education through a synthesis of past experience, your present situation, and your imagination that will greatly impact change efforts.

We set the purpose for change by following the vision quest model of looking to the past and imagining a future - the seventh generation. Indigenous cultures are mindful that decisions made today have an effect on the community in the future. In looking to the future, however, we must not forget the knowledge of those who came before us.

We are educating the leaders of the next generation, they are the stakeholders in curriculum planning...as are their children. This is where imagining the impact our decision will have on the seventh generation is so important. What are the values and ideas that will serve them best? We must watch, critique, inquire, be flexible and open-minded to create a relevant, dynamic, responsive curriculum that connects us to each other and to 'place'. Education must include Earth as a stakeholder. She must be considered as well because more than anything else, our survival depends upon her.

Indigenous people have a tradition of education for the responsible use of resources. We must trust this tradition because it has stood the test of time. If change can be described as waves on water, tradition is like a piece of driftwood, it moves with the flow of change – it is effortless, it is wise...it has learned not to fight. Tradition is also a dynamic force. It is creative and it is willing to be re-created and transformed.

Much of Indigenous education "revolves around a transformational process of learning by bringing forth illumination from one's ego center" (Cajete, 1994, p.209). A

vision quest is a way of knowing ourselves in a deeper way. Dewey's model of reflective thought that will lead to improving education follows the same process (EDCI 532, Summer 2002, Class Notes). When something is not right, we feel it in our bodies. There is a tension there, a feeling of unease. This is like Dewey's indeterminate situation. The vision quest is a way of 'defining the problem, studying the conditions of the situation, and forming a working hypothesis'. Then you apply reason to the hypothesis as best you can, from what you know. When you come down from the mountain, you draw on the wisdom of the people, and in consultation come up with a plan to 'test the hypothesis by action'. Dewey knew that "our culture has an impact on thoughts, experiences and observations. We do not do these things in isolation" (EDCI 532, Summer 2002, Class Notes).

Although we do not grow and change in isolation, this process of introspection is vital to self-growth and personal liberation from dependency. That is why vision quests are part of a rite of passage. We need to reflect, to look to our gift of insight that will guide us, to value our own intellect and wisdom. This too, is done in the best interests of the community...we cannot know others until we know ourselves. Gregory Cajete states that "traditional American Indian education historically occurred in a holistic social context that developed the importance of each individual as a contributing member of the social group" (p. 26). He goes on to say that tribal education was a "process that unfolded through mutual, reciprocal relationships with one's social group" (p. 26). This thesis is my vision quest. It is my solitary journey and my contribution to the group though I journey alone I rely on my connection to, and support of, the group to reach my destination.

The inner knowing of our ancestors is recorded in and expressed through mythology, ritual and ceremony, and language and culture (Cajete, 1994; Hampton, 1995). Perhaps some of the inner knowing of this generation will be recorded in academic papers. Hampton (1995) indicates that the attempt to fit First Nations education into the existing structure results in a tension that feeds the creativity necessary to generate a new model of First Nations education (p. 10).

### ***Self-Determination***

The genesis for the program or alternate learning space I wish to create comes, in part, from feelings of frustration with the public school system. A contemporary environmental, community-based education would greatly benefit from a philosophical grounding in traditional Indigenous education. The Ministry of Education's mandated colonial curriculum is not working for First Nations students. The values that are being promoted in the public school system promote individualism, materialism, and the false notion of Western supremacy. The false notion of Western supremacy is taught in the *null* curriculum; that which is *left out* of education. For example, the contributions of Indigenous scientists, doctors, and philosophers are simply not mentioned. Indigenous epistemologies, values, and pedagogies are ignored to the detriment of First Nations students.

The curriculum is not rooted in the current lives of many of the students and they recognize its irrelevance. In their work with youth at risk Brendtro, Brokenleg and Van Bockern note that the "long and infamous tradition of Western Civilization was to treat children as property of vassals or to give lip-service to their status as 'future citizens'; all of these attitudes entail deferring real responsibility to adulthood" (Brendtro, et al, 1990,



p. 13). This tradition continues in the school system today. The youth know they are not expected to contribute to society in a meaningful way, and in many cases they are prevented from making a contribution.

We do not teach responsibility by denying youth the opportunity to take responsible action, for themselves, and more importantly for others. Anthropologist Ruth Benedict “criticized our [Western] culture for excluding youth from responsibility only to blame them for their irresponsibility” (Brendtro, et al, 1990, p.20). We tell them what to do, solve problems for them, support them and make them depend on us. Rather than evoking feelings of independence and mastery, we disable and discourage our children. As Bouvier (2001) observes, “The deficit and compensatory nature of many programs do little other than to reinforce the stereotypes held of the population” (p. 52). That is why First Nations control of First Nations education is imperative. A redefinition of education, as opposed to a “grafting of Indian content and personnel onto European structures” is required (Noley, 1981, p. 198 as cited in Hampton, 1995, p.10). Hence there is need for a move away from colonial institutions to alternate learning spaces.

### ***Indigenous Camps***

The idea of creating an outdoor education program is not new. Thom Henley’s Rediscovery Camps have been in operation since 1978. Originating in Haida Gwaii, the camps have grown into a worldwide “network of affiliated programs, each community-founded and based, independently administered and funded, and uniquely suited to its bioregion and Indigenous culture (Henley, 1989, p. 19). These very successful camps are modeled on a traditional Indigenous education and the focus is on nurturing a respectful

relationship with the land. The experience provides many opportunities for personal growth such as:

- ▶ belonging to an extended family including follow-up at home
  - ▶ learning to live off the land harvesting and preparing traditional foods
  - ▶ talking circles for youth, creating the opportunity to articulate their feelings in a safe and respectful environment
  - ▶ flexible scheduling based on natural rhythms, such as the tides, darkness and light
  - ▶ personal achievements are publicly acknowledged on a daily basis
  - ▶ healthy eating and physical exercise are included in the daily activities
- (pp. 27-47)

A nature-based educational program can offer meaningful experiences for youth.

I have observed that many Native students are focused on nature; on their role within the community; and on their experiences within what is termed the affective domain in education which include “the subjective experience and observations, the communal relationships,...the ritual and ceremony, the sacred ecology, the psychological and spiritual orientations” (Cajete, 1994, pp. 19-20). The affective domain has become my focus as I have developed as an educator. I did not realise that I was instinctively utilizing methods that my ancestors had used for millennia. It is difficult to articulate and to justify my focus on the affective domain in the regular school system. I trust that by focusing on the students and getting to know who they are will help me help them to learn. Cajete (1994) and Hampton (1995) report that readiness is a factor always taken into consideration in traditional Native education, and community members practiced patience with the knowledge that with proper nurturing each individual would discover his/her gift and share it with the community. There was respect of the individual’s process, which is in direct opposition to the age segregation that is practiced in the Western industrial model of education.

Another important model is Howard Luke's Gaalee'ya Spirit Camp and Old Minto Camp. The program offers a science and math curriculum that focuses on Yup'ik ways of knowing. It is delivered by the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative, which is co-directed by Ray Barnhardt, Oscar Kawagley, and Dorothy M. Larson. The camps combine outdoor academic activities with cultural teachings. For example, in a course called Village Science Applications the students learn how to tie skins to a frame to make a skin boat. They also participate in spiritual and cultural activities like talking circles, drumming and singing workshops, and poetry writing courses (Bradley-Kawagley, 1997).

The cognitive and affective similarities between the camp activities and an ancient traditional Indigenous education cannot be missed. Educators are always speaking of relevance.

The knowledge that we can make the curriculum relevant for First Nations learners forces us to ask, "How can we do it?". I suggest doing away with the Foundational Skills Assessment, and, as a beginning step, taking the students outside. Outside of the walls of the institution and onto the riverbank, into the forest, and onto the beaches; outside of this society's stifling and narrow vision of the capabilities of youth; and outside of the limiting perception they have of themselves, that schools have so cleverly taught them. A return to our traditional ways of knowing is essential, for all our relations: the two-legged, the four-legged, the winged, the finned, and the ones who creep and crawl and, of course, the land. We must go outside, and reacquaint ourselves.

## ***Indigenous Ontology (Ways of Being) and Indigenous Epistemology (Ways of Knowing)***

Throughout this document I refer to ‘Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies’. These are complex philosophical terms that require some explanation. Ontology is defined as “an inquiry into, or theory of being” that is a part of metaphysics. In this thesis Indigenous ontology refers to Indigenous ‘ways of knowing’. Metaphysics is culture-specific and is described as a “set of first principles we must possess in order to make sense of the world in which we live” (Deloria & Wildcat, 2001, p.2).

Epistemology is the theory of knowledge and, in this thesis, refers to Indigenous ‘ways of knowing’. According to Deloria (2001) Indigenous ways of knowing come from “a unified worldview” acknowledging a “complex totality to the world both physical and spiritual” (p.2). How one acts in, and sees the world is based on cultural teachings. Vine Deloria, Jr. (p. 2) states that for Indigenous peoples “the world is our social reality in which everything has the possibility of intimate knowing relationships because ultimately everything is related”. Indigenous epistemology turns its focus on the metaphysical and ontological realm that Willie Ermine (1995) refers to as ‘inner space’; he says “[t]his inner space is that universe of being within each person that is synonymous with the soul, the spirit, the self, or the being” (p. 103). How these terms connect to the creation of a curriculum framework for urban First Nations youth is explained in the paragraph on ‘Cycles of Learning’ that is outlined below.

### **Cycles of Learning**

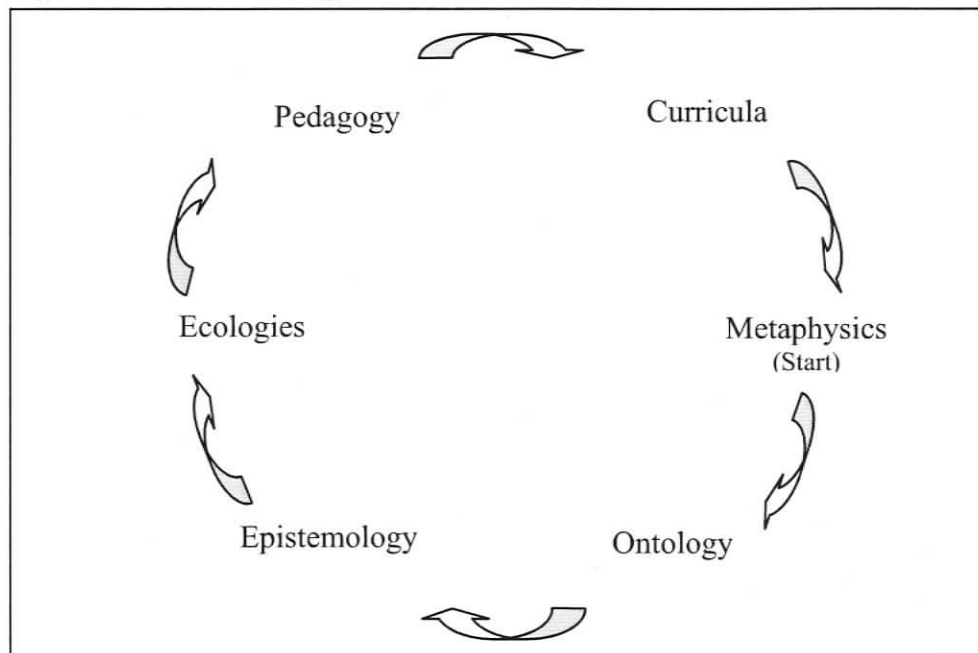


Illustration 1: Cycles of Learning

Indigenous ways of being and knowing are, of course, integral to Indigenous ways of teaching and learning. What follows is an explanation of the flow from one element to the next in the Cycles of Learning illustration shown above. As with the Medicine Wheel, this diagram begins in the east with metaphysics and flows in a clockwise direction.

**Metaphysics** is a branch of philosophy that describes how a culture perceives the world. **Ontology** and **epistemology** are described in the previous section. Micmaq scholar Marie Battiste (2000) and Tewa scholar Gregory Cajete (1994) are both eloquent in their description of how Indigenous peoples exist and learn with their **ecologies**. As Battiste (2000) explains:

We carry the mysteries of our ecologies and their diversity in our oral traditions, in our ceremonies, and in our art; we unite these mysteries in the structure of our languages and our ways of knowing. (p. 9)

Therefore, traditional Indigenous ways of teaching and learning (**pedagogy**) come from a way of knowing and being that is profoundly connected to the land, physically and spiritually. Thus, Indigenous **curricula** must include activities that connect First Nations youth back to a traditional understanding of how to interact with their physical and spiritual surroundings which brings us back to **metaphysics** and the beginning of the cycle.

### ***Conclusion – Toward Summer***

It has been a struggle to write this paper. Across the top of one of my note pages I scrawled “I could whip this paper off in no time if it was on a topic that had nothing to do with First Nations people”. In retrospect, I believe the difficulty arose because this topic is very close to my heart and I feel a sense of responsibility to the First Nations community to do an amazing job. In general, many First Nations people feel as though we are expected to do much explaining of who we are and why we see the world the way we do. There are times we feel we are wasting our breath talking to defensive people who are not interested in learning and growing or to people who are willing to listen and learn but only if it does not require any effort on their part. Like the seasonal cycles these people will be afforded the opportunity to learn and grow over and over and over. Many of these people are teachers in the public and band-operated school systems. I remain hopeful.

Indigenous education was in its summer when the Europeans arrived. We will have our summer again. The snow has already begun to melt. Seeds are sprouting through the work of visionaries like Gregory Cajete, Oscar Kawagley, Marie Battiste and Eber Hampton. I work with many dedicated people in this community, people who are

committed to nurturing the local seeds of our traditions with, and for, our children. The farther we are away from systems that place value upon standardized tests, like the Foundational Skills Assessment, the closer we will be to a meaningful educational process which is grounded in a tradition of unsurpassed environmental and spiritual ethic. I am choosing now to stand in my strength, to bask in the warm light of those who can envision this dream of Indigenous education taking root and growing in the minds and hearts of each person who wishes to see the world from a new and ancient perspective.

### **Chapter 3: Methods & Methodology**

*Methodology is important because it frames the questions being asked, determines the set of instruments and methods to be employed and shapes the analyses. Within an Indigenous framework, methodological debates are ones concerned with the broader politics and strategic goals of Indigenous research (Smith, 1999, p. 143).*



### ***Introduction: My Winter Journey into Methodology***

Feminist scholar Sandra Harding distinguishes between methodology and method as follows, “A research methodology is a theory and analysis of how research does or should proceed...” and, “A research method is a technique for (or way of proceeding in) gathering evidence” (Harding, 1987, as quoted in Smith, 1999, p. 143). The key words for me in this simple explanation were “how research does or *should* proceed” (emphasis added). This short phrase strengthened my resolve to express and explore the discomfort I felt in moving forward with this thesis. Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith expresses the root of this discomfort very clearly in the following quote: “The word itself ‘research’ is probably one of the dirtiest words in the Indigenous world’s vocabulary. When mentioned in many Indigenous contexts, it stirs up silence, it conjures up bad memories, it raises a smile that is knowing and distrustful” (Smith, 1999, p. 1). I found it exceedingly difficult to shake the fear that this work would perpetuate colonization and that made moving forward feel risky. Over time I came to terms with this through the process of reading and writing, and through conversations with other Indigenous students and mentors.

This is a qualitative study conducted within an interpretive design. As it is the aim of interpretive research “to capture internal realities that people have constructed”, this inquiry is meant to capture the meaning of the individual participant’s words and organize and transform them into a cohesive whole (Gough’s class notes 2002, p. 4). Although the emphasis in such a study is placed on the meanings expressed by the participants, it is acknowledged that the researchers’ background of “ideas, experiences, and intentions shape not only the research findings, but also the research experience itself” (Gough’s class notes 2002, p. 4). It is necessary to situate myself within the study and to acknowledge that I am co-creating this body of knowledge with the participants in the study and with the scholars who have shared wisdom through their writing. As the researcher I came to this work carrying my own experience and philosophy of education gained through 10 years of teaching in the public school system. Eber Hampton sees memories not only as knowledge that we have gathered through our lived experience, but also as a motivational factor that drives us in the work we do to make this world a better place for Indigenous peoples (1995, p. 53).

### **Memory as Motivation**

*Memory comes before knowledge. Every person’s life contains experiences and memories of these experiences. The way it worked for me is that I forget those things until I unwrap them, until I actually roll out the sacred medicine bundle of my life and look for those memories. I pick them up and touch them and feel them. And each memory gives me knowledge (Hampton, 1995, p. 53).*

‘Unwrapping my memories’ and reflecting upon my own experience was rich as it seemed that much of my life’s experience has prepared and motivated me to write this paper. While I was growing up in a non-Indigenous home, I was without the benefit of traditional teachings for which I hungered at a deep level. During my experience in

public schools, first as a student feeling slightly off-centre as though there was always something missing, and then as a teacher working with urban First Nations students who struggled to understand the strangeness and uprootedness of their existence. The following memory brought feelings of inadequacy to the surface. Being on the outside, with my different way of seeing, being and doing in the world continues to impact my personal and professional personas.

My undergraduate teaching degree had a 5<sup>th</sup> year practicum program called the Internship. The other interns and I all made it through the summer course work and we were excited to get out into the 'real world' of teaching in the 10-month practicum. Unfortunately my mentor teacher and I were philosophically juxtaposed in our approach to education. At that time I could not articulate my educational philosophy although my vision of education had more to do with personal development as a human being, than it did with the memorization and regurgitation of historical facts from a textbook. The internship was one of the most difficult years in my life, but I know now that the experience carried a gift. It created a problem that required solving...what was my educational philosophy? Why was my focus so different from my sponsor teachers'? And what did that mean for First Nations students? Working on this Master's degree provided me with the opportunity to satisfy that curiosity. I came into this process with eight years of teaching experience, seven of which were with Indigenous students. I knew that my philosophical approach suited these students better because they would attend and participate in my class. This project has given me the opportunity to strengthen my understanding of my own philosophy by studying traditional Indigenous education.

The research conducted is also intended to contribute to the creation of an educational experience that incorporates traditional ways of teaching and learning. My interest in recreating such an experience for students is based partly on my background as an adoptee. I did not grow up in a First Nations community and thus, did not receive an Indigenous education. Growing up in disconnect from my people and my land and my culture confused my identity. My parents had me convinced that I was 'mostly French' and that my Native ancestry was insignificant. I have spent the past 12 years of my adult life scrambling to merge the pieces of who I am as an Indigenous person with the person I became within my adopted family.

### ***Research Questions***

As indicated in Chapter 1, the questions my research intended to answer are:

1. What are traditional knowledge and teaching methods that can serve as the basis for the expression of an Indigenous philosophy and environmental ethic within an urban environmental education program?
2. What themes could be identified that would aid in the creation of a framework for an environmental education program based on traditional ways of teaching and learning?

To find answers to these questions I sought out experienced Indigenous educators living and working in the Lekwungen and W'SANEC traditional territories because the program I was looking to develop would be delivered in an urban area resting on those lands. The participants were asked a series of questions designed to reveal:

- Whether or not there existed an Indigenous environmental ethic underlying traditional teaching and learning

- Their experiences of traditional ways of teaching and learning
- The philosophy that underlies those experiences
- What they see as the most important lessons for First Nations urban youth to learn
- How those lessons can best be conveyed in an urban environmental education program

### ***Participants***

I chose participants who had teaching and learning experience within a traditional educational setting and also within urban educational institutions. Each of them is an innovative leader in Indigenous education, and has dedicated their professional careers to First Nations education. Each of them has a solid reputation in both the First Nations community and the academic communities in which they live and work. The six people I chose to interview met these criteria. I have a great deal of respect for each one of them and I am grateful for the time they shared with me.

I chose Art Napoleon (Cree/Dene/Mohawk) for his experience in leading camps using traditional forms of education within his remote Cree reserve community in northeastern British Columbia “otherwise known as Treaty 8 country” (A. Napoleon interview, 2004). Art has experience in mainstream education as a curriculum writer. His most recent curriculum work is the development of a First Nations Economic Development Program at Camosun College located in Victoria, British Columbia. He also brings a political perspective as a past Chief and a creative perspective as a performing artist.

Butch Dick (Coast Salish) taught art in the public school system for 20 years and has recently retired. He also has experience developing curriculum and is a well-

respected leader, role model and mentor in the eyes of people from all nations. His gentle spirit and sense of humour make him a delight to learn from; his wisdom runs deep, and his generosity is unsurpassed. I felt I had much to learn from Butch based not only on his many years of teaching experience, but based on how he conducts himself in relation to other people.

Lorna Williams (Lil'wat) is an innovative, inspiring, creative and hardworking leader in Indigenous education. Lorna is a professor in the University of Victoria's faculty of education and the department of linguistics. She was awarded a Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Studies, and will oversee curriculum and program changes to bring Indigenous knowledge into all aspects of teacher training and revitalize Indigenous languages. Her love of education and her commitment to improving living and learning conditions for Indigenous people is evident in the time she takes to teach and to work with people from all nations. She has much to teach and is always seeking to learn more.

Robert Wells (Cree/Blackfoot) is an instructor in the First Nations Family Support Worker program at Camosun College. He truly embodies the spirit of traditional teaching in his work at Camosun College. Compassion for his students wells up and spills over in his daily effort to know them and to build a relationship with each of them. He has a strong intellect and philosophically believes that we all know what we need to know and that his job as educator is to facilitate that knowledge into conscious awareness and action. His desire is to ensure that the education First Nations people receive translates into an ability to thrive in our own communities and to help other community members thrive as well.

Nella Nelson (Kwakwaka'wakw) is the Director of First Nations Education in the Greater Victoria School District. She is a powerful leader, an inspirational speaker, and she has an innate ability to teach through story, which is a traditional way that allows the listener to tap into their own wisdom to deal with a challenge. Nella shares her wisdom with conference audiences as a speaker and a workshop facilitator, and with several advisory boards. She has a strong spiritual presence and a great love for the people she works with and the children in the school district.

Janice Simcoe (Anishnabe) is the Chair of First Nations Education and Services at Camosun College. She is a visionary who incorporates spirituality and philosophy in every aspect of her work at Camosun College. Through this approach she is able to see all sides of an issue and is able to articulate thoughtful responses to complex questions. Her way of working with people and with issues has resulted in much change and growth in individual and attitudes toward First Nations students.

### ***Ethics***

A copy of the completed ethics review application is attached. Please see Appendix 1.

### ***Data collection***

The elements of a traditional way of teaching and learning were explored through interviews. I chose to conduct semi-structured interviews because I wanted to have the freedom to engage in dialogue with the participants. This also felt like a more comfortable, natural way to communicate with these respected educators.

Six interviews were conducted with the First Nations educators described above. As previously mentioned, the questions I chose are based on my interest in creating an

educational experience that incorporates traditional ways of teaching and learning. The interviews, which took an average of one hour each to complete, contained 10 questions.

The questions used with each participant were as follows:

1. What are the values and beliefs that guide your vision of Indigenous education?
2. What is important for Indigenous youth to learn, in general?
3. What is important for FN youth to learn about the/their land and themselves?
4. How do people learn to:
  - ~ Listen
  - ~ Observe
  - ~ Experience with all one's senses
  - ~ Develop intuitive understanding
5. Do you see a role for spirituality in Indigenous education? If not why not? If yes, explain.
6. How does a teacher know when someone is ready to learn a particular skill, or understand a concept?
7. What are the key factors any program for Indigenous youth must include?

### ***Data analysis***

Hermeneutic phenomenological methodology was used to analyse the interview data. Phenomenology allowed me as researcher to listen to, and respect the words of the participants. The research process involved articulation and synthesis of the texts and relationships created among the participants, the researcher, and a variety of Indigenous and other scholars. Hermeneutic phenomenologist Max van Manen states that “[t]he insight into the essence of a phenomenon involves a process of reflectively appropriating,



of clarifying, and of making explicit the structure of meaning of the lived experience” (1990, p. 77). Each participant related life experiences that held meaning for them as connected to the question posed; I attempted to uncover the deeper meaning and to identify themes in my analysis of the data.

I recognized the need to consider the concerns of this particular community and this presented a unique situation due to the urban setting. While the city of Victoria sits within Coast Salish territory, there are First Nations people from across the continent residing as ‘visitors’ to this territory. One of the issues when conducting research is power differential. Often the university researcher holds all the power in a research project. He or she decides what the questions will be and then pulls out the salient points according to a particular philosophy, methodology, and epistemology. In this research project power differential is addressed by ensuring each participant was given the opportunity to review and edit the interview transcription as well as a draft of the thesis. The intention was to ensure their comfort with the accuracy of their input, thus placing control of their representation in their hands. Beyond that, the participants in this study each hold tremendous power in this community in terms of professional contribution, reputation for their dedication to, and leadership in education, and the knowledge and wisdom they carry about the way Indigenous people teach and learn. I wanted to find traditional knowledge and traditional teaching methods that they had experienced, and find a way to recreate them in an urban environmental education setting. To be respectful of the participants, I needed to find a way to present their words in the final draft of this thesis document. Max van Manen says “we try to unearth something ‘telling,’ something

‘meaningful,’ something ‘thematic’ in the various experiential accounts – we work at mining meaning from them” (p. 86).

In the analysis each interview was transcribed and then organized into a comments and an essence column where I attempted to capture the meaning in the text. The data were transferred onto a spreadsheet with three columns labeled Quotes, Comments, and Essence (the structure of a lived experience, as described in the first paragraph of this section). The spreadsheet included a master worksheet and 13 smaller worksheets organized by interview question (eg. Values, Beliefs, Land, Senses, Readiness). Each participant’s data were then organized by question and copied into a Microsoft Word document so I could read each section as a whole, with each educator’s thoughts present in each category.

I reduced this data set again by looking within each question set (eg. Values) for what I believed were the essential elements that participant was trying to convey. Themes were further reduced by reading across the questions and combining information from each category into the broader themes of “identity”, “community”, “relationship to all living beings”, and “Human being at centre of education”. The themes are discussed in detail in chapter four of this document.

### ***Research Methodology - Rationale***

The next section will provide the rationale for choosing phenomenology, hermeneutic phenomenology, and Indigenous methodologies as a frame for the research conducted in this thesis. The methods used were based on intuition, a requisite need to conduct research in a way that did no harm, and the desire to privilege Indigenous voice. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith states “Indigenous methodologies are often a mix of existing

methodological approaches and Indigenous practices. The mix reflects the training of Indigenous researchers which continues to be within the academy, and the parameters and common sense understandings of research which govern how Indigenous communities and researchers define their activities” (Smith, 1999, p. 143). This research was conducted in a way that felt good and true, and then a Western methodology was chosen that ‘fit’ the work that had been accomplished to that point. The intent was to obtain help in finding words to describe this process, and to find an established framework to guide the analysis of data. There was also a desire for the product to be ‘safe for consumption’ so that the information within was clear, true (for the participants and myself in the moment), and thorough enough that the reader would not be misled or confused by neither content nor context.

A phenomenological approach was chosen because it acknowledges the relationship that exists between the self and objects outside the self. There is recognition of the effect we have on one another. Hermeneutics moves the descriptive nature of phenomenology in to a deeper analysis through reflection on lived experience. Indigenous methodology moves research deeper into the metaphysical realm to encompass dreams, prayer, and meditation. The following section will begin with phenomenology and will explain the phenomenological approach of French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty.

## **Phenomenology**

Maurice Merleau-Ponty was a leading exponent of phenomenology and although he was profoundly influenced by Edmund Husserl, he rejected a division between subject and object. Merleau-Ponty believed that “[c]onsciousness is a product of perception –

there is no such thing as perception in itself, only perception from some perspective. Perception is a physical interrelation of subject and object, perceiver and perceived, each stimulating the other and neither wholly separate” (Rohmann, 1999, p. 259). To make his point he used a simple demonstration in which he would “place the palms of his hands together and ask ‘Am I touching or being touched?’” In doing so “[h]e describes this inherent and unresolvable ambiguity...the perceiver, in the process of perceiving the world, is simultaneously perceived by it” (p.259). Merleau-Ponty went on to develop the idea that meaning is not a given but a *product* of lived relationships in the world [emphasis added] (p. 259).

The mind does not create reality but interacts with it. The less cluttered the mind is by preconceptions, the richer the experience. Max van Manen states that “phenomenological reflection is not *introspective* but *retrospective*. Reflection on lived experience is always recollective; it is reflection on experience that is already passed or lived through” (1990, p. 10). For phenomenologists the intentionality of consciousness is central; it is the fact that our consciousness is always focused on something outside itself that allows us to appreciate experience. As van Manen (1990) suggests “anything that presents itself to consciousness is potentially of interest to phenomenology, whether the object is real or imagined, empirically measurable or subjectively felt. Consciousness is the only access human beings have to the real world” ( p. 9). This is interesting because it suggests that anything in our consciousness counts as experience so reflection on a dream is part of your conscious lived experience. And when in the process of recollecting an event you are again conscious and reliving a lived experience. This suggests that dreams are lived experience and as such can be reflected upon and utilized to inform our actions

in the same way as an experience in the physical world. Anishnabek scholar Dawn Marsden (2005) states that a combination of prayer and dreaming were used as methodology in her dissertation:

Dreams and dreaming are important human abilities that inform ways of being, knowing, and doing. Dreaming is one of the most important traditional-based processes for knowledge generation or acquisition. While dreams may be considered relevant to some psychologists or counsellors, dreaming is primarily treated in Canadian society as unreal, and the imaginative workings of our unconscious desires and fears. To date, texts that include discussions of dreaming have been marginalized as flakey, whimsical, or as imaginative fiction at best. For many Indigenous people, dreams aren't just imagination, they are the visual manifestations of real life situations: past, present, future, and conditional. (p. 126)

Dreams are a part of Indigenous research. I had a dream seven years ago about a First Nations education program. In the dream...

*I walked into the junior high school I was working in at the time. It was strange because the halls were empty and the school was very quiet. Most of the lights in the hallway were out and many of the doors to the classrooms were open, but no one was in them. When I rounded a corner I heard voices coming from the computer lab. There was one teacher and about five students in the room. The students were sitting at the computers talking quietly among themselves as the teacher quietly circulated among them. I asked the teacher where everybody else was and he said they were all out in community working on their projects. Some were helping elders by getting them groceries or firewood, others were helping to plan events, and the students currently in the lab were involved in a construction project. They had run into difficulty and had returned to the school to conduct some research to help them solve the problem. It had something to do with calculating mass and volume in order to pour a concrete foundation. In the*

*dream I remember feeling very impressed at the focus and ingenuity demonstrated by the students. I also felt a sense of relief – finally an education program that worked for First Nations students and their community!*

This dream had a profound impact on me and provided the motivation to do this study. It fed my discontent with the public school system. Deep inside I knew there was a better way to educate Indigenous youth and I wanted to assist in the development of an educational program that incorporates community and culture in a way that compliments the strength that exists within Indigenous communities.

Phenomenology allows the researcher to listen to and respect the words of the people. The research process involves articulation and synthesis of the texts and relationships created among the participants, the researcher, and a variety of Indigenous and other scholars. I wanted to know how Indigenous people who have grown up with traditional teachings ‘experience the world’. I wanted to know if reflection on those experiences through the questions posed in this study would elicit responses that would provide elements of a philosophy of Indigenous education based on traditional ways of teaching and learning. Madeleine R. Grumet (1992) speaks to the need for relationship between subject and object:

[E]ducation requires a blending of objectivity with the unique subjectivity of the person, its infusion into the structures and shapes of the psyche...education emerges as a metaphor for a person’s dialogue with the world of his or her experience. It is tempting to make the analogy more economical, to eliminate the middleman of dialogue and to speak of education only in terms of experience. But that formula, for all its artful simplicity, would reduce its epistemological subject to an object by reducing the person who is able to interpret, repudiate, or affirm experience to a *tabula rasa* upon which the world makes its marks, a template of societal conditioning (Grumet, p.29).

## Hermeneutic Phenomenology

Early in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Friedrich Schleiermacher sought to develop a universal hermeneutic method applied to textual analysis in general – looking to understand a work’s specific context , as opposed to emphasis on abstract knowledge derived through pure reason (Rohmann, 1999, p. 174). Later in that century Wilhelm Dilthey began to apply hermeneutic principles to the study of society and history arguing that social science “...cannot use the same methods as natural science [positivism] but must employ understanding (Verstehen) and interpretation rather than pure empiricism” ( p. 174). Martin Heidegger and his student Hans-Georg Gadamer (20<sup>th</sup> C) – saw the hermeneutic endeavor as a fundamental characteristic of humanity: that we live and work not with abstract facts of “reason,” but within distinct contexts, and that language itself is the medium through which we communicate (and understand) our essential being. (p. 174).

While phenomenology may be seen as descriptive of lived experience, hermeneutics are interpretive. Writing and rewriting are part of the hermeneutic research process because it is during the process of writing that the themes are reflected upon and discussed in an effort to come to a more clear understanding of the lived experience. Max van Manen (1990) states that hermeneutic phenomenology tries to be attentive to both terms of its methodology: it is a *descriptive* (phenom) methodology because it wants to be attentive to how things appear, it wants to let things speak for themselves; it is an *interpretive* (herm) methodology because it claims that there are no such things as uninterpreted phenomena. The ‘facts’ of lived experience need to be captured in language (the human science text) and this is inevitably an interpretive process (p. 181).

First Nations people recognize, as van Manen did, that “[t]here are no such things as uninterpreted phenomena ...” and it comes through in the language (p. 181). I have

heard elders finish telling a story that contains much wisdom with the phrase: “And that is my truth”. They make it very clear that what they have shared is their interpretation and they do not claim to speak for anyone else, much less claim universalism.

A reflective praxis is what is missing in public schooling, providing students with educational experience is fine, but without reflection on what that experience means to them as an individual in combination with their values, beliefs, previous experience and the context in which they live out their daily lives it is not grounded in their world and therefore, does not have meaning. Van Manen points out that “...a true reflection on lived experience is a thoughtful, reflective grasping of what it is that renders this or that particular experience its special significance. Therefore phenomenological research, unlike any other kind of research, makes a distinction between appearance and essence, between the things of our experience and that which grounds the things of our experience (van Manen, p. 32). Brown (1992) points out that

van Manen argues that practically all modern curriculum theorists fail, to some degree, in capturing the nature of pedagogy. This failure occurs because research into curriculum theory development is seen as an epistemological – not ontological - inquiry.... For van Manen, strong curriculum theory is...that which is committed to the edification of the pedagogic good. ‘Pedagogic good’ according to van Manen is based on ‘the end...from which all our hope, love and inspiration for our children draws its meaning’. (p. 55)

Hermeneutic phenomenology is the analysis of lived experience in the physical realm.

This is limited according to an Indigenous worldview. Deloria & Wildcat (2001) contend that lived experience includes the unseen world (p. 33). Further, they believe that an Indigenous worldview is one that sees humans beings as having “a predisposition to live in the world as opposed to living on, above, or in control of the world” (p. 33). Thus, for the Indigenous researcher, there is a gap when working within a hermeneutic



phenomenological framework. Therefore, in order to truly represent the lived experience of the Indigenous educators represented in this study for whom the unseen world is a very real and indispensable phenomenon, I found it necessary to move beyond the physical realm and to consider the metaphysical realm; I refer to this as an Indigenous research methodology.

### **Toward an Indigenous Research Methodology**

*Essentially, I am saying that Indigenous research methods and methodologies are as old as our ceremonies and nations. They are with us and have always been with us. Our Indigenous cultures are rich with ways of gathering, discovering, and uncovering knowledge. They are as near as our dreams and as close as our relationships. (Cardinal, 2001, p. 182)*

I conducted extensive research to determine “what is an Indigenous Methodology”? For Linda Smith, the purposes of Indigenous research are very clear and involve the “claiming, reformulating and reconstituting Indigenous cultures and languages ...[through an] ambitious research programme...that is very strategic in its purpose and activities and relentless in its pursuit of social justice” (Smith, 1999, p. 142). Indigenous research carries with it a sense of responsibility to treat people with respect and to represent them accurately. The synthesis of knowledge gained through intellectual processes is

there for our own purposes, Indigenous purposes, derived from Indigenous thinking and ways of being. Unless we realise that knowledge in actuality through integration into our own ways of being and knowing and doing, our studies have no life...academic discourse by itself will not support the life of the individual, the family, or the community. As we integrate new knowledge, it is we who give it life that it may sustain life. (Weber-Pillwax, 2001, p. 169)

A constant among Indigenous researchers across disciplines and across nations is the desire to create change within First Nations community. Cora Weber-Pillwax

emphatically states that if her work “as an Indigenous scholar cannot or does not lead to action, it is useless to me or anyone else. I cannot be involved in research and scholarly discourse unless I know that such work will lead to some change *out there* in that community, in my community” (Weber-Pillwax, 2001, p. 169).

When working within an Indigenous methodology it is important to be grounded ontologically, epistemologically and spiritually when conducting research. Prayer, vision, and dreaming all have a place within Indigenous methodology. I am driven by the necessity to include these ways – to respect them in this work. Max van Manen (1990) states that “according to semiotics there is no innocent, pristine, or pure experience of a real external world. We ‘encode’ our experience of the world in order that we may experience it; there is no neutral text (p. 185). In other words we each create our own reality, our own world, based upon our ways of being and knowing. We learn what we know, and how to be, from our family and society. Our values and beliefs are shaped by what the significant people in our lives care about and think about the most. We are taught by them and from those teachings we formulate our worldview – our perceptual foundation.

In “Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples” Linda Smith (1999) describes, what she has termed, ‘the Indigenous research agenda’ of which the peoples’ self-determination is:

...more than a political goal. It [is] a goal of social justice which is expressed through and across a wide range of psychological, social, cultural and economic terrains...It necessarily involves the processes of...decolonization, healing, transformation and mobilization...processes which connect, inform and clarify the tensions between the local, the regional and the global (Smith, 1999, p. 116).

Of the 25 projects Smith described as being conducted using the aforementioned processes of an Indigenous research agenda, the one that is most closely related to this thesis is called 'connecting'. In it she states:

Connectedness positions individuals in sets of relationships with other people and with the environment. Many Indigenous creation stories link people through genealogy to the land, to stars and other places in the universe, to birds and fish, animals, insects and plants. To be connected is to be whole (Smith, 1999, p. 148).

This research project falls under this category as it seeks to connect young people to Indigenous mentors living locally, as well as connect them to the land on which they reside.

### **Conclusion**

I began this research process with the intent of gaining greater knowledge and understanding of traditional pedagogical processes and content. As discussed in the previous chapter, it was difficult to discover and to understand the methodological journey I was on, but as van Manen states:

...no matter how challenging it may be to develop theories or models of learning, reading, doing mathematics, and so forth, no learning theories, teaching methods, or reading models will tell us what is appropriate for this child in this situation. That is the task of pedagogic theory. Pedagogical theory has to be *theory of the unique*, of the particular case. Theory of the unique starts with and from the single case, searches for the universal qualities, and returns to the single case. (van Manen, p. 150)

Ensuring pedagogical practice is grounded in the uniqueness of the individual, making connections between the individual and the universal, and then making the return journey to work with the individual to make sure the learning connections are personally meaningful, is part of an Indigenous pedagogy (Battiste 2000, Cajete 1994, Deloria 2001, Hampton, 1995).

I used a phenomenological approach because it privileges the experience and the voice of the participant, and a hermeneutic phenomenological approach because it recognizes and acknowledges the subjective contributions the researcher brings to the study. This study would be incomplete if not for an Indigenous research methodology that acknowledges the spirit world and the unseen and unexplainable world that each of us experiences daily. These three, taken together represent the relationships that exist among all the participants and their animate, inanimate, seen, and unseen worlds. It provides the most complete characterization of 'lived experience'. Deloria states that:

Experience remains the unexplored metaphysical terrain of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. And it is likely that the best scouts will be Indians – not by virtue of superior 'intellect' as commonly understood, but simply because there remains among many of us a predisposition to live in the world as opposed to living on, above, or in control of the world. (Deloria and Wildcat, 2001, p. 33)

### **The Themes Revealed**

I worked with the interview transcriptions searching for commonalities and differences, attempting to read what was couched within, and what lay beyond the text. The questions posed in this research process were very broad and as previously mentioned; the motivation for attempting to answer them is deeply rooted in my personal and professional history. My lived experience has provided the interpretive lens through which I read the text that was dialogically co-created with the participants in the study. The interviews and the reduced data were read and re-read, but I was unable to see themes beyond the obvious ones taken straight from the questions such as Values, Beliefs, Land, Senses, and Readiness. To get to the subtleties that lay beneath, I deleted the categorical labels, reprinted the data spreadsheet and mixed the order of the pages so I could not tell which question was being addressed. I reread the data and let the words run through me, I attempted to 'feel' rather than comprehend what was being said, I prayed

for guidance, and I wrote. This is a sample of a piece I wrote in answer to the question:

What is the essence of what the participant's said?

*They really talked about the gifts that each individual carries. Each person spoke in many ways about the respect that children and youth deserve to be treated with. This is different from the Western [education] system where you have a very high IQ to be considered 'gifted'. There is more talk of helping than there is of teaching. There is a belief that we already know what we are here to do/learn and that teachers will appear when we are ready to learn. This is the spiritual component. People have a vision of a system that nurtures individual identity and allows/helps a young persons personality develop. (Author's notes, 2005)*

I imagined a conversation with someone in which I described what the participant's were saying in my own words. I wrote it down and worked with it. Eventually four themes emerged: Identity; Human Being at the Centre of Education; Relationship; and Community. These themes are discussed in the following chapter.

## Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter is written to honour the voices of the six educators who so generously shared their wisdom and provided the substance from which this work was created. Because spirituality figured so prominently in every participant's interview, as well as in the literature, I have decided to weave spirit throughout this chapter as it truly is foundational in an Indigenous worldview. Outlined below are the four main themes that became known through the analysis of the data. The themes are: Identity, Human Being at Centre of Education, Relationship, and Community.

### **Identity**

I grew up knowing that I saw the world differently than the rest of my family. I felt angry because they just didn't seem to understand me. I now realise that I was frustrated because nothing in my experience as a child or youth adequately reflected who I was as a First Nations person. Recently, while writing this thesis I wrote: "It is essential to teach an Indigenous pedagogy – otherwise they [the learners] won't know who they are". As I read those words I had a strong emotional reaction. I wondered "Why did this make me cry? What is the significance of this to answering my research question"? I wrote the following response:

*You don't believe you know who you are; but you always knew. That's why you felt so different than the rest of your [adopted] family. How did you handle being different? You escaped into an imagined world. You scoured the stories you read in books and those told in movies for ways that felt familiar to you. And you*

*identified with [some of] them. Oka was a profound story and it brought you back. Ellen Gabriel spoke for her people – the teachings were familiar. You knew the truth when you heard it. It was you. You know education is about helping people recognize what is deeply true for them and then listening to their story. (Author's notes, 2006)*

This is significant because 'knowing who you are' is another way of saying one is 'strong in her identity'. A strong sense of identity is foundational to spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical development. My lived experience of growing up feeling alienated, and of teaching youth who are disconnected from their 'place' led me to explore traditional forms of teaching and learning in order to create a program outline rooted in Indigenous pedagogies; one that resonates with urban & urban-reserve First Nations youth and their communities. School must be a place where who they are and what they know is acknowledged and recognized as legitimate and relevant in today's world.

### **Valuing Indigenous Identity**

*First Nations youth need to be taught ways to enhance self-awareness through learning about their connection to family, land, and the spirit world. This will help them nurture a sense of their strong and unique identity and to know that there is no need to sacrifice their identity for sake of an education. The purpose of education is to learn what you value in terms of developing yourself into the person you wish to become and to know that the knowledge you carry is valuable and relevant in today's world. (Thematic statement representing voice of each participant)*

It is difficult for many Indigenous peoples to value their identity because an Indigenous worldview, which provides a 'sense of self', is not acknowledged in western educational institutions. Coast Salish educator Butch Dick laments the stripping of Indigenous identity that he has witnessed in the public school system:

It's almost to the point where we ask them to forget certain things or certain teachings and take on this other persona at school to become educated. We need programs that teach them how to be people first and all the rest will follow. But they need to be able to value themselves with their identity and their culture that they have. It's really important. (B. Dick interview, p. 14)

Much of the frustration First Nations students experience in the public school system arises out of not being seen or heard; not being valued for who they are. By the time a student is 13 or 14 years of age, some feel they can either 'be true to themselves', or 'adopt a system that refuses to acknowledge and recognize them'. A minority of First Nations students manage to hold onto their identity and stay in school. Nella Nelson spoke of the strength she observed in her parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents as they laboured to maintain their identity in the mainstream system:

[I have] the belief that we can be educated and still live in both worlds. And I think that I have seen that fundamentally practiced by my parents and I have seen it with my great grandparents and grandparents; that you are able to bridge both worlds and that if you know who you are in your beliefs and your identity that it will empower you to do the work that you need to do...And if we practice respect with ourselves to our own bodies and our own minds and to other people it will lay the foundation for really strong aspects of developing education with an Indigenous model. (N. Nelson interview, p. 1)

Youth carry knowledge and that needs to be reflected back to them in a way that indicates contemporary relevance and application because doing so strengthens their identity and self-worth. Indigenous educator Lorna Williams encourages educators to teach youth to recognize that "they have lots of knowledge that they've gained through their experiences" (L. Williams interview, p. 6). She stresses this is necessary because:

Society thinks that the traditional knowledge that has been gained isn't useful in a modern technological industrial world. They think that those things can't coexist and so a lot of their knowledge stays really unrecognized and unacknowledged. And so I think the first thing for me is that First Nations youth that they have to learn that they have a wealth of



knowledge that's useful to them and to society. And I think that for many First Nations youth what I also see is because their heritage has been made to be invisible that part of their identity remains invisible to the world and when an important part of your identity is invisible to the world, you can't actualize who you are. Because the way that you actualize who you are, your identity, is the recognition from the outside reflected back to you and so I think that they need to learn that they do have a strong and unique identity. (L. Williams interview, 2004)

It is obvious that Indigenous people value a strong sense of identity. I believe that a focus on development of the self would benefit all students regardless of ethnic heritage; but reflecting an Indigenous worldview to First Nations students, in an effort to enhance their sense of identity, is imperative.

### **Developing & Enhancing Indigenous Identity**

A curriculum model that places identity enhancement at the forefront of education would: a) privilege an Indigenous worldview; and b) provide students an opportunity to build the spiritual, emotional, physical and mental strength to thrive in Western educational and workplace situations with which they must contend. Each participant spoke to identity development and enhancement in myriad ways during the interview sessions. The following paragraphs offer a few examples of what some of them shared.

Lorna William's Lil'wat community exemplifies lifelong learning curriculum in which identity development begins in infancy:

And I remember in my community that babies spent all their time with the old people. And the old people and it could be old men or old women, and I don't say here 'elders' because there seems to be now a definition of what it is and so I just say 'old people' would come and they talk to and they would you know, be in community together spend time together as peers of elderly but at the same time they always involved the babies. So the babies are always there and so in all of their stories that they've told one another they would also share with the baby even though the baby might be sleeping. And they talked about the land, they talked about people, they talked about relationships, they talked about whatever was happening in the community, but they also really spent time describing their

family and their community and their relationships with the land. (L. Williams interview, p. 3)

Most urban youth have not spent time with community people in such a way.

Thus, there is need for a curriculum model that is designed to help the learner establish his or her identity as a First Nations person, as a student, a son, a niece, a father, or an aunt. Educators applying such a curriculum must be aware that a more holistic approach is required.

Indigenous ways of teaching and learning are holistic and must be included in the education of Indigenous people. We must commit to this principle in order to perpetuate our culture. We are all born with gifts and it is up to the adults in a community-based program to make a place for, to guide, to observe, to listen in order to bring about those gifts (L. Williams interview, p. 4). It seems clear that much of the learning in Indigenous community is aimed at self-awareness. Programs must be designed to focus on personal development, identity, and cultural connection as a foundation to learning, and they must put the human being at the centre of education. This requires the program leaders to work on strengthening their own identity so they are prepared to assist students through sharing their experience, and role modeling pride in their uniqueness and beauty as Indigenous peoples.

### ***Human Being at Centre of Indigenous Education***

*Education needs to be respectful and encouraging and should enhance a person rather than label him or her a failure. Teachers need to be knowledgeable of First Nations culture and work to include students rather than isolate them through the creation of remedial classes. Identity is the key to respect for self and others and will allow each person to receive a formal education and live comfortably in both worlds. (Thematic statement representing each participant's voice)*

Butch Dick insists that when it comes to students, it is most effective if teachers deal with the student as a person; this requires them to recognise that providing an education means offering someone an experience that will enhance their person:

I know it's my own personal philosophy but I treat everybody like a person first not necessarily as First Nations person or non-First Nation. It's just a person that I approach. And I don't, I guess, pigeonhole people or that sort of thing because they're a certain age group or from a certain race. So anything that a person values in terms of their personality and their building of a personality is really important. And the teacher needs to keep in mind that you're actually building a person... (B. Dick interview, p.3)

Such a shift in focus could have a major impact on teaching and learning. If an educator is focused on the 'human' aspect of the learner, rather than the cognitive, and therefore abstract understanding of content the learner possesses, then as described in the following chapter, education will look and feel different.

## **Recognition and Acknowledgement**

Butch teaches about recognition and acknowledgement of people's accomplishments, their land, and their rights (B.Dick class notes, 2005). Recognition and acknowledgement are two important elements of respect. 'Respect' is a word that is used frequently. To be respectful toward a learner means to pay attention to their need for safety and belonging; for learning and developing and growing; for being cared for; and for being challenged. Another way of saying this is to 'put the human being at the centre of education'; this concept struck me deeply and I wrote: "When I thought about this idea [of the human being at the centre of education] I had an intense physical reaction. I felt it right in my chest – a clenching that caused a sharp intake of breath. Then I felt very emotional and I wanted to cry" (Author's notes Jan 2006). I wondered why I

experienced this reaction, so I wrote the question down and this is the answer I wrote back:

*Look at your [research] question. This is basic. What is missing is heart – not that there aren't teachers with heart – it's just different. Head and heart need to work together and if what's in your head is a value of content knowledge – an ability to recall and apply it without the emotional aspect considered it won't sit well with Indigenous students because they are taught to value people's feelings as well as their ideas. So criticizing a classmate's ideas is out of the question. They will look for a way to build on those ideas, rather than for a way to tear them down. (Author's notes, 2006)*

It is essential that each individual in a leadership/teaching role in any education program subscribe to the same philosophy; in a program that puts the human being at the centre, it is critical. Janice Simcoe states that the leaders in an Indigenous environmental education program must:

*...have a common vision and a common understanding of each other's values, beliefs, approaches and...ways of assessing and then dealing with differences. So I think that there needs to be an ability to all be working together and to be working in a way that is community-centered, and learner-centered and growth-centered. And I think that if you don't have that you could have all the elements in curriculum that you want and you can have a beautiful physical environment and you can have elders available but if the day to day air of the place is all mixed up then the curriculum and the physical environment eventually isn't going to make any difference. (J. Simcoe interview, 2004)*

Janice goes on to suggest that the learning community strive for balance among leaders and students rather than equality; staff/students will never be equal in terms of what they have to offer (J. Simcoe interview, 2004). For example the youth, in general, possess energy, stamina, flexibility, and naivety; and that must be balanced with what

being older has to offer, in general, for example wisdom, experience, knowledge, and skill. This is not meant to suggest that youth do not possess any of the attributes listed for adults and vice versa; the point is that each group has gifts to offer the other. These gifts are shared in relationship with one another. Relationship is the cornerstone in an excellent learning environment; curriculum and setting are also important but without the spirit of relationship they mean little.

### ***Relationship***

As I worked through the data looking for themes I wondered “Can relationship be a theme of its own”? Upon reflection of what I had experienced, read and heard, it appears that relationship is a vehicle for everything that is fundamental to an Indigenous education: we learn who we are (identity) in relationship to land and to other living beings. Robert Wells says we are linked to those who came before us and to those who come after us, thus, we conduct ourselves based on what we have been taught by those who came before us, and based on what we want to leave successive generations (R. Wells interview, 2004); and according to Nella Nelson relationship is spirituality:

Spirituality is about connection. It's about relationship with your self, the land, the water, animals. It's about relationship - that's spirituality. So I definitely believe there's a role for spirituality and there's all of these different ways that we can do it that builds on relationships that people have. I can see some aspect of it work [in the schools], like in the [talking] circle. (N. Nelson interview, p. 20)

### ***Spirituality***

It stands to reason that if relationship is fundamental to an Indigenous education, then spirituality is as well. Clearly, the fact that public schools forbids spirituality to be included in their curriculum, creates an issue for First Nations educators seeking to create relevant courses for Indigenous youth. Janice Simcoe reveals one way around this issue:

We've had to learn as First Nations educators to be almost subversive about integrating spirituality into the work that we do in case people see what we do as integration of religion. And I think that most First Nations educators have become subversive because we recognize that that *has* to be there. And so sometimes we name our spirituality as a study of culture, or of tradition, sometimes we say that we're practicing things so that we can speak the emotional language of the communities that we're being taught to work with (J. Simcoe interview, 2004).

By excluding spirituality the Western system of education has stripped a component of an Indigenous way of gaining knowledge. Prayer, dreaming, meditation, and the use of imaginative processes, like creating art, to learn about the world are not usual or acceptable means of conducting research in the mainstream school system. The introduction and inclusion of these processes into an Indigenous education program would, as Lorna Williams indicates below, honour a Native worldview:

Well I guess our view of having a spirit is part of who we are. It's acknowledging it and having a place for it in all of our relationships is really important. I think it's important to us [as Indigenous peoples]...but I think it's important to everybody. There's often a confusion with I guess having a spirit life or a spiritual aspect to one's life with religion and that is where I think there's a problem. And where this shows itself is that in public education there's supposed to be a separation between the secular and the religious and so and it is a problem for us because for us everything has a spirit and that needs to be acknowledged and recognized. Because you know that in any learning situation that learning is not only cognitive, physical, or emotional, that there's also a spirit aspect to it but often times what we have tended to do in education, which I think is where we suffer a lot is that we only think we're dealing with the abstract and the superficial and the cognitive. (L. Williams interview, 2004)

Nella Nelson acknowledges that spirituality is a difficult concept [to learn] and she suggests that a teacher could have students brainstorm about their "...real view of the world at that point and how do they see spirituality and what would they do to get it? It would be really interesting for them because again spirituality's really confusing. But if you break it down and say it's about our relationships; [you could ask them] what's your relationship with the water, the land, other people, your room, [and] your parents?" (N.

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## ABSTRACT

It is well known that gases are present in marine sediments. The gas found in the surficial layer of marine sediments is mostly due to biological origin or migration from deposits in deeper layers. A nonlinear acoustic remote sensing technique based on the nonlinear acoustic scattering theory of gas bubbles is introduced in this thesis to identify the gas bubbles in surficial layers of marine sediments and measure their concentrations. Two close transmitting frequencies were used to generate a nonlinear scattering effect from the gas bubbles in the sediments, and the nonlinear responses were generated only by gas bubbles instead of by other scatters in the sediments. An acoustic inversion was implemented on the nonlinear response, together with calibration results and scattering volume, to determine gas bubble concentrations. Results from the data collected at Gulf of Gdansk demonstrate that the nonlinear acoustic method is advantageous over other acoustic remote sensing methods in gas bubble identification and measurement, and provides more valuable information for seabed classification.