

LEADING ON THE VERGE OF PERIL: A CREATIVE JOURNEY OF VICE-PRINCIPALSHIP

by

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ABSTRACT

This work comprises both artistic expression and self-inquiry to tell the story of a Vice-Principal's apprenticeship and his travels in the narrative landscape of public school. Using *creative non-fiction* methods, the lived experiences of a Vice-Principal are told through a collection of vignettes, adventures and mishaps that occur to the characters in and across the community arena of a typical Vancouver school called Kitsilano Elementary. Much of what is presented describes the struggle for meaning and professional development, which the main character must experience to learn leadership. Angus Bruce, the apprenticing Vice-Principal undergoes training for leadership, taking guidance from a mentor, and attempts to avoid the perils and pitfalls that dot his landscape and challenge his authority and identity. In this narrative Angus shares his experiences, creative expression and practices of school administration, his personal angst and educational joy in caring for young people and the transformations that are experienced in gaining a professional knowledge required to be promoted to a Principalship. The narrative is written using *creative non-fiction* to portray a work of truthful representations in a fictionalized work of art. This arts-informed inquiry uses narrative structures, poetry, and a/r/tography to situate the self-study of administrative service and servant leader in a fictionalized work of art, while creatively portraying the researcher's inner voices of unease, humility and gratitude.

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At various times my school district friends and administrative colleagues showed interest in what I was doing. Every time that I had to summarize how far along the project was, or detail what aspect was perplexing me, I was given unexpected opportunity to wrestle with the vocabulary and find the language to articulate and express the content and scope of my narrative. These discursive moments helped nurture my writing inwardly and from the fruits of these collaborative exchanges I was able to harvest my voice and story-telling tropes. Without their timely questions and keen interest regarding my 'creative inquiry', it would not have taken the form it finally did.

This entire project was enriched, shaped, guided and made possible through long conversations, companionship and attentive listening of my wife Natalie. Being a musician, she is also keenly interested in arts education and liberal studies, and we spent many an evening debating ideas and sharing authors and texts. I am grateful for her patience, her resolute belief in the value of my project and a willingness to prod and encourage when the

going got tough and the path seemed lost. It seemed easier to make another coffee or go for a walk than sit and write a phenomenological explanation.

A small group of artistic individuals deserve special mention as they are at the core of the rhizomic network that supported me. The people in both Carl Leggo's Narrative Writing class and Rita Irwin's A/r/tography course provided the community of scholars and artists that allowed me to explore and share and engage art anew. Without the rich dialogue that emerged within this group, I cannot imagine how this project could have grown into the living story it is. An important aspect of these courses was my rediscovery of art making and subsequently, using it to inform my inquiry. Choosing to investigate self-inquiry through poetic literary art and photographic images was the discovery of an artistic 'home coming' to artful research. Reviving my personal expression via artistic means was made possible with the help and support of three talented academics/artists at UBC: Carl Leggo, Rita Irwin and Dónal O Donoghue. It was an honour for me to have been the beneficiary of their academic guidance and artistic vision. I am grateful to each for their presence on my committee and for their insightful suggestions regarding my final document.

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Dedication

to natalie, for words, with love

We must assume an audience for our work, an audience that longs for fresh language to describe the indescribable emotional and intellectual experiences in and beyond classrooms.

Melisa Cahnmann, 2003, p. 35

Preface

This work and the stories of my travels in the narrative landscape of school are an artistic expression of my own journey in self-inquiry. I documented my administrative experiences via stories, and true to the nature of many stories, the central character finds his or her self altered in the end. The stories are the living library (Manguel, 2008), the long record that accounts for the distances covered and perhaps reveals the purpose for which the journey was undertaken. But that is not all, these stories are also the manner by which the traveler tries to find meaning with which to inform and enrich the subsequent experience. Who am I? Where have I come from? Where am I going?

The writing changed me and this textual journey before you represents a process of living research through arts-informed research practices. In its final form there are three distinct parts. The text begins with my reading of key writers in the area of qualitative research, with a focus on creative non-fiction¹ as valid social science research. Using *creative non-fiction* (CNF) in the form of a narrative inquiry, the middle of the thesis (chapters 3 to 5) recounts the story of Angus Bruce during his 3 year administrative apprenticeship. This narrative tells of his rediscovery of artistic and poetic expression through correspondence, journal excerpts and events all woven together as a bricolage of story. The final section (chapter 6) is Angus Bruce's personal and artistic expression undertaken through a poetic project using a/r/tography. In a co-authored poem, Angus narrates his school identity and the identity of two participants, eventually coming to terms with his earned authority as an educator, administrator and the shared authority this narrative reveals to him.

A narrative inquiry begins by writing – writing to know, rather than writing to respond. My hope was that in writing my own reflective journey I would find answers for unworded questions I

felt and was troubled by but did not realize I was searching for. As contradictory as this may sound, it was the journey through the living landscape of my work setting, via field notes, journal entries, and relationships, that I discovered the essence of my inquiry and its significance.

The resulting artifact is a document containing three stages of a vice-principal's apprenticeship, with chapters highlighting facets of the journey. Much of my narrative voice was written creatively as layered and fragmented texts of Angus' work. I situate my plotline in the frisson of the introspective journal entries and through the dramatic pacing captured in the epistolary fragments of administrative email. The use of multiple fonts was intentionally chosen to convey different time periods and the voice of the main character during his narration. A modest variety of fonts is used in the poems in order to shape and present the verse most effectively, but it is Angus' personal writings which are presented in alternative text fonts in order to capture his internal voice of self inquiry. Additionally the authentic setting of my story line is portrayed through the tension between Gloria and Angus, and the duties and events the Vice-Principal is expected to attend to or avoid altogether. As such my thesis is a work of arts-informed inquiryⁱ and self-expression crafted to tell my administrative story.

ⁱ The term *arts-informed inquiry* is preferred over the term *arts-based research*. I was engaged in self inquiry by writing a narrative of a journey. I chose to use the artistic capacity provided by Creative Non-fiction as the way to present this experience for myself and my character. My work is based inside inquiry and I was influenced by the process of crafting the narrative. Later, the character Angus produces a piece of art, properly referred to as a/r/tography through the engagement of two students within the community of the playground. This type of research practice is best referred to as practice-based inquiry.

Chapter One - Proem ²

The moon passes through different phases – shows us a different face every night – but it's always the same moon.

Pico Iyer, 2002, p.9

All weddings are similar but every marriage is different. Death comes to everyone but one mourns alone. That is the truth.

John Berger, 1985, p.17

TRUTH OF EXPERIENCE

We are connected by the verisimilitude of our experiences, but at the same time driven to describe and portray our individual version of the truth. As Iyer and Berger both point out, the universality of our experiences are ultimately distilled through the telling of our stories to one another. Any narrative method used to communicate ideas and understanding is often more memorable in story form. This work is a narrative of the landscapes of my external *life-world* and my inner imagined memory of that lifeworld. It is an inquiry, an exploration, a self journey expressed through the interpretive writing of events that I experienced as a new Vice-Principal and my administrative apprenticeship during that time.

Journal Entry, Sept 22

VESTA and UBC M.Ed. program meeting

Yesterday I rode my bike across town for an information meeting at the VESTA union offices about Urban Learners Five. Not sure exactly what it is. Patricia, the union president, was most enthusiastic about having the university partnership. She personally encouraged me to join,

took me aside saying, “When I did the URL 3 it opened my eyes and changed my approach to education by self reflection and inquiry”. Not sure what this ‘inquiry’ means.

I came because of my role as a community teacher in the inner city; thinking it might be possible to combine research with community outreach. A group of five UBC Instructors spoke to us, the Director was there too. Lynn and Munir were the main speakers explaining the program offerings and the collaborative nature of studying together in a Cohort. I liked Lynn and Munir right off, very personable and honest. They will be starting with something called Living Inquiry and how others view growing up in the Inner City. The first course starts in January 05 with reading a fiction writer, Wayson Choy. How is this academic research of inner city life?

In this inquiry, I am writing of several phases of my life, capturing numerous evenings spent viewing the moon, so to speak, and later re-imaged and re-imagined at a distance (as if it were someone else’s altogether and not my own). We live, by narration, with each other, seeing the Other and ourselves in stories of moments and myths (Denzin, 1996; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Kvale, 1995; Merleau-Ponty, 2004; Nancy, 2000; Richardson, 2008; Rorty, 1979). It is through the telling of stories that we re-stake our claim in humanity, and make meaning of our experiences and shared *life-world*. Our identity, images, metaphors, and stories require language as the constitutive force for creating a particular view of reality and of the Self we wish to project (Richardson, 2008, p. 475) and claim to know. Knowledge is based on communication between persons, a communal construction of reality and the relationships it invites: “The conversation becomes the ultimate context within which knowledge is to be understood” (Kvale, 1995, p. 24), and negotiated. Each of us lives in the narration of our life; one person’s stories of experience have a relational connection to another’s, using the same words to name objects, emotions, and our sensations. In the complexity of meanings, words such as work, school, busy, angry, noisy, being upset, teacher, childhood, sadness, remorse, joy or the moon, can only represent a shadow of the real concept. This casting of diverse meanings reveals the ambiguity of language and cultural linguistics in which the words are

placed, specific to each person's reality. The multiple shading of ideas and of words defies the notion of one 'right way'; rather the truth of a view is that it resides in both sunlight and shadow. In the shade is the ambiguity of my words while illumination is achieved through evocative prose and imaginative glimpses into non-fictional accounts of school life as I experienced it.

Pick up any work of fiction at the local bookstall or watch any Hollywood film and they invariably begin with a disclaimer. Most are responses to an increasingly litigious world insisting no one take credit falsely or offend the good character of others. These disclaimers are written in variously creative ways to focus first on the intellectual property-rights, and second to clarify that "*this is a work of fiction*", reminding the audience that, *although the names or appearance may resemble someone you know, it is not so; it is purely a coincidence and a work of the author's imagination*. But where do these creative elements come from and how does the writer (or script writer) gather the phenomena that become these imaginative worlds? What are their models if they are not based on the true world of experience?

STARTING WOUNDED

Without question the Urban Cohort was a fine group of teacher colleagues to collaborate with. At first, it felt inviting and the right place for me. We were compassionate, open, sincere and supportive of each other regardless of the paths that had brought us together. Each week we would gather in the VESTA Hall to wrestle with our views on pedagogy, and the urban lives of children.

Wounded

Munir asked the poet to expand her space, for us cohort members across the urban landscapes.
Her post-modernist transformations, a research presentation
of digital inquiry in living space, bent out of shape by contemporary limits,

invaded by a new aesthetics for breathing,
reframing the margins.

Quick images, soundless
the words, choke meaning from me
she powers them to the screen, her research, her art.
Decisively the printed words enter my sight
but I cannot read their meanings,
they have no oxygen for me.

I am struck hard, gobsmacked by my inadequacies, overcome.
Unlearned, unknowable, my shortcomings ripped from my childhood memories.
The wound slashed with disjointed text, hyphenated words blind me.
Understanding suffocates me, and I am overwhelmed by waves of nausea.
I cannot stay in the room, disorientation by real meaning, I cannot see.

I thought the hurt was held back,
anger pushed deep, sentenced, suppressed
by willful effort and hard work,
anger imprisoned to the depths,
where no one goes or feels my painful illiteracy.

Primal despair overwhelms my surfaces,
not since school have these faults opened.
Caught off guard by a volcanic reality,
defenseless, my competence is cracked.
I am propelled from the Cohort space.
Angry, wordless. "I feel sick", my feverish thoughts erupt.

Bewilderment eludes my mind's appropriations,
but the syntax is wrong,
evening class, acoustic space, oral societies, clear language.
I struggle for fundamentals of words now,
gone, taken to another place.
Thresholds, uncrossable, I am not qualified to know these poetic sentences.

Struggling with alternatives, I am able only to choke out,
“how dare this be called, called...” I can’t breathe...
“academic work, ...meaningless for me”, it shouts at my decades of struggles. I am undone
by my question, “why have I tried so hard to write, if this is allowed?”

In the hallway, he quietly listens, a sincere spiritual warmth.
I bleed alone in meaninglessness. Seeing my own wounds, made deep, I am overwhelmed
on such thresholds I don’t yet understand.

I want to speak, instead I am unmanned and surprised.
Crying, tears alter my voice,
I don’t want his sympathy.
Too many emotions, antonyms to what I know, a crisis of representation.
I rage at my Other instead.

I struggled for years. I was told words must be correct,
torment and sorrow,
not being capable, my ideas flow for sounds and whole sentences.

He sees I am upset, my face and stance
clenched and bewildered.
My body the text, not language, words without understanding.
Interpretation not mine, his hand gentle.
My shoulder is touched.

In the spring of 2005 I was finishing my second term in the Urban Cohort attached to the
University of British Columbia when I was unexpectedly disoriented by an experience one evening
in class. This small moment was so troubling I broke down and felt its effects for several days. Part
of my recovery came later while seeking a lyrical expression for my painful memories and
embarrassment.

I wanted to leave, retreat from my discomfort and was intent on quitting the graduate
program all together. But such action was modified by a fortuitous interview for a Vice-
Principalship, my ‘successful listing’ for an appointment and the naïve belief that perhaps my entry

into administration would be of some benefit to the school system. So I chose instead to venture into another cross-curricular graduate program on the main UBC campus. As an administrator I was expected to complete a master's program.

Journal Entry, May 19

Within the Centre for Cross-Faculty Inquiry

I am still unsettled by Monday evening with the Cohort class. The guest poet has left me reflecting all day about the experience last night. How could I lose my self to such old emotions? I was unable to stop the flood of tears. What must Munir have made of my blathering on about my terrors of writing and self righteous anger over valid research? I can write now, and yes I did struggle with it for years. If this new research represents the type of quality research done in CCFI, it doesn't have the rigor I feel is required for researching my perceptions & inner experiences

It is of no small significance that the anguish I experienced in my Cohort was the culminating point of a long personal history beset with difficulty. Today there is no shortage of stories of people who have struggled with dyslexia and other similar learning disabilities, and mine is but another to add to the havoc caused by an often rigid, unimaginative and ill-informed education system.

All my work in the Community School Teams is focused on evidence-based data and accountability. I am motivated to do investigations within an Inner City project and highlight the realities of children's lives. To capture my view of the borderlands empirically somehow, so others can understand it - that is what I want. Real research work, not this artsy fartsy digital crap! Maybe I don't fit this program and if it continues with just a focus on doing major papers I certainly don't want to be part of it as such. I should write to the Centre's Director for advice.

WRITING, FACT, FICTION & TRUTH

My turmoil and angst were later identified as my own crisis of representation. On the one hand, it was symptomatic of the influence and mindset set forth by a conservative research paradigm Steinar Kvale (1995) speaks of, and on the other, my own linguistic obstacles to self-expression. Being wounded by this incident and reflexively asking myself, "*why such an overwhelming reaction*"?, I tried writing my response using words first to describe these limits,

rather than crossing the threshold of my emotions and examining their source, something I later did as art. Only now as I write do I fully realize how long it has taken to unlearn the conventional orthodoxy of my positivist beliefs in scientific objectivism and blind faith in “epistemological hierarchies” (Neilsen, 2008). Walking into digital poetics I saw something new and startling, challenging the sacrosanctity of social science writing conventions (Richardson, 2008, p. 477) I thought were true.

Journal poem, June 2005

Being wounded was
the beginning of my recuperation
after my amputation of
dogmatic thinking
and exorcism of orthodox beliefs
It was a release back to art
from the paradigm that
prevented my open inquiry
within post-modernist relativism,
mindful meaningfulness
at my core, I hungered for
understanding, seeking an expression
not yet available
having no language for
finding new spaces

Journal Entry, June 2007

I have just reviewed some earlier journal entries about the Digital Poetics evening. Looking back I now see that these feelings were a result of finding myself in a foreign (post-modern) paradigm. Having struggled for years with a language disability and a perceived expectation to

meet scholarly conventions, I was dumbfounded by the non-discursive text without privilege to authority. Fighting to maintain stability in the scholarly writing form I knew, seeing writing in erasure of text (St. Pierre, 2008) was a shock.

COMPLEXITY OF AN EXPERIENCE

These unsettling emotions were the result of a reification of my education identity by others. Since grade school I have struggled to be understood, ill fitting an adult view of success as a capable reader and writer. Not seen for who I was, I learned to see only what I could or could not do. For decades perceptions of success (and learning) were primarily limited to showing ones' brightness by reading and writing on demand and in one way. To prove my self-worth I learned other ways to be noticed and appreciated for who I was - by my deeds, my character and by using my ingenuity. Not alone in experiencing these sentiments, I have met a number of adults who tell stories of language dysfunction and discomfort too. This informs me as I teach children who are unknowingly beginning a journey such as mine and who can with care be valued and guided.

To understand my recent past I have chosen to write about it. In the process of retelling our childhood past the facts become corrected and sharpened as one grows older. We lose the child's view (innocence), altering our memory and facts to fit the adult testimony (experience). As my perceptions mature, I realize some of my representative accounts change as well. The stories re-told are in fact a re-creation of memory (fiction). In telling stories of events based ostensibly on non-fiction accounts, each choice of adjective, synonym and metaphor heightens the precision of meaning and in turn drives a reflexive reexamination of a rational and relative truth. Implicit in the act of telling is the co-participation of the listener/reader. The artistic rendering of language by the writer to convey the richness and complexity of an experience (Eisner, 2008, p. 6) alters the text, and the story is made more ardent, compelling, and ultimately different from the first telling. Thus I

find my belief in a ‘true’ telling of remembered events altered over time by the processes of telling-reliving-retelling-and-reliving the story (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Leggo & Sameshina, 2008; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2008). Questioning the idea that my true accounts are indeed both fact and fiction, so what is the difference, if any, between fiction and non-fiction?

LIVING INQUIRY

The post-modern contexts are marked by major ‘*turns*’ and ‘*moments*’ of unfolding. Even after *eight moments* of change (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008) qualitative research continues to endure criticisms from the dualist mindset (Barone, 1995) and “chafes at what research demands...of an educator and artist” (Neilsen, 2008, p. xvi). The conventional, traditional and institutional paradigms, refusing to live with impulses, insights, curiosity, compassion, integrity and mindfulness as alternative forms of human inquiry, still present issues for debate and justification. (Even this inquiry has to address them in order to give legitimacy to what follows.) The conservative opinions, which are well entrenched and argue vociferously against the postmodern view and new writings, insist that good research address the orthodox criteria for quality, rigor and certainty, that the post-modernists have clearly revised in accepting intersubjectivity, reflexivity and trustworthy accounts of living inquiry.

Neilsen (2008) observes, “human inquiry is what life is” (p. xvi), nothing more. Human or living inquiry contemplates values of importance which resonate with our living humanity – “wisdom, generosity, silence, liminality, love, unknowing, faith” (p. xvi). Living inquiry challenges, ruptures and regenerates aspects of our community beyond us and embraces change as a fluid enterprise which is generative and open to new and creative forms of expression. It is hopeful about the ‘new’ that emerges from the “work of the heart, the hands, our sensemaking body, our many-

toned voices” to puzzle, startle and rupture generative possibilities for finding and keeping “the wilderness inside us alive” (Neilsen 1998, quoted in Springgay et al., 2008, p. xvi).

An inquiring life, an investigation, one in which I could learn to let go, to leave the preconceived ideas of conventional research and enter an openness to discovery for myself began once I became aware of the artistry of the new writers (Annie Dillard, Rory Stewart, Frank McCourt, Eden Robinson, Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot) and the power of their narrative skill. They were attuned to life, and their evocative prose captured my attention for extended periods of time. Could I learn and use this form for my own inquiry? Through narrative and story, the form revealed others to be living complex, generative, curious, conflicted, nuanced, dark, particular, transitory, changeable, enduring, and hopeful lives.

ARTFUL INQUIRY CLAIMS

The artistic treatment of language is itself an art form. Good writing invigorates, quickens and animates our senses, creating “an empathetic sense of life in those who encounter it” (Eisner, 2008, p. 6). Ardra Cole and Gary Knowles (2001) use the term ‘arts-informed inquiry’ to refer to their “research that seeks to understand the complex relationships between individuals’ lives and the context within which their lives are shaped and expressed” (p. 214), cognizant of the artful attention to quality and purposefulness.

As the 1970s unfolded, social scientific writing and *literary style* writing became more complex and “crossover” writing forms such as creative non-fiction were born, stirring academic writing (Barone 2008) and “pushing the culture of the scientist ever closer to that of the author of literature” (p. 107). These beginnings evolved into new writings and took form as a ‘*new ethnographic species*’ (Richardson, 2000, p. 930), blurring the writing genre boundaries to capture what Richardson calls the *creative analytical processes (CAP)* in ethnography; the key difference

being “not whether the text really is fiction or non-fiction, but the claim the author makes for the text” (p. 926). Among contemporary qualitative researchers these narrative forms have a variety of labels: autoethnography, fiction, poetry, drama, reader’s theatre, writing-stories, aphorisms, layered texts, conversations, epistles, polyvocal texts, comedy, satire, allegory, visual texts, hypertexts, museum displays, choreography, drama, and performance pieces (Richardson, 2000/2008). For multi-vocal text, narrative is a unifying voice and architecture (the ‘bricks-and-mortar’ of word or text). Norman Denzin (1996) adds for the narrative method to make sense of all kinds of situations, “the new writer creates a world filled with multiple, constantly changing interior forms of self-awareness and consciousness” (p. 237). This is the basis of the attraction I felt for doing a narrative, prior to its being named by Carl Leggo as *Creative Non-fiction*.

Looking into the academic literature on qualitative research practice and how knowledge claims are made, used and substantiated has revealed an ongoing debate and turmoil of disparate proportions. I was not alone in my frustration (Kvale, 1995; Neilsen, 2008; Richardson, 2008; Banks & Banks, 1998). The “research many of us once apprenticed to has lost its authority...and we have lost faith... in the values it stood for” (Neilsen, 2008, p. xvi). Specific to these academic beliefs are issues of fact and fiction, truth and subjectivity, and realism, relativism and *epistemological hierarchies*. For the new practitioners of qualitative research, there are clear lines of thought regarding qualitative judgments, accountability, credibility and the accepted methods to corroborate authenticity. Within the work of qualitative research there is a range of views on the craft of art itself, art making, art forms and media, separating Arts-based research (Eisner & Barone) from Arts-informed research (Cole & Knowles, 2001), A/r/tographic inquiry (Irwin & Springgay, 2008) and Artful Writing Inquiry (Richardson, 2000).

Narrative and the unconventional use of text is rooted in the new writers and New Journalism of the late 1970’s with people writing of a living reality they perceived (Denzin, 2000;

Richardson, 2000/2004). “The new writers focused not on the facts, but rather the science, the situation where events in question occurred, or would happen” (paraphrased from Denzin, p. 236). Left behind in the new views of gender, race and post-colonialism, the privileged researcher was jettisoned, and the subjective reality of the participant and a new relativism entered into the discourse and text:

The new writers refused to locate reality in events per se, rather the real in its multiple forms was anchored in the experience of the text itself. This called for a new form of reading. They produced texts that challenged readers to read reflexively, to read between the lines, to erase the distinction between fact and fiction, to reread experiences, altering prior understandings based on new information. (Frus, 1994, as cited by Denzin, 1996, p. 236)

Denzin goes on to point out that “all assemble their respective versions of fact, fiction and truth”, every work constructs its version of what is truthful and factual, what could have happened, what did happen, or what will happen here. So truth is a social construct and narratives about the world are judged...according to the world we recognize” (Denzin, 1996, p. 238).

CULTURE OF INQUIRY

The “culture of inquiry” is changing slowly for academics and graduate students doing research work. Ellis & Bochner (1998) express the view that meaningful investigation still follows the demands made for meeting the conventions of various research practices while slowly challenging its values. Where the “culture of inquiry referred to as social science research, an institutional form of life that too often has inhibited creativity, promoted conformity, and retarded change in prevailing conventions” (Bochner & Ellis, 1998 p. 8), they insist social science researchers, and readers should contemplate new possibilities and pursue qualitative research practices in artful ways.

Bochner & Ellis (1998) point out the need for the realignment of graduate student training with alternative writing forms, not just for qualitative research but for the entire social science academy. They encourage the academic community “to see social research as a process of participation, a narrative activity, and a form of life at the intersection of art and science” (p. 8), and to be aware of how graduate students are influenced and politicized as they learn the craft of social research.

According to Bochner and Ellis, research must be construed as an activity of participation and writing must be understood as an integral part of inquiry. “By showing how fiction can be used in the service of social research, the authors...encourage the kind of self-examination, risk-taking, and creativity that can clear the way for reforming our research practices and curriculum and making the products of our research more interesting, more accessible, more evocative, and more inspirational” (1998, p.8). Further, Richardson (2008) summarizes where our epistemological beliefs are situated: “The core of postmodernism is the doubt that any method or theory, any discourse or genre, or any tradition or novelty has a universal and general claim as the ‘right’ or privileged form of authoritative knowledge” (p. 476).

CREATIVE TEXT ATTRIBUTES

CAP ethnography and related research approaches give their authors new authority because they view academic practice as an art and as a science—not as experimental alternatives, but as “valid and desirable representations” opening new spaces for thinking about the social (Richardson, 2000, p. 930). Focused as I was in learning what the narrative form was, what the non-fiction form meant and seeing various representations as process and product, I emerged with a view of creative text as having three important attributes: an *art form*, text as a *discursive technique*, and creative text as unconventional *inquiry space*. All were instrumental in reforming my understanding of non-

fiction as a valid approach for viewing my administrative landscape. Viewing text as *art*, *discursive technique* and *inquiry space* encouraged and challenged visions of my own interpretation of who I was as my inquiry progressed. In addition I contemplated my interpretive authority or privileged stance on various ideals. It was during my time in the UBC Cohort that I decided to explore the idea of using my own unconventional text to capture the lived curriculum and the living pedagogy. I regarded my new VP apprenticeship as an ideal source of experiences to investigate using creative qualitative research methods and the “blurred genres” (Richardson, 2000, p. 930). However, the questions remained: “*How do I really do this? What will it look like? Is there a procedure, an approach or methodological outline to follow?*”

ARTISTIC KNOWING

In the first decade of the new 21st century new forms of art are being explored, using state of the art technology that extends representational possibilities via new tools, media, hypermedia, digital ways of seeing and virtual techniques previously unimagined. In these ways artists each unfurl their own ideologies and self-knowledge claims, visions of form, fictionalized and factual expressions of emotional experience about a *life-world* they seek to impart to their audiences. Eisner (2008) would have us believe all descriptive and evocative renderings in an artistic form amount to *artistic knowing* (p. 6).

An inquiry is meant to illuminate the world of experience for the writer (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Denzin, 1996; Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Leggo, 2000d; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2000); in inquiry the author is not engaged in writing *specific answers to questions* but writing to *know*. After three years of gathering field notes, writing my thoughts in journals and making time for writing on a daily basis, the community narrative and the relationships I felt and lived were now part of my narrative, my landscape, and VP experience contained by a relational space.

At first my relational inquiry space unknowingly took the form of a *fluid inquiry*³ until I became grounded in the work of others – narrative inquiry in general and artful creative practices specifically with a/r/tography. My first CCFI Cohort class introduced me to the research frame of *living inquiry* situated in the relational matrix of Place, Space, Time, Self and Other, and their boundaries. This inquiry space was the setting and theme of my apprenticeship as a new VP. To understand narrative theory and method I began reading about narrative frames, such as: the *three-dimensional narrative space* used by Clandinin & Connelly (1998, 2000); and later the *writing as knowing* method advanced by Richardson (2000/2004) and Neilsen (2001/2002); and placement of the *subjective voice* in the narrative text (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). Eventually the literature revealed a tension that persists around dealing with truth-telling and creative fictional space. Barone (2008) speaks of the *ambiguity* of representational writing and the satisfaction found in the equilibrium between authenticity and fantasy space, and Berger (1985) suggests we simply accept the *discursive* power of the story itself and use the magic of storytelling to stride over the spaces between truth and fiction.

Writing this research inquiry has allowed me to play in the spaces of these borderlands, to write of my experiences with attention to subjective voice and discursive story. Such work illuminates the myriad connections and social interactions around me as well as my own relational space. Situated in a large school, this professional landscape contains emotional spaces; my own and those of others. Within these spaces are the stories and interim narrative texts that grow and develop from field notes and continue on in some form toward a final text. These in-between spaces and the tensions Clandinin and Connelly (2000) describe as the boundaries for narrative thinking and the relational matrix are the “moments of inquiry tension” (p. 188). The narrative view and the social significance of the experiences fall on a continuum with boundaries shared by others. Writing my field notes with attention to my own intersubjectivity and as close to the event in time produced

a focused living and retelling of experience and the relationships lived. “It is in the living and telling of experience that we locate what represents our sense of experience as narrative inquirers” (p. 189). For me, a later re-reading in a more dispassionate frame of mind became a process that allowed an examination of my relational space at a distance, engendering less emotional turmoil in the intimacy of the life lived. Choosing to shape the narrative inquiry as a creative narrative rather than a transcription of events over time was made to allow a more empathetic experience. My intention being to have the reader participate vicariously in the landscape of my cultural enterprise and the in-between spaces of my inquiry.

NEGOTIATED FORMS OF KNOWLEDGE

What does it mean to *know* as a cultural enterprise? The traditional view of scientific knowledge for 400 years has been to pursue *certainty*, confirming or disproving assertions about knowledge, but it has not always been the case with *truth, objectivity, evidence and validity*. Eisner (2008) points out that such ‘*assertions*’ rely on discourse and language to be transmitted and understood within a culture. Steven Shapin (1998), a historian of science, reiterate that “within the sociology of scientific knowledge which has convincingly demonstrated that the *socially negotiated* nature of science” (italics in original, Lawrence & Shapin, 1998 p. 7) establishes accepted forms of representation (the truth). Thus we can say knowledge is socially constructed, negotiated in public, among diverse social institutions whose forms of knowledge are openly negotiated across boundaries and other institutions with other forms of knowledge (p. 8). Truth is a negotiated social construction.

Not only does “knowledge come in different forms, the forms of its creation differ” (Eisner, 2008, p. 5). There is an ineffable aspect to knowledge. Eisner refers to the dominance of this paradigm as the propositional “empirical world with synthetic propositions for determining truth”. Each variety of knowing bears its own fruits and has its own uses: “*knowing is a multiple state of*

affairs, not a singular one. In pragmatic terms, knowing is always about relationships. We need to know different things for different purposes” (p. 5). To overcome our uncertainties of knowing we negotiate with others and construct meaning together.

WORDING THE LANDSCAPE

Words are proxies for direct experience. Alberto Manguel in the CBC Massey Lectures adds that “words think us into being” (2008, p. 66). They point us in a direction by which we can undergo what the words purport to reveal. Words, in this sense, are like cues to guide us on a journey. The utility of these cues depends upon their ability to help us anticipate the situation we wish to avoid or encounter. Words make us and we are held in the imaginative narrative and syntax of meanings. So, what language, form and image are best suited to convey the administrative landscape in an evocative manner? How does the often ambiguous nature of words, the ineffable aspect of knowledge and the uncertainty of truth direct and shape my inquiry?

Through various media, artists explore a vast array of expressive possibilities of truth making. Art making and artful expression in research promote another form of understanding that is derived from or evoked through empathetic experience. Hence, the artistic rendering of a landscape using written language and all the richness and complexity of a narrative view, together with the *back and forth gaze* (Ellis & Bochner, 2000) made inwardly and outwardly through my personal experiences, can become my *artmaking*.

Using/creating representations through words, stories, children’s voices, poetics, dialogue, and images are the artistic forms I have selected to re/image the emotional lifeworld of my three year apprenticeship as a Vice-Principal. In this way I scribe (and create) the *effect* of reality and allow others to vicariously view my lifeworld using “evocative artistic renderings” and sensory experiences, and together my reader and I enter a social construction of truth.

Inquiry of one's self, represented as artful written expression or arts informed research of self as an artist-researcher-educator does not satisfy any conclusive *find the question/answer* model of life's research. Instead, artful research is akin to having thoughtful conversations and illuminating dialogue, infused with questions such as: *What does art seek to express? How do works of art represent structures that are analogs for human feelings? How does the artist create empathy in those who encounter the work?*

A number of serendipitous events brought clarity to the artful representation of my inquiry using creative non-fiction. I compiled three years of written entries in journal form, free writing, essays and email correspondence from which a narrative grew and became the format for my field note 'stories'. During a year of studying narrative research, poetics and memoirs I was lead to view narrative inquiry as a way of life on a field of study, filled with the intimacies of relationships and the stories of life as lived. Across this field and "in its broadest sense on the landscape [t]he narrative inquirer... records actions, doings and happenings," (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000 p. 79) where landscapes that were powerful, authentic, and candid can be seen. Narrative research texts as artful inquiry make visible the *back and forth gaze*, "beyond the borders of our senses" (Manguel, 2008, p. 24). Rather than painted, this work is a creative narrative of and across the landscapes of my external *life-world* and my inner imagined memory of that lifeworld. It is an inquiry, an exploration, a self journey expressed through the interpretive writing of events that I experienced and now lay before you to see.



Chapter Two – Creative Non-Fiction

Every linguistic experience of the world is experience of the world not experience of language.

Gadamer, 1989, p. 546

Stories categorized as non-fictional, and therefore as correct and useful, must at least strive toward “truth” as a regulative ideal. They must aim to consistently, directly, and precisely mirror the “real world”.

Tom Barone, 2008, p.106

Journal entry, January 8

Grad Advisor

This first week of returning full-time to university has been very absorbing and fun. There were a noticeable number of younger people in my graduate classes, but the ratio of women to men higher than I expected. I am feeling such freedom. I am my own agent again. No duty to act or assist someone because of my role and expertise. While attending my last courses on research methods, a constant ‘notion’ has been what form, what content, what parts of my narrative shall I include? Having decided on narrative inquiry, just what does it consist of?

Met with C. around 1 pm. When I asked C. about guidance in a narrative study of my administrative role his immediate advice was that I should consider alternative writing formats. He showed me various ideas in text, and was quite excited by Bel Kaufman’s old novel *Up the Down Staircase* (1964) which he had to show me. I like the layout and use of memo exchanges for relaying dialogue. I am going to try to use this idea and email.

He also mentioned that a challenging, but evocative narrative can be done as a ‘*Creative Non-fiction*’. Haven’t any idea what this is. My first reaction to the word ‘non-

fiction' is rather hesitant but C. must have a good reason for suggesting it as academic writing. I'll check into this.

Journal Entry, April 23

I continue writing new poems and reworking some from my journals. After reading Carl Leggo's more recent book of poems and PK Page's autopoetic biography it motivates me to do more of my own poetry. But I should be writing more in prose detail and must not get so distracted by poems. It is so easy to allow distractions these days!

What are the goals of my inquiry? In what way would I like my readers to identify with my situation? As I grow into the role, my feelings and emotional turmoil are written less into my journal, and more into my poems.

Foremost now is choosing the plot structure and showing the continuum of emotional growth I underwent. Has it really been 30 months so far?

I might try and summarize my past months of success. What stands out as the significant aspects of my growth and development as an administrative leader? The short list is: (1) I have changed; I am not the person who began, (2) my curriculum beliefs were challenged, (3) my role grew out of the relationships with people, (4) deeper aspects of myself must be allowed more creative expression, and (5) living and experience are the real curricula (for everyone).

WHAT IS *CREATIVE NON-FICTION* ?

The Scottish writer Andrew O'Hagan (2008) comments that our current 24-hour news culture "tends to rob many subjects of their subtlety" (*CBC Radio interview, Writers and Company*) describing very emotional and intimate events in black and white headlines devoid of the human experiences that layer these stories. He suggests it is perhaps the novelist's job to *slow the narrative down*, and to somehow inject thoughtfulness and contemplation into human circumstances that are loud and electric with controversy. This slowing down engages the reader, portraying identities and

misjudgments as parts of the characters' true nature and relationships. This at its essence is what creative non-fiction does: a slowing down of the narrative to a human scale of inquiry.

“Alternative” forms of written inquiry purposefully blur the boundaries between social science and the humanities, yet the polarization of the literary and the scientific persists, particularly with regard to the *authority* (academic role/scholarly use/privilege and position) of fiction and non-fiction (Ellis & Bochner, 1998). A distinction remains in the literature between the features of social science and humanities writing for scholarly discourse; one view insists on writing for *recording abstract facts* and the other for preparing texts which *co-create meaning* with an active reader. Traditional positivists' writing holds to the voice and authority of a form intent on recording details apart from the subjective, while an opposite view believes, when writing is the inquiry and inquiry the writing, the act of intimate narration borrows from the arts to cause the research to come to life and connect meaningfully with the reader. A Qualitative Research (QR) academic inquiry positioned as “alternative” to any authoritative conventions is done to transgress positions of privilege (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 735) and is neither solely fiction nor non-fiction.

I struggled at the outset in my narrative inquiry to understand and sort out and separate the elements of writing fiction from non-fiction, creative writing from academic reporting. It is not enough to say one is a better approach than another “just because narrative feels right”. The process needed academic substance, structure and technique if I were to write a convincing narrative. After some reflection, I found it necessary to consider ‘why’ these forms are selected – fiction, non-fiction, autobiographical, writing, memoir, etc. – before addressing the issue of ‘*what they are and what do they look like?*’

For me, the radical tension of this conundrum was an attraction. Many of these *creative analytic practices* are alternative species which intentionally ‘blur’ and oppose the conventional paradigm of the positivist writing. These new writers chose to deviate from the traditional canons of

privilege and wrote instead of marginal lives, telling and living ethnographic stories which included the poststructural voice of the Other. That is their *why*: texts which dealt with social inequities keenly felt by their authors. Many of these new texts moved the subjective “I” inside their ethnographic texts to represent a more personal narrative and in this intersubjective form have now become the autoethnographic projects no longer viewed as “alternative”, but considered as belonging to the conventions of current qualitative research practices “as valid and desirable representations of the social”(Richardson, 2000, p. 930).

Besides narrative texts which encourage social activism (Finley 2008), alternative texts have a shape, and I began asking what these might look like. Does the narrative technique have a definitive set of rules to follow? In seeking to identify the narrative *purpose*, I found it hard to separate the format of the work and its textual appearance from *purpose*; something did not fit with my sense of how these texts were engaged in being read, understood or their *meanings negotiated* (Barone, 2008). I saw that this too was a dichotomous paradigm. For within these alternative texts, both the *purpose* and *form* challenge conventions and re/present something new and in-between.

Inside the *equilibrium in-between authenticity and fantasy space* (Barone, 2008), inadequately labeled as either fiction or non-fiction, lies the artist/author’s intention. I have pointed out previously that alternative writing forms have various names associated with the creative non-fiction this autoethnographic project occupies. Of the multi-vocal ethnographic species *filling* the blurred genres Richardson mentions, many have evolved in the scholarly practice of the social sciences field for various literary (fictional) and academic (factual) purposes combined. It seems that their authors’ motives are directed to blending both purposes. As I researched my inquiry, and attempted to find the “preferred” label for the form of narrative and academic work I wished to complete, I found the field to be filled with numerous similar, yet unique descriptors for postmodern narrative writing. They include: *experimental text* (Denzin, 1995); *qualitative research text*, (Denzin

& Lincoln, 2000); *artistically crafted research*, (Eisner, 1995); *ethnographic fiction science* (Watson, 2000); *fictional techniques in writing ethnography* (Richardson, 1998); *artful science* (Brady, 1991 cited in Barone, 2008); *creative non-fiction* (Gutkind, 1994/2005); *autoethnographic project and personal narrative* (Ellis & Bochner, 2000); *portraiture* (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffmann-Davis, 1997); *writing as inquiry* (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2004); *poetic social science* (Bochner, 2000); *literary non-fiction* (Barone, 1980); *life history writing* (Cole & Knowles, 2001); and *poetic discourse* (Leggo, 1998).

Crossing into the professional writer's world I found that journalism conventions also have a history of alternative blends of fiction and non-fiction. Since the 1980s, literary journalism has resulted in such labeling as: *literary news writing*, *the New Journalism*, and *creative journalism*, as news reporting moved into more subjective coverage and reporters became embedded in the various situations deemed relevant for others to read about. Becoming, in turn, subjects of their journalistic coverage, reporters' attempts at more emotional coverage challenged traditional views of objectivity and unbiased coverage. Many of these changes and modes of writing have given rise to the current label *Creative Non-fiction (CNF)*⁴, now accepted as an all-encompassing term for combining the literary (fictional) and academic (factual) purposes. As Stephen Banks (2008) remarks, the distinction between the "practices of fiction writing and non-fiction writing is blurry" (p. 155). Therefore this narrative is written using *creative non-fiction* to portray a work of truthful representations in a fictionalized work of art.

UBC email: Wed, January 23, 2008

Subject: Re: The "process of writing one's self" is messy"

Hi, Bruce,

I like your poetic analogy for the thesis process. Yes it is very much 'planning for a roadtrip with daily

detours'. You are in the process, and finding your way as you journey.

C.

Literary fiction is supported and practiced in qualitative scholarship as a mode of reporting scholarly research (Banks, 2008). Regardless of the blurry zone between fiction and non-fiction (p. 155), a distinction can be made between research *reporting*, summarizing the story of the research experience, and vivid writing, which conveys the research *findings* dramatically, a classification reframed by Caulley (2008) as writing to *show* dramatically or *retell* by summarizing (p. 427).

Writing is a creative process, regardless of the genre in which it is finally placed. Writing something into *form* is a fashioning by the author, sculpting something into that which is new (Barone, 1980; Leggo & Sameshina, 2008), and it is at the same time a method of discovery (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2008). Often to the surprise of the writer, during the process of rewriting, a new form emerges through the artistic handling of language. As Manguel (2007) notes, “words think us into being,... words not only express but create thought” (Manguel, 2007 p. 66). Writing is a way of constructing reality imaginatively “by means of allusion, inference, and suggestion” for which language remains “permanently mobile, ultimately ungraspable: something transparent” (p.25) and alluding to truth in manifold stories and poems.

Using the term non-fiction suggests a writer is “*making it up*”, but at the same time the non-fiction writer maintains an allegiance to the truth of events (Gerard, 1996, p. 7). Creatively written research must show that the writer adheres to rigorously kept field notes and journals and to the veracity of their interim texts (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Working to convey the accurate version of events, the writer must fully realize that “in narrative inquiry our field texts are always interpretive, always composed by an individual at a certain moment in time” (p. 84).

It might be asked if creative non-fiction writing processes are considered too “impure” as data used in research. On the contrary, artful writing - using literary techniques, devices and formats – to narrate the essence of human experiences is a kind of facsimile, a verisimilitude. Using CNF allows the writer to “slow down the narratives”, to regard situations with care and to examine their meaning with greater attention (O’Hagan, 2008). Equally important CNF enables the reader to experience the emotional intimacy of human circumstance in evocative art and virtual experiences (Eisner, 2008). The CNF researcher strives to write for coherence, clarity, enlargement, intensity, presence and moral intentionality (Barone & Eisner, 1997; Cole & Knowles, 2001) communicating the many interpretive moments in the researcher’s subjective life-world. Therefore, I am fully committed to the process of writing a text which has real events and factual and fictional characters (with pseudonyms when ethically necessary), whose lives contribute in some way and were part of my own lifeworld. For three years I underwent a discovery of identity and experiential development while in my VP apprenticeship.

EXPRESSIVE NON-FICTION ART

One might ask, how is non-fiction discourse specific to writing a narrative inquiry and not to be confused with fictional art. What is meant by the term *non-fictional representation*? What is meant by using the term *non-fiction*, at all? Denzin & Lincoln (2000) explain that these terms should be addressed in the social science research context they are placed in and where the processes that give meaning to social interactions are studied and in which the researcher is biographically situated. In the fluid nature of organically piecing the narrative alternative together it is my belief that my self-inquiry is well situated for my purpose, and is amply supported by a number of scholars regarding the credible use of creative non-fiction as an *art form* for research. My self-study is organic in nature, wandering and remaining a *fluid inquiry*⁵ of present moments

and *was/is/will be* visible as I write. All the factual details captured and written into my narrative views, *I observed, lived, re-live and retell* (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In trying to determine *what is creative non-fiction*, I have had to consider what is non-fiction in Qualitative Research (QR), and the necessary elements of a non-fiction narrative and creative expression. I now understand that a narrative using *CNF* (1) has an *artistic form* for qualitative research, in which the artist makes the world visible using *creative expressive techniques* for self-inquiry, and (2) that the product of artistic engagement is *motivated* by something within the artist/researcher to achieve.

What then is my motivation for self-inquiry in school communities where I am situated? How do I adequately investigate and present my work-life as a landscape of multiple experiences? Can my identity and my authority speak from inside a narrative? The resultant narrative is created as a *creative non-fiction* in which the character eventually rediscovers artmaking and employs an inquiry *form* called A/r/tography⁶ (Irwin, 2004) as part of his artistic engagement and exploration of identity.

ARTISTRY

Creative expressive techniques using *Creative Non-fiction* complete the inquiry activities for lived experience. Once the field-notes and narrative data are gathered, the research inquirer's impressions are interpreted and a series of representations produced to make sense of them, thereby making *CNF* both a product and the *method* of production.

Eisner (1995), in discussing artistically crafted research, presented three perspectives on the meaning of 'art' and 'artistically crafted research' as a major means of communication (p. 1). He says that "we can mean by art" the *form* of representations, the *valued features* of the product, and the *process* that brings "something into existence" (1995, p. 2).

My intention is to use *creative non-fiction* as a literary tool to represent my experience of the insular world of administration. Furthermore I wish to establish that this self inquiry uses non-fiction research as a *process* from which alternative texts are *produced* and reflexively examined “with attention to the *in-between*, where meanings reside in the simultaneous use of language, images, materials, situations, space and time” (Irwin & Springgay, 2008). To use “artistically crafted research” such as narrative writing and poetics in a creative non-fictional performance is to be cognizant that my artful representation should address the elements of *form*, *value features* and *method* (or *process*) in meeting my goals for this thesis.

Home email: January 28, 2008

Subject: Evening Visit to Narrative Class

Dear C.,

I have gained a very interesting set of insights from a small article by Kathryn Smithrim; *Singing lessons: a hidden pedagogy* from JACS. I was looking for a descriptive word or idea for the liminal line that moves with my lived experiences and is the space School Principals occupy.

Kathryn Smithrim borrows an idea from Murray Schafer about "teach on the verge of peril"; being courageous enough to let go of control, trusting the learning topic/subject itself to engage and guide the living moments for the students rather than the teacher. Asking the student what they want to learn, and not being the authority. Taking a risk and trusting that students will find their way in the 'space' and not worry about filling it because you're in the "expert"; a teacher who brings questions to class rather than authoritative answers.

I like the idea enough that I am considering my thesis title as "leading on the verge of peril".

- Bruce

UBC email: Monday 28 Jan 2008

Subject: Next time for a visit

Hi, Bruce,

I think your proposed thesis title is superb. Kathryn Smithrim's work is very much connected to the extensive community of scholars that I most readily identify with. Might I suggest you read the *Qualitative Handbook* series for folk who have much to say on the matters you mention.

Sounds like you are having fun!

Carl

ARTFUL FICTION

The messy task of writing my inquiry finds me at this moment attempting to clarify the form (product), features (qualities), and method (process) associated with artful literary practices. What are the specifics needed to fictionalize the facts for my creative narrative of my VP landscape?

In research when the question of terms and definitions is mentioned the alternative must be considered in order to provide balance. What is the place of *fiction* in research? Evidently, 2008 has been a watershed year for those interested in this subject to express their view on *fiction* and *creative non-fiction* within the body of scholarship in respect to ethnographic and personal narrative forms of inquiry writing. Several writers have addressed the *method*, *purpose*, *knowledge claims* and the *aesthetics* that these alternative forms of scholarship contain. Among them, I found the following to be most beneficial to my inquiry: Caulley (2008); Banks (2008); Barone (2008); Denzin (2008); Ellis, (2008); Eisner (2008); Gouzouasis (2008); Leggo (2008b); Leggo & Sameshina (2008); Neilsen (2008), much of whose work has been gathered into a new handbook edited by Gary Knowles and Ardra Cole (*Handbook of the Arts in Qualitative Research*, 2008).

Many of these works follow from the previous scholarly writings of Denzin (1996), Denzin & Lincoln, (2000), Ellis (2000), Ellis & Bochner (2000), Banks & Banks (1998), Kilbourn (1999), Kvale (1996), Leggo (2004), and Richardson & St. Pierre (2004). In addition there are numerous narratives using *creative non-fiction* (often within the title), in which the authors add commentary

about their use of *CNF* writing. Among those from whom I gleaned important aspects are the following: Ceglowski (1997); Clough (2000); Banks (2000); Kilbourn (1998); Lee (2005); Leggo (2005); Watson (2000); and Wright (2004), as well as the collection of writings included in *Fiction and Social Research: By ice of fire* (Banks & Banks, eds., 1998). Much of this has left me with a strong impression that a new ‘turn’, or shift is taking place within qualitative work, a shift where the dualistic fiction and non-fiction distinction is now blurred.

Home email: February 12, 2008

To: Carl

Subject: My research proposal

Carl, could we meet sometime soon? The uncomfortable ‘temperature’ I feel...

I am feeling at sea about what I can and cannot do. This comes about as I hear other grad students discuss their 'proposals' and research plans. What is a research proposal for observed landscapes anyway? This experimental tome and empirical planning plagues me, and the fever increases as I read more. I continue to write, but is it the stuff of my inquiry, the substance of which I am writing? The stories of others' lifeworlds I witnessed are written not in the past but the now. Is this the best way to share the phenomena of my world as an inquiry?

I also have concerns about clarity of ethics, my committee and deadlines.

- Bruce

KNOWLEDGE CLAIMS WITHIN *CREATIVE NON-FICTION*

Several QR scholars have written alternative approaches for assessing and validating knowledge, arguing against the modernist traditional social science view for seeking knowledge in an objective reality (Bochner, 2000; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Ellis & Bochner, 1998; Faulkner, 2005; Kilbourn, 1999; Kvale, 1995; Gouzouasis, 2008; Richardson, 2001, and; Ellis et al., 2008).

Validity from the postmodernist view, accepts the possibility of special local, personal, and community forms of truth, with a focus on daily life and local narrative (Kvale's 1995). A view of

validity based on “issues of reliable witnesses, of valid documents and arguments are part of social interaction” (p.21). Kvale suggests we use Lincoln’s & Guba’s older (1985) view for the truth of research “using concepts such as trustworthiness, credibility, dependability and confirmability” as alternatives to the boundaries between truth and nontruth (p.21).

Home email: March 16, 2008

To: Carl

Subject: Creative Non-fiction drafts.

Well Carl,

Suddenly I think I know where this *fluid inquiry* is going. Thanks for your suggestion. I spent a great deal of time reading Qualitative Handbook articles and the alternative writers of renown.

I have attached the beginning 10 pages of my thesis. *Creative Non-fiction it is.*

I have Chapter 2 underway in rough draft. A focus on the 10 dangerous things VPs should be allowed to do. I have a rough draft and Chapter 3 is an A/r/tographical piece that I am trying to finish up right now for Rita. In all, I have 40 pages of material beyond the 10 edited ones I am sending you now.

Take care – Bruce

Tom Barone explains that the scientific/literary dichotomy maintains a prevailing epistemology with a ‘dualist mindset’, classifying stories as *fictional* and less legitimate while stories categorized as *non-fiction* are designated in turn as plausible and useful. This traditional view of knowledge asserts a *rightness* or *exactness* in its authoritative position, placing itself in opposition to the other, with the implication that the other view is *false* or *illegitimate*. How does Creative Non-fiction claim new and useful knowledge?

Tom Barone yearns for more productive attention to be paid by researchers to the rigorous nature of their work, and the ways in which their work is useful, insightful, and meaningful. In the

absence of a paradigm or value free lens through which to examine meaning, Barone suggests jettisoning criteria with respect to alternative writing, instead setting out goals. In his own words, “I feel that criteria are the very means we ourselves created to contain our desire for freedom and experience, a way of limiting our own possibilities and stifling our creative energies” (p. 267). He asserts that if alternative ethnographies have a multiplicity of goals then it is these goals which can be judged as having been achieved or not.

I wish to return to Norman Denzin’s remarks made toward the end of his article “Facts and Fictions” (1996) in which he placed qualitative inquiry in its historical context. He wishes his reader to regard narrative not as fiction or non-fiction but a *technique* for making sense of situations (p. 237). To summarize my rationale for using *CNF* to narrate my professional landscape, I claim that:

A narrative written as creative non-fiction makes sense of situations and is distinct from texts that are classified as either fictional or factual. Narrative writing constructs its version of what is truthful and factual, situated in the words of the discourse and between the textual dynamics of the fact and fiction. The narrative suggests, interprets and imagines what occurred in the fictionalized circumstances of events negotiated between the text and the reader.

NARRATIVE ELEMENTS OF *CNF*

Creative Non-fiction texts “claim a space between fact and fiction in which a different sort of textual dynamic is played out” (Barone p.108) for the reader to locate themselves. These dynamics, Barone suggests, “momentarily bracket off the text from ordinary stream of consciousness” allowing the reader to dwell in both the literal and the abstract ‘what if’. From such a position, the author claims an implicit non-fiction status between the push of literalness and the pull of figurative (abstract, metaphorical, symbolic, representational) expression.

To dwell in this claimed space the author declares a status for the nature of this textual dynamic leaving alone any claim for the status or authoritative interpretations of meaning. The author secures proximity of the truth by using story telling techniques and literary devices to untangle the “messiness of lived experience” (Leggo & Sameshina 2008 p.12). “What really makes a story interesting and valuable is the way it is told” (Leggo & Sameshina, 2008, p.12). Story tellers and writers attempt to frame all the salient pieces of experience “in order to remind us that there is significance in the moment, in the particular, in the mundane” (Leggo, n.d. p. 3). The creative elements used within a narrative text highlight this significance, especially when the discourse uses vivid and evocative language and the plot is energetically engaging.

Creative elements added to non-fiction, define and shape how the text is read and used. The literary result is *creative non-fiction* which is not fiction and not just non-fiction. When an author claims to be using this form of blurred genre, an implicit contract is expected of the reader that the work be considered ‘truthlike’ by some measure of understanding. Barone (2008) offers seven *Narrative Elements* that the *creative non-fiction* text should contain and he feels contribute to the identity of the CNF form:

1. **documented reality** of actual incidents and lives (*genuine*)
2. **trustworthy depictions** and accurate autobiographical phenomena (*authentic*)
3. **real-life analogies** of experiences, places and events (*mimetic replication*)
4. **disturbs and puzzles** the reader to reflexivity and agency (*pedagogical status*)
5. **creatively crafts** a credible “as if” world using literary devices (*creative*)
6. **a poststructural nonlinear text** which promotes a different kind of reading (*negotiated meaning*)
7. **entices the reader** to dwell vicariously in a rendered actual world (*evocative text*)

Thus, in using the elements of *CNF*, a hypothetical world is intentionally created by the research writer that “abandons the circumscribed territory of the real” and uses the text as an imaginary opening into possible worlds meant to disturb and puzzle (Barone, 2008, p. 113).

QUALITIES OF *CNF*

Having used the expression “narrative” or “creative non-fiction” elements above, I wish to summarize my earlier remarks about the attributes I have tried to explain. Thus far I have determined that *CNF* narrative has three principle attributes for presenting text within a narrative perspective of lived experiences. Such *CNF* texts have:

- (1) an *artistic form* that fictionalizes and represents factual events,
- (2) a dialectic presence using language, words, and tropisms as *discursive techniques* with literary features of the storyline, plot, character tensions, and narrative attributes, employed to dramatically convey the ‘story’, and
- (3) an imaginative text which is lived-told-relived–retold through the intersubjectivity of the writer/researcher in a continuum of *inquiry space* with the reader.

Darrel Caulley (2008) prepared an overview for using the *techniques* of creative non-fiction. His document combines the scholarship of Denzin & Lincoln (2005a), Gerard (1991, 2001), Gutkind (1997, 2005), and Richardson & St. Pierre (2005) and details the stylistic practices that are used in a *CNF* text, with specific insights to the *CNF* method for arranging a story. Among his detailed explanation are the following qualities pertinent to the *CNF* form:

- An opening which is vivid and vital.
- Arouse curiosity and interest with questions and headings that elicit further reading.
- Contains details which *show* dramatic events rather than *tell* a summary.
- Use realistic details of real life to engage the reader with images and emotions, setting a mood and building mental images that the reader fills with details not placed in the text.
- Capture conversation and dialogue as people involved speak so the reader is ‘right there listening’.
- Vary and mix the style of diction, syntax, tone, tropes and narrative modes used in the text – the choice of the words, the type of sentences, the literary figures of speech (tropes), narrative tone, character dialogue, and actions.
- *CNF* writers try to capture truth about reality as they subjectively find it.

- Closings are important, must be slightly surprising, subtle, and may end with a quote, or end by making a recommendation.

(Caulley, 2008)

Journal Entry, March 26

Advice today

I asked for the meeting to discuss issues of narrative form and some of the ethical issues my photographs have created for me in A/r/tography.

I've spent the last set of days reflecting on how to address truth in fiction and creative non-fiction as an authentic voice for my thesis (maybe it's going to be a diegesis, perhaps a Bildungsroman?). This effort has benefited from reading various sources for input. Post modernism thought in general.

Several questions remain and have to be left open for now.

Bruce

I lend my own voice to my own experiences in order to write an inquiry story using fictional techniques. Truthfulness from both my experience and my memories has lead to the images and stories of my inquiry. They are a fictional representation of the facts, events, situations and people, and they recast my lived experiences in words as close to reality as possible. This narrative is not a fiction of memoir designed as a creative narrative in an invented landscape. Tom Barone (2008) expresses the challenges of traditional academic discourse to the fact/fiction dualism represented in literary non-fiction texts which claim the space between fact and fiction (p.108) through the dynamics of stories, "based on a true story or inspired by actual events" (p. 108). In his book *Midnight in the garden of good and evil* (1994) John Berendt caught the essence of claiming the space between fact and fiction as the dynamics of his text presents the *real* lives of Savannah, Georgia citizens, in which the city's genteel society ladies, suicidal husbands, a voodoo priestess and a drag queen are the characters. In his endnote explanation he writes, "When the narrative

strays from strict non-fiction, my intention has been to remain faithful to the characters and the essential drift of events as they really happened” (Berendt, 1994, p. 389).

AUTHOR’S DISCLAIMER

This is an imagined work of non-fiction. All the characters and events portrayed in this work are products of the author’s imagination and when inspired by events from reality they are used fictitiously to show the facts of the matter. The events, the stories and the situations lived by the author have become the words and thoughts of the characters, and are the creative experience of the author’s mind based on what really happened. No person named or described is to be associated with any person living. No such matching, hidden or implied, was intended by me. Similarities and traits between real people and characters, accidental or not, have been further protected by using pseudonyms. Only those names used as public authorities and authors placed in the reference citations are real and represent real people and their names.

So I write my disclaimer as well to “claim the space” and “remain faithful...to the essential drift of the story”. Not for legal reasons, but to satisfy those who need to understand my paradigm.

During a period of forty months, a school in Vancouver, British Columbia was the location for my employment and primary research. Including these three and a half years of apprenticeship, I have worked in the Vancouver area for most of my teaching career of 24 years. No school named Kitsilano Elementary exists, yet there are many schools in the Kitsilano community that contributed to the author’s *fictional* school setting. This is a piece of inquiry research written both as narrative, and as a creative arts work. Just as stories can have stories within, this work has an inquiry arts methodology called A/r/tography (Irwin, 2004, 2006; Springgay et al., 2008) within the *CNF* artform. All of this comprises my self-rendered inquiry.

Personal email: Sat May 21, 2005

To: June, UBC cohort instructor

Subject: Meeting to discussion another Program

Good morning June,

There are a few things I feel need to be discussed before Monday's class meeting across town. As I am unable to reach my pro-tem for program advisement I would like to talk to you about the direction of my academic studies within the Urban Cohort. The size of the class makes it difficult on course nights to talk about our program; with time limited to viewing the films and rushing our discussion.

Mostly, the passive nature of the present course is not sufficient for me, so I feel I may have to make some adjustments. I am looking for a more academic focus which allows for all my 'day' job restrictions and is still rigorously engaging for me.

I wish to meet with you and the Director in the next little while. Can you please arrange this for after school on Thursday. I hope the school strike is avoided, as the strike threat will affect how the cohort continues to meet at a VSB school for the video course.

Thanks, - Bruce

IMAGINE MY STORY

Alberto Manguel⁷ (reading the third CBC Massey Lectures, 2007), in response to a question from the audience, explains how “language is not only the tool used to express our thoughts but language is in fact the root of our thoughts”. The author, he says, in connecting to the reader’s imagination from the beginning, must establish the truth of his remarks. Speaking about Herman Melville’s opening line for *Moby-Dick*, Manguel says the three words used in English allow the reader’s imagination to be involved no matter what relationship they have to the writer. “The device

is the same, - I am not saying my name is Ishmael, I am not telling you I really am Ishmael; just: *'call me Ishmael'*”. Manguel pauses and goes on to say:

This, if Melville were writing in Spanish would be an impossibility, because in these three words, Melville embraces the whole of the human race; he speaks to everyone of every condition and whatever relationship they might have with him. In Spanish you have to define that... So you see language decides those things, we put them together and allow the music to shape the words that shapes the sense but it is language that is responsible. (*CBC Massey Lecture 2007 November, The City of Words, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Q & A session*)

This relationship with my creative thesis, the shaping of my narrative, and the senses of my reader, assumes an imaginative understanding will be accessible to all readers regardless of their circumstances and experiences in Canadian public schools. The root of our common experience both with our Canadian language and school is where, as the author, I have begun this imaginative narrative.

VERISIMILITUDE

As we drift in and out of this narrative and the various stories that are told, the aspirations of Angus are revealed. The connection you make with the text and the plot devices used to set the tensions among the characters invites you to reflect and “puzzle” as you read. A hypothetical world, near, yet at a distance from the actual, is a literary dimension used to fictionalize the facts and the tensions within the narrative view and to imagine the possibilities and interactions the characters yield in shaping the landscape imaginatively placed before you.

Imagination itself, the ability to conceive a reality not materially present to the senses suggests the idea that truth can only be realized in contiguity with the imagination. Words therefore live imaginatively in the minds of the author, the speaker, the reader and the listener as

representations adjacent to the truth (Alberto Manguel, 2007). Such truthfulness exists, and is transferred only in the reader's consciousness as they stride along with the story-teller's words, narrated into an effective discourse, and closely, but never directly, matching the truth of a material reality they partially address.

The trustworthy aspect of this closeness in match, the negotiated meaning the reader makes of the storyteller's discourse and resemblance to lived experiences (the plot and meaning of events), depends on the ideas and expressions of the story teller which *stride over the spaces* (Berger, p. xviii) and present the imagined events as enlivened truth to the reader's awareness. The reader wants to project their view of the world from the story into the relational space. Barone (2008) mentions spaces between meanings, specifically between fact and fiction. He suggests the pushing outward and the pushing inward are a textual dance for negotiated meanings.

The reality of truth is captured in a version of my lived experience. It is the vista I have set before you. What you as a reader must make of my interpretative words is not its precision, its truthfulness, so much as its *meaning*. From such a reading we co-participate in knowing a workplace landscape together, mirrored and negotiated with a *truthlike* resemblance. Such a verisimilitude is my purpose. In this fashion my stories and the narrative before you have to be judged by their transparent veracity and reasonableness for presenting a reliable and conscientious creation, authentically attentive to the realities of the educational workplace a junior school official lives through (exists in) during a period of time.

A LETTER FROM UBC

With relief I receive a hopeful letter from CCFI after my week away at Camp. That my efforts to speak with the Director were fruitful and that he was open to my request has left me with a positive promise; the letter arriving confirmed my feeling. There is still some reluctance on my

part about leaving the others in the Cohort to become part of another community of students, connected by the commonality of studying on campus instead of the inner city classroom. Hopefully my next course will introduce me to some interesting people who are research oriented.

Date June 15, 2005

Dear Angus Bruce

After our meeting I am providing a written update for your files. I have sent my recommendation to the Associate Dean at the Faculty of Graduate Studies that you be permitted to transfer from the M.Ed. program to the M.A. program in Curriculum and Instruction effective on September 1, 2005. I fully approve this recommendation and look forward to your success in completing your Master's program in CCFI.

Sincerely,

G.C. Director, Centre for Cross-Faculty Inquiry in Education

Looking back on these entries, what seems like years later, I am aware of how bound I was by the traditional views of experience in academic orthodoxy and the same way I was exposed to this. All of these institutionalized systems value enforcement and control and the disaggregation of numbers rather than the individuals' actually involved, the journey undertaken, or any story about learning.

ANGUS BRUCE

In a medium sized elementary school I am the junior school administrator. Unlike certain teachers, I never tell children to call me Angus. (A mixed up idea that allowing children to call teachers by first names will put them on equal terms with their charges and yield more cooperation.) It would be best if you just call me Angus, knowing if in doubt that Mr. Bruce will do.

Or for that matter, call me what ever you want; at least once a week people do anyway. Angus Bruce is not who I am, it is just a name; nor is the “VP” but over the years I have been called many titles and important names. All these are no different than any of the aliases that, now and then, I have adopted as a way to describe the jobs I do. These become titles rather than a statement of my character. I am telling you my name is Angus for simplicity. What is true is that I am the new Vice-Principal for Kitsilano Elementary School and this is my story to tell. I feel strongly about telling it because I lived various experiences that subtly and formatively changed me during the story of these past 3 years. My eventual transformation, perhaps predictable by some, was unexpected by me and beyond my control from the very beginning. I took on this new role and for three years watched, practiced and redefined the VP job as I saw it. Along the way certain situations were painfully embarrassing in changing my character. In the end, most of these challenges fortified my professional sensibilities for completely different reasons just before I left the job. But I am getting ahead of myself, as these remarks are expressing more of my conclusion. However, at the very beginning all I wanted was to learn the professional sensitivity expected of me by Gloria and to manage the emotional stresses I felt weighed on my new authority and responsibilities.



Chapter Three - Living Inquiry

We are the blood in all the languages that create us: sound, movement, word, image, colour, touch. Our season is short, but if we think for a moment that what we say and do goes unnoticed, we are mistaken. We are connected in infinite ways across time and space.

Lorri Neilson, 2008, p. xv

OUTSIDE THE VSB EDUCATION CENTRE

Outside the VSB Education Centre, the 99 Broadway transit bus draws up to the curb before the electric trolley arrives. Taking the midsection door I find a seat free and sit down hoping to be back in time to make a late announcement before the dismissal bell. I am rushing after attending the Wednesday morning meeting for North Area administrators. The North Area schools are all found in a northerly strip from East to West across the district. Most of the schools are parallel to the harbour side of the city. Kitsilano Elementary is a short six minute bus ride followed by a six minute walk. Only 12 minutes from the School Board offices and a welcomed and unstressful bus ride. *It's Wednesday, our early dismissal day and Gloria insisted one of us get back on time.*

MEETING GLORIA MORNINGSTAR

I began to negotiate my entry cautiously into *Kitsilano Elementary School*ⁱⁱ (KES) as a member of the new Community School Team for Kitsilano when we visited our area schools in 2004. Almost immediately the team was invited to KES to discuss possible CST service ideas with

ⁱⁱ Kitsilano Elementary School (KES) is a fictional school in the VSB

the Principal of the school. That was how I first came to meet Gloria Morningstar, having no idea I was a year away from becoming her Vice-Principal. Our CST in the early days comprised just three of us: a Community Coordinator, a Youth and Family Worker and a Community Teacher. As a pilot project we were charged with finding services to offer schools for vulnerable youth in the Westside of the city and our team was called West-2 team. As the CST mandate was a global approach to finding services for vulnerable youth, we began by asking each school's Principal for input on specific programs they viewed as useful. In a closet-sized office the three of us, Norman, Brenda and Angus, began making requests to visit schools, starting first with Mrs. Morningstar at Kitsilano Elementary School (KES). I knew nothing of her or her political reputation. Since managing people and political organizations was her forte, it was unsurprising that she agreed immediately to our team visit.

Invited by Gloria to visit Kitsilano Elementary School, the Community team came by one Wednesday afternoon to meet her and talk about programming for KES. There was an additional hope and possibility of extra office space for me. Gloria was ahead of us knowing full well that in order to take advantage of Community Team time available for her school, having a Community staff person on site would amount to greater access to our team's services. This, it turns out, was beneficial for me and effectively became the 'back door' for my appointment later as VP at Kitsilano Elementary.

At about ten in the morning we arrived and entered the main office to ask the Secretary if we could see Gloria. The secretary swiveled in her chair and leaned into the next office to speak quietly. I could see a woman sitting at her computer rapidly typing. Stopping, she stood up and came out to greet us. A short, well-dressed woman in her fifties faced us with a self-assured and direct look. She was wearing a small gold necklace with matching earrings; she was the first to

reach out a hand to shake each of ours and to introduce herself. *“Hello, everyone, my name is Gloria, I am so pleased you could come by. Welcome to Kitsilano Elementary.”*

We introduced ourselves by name. Gloria wasted no time, saying, *“Come into my office and let’s talk about how to get some of your Community programming time.”* She directed us to the seats arranged around the middle of a very large office. The room was filled with nut-brown coloured Scandinavian furniture. The dark paneled walls behind us were filled with several shelves of children’s books, and the walls were covered in book posters giving one the impression that these things were important to her. From the open windows the children on the recess playground could be heard.

We were offered coffee, and we talked for 45 minutes, and then once the subject of space came up, she suggested we take a look at available spots. Gloria had three possibilities in mind but she showed us only one to start with. *“Come with me, I’ll show you what we have that might do...”*

***From: HR Administrative Assistant
VSB email, May 25, 2005 10:38 AM
To: Elementary Principals & Vice-Principals***

***Subject: Principal Vice-Principal Transfers & Assignments
Attachment: Interoffice Memorandum Transfer & Assignment Memo to All***

Here is the transfer list. Please circulate to all staffs.

> HR Administrative Assistant

***From: CST Coordinator
VSB email, May 25, 2005 11:14 AM
To: Community School Teams
Attachment: Interoffice Memorandum Transfers***

Congratulations, Angus, Susan, and Karen! CST, staff FYI. We’re losing three of our teachers to admin.

> Dan, CST Coordinator

BUSY DREAMING

I am stuck, surrounded by a fog of constant work. I can't get it right... impeded by a steady flow of letters and words... the keyboard is misbehaving... delete... delete... No matter how many times I retype the words; she shouts, "*re-edit...too harsh...less direct....go softly.... re-edit... too...*" My first day as VP never seems to end, I try so hard to learn to use better words, but it's already the next day. It's too late, day two is here. The matron stands with hand on hip; gaping mouth wide and open... more criticisms and shouted demands; "*do this; go there; fix that, get going...Anguuuss!*" I was wrong...I am always wrong...on the third day: endless chores; nothing but chores. I am forced to change toilet paper; assigned to make amends in cleaning washroom stalls, before restocking paper towels; only to be left cleaning stacks of dishes in the staff sink. A fourth day, trapped in my office. Forced to deal with adolescent intimidation, dozens of angry women lined up at my door waving nasty emails with the wrong words. Foreshadowing events to be repeated, various mothers lined up, angry; not my child... they were never in trouble before, because... It's your fault... It's your fault. Finally the end of a very long week approaches, but it is only my fifth day. I must rush or I won't make it. Forms; paper; I sign them... all of them... I signed them all to make them go away... No, wait! not that one, but I didn't mean to, ... can I have it back... *the signatory is making a commitment for the next five years based on the fiduciary terms...* I don't want a contract ... *that's it for Today's Business Report, now here's the CBC World Report, it's 6 o'clock ...*

Journal Entry... early June 2005

What was I thinking? What have I done to myself? Last night's dream is a sub-conscious reminder of my angst for my first week.

Five weeks ago my first reaction was elation when the status of school administrator arrived in my mail: "finally I've earned this recognition, I've finally been picked, I am something now, I have a new role." The school yard taunt comes to me from my youth... "If you're so special, do you need a medal or just a chest to pin-it-on?" New labels or old names: Vice-Principal, School

Administrator, admin-team, VP... various monikers, just artifices used for specific convenience and a substitution for self importance. For over a month the news has been an inside secret for Liz, Gloria and me. We kept it between ourselves; I couldn't really tell anyone yet.

Waiting and watching, wondering how staff would react. What made the secret real for me was after the announcement was made: the reality of not turning back. Last week on May 25th the transfer list came out and the school finally knew I was staying on as the new VP to replace Liz. Do I feel different?

The thesis beginning sits on my computer screen and I am reflecting, my words frozen. Is this how a narrative should start; shouldn't I situate my setting and what brought me to this place? I feel an intense need to share how much has happened to me but feel overwhelmed by the sheer magnitude of the task. My journal is before me, as is my *Book of Gratitudes*. Piled on my desk are all the email moments, found poems, blog entries and remarks written in a stream of consciousness. These somehow hold the pictures I want to convey, to describe the emotional frustration I feel and the stories of my struggle to learn the VP craft. I want to paint this professional landscape in the text. Write as I *think*, that is what Bill suggested and it makes sense, but putting pen to paper takes time and I struggle...

CONVERSATION

Bill: (after catching up on our lives, looks sideways at me and smiles.) Ah, that's interesting: your description of writing in the present moment what you see and think, and trying to express observances of others without judgment. It is very Buddhist-like to watch, and collect all this written material and then on reflection, discover the meaning and theories later.

Angus: Oh really, how so? Our writing is dependent on theories in the process of doing it. Theories are not independent of who we are so they are part of our words in the first sentences; filled with subconscious judgments and comparison to the known and familiar. This all happens before any reflectiveness. Don't you think so?

Bill: In Buddhist thought, according to the Four Noble Truths, attachment to one's desires is to be eliminated. So I see your idea of observing within an inquiry and without interpreting what is happening as trying to avoid meaningful attachment. As you say to 'not make judgments' without contemplation is similar to eliminating the desire to possess the 'right answer'. I am by no means anywhere near this myself, but the path to wisdom is through practicing a right view and right intent through mindful concentration.

Angus: Bill, this doesn't sound like the William who used to work in construction with me.

Bill: Well there have been a few sangha (*song gah*) in between meditations on death and dream therapy. My dream journals are very illuminating, especially after looking back over time and the language I use to express myself. I imagine your journals will be just as dramatic once you have them to look back on.

Angus: Well yes, you're right about the writing. It does concentrate the mind and make one attentive to the language one uses.

Bill: When I was in Divinity College I attended to the prayers in my training but they were just words. One has to live the words, picture their meanings beyond the stories they contain. All your work so far has those images; you just need to share them with your reader somehow...

From: Paul Tax (Jane's Father)

Sent: Tue September 20, 2005

To: Gloria Morningstar

Subject: Communication for today

Hi Gloria,

I appreciate your passing on the medical information; I was hoping you could answer the couple of questions I had asked as well: *How will we coordinate in the future so Ken is aware of the classroom events and the athletic events that Jane signs up for, and that attendance at these events is communicated to us?*

You can appreciate, that depending on your response to the question above, will directly impact how I, as a parent, can best support Jane's needs in coordination with the school's efforts. This is an urgent requirement. Please confirm the communication protocols we will all be following this year for her medical needs.

Many thanks, Paul

COURTING DISASTER (*Missteps & Misdeeds in Fieldnotes*)

Sitting in the Emergency ward waiting to see the doctor, I re-experience all the accidents that brought me to the ER. As my past and present are merged, each accident has the repeated familiarity of one painful event. All destined to happen, to someone, involving everyone as they grow up. A full spectrum of life's bumps while living, only to yield a life-time harvesting of stories retold by the scars we carry. Medical marvels and modern substances usually keep me from most hospital emergency wards. Today I am sitting in the waiting room, recalling the contiguity of time while I sit in pain. My leg and knee hurt with a possible tear, done while coaching the cross-country running team earlier and my foolish participation in running wind sprints with the students.

"Where have you been? I am supervising too many children all on my own!", Gloria's negative comment to me towards the end of a *rainy-day* lunch was unexpected. Why does she treat me like an orderly? She doesn't do that to anyone else on the staff. I know the business with Anna is annoying, and probably upsetting her, but should I be the recipient of her misplaced anger?

Commentary

Learning to do things more meaningfully, even as critical of me as she was, Gloria helped me with considering the 'optics' of everything we do. Her insistence on seeing the big picture with a people-view and the demands she made on my performance heightened my attentiveness. This began simply so I would not disappoint her, and would be seen as competent and efficient. To do a better job, my thoughtfulness deepened in the Goethean sense. Contemplation does change "who you are to the point where you begin to see things that you didn't see originally" (Zajonc, 2008). I can see that now.

When the new school year began in September 2005, I was kept busy surviving the new duties and following the Principal's directives for running Kitsilano Elementary School. There was plenty to do, so, I didn't have time for philosophical reflections right then. Just the month previous, during summer training the cohort of new Vice-Principals was told this would be our immediate reality: plenty of work and no time to think. In my naivety I thought I could handle it all... the *BCTF* job action too!

Journal Entry... June 2007

Cruising above the Georgia Strait, I am able to see the water as it catches the morning sunlight hidden from me by the left side of the Beechcraft aircraft. I settle into my padded seat looking out over the right wing, as the 30 minute flight takes me be back to Vancouver. I am now relieved Gloria was so insistent on my flying back this morning. I have to be back at KES before 8:00 am. Today is the official hearing for Gloria.

From: Gloria Morningstar
Sent: September 23, 2005
To: Angus Bruce
Subject: FW: New French Outdoor Center for Immersion Students, now open!

I don't usually open e-mail like this, Angus, but it does sound interesting. What do you think for our grade 6's or 7's? We can certainly bring it forward to our French Immersion dept. >Gloria

Forward From: Clan Camps Powell River
Sent: September 14, 2005
Subject: French Outdoor Center for Immersion Students

Bonjour, Hello, Being a school principal myself, I know your time is precious.

The attachment is an invitation to come and discover our new French outdoor center. It's likely many of your classes have been going to Strathcona Park for French immersion field trips. Maybe you are ready for a change!

Yours truly, Michel,
Centre for Leadership and Adventure in Nature (CLAN).

IGNORANCE

For those first six months I was a cautious leader but I didn't tell Gloria this, as I was trying hard to impress. My prudence was not without substance, but the circumstances I found myself in with her didn't allow any means for expressing my emotional state right then or worries I held from past experiences with perceptions people had formed about me. During my first months as the new Vice-Principal, I had so much to think about just doing the job: organizing tasks, dealing with mountains of paperwork, ordering things, returning calls, finding people for information, dealing with staff and teaching classes three days a week. I was rushing through it all in a blur. The intensity of demands and tasks created such a mental and emotional whirlwind it should have overwhelmed me. But it was only in those brief and infrequent pauses that I realized the work would never be 'done'; regardless of how quickly or efficiently I attended to it. My hesitation about taking on this role eventually required a re-consideration of 20 years of habits and beliefs about who I was.

I knew the responsibilities were vast and would include pouring over policy and procedure manuals, interacting with legions of people: students, staff, and other administrators, parents, and much more. What wasn't immediately apparent was the whiplash effect of switching from dealing with a budget to finding just the right way to teach a couple of quarreling children about compassion, to organizing a Trip to Quebec, while planning the next lesson, and all of this amidst multiple interruptions and phone calls. So my apprenticeship in these various capacities became part of what I was expected to undergo for the next two years and it was gathered under the loose label "the induction process".

The VP'S FIRST TWO HOURS

For two years now, since being at KES, I have been contemplating how to write about my work as an administrator. A project motivated first by a need to vent my frustrations, I was surprised by how effectively it served a therapeutic narrative. Finding the words that capture the essence of the moment has been difficult for me, as I can only write after time has passed, and it is in poetry that I feel my emotional state is most accurately represented. The collection that follows is an attempt to describe one morning's experiences. Upon arriving at 8:05 by bicycle, seeing the janitor, parking my bike, climbing the stairs, opening my office, writing announcements, attempting email, getting interrupted, going to the photocopier, reading a lesson, going to a class and teaching poetry until 10:25, this narrative is a flow of ideas, memories and interactions, through and around others.

Morning at School (Feb 2007)

8:05 am	copy, make, staple, go
bike, door, sweeping, bench, talk	find, listen, ready, carry pile
walk, stair, door, lock	read, mark, comments
chair, bag, turn, coat	covers red, closed, carry, stairs took
walk, turn, back, book	
call, read, up, office, message, walked	students, gone, too early, wait
	write, set-up, arriving, state
hall, walk, door, sit, look laptop	hand'm, go!, now read
email, write, have thoughts	think, respond, message, write
draft words, worries, news	consider, group work, making
talk, visit, good-bye, look	letters, shapes, poems create
door close, work, read, find book	
	time for the break
ready, now, class, book	10:25 am

MY FIRST OFFICE

I was surprised by the sight of what was situated in the centre of the unused classroom. Gloria was showing Norman, Brenda and me some possible office space and in the middle of the classroom was a wooden tower filling the centre of the room to its full height. Gloria's face had a broad grin, waiting for our response. "What's that?" we all said together. "Well", Gloria went on to tell us, "this 'adventure fort' was built for the Kindergarten children a long time ago when such *hippy* things were considered good for free play. It has been in this room for more than ten years, and was even used up until last year. Now the space is surplus and we don't need the room, and for that matter we don't need the fort either." She pointed at the two storey, two metre high wood platform standing on huge wooden posts.

Taking a tree fort apart might have been an impulsive decision, but it freed up space and once Gloria had the main floor room back to normal, she decided it was more useful to place me in the upstairs office, half as big, but much more private. I think I had the better offer, as the second floor room came with wonderfully high ceilings, was quieter, and all mine to enjoy alone. The big windows let in plenty of natural light and a long treetop view to the West overlooking the surrounding rooftops. This became my work space for almost two years before I was 'requested' to relocate near the main office, and plunged into the maelstrom of the front entrance and all the community's immediacies that Gloria wanted me to assist with.

ADMINISTRATIVE PERILS

Early on when I became an administrator, through no fault of my own, I was given an unexpected dressing down by the local High School Principal, a dragon lady well known to be avoided when upset. One day while visiting the secondary school and unfamiliar with her sudden directness and harsh accusations, I felt the third-degree hissing from her as she cornered me on the stairway. Offended by some remarks she thought I had made, she complained about my misrepresenting her English Department's lack of involvement with the new literacy testing. Shocked by her verbal attack and given no time to reply in my own defense I endured an

uncomfortable few moments of being berated without understanding the nature of my crime. Meekly, I mumbled an apology simply to get away and exited quickly down the stairway from which she had stood above me administering her invective. Without knowing what her precise concerns were, I was surprised and distressed by such an unprofessional dressing down. I eventually discovered it was a complete misunderstanding based on my remarks taken out of context when one of the VSB Consultants wrote an inappropriate email with reference to me. Meeting the Dragon Lady was not an experience I wish to repeat, but the situation taught me the importance of being careful about what is said – spoken or written – regarding others and how it might be wrongly conveyed through any staff member, including Curriculum Consultants, who might carelessly attach other people's names to their criticism. I also learned that administrators – even veteran ones – make mistakes, forgetting first to check the facts with the very people involved before acting, and in this case causing some anguish.

From: Anna Cohen

Sent: June 21, 2006

To: Gloria Morningstar; Angus Bruce; VSB Associate Superintendent Thomas Grant

Cc: Debbie Duer; Ian MacDonald; Tish Leah; Dolly Mudder; Saul Stein; Taylor May,

Subject: Disclosure details requested for FI money held at school

Dear Gloria and Angus,

I am writing to get information for a full disclosure of the funds from this year's efforts (2005/2006) for an Exchange, so next year's group isn't disappointed as we were this year. Saul is ready to begin the grant applications for a possible Quebec Trip (2006/2007) right away.

Also, I have not yet seen any statements for the amounts previously held from fund-raising and the cost of this new CLAN camping trip. Because the parent account was closed and the money transferred to the school account, Ian did not receive monthly statements, or handle deposits etc. about this money. Some one did. Do you know? I know I have deposited thousands from various fund-raising efforts that I was involved with, but no final tally has been distributed to the parents.

Finally, I would like clarification as to why the funds are being held by the school with no parental signatures or accountability? I would like to request that all funds are immediately transferred into a

separate account controlled by PAC, including the full amount left from the Quebec trip two years ago.

I would appreciate your attention to this matter.

Sincerely >Anna Cohen

From: Saul Stein
Sent: June 27, 2006
To: Gloria Morningstar; Angus Bruce
Cc: Anna Cohen
Subject: Steps for YMCA funding to avoid another disappointment

Gloria and Angus,

As a follow-up to Anna's earlier efforts, I called the YMCA exchange program for more info about their timelines and the school's options for Quebec Exchange grants from the Federal Government. I've attached a full outline of details for making a proposal; they will only accept proposals for exchange funding from the school administration. Copies of last's year's SEVEC application Taylor May did could be used...

Therefore Gloria and Angus: I'd like to review with you the potential next steps, roles and responsibilities, so that we can involve the parent community to best effect, ASAP. Call me at your convenience or suggest a time when I can call you both.

Thanks, Saul

From: Angus Bruce
Sent: July 19, 2006
To: Saul Stein; Anna Cohen
Subject: RE: How does the YMCA funding go forward now?

I'm on vacation but I've noted your question Saul. Re: Kitsilano Elementary French Immersion approach so far for funding. From our last meeting we did agree to proceed carefully according to the criteria for choosing an alternative school to exchange with and available student numbers.

Our previous partner school expects KES to do the exchange this fall and will be making plans as soon as September begins. Therefore it would seem to me, KES must proceed carefully with the possible YMCA application with a clear awareness of the timelines and how these affect letting our Quebec sister know in time what we are doing. We could lose them.

Thank you Saul and others for doing all this leg work too. Please keep me updated as new info arrives. - Angus

From: Angus Bruce
Sent: August 24, 2006
To: Saul Stein; Gloria Morningstar
Subject: RE: Next steps for YMCA funding

Saul I've just gotten back from summer holidays. How was your summer?

Thanks for all your good work. You are rather keen for this and that's important. And yes we should talk. Gloria and I will talk first and will be in touch with our French teachers as later this week they come back on August. 29th. We will then be in touch with you ASAP. >Angus

Bonjour Monsieur Bruce – A flight home, 2007

"Bonjour Mr. Bruce, ça va?"

"Oui, je suis fatigué. "

"Ready to go when you are", Jean-Guy says in his heavy Québécois accent.

He takes my pack outside and puts it into his car trunk. Pulling out of the school parking lot he asks me if I want to stop for a coffee at Starbucks, after all its 5:30 in the morning and my flight to Vancouver's South Terminal isn't until 6:00am.

"No thanks, I'll be fine until the airport."

Duncan Street points us east and as we crest the hill I can see the airport runway, Jean-Guy motions to the other side of the road and points out the trailer park, where he and his wife live. *We came out from Quebec last year to help Michel with CLAN. Monique was hired to cook and I saw nothing for me to do, and so I help out. As I am retired, you have to keep busy or you go crazy. Alors, Michel needs a driver from time to time, I drive the big bus too.*

In less than 6 minutes since leaving the school, Jean-Guy pulls up in front of a drab portable building. Painted on the grey panel walls in blue is a sign announcing; *Powell River Airport Terminal.*

Setting down my gear, Jean-Guy offers me a firm handshake and a big smile.

"Have a bon voyage," he says, *"Be sure to come back to Powell River."*

A Year Ago...

VSB Email: May 19, 2006
From: Gloria Morningstar
To: Angus. Bruce
Subject: new Grade 7 camp, called CLAN

Dear Angus

We've secured the funding, so it's agreed the Grade 7s are going to the new outdoor camp at Powell River. Let me know soon if this works for you, they'll need you to participate.

>G

NARRATIVE RESEARCH/ER – SPRING 2007

I am rushing to finish my research paper and it's late; the clock reads 10:00 PM. I should have been home sooner but was tied up at school longer with yet another unnecessarily long Parent Council (PAC) meeting this evening. What I've written so far sits on the screen of my laptop. The introduction to narrative studies is a paper I'm preparing to give at next week's class of my Arts Based Education Research (ABER) course.

Voices in my head: I teach in 15 min, but I don't have the lesson sheets I need yet, what can I do instead? Was the last day's topic "verb transitions"? I was planning to show some examples – however – in the mean time – 1st – secondly... now where is that file with the English handouts... Got to run, I'm late again!!

From: Gloria Morningstar
Sent: Wed Sept 28, 2005
To: Paul Tax
Cc: Angus Bruce
Subject: RE: Communication for today

Paul, I immediately gave your message to Angus and Ken (SSA), and asked Pierre to contact you on the day you sent the message. I have been in Job Action meetings each day and away to the

Education Centre on Tuesday, Sept 27th. Angus Bruce, the VP, is the coach of the Cross Country Team and is fully informed about Jane's needs; he will be responsible for checking with her – and reminding her to check in with him. Angus and Ken are coordinating a plan and will inform you – they are the direct contact and so are the best ones to inform you of their plan. I'm sure Ken will discuss this with you today.

>Gloria

SLOWING DOWN – FALL 2007

Slow School is an idea from the Slow Foods movement in Italy. In the summer of 2007, I returned from my holiday in Italy, finishing a wonderful summer of travel and reflection. Gloria's new replacement, Maggie, was not able to attend so I ran the first Staff meeting. I began the meeting talking about my personal decision to do more for me and how I felt by taking more time and slowing down, that we as a society and I in particular, should take charge of our time, rather than allowing the fast paced swirling around us to dictate the pace. Modeling what I believe for staff to see and taking more responsibility for how I spend my time, with the message to all, that *slow was better*. A small, but important decision was to not buy takeout coffee, but to sit and enjoy the coffee as an experience in itself. If it was so important that I needed a coffee break, then making time for it was an important choice I controlled. Coming away from Italy I felt I had learned to have fewer regrets; to consciously stop more, rest more, and to diminish the haste in my day in order to feel more productive and happier.

About a week later Karen approached me in the copier room one evening and said, *"Thank you for speaking about taking more time for ourselves. You made an impression on me and I have been reflecting on just how much we are overrun with work and should slow down."*

"I feel that it is one of my main battles, recognizing that the work never stops; that we need to let it go from time to time. Everything we do is set at an increasingly unmanageable pace and we expect the same of others. If we all just begin to slow down we might find a pace that is humanly do-able."

"Well, I have tried doing just as you said, beginning with how I take coffee. Sitting with a cup and not rushing off to drink it in the car is more fun." She smiles and finishes with, "so thank you, but it's late, so why are we both working now instead of being home with our families?"

"You're right; I did say it was a battle. Our day becomes all consuming and we get so wrapped up in our tasks, we fail to see that speed does not solve the workload. In the quiet of the after school tome, I get into a work pace that amounts to: 'if I go faster' I'll get it done sooner. But it simply doesn't work." As she leaves I add, "So yes let's both go home soon!"

THE SCHOOL BUILDING

Private Access

I love this special privilege
of private administrative access
gets me inside
my own private gate
entering the castle walls,
any time the keys allow,
I know the necessary passwords, security codes
to be left alone
in the empty building, quiet likeable, silent
old brick, the plaster spaces feel cool and solid,
muffled sounds comforting to hear,
no echo of outside; only age,
in the basement
clunks, hiss pipes, thud motors
the elevator, on its haunches settles,
waiting below.

STOCKROOM GHOST

The school space isn't empty; Dave says there's a ghost. He tells me this during the dark of winter one evening when we are both leaving at ten-thirty. For now, during the hot July afternoons, I seek the quiet and coolness as a refuge from the heat to run about in the hallways moving from room to room by myself. Alone, in the privacy of my own pursuits I keep busy with reorganizing the stockroom.

One of the obstacles that must to be dealt with immediately over the summer by most new VPs is the unpacking of bulk school supplies which are to be sorted and shelved in the stockroom. When I went early in the summer I found two pallets of boxes to be opened. KES in fact has 5 locations on three floors for various amounts of these materials. In my case I actually had to clean out the unused, dusty piles of old paper and discarded materials. From hidden corners and the depths of cupboards I found and removed recycled paper which was torn, faded and mite eaten, all left in favour of fresh and tidy sheets. I spent a week and a half extensively reorganizing, tidying, cleaning and renovating the wooden shelves in the textbook room so more materials could be put away. Linda's reaction was "this stock room has never looked this tidy or useful before Angus." From my own classroom experiences, I learned quickly to appreciate well-stocked resources and an administrator who got things for teachers promptly. One of my VP duties is to provide an abundance of special items with a minimum wait. It is a sure way to build positive relations with staff.

From: Dolly Mudder

Sent: September 20, 2006

To: Rosemary (VSB District Parent Association contact)

Subject: PAC monies from Provincial Travel Organization

Rosemary, I think I remember hearing the DPAC would be sending the French schools a cheque.

Did I remember correctly and if so when will the Kitsilano Elementary PAC be receiving their cheque?

Thanks. >Dolly

From: Rosemary (DPAC)
To: Dolly Mudder & Anna Cohen
Sent: Wednesday, September 20, 2006
Subject: RE: PAC grant cheque

Hi Dolly, all the amounts for PAC Exchange Travel-grants were electronically transferred to schools at the end of last May. These are all the details I have, so you can check with your school office whether the funds were received and match the monies included in the attached DPAC highlights.

Rosemary
Vancouver DPAC contact

From: Dolly Mudder
To: Gloria Morningstar
Cc: Anna Cohen, Rosemary (DPAC)
Sent: Wednesday, September 20, 2006
Subject: Fwd: Missing Provincial PAC money

Dear Gloria; I don't think Anna has any record of having received this Provincial Travel grant money from the school office. Please check into it and let us know.

Thanks!!! >Dolly

From: Anna Cohen
Sent: Thurs Sept 21, 2006
To: Gloria, Dolly, Rosemary (DPAC)
Subject: Re: Missing cheque Provincial PAC money

Gloria,

Does the Provincial Travel Money stay with the school accounts or does it go to the PAC account? If it is suppose to go to the PAC account, Dolly, you are correct. I have not seen last spring's money yet.

- Anna

From: Gloria Morningstar
Sent: Friday, September 22, 2006
To: Anna, Dolly, Rosemary
Cc: Angus; Eileen (School Accounting Clerk)
Subject: RE: Missing cheque

Anna,

As soon as the PAC dollars come to the school, the money is deposited to the Parent's account.

Please check with Eileen our accounting clerk to see if it has turned up in the school account.

Thanks! Gloria

DISCIPLINE & AUTHORITY

People did bring me their concerns and there was no magic in dealing with them. But Gloria made sure these situations got to me first, before other adults got involved in their own ways. Although well intentioned, these people can easily complicate a situation, from which justice and fairness have to be untangled later.

That voice in my head... *"Missed reminding the ESL student... oh they remembered today, here they are waiting for me. Have they got their journals or did I leave them inside?"*

From: Susan Vent
Sent: July 30, 2006
Cc: Angus Bruce; Saul Stein
Subject: Info for Susan for Quebec trip paperwork

Hi Anna, My name is Susie Vent and my son Matthew is going into grade 7 French Immersion. I would be happy to help with organizing the exchange program. I am good at paperwork and keep track of stuff. Let us know how we can help.

>Susie

What Is Meant By Power?

In writing a review of the literature on empowerment, authoritative stance, and classroom authority, very few views are in agreement with my own experience, with the exception of Manke (1997), Oyler (1996) and Abbott (2000). For Mary Manke (1997), power is a structure of relationships, “a structure in which teachers and students can build or participate” (p. 1). The structure of relationships is called power because it, rather than the individuals who create it, is what shapes people’s actions (p. 1).

To view power as ownership requires that the teacher remain vigilant about keeping the ownership of such classroom power, instead of attending to the needs of student learning. Mary Manke (1997, p. 2) claims that:

1. Teachers are not the sole owners of classroom power

“John, sit down, you are not to get up without asking my permission to go to the coatroom. Please raise your hand if you want something.”

2. Teachers and students are jointly responsible for constructing power.

“Mr. Bruce, Jessie and I didn’t have enough time to finish the writing assignment because we had swimming team and music lessons.” Two very capable students are speaking to me before class. “Oh, do you think it would be a good idea to have some working time during my English class this afternoon?” They both nod in agreement. “Ok, sounds like a good idea, maybe some of the others need more time too...”

3. The teacher is not solely responsible, the teacher shares the responsibility for classroom events and outcomes with students

“Mr. Bruce, can we talk to you about how all the teachers are treating the grade 6s unfairly? Why aren’t the grade 6s allowed the same “lunch on Broadway” privileges if they can get their parent’s permission too?”

4. Students have their own contributions to make, from which they influence the actions of others and the teacher.

“Quiet, Frankie, just put your stuff away before she sees you. We don’t want to miss our gym time. She is waiting, and you’re wasting our time!”

5. Viewing and understanding power as a matter of relationship implies that the teacher and students co-construct power and relationships.

“...we’ve gotten permission from these teachers just like we did last time for you. Here is the paper with the Dance Proposal and their signatures. So do you think we can have a fund-raising dance on Friday before Hallowe’en? The entrance fee will only be 25¢. We want to start on our Grad funds, so will you let us?”

Historically, educational institutions have operated under the prevailing view that methods of instruction, assessment and classroom management should be based on power residing with the teacher, and by extension, that students who conform and acquiesce to this view will be successful. Sadly, the measure of this success is typically seen as high marks, without a clear understanding of the paradigm in which learning and assessment took place.

Manke (1997) adds that “because this traditional view of the classroom power relationships is so widespread, a shift to an understanding of classroom power as jointly constructed, and therefore shared, calls for significant changes in how we think about many aspects of schooling” (p. 6).

Narratives overheard

That’s not Fair!

A cry of alarm

Despair a sound

Of indignation

A demand for equality

The adult speaks,

The adolescent has spoken

The ideal is lost

Whose authority is heard?

From: Angus Bruce

Sent: Sunday September 17, 2006

To: Saul Stein

Cc: Gloria Morningstar

Subject: Options for Quebec

Hi Saul, can you get in touch with me so we can deal with gathering information going out to the

parent group. Gloria and I met with the teachers to discuss what to do with all the new "findings" from the exchange committee. Presently, Option 1 – 22 students only go, Option 2 – continue and find a parallel tour for remaining 26, Option 3 – No Quebec Trip... or Option 4 – Wait expecting full group funding at last round.

It seems to us that we should try and get an info letter and responses for all the Options from parents in the next week. Could you call me and I will go over the details.

Previously we set a deadline for this week, but it is more reasonable now to work toward the Sept 19th community meeting. Please call, - AB

From: Saul Stein
Sent: September 18, 2006
To: Angus Bruce
Cc: Gloria Morningstar
Subject: Option 4 best for touring Quebec

Angus,
Thanks for contacting me about the new findings – I'll give you a call to discuss this before tomorrow's meeting with parents. I had the impression from the initial parent meeting that the majority of parents wanted an affordable option for ALL students to share a single exchange trip. Not just 22 that we have been granted. Trip Option 4 appears to present this opportunity.

Isn't this option also viable within the new 'fund findings'?
Alan

The Back Pack and the Flute
(A poem on mothers carrying stuff)

Toward me two travelers go home
His strong shoulders bear the school load.

They go beside each other,
She is hunched over and protecting
Held firm, a small case is carried by her.

The case's real importance she demonstrates
Not his flute to play, it is mother's to guard
He has no choice as it swing from her hand.
Silent, without sounds (tuneless)

Traveling home I come upon them, walking
My own musical past, a parade
making me pause
Before I can express a vocal note, my judgment
held,
I reflect on carrying band instruments
a long time ago

My tongue is held, why?
My thoughts unwind
The pair passes, in noted silence, tuneless
Our thoughts, not shared, march by.

From: Angus Bruce
Sent: Mon August 28, 2006
To: Gloria Morningstar
Subject: info for Susan planning Quebec 2007 trip

Interesting tone we're getting from Anna in her email to us June 21/06 demanding "full disclosure". I have since checked with the new treasurer, Ian and he has in fact sent her the account update he was given from last's year's group committee. I will write a reply to her this week, after careful consideration.

- Angus

From: Gloria Morningstar
Sent: September 19, 2006
To: Saul Stein; Angus Bruce
Subject: Quebec Option 4 - problematic for sister school

Hi, Saul. We'll talk further tomorrow after the meeting. Trip Option 4 would be ideal except for the timeline. Waiting until all schools are partnered in hopes of surplus money is a gamble. Whereas honouring our current sister school commitment guarantees at least 22 students can go. If we decide to cancel, ...in hopes that we would get late funding for a comparable experience leaves our sister school in a bad situation? It's extremely problematic.

I know you and Angus are talking today. > Gloria

From: Saul Stein
Sent: September 21, 2006
To: Angus Bruce
Cc: Gloria Morningstar
Subject: Community involvement in French fundraising

Angus,

Thanks for your help at yesterday's Community meeting to decide on how to avoid last year's trip disappointment. As a follow-up, I am enclosing draft letters to be sent to the Grade 7 and Grade 6 parents, providing an update on the Exchange hiccup and soliciting continued involvement in the funding process even with the uncertainty of an affordable exchange or not.

Even with the likelihood for no trip this year. We must involve the entire French Immersion community in the fundraising effort.

Saul

COMPLEXITY AND IDENTITY (Relationships and working with people)

By spending time together with others I have noticed how it is natural to begin liking anyone. I've heard that long term hostages often become attached to and sympathize with those who have imprisoned them (Stockholm Syndrome).⁸ No matter what my feelings are towards another, regardless of my initial sense of a person's personality, in time I learn of their life and their character, their beliefs, their dreams and much of what it is that they do to exist and create. Building connections that bind us into a family that cares and understand is what happens at camp. Over a period of days sharing meals, spending the evenings together, talking and listening, eventually truths are told and secrets revealed, confidences requested and heartfelt views shared that normally take decades to emerge amongst colleagues with whom you work from 9 to 3 in your own classroom.

As people we cannot prevent sharing our understandings and heartfelt passions when spending continuous periods of time together. Sitting by camp fires or in the lounge allows us to comfortably share thoughts and understandings about almost anything. In time and after numerous occasions these conversations reveal much about ourselves and we form close bonds of friendship.

"How long have you been at KES, Pierre?"

"Since 1996 and Monica came in 1999," Pierre answers

"Monica," I ask, *"have you ever met any of Pierre's girlfriends?"*

"No, never, I'm not sure he has any actually" (her big smile teasing).

Pierre is quick to defend himself, *"I get by, no complaints."*

"I guess any man that can dance as well as you should have no shortage of ladies to take out."

"What does your mother think of all that?" Monica tries to prod him some more.

“None of her business!”

These small moments lead to emotional and social complexity understood as co-experience. I hear the other in each of these people talking and it is an enormous privilege to sympathize with each person’s point of view and beliefs.

“... that’s why I left Quebec, looking for job security.”

“You must be joking; your first degree was in *sex-therapy!*”

2005, Kindergarten Tea

My first public appearance in the school was at the Kindergarten tea where Gloria presented me to the parents (mostly mothers) who had registered their children for Kindergarten beginning in September. I spoke briefly, introducing myself, and expressed how I was looking forward to meeting them and working with their children. During this event I toured the new-Kindies around the building and then we all returned for a cookie and juice snack. While snacks were happening, I chatted with a small group of boys, including Danny.

June 2007

I am flying to Vancouver, both to avoid back-wearying travel on a school bus, but more to appease Gloria who questioned my extensive involvement this year with outdoor camps. The consequence of my going again to CLAN directly affects her work, and her dependency on coverage for my duties became an uncomfortable conversation two weeks ago. Asked to speak with her about the week’s timetable, I was startled by her prickly reaction to the news that I was going...

The desk phone rang at 3:40 one afternoon in May. *Bruce, can you come over and see me about grade 7 camp?*

Sure, I'm finishing an email and will be right over.

Gloria was sitting at her desk when I come into her office.

So, Bruce, the budget has been double checked? How's the money?

Yes, Gloria, it's as the spreadsheet here shows, and Max and Tom are still giving us support.

We just can't expect any more financial support, as it is the budget for this is very tight. I am worried we will be over drawn. As it is we need all students to pay for the full fees on all remaining field-trips. We have no subsidies to offer.

All the seven's are paying full costs; there are only two students not going. I've been able to get the costs as low as possible. CLAN has reduced their expectations for adult supervisors as per my request and are giving us a reduced fee.

How is supervision going to be maintained for the whole time? Are any parents going?

No, parents are a problem unless they speak supportive French. I'm still going, as planned.

How is it you have to go for the full 5 days? It's a bit much, as we need you here too. (The we clearly a misplaced pronoun. Has she been so busy that my previous remarks were unheard. I could have sworn I actually wrote this in an email. Hmm... I was thinking of cost savings, I wonder if she is worried about the hearing with Tom?)

It was always the plan, just like last year, but to save money we aren't taking a TOC with us. That saves us nearly \$1200. CLAN said it was fine, they know us well enough, so 4 adults will still give us the proper ratio coverage. They have 6 staff members as well, so the adults are for the after hour coverage and travel.

"Did I know this?" Her question hangs in the air, still obviously bothered by the revelation. It sounds to me like a restrained reprimand. I've worked with Gloria for two years now, where is her confidence in me?

To myself I hesitate, maybe I didn't tell her or... "I think so, I sent you at least one email with the original budget back in late March." I am not convinced my tone is confident, why does she undermine me so easily? "When I was confirming our place with Powell River."

I don't recall any of this, Angus. Turning, she begins shuffling the collection of papers in a folder. They appear to be a collection of camp forms.

I suddenly realize she is holding the very spreadsheet I sent her confirming my attendance and waivers. *See there on the grid it says 3 adult supervisors for the ferry. And I stated who was supervising on the parent/guardian consent form, too, all three of our names; Monica, Eve, Pierre and the VP are mentioned under Teachers in Charge.*”

Did you send the request to Area Office for Out of District field-studies?

Yes and Area Office has my details regarding the School Protection Act, and the secretary has sent me the form back with the Associates’ signature.

Good; What about your teaching assignment during the week?

I’ve made alternative arrangements for my English classes that week. Part of our monetary commitment from Max is to give him feedback on CLAN about whether it is suitable for other Immersion schools to consider. He is helping us with \$2500. The students are paying \$280 each and with that the budget has very little surplus. I have no plan for my resource and ESL students, except they are to miss their classes with me, but most are doing end of year activities and will not be disappointed. (Again the system stealing time as it must.) I am waiting for Gloria to continue or signal I can go. I rarely have ended any meeting with her. Certainly never with a “can I go?” or “is that all tone?” Mostly we just drift apart and I bring it to a close by saying, “I’ll be at my desk if you have any further questions.” Leaving the room, I wander back across the hall to my office.

I feel a mixture of ‘oh my, mom’s upset’ and a desire to get her to calm down, but I am also angry at how I’ve been treated. I am an educated professional adult and working here as a team member. If Gloria is too busy to recall these important details, why is it my fault? I made some decisions that make this educational trip possible and affordable. I know we have no money to spare; that’s one reason why I agreed to go. The grief we would get from parents if we didn’t go would be very unwelcome. Just like the time we refused to go to Quebec.

Seems to me, despite the apparent error of not ensuring she understood I was going to be away, I made an effort to involve her in the written details. Surely she can see that and should be able to appreciate I have done my job properly. I am not responsible for her misunderstandings or forgetfulness.

The phone rings, showing me Gloria's number. Ok, here we go some more. I hope this doesn't get worse. I consciously refuse to get upset, take a big breath.

Hi, and I listen...

...surprisingly, we quickly work out the details needed to address her concerns. I will return early, similar to my visit to the grade 7 Camp at Strathcona Park next week. It seems the week in question is rather busy for Gloria and she is concerned about an overload in administrative work and getting ready. The formal hearing must be on her mind and while I know she has nothing to worry about, it is more than just a nuisance, as she has to document all the communications that took place with the PAC parents. The timing isn't great, the preceding Monday will be her retirement party after which I am away to Strathcona Park, returning on Friday, only to leave again on Monday to supervise French 7 at camp CLAN in Powell River. There is just enough surplus money, which Gloria insists will pay for my flight back Friday morning so I can be at school all day when she is to be downtown for the formal hearing into the allegations against her. Good thing I already had this figured out for saving my backache; now it will prevent a headache too.

The plane banks sharply toward the Iona Island runway at YVR and a short time later I am catching a taxi to school. Strangely it takes longer to move through traffic in the city than my flight. I enter the school at my familiar 7:15 am time. *Let me see, do I have time to check my emails before anyone drops by my office wanting something.*

***From: Angus Bruce,
Sent: August 30, 2006
To: Anna Cohen; Susan Vent; Tish Leah; Debbie Duer; Saul Stein
Subject: Quebec Exchange plans 2006-2007 school year***

Hello Anna, hope your summer has been relaxing.

Attached is a two page update and current state of our YMCA application, budget balances and details for French Immersion parents to receive shortly. Please check it over. I have been in touch with Susie Vent for the grant application and hope to have Debbie email the details to all FI parents once school reopens. We are in a lottery situation for these monies, there are no guarantees. There

is a high BC demand, so I was cautioned about our success.

The money raised in prior years has not been spent. Gloria and I feel all fund raising should be handled by the PAC treasurer with the fundraising chair person also keeping accounts. Similar to what you did last year. Let me know if you have other suggestions for making this year's Exchange plans a success.

Sincerely - Angus

From: Gloria Morningstar
Sent: September 20, 2006
To: Angus Bruce
Subject: Tish's note to me about Money.

Angus I received a short note from Tish Leah about money and will copy my reply for you. Has she been speaking to you about some concern? She is in the hallways most days and has already made it clear she won't be letting her child go to Quebec. What do you think is going on? I'm wondering what's bothering her? Is she really asking about how the funds are spent and allocated for FI projects or is she worried about something else?

> Gloria

Documentation Panel "K"

In a rush I dash between
groups of students,
gathering their images
for a parent's project

Trying to be fair,
seeing the children's
world
a view, shared

Watching the centre,
he directs me
I wait, I watch
what does he see?

Journal Entry, year 3, Sept 2007... a mix of entries at the beginning of a new school year...this will be my last year at KES.

From: Gloria Morningstar
Sent: September 20, 2006
To: Tish Leah
Subject: Money to support Families

Hi Tish, I got your note requesting the amount we “pay out to support families who cannot pay for camps, etc” Do you mean CLAN and camping, or do you mean all field trips, skiing, etc.

I will check with Eileen, but my sense is that she hasn’t kept a running record of that info. When a child can’t pay, we simply take the amount that has been gathering in the General School Account for that class and supplement it with what is needed/available in the School Fund. There’s already a huge load of bookkeeping for our Office Secretary, on top of the fact she does everything else.

Let’s talk. I’m wondering about your question and what might be needed to get the answer you’re looking for.

Cheers > Gloria

English Class

Discipline and class interruptions must be dealt with even while teaching, usually by using my school cell phone or standing at the threshold of the doorway. I often call the secretary while teaching grade 7 English so I can continue to supervise the class while assessing and prioritizing my administrative situation.

Angus, there are some trades guys here to do an estimate for a repayable, but they don’t know what you mean by lowering the bulletin board outside the fire-doors...” Oh, can’t Big Bob deal with it? I see... well can you send them up to room 210; I’m teaching class right now. I’ll be able to talk to them at the door. Thanks

The students enjoy these glimpses into my work life. I see that they have stopped writing and are intent on hearing my conversation. They are all listening in, to hear what crisis is afoot.

From: Gloria Morningstar
Sent: September 21, 2006
To: Angus Bruce
Subject: French Immersion Community Communication

Good job, Angus. These communications with the FI community should continue to be handled by you, even though they keep copying to me. Last night's meeting was again Anna and Tish going head to head with me. Not sure what their problem is? You have handled things remarkably well with these parents. Keep up the open communication with them.

>GM

From: Thomas Grant
Sent: Friday, June 10, 2006
To: Area Administrators
Subject: How to Praise

Please accept the article below from the *Learning Link* as a reminder of good practice. I know that we praise constantly in our roles but I thought that the article was a good summary of strategies associated with praise. Have a great weekend
Ciao, Tom

HOW TO PRAISE

"Results that are recognized get repeated"

In today's competitive world criticisms will nearly always outnumber praise and a shortage of time often leads managers and parents to give both at the same time is not an effective strategy to encourage or discourage a particular behaviour...

The Learning Link, June 2005, p. 1

From: Angus Bruce
Sent: Thursday, November 30, 2006
To: Max
Subject: No Quebec Trip, requesting funds for Camp

Hello Max,

As per our telephone call I am requesting funds to help with the costs of our 2007 Spring Trip to CLAN in Powell River. The generous offer of \$1500 for assistance with our costs would be

appreciated by KES and the parents. In lieu of going on Exchange this year the grade 7 FI are planning for this language experience

Thanks for all your support - AB

From: Max
Sent: Thursday, November 30, 2006
To: Angus Bruce; Gloria Morningstar
Subject: Funding for TOC costs to Camp

Hi Angus;

Same promise as last year; we will again set aside \$1500 in our 2006/07 budget to help KES with your extra TOC costs to allow FI students to attend a French-language camp or Exchange trip. Even with the current limitations on our funds, I did promise you this money, so you should be getting it.

Sincerely, Max

Modern Languages Consultant

9:00 am: damn, I'm late for my intermediate ESL class...

Please Do Not Disturb
tempo: allegro

I want more time for me.
Can my space, here, not be my own?

Who said you could intrude?
Why must I stop what I am doing...
for you?

Do you realize I have my pursuits,
Do you see me working, reading...
acting on deeds, too?

My office is for... oh never mind.
Leave now, don't make excuses,
just please go, and do not disturb...
me now.

I have school business to finish,

Before you or others bring me more,
In your urgency...
to do.

Just because my office is beside the hallway,
Do you have a minute, I'm asked?

2:50 traffic is detoured into my door,
and drifts unbidden into my walled enclosure.

Phone ringing, door knocking,
Make an appointment please,...
I suggest.

Next year? Too late! Sooner, how about
October?
Can you come back in forty nights...?

No!
Oh... I have... let me see... hmm...
a moment... now... I guess

Sent: September 21, 2005

To: Paul Tax

Subject: RE: VP Communication and our discussion

Paul, further to our sidewalk chat: I will review the medical plan and be the main contact. The coordination of the schools efforts to follow the medical plan will go through me. This will be mostly by email. Ken, the SSA, has attended training and I see him regularly checking in during the day with Jane. I also check in with her when she comes under my care during X-country running or Student Helpers.

Regarding all school communication, regardless of whether Jane is bringing some of those messages home, I will endeavour to do my part to complete this loop for you. During X-country meets Ken will not be attending, but he will speak with her before she leaves for the meets, to see that she is "fit" and has checked her blood sugar. I will be responsible for her when you cannot join us. Otherwise, it will be good to have you join myself and the other parents for a KES cheering section.

I trust this is a good first step, regards, - Angus Bruce, VP

From: Paul Tax

Sent: Thurs September 22, 2005

To: Angus Bruce

Cc: Gloria Morningstar

Subject: RE: VP Communication and our discussion

Good morning Angus,

Thank you for following up and your quick reply. I am pleased that you agree that clear lines of communication will facilitate better understanding. In addition I thank you for taking responsibility and identifying yourself as the communication coordinator.

Regards, Paul

Assemblies

The Friday assemblies are usually fun. I involve the leadership students in running them as a way to show how they are quite able to lead them. There is always a keen bunch of volunteers for this role. But why does it seem like Gloria thinks of putting these on at the last moment and then expects me to deliver without any preparation time?

Planning content, setting up the equipment and chairs, visiting groups, organizing the direction of entry and deportment, running the show with student involvement can't be magically created without some advanced warning. She seems to forget I have teaching duties that have to be planned for too. Argh!

I am caught doing the heavy lifting because the gym benches have been put up on the stage again. Why can't Big Bob be more interested in being part of our school community and pitching in? I'm doing this in good clothes.

Orchards

Orchards of my Mind (2007)

(fruity thoughts and harvest pickings)

I live in my ideas, but they seem distant and inedible
like unripe fruit, picked early, green,
hard and unsweetened by sunlight
such unappreciated bounty of nature,
promise sustenance for my soul
it taunts my mind, knowing I want to learn much,
yet, I hunger for more.

I am driven to finding a greater abundance from the crop
intuitively reaching...with greater care can ideas yield more, I ask?
the orchard's finest promises, nutrition for others.
But, much of the harvest remains aloof,
green and feeding few, picked early
while filling containers with hard, indigestible undeveloped lumps

I want to care, but my frenetic world is too busy, ideas rush by
daily events intrude; invading my hopes, wormy thoughts
(and taint the crop promised for others).
Above, useable delights remain behind, left taunting
bright fall silhouettes, hanging in tree light, dehydrated...
untouched, alone
their brethren picked earlier.

From: Gloria Morningstar
Sent: Thurs September 23, 2005
To: Angus Bruce
Subject: RE: Jane - VP Communication and our discussion

Paul Tax loves you, Angus! You get BIG points. Cheers, Gloria

Pacific Coastal Airlines flight, 2007

I am called to board and wait 3rd in line as the attendant takes my boarding card. After a short walk outside, I see that we are to climb the short set of stairs to the aircraft. The plane can carry 19 people, but today only 12 seats are taken. We have to walk down the aisle bent over as the ceiling is so low. I take a seat midway on the right while others find theirs. We are sitting in single seats on either side. The co-pilot pulls the stairs up and fastens the door. Standing hunched over in the passage way he reviews the standard safety drill and then turns and takes his seat with the pilot whose back I can partially see. It's nice to see forward somewhat out his window. I look around at my fellow passengers and everyone is trying to peer out the small port-hole windows. The older man behind me is busy waving to a woman standing behind the fence waving back. The engines increase rpm and the two chatty women in front of me are finally drowned out. I insert my ear plugs to reduce the sounds. I feel anxious to be off and back to Vancouver quickly but feel sorry to not be in the company of the students for today's long return to Vancouver and home. A journey of two ferries and 3 bus rides home taking most of the school day and four and half hours.

The Beechcraft 1900 twin turbo prop taxis to the end of the Powell River runway and waits as the pilots do their last engine checks. The thirty-three minute flight is expected to be smooth, while low grey clouds threaten to make it another wet day of intermittent showers, but maybe not. I can see the morning sunrise just emerging over the Coast Mountains. The Beechcraft starts to rapidly move and vibrate down the runway. Suddenly it's up and I can see the fields rising away from me below. In a moment we are over the CLAN school and the buses parked outside. It's too early to notice anyone and then the plane banks to the left over the harbour as it heads south. To my right, Blubber Bay village and the ferry dock are still in shadows. Continuing to gather altitude I notice that the cloud ceiling is thinning and brilliant rays of sunlight catch us as it enters the right port-holes. My anxious mood lifts and I revel in the meditative colours and relax, considering what the days have been like and how I hope Gloria is not in a mood over having more work because of my absence.

Camp at Powell River is an intensive language experience in full immersion, speaking French, learning outdoor skills and experiencing a natural setting in the ocean community and the surrounding forests: archery, rock climbing, camping, hiking, nature studies, teamwork, language improvement and marine studies. The first week of June was not as sunny as last year.

The plane now travelling over Malaspina Strait is parallel to Texada Island and below us the limestone quarries are on the right. I see the open pit mining and the equipment roadways have scarred much of the landscape.

Improvisation Outburst

Viewing the Texada Quarry from the aircraft, the twists and turns of the service road are obvious. These pathways for the trucks have left their mark etched in the landscape. Sometimes children leave such heavy scars when they lash out at others, twisting and turning with their emotions so their words are distorted and hurtful. I am glad the situation last night in the CLAN gym was handled by Eve so well. Magnus was not communicating his desires in any diplomatic

way and the collaboration and group effort necessary for the improvisation theatre exercise turned nasty with his words. His rude outburst caught all of us off guard, especially the racial slur and the sexism. Eve took him out and they talked for some time. She was leaning in close and making reasonable physical contact with her hand on his shoulder. She is as much the faithful big sister in this moment as his teacher. I could see he was crying with her and upset, but his respect for her was obvious and I relaxed my vigilance for her safety and was confident in her handling of his emotional state. I'll speak with the school counselor next week, on how to approach him and his mother on the need for anger management and better self-control of his temper. Next year in grade 8 will be very difficult if this persists. I wonder how his learning is. Is he reading in French at all? What about his English reading and listening skills? The other students seemed only surprised by his rude language, rather than his shouting at everyone, and I wonder if he has trouble participating in group work all the time.

BIKING TO WORK (*slowing down, riding transit & walking*)

Once a month, at about eight in the morning all the Administrators have their team meetings. Of the three VSB areas, I work with the Sunrise North Area. We gather together in a long narrow room made by opening the adjoining accordion door. The Principals and Vice-Principals take this time to socialize and chat before the Associate Superintendent calls us to order and we sit at the meeting tables. There is usually food and bad coffee for these early meetings. The friendly chatter subsides as we move into the Associate's updates concerning the District and the provincial Ministry of Education. After these meetings many of us look forward to quiet travel back to our respective places of work. I enjoy taking the bus back to school.

Waiting can be a restful pause, a respite in a hectic work day. When allowed to have a calm moment of time, most administrators consider it a welcome blessing. In such situations, my

thoughts take me to other times or to the dissection of recent mishaps. My mind races with constant thoughts and chatter of self-criticism about my reactions or judgments. Such mental noise has to settle and dissipate just as ripples from a stone in water will if no further stones are thrown. A full work day is a mindful event, ending only when my body dives into the unconsciousness of sleep or in a few delightful moments of physical relaxation and reflective solitude in a private space. Removed from the direct control of being responsible for the service of others, moments such as sitting on the transit bus or having an unhurried coffee at a café allow this private space. In silence or in solitude, any opportunity to be allowed such space is calming and revitalizing. This is a particular pleasure I find while traveling by public transport or going for a long run in the woods or riding home on my bicycle—small meditative moments.

Sent: October 06/2006

To: Angus Bruce

Subject: A request

Hi Angus,

Julie just called me by cell-phone rather upset and said that Ms. Morningstar told her she was not allowed to go upstairs to put her blood test kit in her locker. We have instructed Julie to do this every day after lunch so that she doesn't forget it. She has left it before in the lunch bin and on the playground in the past. The worry is it's very expensive and shouldn't be carried around. This is all done in an effort to help Julie manage her routines, make her more independent and not appear noticeably different. Could you please confirm that visiting her locker is acceptable?

Thank you, Paul Tax

DREAMING

Work takes over my conscious thought and mental reflections, often entering by unconscious thoughts, especially in my dreams. If I am quick and take the time first thing, I can catch enough of them to write a poem.

When I Dream of Work (2008)

I dream poems, long ones
stories not told, old
not lived, living
my stories, past schools
history, tales, memoir myths
mostly, in my dreams, re-told.

I dream people, unforgotten
names, a habit to recall
spirited emotions, saucy attitudes
earnest friendships, intense,
yet complacent, inspiring
playful colleagues.

I dream of work, a future
the place, with people
beliefs, feelings
experiences,
it feels good
identity understood
poiesis

I dream of moving
a rocky new country
a rugged shore
a place where the people
are different, kinder
solid in spirit

*Last night, I moved in
I dreamed it, another place
Last night, dreaming
I moved, to another place
(the Other's place again)*

I dream of place
dreaming a dream
a new country,
with people who give, different themselves
who think of others, and are
healthy by it.

I dream of hope
a rugged society in
a hard topography with

soft hearts, I wished, I visited longer
many people go to its shores,
wanting its new geography

Yoga Sue

The grade one teacher we just hired is having such good success with her students, unlike the teacher who left suddenly. The morning yoga is calming this unruly class, especially the group of grade 1 boys. Albert is responding so much better to Sue's cooperative approach with him, unlike the teacher before, who was a coercive disciplinarian. I must remember to tell her how wonderful it is to see happy and engaged kids again. We are so lucky to get Sue for this class! Such passion and strong beliefs about pedagogy are rare in new hires. She has transferred from another district and with twenty years experience demonstrates teacher-leadership for the benefit of all of the KES staff.

From: Angus Bruce
Sent: October 07, 2006
To: Gloria Morningstar
Subject: FW: Paul's Request

Gloria, I will let Paul know that the issue is not about treating Julie different, but about expectations for students to stay out of the hallways at lunch time. Of course we want her to put her test kit in a safe place. Was she alone or "joined at the hip with 2 others" when you spoke to her?

- AB

From: Gloria Morningstar
Sent: October 07, 2006
To: Angus Bruce
Subject: RE: Paul's annoying request

Angus, I was swamped with getting games out, caring for the Library, etc.etc. and you were equally involved in the gym. Yes, she had 4 friends with her and wanted to go upstairs to her locker. I said that upstairs was out-of-bounds, as we have agreed with staff. Had I understood fully what she was asking, I would have suggested that she drop her test kit off in the Office. (She would equally be 'noticeably different' if she were allowed to go up to her locker when other students are not allowed

to do so.)

Thanks for communicating with Paul on this. >Gloria

From: Thomas Grant
Sent: June 16, 2005
To: Area Administrators
Subject: How to Criticize

Last week I forwarded an item on *How to Praise*. Today I forward an accompanying article which provides advice when we have to criticize others.

Have a great weekend
Ciao, Tom

- - - -
HOW TO CRITICIZE

"Learning is the name everyone should give to their mistakes."

In last month's *Learning Link* we learned that praising is an essential tool to reinforce good behavior but that it is diminished in its effect without criticism...

Remember, however, that it is the contrast between praise and criticism that makes them both so effective. If you spend all your time praising it will soon lose its potency to motivate and if you spend all the time criticizing you will quickly lose the respect of your colleagues or the love of your close ones...

...The first problem most people have when being criticized is to become defensive and consequently learn very little. So here are five tactics to employ in turning destructive criticism into *constructive criticism*...

The Learning Link, June 2005, p. 1

From: Angus Bruce
Sent: May 02, 2007
To: Max
Subject: KES Monies for FI Camp

Bonjour Max,

I am wondering if the Camp money is still available? I seem to recall a message about shortages in your budget and the remaining transfers were being limited to the schools.

At present, all KES has received is the transportation grant from the BC Gov't for our exchange travel. There was some confusion with the parents about who should receive these funds. Max, you had promised me a further set of monies for CLAN camp. We had agreed to \$1500. Would you let me know where we stand on all of this please?

Thank you - AB

VPC (Vice-principal's club)

Albert Stein was in grade 2 when he started to meet with me at lunch every day. Initially this was a means for monitoring his behaviour, but it grew into something quite remarkable by his own initiative. Our lunch time sessions were an extension of close monitoring for the challenges of his behaviour. Not only was Albert a persuasive personality, but he was quite bright and quickly found ways to selectively bother his peers with just the right remark, prod, poke or precise pinch. The resultant explosion or outburst from his targeted victim was part of the enjoyment he sought from those most vulnerable to his talents. Such demonstrations and outcomes were typically mine to deal with for nearly two years. As a survival tactic, I started to request that Albert spend every recess with me. He dutifully complied and in short order our relationship grew into that of being a significant adult in his mind; one in which he desired my regard and attention and that I used to advantage in changing his basic need for seeking delight in hurting others. What happened in my giving him daily attention and an opportunity to work quietly on the computers soon began to be shaped by his young mind as a special privilege that he enjoyed and soon persuaded his classmates was a desirable activity. It was not long before he began asking me if others could join us. In no time he became the leader of a small group of peers whom he gathered up at lunch to meet me in the hall. This group he took to calling the VPC; the Vice-Principal's club and Albert Stein enjoyed

being the self-elected chairman of the table top sessions of 7 year olds that came to my Resource Room at noon.

From: Max
Sent: May 03, 2007
To: Angus Bruce
Subject: Monies for KES French Immersion Camp

Bonjour Angus,

Further French Immersion funds for transfer to KES in 2006/07 are now limited. As the District will NOT receive all the anticipated FI funding from the Ministry this year (due to a computer error), we'll have to wait a few weeks **before confirming whether or not we will be able to provide an extra \$1500 in funding** (as last year) to KES to help with Camp costs . Please do not hesitate to call or write if you have any questions while we wait.

Sincerely,

>Max

LANDING, June 2007

Most times, returning from being away is like checking a lottery ticket, in reverse. Only instead of winning cash, the pay-out is little or no discipline to deal with. My mail box is full of paper but my emails are fewer in number than I would expect. But then it is the end of the year and there is less coming in from the School District offices.

The few discipline situations have no pattern and are completely unpredictable. By the end of May and certainly into June, the older students are moving on to high school dreams and don't push much on the system that school subjects them to. They realize it is really over and the last few details such as the graduation-leaving ceremony and the grad cruise combine with June fun arranged by their teachers. Grade 7 camp is one of these, except this year it was the last week of May.

The daily instances of discipline that I have to deal with are mostly determined by supervising adults as wrong doing; a judgment I find too hasty and with an expectation of punishment to follow. Frequently the “culprits” do not have a clear understanding of their alleged “wrong-doings” and my inclination is to want to understand the bigger picture and convey this to the child involved.

For grade 6 and 7 students, May and June are the months of serious hormonal drives to associate, hang out and be playful together. It seems none of my Supervision Aids can recall or relive any of these experiences from their own youth, preferring to take a puritanical view of associating in a *herd* as simply bad behaviour. This seems so unfortunate; we have great students at KES.

The primary students on the other hand, especially the little puppy dog boys, are the ones who get carried away and mischievous. They all desperately want summer to happen and view every sunny and warm day as the direct evidence of this truth. Young boys in particular see time differently, perhaps only the hour ahead and maybe the day, they are unable to count and internalize how much school remains before summer vacation. The boys act as if vacation has arrived and with it some of their playfulness, including water balloons and wrestling, arrives early too. Any continued request to sit and read, or do numbers is viewed as cruel and unusual punishment.

It's fun in the sun,
school is dumb.
Teacher can we work outside?
It's too hot in here
(for my brain to think).
Teach, can we take our books
and sit under the trees?
(so we can play!)

(My talk with Albert Stein, president of the VP Club)

Where Will the VP Go in January?

Presented with the sudden news of my departure, parents involved with the school seemed curious for a more detailed explanation. Tiring of repeating a short, but inadequate explanation of why I was leaving, I took the opportunity to creatively demonstrate with a practical sample of my narrative for the parent's website... I wrote the following to share with the Community as I negotiated my exit.

Here is a sample narrative of some of the ideas I am trying to convey about the inner world of children, my view of school administration and the decisions that are made. Beginning January 1st a new Vice-Principal was named to replace me while I go away on leave. I hadn't told Albert E. yet that our relationship was going to change and I was leaving. With the December holiday approaching, it was during one of our noon chats that I discussed this event with him.

Eagerly Albert arrives most days quickly after lunch to see me. He appears outside the main office and waits to catch me on my travels to the office. Coming down the stairway I see him. Today I ask my young friend, to sit and talk with me in my office. (I have considered carefully how to tell him about my plans.)

"You do know... I won't always be here at this school? I might have to go away sometime... maybe even in December." (How will he understand the concept of taking time away from my job and going back to school to study?)

"Yeah,... of course. I'm going to Seattle in December."

"Hmm... who do you know there?"

"My Uncle Joe"

"That's nice. Do you see him much?"

"No, not really, only at Christmas time."

“You see me most days, don’t you?”

“Yup,... cuz yur always here and you let the grade 2s play in the gym sometimes, and the computers in the resource room.”

“Well because you’re one of my little friends I thought I would tell you a something important. Can you keep it safe for awhile?”

“Yeah; I can... but I might tell Sam if I sit too close to her”.

“Well you can tell others later. You are the first little person to know, but I’ve told the grade sevens already about my going away.”

“Know what?”

“That ... I’m going to be leaving in December. I’m leaving at Christmas time and won’t be the VP here anymore.” (pausing, I consider carefully watching how he will respond. Albert is quiet and clearly thinking.)

“Where are you going?”

“I am going back to school.”

After a short pause this time, he says, “But you’re the Vice-Principal! Why do you have to go back to school?”

“Well, I am actually going back to the University and I was wondering if it would be Ok to come and visit you?” ... I quickly add, “That’s what friends do. I’d like to come here (to KES) and visit at least once a week and see everyone so I can hear your stories.”

Albert quietly answers, “For sure... can we still do stuff too?”

“Of course, maybe I can come into your class to help out” I pause and consider what to say to him “After Christmas I will be at the University finishing my research book called a thesis. Have you heard that word before?”

“No. (We hear the bell ring.) Is it big?”

“It’s a book with a least a 100 pages that I have to write; stories about the school and my job as a Vice-Principal.”(We stand up together to go back to class).

“Oh, cool. Will I be in it?”

That voice again: *Period 3! Hurry Angus you have to get to class to teach grade 7 English, now!*

I've got to gather the end of term assignments that are still outstanding. Too many of the boys just don't take their responsibilities to heart for their work.

From: *Clare Nichols*

Sent: *February 4, 2007*

To: *Group Parents French Immersion Exchange*

Subject: *Gala Event POSTER*

I've taken Staz's artwork and scanned it into MS Publisher. Hope you like the poster results! If not, I'm open to any suggestion! We still have some time, not much though... before we have to get it out.

>Clare

FRENCH IMMERSION EVENTS

French Immersion parents are the most demanding over achievers that administrators have to deal with. In schools with French Immersion programs, the behaviour of parents makes it seem like the parents are going to school rather than their children. All their expectations result in a constant scrutiny of classroom "service" that amount to a regular confrontation with at least one parent each week at KES. The Gala Poster was another of these "*we know best and how dare you have an alternative point of view about our student's art work?*"

GALA POSTER

I am dealing with a discipline matter and the student involved is in my office talking to me when there is an end of the day knock at my office door. Staz, one of my grade 7 students wants to speak to me.

"Mr. Bruce, can I ask you a question?"

Sure, but I'm busy with Frankie right now, can you wait , or is a quick answer needed?

“It can wait.” His body language demonstrates he is nervous about the matter, and it has taken a great deal of effort for him to come and see me. I don’t want him avoiding the matter by being put off now. I attempt to get a better feel for the topic he has in mind.

“Oh, is this about English class?”

“No.” Curious to know more of what he wants, I inquire further, suddenly aware it might be the poster he drew, I press him for more details.

“Staz, you are obviously concerned about something, what is it about?”

“My picture.”

“Which picture? The Gala poster ad?”

“Yes.”

“Ah.” I am cautious now, I haven’t presented any information of my concern about the image he drew to anyone else, except one parent.

“How has it come to you that your picture was any concern of mine?”

“Another parent mentioned it to me.”

“Oh,” I say in surprise. “Who might that be?”

He hesitates, “I shouldn’t say, they asked me not to tell.”

Strange, but undeterred I ask, “What exactly have you been told, that I apparently said?”

From: Angus Bruce
Sent: February 5, 2007
To: Clare Nichols; Gloria Morningstar
Subject: preview Gala Event POSTER

Hi Clare have you had any feedback from the parent committee? The draft is well done and makes a very informative flier, very eye catching.

I had a look with Gloria. Two comments: (1) the words, GALA should be obvious, as people know what this is and will be open to coming again; (2) the image is very adult, normally not a problem, but it would not be wise to have dozens posted around the school, as it would invite unnecessary comment from our adolescents. (Sorry to be so blunt, maybe the dress could be lengthened.)

Thank-you for all your hard work,
Sincerely - Angus

5 Minutes for a VP's Poem

I was involved in a judgments focus group for administrators, and we were asked to try and capture in writing all of the decisions we make/take in 5 minutes. This is my poetic result between 11:35 and 12:04 one Wednesday. Rushing from the Education Centre, I returned to school just before noon dismissal needing to get an English assignment copied and distributed before the grade 7s leave.

Moments in half-an-hour

11:35
I have chosen
deciding
I consider, I re-consider
I hesitate considering again
it would take too much time.
I make a mental note
look
11: 38...

I think and consider
no, I'll just continue
should I go
the coat,
should I get
No...
copier first
say 40.

I chose the right tone,
I must deflect her
don't say much more
first I must rewrite
I check my watch, 11:52...
I excuse myself
11:56...

But I'm...
shouts an unconscious voice back
I chose left
I pause and think
I act
11:59...
I look to see
12:04...
where did that parent go?

From: Anna Cohen

Sent: May 08, 2007

To: Tom Grant

Cc: Superintendent of Schools; VSB Trustees Office

Subject: Financial concerns

Dear Tom,

I am writing to request an urgent meeting, as soon as possible, to discuss some serious concerns regarding PAC money and the KES school principal. These concerns have direct financial implications (costs) to the PAC funds (i.e parents) and have also caused several situations that resulted in the bullying and harassment of the VOLUNTEER parent treasurers of these funds.

I can be reached by telephone or via e-mail. Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Anna

FINANCIAL ALLEGATIONS

Dangerous and irrational people are part of my landscape. I have worked so hard to follow Gloria's advice and to work with people. Misunderstandings happen so quickly.

In an email from cranky Anna, Gloria was alleged to be taking money from the parent's funds. Message to self, be sure to learn how the school accounts are properly balanced. Now we have to deal with the investigation by our Associate Superintendent.

I hope this doesn't upset Gloria anymore than it already has. Anna must have a screw loose to do this; after all we have done for her and her child!

From: Tom Grant
Sent: Tuesday May 09, 2007
To: Anna Cohen
Cc: Superintendent of Schools, VSB Trustees Office
Subject: RE: Financial concerns

Dear Anna, I will ask my office assistant to set up a meeting to discuss your most recent message and concerns.

Ciao, Tom

That voice: Wednesday, 1:40 – late again for the Linda's grade 2 prep class, hurry Angus. I hope the computers are on.

From: Gloria Morningstar
Sent: Wednesday May 10, 2007
To: Tom Grant
Cc: Angus Bruce
Subject: RE: Unbelievable Parent's Concerns

Tom, this is Unbelievable!

After all Angus and I have been through with this parent around fund raising! Do you really have to

give her another 'soap box' to rant from? She has been so mean spirited and demanding that to hear her out will just fuel her sense of entitlement. Who does she think runs the school!

> Gloria

From: *Susan Vent*
Sent: *July 30, 2006*
Cc: *Angus Bruce; Saul Stein*
Subject: *Info for Susan for Quebec trip paperwork*

Hi Anna, My name is Susie Vent and my son Matthew is going into grade 7 French Immersion. I would be happy to help with organizing the exchange program. I am good at paperwork and keep track of stuff Let us know how we can help.

>Susie

Journal Entry, Spring 2007

I continue to wonder about a research topic for inquiry. How does one write answers before knowing the questions? I am writing the draft for my grad class presentation due in two days. I want to write of my workplace, and try to narrate the situations through the stories I experience.

Situation I (Place) - CLASS PRESENTATION – UBC, SPRING 2007

My present and professional lifeworld is that of a public school administrator and Vice-Principal. I am both the assistant to and team member with a Principal of a large elementary school, situated in one of the largest school districts of the province. The school is where my role and place are geographically located for the primary purpose of gaining experiences (and learning) in order to learn how to administer a school for myself. This living environment of complex relations and the educational experience I *live* are situated within an internal and external geography—a variety of personal and shared landscapes populated by a variety of characters and events. There is no pedagogy for administrative leadership and my personal inquiry of identity and professional development have evolved during a three year path as a personal search in qualitative expression to describe my lifeworld so others can *walk in my shoes*. (Or as Atticus says in *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960): “You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view...until

you climb into his skin and walk around in it” (p.36)). My story and the stories of others, led me to an appreciation of narratives in which lives are told, retold and reconstructed for others to share.

_____ □ _____

Chapter Four - Objects and Abstractions

Goethe says “every object well contemplated opens a new organ in us”; you have to live in that world of phenomena, you have to attend carefully, every object well contemplated, not just casually contemplated but well contemplated, attended to, over time, repeatedly, changes you, changes who you are to the point where you begin to see things that you didn’t see originally and perhaps which no one before you has seen. Arthur Zajonc, 2008, CBC Ideas

CAFÉ BEGINNINGS – SPRING 2007

The café occupies a vintage Vancouver storefront covered in red clapboard. Its large windows face Broadway, beckoning customers. Looking up, top floor windows reveal a number of second floor apartments, fitted into the narrow frame of the building. The middle-aged woman sitting at the corner, deep in thought, taps her pencil a few tables away from mine. She suddenly finds what she is seeking and uses the pencil to briskly write on the newspaper. It’s obvious now; it must be the crossword she’s working on. I sit at the smaller table near the window waiting for Bill to arrive. Looking out the window up Yew Street, it’s 3:45 pm and I’ve arrived early because the retirement committee finished sooner than expected. After ordering a cup of coffee, dark, and in a white porcelain cup, I return to my table by the window hoping to write in my journal before he arrives at four. The woman continues to work on the newspaper crossword and I take in the welcoming space and the warmth of the spring day. The high ceiling café is in an old store front, the front and one long side having tall narrow windows to the street; against the back wall there are no window openings for the length of the lot. The large converted room is painted dark, while the windows are trimmed in white, highlighting the building’s antique qualities. Hanging along the

windowless wall are small framed art works with little pieces of paper under each indicating the displayed art is for sale. A symbiosis of gallery viewing mixed with entrepreneurial benefits for both. The entrance door faces the corner of the street and through it I see a twenty-something couple enter, the large door jingling the small bell that hangs above it. They approach the coffee barista to order. The coffee bar is away from the windows closer to the back wall, behind which the display shelves are mirrored to give the work area more light. The woman looks up at the menu board while her young friend looks in the round glass display to choose something to eat. I turn to the street and see Bill pushing his old bike across the street, a mix of red, blue and black mismatched parts. He waves to me in greeting and leans and locks his bike to the rack.

From: Anna Cohen
Sent: July 30, 2006
To: Susan Vent
Cc: Angus Bruce
Subject: Your assistance with Quebec Trip paperwork

Hi Susie

Your help would be great. I am still waiting for a response from Angus and Gloria about the application for funding and all the material from last year, and a complete financial account. As soon as we have the material you can start putting together our application for this year. .

Happy Holidays, Anna

KITSILANO ELEMENTARY - KES

The school building is old. Almost 90 years old. During the day, filled with people, it seems to contain and shape space with passages of light filtering from numerous directions. Alone within it, late or early in the summer day it has a different character, one tempered by silence and restful patience. These qualities are familiar somehow, I have been in and over and under buildings working within them for a number of years. So why do I feel comforted being alone here; should

this old place be less welcoming without its students or more inviting in anticipation of the busy months ahead? For now, smelling of old books and worn paper, it is a place of refuge for me; a place where I live with my own ghosts and soon the shadows of others to follow.

MY APPOINTMENT

I was interviewed for vice-Principalship on April 14, 2005. The actual letter of acceptance came not long after and indicated I was now on the ordered list for an approaching appointment. The letter was confidential and I shared the details with my family, but not many others. The official and public announcement of both being accepted and getting an appointed assignment happened at the same time. When it came, it was a relief to have others finally know of my future career direction, and a surprise to be staying at KES for the new role.

VSB email, May 11, 2005

To: New Vice-Principals waiting for assignment

Subject: Vice-Principals' Summer Training Institute July 6, July 7 and August 25

Congratulations on your appointment to the Vice-Principalship. The VSB Leadership Development Program includes an induction phase for new administrators. Induction involves participation in a summer institute, a two year cohort program and a mentorship with an experienced administrator. You are invited to participate in the New Vice-Principals' Summer Institute, with all your cohort of newly appointed elementary and secondary vice-principals.

All those on the ordered list who will be assigned to a school for September or are waiting for assignment are encouraged to participate in the Institute. The three days will include:

- annual calendar of duties and task planning; introduction to the school act and regulations and VSB policies; student conduct and behaviour management processes
- key contacts – VSB Departments and who to call for help
- school startup issues; including how to use SEMS for substitute teacher requests
- staffing and school organizations
- and of course your contractual professional growth and mentorship arrangements

Let me know if you're able to attend.

Administrator for Leadership Development

During this induction process I soon found out I was part of a privileged group of people who were to be my supportive colleagues in all respects, no matter what might happen to me. I also had to adjust to filing, piling or creating a binder for each significant topic I was expected to understand. Suddenly it seemed I was part of a new existence, but was I still a unionized teacher or was I some other? A sort of betrothal process began to take over for May and June as new expectations developed and a greater awareness grew with being a part of the Vancouver School Board (VSB) management side of public education. I was not alone in this newness, thankfully a small community of new VPs joined me and from among the sixteen new appointments, I was grateful for the cohort friendships of seven people in particular. Professional friendships are essential and it became clear to the seven of us that only within this group was it safe to talk about our common experiences and to truthfully share our private concerns. While the skills and qualifications needed to be appointed seem enormous, as a beginning administrator I was still a novice leader learning the difference between agency and objects. I didn't 'contemplate well' what I was supposed to be doing as a school vice-principal. My "practice of thoughtfulness" (van Manen 1997, p.31) was nothing more than the natural and pre-reflective attitude (Husserl, 1982) of living my experiences as my attitude for everyday life. How could I do otherwise, if reflexivity was unknown, obscure and unlearned? In June 2005 I had completed only two course with The Centre for Cross-Faculty Inquiry in Education (CCFI), a UBC graduate program, and had yet to internalize concepts such as the intersubjectivity of my lived experience, the human impulses of 'other', relationality, agency and poetics, the power of story to shape personal inquiry, the language of metaphors and metonyms (Irwin 2004), and the significance of capturing unique experiences in

narrative and autobiographical writing (Clandinin & Connelly 2000; Leggo 2008; Van Manen 1997).

The discoveries and importance of these postmodern concepts were mine to discover much later.

From: Paul Tax
Sent: Sept 05, 2006
To: Angus Bruce
Subject: A new school year & FI Steering Committee

Good Morning Angus,

I hope you had a pleasant and restful summer in Italy. With the new school year starting I wanted to meet with you regarding Jane's medical plan and also offer my help on the FI Steering Committee.

To ensure we continue to build on the progress that was made last year and that the staff are aware of her condition and needs. I think that this is going to be particularly important since there are new staff and the likelihood of a Quebec Exchange trip.

Are you available tomorrow at noon?

Thanks, Paul

CAMP (My invitation by email)

From: Gloria Morningstar
VSB email, May 19, 2005c
To: Angus Bruce (incoming VP)
Cc. (outgoing VP)
Subject: Outdoor Camp Vancouver Island, June 6 -10

Dear Angus,

The Grade 7s are going to outdoor camp at SPL. This would be a good opportunity for you to assist the staff for four days. Liz is going up on Thurs and coming back the same day and can bring you back to Vancouver. This would allow you to spend time with 3 of the teachers and Debbie Duer, a parent volunteer. She is our PAC super mom. Let me know soon if this will work for you.

> Gloria

I went to camp in June, first as a volunteer and secondly as a VP in waiting. Technically I wasn't really the Vice-Principal yet, I was still a community teacher and I would not have any

official authority until July 1st. In my mind, my role was all based on anticipation. Just like a betrothal to someone, where the partnership is not yet sanctified but both parties are fully committed. And so, not yet married to administration, but appointed, I was unaware until later of how the threshold between teacher and administrator was being crossed during the four days at camp.

I was encouraged by Gloria to go along to get introduced to the senior class. I am not sure why the supervising teachers invited me to join them. I knew most of them as a West-2 CST⁹ teacher all year and in a sense it was part of my community-based teaching work to be asked to come along. As a consequence, I found myself with 48 grade seven students and four adults—Gordie, Ralph, Jasmine and Debbie on an early morning bus ride leaving for camp at 5:30 a.m.

Journal Entry... June 6, at Strathcona Park

- Bus departure was delayed, as 4 kids were late. While at the ferry terminal the students sitting in their seats kept coming up to us and asking when was it leaving. Ferry ride very noisy, too much free roaming and there were three other school groups onboard. Words between the groups were not taken well.
- Mitch didn't take his meds, as he didn't want to eat any food at 5am. (His teacher was reminded to remind him but he too forgot.) Boy was that a mistake. Later Mitch wanted to take several motion sickness pills. I saw him with at least 3 in his hand and we were still parked onboard the ferry! We dock, the bus pulls off and gets 100 metres and Mitch says he feels sick so the bus pulls over in the BC ferries parking lot. The Driver opens the door and he gets out. Why didn't he use the bus toilet?
- Finally the bus is traveling up the highway, meanwhile a constant stream of kids up the aisle to talk, complain or ask for assistance from Ralph. I can see he is losing his patience.
- Next, the toilet gets plugged with an apple and Mitch 'accidentally' tries flushing it, which overflows the toilet and we get a wave of water rolling down the bus floor. Gordie & Ralph investigate, clearly not happy and I say to myself, "glad I am not the one in charge".

- Later several kids need to “go”. They keep coming up to ask “when will we get there?” Finally, 20 Km from the Lodge and the toilets, we pull over. We get off to talk, no one else is allowed off and Gordie climbs into the woods to get a stick.
- Using a stick, Gordie and the driver, poke, jam, thrust, and whack the apple in the toilet without success. It just doesn’t budge. The driver goes outside and gets an even bigger stick for the job.
- Finally it breaks. Not the toilet, but the apple. Gordie using the bigger stick has pulverized the apple into bits. The toilet can be flushed now, but none of the students want to use it. 15 minutes of time has been wasted. The bus pulls onto the road again.
- We arrive and unload gear. Several kids leave their gear on the ground and need to be reminded to get it later. We soon discover that the students have understood “bring a bag lunch” to mean something else. No lunch for a number of grade 7s.
- Orientation by team leaders and groups form up for the afternoon’s activities. Adults are asked to gather with SPL staff to review goals, get our input, be handed the timetable, and evaluation sheets. SPL expectations for supervising adults (teachers) are to keep quiet and not get involved with student misbehaviour; they want the leaders to handle it.
- My group is lead by Warren. During the Blind-fold activity, Mitch and two others begin to show how uncooperative they are. Intermittent rain and I come back from my room with a rain coat and find several kids have none. Millie insists on using her umbrella. That’s going to be trouble for the canoe trip.
- Warren the leader becomes frustrated after the ropes & cable exercise does not work. He decides to try dunce hat and humiliation tactic... oh boy! Several others are now seeking attention negatively in the group activities. Warren seems out of his league with these students.
- Dinner is delicious. Later I notice Pam visiting the boys’ cabins contrary to the rule: “no girl & boy room visits”. But more of this continues and Gordie, Ralph and I read the “rules” again in visits to separate cabins. Franklin School reports a problem between two of our girls. A female teacher wants to speak with us later. I hope Jasmine can deal with this herself.
- 9:00 quiet time, 9:30 in cabins, 10pm light out. Thank goodness; it’s been a long day...

Journal Entry... June 7, day two at Strathcona Park, SPL

- It's 6:30 in the morning and I am on the kitchen patio writing and drinking coffee and enjoying the quiet of the morning and the wonderful view of the lake. It's going to be a sunny day. The chow bell is rung and the line-up enters for food. Good and nutritious breakfast. Plenty of sleepy looking kids filling their plates. The other adults finally show up.
- Debbie sits with me and then it starts. She fills me in with the events of the evening at the girl's dorm. She and Jasmine were up very late settling the girls over a remark made by one of the boys; "I am going to commit suicide" in an attempt to get the girls to leave his cabin. They were asked to leave and wouldn't, so Peter took to waving a paring knife threateningly at the girls. They left but were obviously upset. It seems they were confused as to whether he really meant it or not. (What are knives doing in students' cabins???)
- Later the girl who chooses to report the remark to adults is now being accused of disloyalty to the group. The adults talk at the breakfast table, and I suggest the importance of a full group meeting at 8 am to revisit the School's and SPL expectations. Ralph, Gordie and I feel we are beginning to have these conferences too often.
- Ralph and I confer briefly before speaking to the whole group. I suggest we get a show of hands for feedback. Jasmine, having slept in, joins us as we are assembled. She quietly sees what we are about to do and agrees.
- Before Ralph can begin students interrupt him. They quiet down after he gives them the evil eye ball, then begins by asking for a show of hands for numbers. "On a scale of 3 fingers; great-time, to a fist for zero-disappointment, please indicate how the last 18 hours have been." 48 students show us their hand signals and there are just two with three fingers, adults all show fists and most of the students are either 1 or 2. Ralph mentions how unhappy some of the SPL staff are and reviews the main camp rules. Good job Ralph; let's hope there are more positive behaviours. I decide to step forward to speak to them about the insurance reasons for the rules, like no swimming unless wearing a life jacket. But I feel afterwards that I was being too authoritative. Ralph asks a few kids to remain behind and speaks to the group. I see that he is angry and upset with them.
- Gordie tells me he made sure Mitch took his meds. Hurrah! I notice Peter is sitting alone waiting for Ralph... "Peter we have been having some serious concerns develop and several names are already being considered for an early ride home." I tell him, "You have 24 hours to

seriously show us that we can count on you". I leave him with this to consider. "It's up to you Peter. Can I trust you?"

- "Yes, you can trust me; I am not going to say anything else stupid again." Good, we will see how it goes when the VP (Liz) comes and I hope I can speak positively in your favour when she arrives Thursday.
- Mitch's meds kick in during rock climbing; he was loud, but under control. I watch the students scale the rock face but don't try any rock climbing myself...

Journal Entry... June 9, day four, SPL

- Hike up the mountain yesterday was not good. Warren and I have the heavy loads and three unfit students stagger along with us. Millie wants to go home and has to be distracted with conversation. We can follow the group by the detritus left along the trail. Students so spread out, Warren frustrated, plots a fictional "accident" and we stop and wait to see if anyone comes back for us...
- Overnight campout with Warren, plenty of mosquitoes. Mitch without meds again, he is really pissed off about the "accident" making him run back. Most of the kids aren't happy about food choice, or no toilet paper: "no-trace camping applies to everyone; use leaves." (More toilet troubles!) Only now one of the female students tells me she has her period and is ill equipped for dealing with this. Good thing I had my own TP and accessories for her. As a male teacher I am cognizant of the dilemma I find myself in: the absence of female staff on this particular outing; my responsibility for this child's safety and well-being, and my hyper-awareness of the importance of handling this situation professionally.
- I make an extra effort to speak about my camping with my wife and daughter and to give her as much privacy and consideration about the matter as I can. She's clearly happy there is a better solution for her than "leaves"...
- Today's long walk back to the Lodge, steep cliffs and I worried all the while about losing someone over the edge. Mitch obviously used no meds today. Warren thought they would pull together and help each other if we went this dangerous way. (Hardly, thanks Warren for letting me know.) Teamwork? Not with these kids. Mitch takes off down the steep hillside as if it is a slalom ski slope. At the bottom he waits for us and then seeing us come out of the woods, races off to cross the highway and almost walks in front of a passing truck. Geez, he was lucky.

- Mitch and Ralph and I meet to finally talk over this issue of Mitch's conduct. Warren is fed up with his uncooperative behaviour and leaves the matter to us. We decide that Mitch's medication routine must be handled better. I sense Ralph is looking for me to decide on this one. I point out that a loss of one activity would mean a great deal for Mitch, as kayaking is next. Take him home or time out? I think time out is justified and if we get called on it, the easier to defend with parents as a natural consequence.

- Ralph speaks with Mitch and is surprised that he agrees he has been a pain; that not going kayaking would be a good consequence, rather than going home. Liz should be arriving soon and could take him back, but Millie insists she is still home sick and must go home. This is a repeat of her feelings just before leaving on the overnight trip. We call her mother again who agrees that with all the stress and calls home, it would be best to bring her back now. She is desperate to leave and has no close friends...

- Thursday afternoon and we assembled the students again. They see that Liz has arrived and realize that she has the returning van. There are some long faces. I privately speak with Peter. "Peter, we have been having some serious concerns and several names have been considered for going home this afternoon, but your name is not on that list." He smiles and is obviously relieved. The van is loaded and Jasmine, Liz, Millie and I head back for the Nanaimo ferry in time for the 4:30 sailing. I get dropped back at school by 8:45pm.

Sitting in the van driving away I felt a mixed assortment of emotions. Is this my new world, dealing with undisciplined students, anxious children incapable of simple risk-taking? This was problem-solving, not leadership. This was dealing with the tricky emotions of adults and children and not the summer joys of camping out. Was I going to be doing first-aid or life-aid? I began the summer wondering specifically what is the actual job of being the Vice-Principal anyway?

ALTERCATION TODAY - (JUNE 30, 2005 THE LAST DAY OF SCHOOL)

The email subject line begins, *Altercation today please deal with it!* It is the last week of June, there is a flurry of activity by staff to finish tasks and complete paperwork left piled and put off for 'later'. The busyness has a tangible tone as 'later' is perceived by most to have arrived, with

no ‘laters’ left. The after-class buzz is indicated by teachers working alone and moving or lifting books and papers in their classrooms or carrying items to rooms around the building. All are focused and concentrating on one goal—to finish the paperwork and begin the summer break on time.

Various forms of this year-end paperwork are mandated by educational authorities and must be signed off by each teacher and then the Principal. Amidst this flood of activity the staffs are copying reportcards, filing papers, collating student folders, and completing details for students’ next grade placement. They are tidying their classrooms and putting resources away in boxes so a fresh start welcomes them in September.

Gloria’s intention, unknown to me, was mostly to pass a bothersome issue on, but I saw it as a test of my skills in handling a politically sensitive set of parents. School was out, so why were we dealing with grade 7 boys whom we had just technically promoted to high school? Suddenly I found myself wavering again about another daunting aspect of my role.

From: Angus Bruce
Sent: September 05, 2006
To: Paul Tax; Gloria Morningstar
Subject: RE: A new school year for Jane Tax

Good to see you, Paul, this morning. A meeting tomorrow will have to be after our staff meeting, 3ish would be fine. I have already contacted the Community Health Nurse about Jane’s medical plan; the CHN told me Jane is no longer on her caseload. Because of her age, she is considered part of “gradual release of responsibility.” We’ll talk some more.

I’m so pleased you have joined the FI Steering Committee. - AB

School staffs have a wide range of tasks and difficult people to deal with. Some rather strange communications get sent at the beginning of the year (others just silly). Once in a while something interesting happens. This one came on the first week back...

From: *Office of School Superintendent*
Sent: *September 13, 2005*
CC: *Vancouver Police Liaison Officers; VSB Area Associates*
To: *Elementary Office Admin; Elementary Admin*
Subject: *Male Caller - Obscene Phone Calls*

To follow up from last year, unfortunately, schools are **again receiving obscene phone** calls from a male caller. The caller usually wants to “buy underwear” or “kick someone in the balls”.

One school was able to trace the caller’s number by dialling *57. The school notified the Police with the information. Constable Callview from the VPD traced the caller’s number to an Ottawa exchange. No suspect has been identified. The Police file number for this case is: 04-432-646. Constable Callview’s contact pager is: (604) 777-3439 #9237.

Should you receive an obscene call, please try *57 to trace the number immediately. If you are able to successfully trace the telephone number or have any specific information you would like to provide to the police, please contact Constable Callview by pager.

Thank you. Happy School Opening!

>Jenny,

VSB Area Office

WELCOME TO THE VP JOB

All the students left yesterday for summer break. I enter the office to check my mailbox at 10 a.m. when Gloria asks that I see her about the worried mother’s message on her voice-mail. I am not the VP until tomorrow, but Gloria is handing me the “situation” as a task that needs to be handled properly before summer begins. Gloria wants her desk cleared before 3 pm, too, so it has been placed on mine for now.

“Angus, would you please deal with this.” I sense something difficult, dangerous, and needing to be handled right so that it goes away and doesn’t come back to bite me. Is this my first test?

She is polite but I know the sound of an order; she wants me to deal with the matter between these grade 7 boys and their threats to each other. A day before my official VP responsibilities, I am about to call the parents involved, but hesitate, worried about my approach. Not quite sure of how to handle the matter without messing up. Do I play the good cop routine...? What do I call myself...? Can I really say I am the Vice-Principal? Will my title make people take notice...? *“Oh well, I just have to plunge in and dial the phone...”*

Gloria has printed the email and when I stand in her office doorway she hands the folded copy to me adding, *“I received this and a voice mail from this Mother. She spoke to me on the telephone just 20 minutes ago and to get her to leave, I told her you would be looking into the matter right away. The email came to me late Wednesday and I have only got to it now. Would you please give the students involved a call, and call the other mother too?”* Gloria turns from me to resume her task.

“Alright, sure...” I unfold the printout and read the details to myself as I head towards the office doorway. The confusing message involves some grade 7 boys, whom I don’t know well and I certainly have not spoken with their parents before. Not sure how this is to be handled, I turn back in Gloria’s direction, *“what action do you want me to take with this?”*

Gloria is sitting back at her computer again and turns in her chair to face me. *“The situation has probably been blown out of proportion by this Mother; she needs to be assured that it will be fine and that the boys are not really going to follow through with the threats. As it happened off school property and school is officially over, there is not much else we can do. You might call the High School Counseling Department and the School Police Liaison Officer and alert them.”*

I sit at my desk upstairs reading the email carefully and I still don’t follow what this Mother means. She has used too many names and it is not clear who the victim might be or

which of the five names she means to be the person uttering the threats. Using the class lists, I find one of the names mentioned and dial his home number. A boy's voice answers, "*Hello.*" I can hear a TV on in the back ground.

"Hello, I'm Angus Bruce, the new VP for Kitsilano Elementary. Is this Hinton? I am calling about the incident that happened with Darren and Rick yesterday. What can you tell me about that?"

"At lunch..." He asks, sounding hesitant and possibly surprised that a man has called him about the threatening behaviour. *"That's all over now, no big deal..."*

When I am done calling the others, two and a half hours have passed and I've called five households, spoken to three of them and left messages for the others. I walk downstairs to see Gordie, the grade 7 teacher, and ask him about the boys involved. He updates me, *"Those boys are all usually friends; they are just being jerks; it should blow over in no time."* In fact, the Worried Mother has called Gordie's cellphone and he in turn spoke with two of the boys I hadn't been able to reach.

I return to my desk and call and leave a voice mail for the high school Counseling Department that deals with grade eight students next year as well as leave a message with the Police Officer who has the liaison duty at the high school.

Finally I call the mother of the boy who was frightened, and assure her I have spoken to everyone and received a personal promise from the boy who made the threats. It seems to be all over now, the boy telling me "no big deal", *"it was just a simple misunderstanding."* I warn him that there would be police involvement if there are any repeated behaviours. The frightened mother is very relieved and thanks me. I did not bother to call the Worried Mother who had reported the matter in the first place, as her own son was not involved; the frightened boy is only her neighbour.

I go back downstairs to see Gloria and tell her of my results. No need, her own assessment matched my discovery as she felt it was more than likely just the bravado of grade seven boys. *“We have covered the bases and now that school is out, it isn’t our concern really. It’s 3:45 p.m., time to go home, Angus. Welcome to the Vice-Principal’s job.”*

WHAT IS THE PROFESSIONAL LANDSCAPE?

The question sits on my screen and I hesitate to begin writing the paper for my CUST 512 course on Action Research methods. Is this *landscape* metaphor the best means for revealing the life world of work. How do I have the reader see through my eyes, walk in my shoes, and hear the voices making demands inside me?

From: Susan Vent (Grade 7 parent)
Sent: Tuesday, September 19, 2006
To: Angus Bruce
Subject: Your telephone message regarding Matthew and Math 7

Hi Angus,

In answer to your question, yes Matt completed advanced math via Distance Education and yes last year at KES he was doing the same. It should be in his files, as I brought the official documents to the office. Thanks for bringing up the subject with Matt about his math 7.

Your approach was excellent as it was exactly the type of thing that we would say, *“Matthew just to be clear, you don’t want to waste the full year doing stuff you already know instead of taking on the challenge of new concepts offered by doing Math 8.”* When his teacher Pierre spoke to Matt, about his puzzling behaviour, he said much of the same thing. Basically, why hadn't he told him before now that he completed math 7 last year and why was he sitting in class for 3 weeks without saying anything? It's good for Matt to see that his parents aren't the only adults in his life who are expecting him to take more responsibility for his school work!

Our preference is for Matt to do grade 8 math with a group of other students at that level or Distance Ed again. I think a group is much more satisfying for him than working on his own. We assume he wants marks in grade 8 math and to complete the grade 8 program. Hopefully, Matt will be a little more articulate than he was tonight at home, when you have your next conversation with him.

We'll see you on Thursday at the Steering Committee meeting. Thanks for all the hard work you are putting into arranging the Quebec exchange. Take care, >Susie

Journal Entry... Ferry Coffee, June 2007

Early morning departure Horseshoe Bay and finally I can take an enjoyable moment to have a late snack and a cup of coffee on the BC Ferry to Nanaimo. Later, looking at the lineup, I am surprised to see David, a colleague from the Science Curriculum Team on board. I call him over and we sit eating together to catch-up on our lives. He is working on Secondment with the Healthy Buddies program and promoting a sponsored healthy living curriculum for collaboration elementary teachers to use. I am on my way alone to Camp without a busload of kids or plugged toilets.

A LATE WALK HOME

Finally the meeting is over, Gloria has left and Dave and I close up the building together at 10:29 pm. He is riding home and as I didn't bring my bike today, I have an evening walk before me.

"Good night, Dave, safe ride home."

"See you tomorrow, I'm in tomorrow morning for Big Bob, he has a medical."

"Oh good, maybe you can help me get rid of that old couch in the basement that he sleeps on."

Late night PAC meeting (Parent Advisory Committee) can be tediously long and more so with a disorganized chairperson who doesn't know when to stop talking and move the business of the meeting along. I am so tired of doing their minute keeping. I would rather listen attentively and make my own notes. But, oh well, Gloria and I have no choice if they can't find someone to be the PAC secretary.

Walking along 6th Ave the boulevard trees are in full leaf now. The leaves are still so green even though it is dark. Odd how the street lights give off enough illumination so the tree colours stand out. I wonder what green hue they make in direct sunlight? Maybe I'll ride back this way tomorrow morning instead of my usual ride route. Lovely flowers in front of that house; I see that

the old car that is used as a flower box is filled with impatiens. The colours were chosen to match the pink caddy.

On my walk home, I often see students out playing in front of their houses. One evening, two boys playing hockey stop and look up as I slow down to chat. They wave me on and I am soon joined by my wife coming toward me.

“Hi, hey Jake look!”

“Hi Mr. Bruce”

“Hello Jake. Hi Mitchell. Who’s winning?”

“Mitchell, but his stick is wider.”

“Yeah, but I’m the goalie”

“Well keep practicing, enjoy your game.”

But tonight the hockey goal is leaning empty outside the gate. No boys in sight, the house is dark and the lights are off. Tonight’s PAC was also a shut out; the meeting poorly attended as usual. Such a shame as this is the fourth time in as many months with only the familiar parents coming out.

Journal Entry... after Ferry Coffee

Another coffee break at the Campbell River Esso station. This June morning, a Tuesday, finds me driving up the island highway, comfortably traveling at 110 km/hr and not at school. Last evening was Gloria’s retirement and I was pleased to delay my departure and attend such a nice celebration of her career. It shows how well loved she was, and how much she has done for so many people including me.

Honoring Gloria in this way was important to me, and because I was part of the organizing committee team that put the Hycroft event together, I personally witnessed how much she has contributed as a professional colleague and a committed educator, during a 31-year career.

Another group of grade sevens left yesterday at 5:00 am for Strathcona Park Lodge, and as planned, I am driving alone to meet up with the camp group today. Getting off the Nanaimo ferry at

8:30am, the quiet hum of highway driving settles my thoughts. I arrived in Campbell River at 10:10, nicely relaxed, my thoughts drifting over the year's memories of the English program students waiting for me. Most I have gotten to know over the past two years, having been involved in handling discipline, playground mischief and daily reminders to modify their adolescent energies. I feel proud to be seeing another group of young people about to move on to high school.

ENTRY-EXIT PLAN (*Liz's list of objects*)

Before finally leaving yesterday, Liz hands me a pile of papers that are for my VP reference. Among them are the official instructions exiting administrators are required to complete for their incoming replacements. (In this case, for me.) This Entry-Exit plan, mostly a checklist of locations and tasks, is Liz's legacy to me and my quick ready-reference for locating specific admin items for KES. (A sort of *transfer of command* but more like tossing a set of keys with a final "good luck" wink as they swagger off.) I am holding the sheet from Liz and after reading to the end of the second page I start laughing out loud. Just like her to do the plan her own way.

Angus, the rest of the topics are on the list below but the damn thing is too long, too much work and too exhausting to do in detail with so little time left. So for heaven's sake, just call me or email me if you have questions on any of the following seventy-five topics. This is my KES gift to you! Just call me for the details when needed

- Liz

Entry-Exit DETAILS for New VP ADMIN

OUTGOING: Liz Clapper In-coming: Angus Bruce July 2005

SCHOOL PHILOSOPHY

VP – ADMINISTRATIVE DUTIES 30%, with 70% for Teaching English Language Arts grade 7
VP – ADMIN - CRITICAL INCIDENTS involving threats, death, illness or mental illness.

VP – HEALTH AND SAFETY committee for staff WorkSafe issues

VP – STAFF EVALUATIONS

You're new so the VP doesn't do them until their second year here.

VP – PERSONAL GROWTH PLAN ROUTINE

For your contractual health, meet in December with the Principal and outline your goals.

VP – STUDENT EDUCATIONAL AIDS - Performance Reviews

VP – TEACHING DUTIES

Varies each year, check the timetable used to communicate with whom the VP works. 70% teaching is in fact not enough and 30 % administrative time often becomes more, which means instructional time is taken from children for urgent admin duties.

VP – AUDIO AND TECHNICAL EQUIPMENT.

Not really your job, but often is. Especially every time the teacher who volunteered can't be found and you have to set stuff up in a rush.

VP – SCHOOL SUPPLIES FOR NEXT YEAR - BULK ORDER ROUTINE

The VSB buyer will contact you. Most of this is now electronic order forms. Watch the teachers, they often miss the memo and forget their real needs.

VP – BASEMENT AREA...- This is a special gift for you.

Memo TO: Angus and Gloria Nov. 20, 2006

Subject: Basement Behaviour

It was a full-time job today for all 3 of us telling kids it was an "outside day". Many of the kids were running through both basements playing tag & man hunt. We tell them not to bring the game inside but it happens again. I have given repeat offenders time out & taken them out of the game but it is rampant – as one group leaves another comes into the basement. An official reminder would hopefully be helpful. Thanks, Silvia, Supervision aide

VP – CONFIDENTIAL FILES – FREEDOM OF INFORMATION & ACCESS
VP – CURRICULUM SUPPORT
VP – DATA COLLECTION LITERACY & GROWTH
VP – DIFFICULT PARENTS
VP – ENGLISH PROGRAM
VP – FIAO MEETINGS
VP – FILES, RECORDS AND LETTERS (NOT THE CONFIDENTIAL ONES)
VP – FOOTPRINTS
VP – FORMS ALL TYPES BLANKS FOR DIFFERENT PURPOSES
VP – FRENCH IMMERSION RESPONSIBILITIES
VP – FURNITURE AND REQUISITIONS
VP – KEYS
VP – MINISTRY Stuff: SERVER ACCESS CODE: DATA, REPORTS, RECORDS, 1701...

Today I have no power!

Chaos during the Primary Music I was asked to do while Gloria was away today. With four primary classes of unruly kids, once they all started to see the 4 boys in grade 1 misbehaving and showing off I was done for. It was a complete disaster. A hundred primary voices out of control and I could do nothing but watch and wait for them to settle down.

INTELLECTUAL STATUS (My Poetic Authority)

The scientific/literal dichotomy is positively
caught in the metaphor,
outside
framing a dualistic view of objectivity.

No such world exists, beyond a mind
filled with technical rationality and separation
for drawing linear sanctions

ill placed,
having no vacuum to occupy.

Space
a useless distinction in the between,
impossible
ill placed, vacuous borders.

Bridging, edgy edges, boundaries mark
in-betweens and striding leaps over space
metonymic moments defined,
outside sanctioned frames.

Here, unfolding as we dwell in/through the text
expressed in/with Aoki form
amidst, presence and absence.

We are a singular-plural,
indwelling
the spaces, relationality refolding in
equality, equals without authority.

NARRATIVE RESEARCH/ER – SPRING 2007

I am rushing to finish my research paper and it's late, the clock reads 10 pm. I should have been home sooner but was tied up at school with yet another unnecessarily long Parent Council meeting. What I've written so far sits on the screen of my laptop. The introduction to narrative studies is a paper I'm preparing to give at next week's class of my Arts Based Education Research (ABER) course.

From: Tom Grant
Sent: December 19, 2006
To: Angus Bruce
Subject: RE: Learning Inquiry Applicant

Greetings;

Once again, thank you for your application to participate in the 2006/07 Learning Inquiry. I appreciate the thought and effort that was invested in deciding to apply, and completing the detailed application form.

As you are aware, the budget for the Learning Inquiry was recently reduced. Consequently there will be no new Learning Inquiry Sites; however, the Learning and Development Team is very interested in exploring ways in which you and your school could be supported in pursuing the issue or topic that you identified in your learning Inquiry application. We would like to invite you to a meeting on January 10/07 to discuss this question. Let me know whether you can attend the meeting.

Thanks > Tom

From: Gloria Morningstar
Sent: January 08, 2007
To: Angus Bruce
Subject: FW: Learning Inquiry2006-2007 Applicants

So, Angus, I know this is an important initiative for you. I expect you'll attend this and then come back for the 12:45 staff meeting, right? I'm at an Association meeting, but have told them I have to leave by 12:30 pm to be back too.

Cheers, Gloria

Sexuality and the French Poster (see appendix B for image)

I am dealing with a discipline matter and the student involved is in my office talking to me when there is an end of the day knock at my office door. Staz, one of my grade 7 students, wants to speak to me. He is clearly upset, and not wishing to be in a confined space with two grade 7 boys at the same moment, I suggest Staz and I move into the hallway so I can find a better place to talk privately.

“They told me you don’t think my picture is appropriate or something about it should be redone.”

I pause to gather my thoughts.

“Frankie, can you excuse me for a moment?”

Staz, come with me into the nurse’s room so we can talk. But, first, let me find a copy of your drawing...” Ah, where did I put it... (rifling through a stack of papers on my table), got it!

We move to the next room and I close the door. Holding Staz’s poster picture in front of us, I speak and point to his images. It shows two dancers in a Latin dance embrace, the lady’s dress is very short, she is leaning back with her bent leg rising in a suggestive kick...

“There is nothing wrong with this picture, I did my best to draw two adults.” Staz is trying to defend his choices, but I interrupt.

“You asked me to comment on the drawing, you don’t need to defend it. I understand you drew it and I am delighted by your creative talents. It is very good. I am impressed.”

“But in my emails, private emails to adults, I expressed a view that it was an adult image and perhaps not one for elementary school children. I have a responsibility to monitor what we post on our walls at KES and a school is not where we normally place adult and provocative images. That is all I said.”

Trying hard to get him to see my view, I speak softly to him, “Staz, have you finished the drawing completely?”

“Yes, and we have copied it several times.”

“Oh, would you have to redo the master copy completely if the dress were made longer?”

“Yes, but it was shorter originally. That’s what dancers really wear for Latin dance.”

Realizing he doesn’t really see how the stylized image has sexual overtones, I continue to explain.

“Yes, I understand, but... you see the woman’s exposed thigh is very close to the man’s groin and I am prepared to allow this poster, but we, I and all the grade 7s on the Gala committee have 30 copies around the school to watch.” I pause, being cautious about my next remarks, as I find it difficult and I don’t wish to spoil his artistic view of his own work...”We are going to have to watch carefully everyday, to make sure that some one does not draw in something else that doesn’t belong. Do you get my meaning? Is that ok?”

He's grinning now, "Sure, let's give it a try and see what happens, but nothing will."

And nothing did, thank goodness!

That nagging voice again...10 minutes until my learning assistance group, hurry up Angus -- now where were they in the math text? It was somewhere here on the table...Geez! I have to make some time to tidy up these loose piles of paper...

Christmas Card 2006

Pierre, Joyeux Noel

It has been a pleasure working with you this year. I hope you have a restful holiday and get well rested for your Quebec trip. Your consideration and thoughtfulness for students and your willingness to be involved in various extra activities at KES is wonderful. Thank you and keep up the good work. Have a Happy New Year. - Angus

WRITING INTERACTIONS IN ENGLISH CLASS

Before I taught in the French immersion English classes I had extensive time teaching intermediate students in grades 5, 6 or 7. Much of this time, specifically grade 6 and 7, gave me ample exposure to the language capabilities of these age groups. It took me awhile to figure out a program at KES that would work for grade 7 Immersion students. The full English language arts curriculum is focused on reading and writing comprehension and effective presentation. Within my limited weekly contact it took sometimes before I found a reasonable approach, and I insisted it was essential that instruction had to be a minimum of two hours each week.

With a short amount of time each week to teach English and very little marking time, I tended to keep the writing elements that I presented to students short. So my English writing

assignments focused on practicing coherent short passages of no more than one page, maybe 200 words at the most.

Over my three years of teaching English, I developed several good poetry units that were especially gratifying for the end of each year. Not only were these lessons easy to teach, but they created very satisfying opportunities for students to freely discover and engage in poetry making. It was clear by their responses to poetry that they were doing this poetry for fun; it was not about a mark, and it wasn't about demonstrating some understanding as an outcome. What I observed was sheer enjoyment. And as a group we shared that enjoyment through reciting, thinking and talking about basic poetry structures: couplets, raps, stanza, rhyme, metre, syllablization and sound (Cinquain, Quatrain, Haiku). Specific rules of form and poetic structure were taught and learned; however more simply the students became aware of the delight that belonged to poetic expression. They realized that ultimately all poetry can be thought of as not bound by rules or that any rules, once considered, could still be broken for the poetic effect and creative purpose the poet desired.

Vices and email rushing...

**%#s*t, look at the time! Just need to finish this email, the class will be waiting for me. I wonder if their teacher has left them before I show up. ... please get back to me if you think the budget for the Gala fund raiser needs any other considerations. Sincerely – Angus, there... now I've got to run...*

WORDS THINK US INTO BEING

I read that Alberto Manguel (2007) believes words fashioned for common use have acquired the power to fashion thought itself. Interesting idea, that the imagination of words have a reifying role. In using a word, that word is refashioned and has an existence in another person's mind. Words think us into being. Words not only express but create thought as an imaginative engagement with our efforts to signify the signified.

Christmas Card 2007

Eileen, have a wonderful and Merry Christmas break.

Your wonderful work for the school is beyond expectations and we appreciate it immensely. Your care for children, your unruffled nature and your wry humour are a daily welcome for Gloria and me. Do enjoy the holiday. May it be fun filled and relaxing with the family.

We'll see you in the New Year

– Angus

WHO AM I REALLY?

Six months since Gloria retired and I need to ask her for a reference. Maybe I should write and ask Gloria for some advice on my next administrative assignment.

May 11, 2008

Sunday afternoon

Dear Gloria,

It seems strange to be writing a letter to you on Mother's Day. We haven't spoken since your kind thank you note last September. Thank you for that. I thought I would see you at the Joint Administrator's Dinner but unfortunately I have another conflict with the date and won't be able to catch up on all that is new in our lives.

I am writing for advice on how to begin my next assignment to ensure a successful entrance. During my study leave I spent time reading about meaningful curriculum, observed phenomena and more on writing for self-inquiry. This is a reflective process and in the academic jargon it is a subjective connecting of self as both observer and participant in the place one works, just as I feel successful administrators do. The term used for this is *reflexive* - thinking and rethinking the drama of administration. Sitting now in the comfort of

my home and having no school related responsibilities it seems obvious I am not the person who started with you in 2005, but who am I now?

The fall term at KES was busy; as I am sure you have been informed by Principal Maggie. My six month leave of absence has been full of surprises. Studying and writing is another form of intense and demanding activity though I am only occupied by my own agenda and not the insistences of others. Demands I place on myself have kept me busy, with this being at present 126 days of continuous research writing, and more to follow.

I took this time to finish my research inquiry and write a narrative thesis. This has been a continuous effort for me and very enlightening. I am now glad HR refused my request for a part-time admin assignment; I would not have accomplished as much as these last 126 days have allowed. This UBC term, I have finished an interesting course in arts-based research and through it have reconnected to my own creative delights in writing poetry. (How is your own art making going?)

From time to time I drop by KES. The spring community event was yesterday and was well attended. It was similar to previous years with all the regular faces of course. It ran later in the day but there were perhaps 300 people during the first two hours. From time to time, I have come by to see staff and Noah's class in particular. It is interesting to observe the social organization of a school, and certainly more so when I am no longer so intimately connected.

Myrna and Eileen are a delight as always to visit in the office, and seem disappointed that I don't come by more often. In many ways the privilege of working with such groups of people at a school is a double honor when later you are welcomed to drop by and in a relaxed manner spend time, watch and observe without responsibilities; a distancing for me that has highlighted how certain things change, while others don't. People, and roles change, the necessary work gets done, and life moves on.

During April I returned more often for visits; my UBC term was over and I could answer the “how is the thesis going?” question with more conviction. Strangely I was given complimentary comments by people who missed me. If memory serves, I was not always the recipient of such comments when I first came in 2005, and some were very hurtful. (“*The new VP needs to go to charm school.*”) In my novice role I naively disconcerted people, though unintentionally, by not conforming to the expectation people read into my authoritative role and professional language. You and I spoke several times about “perceptions” and “what are you going to do about it, Angus?” and for this I am terribly grateful for your insistence. Still, it’s with some trepidation that I anticipate the next school. Have I changed or will I suffer through it all again I wonder?

So, if you have any thoughts for me, I would welcome some mentoring regarding how to arrive anew and move into my next school in a way that best demonstrates my goodwill and my talents. Any words, advice or warnings would be appreciated; possible pitfalls and philosophical traps to avoid, or ways to ensure positive relations within a new administrative partnership. I remain passionate about service and teaching children and providing leadership that improves the experiences of others and I continue to be encouraged by Chris’s clarity and vision for the VSB.

In friendship and spring light (say hello to your husband for me)

- Angus

GLORIA’S FIRST REPLY

Personal email: June 4, 2008
Subject: Thanks for your letter

Dear Angus,

I fully intended to write to you in response to your lovely letter... thank you for your kind words and thoughts. I haven't kept up on any district or KES news, although I

did hear from Maggie about Ruth and have written to her. Ruth replied and it sounds like her prognosis is good. I also just got a call from Maggie today, and hear that 'our crazy problem' is finally retiring. That will be a relief to everyone, I'm sure!

Long ago, I meant to respond to your letter, then saw today that it was dated May 11th – yikes, the days do evaporate! I want to put some thought behind my comments so, please, just be patient. I loved your final lines: "I remain passionate about service and teaching children and providing leadership that improves the experiences of others and I continue to be encouraged by Chris' clarity and vision for the VSB." Hurrah! I'm with you all the way on all that you said there. So, I'll write. Soon.

Give our love to your wife. All the best! G & W

Journal Entry, Perilous Work

The phenomena of my authority and people's perceptions of power continue to plague me. Everything I do seems fraught with hazards and disappointments. Being the VP is perilous work for my selfhood.

Who am I really? This person who holds such authority to lead and work with others in educating children, while still being just a person with rough edges, yet to be sculpted and shaped for a better me? Am I a lightning rod for shaping a better school?

DAKOTA IS AT RISK

Children live in day-to-day moments, blissfully unaware of the perils adults see around them. Some children have the most remarkable abilities for resilience and survival amidst the collection of fun, thrills and dangers a large metropolis like Vancouver offers. Dakota was rather foolishly capable of leaving the safety of her Grandfather's care to wander freely and follow where her moods took her. On such wanderings she would meet strangers of all types and ages, and innocently tag along, often the recipient of various gestures of kindness they might offer. Dakota was 12 years old and just beginning puberty when she enrolled at Kits Elementary for grade 7 but was considered to be academically and intellectually delayed.

The first worry...

Dakota “arrived” first as a thick file of “*histories*” hand-delivered by the District Alternative Programs Manager who meets with Gloria, the grade 7 teacher, and me, the week before Dakota is to enroll. The Manager is asking us to help her out by allowing Dakota to be placed here, there seems to be no other safe place for her. The meeting is friendly, but the Manager trying to shine the best possible light on this young girl’s sorry life... “*we have no where else to place her...*”, “*I’ll arrange transportation from the shelter, and for sure you will have a half-time female SSA, as we know that she is at severe risk.*” This is an expensive child if she has an SSA. I’m wondering if there is another set of worries?... The manager continues reading more details, “*...at age four she was abandoned on the street... her paternal grandfather has custody now... First Nations Ministry of Children... staying in a downtown shelter, no other kids around... grandfather has no resources...she’s developmentally below grade... female classroom aid will be assigned because...*”

“*Hello Dakota, my name is Mr. Bruce. I am the Vice-Principal.*”

“*Oh.*” A wide-eyed young girl with her long dark hair pulled back looks at me briefly, but her face is turning to take in the hallway corridors. She is smiling; her complexion is spotted with acne.

I realize she might not understand the job title, “*Do you know what that is?*”

“*No,*” she says without any visible sign of self-consciousness or interest in finding out.

“*I am like the Principal, I help run the school.*”

Her grandfather in a wheelchair is with her, and unless he is speaking to me he avoids eye contact and keeps rolling his chair wheels in a back and forth rhythm as if the ground has slippery traction. Dakota is looking about the hallway where we are meeting, but doesn’t pause long enough in her glances to be discriminating or reading details. I wonder if she is anxious? I wonder what she is thinking about.

“*Do you want to see your new class?*” (She nods.) “*I’ll show you the room just down here. There is someone else I would like to introduce you to, his name is Gordie.*”

We turn and walk/roll down the hall, *“How will Dakota be getting home?”* Grandfather asks me.

“I understand that you came by taxi today. We will arrange for the taxi to take her home too.”

He’s noticeably relieved, *“Good. If it’s not a bother, I can’t take the taxi to pick her up, so can she take it by herself back to our place Downtown?”*

“Yes, I believe the taxi will pick her up from your place downtown, bring her in the morning and at the end of the day we will make sure she is safely picked up and sent home the same way.”

The second worry & more dangerous...

Grandfather is on his cell phone to me early Monday morning. *“Hello Mr. Bruce, I didn’t know what to do. Dakota skipped out Friday night and was gone all weekend. I was worried sick, and I then called the police.”*

“She’s here today at school; did she come home?”

“Yes the police brought her home after they found her wandering over the Lions Gate Bridge. She says she didn’t know where she was or what was the right way to go. So she just kept on walking. She skipped out on me Saturday afternoon and I waited until Sunday morning, then I called the police to say she was missing.”

Why would he wait so long I wonder; does he have any idea how much at risk she might be in Downtown Vancouver overnight on a Saturday? Calmly I ask, *“Has she done this before?”*

“Not really, usually just a few hours, but then she comes back in. This was the first time over night,” he says.

Dakota lives in the moment. Innocent and without any perception of the dangers a young girl is risking being on the streets at night. How would she; after all, she had to live there before. What are we going to do to teach her how to make safer decisions? Michelle (SSA), her teacher and I need a safety plan...

Sent: Friday January 05, 2007

To: Angus Bruce

Cc: Taylor May, Debbie Duer, Dolly Mudder, Ian MacDonald

Subject: Re: We're NOT going to Quebec yet!

Hi Angus, There is a danger that the fund-raising and school-monies will become confused, should

we have to return people's money.

Just to clarify, we have received deposit cheques from 31 families and 2 requests for financial aid. That means 33 students and 4 adult chaperones. How will we deal with this if the YMCA will allow us a group of 37 to travel?

Also, a reminder to include in your next FI newsletter a request for all installment cheques, the fourth is due Feb 5th 2007. These funds now equal the full cost (\$800) of each child's travel, should we have no further fundraising success.

Thanks, Anna Cohen

From: Debbie Duer
Sent: Monday, November 20, 2006
To: FI Steering Committee
Subject: RE: Tracking Canucks Hockey Tickets Sales

Hi Folks, I am not in favour of keeping track of everyone's fundraising involvement for the following reasons. - Keeping track takes a lot of energy that can be used for other aspects of the trip. - score-keeping exercises can cause a lot of bad feelings in a group over fairness of time vs fairness of money raised; - pettiness mentality, instead of just pitching in you get an "If I do xyz, I had better get credit for this and that."

I would rather ask people to participate in fundraising. If they do not want to, we give them the option of paying a direct donation. I would present it as an honour system, and is a small price to pay for generating a better community feeling.

Those are just my thoughts. >Debbie

_____ □ _____

Chapter Five – Authority and Identity

I'm goin' down to the railroad

Lay my head on the track

But if I see the train a-comin'

I'll jerk it back

ANONYMOUS

DANGERS THE VP SHOULD AVOID

From: Liz (out going VP)

Sent: September 12, 2005

To: Angus Bruce

Subject: Health & Safety Inspection - Dangerous things

Hi Angus,

The most recent H & S inspection was last Spring, it's the one you were specifically referring to about loose animals. (Not the adults but the warm blooded pets.) Get in touch with the VSB Safety Officer, Colleen, and ask her to tour the school.

Good luck on fixing this!

Liz

LEARNING ABOUT DANGEROUS THINGS

In California, Gever Tulley, a computer scientist and software designer, speaks of his belief in allowing children to freely explore their surroundings and to live experiences without the extremes of excessive safety zones. Tulley argues that learning to live in the physical world is not without risk. But, we live in a world subjected to increasing amounts of stringent child safety regulations that sometimes seem unreasonable. Tulley is the founder of a summer youth program called Tinkering School, where kids of all ages learn to problem-solve. Allowing his students to be

creative and giving them access to tools and equipment they build things they have designed. While “they do come back bruised, scraped and bloodied” from Tinkering School, at the same time they have valuable learning opportunities to be creative, confident, and in control of the environment around them, so they learn to be safe by themselves.

Tulley criticizes the over-protectedness of child safety regulations and how these are shrinking the boundaries of each child’s safe zone. In the USA, he argues there is excessive warning labeling on everything, cautioning users of potential suffocation, choking, cutting, burning and bruising. This means children have no experience of things with “pokey bits or sharp edges” and will, without previous curious and gentle exposure, truly hurt themselves. He believes teaching children to understand that objects without round corners are safe to use and that interacting with the world we live in should and does have some degree of normal risks. He believes, with guidance, children can and should learn cautious approaches to exploring their environment and their own physical limits.

Taking a similar viewpoint, I realized the parallels for my administrative world could leave me “bruised, scraped and bloodied”. Gloria is always cautioning me about “things to avoid”, “be careful about...”, “ stay away from” saying..., “have you considered...” and while her worries are well-intentioned, my own experience of the administrative, “pokey bits” is valuable learning for me.

Tulley, in a video talk on Ted.com, speaks of the “Five Dangerous Things you Should Let Your Kids Do”, which is part of his forthcoming book titled “50 Dangerous things for Kids.” His attention is focused on children aged 8 to 10 years and in his presentation he excerpts from his book the following five things: (1) play with fire, (2) own a pocket-knife, (3) learn to throw spears, (4) copy others’ good ideas, such as breaking the digital media copyright act, and (5) take apart household appliances to see how they function, including allowing children to drive the family car in an empty parking lot. His list prompted me to consider my own list of VP dangers.

From: VSB Safety Officer
Sent: September 16, 2005
To: Vice-Principal KES, Angus Bruce
Subject: Health & Safety Inspection – Lizards & Rats

Angus & Gloria,

Nice to meet you both yesterday during my walk around.... Hope your first week back was filled with lots of great moments, in addition to the challenges! Please pass along my thanks to Big Bob for meeting with me yesterday to review the issue from the July incident where the escaped classroom rats and lizards interfered with the summer carpet cleaner's work. As it turned out, none of these animals were in the classroom when I visited and my recommendation would be that they not return...

Again, I refer you to the VSB Policy and the BCSPCA recommendations around Choosing Classroom Pets, Humane Habitats, and many other issues. I will be writing this incident up in my update to help other schools find a better perspective on classroom pet issues.

Take Care, Colleen

NEGOTIATING ENTRY (Waiting For Acceptance)

Have I mentioned I am often uncomfortable with the authority people give me? It is not in my nature to take over. Yes, I can run things, manage tasks and share my awareness from an authoritative point of view. This phenomenon of being given responsibility for others and their welfare is counter-intuitive to me. Co-evolution of learning and complex learning theories suggest a new view which is *mindful* of what is taken for granted by previous models (Davis, Sumara & Luce-Kapler, 2000). Complex systems thinking have given rise to new views and new challenges to assumptions of the past. "Complex learning theories are ones that regard the learner in such complex terms," where knowledge for the learner is "contingent, contextual, and evolving; never absolute, universal, or fixed" (p.78). Human learning and my learning as an administrator, is more a reaching out than a taking in. It is a participation with others, and therefore better described as a co-participation of learning.

From: Debbie Duer
Sent: December 01, 2006
To: Angus Bruce; Gloria Morningstar
Subject: Draw Winner of the HOCKEY TICKETS fundraiser

Hello Angus, Can you believe it? Matt Vent lost the tickets he won today... He is sure that he had them when he left school but I just wanted to check in to see if maybe they were turned in to the office. Let me know if you hear anything. Have a great weekend.

>Debbie

From: Angus Bruce
Sent: December 04, 2006
To: Susie Vent
Subject: Missing CANUCK TICKETS?

Is this really true!? Or did you find them? Wonder of wonders. Nothing turned up here, and the game is tonight. - AB

DANGEROUS THINGS – Avoid them at your peril.

Why is risk-taking healthy and in what way does it strengthen a person's character? I have a normal fear of being misjudged and I am overly self-conscious that people will consider me a dimwit, as I don't have verbal alacrity. I am a cautious listener and have a reflective temperament. I seem unable to defend myself with language when I should as this is a part of my language disability. Later, I brow-beat myself with what I should have said, speaking back defensively only in my imagined replay of events, after carefully scrutinizing my doubts and word choices. I spend too much time inside my head. Spoken words just don't seem to come out as they should, so I take my time.

Often I think risk-taking makes you wiser and stronger. In my case, taking creative chances often proves to be most gratifying and I enjoy earning the respect of others from doing it. However, during the first month of working with Gloria, I could have used a more restrained approach. Now

that I look back, I realize I was rather impulsive and should have spoken less, heeding my own temperament to listen and watch Gloria more, and gain her confidence gradually.

From: Susie Vent
Sent: December 04, 2006
To: Angus Bruce
Subject: RE: Missing CANUCK TICKETS?

Yes, Matt lost them!!! However, apparently technology is such that tickets can be voided and reissued. Shirley and her family were wonderful and managed to do this for him. Matthew and his dad picked up replacement tickets on Saturday, before the game.

The irony of the situation is that while I am on Matt's case about many things, losing things is usually not one of them. He has never lost a house key or bus pass. He was absolutely devastated on Friday night. I have never seen him so upset, so mad at himself and so humbled (for lack of a better word).

So the little man who the day before was rather full of himself was suddenly very contrite. With suggestions from us, he made all the phone calls and apologies and arrangements with Shirley and her family. He has already called for the donor's address so that he can send a thank-you note to him and Shirley after the game. It has been a good learning experience for Matthew (if not a little stressful for us, but who said parenting was easy). I am quite sure that there will not be a more appreciative fan in the rink tonight. He looked very excited as they left for the game an hour ago.

Thanks for checking up on the situation. Take care, Susie

More, DIFFICULT PEOPLE ...

From: Tish Leah (Madeline's mother)
Sent: January 17, 2007
To: Angus Bruce
Subject: Sex in classroom

Hi Angus

I am not opposed to sex education having just sent Madeline to a course offered by Meg Hickling, (who is a well respected sex educator in Vancouver) but what happened in Monica's class last week was highly inappropriate. I gather the students were asked to write down all the words they knew that were related to sex, including street slang. She then read these out and explained what they meant. She used amazingly poor judgment in describing sexual practices that should not have been discussed in a grade 7 class. If every parent of a child in that class was shown the list of words that she talked about, I think they would be very upset.

As Monica doesn't seem to understand what is appropriate and what isn't, I have totally lost confidence in her teaching sex ed. I believe the class should be suspended until she can assure the parents that she will only discuss what is listed in the curriculum or, if she can't give us this assurance, then the school nurse needs to take over.

After this situation has been discussed with Monica, I need to hear what has been decided.

Thank you, Tish Leah

OTHER PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCES

In my role as a school vice-principal I share the administrative duties of a large elementary school and the community of people it serves. My educational work involves both teaching and facilitating others. I refer to this as leadership, but a single label is inadequate to describe the work I actually do.

In 2006, at the annual student conference event I help organize, I listened to the Superintendent of Schools for Vancouver, Chris Kelly, give the opening address. The focus of the annual conference is student service learning and leadership, and it was appropriate that Chris spoke about the importance for each of us in giving our attention to community service and contributing to decisions which better the lives of others. He went on to explain his understanding of leadership: **"Leadership is taking responsibility for the quality of other people's experiences"** (Kelly)¹⁰.

For personal reasons and in my search for a meaningful VP identity, his remarks were timely and salutary. At the time I was finishing my sixth month as a new VP and the quality of my

experiences were at a low point. I was dealing with the newness of the VP role, still developing a relationship dynamic with my administrative partner Gloria, and suffering a little from the lack of light that is often a feature of January in Vancouver, all of which conspires to put me in a state of self-doubt. Chris's words were an epiphany for me and I immediately wrote them down and have reflected on his statement numerous times since.

From: Office of School Superintendent
Sent: May 15, 2006
To: Elementary Office Admin; Elementary Admin
Subject: Dangers in Board Policy Manual- updates

Please be advised that revisions/amendments were made to the policies noted below. The VSB policy manual is located online at www.vsb.bc.ca under the section entitled District Information-Policy Manual.

INH	Alternatives to Dissection – new policy
EBCC-R	Bomb Threats – Regulation - revised
EBCC-E	Bomb Threats – Pictorial Exhibits - removed

>Business Administration Coordinator
VSB Area Office

From: Angus Bruce
Sent: May 15, 2006
To: Michel Beault
Subject: Dangerous things - Outdoor Regulations

Hi Michel, The list of camp gear for students causes me some worry.

The waiver has been ok'd by my Legal people. As long as parents sign it, the school doesn't have to.

About the dangers and regulations:

- 1 - Why do you suggest needing pocket knives? I would rather not have grade 7's bringing them
- 2 - Won't camping foams get wet in the open shelters overnight?
- 3 - Can you send me your camp expectations so I can align them with those we have for our school outdoor trips. I presume you go over the basics once students arrive for camp.

> Angus

From: Angus
Sent: January 17, 2007
To: Gloria
Subject: RE: Sex Ed and Body Health

Copied, just to let you see for yourself what Tish is saying. As you know she can be a reactive parent for many issues. I am not surprised she feels that Sexual education is a topic that must be strictly controlled.

Would you arrange a meeting with Monica to discuss what went on in her grade 7 class last week?

Thanks, -Angus

From: Clan Camp Powell River [from Michel Beault]
Sent: May 15, 2006
To: Angus Bruce
Subject: French Outdoor Center regulations

Bonjour Angus, Please send the food and medical Excel file soon. The medical waivers in paper you can bring when you come up.

For your questions:

- 1) Knives are on the list because kids like pocket knives and have usually nobody teaching them how to use them. We take the time to do it.
- 2) Camping foams might get wet, but that is the challenge for the camper. It is only 1 overnight event. We have an extra dozen for any that get wet and can't be traded with the next night's group.
- 3) I have attached the expectations document used for staff training as it contains all the information pertaining to expectations we have for both the staff and the campers. Staff are then responsible for making sure they explain those dangers and expectations to campers. It is in French however, for obvious reasons.

> Michel

Directeur; Le C.L.A.N. Centre de leadership et d'aventure en nature

From Angus Bruce
Sent: Monday, December 18, 2006
To: Ian MacDonald
Cc: Anna Cohen
Subject: FW: Money and paperwork due date

Hi Ian, in readiness for the application deadline I will need to enclose a cheque for \$1560 (\$40x39)

to the YMCA. How will you get this to me?

Also, what is the balance the school owes the parents? I want to arrange getting this cheque to you.

- AB

From: Ian MacDonald

Sent: Wednesday December 20, 2006

To: Angus Bruce

Cc: Anna Cohen

Subject: Re: Money and paperwork due date

Hi Angus,

Anna and I made a second attempt to arrive at a specific number that could be justified and explained based on the numbers that are available. However, we were unable to do so. Per our last discussion on this topic, we had determined that the number was in the range of \$1,521 - \$2,521. Do you think that we could come up with the right number if we sat down once more to hash over the numbers? Or can we come up with an alternative solution that would minimize the effort?

Ian

Journal Entry – not understanding - the dark side of suspicion

The French Assault is upon Gloria and me. Where is the money Anna wants to know?! This parent certainly seems to think she has a right to know our business. She is unable to let go of something and trust that others (such as Gloria and I) are doing the best we can.

After the confrontation with the French Immersion parent over money matters, I am not certain any administrator is safe from false accusations. Gloria is not taking it very well. She fumes over the matter if the slightest mention of it occurs.

After Anna sent that detailed set of accusations in writing to the Superintendent's office, it seems to be taking on parameters of a serious witch hunt. All of which is so unnecessary; Gloria has been completely honest and open. It's just the archaic accounting system the School District use that makes it so difficult to show the reality of our school accounts!

QUESTION: ARE THERE THINGS TO AVOID?

Starting with the *Place*, I would like to describe the *landscape* of my work, the school and its community of people. In particular let me construct a view of it through the gaze of children and my work with them. This isn't a dangerous place, except in the nature of the relationships that must be maintained. Gloria certainly keeps reminding me to be careful and avoid certain situations with people.

In fact I am not sure that there is evidence of any *Place*, or *inBetween* that has to be avoided. What is implied by this statement? What objects, events or issues are so negative or so harmful, that if a VP happens to 'arrive' on the edge of an unwanted experience something unavoidable will happen? Bruises mend and wounds heal, in time and we learn from those explorations that mark us.

The unexpected will always happen with children. The younger they are the more likely this is the experience. My view of children's learning, their situated authority and the lived experience that gives them meaningful encounters with their senses is called *social constructivism* (Davis, Sumara & Luce-Kapler, 2000). It requires an adherence to a belief in their personal autonomy and the concept of *subsidiarity* (Abbot 2002). A fine example happened in the spring during my experience while having tea with the new Kindergarten children.

THE POWER OF APPRECIATION

With the Appreciative Leadership approach to human relations, a group of administrators first practiced focusing on an asset view of our day and were encouraged to write daily about those things, situations and events for which we were simply grateful. The recording of these '*gratitudes*' continued for some time and I still use them when I need a structured method for beginning the mental task of writing, but am unsure of what I need to write about.

Twenty months into my new VP job, writing in my ‘*Gratitudes Book*’ became a daily exercise. Prior to doing this, I did not consider myself a “writer”; rather I wrote as needed—emails, letters, memos, instructions, explanations and lesson plans. These technical forms of writing were easy for me, and in the past three years my email output has proven the aphorism, *practice makes perfect* to be true. But *real* writing, such as composition, narrative, and expository prose were forms I felt incapable of achieving because of some deep rooted fears I felt. Reigniting my emotional connection to thoughts and experiences was about discovering writing as a creative outlet.

From: Ian MacDonald
Sent: January 09, 2007
To: Angus Bruce
Cc: Anna Cohen
Subject: Re: Money and paperwork due date

Hi Angus. Happy New Year.

Hope the break was a good one for you. Have you had a chance to think about the money the school owes the parents from the old French account yet?

> Ian

From Angus Bruce
Sent: Thursday, January 11, 2007
To: Ian MacDonald
Cc: Anna Cohen
Subject: RE: French Ex Money owed

Hello Ian, I have reviewed the accounts. I am unsure of how the 2005 tree sales have been counted; it seems that funds raised may be confused with net profit. However we resolve this money, it remains for us to come to a final number depending on our (1) available cash balance, (2) the effect on French Immersion resources and (3) our reckoning of camp cost, paid by the school for CLAN last spring.

As cash flow has been restricted all year on our School accounts, it is not a straight forward transfer. So to be fair I know we are good for \$1500 now, but the balance must in all fairness be decided by the larger Steering group.

Good News!

We have received confirmation of the BC government's grant for travel. It is equal to \$75 x 35 participants (\$2625). Funds have not yet been sent to the schools.

- AB

From: Ian MacDonald
Sent: Tuesday, January 16, 2007
To: Angus Bruce
Cc: Anna Cohen
Subject: Re: French Ex Money accounts and paperwork

Angus, Yes, let's get together to review the sources of all funds. I've talked to Anna and both of us are pretty flexible for afternoon next week. Please let us know what time is most suitable.

- Ian.

Journal Entry, March 2006

Dangers or Difficulties: are these just a matter of perception? It seems to me I need to start a list of hazards. (1) - False accusations; beware of parents who want control, (2) - Defending your actions will be viewed as having hidden agenda; (3) - Avoid any possible disasters in the making early, (4) - Dangerous things should be anticipated and planned for as if they are a certainty.

Journal Entry -

Living on the edge of chaos and having no worries is not a talent that comes naturally. It has taken me several years of looking over the edge to determine if I would fall and perish or not. The view is remarkable, but the vertigo can pull you in...

From: Angus Bruce
Sent: Wednesday February 21, 2007
To: Tom Grant
Subject: VP 2007/2008 Placement & Move Requests

Hello Tom,

Just finished sending my French Immersion group off by airplane this morning. Now I can get back

to some of my other priorities.

Re: my next placement; I am assuming we had this discussion already in December, with regard to Gloria's retirement decision. I have no need to meet again unless you need to dialogue possibilities with me. I am still open to going or staying until December 2007.

Cheers - Angus

DANNY

“Assessment for learning” is a concept aimed at children's authentic learning experiences. It is within this “self-controlled” experience that the principle of *subsidiarity* (Abbott 2002, 2005) is also shown (and the purpose for retelling Danny's story). I believe in a students' right to independent learning and John Abbot simplifies subsidiarity to mean “learning for your self” (2002).

The essence of self-directed learning for me is when the learner makes their own connections, and checks those conditions against what they already know. Another story I have, tells of how self-made learning was redirected by well intentioned adults.

DANNY'S NAME

At the spring Kindergarten introduction meeting we hold a Kindergarten Tea for parents and children. Mostly we want the enrolling children to visit the school prior to coming in September and it is also a way to show our facilities to everyone, as some are still ‘shopping’ for a school.

I wrote in my journal a few days later of my observations and involvement in the Kindergarten tea with next year's enrolling children. After our little walk-around together accompanied by intermediate peer helpers, we were all back with the adults, most of whom were mom's, having cookies and juice at the lunchroom tables. Seeing a group of three boys sitting together I went over to talk with one of them. In order to be at his level I knelt down at the short

table, also aware of avoiding the power dynamics implied by being taller and ‘above’ another person. (My age and the “uniform” carry more than enough elements of “coercive power”).)

KINDERGARTEN TEA

“Hi,” I say to all three boys, who seem to know each other judging from the familiar way they are interacting: all smiles and making easy eye contact—clearly a mischievous bunch when they choose to be.

I ask the boy closest to me, “*what’s your name?*” He has finished his cookie so his mouth is now empty.

“*Guess,*” he replies with a twinkle.

Game for some fun, I smile and answer back, “*Ok, but you’ll have to answer my questions to help me.*” I wait a moment and reflect that this could be more challenging than I want. “*What letter does your name begin with?*” I ask, but as soon as I ask and read his face I realize he probably doesn’t know his letters yet – after all he isn’t even in kindergarten yet.

I wait a little, and then suggest hopefully, “*what sound does your name begin with?*” During this exchange his mother has been standing in the back listening, as have the other boys.

One of the other boys offers “*duh*” and the boy I’ve asked says slowly “*wuh, wuh.*” Clearly he is practicing to make this separate sound and I am confused as to which sound or combinations is the one for his name. I offer “*Wayne, is your name Wayne?*” No luck, his mother is now shaking her head. He corrects himself and says “*duh, duh*”.

“*Oh,*” and I say back to him, “*does your name start with D?*” It seems to be yes and D now nods his head and his mother is smiling.

I decide to try another approach for success, “*how many letters does your name have?*” Now, an amazing set of things follows; while I am concerned that I’ve pushed the limits of D’s counting skills, he surprises me and takes his left hand, which has been on top of the table, brings it below the table and using his right hand

appears to be counting out the digits and spelling his name before giving me an answer.

While he is doing this, his mother is watching closely and can see from his digit pointing that he might not be getting the right count, which might cause either her embarrassment (or his) or prolong the *guess-my-name* game for me.

Before D is finished she bends down, and whispers into his ear. I, of course, know that she is telling him the right number. D now repeats loudly “*five*”, with a smile.

“*Ok, your name begins with D and has five letters.*” He keeps smiling but his mother is the one who nods to me, clearly enjoying the game but not wanting me to fail in my pursuit of his name. I suggest, “*David, Darren ... and Daniel?*” Simultaneously D shakes his head “no” while mother nods “yes,” then saying aloud “*Danny, yes Daniel.*”

“*Oh, got it, hi Danny,*” I say, “*nice to meet you.*” Standing up now, I look directly at everyone around the table and say “*that was fun, I look forward to seeing you all again,*” and I leave.

While I am walking away from this event, I realize this was an example of the mother breaching the principle of subsidiarity by taking Danny’s counting moment away from him. He knows his name, and the first letter sound but he may not know how many letters it contains. Clearly he has enough skills to find out for himself and endeavours to address the direct question of “how many letters” within his own authority. Until his mother intervened, Danny was in control of his own experience of learning.

John Abbot argues strongly against the long-standing practice within public education, of controlling and coercive teaching practices, which are contrary to human brain-research findings from the last ten years. These studies suggest that youth must be provided with gradual opportunities, just as in a classic apprenticeship, to develop and explore their own sense of direction and control.

PERCEPTIONS OF OTHERNESS

I began to rediscover writing during my time at KES, marked by two events. One happened while I was involved in a training session for Appreciative Leadership and the other gradually grew out of my attempts at teaching writing and literacy on a weekly basis with grade seven students. These writing processes changed my perception of myself as a writer.

From: Angus Bruce

Sent: June 21, 2007

To: Paul Tax

Subject: Thanks for your work on the FI Steering Committee!

Paul, thank you for your superb assistance with the Quebec Exchange trip this year. It certainly has been full of surprises for all of us! Months of it, that I am certain you and I had not expected.

Without your direct involvement, this wonderful Exchange opportunity could not have been a success. Thank you for your guidance on the steering committee and the significant role you took on in agreeing to be one of the supervising adults to Quebec.

It has been a pleasure working with you on the Steering committee and I appreciate your professional approach to the management issues and consistent willingness to maintain communication and involvement in all the major decisions.

Sincerely, Angus

Journal Entry February 26, 2007 – my writing

Eight year old Marcus regularly shows up early looking for a meaningful task in the school community; one which he now cares about and perceives as his. For such an outlook he views me to be partly responsible. He genuinely wants to be kept busy by me because on numerous occasions I have included him in what I was doing, asking him to come along as I attend to various duties before the day's first bell.

It now seems he comes to school with a hopeful attitude, greets me first thing, smiles more, and indicates he can be relied upon to contribute to the society he finds at school. By all indications he demonstrates he is a successful participant in the experience of school.

As a school leader I believe I am directly responsible for ensuring that students such as Marcus, Connor, Ian, Ben, Danny and others feel cared for and accepted by the adults in their lives. In particular, the quality of each student's experience with me reveals my educational philosophy and practice.

RASCAL CRAYON

While my office is open, I am not aware of the young boy putting away his things until he calls out toward my door. *"Hi, Mr. Inglis."* I turn and he is looking directly at me, waiting; waiting to be *seen*. This must be a powerful exchange for him as it is repeated often and happens most days with many of my students. (Is my openness and friendly manner the attraction for them? Is it because of the values I believe and model or is it part of our co-evolution in learning together?)

"Good morning, Marcus, how are you and that rascal, Rascal Crayon, doing today?" A broad smile fills the Salvadoran's face.

"I am fine", he grins and adds..."and Rascal hasn't been drawing on the desks!"

(One day I hope to be able to ask him about his Central American stories. Does he know in any direct way the effects of the war?) *"Did you walk with your sister today or did Grandpa drive you?"* I ask.

"Walked."

The exchange continues for a moment longer before I return to my computer keyboard and email. Marcus wanders off looking for his friends. I know he will be returning.

Later, as I leave my office door to go downstairs, he greets me again as he ascends the top of the stairs. *"Nobody's here yet, ahh... I feel like doing something!"* He's standing in my path. *"Do you have anything that needs to be done?"* This

exchange (not the first) is the result of many caring interactions with Marcus and my gentle encouragement to him to get involved at school.

This conversation with Marcus is important in more ways than I can possibly know or perceive. When I first met Marcus, six months before, sulking in a corner of the hallway after storming out of a class, I was certain that he felt alone, unacknowledged, misunderstood and friendless. During the next six months with the help of his very caring teacher and a willingness on his part to change, he now feels accepted and appreciated for who he is. (Does he have a *place* here at school? Is his sense of belonging due to the *place* or to the relationships he has built?)

Encouraging a community of learners often begins by simple acts of courtesy and respect. For me it begins with the regular exchange of hellos and using children's names when possible. (Even if I have to play sounding out games to learn them.) I learn many of my students' first names, and as with Marcus, some sooner than others. When I pass students during the day I give them at the very least, a sign of acknowledgement, which might be nothing more than a secret finger wave or a smile.

A friendly greeting to a child conveys an acknowledgement of their existence and their place in the world that both inhabit. *I see you, I know who you are and I care about you.* I believe that showing such care is more than respect. It both recognizes the individual and situates them in the microcosm of, in this case, the school community. Participatory identity and relational learning within a community. In such a community there is no place for the 'other'. Encouraging and sustaining relationships in this way begins with simple acts of kindness, inclusion and courtesy to each other.

From: Betty and Ryan (Helen's parents)
Sent: June 28, 2007
To: Angus Bruce
Subject: Cheques and \$50 - Thanks for your work

Thanks Angus for this and all the work you've done all year. I've appreciated your energy and all that you've put in to the French program and the Quebec exchange. I'm aware it hasn't been an easy year with these demands, but I think Helen has gained a lot from the English classes that you've taught, from the opportunity to be involved in the Quebec Exchange and from the experience more generally at KES. We've seen her leadership and confidence develop. I know she's had a good two years at KES. Thanks for your part in making that happen for her. Have a great summer.

- Betty

From: Angus Bruce
Sent: June 27, 2007
To: FI parents
Subject: Successful Fundraising – refunds to be issued

The Steering Committee agreed to cover the \$50 grad leaving costs for all FI students. With such a successful fundraising there are now sufficient monies for grad cost, refunds and legacy 'top-up'. For parents who paid a significant portion of the Exchange costs, it was also determined that their final installment of \$400 would be returned if your child went on the exchange.

Regards everyone, Angus

TEACHER ON CALL

I turn from the counter and notice the visiting TOC (teacher-on-call) looking tense and unsure of her surroundings. I greet the young teacher and introduce myself as the administrator. She relaxes as I show her what to do, where to sign in.

I ask, "*Who are you in for today?.*" She gives me the teacher's name.

"Ok, I can take you to their classroom."

Moving down the hall, I chat as we walk, point out the staff washroom and where to find the staffroom door. Arriving at the room I unlock and leave her at the classroom door. I remind her to secure her purse safely.

“Enjoy your day; if you have any trouble, or concerns don’t hesitate to let me know. I am usually in my office near the main office before recess.”

As I walk along the school hallways or teach in various classrooms, the children and adults with whom I have the opportunity to work are looking to me to help make sense of their world (and our shared lifeworld). What I do, the words I speak, and my manner have an influence on their view of their world and their understanding of what my leadership is. Beyond the finger-wave, the smile, saying hello and “how are you” exchanges with students, there are numerous formative means for a school leader to build positive relationships and make schooling about more than academics. On a daily basis I choose to be involved in the learning experience of children and the qualities of other’s experiences.

Sent: April 30, 2007 9:43 AM
To: Angus Bruce; Gloria Morningstar
Subject: Zero tolerance for bullying

Hello Mr. Bruce and Ms. Morningstar,

My son Robert (grade 1) was bullied at school last Friday at lunchtime. He was wearing a nice fleece vest and took it off because it was hot. Some kids then grabbed his vest and tossed it around, so Robert couldn’t get it back. He told me there were no supervision aids around and he couldn’t find anyone to tell.

Robert won’t fight back and is frightened of being hit or kicked, etc. He NEVER came home with the vest (worth around \$40) on Friday and cannot remember if he got it back. I’m hopeful it might be in his classroom.

I hope that KES has a “zero” tolerance for bullying. I look forward to hearing what you recommend in terms of punishment for these 2-3 boys will be. Especially if Robert doesn’t get his belongings back!

Thank-you - Ann Norman

DIFFICULT CHILDREN OR DIFFICULT SITUATIONS...?

A certain number of children will always need guidance around their behaviour and learning. As a VP I become involved with children whose inappropriate behaviour has been brought to my attention. I view this as an opportunity to get to know the child, understand the reasons for their behaviour and establish a positive relationship that encourages and supports reflection and learning on their part. Without knowing me, these students might otherwise regard my intervention with suspicion and possibly anger (issues of power-authority seem to be connected with angry children who have no voice or choice), instead of regarding me as a familiar and caring adult who has something interesting to offer. Sustaining these types of relationships in a school community is much more than just showing courtesy towards children; it entails taking responsibility for our actions and the experiences of others. It involves inclusion, listening, care and attention to an individual's physical, intellectual and emotional growth.

WAITING TO BE SENTENCED

Ian is in grade 3 and has come along with his father to discuss a safety plan for improving his playground behaviour. Ian thought he was supposed to stay in the hallway and wait for his 'sentence'. Instead I ask him to join his dad and me. That was his first surprise. His second came when I began asking for his suggestions, *"So, Ian, what do you think you can change to play safely on the playground?"*

A compassionate community of adults establishes an ethos of care in which students of all abilities have opportunity to participate in choices associated with their learning, and where their emotional health is valued.

CONNER'S MEETING

Connor and his mother are in my upstairs resource office to discuss his IEP. It is obvious from his demeanor that Connor does not want to be there. I take a few minutes to explain that his presence is very important. I tell him that he is involved with his learning more than I am, so it is only right that when people are talking about him, his voice should be heard as well. I point out that at Connor's age he must learn to advocate for his learning if he wants to feel successful at school.

Educational leadership is about taking responsibility for the quality of other people's experiences (Kelly, 2004). Whether I arrange interesting field-trips, include children in adult meetings or when I purchase learning resources, I am concerned with meeting the perceived needs of everyone, children as well as adults. The resultant educational experiences are supported not by my authority or my role, but by my person. When I enter a classroom trying not to disturb the teacher's teaching, I am concerned with both the learner's experiences and the pedagogical efforts of the teacher. When I meet with a few people to discuss a problem, I want to hear all perspectives on the issue, including the child's voice. My authority is not sustainable unless reflection, imagination and dialogue are incorporated into my interactions with others. The perceptions and experiences of others such as Marcus, Rascal Crayon, or the visiting Teacher on Call, (and certainly issues with authority for Ian and Connor) are all facets of reality that must be considered in order to ensure the most fertile ground for learning for all involved.

MATTHEW'S MISSING MARKS

Until my conversation with Matthew in which I explained that assessment was for his benefit, the notion of marking and assessment was mysterious to him. The facets of service he needed were obvious to me, but as yet invisible to him.

It is after school when Matt is meeting with me about the problem of his missing work and his mark. A call the previous day from his mother, Susie, tells me he is upset and discouraged because of what he expected his mark might be. He doesn't understand why his term 2 report card mark is so low, but agrees that five assignments are missing again from his term two English. I sit with him and show him my sheet of marks and how the missing spaces are combined to contribute to the resulting mark.

To give him encouragement I also point out that much of his work indicates he is a strong and capable student. I remind him of the class discussion about surviving high school and how the marking system is unkind to students with missing assignments. Because I believe in fair assessment of learning, I offer to mark the missing materials if he gets them in to me. I also promise to adjust his term 2 report mark before the report is printed. Matthew leaves hopeful and pleased with our meeting.

Healthy communities care about all the individuals and groups of people within them so they can live with hope and dignity in their lives. Healthy and viable communities are places which sustain meaningful relationships with all its members through consistent values of respect, honesty, compassion and fairness. Caring for the children in my school involves being a school leader who lives these values to encourage community, to nurture relationships, to recognize and honour differences, to foster within students a sense of hope about their lives and experiences, and where possible, to permit dialogue with people before determining (agency & judgment) important issues democratically (plurality of action).

From: Susie Vent

Sent: Friday, February 16, 2007

To: Angus Bruce

Subject: Thanks for straightening Matthew's lack of performance

Hi Angus,

I just wanted to send a quick note to say thanks for all your time and energy with respect to Matthew's missing English tasks, particularly this past week. Forgetting to hand in work and his "Oh well, I guess its too late" attitude and not trying to remedy the situation just makes me want to spit. Your mentoring him is much appreciated by us, including Matthew, in his more thoughtful moments. He knows he was lucky to have the second opportunity to hand in the missing English assignments this week and to pull his mark out of the dumper. As I have told him, he is still in the competition game with respect to high school options and must get his act together if he wants into the alternative program for math. With more applicants than spots, he is going to have to put the necessary materials together for a proper application folio. We will see if he can! He certainly straightened out losing the hockey tickets on his own.

Hope you have a lovely week-end. > Susie

From: Angus Bruce
Sent: April 30, 2007 3:33 PM
To: Ann Norman
Subject: Robert bullied at school

Hello – Ann

The vest was found in the lost & found by the classroom SSA. Yes we have no tolerance for this behaviour, but it was not bullying.

I spent some time determining who was involved and allowing all the individuals to speak and listen to each other. The events I believe are less frightening than first conveyed. Robert walked with me as we visited the other classes, so the boys could be properly identified, and told me what happened. I then asked the boys to tell me and Robert what they remembered. Robert agreed with their stories.

Whenever possible, I have those involved meet to discuss what events happened so the story is heard by all involved. I do this also to watch their body language and eye contact. Robert for his part was comfortable looking at each of the boys and had no trouble telling them how he felt. He accepted their apologies. The boy's eye contact, willingness to talk and body language together indicated NO long term issues. This would not be the case were it a repeated period of being "bullied".

I have had all the boys promise me there will be no further problems. I have indicated to them that this event is strike 1 and if there is a strike 2, there will be phone calls home. I have been in contact with Jack's mother and told her the details. I will be monitoring the boys closely myself during free time. Robert tells me there were no problems for the rest of the day. Please let me know if there is more to be done.

Sincerely - Angus

From: Gloria Morningstar
Sent: May 1, 2007
To: Angus Bruce
Subject: Robert Apr27 Incident

Wow – thank you for your thorough response with the boys and in communicating with the Mom, Angus!
Cheers > Gloria

O n t h e O f f i c e C o u n t e r

A crystal bowl, sits in silence
gathering hands during the day.
To beckon, tease and taunt,
Snared, many couldn't stay away.

Addictive temptations lie within
a small glass trap, set each day
for other's pleasure, for insulin,
a hypoglycemic snare (entrapment a sin).

No excuse but a sugar low
is offered, given, or taken
from the bowl, where
flavours taunt and beckon.

Lifesavers, Mint Spray
Butterscotch Rum
Fruit Medley, Werthers,
Yum.

Wrapped delights, now gone, more sugar
on sale at Shoppers, only two blocks,
on Broadway, eight bags, the lot
are carried, hidden, and locked.

Working later, the VP is noticed
refilling the crystal snare.
Sugar-free, Barb asks?
they're a temptation, beware.

Quickly and carefully, sneaky

young hands slip into the bowl,
unseen by day, until Becky
is caught, and asked.

But everyone does!
They take free candy (without shame).
Trapped, I laugh and allow,
just one, freedom, her sweet victory.

From: Angus Bruce
Sent: January 19, 2007
To: Tish Leah
Subject: RE: Sex Ed in classroom

Dear Tish;

The Principal and I spoke with Monica about what took place in the sex-ed lesson. The instructional strategy which she chose to use for collecting and discussing terms is commonly used to set a serious tone for the topic of sex education and the vocabulary involved. While the choice to respond to certain terms is left to the teacher, the intent is to provide a place for students to have their uncertainties addressed. From my perspective there seems to be a difference of interpretation between how the adult was explaining terms and how the children understood them. I would agree there are expressions better left for the family to explain.

The matter has been reviewed by Gloria and I and we are taking steps to avoid any further issues. The school nurse has been contacted and will be providing assistance and instruction with Monica in the next while. She will be following the expectations for the teaching of Body Science as this is the expected content for a grade 7 curriculum.

I trust this meets with your request, sincerely Angus

From: Gloria Morningstar
Sent: January 19, 2007
To: Angus
Subject: RE: Sex ed/Body Health and Science

Nicely said Angus. Thanks! Gloria

Dave, the full-time night custodian, likes to stop and talk, but as I don't see him right now he must be upstairs on the second floor working his area. I can hear the large vacuum running. He has a friendly nature, but prefers to get his duties done first and enjoy his free time chats afterwards. Conversations, when we have them, cover a range of topics, not just talk about school issues. In time I learn of things in his home life and his first marriage, ongoing home renovation problems, his morning routines with his second family, and more recently his athletics and delight with long distance running. Over a cup of coffee, Dave, Barb and I share our mutual concerns with human interactions as well as fragments of our own histories. We recognize the commonalities in the nature of our service work that bring people to us with myriad complaints and demands. Barb has her difficult moments dealing with these demands, but she always offers a suggestion for solving them as well.

From: Susan Vent
Sent: July 5, 2007
To: Angus Bruce; Anna Cohen; Debbie Duer;
Subject: FI Exchange Refund

Hello Angus

We didn't get this cheque. Matt has probably lost it. He remembers that he was given the cheque but couldn't find it anywhere. We apologize for this. Could you please write us another cheque as a replacement? If the original cheque should turn up after we receive the replacement, we will destroy it.

It would be easiest for us if this cheque were mailed to our home address. Alternatively I could pick it up. Thank you, > Susie

From: Anna Cohen
Sent: July 05, 2007
To: Angus Bruce
Subject: Re: FI Exchange Refund

Angus;

Will you please sort this out with Susan.

This is the second misunderstanding from the e-mail that Debbie sent out - without the full consultation of the committee. Looks like we have lost over \$1,000 in funding from the YMCA, due to an oversight. Not to mention the headache dealing with the bullying and legal threats of certain people.

Thanks > Anna

From: Angus Bruce
Sent: Friday, September 28, 2007
To: Debbie Duer
Subject: RE: Questions about Refused Refunds

Hi Debbie,

In short, NO resolution yet to the matter of these families getting their missing money back. No communication replies either from Anna about what the reason was for her decision to refuse Magnus' and Serge's family the money they were owed back in June. Interestingly, the control of the Parent fund-raising money has not been transferred to anyone for this year either. We are still waiting for the new treasurer to be identified. The money I presume can be accessed by PAC but I don't know this for sure. Ian is not pleased with the solo decisions made this summer by Anna and was just as surprised upon returning as the school was. Attached is the last balance sheet Ian had for me.

KES will issue refund cheques by October 1, if Anna won't do so. Cheers - AB

From: Debbie Duer
Sent: Saturday, September 29, 2007
To: Angus Bruce
Subject: RE: Unacceptable Decision-making by one person

Hello Angus, Thanks for the funding update and please do keep me in the loop; especially if there are any meetings regarding the refund. I truly believe that such decision making by Anna is unacceptable and should include the committee that was active for the 06/07 Exchange. What is Anna playing at, refusing to refund two parents the money they are owed?

Talk to you soon.
Bye, Debbie

A LETTER BACK – Retired Principal’s Reply

June 20, 2008

Dear Angus,

What a happy surprise to hear from you on the telephone last night. Has it been 8 months since we were a team? Yikes! Yes retirement seems overly busy and we are still finishing around the cottage. Mostly paneling or painting now, but the cottage is weather tight and warm. We’re looking forward to the summer deck chairs. I am very remiss in not following up on my email previously to you.

Your thoughtful questions show me how much you have changed over these last years. I was chuckling over your reference to the “I naively disconcerted people” remark. It made me recall the time you had everyone upset by a February request to fill in their Bulk Supply orders with only 2 days notice; right in the middle of report cards. You needed to complete the electronic order but it meant they had to learn how to run the excel spreadsheet, save files on a diskette, and of course read the memo in time... Most of them having less than 24 hours, came to me in a panic about the lack of time and were worried about not getting any Supplies for September unless they met your request. Poor timing on your part; definitely to be avoided, even though you were being efficient under the circumstances.

Angus, remember it is the little things that add up in gaining people’s appreciation and respect, not the accumulated deeds of performance. When you meet the next staff, my suggestions are to give more time and attention for understanding of people’s motivations and needs. Don’t rush things as you did with too much efficiency at KE in your first year. And certainly take your time before flexing your curriculum knowledge. Without knowing you’re doing it, you make people uncomfortable with your professional language until they trust that you’re not being critical or showing them up. Make more eye contact, speak plainly and directly until they all get to know you better and your qualities of leadership.

You have a great way with the students, so no worries on that score. Make sure people see your sincere side first, rather than your expertise. Its all about relationships, Core Purpose and children’s learning as we have talked about so many times. You have these people skills, so go slow and relax more. I trust you will do fine.

Sincerely, Gloria

□

Chapter Six - Apologia

It's late in the day and I am tired having little success trying to read through the stack of inbox papers that have accumulated on the corner of my desk. The office phone rings; the call display showing "*unknown caller.*"

"Hello," I answer, "Bruce Inglis here."

Yes, this is Angus Bruce speaking. I would like to arrange a meeting to discuss what you have said about me in print. I just finished reading your CNF narrative.

"Oh, how is that possible?"

"I got a copy from my advisor who is a member of your committee. Well, more to the point, what you have written about me... 'that I am a naïve and immature new administrator', I don't feel it is fair or genuine, that..."

Still confused, I cut Angus short. *"No, ... I mean how can we meet? I fully understand that you may have your own point of view of the events. Everyone does."*

Well I thought I could come to the office and we could discuss the actual significance of how you have written about me and if I might have an opportunity to explain for myself in order that you might consider changing some of your interpretations.

"I see, well I have several afternoons open next week, but this week I can only meet late on Friday afternoon."

Friday's good for me. Instead of your office, can I suggest we meet where we can have a coffee or a drink?

"If you like, sure, let's meet at Joe's Café in the Alma Village. Do you know the place?"

"Yes I know the place, 4:30 pm then..." I hang up just as Noah comes to my door looking for my help with finding a replacement cartridge for the photocopier. He's rushing to print the last of his final report-cards.

Two days later I'm enjoying my 2nd beer when Angus arrives and sits down. *"Hi, glad you made it. Can I get you something to drink?"* I ask, *"Coffee or a drink? I've already started on the beer."*

"I'll get my own, thanks." Angus places his order and returns to the table with me. *"How was your day? Mine was hectic and I had to rush with finishing the School Organizations (SOA) reports for HR."*

Trying to start off on a pleasant note, I ask Angus about his thesis, *"Your thesis must be finished by now. What is it called?"*

"It's simply called Inquiry & Thesis." He adds, *"My defense is coming up in 2 weeks time."*

Isn't your advisor Dónal O Donoghue? How's it going with him? Angus nods his head.

"Fine, he is very supportive of my approach to art and identity." We continue with a few more remarks about our committee members and the worrisome details of external appraisal.

"So Bruce, how shall we begin this discussion? To avoid any sense of attacking each other, what I had hoped we could do was start at the beginning, when and where you crossed the 'liminal line', sort of like a 'truth line' in the text."

Oh, where do you see that? I tried to be as honest as possible" To cover my annoyance showing on my face to Angus, I take another sip from my beer glass.

"In the narrative it happens after the point where you write the author's disclaimer, after which truth and fiction blur. That's how I read it."

I sit back in my chair to consider an answer. *"Angus, I just don't agree, I never mixed fiction into this work, I fictionalized features, around the real facts so they would fit the storyline, but for the most part it is a socially correct view of school life based on the reality of my last school, just as the disclaimer says."*

"Not to me; you have basically presented an imagined 'social reality' in which you have created characters as composites and made a pretty conventional version of "the truth" for us to read. You should have written the disclaimer to say; 'the names have been changed to protect the guilty', that is the real reason you gave people privacy through a pseudonym."

I need another drink and some time to reflect on what's been said. *"I'm getting another, shall I get one for you?"* He nods, and I slide out sideways and head to the counter.

Returning with two glasses, and hoping to change the topic I start to say as I set the beer down, *"Well, what you said on the phone, something or other about my calling you "innocent and immature."* Angus takes his glass of beer, but waits for me to finish my remark. *"I wrote exactly what I felt was my experience, what Bruce's views and attitudes were in my first year of training. Maybe naïve and immature is a harsh appraisal but that is how I look back to my newbie identity and attitude. So that is how Angus was viewed by me."*

"Well it isn't my view even if you have written a metafiction. In the beginning my novice views were always cautious and certainly deferential to Gloria's wishes. I have been in training situations in the past and know how to avoid stepping on 'toes'. Your assessment of me, of my skills and my identity in the beginning are definitely harsh. They were the views of some ill informed mothers who went around saying " the VP needs to go to charm school" when the reality is as men we can't be overly friendly for first meetings, it can be dangerous, with some women it gives them the wrong impression."

"Well yes, you just can't win with everyone no matter how you approach the first time. Some are going to like you right off and others will be unable to make a transition to a new face. I know your watchful nature, but you were naïve about how to begin making people see the person for the role. You thought just by being an efficient administrator people would be more welcoming and accepting of your authority."

Angus pauses before continuing. *"Service, authority and leadership, those three situations have multiple perspectives. At the moment my view of them is different from yours. I just can't agree with your statement that people's acceptance of an administrator is a false assessment in the early days. You think people project what they expect from us regardless of who we actually are. Your only proof is how over time they learn to "love us," but maybe, just maybe we change in subtle ways too.*

"This can't be all you're upset with, what else is wrong with my work from your point of view?"

"Bruce, since you asked me, there are three matters that stand out in your thesis that I disagree with: one, your portrayal and interpretation of my motives; second, the history and aesthetic of my art-making; and finally your implication about my relationship with Gloria." He pauses,

“just to be fair, you conveyed the French Immersion financial improprieties truthfully and the dynamics between the parents and an administrator.”

“I didn’t make those up. They are combined episodes based on the time in question and my direct experience of a school with overbearing parents, just as the French Immersion parents were...”

“I just think you have made too much of an effort to cover over any mistaken reading of you for my identity. You’re trying to avoid people reading the text as history and confusing the characters’ opinions with the author’s, or the narrator with the author. Let’s face it, you’re the message writer and I am the messenger.”

“Ah, that’s interesting. It’s just like the conversation between Laurel Richardson and Ernest Lockridge (1998) about authorial identity. Regardless of how real-life characters behave, our writing theories are not independent of who we are believed to be. You’re saying my identity is in ‘reality’ yours.”

“Yes, didn’t you start by telling the narrative based on the represented series of events and situations of your what you came to call the “administrative landscape” and these lived experiences were written as my world? Eventually you made your recorded thoughts mine. So my character really is based on the ‘facts’ of your identity and includes your philosophies and beliefs.”

“I was inspired let’s say... I want to return to the artistic literary form and what you said earlier about...”



Epilogue – A/r/tographic Expression

“Makers shape things into being, granting them their intrinsic identity. Still in a corner of their workshops and yet drifting with the currents of the rest of humanity, makers reflect back the world in its constant ruptures and changes, and mirror in themselves the unstable shapes of our societies, becoming what the Nicaraguan poet Rubén Darío called “celestial lightning rods” by asking over and over again “Who are we?”

Alberto Manguel, 2007, p.13

WHO AM I?

I enrolled in my last course, called A/r/tographic Research, uncertain about what to expect, but seeking a better understanding of arts-based research work. By this time, my field notes and early narrative draft were well underway, and while these early writings were satisfying, some deeper narrative achievement seemed to be missing from my administrative landscape, some underlying aspect of what my inquiry should produce. A vortex of emotions began to surround me and I felt drawn toward any opportunity to understand *Art* and its ways.

NARRATIVE DISCOURSE

For poetry to be understood as research, it is necessary to realize that of the three aspects involved in narrative – story, interpretation and discourse – a primary emphasis must be placed on the manner and style of the discourse (Leggo & Sameshina, 2008). How the story is told and how the narrative attends to the discourse and delivery of the story is critical to people’s experiences and emotions. Narrative and poetic work explores the in-between spaces of critical and creative discourse to hold past events in a “certain light in order to interpret it” and “lean on it” (Leggo 2008b

p. 7) allowing the reader to attend to the relationships that shape and compose” (p 5.) the narrative details. In this way my school landscape can be gathered into my own poetic authority.

REDISCOVERY- ART IN A/R/TOGRAPHY

Life is full of serendipitous moments; we only see such gifts after they are revealed as history, rarely when they are gifted in the present. My joy in seeing my art-making afresh began with the *Arts-based Educational Research* (ABER) class assignments and various questions of practice. In pursuing the topics of my class assignment I began by undertaking a close and careful look at the work of poets and their craft. Beginning with what was at hand and searching for exemplars of art and artistic expression for myself, happenstance led me first to look at poetry and painting with new eyes in the events of my school.

RECKLESS BEHAVIOUR

One sunny December day, the day before I asked the boys to work with me taking pictures, I sat at my office chair trying to catch a moment's rest after supervising noon games in the gym. It was 1:20 and five pink message slips retrieved from my mailbox were waiting on my desk for further attention. Among them was one larger memo sheet, one of those triplicate memo forms the supervision aides use to copy Gloria and me about playground concerns. Holding it now, I sat reading what Silva, the supervision aide, had written about two boys, Teddy and Juan-Carlos, and the events that were alleged to have happened at lunch. Both boys' behaviour files are familiar, though not for the same reasons, and neither of the boys has had any problem with each other before. I try to make sense of the handwritten memo as best I can. Today Teddy and Juan-Carlos (also called Juan) were apparently having some difficulties that started while eating lunch....

Angus, two boys had a problem and were fighting at lunch today.

Dec 2/08

Juan-Carlos had a problem with Teddy and his lunch friends. Teddy jumped out and surprised Juan, who pushed him and Juan fell down by the slide. Teddy did nothing to help him get up but Juan got mad and threw a rock. It hit Michael who was nearby playing. Rowan had to hold Juan's arm so he wouldn't throw another rock at Michael. Michael was hit near his eye.

Silvia, Supervision Aide

Confused by the handwritten scrawl, minimal details and the implied request to discipline the boys, I write names from the memo, Juan-Carlos, Teddy, Rowan, Michael, and wonder just what it is Silva thinks I am responsible for. Grabbing the student class lists I quickly check to see which classes these grade 4 boys are in. Two separate divisions it seems. Do I have enough time to speak to all the 'players'? There will be various viewpoints on this story for sure, especially with how grade 4 boys tell it and it will need more than thirty minutes of talking. I think to myself, *why didn't the supervisor talk to the boys first?* Checking my watch again I see that it is just about 1:29 pm and decide to run up and gather the boys so I can attempt to figure out their stories for myself.

A STORY THE BOYS TOLD

I finished chatting with the boys by 2:10, having taken thirty minutes to debrief the story events that the memo had left out. Just as I suspected, filling in the details from lunch revealed that their playing had occurred in four different locations. Talking to 4th graders is never done quickly, but it is less time-consuming to talk with the boys all together, as they are willing to tell the truth as they see it. However, today's events are much more involved than the memo suggested. Once I know more, I am left to make some authoritative choices around their behaviour, including the

consequences required for their actions. (*What I really want to do is speak with the adult supervisor who can't figure out little boys' stories before sending the matter to me!*) While sitting together with me, none of the boys showed any apparent ill will about the lunch time event. I finished the debriefing, and now have another perspective on events and who the important players might be... (*So what do I do now?*)

CONNECTING WITH POETIC ART

Once I ignited my artistic sensibilities again, the urge to create became more than necessary. It was a slow discovery, one catalyzed by the directness of being asked “*what do you do?*” when what was really meant was “*can you do any art?*”

Last year I wrote in my journal a dialogue and response to Peter, an artist friend, on creativity and the lack of opportunity to do my art, and my need to be creative. After some reflection on the remarks he made in questioning my artistic skills, I wrote a further reply in my journal: “*building a piece of written art that I might share with other, has an appeal I didn't know I felt so strongly about; physical activity and the act of writing may have more creative equivalence than I first thought. Words have always held an aloofness that frustrates me, just out of reach of my emotional expression and yielding more suffering than satisfaction as I struggled to comprehend my learning disability*”. Maybe it's time for no more regrets and no more excuses!

THE STORY - LUNCH CHEESE

“It started when Teddy threw a cheese strip at his friend Chris but it missed him and hit Juan-Carlos instead. Ha! Missed me, Teddy, Chris yells and Juan looking over at who's speaking, sees who has smucked him with the goop. Someone else throws another strip of cheese and it lands in front of Juan. Teddy is

grinning. Hey! Take this back, Juan says, throwing it at Teddy. Teddy and Michael both duck, and laughing, then get up from the table and run off together outside."

THE VERGE - ABSENCE AND SILENCE

While waiting for a poetry reading I picked up this poem by Rita Wong (1993) *Write around the absence*, a poem about speaking Chinese and learning English. Conveyed through her poem is a struggle with writing English, mirroring my struggle for expression. I feel a resonance with my own arduous journey to express my felt thoughts and discern an important quality of poetry to unburden the divide between thoughts and their written frisson, a way to bridge the absence and move across the verge.

write around the absence, she said, show
its existence
demonstrate
its contours
how it
tastes
where
its edges
fall hard
on my stuttering tongue, how its tones &
pictograms get flattened out by the
steamroller of the english language,...
Rita Wong (1993)

Around absence,
verging the emotional expression I desire,
take me across the edges, where
I no longer want the 'steamroller' of English
to flatten my meanings;
imprisoned by its punctuation and grammar rules,
spelling and syntactic dictates;
all censoring my thoughts and artistic voice.
I want a manifest form that allows me to tell my stories
heart free, and mind soaring,
fearlessly into the *unused room*.

Bruce (2008)

THE STORY - TEASING

Later Juan-Carlos is walking by the slide area and Teddy jumps out and surprises Juan. *Why?* I ask him. *"For the fun of it."* (They say the supervisor was nearby and saw only this much of the situation.) *"Boo, you lunch nerd!"* and in the surprise and confined space, bumps into Juan who falls down. Juan-Carlos gets up and is mad not knowing why Teddy is picking on him. Because they are not in the same grade 4 class they don't know each other very well. In anger, Juan reaches down and picks up a woodchip or bark (not a rock) and throws it at Teddy. *"Missed me again, nerd."* Turning, Teddy runs off again, following his buddies Chris, Rowan and Michael who have already fled. Trying to ignore them, Juan-Carlos keeps walking in the other direction and is not sure how to make sense of why they are teasing him.

ARTISTIC AUTHORITY

How does anyone, or any living thing for that matter, connect, make a connection, re-connection with, or disconnect from another person? What am I trying to do? In our contiguity, isn't a two-dimensional reality implied? How is space/time related to me, to you and the lives previous to mine? I can and do connect, but only in moments of meaning captured by my dearth of words as a multiplicity of meanings pass by and I reach for the best expression among them. Similarly, P.K. Page speaks of her writing and painting processes as alternative "roads to silence" which are essentially interchangeable art for her *"if I can hold it steady long enough, the feeling which is associated with that point grows and fills a larger area..."* (*The Glass Air*, 1991, p. 208). This is her artistic authority; play for the sheer joy of it, be transposed to another dimension, travel on the wind, and learn to conjure magic with words and paint.

BY WHAT AUTHORITY DO WE KNOW?

Several poets (Carl Leggo, Lorri Neilsen, Laurel Richardson, Monica Prendergast, Leonard Cohen, Kim Minkus, Rebecca Luce-Kapler and Rita Wong), not all of them scholars, are responsible for showing me some small part of the multiplicity of a shared life in poetic expression, various moments of a biographic self, stories created, told and portrayed in poetry while researching the self. My story and the story of those I work with each day are often not told or understood as shared experience and are too easily prejudged, and fixed as pre-written and unaffected by irregularities or external influences. My own educational story is like that, a deep landscape of rewritten contours.

MORE HIDING FOR MANHUNT

Later Juan-Carlos sees that Teddy, Rowan and Michael are playing manhunt or some hiding game, and doesn't quite understand how they play it. Michael is in the bushes and doesn't want Juan to look at him hiding in this spot and by looking at him, give his location away to the others. Juan doesn't understand why Michael is waving at him, but it makes him angry again, as Michael was the one person laughing previously when Teddy pushed him and ran away.

UNLOCKING SHARED AUTHORITY

Empowerment and shared authority are new paradigms for the classroom (Oyler, 1999). I have spent many instances frustrated because of the presumptions others have of my role. Without asking me, so much is assumed by others about my identity and I have limited ways of correcting this without an obvious tension developing between us. Oyler truly understands how educational empowerment evolves - in the class and school: ***power is co-constructed; power is***

a continuum of interactive contexts with others; power and conflict are due to concealed agendas; and power relationships are built using discourse rather than dominance or legislative authority. The implication for an insightful administrator is not reckless chaos or capricious decision-making, but shared authority and mutual relationships co-constructed with others.

THE STORY - THROWING A ROCK

From his hiding space Michael can see Juan-Carlos but not yet Rowan who is further away. Juan, thinking Michael is being mean, picks up a small rock to throw at him. *“Hey, what are you doing,”* Rowan shouts. Rowan has just appeared from around the corner looking for Michael, but sees Juan instead and knows throwing objects is bad, so he runs at Juan and grabs his arm to stop him. *“Juan-Carlos, stop throwing stuff at people. It’s not nice.”* But Juan is so mad he throws past Rowan, aiming the rock at Michael, who gets hit near his eye. *“Ouch, you hit me! That hurt.”* Rowan turns and sees Michael and goes to help him. Feeling scared, Juan runs off. The boys go and find the supervisor to complain about Juan and she writes me the memo without talking to the boys about all the details.

VALIDATING CRITERIA

As Monica Prendergast (2003, 2006) points out, research poetry must be evaluated using an Arts-based Education Research standard for examining the aesthetics of a research poet’s work. I believe that the concepts and identities the research poets unlock come about because they have chosen not to be limited by the standard academic paradigm. As I began and continued my living inquiry, I wondered how the substance of my work and its progress will be viewed when completed, knowing that my identity as curriculum leader/administrator is being challenged and

redefined as I write. To address style, qualitative substance and conditions to be found in my a/r/tographic research poetry, I am comfortable using Barone and Eisner's (1997) criteria list:

1. the creation of virtual reality
2. the presence of ambiguity
3. the use of expressive language
4. the use of contextualized and vernacular language
5. the promotion of empathy
6. personal signature of the researcher/writer
7. the presence of aesthetic form (pp. 73-78)

Using richly expressive and vernacular language, good poems challenge and enlarge our perspectives on intelligence, values, purposes, universal truths, family, relationships, and story. Keeping Barone and Eisner's seven criteria in the foreground, I see that all are found in my a/r/tographic expression. My intention, my poetic hope, is to revisit and redefine concepts of *self*, *place*, *time*, *past/present*, and *gender* (boy, man, husband, lover, teacher, professional, care-giver, male, humanitarian). As an a/r/tographic response, poetically I wrote my narrative interpretation as an example of my three-dimensional inquiry space (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000), to express my/our relational, temporal and lived experiences.

ARTWORK - RECESS RUNNING

Our chat is over and I ask Teddy and Juan-Carlos to come to my office tomorrow to be with me at recess. This is to be their first consequence for making poor choices and being aggressive. The other boys, while being playful, but somewhat unkind, were not as culpable, so I don't see any reason to see them this time.

The resulting a/r/tographic work and finished prose poem was created using the pictures taken at my school on December 07, 2007 over a 24 minute and 9 second time sequence. I recruited two grade 4 boys (Teddy and Juan-Carlos) to collaborate with each other and during recess, take photographs of 'students in action'.

CO-AUTHORSHIP

Having been sent to me on a discipline matter, *Recess Running* is an artwork which Teddy and Juan co-created as an art piece with me, though they were unaware of the artistic endeavour in which I was to involve them. I am expected, as the VP, to deal with children's behaviour deemed by others to be socially inappropriate, or where they are observed to act in a fashion that is harmful to themselves or others. The nature of this administrative role (and partnership) is unclear to me because my own concepts and categories of *subsidiarity* are in a tug-of-war with my view of structural values, but the purpose and reason people have for sending misbehaving children to me appear to be largely determined by an adult view of power, fulfilling a scripted notion of enforcement they believe is necessary for peace, order, and good government.

The VP (and Principal) is viewed by many as the authority figure who is responsible for keeping the school safe—someone who will somehow alter behaviours, control and monitor student free will, judge the guilty, and determine the consequences for these rebellious and unwise choices. This conventional belief is not mine. I will not force or coerce children into doing the right thing. Being both judge and jury is tantamount to a travesty of my regulative authority in an institution with a democratic mission to educate children and uphold values of social justice and equality for all. Instead, from my viewpoint as the Vice-Principal I am concerned with children's welfare and teaching them socially acceptable behaviour, rather than punishing those who have yet to learn it.

PROCEDURE

The previous day, during lunch (unstructured) time, the boys were observed displaying inappropriate behaviour and having difficulty getting along, which resulted in throwing objects at each other. I asked the students to report to me the next day at recess. Often students are asked to meet with me so that we can review what happened and I can re-teach what appears to be needed in their learning. When they report to me, I want to avoid any perception of punishment or humiliation. Most children who see me in these situations are comfortable visiting due to the relationship I have established. At the same time, they understand they are speaking with me as a direct consequence of prior behaviour. Often I go for a walk with them, allowing us to talk and be together. Besides getting fresh air and having meaningful conversations about their lives, the children involved and those witnessing us, see that spending time talking with me is not unpleasant.

When I cannot go for a guided walk, I send them on a guided task and I might give them my digital camera, as I did on this day. Experience has shown me that most children who have established a meaningful relationship with an adult willingly undertake an engaging activity for that person when asked to. They not only comply, but take full responsibility for doing it well. Today I assign the boys a task: to wander about taking photographs for me. (My purpose for doing so is first to put them together to learn cooperatively and, second, to obtain an objective view of school yard behaviour.)

“Take the camera, and I want both of you to take pictures of students on the playground. You are each to take 15 pictures. Share the camera and wander around the building in all areas. When you are done, bring the camera to me before going back to class. Ok?”

To be certain about the technical skills I am expecting them to perform we then discuss how the camera works and they each take a practice picture of me (see first frame; VP on the phone) and of each other (see Appendix I - 2nd frame, Juan photographer, and 3rd frame, Teddy

photographer). Later, all the photo images were altered by colour modification so the privacy of the individuals was properly secure. The photo images became the raw text that I examined in depth for meaningful content, and in such a form provided the authentic data I used to create my final poetic commentary.

Poetic Discourse for Recess Running

1
I gather images into a montage
looking closely, attentive,
wakeful to the stories they hold.
Writing retrogressive moments,
I search for meaning and craft sentences of
identity.

2
Seeing less and hearing more,
in a fluid immediacy,
I concentrate on listening
to the literacy of student's lives.
In my reflexive comprehension
I attend to what has taken place,
for them, (it's not about me).

3
Teddy and Juan, arrive at recess,
in my haste, forgotten,
a consequence earned.
Intending to walk together,
but without me now
I hand them the camera.
Trusting, coaching independence,
take our portraits, I ask.

4
Mine, authoritative and holding
the telephone,
Theirs, either friendly or reserved

Juan stands composed, a gentle smile
Striking familiarity in his demeanor,
Teddy a stern smile,
Looking resigned or defiant?

5
Climbers viewed from the front door
recess in the front, groups play
Try and alternate the picture turns, I say
A reminder, check the image in the viewer
heading down the stairs, they leave me.

6
Recess out front, swings, boys running by
I watch from the stairs before returning inside.
Juan's camera turn, boys seen, unnoticed
Looking at the dirt, friends of Teddy
Receiving the camera, he rushes.

7
Turning in haste, he blurs the shot
should wear his glasses.
Flashes of light, legs or feet, walking
sunlight, a downward picture
of a recess leg, shutter opens,
oops, wrong finger.
where are Juan's legs?

8
Busy slide, action
big, his "point-of-view"

Boys on the slide
going up, against a rule.

9

Child in red; bumped, tumbles
backwards down the picture.
Nearby, a Red Hat fashion girl
someone Juan knows, stops
for her picture, yields to his camera.
Her arm freezes, a clear possibility
of his superpowers?

10

Below recess slide
parent sitting, no wheels please.
Fluorescent supervisor, and
parents on the playground, a stroller
Reading in the sun, a scooter delivery,
parents feel safe in this space.

11

Centered image, four peers going by,
Teddy compares himself,
Are both photographers
competing for attention?
Moving on, turning forward
a primary runner, moving action,
another frozen image, without clarity.

12.

Viewer's view a blur
Standing
under the playground climber
boys hidden but curious,
catch their own shadows, focused,
a group of girls, popcorn in hand
Aware girls are different, an image
girls call it spying,
not watching.

13

Boys behind the bridge

Juan asking for camera
Action, in Teddy's hands
not apparent,
peers or authority, their image a secret.

14

Tetherball pole
three arms swing
three boys, themselves
spinning, a parallel game
boys only,
each a different age.
dashing boys return
the running game.
Popcorn bucket, snack
Montessori parent passing
empty stroller moves by

15

Being It, the boy
is chasing,
running by, directly
looks at the camera, focused.
Photographic connection, he smiles
Background, backyard, adventure
another parent with younger children.

16

Caught in sunlight,
the skipping girl, rope a whirl.
Teddy looks over
the view-finder,
limiting his frame of view.
He turns back, up the Slide,
more popcorn running among the boys.
End of primary recess, passing
Children delay, one more slide,
I'm on my way, they say.

17

Sunny basketball court,
a senior recess spot

group of three, wave
a signal of Teddy friendship?
Or camera-ship?
The dribbling ball, a single
grade 5 boy, looks up
two shadows, a space caught.

18
Three blurs soccer past.
the zoom, Juan uses.
Risking an experiment,
Identity, self, and authority,
delight the field of view
Zoom images are hard
to focus, with detail.

19
Two with Popcorn
tub, are smiling at Teddy.
Why, when his outspoken
rudeness intrudes.
Most comments ignored.
More playful silhouettes blurred
in the sunlight, Teddy forgotten
camera shared, responsibly.
The image kicks past the ball.

20
More soccer, better focus
caught unaware.
Red shorts, legs, boy.
Camera moving across the back field
another Blue Blur, Teddy's trade mark
Takes several consecutive shots,
without Juan .

21
The girls at the fence,
watch, popcorn shared.
Actions, activity, movement?
Teddy and popcorn, not
the people, a focus

peer relationship

22
Go inside now, for what?
Wait, in line,
Shutter button with zoom, imaged
altered 'discovered', in the dark
Teddy wanting popcorn.
popcorn machine, parent to serve
while making, crazy eyes
Juan's camera play.
young child, silly photograph.
Images of younger children.
Teddy's were older, peers?
Authority and identity.

23
Red hands indoors
colour adjusted , a dark image
shows up, stairs, altered
and underdeveloped,
no flash, no share, not fair.
Teddy can't, he's eating popcorn.

24
My office, among the
paper punch popcorn
bucket, in Teddy's hands.
inside, waiting for me.
Do the boys hear the sound,
the recess bell has gone
primary recess an opportunity
finished long ago.

25
A happy mouthful of popcorn
This is Juan's action photo.
Teddy attention seeking, a picture
taken, or is it popcorn identity
and self expression.

26
The no flash black image

moves the camera from my office.
Juan is experimenting, zooming, exploring,
capabilities, consistently so, in many images.
The camera now outside
Captures rushing football players
Imaged left, then to the right
Centred I wonder,
but recess is over.

27
Children slowly walking in, while
the red player catches, Teddy
not sharing, is making up for lost time.
Waves the camera,
around the field.

28
Just a fence, just legs, just walkers,
the boy in red, active.
Miss-pointed camera, too much distance,
looking over the view-finder.
Two recess children, running wrong way
to the boy's washroom, another delay
shadows of Teddy and Juan, (yes it is them)
Teddy, a silhouette caught, and focused.

29
Recess long over, returning group
walk among the red football players,
zoomed in, first time Teddy.
Did Juan tell him?
player running red,
precisely caught.
self control, fair share,
Teddy-share
camera share

30
Slowly walking,
across the butterfly garden.
shapes in wood, small shapes in the frame
forgotten zoom

Running by, late another boy
Nicely centred, focused, yeah
Fluorescent supervision, doesn't see
photographer behind, as she
waves her arm, encourage haste
Too many basement stragglers,
late.

Seeking the Teacher in A/r/tography I wrote this interpretive discourse on authority after writing the Poetic Discourse. I was puzzled over what comprised the interactive experience between two students during their paired responsibilities of taking pictures of recess for me. Looking at their pictures, I wondered and reflected on the significance their image-making might have for them and how best to convey the implications of my authority and identity?

Furthermore, I wondered why, after choosing to act uncooperatively and contrary to the expectations of responsible behaviour, they agreed to comply with my request? If asked by other students, how would the boys have described what they were doing? Was my authority instrumental in guiding how each boy made sense of identity and viewed themselves? Additionally, what were the dynamics between the boys as they experienced the complexities of a partnership? A partnership forced into a *time* and *place* by me, or my so-called power of authority.

During the last stages of my Master of Arts inquiry, starting and intending to complete an art project with images and poetry based on pedagogical documentation, I wanted to find a useful way to objectively record and examine student's behaviour on the playground. Instead I found that my own self awareness, behaviour and identity were revealed because the product of my inquiry was a qualitative experience from which I learned about myself.

Concurrently while doing this art I was researching other ABER works and came across a reference made by Anniina Suominen Guyas, *Water: Moving Stillness* (2008) in which she expresses an endless search for self actualization in research (p.25) and addresses the question of identity construction (p.25)—a timely reference which pushed me toward a sudden realization, maybe even an epiphany of understanding, finding and reading an idea I felt I was looking to express within my poverty of words. I recognized the seed of my own search inside the words of Suominen Guyas and was now setting down a version of my own research question to be pursued and for which all my reflexive journey held a comprehensive set of answers.

At the end of my three year apprenticeship in administration, what appears to be a new artistic undertaking for the a/r/tographic inquiry I was finishing in my Arts-based Educational Research course was both a beginning and a completion to my lived experiences. A process of self-actualization during this time, and perhaps for most of my three year Vice-Principal apprenticeship, evolved from questions about my administrative role and identity and was written about at length in my journals, creative narrative pieces and various poetic expressions. Across this landscape of place, time and situation, I finally knew that I had been searching for answers to an inquiry properly addressed by a questions of how others saw me and how I saw myself:

“What narratives of identity and difference shape my authority and how can I use the authority conferred on me to challenge and expose the narratives that co-evolve with the people I serve?”

_____ □ _____

- E n d n o t e s -

- ⁱ The spelling of non-fiction or nonfiction has created ongoing discussion during the review of this thesis. For artistic reasons I have elected to use the hyphenated form. The hyphen suggests an inbetween space which I argue is the location of the creative and truth like purpose for using the form called *CNF*.
- ² *Preface* is an introduction written by the author. The *preface* often closes with acknowledgements of those who assisted in the project. *Preface* comes from the Latin, meaning either "spoken before" (*prae + fatia*). The *prologue* is typically an *introduction* to a novel, fitting in with the genre and storyline of the main text, presented in the narrator's voice. If Angus were speaking at this point, he would have written a *prologue*. Originally meaning the expression "made before"; (Latin root, *prae + factum*), which implies an *introduction* written before the body of the book. In preference, I chose **proem** which is another term for *preface*, and comprises an introductory discourse, (Greek root for *pro + song*) which is more fitting for my thesis.
- ³ *Fluid inquiry*; a term from Schwab (1960) cited in Clandinin & Connelly (2000), to mean a way of thinking in which an inquiry is not clearly governed by theories, methodological tactics, and strategies. There are numerous false starts and dead ends (p.121).
- ⁴ The source of the term CNF is undetermined, but at the 1983 meeting of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) dealt with the official matter of how to categorize the "art" of non-fiction and to establish a descriptive term so writers would understand what types of work to submit for fellowships. Many essayists wrote "artful non-fiction" but the genre was perceived as more experimental. "The word "creative" refers simply to the use of literary craft in presenting non-fiction...in a compelling, vivid manner. ...,creative non-fiction writers do make things up; they make ideas and information that already exist more interesting and often, more accessible." Homepage, p.2 remarks of Lee Gutkind a college English professor, editor and founder of the Creative Nonfiction Journal. <http://www.creativenonfiction.org/thejournal/whatisenf.htm> retrieved 31/03/2008 2:33 PM
- ⁵ see footnote 2.
- ⁶ A/r/tography is a multi-practice term comprised of the disciplines, artist-researcher-teacher and refers to an ongoing methodology for self-inquiry and learning which artists educators and others engaged in to produce artform. Dr. Rita Irwin, a scholar and painter came to use the term in 1998, This arts approach to inquiry has since become a research method encouraged at the University of British Columbia. The website states, "A/r/tographical work is rendered through the methodological concepts of contiguity, living inquiry, openings, metaphor/metonymy, reverberations and excess which are enacted and presented/performed when a relational aesthetic inquiry condition is envisioned as embodied understandings and exchanges between art and text, and between and among the broadly conceived identities of artist/researcher/teacher. (Rita Irwin) <http://m1.cust.educ.ubc.ca:16080/Artography/>
- ⁷ CBC Massey Lecture 2007 November, *The City of Words* at University of Alberta, Edmonton
- ⁸ Stockholm syndrome is a psychological response sometimes seen in an abducted hostage, in which the hostage shows signs of loyalty to the hostage-taker, regardless of the danger (or at least risk) in which the hostage has been placed. Stockholm syndrome is also sometimes discussed in reference to other situations with similar tensions, such as battered person syndrome, rape cases, child abuse cases and bride kidnapping. The syndrome is named after the Norrmalmstorg robbery of *Kreditbanken* at Norrmalmstorg, Stockholm, Sweden, in which the bank robbers held bank employees hostage from August 23 to August 28 in 1973. Ref: Nils Bejerot: The six day war in Stockholm New Scientist 1974, volume 61, number 886, page 486-487
- ⁹ West-2 is the north region of the VSB, and one of the 12 Community Links teams responsible for community projects and vulnerable youth in the city. I was the CST teacher assigned to West-2 from its inaugural beginnings in Sept 2004 until June 2005.
- ¹⁰ Chris Kelly, opening address VSB Student Leadership Conference, Round-House Community Centre, Jan 25, 2006.

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APPENDIX A – The A/R/TOGRAPHIC IMAGES

AUTHOR'S NOTE (Texts' method and images used in Recess Running)

My photographic-poetic narrative is not the normal format for *Pedagogical Documentation* work, but it is based on a Reggio childhood education philosophy. Documentation panels are considered a collective pedagogy for discovering a relevant childhood curriculum. In my modified form I have made my own interpretive poetics from the practice of multiple discourses. Rather than with a group of educators I have gathered multiple views and written a singular poetics. On a technical note, the digital date/time printed in each corner of the images does not show seconds. Also, my Nikon E5600 software prints the 24 hour clock with a 1 hour error (i.e. recording 10:05 PM as 21:05) on each image's date file. I corrected all P.M. times to 10:20+ as this better reflects the correct A.M. timeframe of the images and the probable events occurring during recess time.

The full and initial text is contained in this appendix. On each page and within its three frame sets, the art project is presented as three separate and co-joined activities - as raw text (*picture & facts*), interim text (*left paragraph*) and interpretive verse (*discursive poem*). The reader may read these factual texts in a linear set or as a concurrent expression. Initially, to provide a varied set of choices for the reader I present the text frames in a parallel arrangement with the images (raw text on the left, interim text on the right). To the right hand side, the complete narrative of the playground experience can be read separately from the paired column on the left, or not. In doing such a multi-linear reading, the reader is expected to experience the interpretive discourse and phenomena of my internal landscape rendered in the in-between, as an interim process of creativity, reflection and rhizomic interactions. Completed last, the lyric interpretation is presented as the first text for the reader to experience, but it is not separate from the others in its creation or meaning. My

preference would be that you read the lyric interpretation (p. 182) first, and this is the reason behind placing it in the body of the thesis and not here in the appendix.

This final poetic narrative attends with alertness to my reflexive authority and reflective purpose to assist children's agency in socially acceptable ways and to promote my own well-being artistically. This final conversation is a poetic discourse with myself about my identity and how I view the children's identities. My search for the phenomena of identity lead me to viewing the agency of individuals and the structure of the school institution where power is co-constructed (Olyer, 1996). As a so-called authority figure, I represent the power structure of the school system, but must remain reflective about my primary role as principal teacher (head-teacher). I became interested in this inquiry project as a documentary means to work with the theory of *subsidiarity* (Abbott, 2002, 2005) applied to organic discretionary decision making of participants (Robert Starratt, 2003, p. 202) and *learning as participatory and co-evolutionary* (Davis, Sumara, Luce-Kappler, 2000). Engaging and practicing a holistic pedagogy is "*a pedagogy of constant and endless search for identity construction*" (Suominen Guyas, 2008 p.25).

After writing the *prose frames* to convey the plural experiences, I then reexamined the full document and wrote the *interpretative discourse* to include my singular/plural experience of this authoritative drama at school. My art making is a co-participation with the boys, a participation of shared skills – my story and their picture-taking of the school community. This team work takes place in an interaction of events which continue to evolve, and later while making my art and poetry they become positively affirming thereby allowing me to maintain a rhizomic relationship with others in the community.

Recess Running: another view (Interpretive artographic photographs)

Details,
(Recess 10:20:00 AM camera clock
prints as 21:20:00 PM)

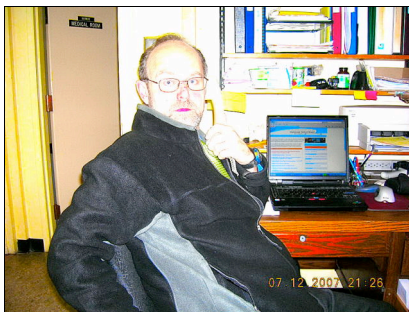
Images

Story

VP on the phone 10:26:05

Start minute 0:00, *Teddy*
photographer

- Beginning of recess the two boys come to my office
- They were having a problem getting along yesterday at lunch.
- They are given the instructions and take the first picture of me.
- I am on the phone and instructing the boys at the same time.
- I am on hold for the computer HelpDesk



Waiting on the phone; I was tied up with Helpdesk. This was a necessary phone call but I forgot about asking Teddy and Juan to come and spend recess with me. I intended to walk around with them and coach them on taking good pictures for me. Instead I give them independence and hand them the digital camera. To explain how it works I teach them to take our own portraits now. I add a caution about staying still when they take each photo. If the image is blurred they will see it in the view finder and can take it again if they want. I ask them to share the task and take 15 pictures each. Teddy holds the camera and Juan watches closely. (this seems familiar for Teddy).

Juan a/r/tographer 10:26:33

+ 28 seconds, *Teddy photographer*

- Juan has not seen me before today
 - This is his 2nd year at school
 - He has no real friends, but a very friendly manner and a happy disposition.
- Very compliant with adults when asked to do things.



Juan stands for his portrait while Teddy can take it. This is 30 seconds later. I chose to give Teddy the camera again and I coach him taking the photo of Juan, who immediately stands with this composed stance, a gentle smile looking directly at the camera. I am struck by his childish familiarity with being photographed. The boys and I look at Juan's digital photograph in the viewer; discuss it and pass the camera to Juan so he can take Teddy's picture next.

Teddy a/r/tographer 10:29:01

Time now + 2 min.32 seconds
Juan photographer

- Teddy has attended this school since Kindergarten now in grade 4 (5 years)
- I have dealt with Teddy several times. Teddy has friends, but also chooses behaviours which cause relationships stress. He can be impulsive and needs reminders to be more thoughtful before acting.



Teddy looking at the camera poses more naturally, but without a smile. We examine the first image and discuss keeping the person's image in the middle of the frame. Juan while using the camera seems physically uncertain with this type of mechanical operations. He projects hesitancy in how he holds the camera. I wonder how he sees himself and control of his physical body. I suggest that the arm strap can be worn if he is worried about dropping the camera. Juan seems excited.

Recess Running: another view (Interpretive artographic photographs)

Recess climbers 10:30:23

Time: + 1 minute 22 seconds,

Teddy photographer

- not sure who took this picture, but I seem to recall it was Teddy's turn
- I was standing with the boys at the front door, which is up above the playground level
- Several children look our way, but don't register that we are photographing them
- this shot is taken standing with the boys, we looked in the viewer together.



View of Climbers from Front Door.

A minute and half later all three of us are standing above the climbers. I hung up the phone waiting for the Helpdesk and have taken the boys out the front door. The process I want the boys to use for this project can't be put on hold, as the 15 minute recess will end in no time. From the front door just outside my office we can see several children on the climbers. I want the boys to alternate the picture turns, so I would have insisted it was now Teddy's turn to hold the camera and take an image. Juan takes the camera strap off his wrist. I indicate by pointing at the climbers where Teddy should aim. We all look at the image in the viewer.

Recess out front 10:31:11

Time: + 48 seconds, *Juan*

photographer

- The boys (Teddy & Juan) have gone down the stairs and turned left
- They met this group of boys from a different grade 4 class
- The boys don't see the photographer
- Two adults are on the playground, behind the group



Recess out Front by Swings is left from the bottom of the front stairs. I watch from the stairs briefly before going back inside. It would have been Juan's camera turn again. The boys seen here are from Juan's grade but they don't associate with him so they don't notice that he has a camera and is taking pictures. While he is doing this, Teddy has seen some of his friends against the wall. In the picture are two adults (parents?) who must be visiting their children. Many parents come to school during unstructured play time to visit their own children. The two seen in the background are not staff. (I often ask myself *Why, do parents feel compelled to come here at this time?*)

Recess dirt 10:31:30

Time: + 19 seconds later

Teddy photographer

- The boys have been talking and playing a Gameboy, is seen being held
- The boys know Teddy because they are in the same class
- The boys are looking at the cedar bark for the old tire swing.



Two boys looking at the dirt are in grade 4 boys and friends of Teddy. The camera was handed over and Teddy rushed the shot. The friends, one is holding a Gameboy, walk and talk while moving by but Teddy was turning with the camera in his haste. Before getting the camera, he would have been talking to them and not watching what Juan was doing. Teddy is supposed to wear his glasses but often doesn't. The photo is blurred.

Recess Running: another view (Interpretive artographic photographs)

Looking down 10:31:46

Time: + 16 seconds

- *Teddy photographer, oops*
- accidental shot, finger on button
- someone's foot near scrub
- was he distracted?



Shot downward is an unplanned photo.

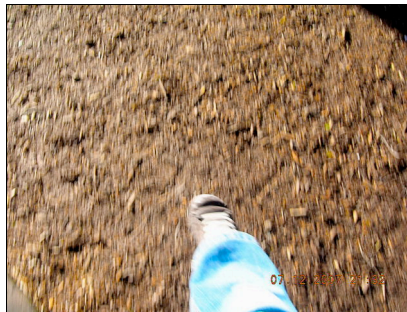
Teddy is not aware he has pressed the shutter button as he walks. He is busy talking with his Gameboy friends whose picture he just took. Other children were in the bark & dirt area; someone's striped pant leg is shown. This is the old tire swing area, but the wood structure, now cracked, cannot safely hold the swing. Teddy has not fully engaged the task requested yet. There is plenty of action in the front area. Is he talking to Juan? What does sharing actually mean for them?

Recess leg 10:32:21

Time: + 35 seconds, *Teddy*

photographer

- unintended photo (?) of his leg as he is handed the camera
- Shot while walking Westerly as the sunlight is showing in the picture to be ahead of him as they pass the corner.



Recess Leg, oops again as Teddy is still holding the camera with finger resting on the shutter button. Shot is Teddy's pant leg. He is not aware of doing this while he is walking into the direct sunlight. I wonder where Juan is? Where is his, Juan's leg? Juan is busy watching the activities and asking for the camera is not on his mind. Juan gets the camera and heads toward movement they reach the corner of the building. Teddy's clumsiness is different; wandering attention, poor vision and coordination. Juan is uncomfortable with his body; standing closed, tight, with arms in. Juan's clumsiness shows lack of practice.

Down slide 10:32:35

Time: + 14 seconds, *Juan*

photographer

- Two boys on the slide together
- Older students are watching
- The camera is pointed too low for anticipating the action shot on slide
- Bright sunlight



The Big Slide is always busy with action. Juan took the photo because he saw the activities and recalls that I asked for "action shots". As Juan holds the camera he must allow for his "point-of-view" in setting up this image, including the frame view and the movements happening all around him. He struggles with this. The boy on the slide facing him is in grade 1 and often going *up* the slide. His location on the slide causes the other child (in red) to be bumped and to tumble backwards down the slide. Two girls are so close to the foreground that they appear almost adult in size.

Recess Running: another view (Interpretive artographic photographs)

Red hat recess 10:32:47

Time: + 12 seconds, *Juan photographer*

- Just in front of the slide is the adventure area with the slider.
 - Juan just turns around from the slide and takes the picture.
- Girls in the background are hanging from the track wheel slider.

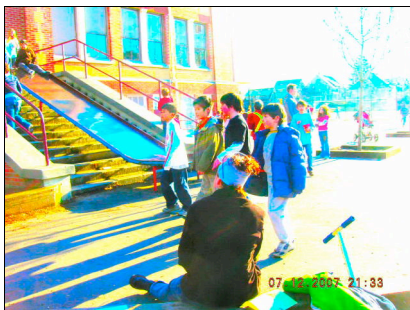


Christmas Red Hat worn by a girl as a Christmas fashion. Juan keeping the camera sees a student he knows. She stops for Juan to take her picture. This pose and the taking of the photograph acknowledge the *authority* of the photographer. She knows not to move for a picture, so she has frozen with her arm up. Juan takes a clear picture as soon as possible because someone he knows has stopped for him. This effort is only 12 seconds from the last. What motivation did Juan feel and why not give Teddy the camera? How are they sharing?

Recess scooter 10:33:04

Time: + 17 seconds, *Teddy photographer*

- The camera is pointed at 4 boys (centre) from grade 5, the next peer group above Teddy's grade level.
 - The parent is reading, she has a scooter and is watching her own child who is at the top of the slide waiting to go.
- There is a tall adult aide near the tree who is a School and Student Worker for a child in the picture.



Recess Slide and parent with scooter.

There is a supervisor in the middle of this shot in a fluorescent vest. She doesn't seem to be looking at the slide, but the parent out front is. Its recess, but already the pictures show me 2 parents are on the playground. Why? She came and was reading in the sun. This adult traveled by scooter, to deliver a coat to her child? (no wheels rule on the playground means everyone!) His coat is lying behind her. A second parent is nearby their stroller is shown in the upper right behind the small tree. Centred are four boys all in the same class who like to walk together talking. Teddy took the picture. How does he feel about them?

Recess running 10:33:15

Time: + 11 seconds, *Teddy photographer*

- Teddy keeps the camera
- child running between the two adventure climbers, a tower (right out of view) and a sliding pulley track on his left.
- this boy jumps down from the tower platform, behind him now, and is headed to the pulley track shown as a shadow.
- While running he looks up at Teddy who photographs his action.



Primary Boy Running. This location is just behind the scooter. Teddy must be thinking to take 2 or 3 pictures before sharing. Are Juan & Teddy trying to compete somehow? (Teddy is often competitive for attention) The photographers are moving back toward the front area, instead of south. The young boy shown here is moving between the adventure climbing bridge and the pulley track. He looks up while running at Teddy who photographs his action. Teddy is still not allowing the camera to focus. Teddy should be able to observe the clarity of the image before pressing the shutter button but must be looking over the camera. Is he reviewing the finished images as they are taken? His attention is not focused.

Recess Running: another view (Interpretive artographic photographs)

Shadow Shot 10:33:20

Time: + 5 seconds, *Teddy*
photographer

- the boys shadows on the ground, show who holds the camera, Juan's shadow on post
- girls doing something, one has a large pop corn tub
- taken while under the adventure climber
- does this image show a gender issue?



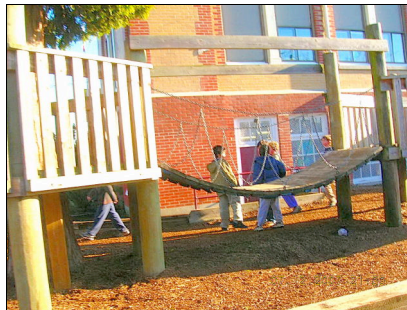
Standing under the Adventure

Climber, only 5 seconds later, Teddy has kept the camera, but the image is in focus. Is his competitive nature a demand for authority? The boys hiding and looking, photograph a group of girls gathered in activity and manage to catch their own shadows as well. Popcorn is sold on Fridays and the girl in front has a large container of it. These large tubs are shared and once empty are worn as hats by some of the students. In grade 4 the boy and girl dynamic has not yet become strained but boys are aware of girls as really *different* from boys. They watch out of curiosity. Young girls call it spying.

Behind the bridge 10:33:25

Time: + 5 seconds, *Teddy*
photographer

- the grade 5 group gathered, draws the attention of the grade 4 photographer
- is this a secret photograph ?



Boys behind the Bridge are the previous grade 5 group Teddy was watching. Teddy has forgotten to share the camera, but Juan is now asking for it as Teddy has taken four continuous pictures. The action in the picture is not apparent, but the characters and their peer authority felt by Teddy must be why he takes their image secretly. Juan gets the camera now.

Recess pole 10:34:04

Time: + 39 seconds, *Juan*
photographer

- these three boys are playing
- each in a different grade
- grades 3, 5 and 6
- often a child takes his lunch pack to carry their snack outside



Tetherball Pole and 3 boys swinging around it are all that can be found now that Juan has the camera. Two of these grade 3 boys are together spinning themselves around the pole while the other chases. The boy in the centre always carries his possessions outside on his back. The older boy, slightly facing the camera is making a game of chasing the younger ones around the pole. This is not a friendship group, but more of a parallel play opportunity that the boys have chosen.

Recess Running: another view (Interpretive artographic photographs)

Recess dash 10:36:06

Time: + 2 min.2 seconds,

Teddy photographer

- boys running by are a group playing game manhunt around the building
- bucket of pop corn is seen
- parent with stroller and child clearly in background



Dashing boys return from the east in their chase game. This location not had much action for 2 minutes. Three Boys dashing back in front from around the east corner of the school. Popcorn bucket is held by one of the boys. These are the same children in the game from “Recess out front” returning from the other direction. A parent pushing a childless stroller does not appear to be with any school child. This parent must be coming from the Montessori play school which is in the back of our school property. Teddy has the camera again: has it become power issue, or a demonstration of his self-competence?

Chase me 10:36:40

Time: + 34 seconds

Juan photographer

- good centered image of boy running by, he is smiling at the camera
- a parent playing with 2 children in background



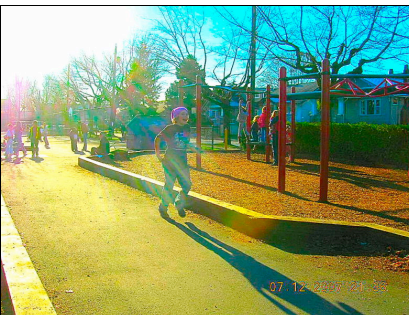
Boy chasing the other boys; seems he is “being it”. The boy has engaged Juan who has the camera, by looking directly at the camera; his smile shows a connection is made between subject and photographer. Parent in the background is playing with two young children. The adventure climbers are used by all children.

Skipper 10:36:51

Time: + 11 seconds, *Teddy*

photographer

- picture taken into the December morning sunlight. Angle of shadows is a nice aspect of this amateur photo
- 3 adults can be seen in back
- florescent vest on supervision aide



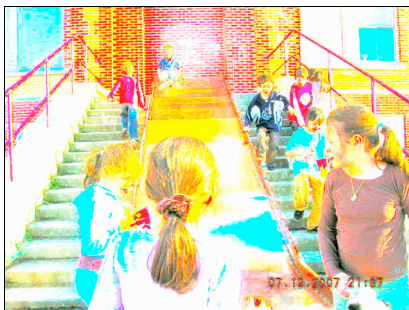
A girl skipping is caught within the sunlight. Teddy would have seen the action but if he were looking properly in the view-finder, the image would have camera warnings about the digital reading of the light. Teddy seems to limit his frame of view. Why is this?

Recess slide 10:37:09

Time: + 18 seconds

Juan photographer

- returned to slide for photo, not same children as before (see frame 7)
- several primary children playing here now after 4 min.34 seconds
- primary recess was over 7 min. ago



Back at the Recess Slide. The three running boys being chased have run up and over the high steps to avoid getting tagged. Popcorn bucket still in the hands of boy seen four frames past. Another child holds a bucket of popcorn. Primary recess is over and the primary children have run up to take the slide one more time on their way into class. Girls play with girls and boys with boys.

Recess Running: another view (Interpretive artographic photographs)

Hoop on Court 10:37:28

Time: + 19 seconds, *Teddy photographer*

- new intermediate group out for recess
- two waving a 2 finger 'peace' signal
- popcorn container in hand is 'finished'
- Black object behind hoop pole is the outside garbage

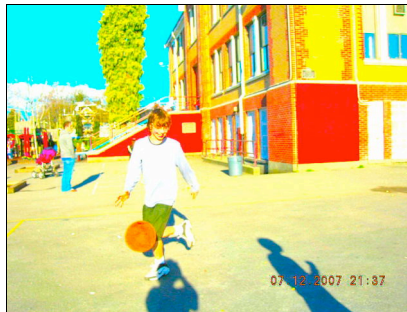


Basketball Court with a single boy holding a squished popcorn container. Senior recess. Grade five students; 3 boys and a girl are together. The slide area is now empty of primary students. Only 19 seconds later. Waving signals of friendship toward Teddy. The running boy is on his way to throw his empty container in the garbage tube, which sticks out of the ground in the back.

Recess Ball 10:37:45

Time: + 17 seconds, *Teddy photographer, his shadow clearly shown*

- Juan is not facing the ball player but looking off to the right
- Adult in back with stroller



Recess Basketball with a grade 5 boy. Teddy has forgotten to share the camera, as his shadow shows us. Male Parent with stroller now in background. Two shadows show two photographers, but they are not facing the same direction.

Teddy taking the picture, does Juan have something in his hands?

Soccer Boys 10:38:09

Time: + 24 seconds, *Juan photographer*

- walking into the field this picture was taken while on the field but using the zoom lense feature
- focus is not sharp, but this is the first zoom image.



Three soccer boys blur past. Juan's turn with the camera. He must have used the zoom, which is obvious because of his location for the frame in the sequence. He has taken a *risk* and from this demonstrates his personal *authority*. The boys are in different grades and spend all their free time playing soccer on the field. Zoom images are hard to focus as the motion causes the image to be less detailed.

Fri popcorn 10:38:23

Time: + 14 seconds, *Teddy photographer*

- 2 grade 4 boys eating pop corn from a large bucket
- They know who is taking the photo as they are interacting with the photographer in this shot



Two boys with Popcorn tub are smiling at Teddy. Popcorn is sold at recess on Fridays as a PAC fund raiser. Most of the primary staff disagree with it as it can cause a huge mess of spilled kernels and the children have issues such as sharing, money, friendship upsets, and silliness with the empty containers. Why are so many children smiling at Teddy? He is fairly outspoken. What is he saying to people that makes them smile into the camera image?

My experience of Teddy suggests he makes intrusive comments and most students ignore him and are smiling because of his silly and outrageous rudeness.

Recess Running: another view (Interpretive artographic photographs)

Field game 10: 38:27

Time: + 4 seconds *Teddy*

photographer

- another image taken into the sun
- various boys playing soccer together grade 5, 6 and 7 play together here most days.



Playing field silhouettes blurred by the direct sunlight. Teddy has forgotten to share the camera. Boys playing an active game of soccer. No one is left out and they are sharing responsibly. The ball has been kicked past the image toward the goal posts.

Recess soccer 10:38:48

Time: + 21 seconds, *Juan*

photographer

- not much action shown, the black shirt child is in Juan's class
- group of people can be seen in the far back



More soccer players looking for the ball to come their way. Caught unaware of the camera. Better focus and more control of the subjects in the image. Juan is now in control of the skills needed to use this camera (machine). He has learned to develop his own personal authority with a simple device. How about people and Teddy's domination?

Soccer legs 10:39:15

Time: + 27 seconds, *Teddy*

photographer

- they have walked out toward the fence
- red shorts of boy playing soccer
- white ball can just be seen as he ran in front of the camera.

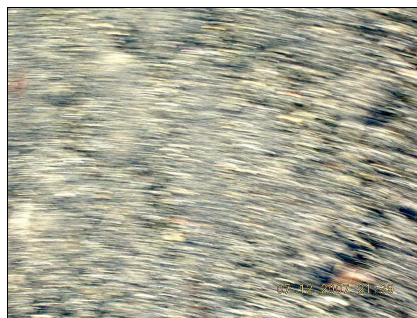


Red shorts and legs of a boy on the soccer field. What action is being captured? Image is cut off and must have been taken with some intent not apparent by the image itself. The previous image shows that the camera has moved across the field toward the fence. Is the photographer actually attending on the student in white rather than the player who ran in front? The details of these images take me to my memories of Teddy and Juan. Their mannerisms and personal traits speak from how they take the pictures.

Blue Blur 10:39:18

Time: + 3 seconds

Teddy photographer possibly handing camera to Juan photographer



Another Blue Blur, which seems to have been Teddy's trade mark in this series. Why does he take several consecutive shots before Juan gets to have the camera? How Teddy and Juan play, talk and interact with others has become apart of these photographs.

Recess Running: another view (Interpretive artographic photographs)

Fence watchers 10:39:29

Time: + 11 seconds, *Teddy photographer*

- group of girls gathered, one is sharing popcorn from bucket
- grade 5s and 6s in this group
- not sure of action, the focus may be the popcorn

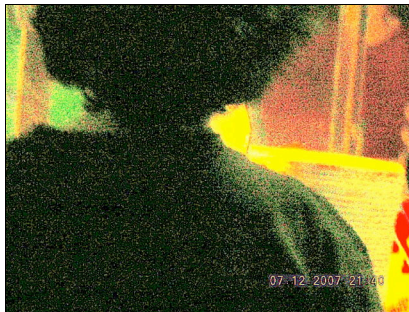


The girls at the fence watch the field but are mainly together. A bucket of popcorn is being shared. Actions, activity, movement; what does the camera person see? Is Teddy looking at the popcorn rather than the people? Is he focused on this group for reasons of age or power? His photo indicates his subordinate identity is confirmed by the peer authority expressed by these girls. They have ignored him! This is not the first time he has photographed grade 5 students standing as a group.

Waiting 10:40:22

Time: + 53 seconds, *Juan photographer*

- interesting that the boys have gone into the basement where the image is darkened
- the next frame makes it clear where it is
- zoom setting too high



Waiting in line, Teddy has his back to Juan, who is taking this indoor picture. Why is the zoom being used? Has Juan confused the shutter button with the zoom? This photo had to be altered until an image was 'discovered'. The flash setting does not appear to be going off.

Waiting to Pop 10:40:44

Time: + 22 seconds, *Juan photographer*

- he has pulled the zoom back, and we can see that Teddy is waiting at the popcorn counter
- a parent volunteer runs the popping machine

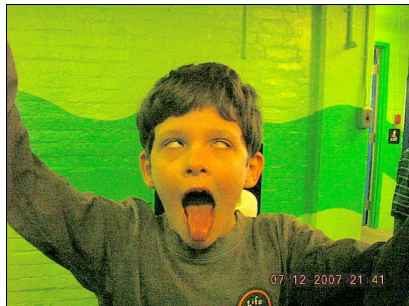


Buying Popcorn. Now it is obvious what Teddy is waiting for. The popcorn machine is now in the image and the group waits for a parent to serve them. Whose idea was it to go inside now?

Crazy eyes 10:41:09

Time: + 20 seconds, *Juan photographer*

- Teddy is still waiting so Juan turns and takes this boys image (S)
- S is showing off with crazy eyes
- S is in grade 3



Making crazy eyes a younger child stops for his photograph. Juan has taken other pictures of younger children, yet Teddy photographs those that are older. Students are in grades lower than Juan. Does he identify with those who are younger because of his perception of authority? What is involved in looking and seeing between these age groups? Teddy photos show students older than him, especially peers just a grade above him.

Recess Running: another view (Interpretive artographic photographs)

Red handed 10:42:18

Time: + 1 min 9 seconds, *Juan's photo*

- Teddy has his popcorn in a bucket and
- Walks up the stairway just above the basement popcorn station
- He is walking onto the main floor
- Other children at the stair bottom with popcorn

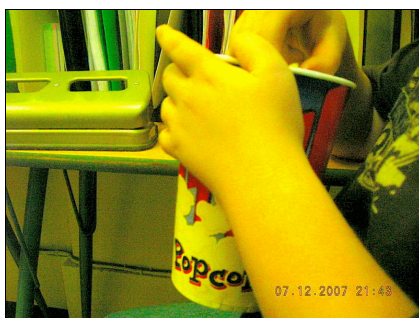


Red hands are from the colour adjustment to make the image show up. It is indoors and underdeveloped. The flash didn't go off. While it would be time to share the camera, obviously Teddy can't take photos – he is eating instead. Does he offer any to Juan? Not sharing, is it about power or selfishness?

Office Hole punch 10:43:08

Time: + 50 seconds, *Juan photographer*

- sitting in my office, my files and paper punch can be seen
- where is the VP? (me)
- Is Teddy sharing popcorn with Juan? central image of just the arm and bucket

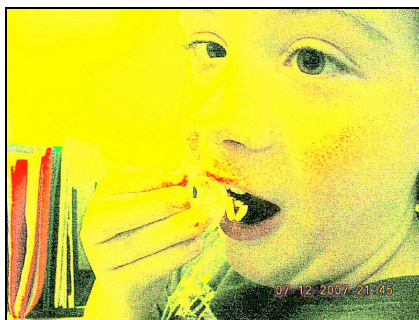


My office paper punch is on a small desk I use to hold admin folders of files. The camera is very close to the image and captures a popcorn bucket and Teddy's hands. The files and paper punch indicate the boys are inside my office. I am not in the picture and recall that I was away from the room. So they were waiting for me. The recess bell has not gone for the intermediate students, but the boys know they are on a second recess as theirs finished along time ago.

A mouthful 10:45:00

Time: + 1 min 52 seconds, *Juan still the photographer*

- waiting for me, there isn't much action
- good close-up of Teddy eating popcorn
- recess is now over the bell would have rung



A happy mouthful of popcorn is this action photo. Teddy is eating and appears to want his picture taken. Why else would he look so directly and have to turn his head for the camera? With so many pictures in the sequence of Teddy and his popcorn, again I wonder if any was offered to Juan. Did Juan ask for any popcorn? Is Teddy's relationship and *authority* between himself and Juan represented by the popcorn ownership? Do the pictures suggest more about Teddy's self expressed identity than can be discovered about Juan's?

No flash office 10:45:28

Time: + 28 seconds, *photographer?*

- someone takes a photo and the flash setting does not work or the camera is covered by a hand
- inside office or walking somewhere?



A No Flash image of my office. Juan is experimenting with the camera again. Clearly to do so, whether he is setting the zoom or using the flash the photographer has to read the icons and explore the machines capabilities. Juan has consistently done so in many of these images.

Recess Running: another view (Interpretive artographic photographs)

Football left 10:49:02

Time: + 3 min 34 seconds,
Teddy photographer?

- camera is outside again and looking at the field.
- 3 children running after football
- But recess is supposedly over



Three Football players run across the image toward the left. Are they playing or going inside as recess is over? The field sports are often the last to stop as the rear field does not hear the buzzer sounding the end recess time. How is it that Teddy and Juan are again outside? They would have been in my office eating when the bell rang?

Football centre 10:49:05

Time: + 3 seconds, *Teddy photographer*

- camera is outside again and looking at the field.
- child in back headed toward school door



Football is still happening even though recess is over. The red player is holding the ball. The central figure is ready to catch, but the child behind is going toward the building. Teddy is making up for lost time, as Juan had the camera for a number of pictures while Teddy ate his popcorn.

Just the fence 10:49:09

Time: + 4 seconds, *Teddy photographer?*

Juan photographer

- camera is outside again and looking at the field and students walking in. One has a red hat.
- All the frames on this page happen close together indicating the same person took them.



Just a fence below a group of kids. To be looking at the distant children the photographer mis-pointed the camera. The fence is well framed and shows no action. But the children in the distance are going into the building. Teddy seems to look over the camera rather than into the image viewer. Is Teddy sometimes taken by and 'shoots' interesting structures and perspectives – and not people?

Recess pair 10: 49:12

Time: + 3 seconds, *Teddy photographer*

Juan shadow in image

- seems the photos are still being taken by the boys.
- 2 young boys are running past
- Primary recess is over, but these primary boys are outside (?)



Two recess children are running away from the entry doors. But as they are late and running it seems possible they are headed to the boy's washroom on the far side before going to class. The shadows of Teddy and Juan are in the image. Teddy's silhouette shows he is taking the picture. Why are primaries outside at intermediate recess break?

Recess Running: another view (Interpretive artographic photographs)

In Field 10:49:33

Time: + 21 seconds, *Teddy photographer*

- children coming in from recess
- the football game continues in the background
- red shirt can be seen



In the field a group of students are walking casually back. The football game is still happening behind them. The top of the fence is in the foreground. The sunlight is over exposing the image. Teddy is keeping the camera; he isn't counting the frames but has decided to take over doing these last images to make up for the continuous sequence Juan took using the camera earlier. How does Teddy view "fair sharing"? Who wants to have control?

Recess football 10: 49:41

Time: + 8 seconds, *Teddy photographer*

- football player in red shirt
- football game gets delayed as long as possible
- before children come in from recess

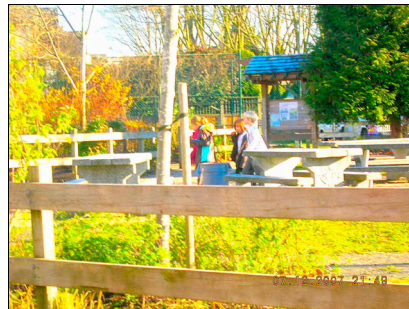


The red football player running is zoomed in on for this image. This is the first time Teddy has used the zoom. Did Juan tell him about it? Clearly the action of the player running, was precisely caught by the photographer. Although it isn't focused of course.

Butterfly garden 10:49:52

Time: + 11 seconds, *Teddy photographer*

- field group seen before has now reached the plant and herb garden
- area is referred too as butterfly garden
- it shows the 3 concrete picnic tables



Students causally walking are now in the Butterfly garden. This garden area was planted with scrubs to encourage nature studies. As an art project butterfly shapes in wood were painted and attached to the fence. The frame of view shows too much fence and small images of the students. Did Teddy forget how to use the zoom?

Recess Running: another view (Interpretive artographic photographs)

Running late 10:50:05

Time: + 13 seconds, *Teddy*

photographer

- a boy rushes by as he is late retuning into class



Running by, late from recess a boy's image is caught by Teddy. Nicely centred and focused. The supervision aid is to the left and doesn't see the photographers behind her. Teddy turns to take her picture next.

Recess end 21: 50:14

Time: + 22 seconds, *Juan*

photographer

- one of the three supervision aides is calling and waving late stragglers in
- the football players in particular
- she is turning toward the doorway she will enter through
- Recess was over 10 minutes ago!



Supervising adult waves her arm to hurry in late comers. A child's arm can be seen entering the school entry door. Often students go now to the washroom area in the basement, delaying getting back to class more, but with a legitimate reason. The supervision aide tries to encourage hastiness for the children belonging to the basement stragglers and late washroom users.

Recess Running: another view (Interpretive artographic photographs)

List of images for Recess Running Photographs with time details

VP on the phone 10:26:05	Soccer legs 10:39:15
Juan a/r/tographer 10:26:33	Blue Blur 10:39:18
Teddy a/r/tographer 10:29:01	Fence watchers 10:39:29
Recess climbers 10:30:23	Waiting 10:40:22
Recess out front 10:31:11	Waiting to Pop 10:40:44
Recess dirt 10:31:30	Crazy eyes 10:41:09
Looking down 10:31:46	Red handed 10:42:18
Recess leg 10:32:21	Office Hole punch 10:43:08
Down slide 10:32:35	A mouthful 10:45:00
Red hat recess 10:32:47	No flash office 10:45:28
Recess scooter 10:33:04	Football left 10:49:02
Recess running 10:33:15	Football centre 10:49:05
Shadow Shot 10:33:20	Just the fence 10:49:09
Behind the bridge 10:33:25	Recess pair 10: 49:12
Recess pole 10:34:04	In Field 10:49:33
Recess dash 10:36:06	Recess football 10: 49:41
Chase me 10:36:40	Butterfly garden 10:49:52
Skipper 10:36:51	Running late 10:50:05
Recess slide 10:37:09	Recess end 21: 50:14
Hoop on Court 10:37:28	
Recess Ball 10:37:45	
Soccer Boys 10:38:09	
Fri popcorn 10:38:23	
Field game 10: 38:27	
Recess soccer 10:38:48	

All these images were labeled according to some aspect of the photographic image. The narrative was developed from each photographic frame and its contents. These themes were used to rename the image. See the previous pages 191 to 203 for more detail.