TOWARDS CARING:
THE ROLE OF PLACE-BASED LEARNING IN A SECONDARY SCHOOL ENGLISH
FIRST PEOPLES CLASS

by

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Abstract

This research examines the current challenges of teaching a First Peoples English course using place-based pedagogy, and the benefits of incorporating place-based learning despite these challenges, through a qualitative study in the teacher-researcher's English 10/11/12 First Peoples class at Howe Sound Secondary School. The research draws on evidence from observations and journaling of the teacher-researcher, samples of student work, and student responses to short answer questions in order to address the over-arching research question, *What stories of learning have I identified regarding a First Peoples English course that makes use of place-based methodologies?* This question is broken down into two others: *What challenges exist in introducing place-based learning at Howe Sound Secondary School, and, if possible, how may these challenges be overcome?* and, *What are the benefits of conjoining place-based learning and a course focused on Indigenous perspectives?* The primary purpose of this study is to determine how to incorporate a place-based education in a traditional secondary school setting, and what are the benefits for students. The results of this study indicate that it is possible to overcome some barriers to place-based learning, and that the benefits to students make it worthwhile to do so when possible. The findings indicate that offering a place-based, student-centered approach and connecting to local landscape and community contribute to increased student engagement with, effort in, and enjoyment of the course. They also indicate that place-based strategies can successfully facilitate connections with
individuals from the local Indigenous community, contributing to greater understanding of the history and people of the place, and a possible breakdown of prejudice. The evidence also indicates that incorporating discussions of hegemonic educational models alongside local and non-local Indigenous ways of learning, including learning from place, also contributes to understanding of other cultures. Some place-based activities also encouraged family and cultural connection and lead to feelings of pride in Indigenous students. The study concludes with suggestions for future practice.
Preface

This thesis is the original intellectual product of the author, S. Price. The study discussed in chapters 3, 4 and 5 was covered by UBC Behavioural Research Ethics Board Certificate #H14-02943.
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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my parents, whose support is unwavering and immeasurable; and to my grandparents, who would be pleased that the tradition continues.
Chapter One: Introduction

1.1: Education and Society

1.1.1: Education and society: Introduction

The way in which a society educates its children should, and usually does, reflect the values of that society. But what about when values of the society change and the education system doesn’t change with it? Or when a government’s values don’t accurately reflect those of its citizens? Or, as is often the case, the change simply takes more time to incorporate in the system than educators are willing to wait? When this is the case, it may be up to individual school districts, schools, and teachers to find and incorporate teaching and learning methodologies that better reflect their society’s values. The purpose of this study is to examine the ways in which incorporating place-based pedagogies may add meaning to students’ school-based learning experiences, and why this is especially important in a course with a First Peoples focus. This study will also explore the challenges of doing so within a typical BC secondary school system.

Like much of the Western world, the focus of the BC provincial government seems to be primarily on economic growth (Government of BC, 2014); other concerns are secondary to expanding markets and job creation. BC schools reflect this focus in that they are designed to turn students of all backgrounds into “productive” workers; “productive” in this context seems to mean contributing to a nation’s Gross Domestic Product (Sharpe, 2010). As David Orr (2004) points out, our current education system was designed with the goal of industrializing the earth.
The focus on marks, right and wrong answers, efficiency, and segregation of subject areas reflect this goal. And yet, these fundamentals of contemporary formal education not only differ from, but in many ways undermine, values and essential skills of today, especially those that may help to repair the damage wrought by industrialism. The BC Ministry of Education (2014) seems to realize the need for change in education, with the Minister himself, Peter Fassbender, pointing out that “if [our education system] is going to continue to achieve our goal of fostering capable young people ready to thrive in a rapidly changing world, education needs to adapt to that changing world as well” (Ministry of Education, 2014). Despite this statement, little is changing in education that would truly prioritize the kind of learning that would result in today’s students achieving something different from their parents’ generation; the core problems mentioned above remain.

As educators, we are well-positioned to begin making changes in our own classrooms, schools, districts, and even provinces. But this leads to one of the tricky things about education: what and how teachers teach is never objective. Our curriculum, and how we convey it, is always partially shaped by the dominant cultural beliefs of our place and time. This is a frightening thought, especially considering how difficult it can be to see beyond our own biases. In this, I find myself caught in a difficult place, as it seems that often when education (or society) is most invested in the belief of its own good is exactly when it does the most harm (Marlens, 2010). Many of the Catholic priests and nuns who played pivotal roles in the destruction of Indigenous cultures in Canada were convinced that they were doing a great service, first by allowing “the Indians” to share in the gifts of Western civilization, and, second, by saving their souls. And residential school teachers were most effective in destroying the cultures of their students when they expressed genuine affection for, and earned the trust of, their students.
(Ormiston, 2002). Clearly, the same factors that can make education so powerfully positive can also make it dangerous. And so, when we are thinking of how to change education, I think we need to ask ourselves an important question, one that often gets pushed aside in the hectic pace of 21st Century life: “What matters?”

### 1.1.2: Education and society: Cultivating care

This may seem like a simple question, but in order to answer it, we have to care, and care enough to want to do something about whatever it is we think matters. What I think matters is cultivating this care in our students, or educating for empathy. When trying to help my adolescent students figure out what to focus on in their studies, I have often asked the question, “What do you care about?” or “What are you interested in?” On more occasions than I like to recollect, the answer has been, “I don’t know. Nothing.” Other adults have sometimes passed this off as the students “just being teenagers,” but I don’t think it’s natural for people of any age not to care. It is, of course, also possible that students just don’t want to admit that they care or to talk about what matters to them, but if that is the case, creating a culture of care is no less important: no one should ever feel embarrassed to care. There is, I believe, a way to encourage care and questioning so that students learn about their own values, and are encouraged to figure out the answer to that question of “what matters” for themselves. From the preliminary research I’ve done, it seems that the most effective way to do this will be in the form of place-based pedagogies; reasons for this choice are described in detail in the following chapter (Chapter 2: Literature Review).

In order to determine whether place-based learning is feasible and has these- or other-benefits to students, this study will seek to understand stories of place-based learning from the
perspective of those involved in an English class that makes use of these methodologies. The study is valuable because it will give educators a better understanding of the practical challenges and rewards involved in incorporating place-based learning into a typical secondary school. This study has a particular focus on place-based strategies and their especial importance in a course that prioritizes an Indigenous perspective; the study therefore takes place in an English 10/11/12 First Peoples class at Howe Sound Secondary School. The stories of learning that are analyzed in this research are from my perspective as the teacher-researcher, as well as from the perspective of my students. The research questions are as follows:

**Central Question:**

What stories of learning have I identified regarding a First Peoples English course that makes use of place-based methodologies?

**Sub-questions:**

What challenges exist in introducing place-based learning at Howe Sound Secondary School, and, if possible, how may these challenges be overcome?

What are benefits of conjoining place-based learning and a course focused on Indigenous perspectives?

Though the questions above don’t explicitly focus on the concept of developing values or care, these ideas are addressed in the second sub-question, as part of the benefits of conjoining place-based learning and Indigenous perspectives.
1.1.3: Education and society: My positionality

This concept of what matters, of what I care about, has certainly changed over the years. I’ve been a teacher. When I began teaching I was quite content with the system in which I worked; in fact, I had always loved school. I was one of those fortunate students who just kind of fit the system and got it: the focus on reading and writing, the learning from a book and then applying that learning to life, even the requirement to sit for long periods of time; none of this really bothered me in my own education. I formed positive relationships with my teachers and, with a little work, made it through the school system relatively easily, having fun, learning (some of which would be relevant later on), and generally doing pretty well.

But as I approached my tenth year of teaching secondary school art and English, new feelings about school began to emerge, and I became increasingly frustrated and discontent. Over those years, I had become, I think, a pretty decent teacher within the system that had shaped me. I generally had positive relationships with my students, good rapport with my classes, and enjoyed the challenge of finding new strategies to teach the curriculum laid out for me. But despite that, being a teacher had given me a different perspective from that which I had as a student. The cause of my frustration came from the recognition of a couple of, what seemed to me, major problems within our school system. The first was the increasingly overwhelming feeling that the most important things students could learn were not being taught in schools. The second was the realization that, though the system works well for students like me, it fails many students who learn differently from “the norm” or who come from different cultural backgrounds. I felt that, though the goals of education had changed over the past century or so, the education system had essentially stayed the same, not meeting the needs of today’s students.
or world, but instead the goal of industrialization: a goal which has already been met and, I think, is becoming that of an antiquated system.

1.2: What and How We Teach

1.2.1: Problems in the system

These problems are rooted in both what we teach and how we teach. The North American education system has at its core the importance of right and wrong answers; it overwhelmingly bases learning, and evidence of learning, on reading and writing; it isolates subjects from one another; and it separates learning from “real life,” by enclosing it within the walls of the school building (Orr, 2004). These characteristics of formal education are, for the most part, simply accepted as inevitable. But they ignore some important truths: that issues that don’t have clear right or wrong answers are as valuable- perhaps more so- than those that do; that, out in the “real world,” tackling problems often means integrating information from many different disciplines; and that, in order to be meaningful, memorable, and perhaps even transformative, learning needs to be attached to students’ own lives, and directed by their interests, rather than confined within classroom walls.

1.2.2: Place-based education

I believe the educational theory that best addresses the issues I outline above is place-based education. Education that is connected to students’ own lives, communities and landscapes is likely to encourage other important things: intrinsic, rather than extrinsic, motivation; creative solutions and further questions, not right and wrong answers; viewing different subjects as
integrated parts of a whole, rather than segregated, isolated disciplines (Orr, 2004); and viewing the world, not the classroom, as the primary location for meaningful learning (Louve, 2005; Orr, 2004; Nisbet, Zelinsky, & Murphy, 2011). In place-based education, the student’s own immediate world becomes the most important source for learning, and the classroom the location from which to more deeply understand and analyze the phenomena outside classroom walls. I propose, then, that place-based education is a likely strategy for cultivating care in students. If students are able to more deeply and meaningfully connect with the people and landscapes that surround them, it seems likely that their own sense of belonging in that place will deepen, and this, in turn will encourage care for the place in which they live.

In thinking about these issues, I have realized how much of my understanding of place-based learning comes from my own experience. Like many kids of my generation from small towns, I spent much of my childhood covered in dirt from my mom’s garden and the surrounding forests, dripping water from the creek in our yard and nearby lakes, or slathered in mud from the “frog-pond” down the road. Until recently, I didn’t realize how much I learned about myself, about ecosystems, and about the world through being free to roam the outdoors as a child and young adult. This lifestyle cultivated in me a curiosity about the world that has lasted through adulthood. This kind of curiosity is not always encouraged, and is sometimes even squashed, by schools today. Growing up in a time where more money was allocated to public services such as schools, I was lucky enough to attend “Outdoor School” for at least a couple of days almost every elementary school year. I don’t remember many specifics from elementary school, but I remember outdoor school. Tasting milk straight from a cow’s teat; watching the first crack appear in a smooth, creamy eggshell, and a tiny beak poke through, and the wet, exhausted chick emerge from the shell; learning bannock-making and cedar basket-weaving from Skwxwú7mesh
people. These experiences comprised the kind of schooling that encouraged curiosity, connections to non-human beings and the earth, and respect for ways of life that were different from my own.

I now see that what I remember is a place-based education: “a curricular and instructional approach designed to help students learn about the immediate surroundings by capitalizing on their lived experiences” (Knapp, 2005), and one that, though not what Gruenwald (2008) would consider a “critical place-based education,” nonetheless encouraged compassion for people and beings unlike myself. It was certainly conducive to the development of an “I-thou relationship,” which Knapp (2005) describes as “a more intimate environmental relationship that will help [one] feel part of the greater whole” (p 278). This is the kind of relationship that is common to many Indigenous cultures: it embraces the idea of kinship with and respect for other-than-humans and the natural world (Parajouli, 2001), and formed in me a deep sense of respect and gratitude for the earth and its creatures.

When I look around, I realize that mine truly was a rare and privileged childhood. Today, even those families in similar situations to mine don’t seem to feel safe allowing their children to roam the woods the same way I remember doing. Though I had a job as a teen, it seems that the pressure on many of my students is greater. On top of their school hours, many students work close to full time in order to help support their families, or to afford the many technological wonders they “need.” Many take care of younger siblings after school while parents are at work. Some of them have home situations that have resulted in their leaving the family home early and living on their own while still in high school. They seem to feel more anxiety around getting a good job (and getting into post-secondary programs that will enable this) than did most adolescents of my generation. And many have grown up with personal electronic devices. This
urgent need to respond immediately to whoever is contacting them adds to their overall stress as well, I think, and is a tempting distraction from any learning activities not engaging enough to retain their attention. Together, these things seem to result in students have less time and motivation to simply enjoy learning.

1.2.3: English First Peoples and place-based education

These added pressures in combination with reward-based, subject-segregated schools may have the greatest impact on Indigenous students, whose cultural values are more likely to conflict with this kind of system. There is much talk in BC about how to improve education for aboriginal students, but unfortunately, much of it seems to miss an important point. It seems to focus on how Indigenous students can change in order to better succeed in Canadian society, ignoring the aspects of that society that are incompatible with an Indigenous way of life, or the possibility that perhaps our schools should change in order to better fit these students. On the outside of every school in my hometown of Squamish is some form of Skwxwú7mesh artwork, and yet within the walls of each (despite some vast improvements in this area and some successful Indigenous learning initiatives by the school board), in many classes there is still little that reflects Indigenous ways of learning. This contradiction between outside appearance and inner reality strikes me as an appropriate metaphor for the Provincial Government’s approach towards Indigenous education. On the surface is an attractive veneer, purporting to prioritize First Nations students’ needs, but on the inside, little content of this rhetoric permeates the educational structure itself. As long as the focus in secondary schools is still on marks and exams, this is unlikely to change.
1.3: Thesis Organization

This thesis is organized into five chapters. The following one (Chapter 2: Literature Review) will explore the theoretical basis for this study. It will analyze a range of literature on place-based learning, including a focus on critical and Indigenous pedagogies of place. Next, Chapter 3 (Methodologies) will detail the process of the research involved in this study, including the following: the purpose of the study and the research question; measures taken to address potential ethical issues that could arise; and the research procedure. Next, Chapter 4: Research Findings addresses each research question in detail, using evidence from my observations, Evidence includes journaling that I did throughout the study; anonymous compilations of student responses to short-answer questions; and student work by those students who gave consent, and got parent consent, to participate in the study. Finally, this thesis ends with a conclusion (Chapter 5). The conclusion includes a summary of major findings of the research and the value of the study to the field, as well as a description of relevant post-research experience. It ends by touching on the ideas in this chapter again, connecting this study to the original question of “what matters?” and the concept of care.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Overview: Critical and Indigenous Place-based Pedagogies

The theoretical basis for my research lies in a pedagogy of place. Place-based pedagogies have much in common with other educational practices that have arisen in reaction to problems that emerge from a Western school system and way of life. These pedagogies have a number of names, including experiential, community-based, sustainability, democratic, Indigenous, outdoor, ecological and environmental education (Meek, 2011; Gruenwald, 2008). However, place pedagogies resonate most strongly with me, and are what I believe to be the most appropriate educational response to the challenges of today, since make put students and authentic experiences central to school learning.

The first important characteristic of place-pedagogy seems somewhat obvious, but is often missing from contemporary classrooms; place pedagogies encourage engagement with real, immediate issues and locations rather than those that are fabricated or detached from students’ own experience (Johnson, 2012; Knapp, 2005; Gruenwald, 2008; Sommerville, 2007). This engagement can lead to a more meaningful connection to community and environment, which seems in turn to lead to a deeper sense of respect and care for the land and its creatures, human and non-human (Cajete, 1994, 2001; Gruenwald, 2008; Knapp, 2005; Krug, 2010; Smith & Sobel, 2010; Sommerville, 2007; Tooth & Renshaw, 2009).

Additionally, connecting learning to place results in the integration and unification of subject matter rather than subject isolation and segregation (Cajete, 1994, 2001; Johnson, 2012;
Sommerville, 2007; Tooth & Renshaw, 2009). This more holistic way of learning allows students to transfer the learning they do in school more effectively to their lives outside of it, since most of what we do in life requires drawing on skills and knowledge from different disciplines or fields. This ability to make connections is also integral to the creative process, which is sometimes forgotten or even squashed in classrooms (Robinson, 2006).

Along with these common aspects of place pedagogies, there are three more characteristics that are unique to the specific kind of place pedagogy in which I am interested. These are addressed in literature that specifically focuses on critical and Indigenous pedagogies of place, and put together, form something like what Johnson (2012) calls a “critical pedagog[...]
grounded in Indigeneity” (2012, p. 829).

Critical pedagogies of place are defined as those that involve not only learning about and from local places, but also “examining the economic, social, historical, and political forces” involved in shaping specific environments (Meek, 2011, p. 292). Place-based learning becomes critical when it foregrounds political and economic issues and their impact on specific places and people (Gruenwald, 2008). A critical pedagogy of place conjoins the important work of critical pedagogies with those that have local ecological and community foci.

However, relying on a critical pedagogy of place exclusively may have some problems (Bowers, 2008). It seems, though, that these problems can be mitigated by merging Indigenous place-based learning with critical place-pedagogy. This will achieve two important things that may otherwise be overlooked: first, it will necessitate an explicit discussion about and experience with alternative (in this case, Indigenous) ways of learning that will broaden students’ understanding of education and move away from the hegemony of the Western education system (Johnson, 2012); second, it will lead to a more complete understanding of the potential of
humanity: that there are many different possible ways to exist (and learn) as a human besides the increasingly dominant Western European way, and that no one way is better or more “advanced” than another (Davis, 2009).

Including an Indigenous place-pedagogy also ensures that the learner him or herself is central to the learning process, since this is key to Indigenous ways of learning (Cajete, 1994, 2001); this is a characteristic of Indigenous place-based learning that is valuable to all students, I think. Most importantly, it means that students themselves play a key role in deciding what and how they learn. But I am hopeful that combining this learner-centered approach with one that is place-based - i.e., focusing on learners themselves and their relationships to the places they inhabit - will not only help each student better understand the diversity within human nature, or the ethnosphere (Davis, 2009), but also to consciously decide what kind of life he or she chooses to live within the many possible ways of being human.

Since the kind of learning I hope to encourage in my classroom embodies all of these characteristics, it is both critical and Indigenous place-pedagogies that I use to inform my own research. The following sections address in more detail the key characteristics of this pedagogical approach.

2.2 Engagement with and Connection to Community and Environment

2.2.1: Disconnection and isolation

There is nothing particularly new about learning from local places and experiences; in fact, it is an older idea than formal schooling itself, since children learned about the world from their local places before schools were created (Smith & Sobel, 2010). Schools, however, have
isolated the concept of learning from the experiences students have in their own community and surroundings; now, learning is often perceived to be what happens in classrooms, most often while using books, paper, and pen. This separation of school learning from life experience causes a few problems for both teachers and students.

Drawing on my experiences as a secondary teacher in Squamish, BC, Canada, I have found that since class work is often disconnected from “real-life” experience, students are likely to be less interested in it and have trouble focusing for long periods of time. Additionally, secondary school students are often required to sit for long stretches without “disruptive” movement about the classroom and with minimal interaction with their peers. Finally, students are frequently expected to learn and express most of the “important” material- i.e., that which will show up on exams and determine marks- through the written word. Reading and writing is just one skill of many that people can use in living a satisfying and purposeful life, but these skills have been “fetishized” through schooling (Orr, 2004). They are now given the highest level of importance in formal education, which means that those who do not excel in this area often come to believe that they are unintelligent, sometimes giving up on the idea of educational success altogether.

The combined effects of these characteristics of secondary schools make “classroom management” a serious problem for teachers, to the point that teachers even spend precious professional development time learning strategies that will make it easier to convince teens to do something that is very unnatural in the first place: sit for six hours a day, while paying attention to issues they have not chosen to study (and may have little interest in), and refraining from talking to their peers.
2.2.2: Engagement

The problems described above are in part with the physical requirements of literary learning (reading and writing are usually stationary, solitary tasks), but are also issues of student engagement. Having students who are engaged in classes is vitally important since it is strongly connected to positive outcomes in schooling: engaged students are “more likely to learn, to find the experience rewarding, to graduate, and to pursue higher education” (Marks, 2000, p. 154). But engagement is much more than simply time on task or the act of completing class work (Parsons, 2014). To be truly engaged is to voluntarily push ourselves to complete a task or further our learning, even when difficult, because to do so is in itself worthwhile and rewarding (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Csikszentmihalyi (1990) also connects engagement with happiness, pointing out that happiness comes, not from having circumstances go our way or “when external conditions are favourable” (p. 22), but from being actively engaged in life. He further connects this to the concept of flow, a state wherein people will pursue an activity even at great cost, because they so enjoy themselves while involved in it that nothing else seems to matter (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). This concept of flow shouldn’t be mistaken for related ideas of “fun:” people pursue activities that give them a sense of flow not as an escape or for entertainment, but because doing so gives them a sense of purpose in and control over life. If students can find flow in their classes, schools may cease to be places associated by many teens with boredom and competition, and instead be places where purpose and joy in learning can be experienced. For the purposes of this study, “engagement” is defined as heightened interest that results in increased effort, concentration and/or enjoyment in class work or learning (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Shernoff, 2003).
Clearly, engagement with certain tasks cannot be forced upon anyone, nor is there anything that teachers can do to guarantee students will engage with class work, since engagement depends, in part, on students’ personal backgrounds (Marks, 2000). It also depends on the relationships and expectations of students and teachers; interactions of students and the social environment; the level of challenge in class work; and the degree to which students feel they have ownership and control over their learning (Marks, 2000). This study will seek to understand how incorporating place-based pedagogies affects the degree and frequency of engagement in a classroom. The characteristics of choice and connection to lived experiences in place-based learning suggest that it may contribute positively to engagement, since Shernoff, et al. (2003) found that perceived control and relevance over school activities positively contribute to student engagement.

### 2.2.3: Connection to community

Place-based learning provides an alternative to this situation by connecting students’ schooling to their own communities and experiences, making learning much more immediate and relevant. Current educational (and cultural) practices often result in a sense of placelessness, and a separation of culture from nature, or, by extension, education from nature (Johnson, 2012). They also neglect what Smith and Sobel (2010) call “social capital”, the kind of trust and respect required for a strong community. Place-based learning can provide an “antidote” to the growing sense of isolation felt by many people in North America today by reconnecting students with organizations and individuals in their communities, building important relationships, and encouraging care and a sense of belonging (Smith & Sobel, 2010). Students can also work on projects that focus on strengthening the community itself. To do so, they would need to gain an
understanding of different aspects of their community and its needs, and then devise a way to fill that need (Smith & Sobel, 2010).

Some of this community understanding may stem from local history, another important part of place-learning. Due to the colonial past in BC, many communities remain somewhat divided, in part perhaps due to lack of understanding of history of the place and its people. Sommerville (2007) recognizes that many challenges may arise due to a place’s history, and calls place a “zone of cultural contact” where students can gain a better understanding of their history and perhaps also increased empathy for others affected by this history. This is different from learning about history from books, since the effects of the past will be visible and much more memorable when connected to a place.

2.2.4: Connection to environment

Besides separation from community, students may also feel a disconnect between their classroom experience and the natural world (Smith & Sobel, 2010). If people feel separated and disconnected from the natural world, they are less likely to take measures to protect it (Smith & Sobel, 2010). Spending time in the natural world encourages care for it. This is especially true when students are encouraged to engage the senses and participate in a kind of “reflective response,” where pedagogy is slowed to allow students to find their own meaning and interpret their own lessons in a place (Tooth & Renshaw, 2009). It is important in this reflection for students to make connections between themselves, others (human and non-human) and place (Tooth & Renshaw, 2009).

Focus and reflection on place is also what Knapp (2004) advocates for through his analysis of Aldo Leopold’s “A Sand County Almanac.” In his list of ten ways to know nature
(wondering and questioning, knowing local history, observing seasonal changes, listening intently, counting and measuring, empathizing with and personifying nature, connecting elements in cycles, finding beauty, seeking solitude for reflection, and improving land health), he clearly illustrates a reflective process that develops an intimate relationship with and understanding of one’s surroundings. This kind of intimate connection to natural places cultivates care for those places and the living things within them, since, as Knapp (2005) points out, it encourages the feeling that one is part of the whole that is the natural world. He draws on Martin Buber’s description of this perspective as an “I-thou” relationship, rather than an “I-It” relationship wherein the environment is perceived as made up of things that are separate from the individual. Clearly, the dominant capitalist and industrial perspectives are of the “I-It” nature; this view contributes to governments and corporations’ willingness to destroy so much of the natural world to use it for human needs at the expense of all other inhabitants of the earth (and, we are now learning, humanity’s expense as well). If an “I-thou” relationship can be cultivated in schools by learning about the land through intimate, personal experiences, it might have some effect in challenging the often unquestioned progress narrative (Knapp, 2005). Cajete (2001) also points out that today’s education conditions students to be consumers, and to see land that is uninhabited as valueless and empty, having worth only when it is monetized, developed, and inhabited (or perhaps simply used by humans, such as for resource extraction). Place-based learning will have made an incredibly valuable contribution if it can help to challenge the definition of “progress,” perhaps by changing it from meaning developing and industrializing the natural world for human uses, to meaning progressing towards a way of human life that is sustainable for all life on earth.
In order to even begin the process required for environmental action on a global scale, individuals must have a close understanding of local places (Sommerville, 2007). This local understanding can reach beyond the specific place, though, by giving students an understanding of how global issues manifest themselves locally (Sommerville, 2007). Sommerville (2007) advocates for viewing place through story, by both reclaiming stories that might have been displaced through colonization or industrialization and generating new, personal stories of place. This storying would lead to the kind of deep reflection encouraged by Tooth and Renshaw (2009). Reflection on intimate experiences with the natural world is the kind of learning that makes up a pedagogy likely to lead people to realign their lives with sustainable values that they may develop through this process (Tooth and Renshaw, 2009). In order for environmental care to have an impact, this realignment is crucial. It is in these local places that positive change most often begins. Place is key since it is where action can occur (Sommerville, 2007). As much as I believe that theoretical discussions are important, they cannot truly make change until someone puts the theory into practice in a real situation in an actual place.

Putting place at the center of learning is vital to finding solutions to our environmental problems elsewhere, too, since learning about natural systems within a specific place encourages understanding of how these systems are able to maintain balance, and how interconnected these systems are (Cajete, 2001; Sommerville, 2007). It also provides concrete examples of what happens when they become unbalanced. This may seem as though it is limited knowledge, only relevant to one specific situation, but this is not the case: instead, it is through observation of these specific situations that we can begin to understand the interconnectedness of our world, and the importance of maintaining the balance within natural systems: knowledge of one part increases understanding of the whole, and gives students a foundation on which to base future
decisions (Smith & Sobel, 2010; Sommerville, 2007). In addition, it may be through the connection to place itself that we find some answers: if we change our relationship to place, we may find that this in itself may open up alternative solutions to those we currently depend on, such as developing new technologies and furthering scientific knowledge.

Changing our relationship to the natural world from one of using and discarding to one of respect is essential for the shift of collective consciousness that will be required to repair the extensive damage the industrial revolution has wrought. It may be that refocusing education on relationships with place will give students the ecological understandings they need to successfully face the problems of today that have been created by a sense of separation from and a lack of understanding of our natural environment (Cajete, 2001).

2.2.5: Reconnecting and rebuilding

In all, if students connect to local places, they are more likely to invest in the well-being of these places, whether they be a local community or the environment as a whole (Smith and Sobel, 2010). This, of course, means moving away from the idea of a universal lesson plan that will work across the province. However, this kind of education will be relevant beyond the place in which it occurs: instead, it provides the basis for a more complete understanding of how systems and cycles in our world work, and provides a foundation on which to build understanding of more complex systems. It also leads to understanding of how interconnected these seemingly different things really are.
2.3 Integration of Subject Matter

2.3.1: Segregated subjects

Besides separating learning from “real-life” experiences, most secondary schools have segregated different areas of learning into isolated subjects. This is effective if our goal is to create experts in one specific field, which, of course, is useful in some situations. However, there are limits to a society that has experts who lack the knowledge and understanding of how decisions in their area of expertise affect other aspects of the world. Many of these problems have become the greatest challenges of our time: climate change and food security, for example. I am not opposed to specialists, of course. In many situations I believe specialists to be vitally important; but I believe generalists to be equally so. Segregating subject matter as early as we do, and as thoroughly as they are separated in secondary schools, cultivates generations of citizens who are in the habit of thinking in fragmented, disconnected ways, and this is unquestionably damaging to the earth and its vulnerable populations.

2.3.2: Cross-curricular learning through place

Place offers the opportunity for “bridging” many ideas that are separated in most schooling, such as science and humanities (Sommerville, 2007), history and literature, or even art and science. Johnson (2012) points out that there are two main conceptualizations of place, and it is these definitions that I refer to when using the term “place” in this thesis. Firstly, place is used as a way of “understanding, knowing, and learning about the world,” and, secondly, as a physical location of the search for political, cultural, and economic meaning (p. 830). I choose to use
these two definitions since they best fit the way in which students engaged with place in this study.

Cajete (2001) also creates educational opportunities for students to blend the arts, cultural, and scientific learning. Meaning-making in our lives is naturally cross-curricular; we can’t fully understand our experiences only through isolated disciplines (though specific disciplines can certainly affect how we see the world). The study of a specific physical feature of the landscape, for example, can be more fully understood through a combination of geology (learning about its geological formation); biology (its role as habitat for different species of flora and fauna); culture (its significance to different cultural groups in the area); politics (controversy about its value for resource extraction and recreation); language and the arts (hearing and creating stories about it) and history (the history of the feature itself and its historical use and meaning). It is clear to me that place-based learning is an ideal way to bring different areas of study together.

2.4 “A Critical Pedagogy of Place:” The Importance of Critical Inquiry

2.4.1: A place for the critical perspective

Despite some conflict amongst place-educators about whether a critical perspective “fits” with place pedagogy, I believe that meaningful, critical engagement with places and issues, rather than passive absorption or observation, is a vital part of place-based learning, and perhaps the opposite is true as well: that critical pedagogies are also inherently place-based (Johnson, 2012). Including the term “critical” highlights an engagement with place that encourages
contemplation of complex histories, behaviours, and injustices that may emerge from the
“contact zone” (Pratt, 1992, 1999, as quoted in Sommerville, 2007) and its inhabitants. In critical
theory, the historical, social, cultural and political context of places (including schools) are
examined, as well as power structures and imbalances that may cause injustice, and commit to
the transformation of society for the common good (McLaren & Crawford, 2010). This
examination is, I think, essential to encouraging critical inquiry in our students.

In understanding critical inquiry, I draw on Don Krug’s use of the term (Krug & Parker,
exploration of Wisconsin people, art and stories: “(1) direct experience; (2) observation and
reflection; (3) deliberation and dialogue; and (4) collaborative actions” (p. 34). These processes
provide the basis of the definition of critical inquiry that I use throughout this thesis. They are
not limited in relevance to learning through interviews, or indeed research at all, but may be
valuable in any context where a desire to understand complexities of issues or to engage with
lived experiences and/or places is present. Krug and Parker (2009) also point out that
neurological researchers understand that there are “relationships between cognition and learning
and social and cultural experiences” (2009, p. 35). Therefore, critical inquiry can be encouraged
in students as an approach to learning and a way of thinking about ideas and information.

Experience, reflection, deliberation, and dialogue are key to coming to more complete and
thorough understandings of complex issues, and adjusting actions is a key way people show
evidence of changing understandings of the world. Importantly, critical inquiry is a set of
processes which involves analysis of a subject in context; these contexts may include, but are not
limited to, those that are social, cultural, political, and ecological (Krug & Shaw, 2016). Critical
inquiry offers a more complete understanding of the way in which context affects viewpoints, both our own and others’ (Krug & Shaw, 2016).

For the purposes of this paper, the term critical inquiry embodies the qualities described above. It values lived experience, including collaboration, and examines how lived experiences affect one’s perspective. It also involves assessing the validity of sources and information and striving to understand context and differing perspectives on a given topic; this is an approach to learning that is encouraged by some activities in this study. This approach is, of course, very different from a kind of learning or thinking (often found in Western school systems) that relies on memorization or unquestioning absorption of information.

In his article “The Best of Both Worlds: A Critical Pedagogy of Place,” David Greenwood¹ (Gruenwald, 2008) points out that critical pedagogies are necessary in order “to challenge the assumptions, practices, and outcomes taken for granted in dominant culture and in conventional education” (p. 308), especially the emphasis on values of individualism and competition that are ingrained in our children though public schooling. In bringing the theoretical tradition of critical pedagogy together with place pedagogies, Greenwood finds a commonality between them in the spatial dimension of change, or, to use Friere’s term, situationality: reflection about the space one inhabits is inevitable when reflecting on one’s specific situation, and this reflection is likely to lead to a changed relationship with place (Gruenwald, 2008). Greenwood expands these ideas into those of decolonization, defined as “learning to recognize disruption and injury and to address their causes,” and reinhabitation, which is “learning to live well socially and ecologically in places that have been disrupted and injured” (p. 319). Greenwood is careful to emphasize that reinhabitation doesn’t consist of

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¹ In his earlier work, David Greenwood uses the name David Gruenwald. For the purposes of this paper, and in order to avoid confusion, I refer to him as Greenwood; however, I leave the citations with the name that appears on the original article.
replacing all current or dominant ideas with new ones, as might be suggested by Friere’s concept of renaming the world (wherein each generation “renames” or redefines the world), but in fact may often equally depend on maintaining or recovering traditional knowledge and culture that has been damaged or marginalized by dominant social groups (Gruenwald, 2008; Sommerville, 2007).

2.4.2: The development of critical inquiry

Something else important that critical pedagogy should cultivate is, of course, critical inquiry skills. As Johnson (2012) points out, our current educational practices disallow critical engagement with place-based learning since they separate not only subject matter, but also different ways of knowing, due to the hegemony of the Western scientific knowledge system in schools. He also points out, though, that scientists, historians, ecologists, and anthropologists are beginning to combine the binary approaches of Western Science with the more holistic approaches of Indigenous people. Doing this in schools, such as by using a science education rooted in place or even simply by pointing out the dominance of one knowledge type (since its ubiquity often results in a lack of awareness that other options exist), can open the door for our students to think critically about their own education and knowledge sources (Sommerville, 2007). Indigenous place-based learning experiences can further this by giving students a practical understanding of another way of knowing. It is likely also to encourage critical inquiry about the history and culture of the place in which they live and the people who inhabit it, both past and present. In order to truly understand a people, we must also understand the history of the place and the struggles of their community (Johnson, 2012); specific local places can serve as the sites to examine the many stories that exist there (Sommerville, 2007). Students, then, can
examine these stories and learn to assess the power relations that exist in the local place, and to evaluate for themselves the many different stories and viewpoints that can arise in a place.

Community-based learning also requires problem solving and analytical skills (Smith & Sobel, 2010), and ongoing experimentation and inquiry (Tooth & Renshaw, 2009). All of these are essential to a critical approach to learning. In order to persist through these challenging tasks, the student must be at least somewhat self-motivated; without some self-motivation, the persistence required for the evolving and creative process (Tooth & Renshaw, 2009) of genuine critical inquiry would be lacking. Critical inquiry often involves problem solving, which requires effort by the student; this is more likely to occur with place and community-based learning, since it tends to make school experience more valuable and meaningful to students (Smith & Sobel, 2010).

### 2.4.3: Challenges of combining critical and place-based perspectives

Despite these benefits, the idea of a critical pedagogy of place is not without its own critics. In fact, Greenwood’s “The Best of Both Worlds” (2008) resulted in at least three other papers being written in what appears to be somewhat of a literary battle, complete with attacks, counterattacks, and allies. But the critical pedagogy of place seems to hold up even under this scrutiny. Bowers’s work “Why a Critical Pedagogy of Place is an Oxymoron” (2008) starts the battle. He asserts that critical and place-based pedagogies cannot work together, due to critical pedagogy’s focus on continual transformation and decolonization clashing with the place-based focus on conservation and preservation. Bowers acknowledges that Greenwood understands that conservation is important to a critical pedagogy of place, but argues that this is not possible due
to the key theorists of critical pedagogy (Paulo Friere, Henry Giroux, and Peter McLaren) having certain prejudices and biases that emphasize the ability of abstract theory to improve the world (Bowers, 2008, p. 327). Another idea Bowers has a problem with is critical theory’s concept of reinhabitation. He interprets reinhabitation to mean that transforming dominant ideas must always involve Friere’s concept of renaming the world, or the next generation making changes to their parents’ way of doing things; clearly, this is problematic when looking at cultures whose practices are already ecologically sustainable, and that have important rituals of cultural importance.

In both of these criticisms, Bowers seems to believe that it is not possible to learn from a theory without adopting all of its characteristics. I’m not suggesting that academics may simply pick and choose whatever they like from different theoretical traditions in order to create their own hybrid. Instead, I suggest that it is possible to find the commonalities between different traditions and expand on ideas therein (as Greenwood does in examining Friere’s situationality and expanding its core ideas to decolonization and reinhabitation). Bowers leaves out a possibility that Greenwood seems to suggest: that a critical pedagogy of place could draw on the traditions of both critical and place-based pedagogies, but be neither one of them; it might, instead, be something new altogether. Greenwood doesn’t claim to be interested in each tradition in its entirety: he states that he “analyze[s] aspects of each tradition that are relevant to constructing a critical pedagogy of place” (p. 310, emphasis mine) and never pretends that the two are completely compatible; indeed, he points out that there are tensions between them. As Gregory Smith (2008) mentions in an article he writes in response to Bowers’ criticisms, Bowers’ issues with Greenwood’s article seem to be largely semantic. The ideas at the core of Greenwood’s critical pedagogy of place (such as the importance of connecting to place in order
to gain ecological understanding, while also striving for understanding of context, culture, and history) actually seem quite compatible with Bowers’ own perspective (Smith, 2008).

Bowers also ignores another important point, though it may be relevant to his own about tradition, especially with regard to Indigenous practices: the fact that it is possible to maintain the values of tradition without practicing these values in the traditional way (this may not be true for all traditions, such as spiritual rituals, for example, but can apply to many situations). A practical example of this can be seen when Indigenous cultures make use of new technologies. This is often questioned by non-Indigenous people, who argue that if Indigenous people want to maintain traditional ways of life, they should avoid using non-traditional technologies. But these arguments, like Bowers, ignore two important points: first, in new contexts it is not always desirable, nor even feasible, to maintain tradition exactly as it once was; and second, it is often possible to maintain the most important aspects of tradition while still embracing some change. A local example from First Nations people from BC’s North Coast, mentioned by Tracy Friedel in a lecture in March, 2013 to an EDCP 585B class, illustrates this point: though fishing practices today often incorporate non-traditional technologies, traditional values are respected in the ways in which they are done. To maintain healthy populations of fish, only those species that have strong populations are fished; species that are smaller in numbers are left to spawn so as to have a better chance of recovering in the future. The fishing technology may change, but the values that ensure populations remain healthy does not. In the context of place-based pedagogy, critical theory may change or evolve, but the spirit of it may still be maintained, and be key to balancing out non-critical place pedagogy. The two may come together to make something new that draws from both, but is not exactly one or the other.
2.5: Indigenous Place-based Learning: Indigenous Student Success and Development of Sense of Self

2.5.1: Critical and Indigenous pedagogies

This concept of bringing multiple pedagogical theories together to create something that combines particular aspects of them also applies to my desire to include Indigenous place-based learning in a critical pedagogy of place. Indigenous place pedagogies provide alternatives to Western ways of learning and being that are essential to a place-pedagogy that most effectively encourages care for the environment and a more complete understanding of human diversity, and an understanding of how the two are inherently connected (Davis, 2009; Johnson et al, 2016). Also central to Indigenous place-pedagogies is a student-centered approach, where self-reflection and understanding and the development of the individual are prioritized (Cajete, 2009). Allowing students to connect with Indigenous ways of learning and knowing in the classroom is also likely to increase trust between Indigenous communities and schools, repairing some of the damage that schooling has wrought on Indigenous cultures and increasing the successes that Indigenous students have in formal education.

2.5.2: Ecological and cultural sustainability

Though I’ve already mentioned the importance of place-based learning to encouraging positive and respectful attitudes towards the natural world and more-than-human populations, it’s important to specify what Indigenous place-based pedagogies in particular can add to this area. I include cultural sustainability here since the two concepts are inextricably linked: as ecosystems
change at a rapid rate due to climate change, cultures Parajouli (2001) calls “ecological ethnicities,” whose way of life is inextricably tied to their environment and maintains without disruption the ecological systems to which they are linked, are also at increased risk for disruption or even extinction: a culture that depends on specific places and ecosystems is difficult to maintain when those places and/or ecosystems are destroyed or vastly altered. It is important for students to understand that the current economy, which transfers resources from one place to another, has resulted in four-fifths of the world’s resources being consumed by one-fifth of the world’s population (Parajouli, 2001). Importantly, most of these resources are not being used to satisfy needs, but for luxury items of the wealthiest global populations, and yet their extraction is displacing, polluting, or otherwise negatively altering the habitats of those poorer (in terms of money) populations (Parajouli, 2001). It is very important for the next generation of policy-makers and consumers to understand the link between their own choices, the health of ecological systems, and the health of cultures that are inherently tied to places.

This connection is also important to understand since these very cultures, many of them Indigenous, are working against negative effects of the dominant capitalist economy; the larger the percentage of the global population who live as “ecological ethnicities,” the better, as far as environmental damage is concerned. Rather than encouraging these populations to change their way of life and join the global economy, as schooling often does (Marlens, 2010), what would be more useful is for schools to teach aspects of these cultures to students so that the global West can learn from them.

Though a better understanding of Indigenous ways of life and their importance to the health of the earth are valuable in the context of place-based learning, even more important from an ecological standpoint are what Cajete (1994) calls the “foundational characteristics” of
Indigenous education. What these characteristics embody is a different way of viewing the natural world and the human-nature relationship: the natural world in this educational model is sacred; and the relationship between humans and nature is reciprocal and interconnected (Cajete, 1994). Learning in this way is reflective, cyclical (going deeper with each cycle), and authentic (connecting personally to ecologies, rather than learning about them from afar). Nature is not separate from this process; instead of learning about nature, nature is an essential part of learning about self and community, including spirituality (Cajete, 1994). Though it is important not to generalize, Cajete explains that, though each tribe may have different ways of expressing spirituality and connection to places, there is often a common spiritual connection that “Indian people feel to the special places in their lands and their lives” (1994, p. 42).

Though Cajete makes this generalization about Indigenous people, it holds true for others, as well. Most people have emotional and even spiritual connections to special places in their lives. Understanding places, especially natural places, as having value to the individual and community beyond a physical location or as a commodity is important to a place-based education that will more effectively encourage healthy choices, for human and other-than-human communities, and the land itself. Countless examples show us that individuals will fiercely protect places that they are connected to emotionally or spiritually. That is where the “not in my backyard” sentiment comes from. What is needed is for the empathy we feel for our “backyards” to extend beyond our own experience; the stronger our connection to natural places we know, the more likely this is to occur.
2.5.3: Importance of self

Also important to Indigenous ways of learning is the development of self for each individual learner (Cajete, 1994, 2001; Sommerville, 2007). The development of an individual’s sense of self is often, oddly, largely ignored in schools, but is absolutely essential if we want to encourage students to find meaningful life goals that align with their own beliefs and talents; if we want to encourage them to find their “calling” (Orr, 2004). In his 2001 chapter, “Indigenous Education and Ecology: Perspectives of an American Indian Educator” Cajete describes the Pre-Columbian Aztecs version of a complete education, where individuals would need to find three essential things: their “face,” their “heart,” and the work that could best express the previous two things (p. 622). Finding one’s face meant finding one’s identity, including character and relationships with self, community, and the natural world. Finding one’s heart was finding one’s desire, motivation, and passions in life. Finding one’s work, then, was not about finding a way to make money or even survive. It was perhaps more akin to what we might see as an individual’s “calling” in life: a vocation that allows them to express who they truly are through their work (Cajete, 2001). There are few things in life more worthy than knowing who we are, what we stand for, and how to live in line with these two things in our careers, as well as the rest of our lives.

2.5.4: A place for Indigenous students

Of utmost importance in BC is how incorporating Indigenous place-pedagogies is likely to create a learning environment in which Indigenous students feel comfortable and can be successful. If students are able to see cultures like their own reflected in their schooling and engage in ways of learning that are meaningful to them, it may do a little to mitigate the problem
of schooling continuing to be (purposefully or not) a neo-colonial tool that continues to undermine non-Western cultures (Marlens, 2010). Even the simple acknowledgement of different ontologies in classrooms is a step away from the hegemony of the Western knowledge system (Johnson, 2012), and therefore holds the potential for a shift in perspective to one that is more open and empathetic to other cultures.

Introducing Indigenous ways of learning will likely be beneficial to all students, but it is also important to acknowledge that it will likely be most beneficial to Indigenous students: hopefully, it means learning in a way that aligns more closely with many Indigenous students’ own world views (Cajete, 2001). This could be used as an argument against it by critics (though this could easily be countered by pointing out that the current educational practices tend to disproportionately favour students from Western-European cultures). However, if the BC Ministry of Education is serious in its professed dedication to aboriginal education, as stated in their description of the Aboriginal Enhancement Agreements (2014), advantaging this generally disadvantaged population of students will be a desirable outcome. Since Aboriginal Education is a high priority for the British Columbian Ministry of Education, Indigenous place-based learning seems a logical way to “practice what we preach:” not only changing what we teach, but how we teach, to ensure success for all of our students.

2.6: Conclusion: Connection to Care and Redefining Success

Many of the concepts described above connect to my original motivation for exploring place-based learning: development of care. Nel Noddings’ (2012) definition of care ethics is inseparable from the ways in which we relate to one another, the caring relation. People within the caring relation have roles of carer or cared-for, and those these roles are fluid rather than
static; each person in the relationship may at times take on either role (Noddings, 2012). The caring relation involves certain behavior by both the carer and the cared-for: the carer is attentive to the cared-for in order to understand the needs of the cared-for, and must make an effort to direct energy towards the needs of the cared-for; the cared-for, in response, must acknowledge this effort in some way that shows the caring has been received (Noddings, 2012). This exchange of care and acceptance or acknowledgement of care are essential to any caring relation.

In this thesis, I also draw on Noddings’ (2012) work in my definition of empathy. Noddings’ understanding of empathy is one that resonates with me in the work done in this study: it “may be thought of as ‘reading’ of the other that engenders both feeling and understanding” (p. 55). It occurs when we can identify with another as someone who is “one of us,” and when we are receptive to understanding his or her ideas or position (Noddings, 2012, p. 55). For empathy to occur, then, there must be openness on the part of the empathizer. It requires not simply thinking, “How would I feel?” in another’s position, but striving to understand what the other is actually feeling (Noddings, 2012). This is a subtle, but important difference: the first approach is self-centered, whereas the second is centered on the experience and feelings of another.

Connecting the work in this study to the concepts of care and empathy has value in and of itself, of course, but is also significant in relation to other educational objectives: as Nel Noddings (1995) points out, other goals, such as academic success, are not likely to be achieved unless students feel cared for and care for others.

As with all educational reform, it is success for all of our students, and for future generations, that drives the (re)integration of place-based learning into educational practices. In place pedagogies, though, the term success means something somewhat different from its typical
definition in schools. Success in place-based learning is not getting higher grades or test scores (though I suspect it will do both). Instead, it is about a process and creating a more complete, caring, and balanced understanding of ourselves, our world, and its inhabitants. It is this goal that makes incorporation of place-based pedagogies a worthy goal for any educator, and a worthy subject for this Master’s thesis.
Chapter 3: Research Methodologies

3.1: Background Information

3.1.1: Changes through learning

Before explaining the process of this research, I first want to go back to the beginning, to how I arrived at asking these questions in this English First Peoples class. Though my overarching goal (cultivating care and critical inquiry through ecological and social justice education) has remained, a few important things have changed since I began.

The first change came while I was in my first semester, taking three courses: Multiculturalism and Anti-racism; Environmental Geography; and the required Curriculum and Pedagogy course. Through these courses, I started to think more deeply about the school system itself and the unintended effects it has on students. I also began, through campus lectures and some self-directed reading, to think and write about Indigenous ways of learning, which are generally more holistic than Western methods and intrinsically connected to place. I began to wonder whether these methods might really benefit all students; unequally, of course - they would likely benefit our Indigenous students most profoundly - but I think that is what is needed, at least from a social justice perspective. These courses helped me to understand that I needed to turn to Indigenous ways of teaching and learning in order to better achieve these goals.

The second change came the next semester, through a course titled “Place-based Learning.” When I registered for the course it was on the recommendation of my advisor, and I really had no idea what I was signing up for. But it turned out to be the perfect course for me. I began to increasingly understand that caring about the wider world could not occur without students first being connected to their own communities and local landscapes. First, I believe
now, students need to feel that they are connected locally; after that, it makes sense to bring in broader discussions.

The classes that became available to finish off my Master’s coursework were also oddly serendipitous. Two courses in Indigeneity and Eco-pedagogy were offered for the first time that summer. What was truly incredible was that these were place-based learning courses that were taught onsite in Peru. Our learning was focused on Indigenous theory and sustainable cultures, and we learned much of this from Quechua people themselves while living, for a short period of time, with them on their land. It was an amazing experience and an incredible example of place-based learning.

It was in part these experiences with my own education that made me determined to at least try to make a bigger change. That change proved to be more challenging than I had anticipated.

3.1.2: Grand ideas, limited reality

At the beginning this research, integrating place-based learning in a meaningful way felt quite daunting. After my first year of course work at UBC, having read literature about and taken courses in place-based learning, and having been away from teaching for a year, I emerged with grand ideas of creating unique and engaging place-based opportunities for my students. These would include interdisciplinary, student-led projects where students were self-motivated to connect with people outside the school through community or environmental projects. I had read about projects such as these in my courses and for my literature review, and I wanted to be one of those teachers, and to have (or perhaps help develop) those kinds of students.
However, when I returned to my teaching position at Howe Sound, with English 10 and 12 classes on my schedule for the year, I quickly became frozen with indecision. I was confused about how what I had read and dreamt about fit into my classroom, my school’s organization, my students’ interests, and my courses’ learning outcomes. It turned out that this challenge resulted in about a year’s delay in completing my Master’s. I had a number of ideas, but most were “too big,” or too complex, or too interdisciplinary to do in my four-month-long, 75-minute-a-day, single-subject, provincially examinable courses. As it turned out, I did end up trying a few different projects that were somewhat place-based that year, but was ultimately dissatisfied; none of them seemed adequate. I became frustrated with the limits that the class organization and school day unintentionally put on what I could realistically do. This led me to believe that it would not be enough to attempt this within my class, since it seemed that the way learning was structured was the greatest barrier to learning centered in place. I felt that I needed to find a way to structure learning differently in order to bring to fruition the vision I had for place-based learning.

An idea of how to overcome these challenges came from two conversations; one with my father, a retired teacher and principal, and one with a colleague. Resulting from these conversations was the concept of an academic “academy” with place-based and social justice foci. Our school and school district were embracing academies during this time, but they were (and, it turns out, still are) all sports-based. If we can make Cycling and Hockey academies work, my colleague asked, why not an academic one? That would adequately address the issues I had been having, as an academy would allow us to have a flexible timetable to make leaving the school for longer periods of time more feasible, and combine multiple subjects for interdisciplinary learning. It seemed perfect.
I and a number of other teachers from my school spent some time that winter discussing what kind of education we believe would be most effective, and how we might be able to achieve this within our current school day at Howe Sound Secondary. What we came up with was an interdisciplinary, place-based cohort that would focus on the theme of Social Justice. I, with an Art and English background, and Michele Roblin, a colleague with a Math and Science background, would teach it together. We had hoped it would run the following year. For a number of months, planning and promoting this became the central focus of my time. We wrote up a description for what we had decided to call the "Cohort of Inquiry and Innovation," and offered it for the following year in the school calendar.

In the end, unfortunately, we didn’t get enough enrollment for the cohort. We probably got a little ahead of ourselves in attempting to offer it so soon, since by the time we came up with a plan we had little time to promote the program. Though this didn’t go through in the end (or at least, not yet), it did lead to some valuable learning about the challenges that face secondary teachers wanting to implement place-based learning, the necessity of being realistic about the scale of projects, and the importance of embracing the idea of “doing what we can” in the circumstances we are given, and counting the small successes that come from that.

Since the cohort didn’t work out, it meant, of course, that I could not write my thesis about the cohort students’ experiences with place-based learning. Though I admit that I was discouraged by this, I think things perhaps turned out for the best, as another opportunity presented itself: English First Peoples, a course that Howe Sound Secondary had offered before but had never had enough enrollment to run in the past, was now going to run the following year. I was offered the opportunity to teach it.
Though a cohort would still be a great asset, and I hope it will run in the future, English First Peoples is also a fitting context for examining place-based methodologies. Having place as a primary focus ensured that, through the course, we connected often with the Skwxwú7mesh community. One of our district’s amazing Squamish Language and Cultural teachers, Charlene Williams, and our school-based First Nations Support teacher, John Hamill, both told stories and anecdotes that made the learning more relevant to students. Students also generated their own place-based work.

3.1.3: Purpose

The purpose of the study is to develop an understanding of how, in a practical sense, to incorporate place-learning into an English First Peoples class at Howe Sound Secondary, as well as what significance place-based learning and place-based methodologies have for participating students. The overall question of what “stories of learning” I identify refers to both my own learning and my students’. I have sought to address my research questions through a qualitative research study in a combined English First Peoples (EFP) 10/11/12 class that ran at Howe Sound Secondary School in School District #48 from September, 2014-February 2015.

3.1.4: Research questions

This chapter details the findings to the central question “What stories of learning have I identified in a First Peoples English course that makes use of place-based methodologies?” I have made five changes to these questions: three significant, and two quite minor. It seems relevant to this paper to explain why these changes were made.
The original questions for this research project were as follows:

**Central Question:**

What stories of learning do students tell regarding a First Peoples English course that makes use of place-based methodologies?

**Sub-questions:**

What does the concept of "place" mean to students?

How does place-based learning influence students' perceptions of the local community? How does it influence perceptions of the environment (social/ecological) beyond the school?

What is the added benefit of conjoining place-based learning and literature focused on First Nations perspectives?

What connections are there between place-based learning and issues concerning student engagement?

Here are the revised questions that I will address in the next chapters:

**Central Question:**

What stories of learning have I identified regarding a First Peoples English course that makes use of place-based methodologies?

**Sub-questions:**

What challenges exist in introducing place-based learning at Howe Sound Secondary School, and, if possible, how may these challenges be overcome?

What are benefits of conjoining place-based learning and a course focused on Indigenous perspectives?

When I first developed the research questions for this study, the questions focused entirely on the experience of the students, since they were who I was thinking about as I was
imagining what I wanted to learn. However, partway through the semester, I realized that the person who was probably learning the most from this experience was actually me, and examining that learning needed to be included in my questions. I had spent a significant amount of time reflecting on how I would overcome challenges in implementing place-learning, I’d learned how to make small changes that seemed to make a big difference to student engagement, and I’d also realized that it just wasn’t possible to do all that I had hoped to do. For this reason, I changed the wording of my central questions from What stories of learning do students tell in a First Peoples English course that makes use of place-based methodologies? to What stories of learning have I identified in a First Peoples English course that makes use of place-based methodologies? This gave me the flexibility to focus on my own learning as well as that of my students.

In order to discuss my own learning adequately, I needed to include an additional question: What challenges exist in introducing place-based learning in a traditional secondary school setting, and, if possible, how may these challenges be overcome? Therefore, I made this my first sub-question. Since my first and greatest challenge was figuring out how to incorporate place-based learning effectively in my class, it became clear that if I couldn’t address that question, the others would be irrelevant.

When I added this question, I also removed a question. This was the second significant change to my questions. What does the concept of place mean to students? seemed like an obvious question to ask initially, but I realized that it mattered most in relation to Indigenous knowledge, experiences, and learning, all of which is covered by other questions. Though I did ask students to write briefly about place before having given them much context, their answers
do not provide much worth discussing in isolation from the other issues; this question will be subsumed into others where appropriate.

The third significant change to my research questions was removing the question How does place-based learning influence students’ perceptions of the local community? How does it influence perceptions of the environment (social/ecological) beyond the school? In the course I taught, I simply didn’t have the time to go as in depth into local issues as I’d hoped. Part of this was due to having a three-grade split class, with two of the courses being provincially examinable. As much as I would like for the standardized testing to go away, it exists, and I had a responsibility to use the last portion of the term to prepare students for it. This involved using some class time for exam prep; it also guided my teaching, since English First Peoples 12 has a list of required texts of which students must know at least two. This use of time, however, was much less of a problem than another: the unavoidable circumstances of a BCTF strike that lasted the first three weeks of the school year. Losing that amount of time took away the opportunity to do a project intended to focus on, and share with, the local community, from where most of the data for this question would have come.

The next changes are quite minor. I changed the wording in the third question, from singular “the added benefit” to plural “added benefits, since there are multiple; and “First Nations perspectives” to “Indigenous perspectives” to be consistent with the term we most often used in the course (since the term “First Nations” tends to be used for Canadian Indigenous people, whereas the course touched on Indigenous cultures outside of Canada as well), and also the word literature to works since we studied a variety of forms of Indigenous works in the course.
Finally, I made another change quite late in the writing process, when I was part way through writing up my research findings. This change was to meld the final question, *What connections are there between place-based learning and issues concerning student engagement?* into the second sub-question, *What are benefits of conjoining place-based learning and a course focused on Indigenous perspectives?* As I was writing my findings, it seemed important to mention student engagement as one of the benefits of place-based learning, rather than as a separate question. In part, this is also due to the challenges in gathering evidence of student engagement: other than my own observations, the majority of evidence of engagement was gathered along with evidence of other benefits (such as disrupting prejudices), and it seemed awkward and counter-intuitive to place this topic in its own category. This became increasingly obvious when doing the analysis, since I realized that engagement was inextricably linked to other benefits of place-based learning.

### 3.1.5: The class

This English First Peoples class was unusual for a few reasons: firstly, it was the first time this class had been taught at our school, so both the students and I came into it without clear expectations of what it would be. Secondly, it was a mixed-grade class: English 10, 11, and 12 students were all in the same class, reading much of the same material and completing similar assignments with slightly different expectations depending on the learning outcomes for each grade. Again, this was the first time this has happened in our English department, and, as far as I know, in our school. The third reason this class was unique was that it was an English class that students chose. They had the choice of English Language Arts or English First Peoples, and almost all students chose this course because something in its description appealed to them (with
a couple of exceptions of students whose schedules made this course “fit” for them). Though one
would think that this would make the course somewhat homogeneous by perhaps being
composed of primarily Indigenous students, in fact, it was quite diverse. Of the twenty-three
students, ten were Indigenous, eight were international students from European countries, and
five were Canadian non-Indigenous students. Students who agreed to participate in the study
reflect this mix of cultures as well.

3.2 Measures Taken to Minimize Ethical Issues

3.2.1: Consent

Before beginning the study, I gave informational letters to and received consent from my
school administration and the school board (Letter to Administration, Appendix A-1; Consent
form Administration, Appendix A-2; School Board Letter, Appendix A-3). Next, students in my
EFP course were briefed by me, both in writing and orally, on what this study entails, what their
role in it would be, if they chose to participate, and how their work would be used. I sent a Letter
of Invitation (Appendix A-4) home along with a Parent Consent Form (Appendix A-5), and gave
students a Student Assent Form (Appendix A-6). Students must have returned both the Student
Assent and Parent Consent form in order to participate in the study. The only exception to this
was students who did not live with parents or guardians; these students only needed to hand in
the Student Assent Form. Since these students are permitted by the school to sign their own
permission forms and have the same day-to-day responsibilities as adults do, it is clear that they
are capable of deciding on their own whether or not they want to participate. Though I do
anecdotally discuss my own interpretations of work from many different students in the class, I
do this without using any distinguishing or identifying features of the work. For excerpts and further analysis, I have only used the work of those students who handed in the required forms.

In total, eight students handed in both required forms. There is a discrepancy between the number of student consent forms versus parent consent form returned: fifteen students of a possible twenty-three handed in student consent forms. Initially, only four handed in parent and student consent, with one student who lived alone also handing in her consent; a further three students handed in parent forms later on, for a total of eight. Upon follow-up, I found that other students had simply forgotten to have the parent consent forms signed and returned; there were no issues with the study that I am aware of. Since by the time I knew who was participating, the students were no longer in my class, seven parent forms were not handed in despite students agreeing to participate in the study; samples of their work are therefore not included in the analysis. Though I tracked them all down once, I didn’t often see these students around the school, so didn’t have an opportunity to remind them again; I also didn’t want to pressure students, due to my concern about power relations (examined in the next section).

The eight students who participated in the study included three male and five female students; four Indigenous students (3/4 Skwxwú7mesh Nation); one non-Indigenous Canadian student; and three non-Indigenous International students.

### 3.2.2: Power relations

Because this is a required course for students, and I am their teacher, I understand that the possibility of some ethical issues due to power relations may exist. Though students didn’t seem concerned about this, I wanted to be sure that they were confident that their success and grade in the course would in no way be affected by their decision of whether or not to participate. In order
to ensure this, I had a colleague from the school collect forms that would give permission to use each student’s work. These forms remained sealed in my colleague’s possession until after final marks for the course were submitted. I did not know which students had agreed to participate in the study until after students’ marks were finalized.

3.2.3: Privacy

In order to protect students’ privacy, I have used pseudonyms on the copies of their work and in this document. All data used in the study will be kept securely in a locked cupboard at Howe Sound Secondary for the duration of the study, and locked in the office of Don Krug, the Principle Investigator, for five years after the study is complete, after which time all paper data will be shredded and digital data deleted. No identifying characteristics of students will be included in the analysis. The three Indigenous guests who came into the class are named in the study, since all three gave their written consent for their names to be used.

3.3: Procedure

3.3.1: General description: Types of assignments, projects and units

In order to investigate these questions, I needed to gather information from students. Two sources were used for future analysis: my own reflections (in the form of journals) about my experiences and observations of student experiences in the class; and students work, most of which they would be doing as a part of the class irrespective of the study. In order to have examples of student work to use in the study, but still return students’ work to them, I photocopied or took digital photos of student work that was related to place throughout the
course. Some of these assignments were directly focused on issues of place, and some were more general (such as when connections to place were possible, but not required).

Any data I gathered from students was either through the projects that they did in class or their reflections on class experiences. In hindsight, I wish I had the students do more reflections. I think they are useful for students, as well as being quite revealing in regards to what types of assignments and activities students connected with in the course. However, it is also possible to see signs of student engagement through looking at completion rates and effort for place-based compared to non-place-based work.

There were three main methods in which I incorporated place-learning into the class: firstly, through projects that either specifically require or give the option for students to connect to their experiences and communities; secondly, by inviting local Indigenous guests into our class for formal presentations or to more casually connect with students; and lastly, through a specific unit about a prominent Squamish landmark.

The first assignment in which some aspects of place-learning existed was a bit of an accident: it was during the first week of classes, and we had been focusing on the Canadian residential school system in our first unit. The range of understanding of this topic was broad, ranging from international students from other countries who had never heard of it, to students who had parents and grandparents who had lived through it. As a part of this unit we read Joseph Boyden’s short story, “Legend of the Sugar Girl.” Though I had intended to do work that focused more on a literary understanding of the story, such as analysis of plot elements and literary techniques, I realized through our class discussion that what I really wanted to see was students’ own connections to the work; it seemed to me that not only was this a good avenue not only for understanding literature and an important historical event in Canada, but also for students to
explore their own understandings of the residential school history and their feelings surrounding this issue. Because of this, the creative responses contained some elements of place-pedagogy that I think are worth discussing in my findings.

The first intentional method of giving the students the option of connecting to their own experiences and communities was the easiest for me to incorporate into the class, as it could be done through the same kinds of projects I do in other classes, such as inquiry-based learning, by simply changing the parameters of the research to reflect local issues or issues that students felt were important. For the purposes of this research, *inquiry* in regards to student research is based on the approach that I use with my classes. It is a research approach where students first choose a topic; then pose questions or define a problem related to their topic; and finally, seek to address the questions or understand and explore solutions to the problem. There were two inquiry-based research projects in which inquiry was offered with a place-based option: *Inspirational Person Project* (Appendix B-3) and the *Final Inquiry Project* (Appendix B-4). In these, students’ preferences dictated to what degree their project would be place-based. It is important to note that *inquiry* as an approach to research differs from the term *critical inquiry* as described in Chapter 2 (2.4.2: The Development of Critical Inquiry), though using this process of inquiry in research may draw on critical inquiry skills.

The second method, inviting local Indigenous guests into the class, occurred more formally with presentations from one of our district’s amazing Squamish Nations Culture and Language teachers, Charlene Williams. Collectively, our Culture and Language teachers have designed a number of different lessons that span many grades and subject areas. Charlene presented to our class on three occasions. Additionally, our District Principal of Aboriginal Education, Susan Leslie, visited our class on a few occasions, usually making more informal
connections with students, but also telling the class a story of her own that related to an assignment students were doing. Our school’s First Nations Support Worker, John Hamill, was also a regular visitor to our class, sometimes to connect with students about their progress, but also to give his perspective on issues we were discussing, and on one occasion, to teach us the protocols for running a Sharing Circle, something I was not comfortable initiating without him, since I am not an Indigenous person myself.

Finally, the most targeted place-based work we did was a unit (which I will refer to as *The Chief Unit*) that looked at the importance of both place and storytelling. This unit focused on a local landscape feature, The Stawamus Chief, which is an impressive 700-metre granite monolith that can be seen from almost every location in and around Squamish. The unit began with students comparing land use priorities for The Chief Provincial Park (as they interpreted them from the Chief Park brochure [2014] and the *Stawamus Chief Management Plan* [1992]) with land use priorities for the Squamish Nation (as described in the Xay Temíxw [Sacred Land] Land Use Plan). Next, students listened to Charlene Williams of the Skwxwú7mesh Nation tell a story of how the black streak came to be on the face of the Chief, and discussed the importance of storytelling to her people. We also talked about students’ own experiences with the Chief, heard a Skwxwú7mesh story about it, and briefly talked about some of its physical features and its geological formation. The culminating project in this unit encouraged students to reflect on these different learnings in relation to the Chief, and design a creative project that incorporated at least two of these learnings, including, if they liked, their own experience.
3.3.2: Journaling

At various points throughout the term I wrote journal entries about my experiences. These were primarily my impressions of the class, my feelings about different activities, and my impressions of student experiences. I mostly focused on my perceptions of student participation in, reactions to and engagement (assessed through observation of interest and effort) with the place-based material, but also wrote a bit about challenges I faced with this methodology. This was very useful in my writing of the data analysis and results of the study, especially in regards to the questions about challenges and how to overcome them.

3.3.3: Compilation and analysis of student work

Analysis of student work was done in a few different ways, depending on the kind of work being examined.

1. Short answer questions
   For short answer questions (done on three different topics throughout the term), I compiled student responses in the same order, so that “student 1” is the same for each batch of questions (though “Student 1” is consistent through each set of questions, it changes from one set to the next, since names were not required on all responses). Seeing the responses to each question together made it easier to see patterns and commonalities in the responses, which I then recorded and analyzed in the Findings (Chapter 4).

2. Place-based unit
For work that was part of the place-based unit (*The Chief Unit*), I looked at individual examples of study participants’ work to gain understanding of individual student engagement with this place-based topic. In my Findings, I interpreted what students seemed to have gained from a unit focused on a local place with which all students were familiar. Looking at samples of this work together also allowed me to see some patterns in student learning and engagement.

3. Other student work

I also kept copies of study participant’s work where approaching it from a place-based perspective was optional to see how many students would choose this option, as well as whether there was a difference in student engagement and quality of work when place-based responses were chosen. I also analyzed this work for apparent benefits to students of choosing a place-based option.

### 3.4: Limitations of the Study

It is important to note the limitations of this study. Because I was working with only one class, and only eight students in the class were able to participate in the study (since not all forms were returned signed by parents), limitations come from the small sample size of student work. In the analysis of compilations of questions, where the responses are impersonal and anonymous, the sample size is larger, but is still limited by the class size of 27 students. This study also relies on anecdotal and observational evidence, which may be limited in terms of the subjectivity of these observations; my cultural and socio-economic background, as a middle-class, Caucasian woman, may be
a factor in my interpretation of the data, but, being aware of these limitations allowed me to address them to the best of my ability.

**3.5: Conclusion**

This qualitative study has changed and adapted over time to better reflect my own learning and adapting perspectives. The methodologies used with students throughout the process were designed to maximize understanding of their experiences – their “stories of learning” – while protecting them in terms of power relations and privacy. Though discussing my own learning was straightforward since it simply relied on my own observations and experience, analyzing student works was more challenging. Methods to do so varied depending on the kind of work being analyzed. In all analysis, though, I attempted to interpret and understand student experiences in various activities in the class, taking into account my own personal and professional biases. I believe that writing entirely free of bias is impossible when designing, teaching, and experiencing the class activities with my students.
Chapter 4: Research Findings

4.1: Introduction: Research as a Process

This chapter details the findings to the central question “What stories of learning have I identified regarding a First Peoples English course that makes use of place-based methodologies?” I have organized the findings into sections, with each section focusing on evidence that relates to one specific sub-question of this research project. This research indicates that, despite many challenges to incorporating place-based pedagogies at Howe Sound Secondary (some that are, and some that may not be, possible to overcome), it is worthwhile to use place-based methodologies wherever possible in an English First Peoples class. This study suggests that doing so encourages critical inquiry, as well as student engagement and effort in tasks. It also suggests that place-placed pedagogies result in: 1) connections to and feelings of pride about family and culture in Indigenous students; and 2) greater understanding of Indigenous perspectives and breakdown of prejudice in non-Indigenous students. Students also expressed positive feelings about having choice in subject and presentation of work.

4.2: What Challenges Exist in Introducing Place-based Learning at Howe Sound Secondary School, and, if Possible, How May These Challenges Be Overcome?
4.2.1: Barriers to place-based learning and overcoming challenges

Though I attempted to introduce the social justice cohort as a new program in the school (described in more detail in section 2.1.2), the failure to succeed in this attempt brought the barriers to place-based learning that exist in most secondary schools into full relief. The kinds of inspirational projects and programs I read about didn’t seem to exist in academic subjects at Howe Sound, though many great programs that employ place-based learning do, including college-level carpentry and chef’s training, and an excellent work placement program. However, academic place-based programs and projects such as the Science Solutions course described by Smith & Sobel (2010), and the outdoor experiences described by Sommerville (2007) and Knapp (2004), were missing. There seemed to me to be more of this kind of learning happening in Elementary and Middle schools in our district, but little in senior secondary. I think that the barriers outlined below are a significant part of the reason for this.

4.2.1.1: Single-subject, content-based classes

One major challenge to place-based learning in secondary schools is the fact that secondary school classes at Howe Sound focus on only one subject area. In this regard, I’m fortunate to be an English teacher, since I can justify studying any topic through reading, writing, listening or speaking in English. However, I found it much more difficult to “fit in” the kinds of experiential learning that are, I think, an integral part of place-pedagogy. How could I justify a walk in the Squamish estuary or a day spent exploring the flora and fauna of the local forest? What could I say to parents, colleagues, and administration to justify spending precious class time in this way rather than explicitly on content, especially in a strike year where a significant amount of time had already been lost?
As it turns out, there are ways to justify getting outside even in an English course. The main place-based unit I did as a part of this study was The Chief Unit, where (as described in Chapter 3: Methodologies) students reflected on the importance of storytelling through a Skwúw7mesh Nation story about the Chief, examined the significance of important pieces of land to different groups through a couple of key documents, and shared their own experiences with this prominent Squamish landscape feature, and then synthesized this learning in a final creative project about the Chief. I had hoped, as part of this unit, to do two additional things: firstly, to spend a class at the Squamish Estuary, a beautiful, natural location from where the Chief is clearly visible, and have students brainstorm words that describe the Chief while looking at it, and then to turn those words into a piece of descriptive writing. Secondly, I hoped to hike part or all of the way up the Chief with the class. In the end, I was unable to make either of these things happen. Fortunately, my classroom window provided a clear view of the Chief, so students were still able to look at it and write down words that came to mind while doing so; some students incorporated this brainstorming into the final Chief Project (Appendix B-2).

There were a few reasons I was unable to include these two activities (I expand on this in 4.2.1.3: Timetable and Time Constraints), but one of the major reasons is the content-driven nature of secondary school courses. The nature of a combined 10/11/12 class meant that the class had to cover more learning outcomes than were required for any of the courses individually. Though there is certainly some overlap, EFP 10/11 has some required terms and literary devices that are different from EFP 12, and EFP 12 has many additional terms not included in EFP 10/11. English First Peoples 12 is also the only English course to have a list of required texts on which students must write for the provincial exam; this, as well, meant that some of our class time needed to be spent on understanding these texts. This reduced the amount of time for
activities that I believe could have enriched the course, in favour of content that is required by the government. Since it is my duty to teach the curriculum, these things took priority over our time despite my own beliefs about what is more valuable. It seems, though, that the BC government knows that extensive Prescribed Learning Outcomes and Required Terms and Devices can be restrictive to critical inquiry; the new BC Education Plan (2015a) recognizes that teachers need to “shift from being the primary source of content to focus on helping students learn how to learn” (p. 4) through a reduced number of learning outcomes. It also states that the BC Ed Plan’s new curricula will “[open] the door for new ways of learning – not just for students, but for teachers as well” (BC Ministry of Education, 2015a, p.4). I am optimistic that, in the next few years, this barrier will be greatly reduced.

4.2.1.2: Provincial exams and marks

I am fortunate that my school and school district are very supportive of investigating such ways of teaching and learning as place-pedagogies, and I have even been told it is okay to “throw out the curriculum” in order to do this, if need be. However, the reality is that as much as I have a moral imperative to give students the best education I can, I also have a responsibility to teach the provincial curriculum and to adequately prepare students for government exams. Having grade 10’s who had never written a provincial exam before, and grade 12’s with an exam worth 40% of their final mark (many of whom are quite worried about achieving certain marks for university entrance) it was important for me to concentrate on exam preparation enough that each student would know what to expect and would feel confident walking into the examination room. In the case of this class, that meant spending a bit over a week (more than a quarter of our total
time after Winter Break) at the end of the year on review and practice exams. This definitely took away from time I would have preferred to spend on a final community-based project.

Marks are also difficult when it comes to place-based learning, since much of the learning is difficult to express in a way that will fit assignment criteria or rubrics. In order to attempt to overcome this in the first project of the term – one that I only realized in hindsight had place-based characteristics – I had the students themselves come up with the criteria as a class. This was for their Creative Responses to Joseph Boyden’s ‘Legend of the Sugar Girl,’ a story about the life of a girl who goes to residential school. Having students decide on the criteria for the project helped us all to better understand what was required for excellent/good/satisfactory/unsatisfactory work. In order to reduce the constraints on creativity, students decided there should only be two areas on which they would be marked, creativity and presentation. They wanted to be free to respond to the story in whatever way they were inspired. This strategy of having fewer criteria seemed to be quite successful. There was a wide variety of very high-quality responses from the class, especially in relation to more structured responses we did to works later in the term (though this could, of course, have also been to do with their connection to the story itself).

Some students wrote stories about their family members, some created poetry, personal essays, or artwork that addressed how the issues in the story made them feel, and some wrote about their own experiences visiting an old residential school on a school trip that was part of the Aboriginal Leadership class the previous year. Virtually all of these projects showed evidence of deep reflection on the main ideas in the story, connection to personal experience and/or beliefs, and critical inquiry in regards to the issues presented (this will be further addressed in section 4.3.1.1: Accidental Place-based Learning). This kind of assessment would likely fit well with the
new BC curricula, as it connects to the learning process and is student-led. Since I was still required to teach and assess the 2010 EFP curricula, this strategy would not work for all assignments we did, since it would be difficult to assess understanding of a wide number of Prescribed Learning Outcomes in this way.

4.2.1.3: Timetable and time constraints

The timetable at Howe Sound is similar to many other secondary schools. Each day consists of four 70-minute classes, with one period of Silent Reading time during the second block of the day. There are two semesters in the year, meaning each class runs for one four-and-a-half-month semester. With few exceptions, students change teachers and classes each block, meaning that the total time a student spends with the same class and teacher averages out to 75 minutes a day five days a week for 4.5 months. Though teachers at Howe Sound often try to collaborate about best practices and developing new units within a subject matter (even at one point introducing one common theme to focus on in a variety of subjects and courses), interdepartmental collaboration is very difficult, and sometimes impossible, since teachers have different students at different times. There is no feasible way to do meaningful interdisciplinary planning because of the timetable.

This kind of timetable seems to be organized to support moving through course content rather than understanding complexities of issues. And for its intended purpose, it is quite effective: each subject is separate from the other, so teachers and students can focus on understanding material and information only within that specific subject area. This, of course, supports the current organization of the curricula for most subjects, where content, not depth, is the primary focus. However, with the shift of curricular goals from content to skills, from
breadth of understanding to depth of understanding, it is clear that change needs to occur in secondary schools. Thorough and critical engagement with subject matter requires that subjects be integrated, not segregated. This allows students to learn the extent to which different things in “real-life” are connected, and see how decisions in one area affect others. In the EFP study class, I attempted to draw attention to one example of this through The Chief Project by looking at attempted to do this by examining different priorities of user groups in the area, including BC Parks, Squamish Nation, wildlife, and recreationalists. I believe this could have had more depth had I been able to work with another teacher in another subject: through collaboration with a biology class, for example, students could have studied the life cycle of the peregrine falcons that nest on the Chief’s face, and how the birds are affected by Chief visitors (like rock climbers); with a marketing class, students could have examined how Squamish businesses use the Chief as a key marketing device in our town; with a PE class, they could have hiked the Chief and played the different sport that were played by the Skwxwú7mesh people. In an English class, our focus was English, so (especially with the additional time constraints I’ve mentioned), I didn’t feel justified in doing these related activities.

Another key area in which this timetable falls short is the forming of relationships. Most teachers know that students learn best when they are comfortable in the classroom and with their teacher, and that even the most reluctant of students can become invested in learning if they are confident that the teacher truly cares about him or her. But before this can happen, a certain amount of time must be invested in students and teachers getting to know and understand one another, and building trust. I often feel like the best part of the term is the last six weeks or so that I have with my students, when we know what to expect from one another and have built enough trust to relax, and even have fun and joke around a bit in the classroom. Though it
doesn't seem like this kind of lighthearted behaviour would be important to learning, I know from experience that it is. It is especially important, I think, in a First People class (or any class with Indigenous students), since there is some cultural mistrust around schooling due to the residential school system. Once trust is formed, students are willing to take risks with their learning, which is, of course, vital to creativity (Robinson, 2006). They are also more likely to allow teachers to move away from what they expect in the classroom, like tests, worksheets, and essays, and towards kinds of learning, such as place-based that may be unusual for many students today.

Oddly enough, one of the barriers to trying new pedagogical techniques that most surprised me was the students themselves; because we have trained them to think of education as made up of measurable, paper and pen-based activities, many of them are reluctant to try new things as well. They themselves are concerned about how it might affect their marks, their exam outcomes, and are sometimes just unsure of how to begin. This is another important thing I learned; much time must be invested in the beginning of a term to discussing education itself, at least as long as students are used to education meaning traditional schooling. I now start most of my classes with this topic, which I find from course evaluations that students enjoy, since many of them have never talked about school in this way. In discussions of different kinds of education and learning, students begin to understand that the education system Canada and other Western nations use is just one choice of many, all of which have costs and benefits. This opens up the dialogue around doing other forms of learning in school, and seems to increase the willingness of students to participate in a variety of learning experiences. However, even with this kind of start, relationships cannot be rushed. It takes time spent with one another before students are willing to take risks with their own work, especially if collaborating with one another or sharing it with the
class. These relationships must be given time to form in order to do meaningful place-based learning, where curiosity, risk-taking, and exploration are essential.

The structure of our timetable also means that, if students attend a field trip in one class that extends beyond the 75 minutes of that class, they will miss other classes to participate. Sometimes, especially in grade 12, students will decide not to attend a field trip (especially if it is all day) because they fear they won’t be able to adequately catch up on work from their other classes. The was the case for a number of my grade 12 students in the study class. Though they had an interest in attending the Museum of Anthropology, they were too concerned about their other classes to attend. There can also sometimes be pressure from teachers or admin not to plan too many field trips, or not to plan them at certain times of the year. Though this is certainly a reasonable concern, it remains a barrier to learning outside the walls of the classroom.

The final barrier that has to do with the timetable is a factor that is really uncontrollable, the weather. It was a shortened semester, and many teachers were reluctant to allow students miss classes for field trips (which my students were already going to be doing once). Therefore, I decided that instead of hiking up the Chief, which would take the entire day for us to do together, we would walk to the nearby estuary from where the Chief is highly visible. Once there, students would pay attention to the sensory experience of that place; what it looked, felt, smelled, tasted, and sounded like. Then they would jot down descriptive words that came to mind during this time. This would only take one class, but the following day, we would use these words to write a descriptive poem about the Chief, which students would have had the option of expanding on for their final Chief Project. The estuary walk was planned out and ready to go (with permission forms collected and clipboards bought). It was November by then, but I had about a week and half to hopefully find one dry day to do our walk. Students knew to bring appropriate clothing
for any day that looked promising. Unfortunately (but perhaps not surprisingly, in Squamish), a long stretch of cold, very wet weather set in. This probably seems like poor planning on my part, and in part, it probably was; but as I mentioned, it was important for an activity like this that there was some degree of trust built up in the class. Since September was largely lost due to the strike, I needed October to build relationships and trust in the class, as well as some provide background knowledge about Indigenous people and Canada’s history, especially for the international students. Therefore, we were already into November when it was time to begin this project. Since the term ended in the last week of January, the weather wasn’t going to improve; I began the Chief Project when I thought it would be most likely to come together the best, and unfortunately, that important piece of it got left out. In hindsight, I think I should have done this activity despite the cold and wet. Comments written on the Course Assessment/Understanding (Appendix D-3) showed that students were disappointed, too: some indicated that they would like to go outside more (5 students) and go on more field trips (4 students).

4.2.1.4: Administrative requirements

The final barrier to place-based learning I experience at Howe Sound is a minor one, but, I think, still has an impact on how often teachers leave school grounds with their students. The first minor barrier is the paperwork and supervision involved in taking students off school grounds. For a simple walk to the estuary, the required forms are an Off-site Experience Proposal, a Detailed Trip Plan, and an Acknowledgement of Risk. If a field trip contains a “higher risk” activity, which in the case of SD48 includes hiking, they must also be “referred to the Superintendent for approval” (School District #48, 2015). If a bus is required than teachers must also complete a TTOC (Teacher Teaching On Call) request for any other classes they are
missing, as well a Bus Requisition Form. They often also need to have further communication with the Supervisor of Transportation and Grounds in order to determine a bus size and the timing of the trip with the daily bussing schedule. Most of this is done by the classroom teacher, and can be time consuming.

Some responsibility for field trips also falls to students, of course. Students need to obtain written permission from home. They must get the permission form, take it home and have it signed by a parent or guardian, then bring it back to the teacher. Though this seems simple, it often takes many reminders for students to hand in permission forms, and even then some students or parents forget. At HSSS, phone call permission cannot be given to a teacher, but only to an administrator (and this is not the preferred method of gaining permission). For the one field trip the EFP class did this year, a number of students who had said they were planning to attend in the weeks beforehand never got their permission forms signed and returned, despite reminders from me on the board and orally. In this case, it was a major trip, with two classes from our school attending along with two classes from another school in the district, so the vice-principal phoned home to obtain permission for these students. On a trip such as the estuary walk, though, it would be much less likely that the same could occur, since it might not be possible to take the time needed to find an administrator and make the call(s) at the last minute. The students without permission would simply have to stay behind if this is the case. If there is only a few, that’s not a problem, as they can work in the library, but if there is a higher number staying behind, a supervisor has to be found. In all likelihood, this would result in a cancellation of the trip; it is not easy to find supervision at the school for eight or more students.

Supervision on the trip itself can also be an issue. In my EFP class, I had an Educational Assistant who worked with us every class, so a low-risk trip was easier for us than most, since
the ratio needed for supervisors to students is 1:12 (School District #48, 2015). Though I had 28 students in the class for most of the year, the realistic number of students attending regularly was closer to 24, so we would have been able to do our trip without having to find additional supervisors. However, since many classes are over 24 students (most English classes being between 24 and 30), taking an entire class would require a parent or other volunteer adult supervisor. If this is the case, additional forms are required, such as a current criminal record check from volunteers (School District #48, 2015).

The challenge of permission forms and paperwork can be eased by using blanket permission forms for classes (which I used for this course) that allow students to leave school grounds, within school hours and walking distance of the school, on any day of the course, provided there is adequate supervision. Even better, (if possible from a legal standpoint) would be to reduce the number and streamline required forms for taking teens off campus in order to facilitate place-based learning. Could there be a blanket permission form for each student in the school to allow them to leave campus by foot, within walking distance of the school, so long as they are accompanied by their teacher and the correct adult-student ratio? Is it possible to reduce the student-adult ratio to 1:15 (or better yet, 1:30!) for low-risk senior secondary school trips in order that just two adults can accompany the average class of 30 on a walking trip off campus? The more that can be done to make this easy the more likely teachers are to try teaching and learning outside school walls.

4.2.2: Final thoughts on barriers

Though some degree of place-based learning was certainly possible in my English First Peoples class, there were many barriers to fully integrating it into the course. This impacted my
study, and, in some ways, resulted in a less successful, or at least less ambitious, kind of place pedagogy. However, there is much that I learned from the attempt, and, as I expand on in the last chapter, much that I will do differently (and, I think, better) in my next EFP course. Reflecting on these barriers has also resulted in better understanding what changes could be made at the school and board level that would facilitate place-based learning. I also expand on these potential changes in the final chapter.

4.3: What are Benefits of Conjoining Place-based Learning and a Course Focused on Indigenous Perspectives?

4.3.1: Anecdotal evidence: Observation and interpretation of students’ place-based work

Employing place-based techniques is valuable in any classroom, I think, but it has proven to be especially valuable in a class focused on Indigenous perspectives. Many place-based learning scholars (Sommerville, [2007], Johnson [2012] Knapp [2005], and Gruenwald [2008]) emphasize the importance connecting with real, immediate issues in place pedagogy. Though this was not possible in every assignment and project, evidence gathered from student work and questionnaires suggests that the times it was possible were enough to allow three important things to occur: 1) Indigenous students connected with their families and culture; 2) non-Indigenous students learned about the local history and culture from an Indigenous perspective; and 3) students from all backgrounds reflected on and, in some cases, adjusted, their preconceived notions about Indigenous people (these findings are supported below). Smith and
Sobel (2010) point out that connection to community encourages care and a sense of belonging, and Cajete (1994, 2001) and Sommerville (2007) emphasize the importance of the development of a sense of self in Indigenous learners. The projects and presentations described in this section were intended to encourage both connection to community and development of self.

4.3.1.1: Accidental place-based learning

When I was creating the first project of the year, I had no idea it would be connected to place-based learning at all. After all, we were reading a Joseph Boyden story, “The Legend of the Sugar Girl,” and, though he is a Canadian author, he’s by no means from our local place. It was when I realized that none of the “standard” assignments (comprehension questions, formal essays, plot charting, journal response) would be an appropriate response to this story for these students (for many students, it related to them personally; for others, it directly affected their classmates and community) that it grew into a student-centered project. This was the first week of classes when building community and trust were vital. For these reasons, this response needed to be more flexible and personal for students, and it was because of this that it ended up having a bit of a connection to place.

“The Legend of the Sugar Girl” is a Joseph Boyden (2008) story about the effects of residential schools, the system of schooling introduced by the Canadian government that had the explicit intention of destroying Canadian Indigenous cultures in order that Indigenous people would amalgamate into the Western European culture. It tells a story of the effects on an Indigenous girl who attended residential school, and on other generations affected by them. In this class, almost half of the students had personal experience with this issue through community and family members. When I asked them for a “creative response” to the story, I left it quite
open. They had somehow to express what the story made them feel or think of, and they had to share their ideas with the class. We came up with marking criteria together, creativity and presentation being the primary focus, but how they presented their ideas was up to them; they could tailor it to fit their needs. They had the option to work with a partner, in groups, or on their own. Though it wasn’t a conscious decision at the time, in hindsight I see that this assignment in many ways mimics Tooth and Renshaw’s (2009) concept of Reflective Response: though it was not a reflection based in place, it was an opportunity for students to connect personally with the story and, if they chose, relate it to their own stories. Pedagogy was slowed, and students were encouraged to engage in a personal interpretation of the story, and to find their own meaning in it.

So it was the students themselves who made this a place-based project: it turned out that giving students the freedom to respond in a manner of their own choosing made their responses personal, varied, and, for many, local. This was the first week of school, the time I set aside for developing relationships and trust; I didn’t expect them to be so willing to share already. To be quite honest, more than once I felt my eyes begin to water as they shared their responses.

Most students who worked individually wrote stories. When they shared their stories, each student shared with the class how much of the story was from life – in other words, from their own or another’s experience. It turned out that all of the stories were based on stories their parents or grandparents had told them. This made other students in the class pay closer attention, and made Joseph Boyden’s story more powerful, too. One Indigenous student wrote about his own father’s experience at Residential School; another wrote about visiting the residential school his grandmother had attended, phoning her from that school, and having her hang up on him, since his being there was more than she could handle; and yet another wrote a beautiful and
touching narrative about the confusion she felt at the sadness she saw in her grandmother’s eyes when she talked about school, and the understanding she gained about not only her grandmother, but her community as well, when her grandmother decided this girl was finally old enough to hear the story of the grandmother’s own experience at residential school.

Now, for all of the students in the class, the short story they had read was connected to experiences of real people, not just characters in the story. It was personal. It happened in this place, to people they knew and to these peoples’ families. There is no doubt that this increased the empathy between non-Indigenous students and Indigenous students. It was reciprocal, as is required in a caring relationship (Noddings, 2012): Indigenous students’ feelings in sharing their stories were acknowledged by non-Indigenous students’ expression of sorrow and anger at this piece of history. This experience seemed to set a respectful tone in the class; one where all students, of any background, were viewed as potential teachers, learners, and knowledge-bearers.

One non-Indigenous student struggled to write a poem that expressed her outrage at this part of Canada’s history, and her hope for healing for Canada’s Indigenous people, but to do so, somehow, offending neither descendants of the colonizers nor the colonized. Her sincerity and passion in creating her poem was touching, and also seemed to encourage connections with other students, since she turned not only to me for advice, but also to an Indigenous student in the class.

Students who worked in pairs mostly wrote collaborative poems or created visual representations of their interpretation of the story. One larger group of four students created a large image of the character of the Sugar Girl as a tree, with different parts of her body representing different aspects of her life. Their explanation of their image was detailed, thoughtful, and showed their depth of understanding of the effects of residential schools. Since
three of the four in this group were International students from different European countries, this was especially interesting, as they had little previous knowledge of the Canadian residential school system.

The simple strategy of encouraging genuine, personal responses to the story brought students’ connection to this place and their own experiences to the forefront, and the work they created was astoundingly beautiful. The fact that this project all students in the class completed the project, and on time, suggests that perhaps there were higher levels of student engagement for this project than there would have been otherwise. This is likely due to students being able to connect the work to their own experiences, as well as having control over marking criteria and the direction and focus of their work.

This project further connected to place a few days later with a presentation on the residential school system by Charlene Williams. Charlene began with a general introduction of the system, which rapidly became both personal and local when she pointed out her grandfather in a black and white photo of children at St. Paul’s in North Vancouver, the residential school that most Indigenous people from the Sea to Sky area would have attended. This is one example of what Sommerville (2007) might call a “zone of cultural contact.” In this “zone”, students gain a better understanding of the history of the place they are, and perhaps also increased empathy for others affected by this history through the recognition of the many challenges that arise from a place’s history.

Charlene also made the presentation personal by discussing the ways in which the schools affected her parents and herself, sharing that those who are not raised in families do not learn how to raise families, and that understanding that helped her to realize that there was nothing inherently wrong with the people in her community, but that they, and then their
families, had been broken by the system. She also explained how knowing this allowed her to know that she wanted to break that cycle. She said that she realized she didn’t know how to parent, so when she became pregnant, she read all the parenting books she could, and she learned what her parents could not teach her, having been unable to learn it themselves. What made this presentation even more powerful was that her child was in our class, and is a compassionate, intelligent, thoughtful, well-adjusted leader. I couldn’t help thinking that with him as her son, she must have achieved, even surpassed, her goal of being a good parent.

These anecdotes, though not a broad body of evidence, illustrate some of the important benefits of conjoining place-based learning and a course focused on Indigenous perspectives. 
1. Indigenous students saw stories from their cultural background valued in school, both by telling their own and having a well-respected Indigenous member of the community invited to speak as an expert on the topic.
2. Non-Indigenous students learned from the experiences of their Indigenous classmates, putting the Indigenous students in a position of being the knowledge-bearers. I believe this works to dislodge some of the damage done by Western schooling in positioning the Western perspective above others.
3. For the many who worked in partners or groups, relationships between students were strengthened as they worked together to express their complex feelings in response to this disturbing piece of history.
4. Finally, compassion seemed to be strengthened in all students as they listened to one another’s stories. This was apparent from the way students related to one another in the class, being more willing to interact, ask one another questions and work together after this activity. This
set a respectful tone in the class which lasted the rest of the year: no one in the class was superior or inferior due to his or her background, but instead, all students were learners. I identified the characteristics above primarily through my own observations of the class.

Additionally, in informal discussions with a couple of students afterwards, they, too expressed that they valued this activity for its flexibility and the way in which it allowed them to learn from and about one another. Though these students didn’t explicitly identify the characteristics above, my interpretation of their verbal reflection on the story project contributed to my understanding of its benefits.

4.3.1.2: Successes and failures: *Inspirational Person Project*

The first project that I have really intentionally designed so that students can connect with place is the *Inspirational Person Project*, an inquiry-based research project. In class, students were asked to reflect on their own beliefs, do a piece of writing on what they would change if they could change anything in the world, and do some pre-reading about Indigenous people who are working towards a goal they believe in that creates positive influence in their community, province, nation, or the world. Then students were asked to choose an Indigenous person who they found inspirational, come up with questions about or for that person, and go about finding the answers using whatever research methods they felt most appropriate. They were required to share their findings with the class, but could present their work in whatever way they thought would be most effective. I encouraged students to choose someone local or someone they know. I also encouraged students who had chosen someone from BC to attempt to make contact with that person and ask them questions directly, rather than relying exclusively on the Internet.
In this regard, I have to admit that I felt disappointed with the way the project went. Most students chose people from the list I provided, which was intended to give suggestions primarily to the many international students in the class, who don't have the knowledge to choose someone they already know or of whom they have heard. Though most students were engaged with the research, and all but one completed the project to the best of their abilities, the personal connection, either through a "real-life" connection to their research, or through choosing someone whose beliefs aligned with their own, seemed to be largely missing.

There were three exceptions to this, which I feel are worth mentioning despite my overall sense that the project somewhat failed in its intent.

First was Jeff*, who chose his brother's namesake to research. Jeff had known that this person was inspirational to his parents, of course, so much so that they had chosen to name their first child after him, but had never understood exactly why, or what his brother's namesake had done, exactly. This made the project much more relevant for Jeff, but also seemed to pique the interest of the other students, some of whom knew both brothers. What really stood out was the pride that he seemed to feel when talking about his family and their connection to this inspirational person.

The other student who really made this project relevant to her own life was Celeste, described here in an excerpt from my journal:

December 16, 2014

_Celeste speaks clearly and proudly, with a quiet confidence. She goes through each slide in her powerpoint, elaborating on the questions and responses outlined therein, giving her audience, her English First Peoples 10/11/12 class, background information about the woman*

*All students’ names have been changed.*
whom she has chosen to study for her Inspirational Indigenous Person Project. To my delight, she has chosen a close family member. Her presentation is touching, so much so that I feel myself almost tear up at one point: the pride Celeste has when talking about her family, and about the challenges this person has overcome, is powerful. I know the class feels this, too, since even those who often have difficulty being still are silent, respectful, calm. (Author’s personal journal, December 16, 2014.)

This student chose to interview a family member who had overcome many obstacles to live a clean, healthy life. Celeste had come up with interview questions, and then conducted the interview over the phone. At one point in her life, Celeste had been separated from this family member due to the challenges of becoming and remaining healthy. I met Celeste’s mother at a community event, and she told me what a positive experience doing this project had been for Celeste, as well as for herself and the family member. wonderful

There were a few others who made their research especially relevant to their lives and interests. Three students researched A Tribe Called Red, an Indigenous music group that had performed the year before at the Squamish Live festival; I learned after this research began that some of the students in my class had performed on stage with them at the festival. Some students chose to research local Indigenous artists, including Bill Reid, Roy Henry Vickers, and Lawrence Paul Yuxwelupton, all of whose work connects to local landscapes and/or issues with which many students are familiar.

Also wonderful to see was Cassidy, who chose to research the women who founded the Idle No More movement in BC. This was a group she hadn’t heard of previously, but that inspired her greatly. It also connected to another group’s project on Chief Theresa Spence of
Attawapiskat. It was interesting to see students making connections between their own lives and the projects, as well as between the different projects themselves.

Despite understanding the project did not achieve what I had hoped it would for all students, witnessing the positive impact it had in certain situations, especially in the case of Celeste, makes me believe there was some success nonetheless. Further evidence for believing this project had some success is that three students of the thirteen mentioned it as their “favourite” project (of those that connected to place-learning or their own experiences) on their anonymous year-end Course Assessment/Understanding (Appendix D-3). One student’s reason was that they enjoyed “learning about the lives of important people in the native community.”

This is good, but much more powerful was the student who said it allowed him/her to talk to his/her family member about the past. He/she also said that where usually there would be shame about this, instead there was an openness from the family member that allowed the student to “show other people these issues exist.” It is hard to debate the importance of that.

4.3.1.3: The main event: Place/storytelling unit

The unit that was most thoroughly designed to explore the value of place-based learning was The Chief Unit. Its purpose for students was threefold: 1) to understand the concept of “place,” and its importance both personally and to Indigenous people generally; 2) to understand the importance of storytelling, especially to the Skwùxw7mesh people; and 3) to reflect on the importance of a very prominent landscape feature, the Stawamus Chief, again personally and to the Skwùxw7mesh, as well as to the town of Squamish and the Chief’s other user groups. The focus on a landscape feature that can be seen from almost anywhere in Squamish worked well, since all students were familiar with it, whether they were from Squamish or not. One purpose of choosing something all students knew was to try to counteract what Johnson (2012) describes as
a sense of placelessness, and a separation of culture from nature, or, by extension, education from nature.

In the opening activity of the unit, students did a brainstorming activity (Chief Brainstorm, Appendix B-1) where they reflected on their relationship with and knowledge of the Stawamus Chief. I don’t feel the need to discuss this assignment at length, since it was simply an introduction to different ways students think about the Chief. Because it was a part of the reflective process, I thought I would nonetheless include this brief mention of it.

4.3.1.3.1: Place/storytelling: Charlene William’s presentation

Storytelling is an essential part of any English First Peoples course, and learning about it from the perspective of this land’s own Indigenous people makes it even more meaningful for students. With that in mind, I invited Charlene back into the class to talk on storytelling. For this talk, Charlene had students put their desks in a circle. She began her presentation by explaining the importance of stories, particularly to her own people. She explains how storytelling was integral to the passing on of information, values, and culture from one generation to the next, since it was what conveyed important lessons to the next generation. Youth, therefore, had to be good listeners. If not, the lessons might not be passed on to the next generation as they were intended, or the stories might even be lost. She also mentioned how this affects who is permitted to share stories, and with whom. If the stories are shared with people who change them in any way, whether on purpose or by accident, the teachings and culture that is a part of the stories may also be lost or changed. This understanding seems to have resonated with students, since it came up again in more than one of our discussions later on in course of the project and the term.
These aspects of storytelling apply to most Canadian Indigenous nations, but Charlene also explained important characteristics that may be more specific to this region. One of these is that part of the value of Skwxwú7mesh stories is that they don’t have an explicit moral or lesson; therefore, listeners might hear a story many different times and get a different lesson each time, depending on their age, maturity, and what is happening in their own lives. Also important is the fact that there is generally no hero or villain in the stories. Raven, for example, is a trickster; he both acts bravely and in a positive manner and makes many mistakes. He embodies many values that children are to learn, but he does not have to be perfect. Raven stories are often humorous, too, teaching children that life – even mistakes – can be approached with a sense of humour, and that, like Raven, they don’t need to be perfect all the time. Charlene told the students a Raven story, which allowed them to recognize these aspects of the story.

One of the most important parts of the presentation as far as our place unit went was the story of Sinulhkay, the Two-Headed Serpent. This makes the presentation even more rooted in a place that all the students know, since the welcome figure at the main entrance to Howe Sound Secondary is Sinulhkay. This welcome figure was carved in 1997 (incidentally, the year I graduated from Howe Sound) by students at our school. It also connects to the Chief: the black mark up the front of the Chief is the path that Sinulhkay left when he slithered to the top. It is also an important story to the Skwxwú7mesh, since it explains why all peoples along the Squamish River Valley are connected. Whuch-tall is a young man from Sta-a-mus who kills the serpent who had been terrorizing the people of the valley. He is offered one member from each village along the Squamish River to bring back to his village, Sta-a-mus, because he has the bone of the serpent which is clearly so powerful. This story emphasizes the trust that existed between
different villages: they would even trust the people of a different village with taking care of their own people.

The lessons revealed through the stories Charlene tells clearly made the students, especially non-Indigenous students, reflect on the values they were taught. Students noticed that the values learned from these stories differ from those they learn in school and from their society. Children are allowed to make mistakes, and are not punished for them, unlike in our graded system; the emphasis in children’s learning is not on memorization or right or wrong, but rather on values and ways of being; in fact, there is no wrong answer of what to get out of a story, no moral that can be “missed,” since everyone is expected to learn something different. It is clear, throughout this presentation and at afterwards, that some students have glimpsed something they didn’t know existed before: a world view that differs from their own.

4.3.1.3.2: Place/storytelling: Priorities for land use

Another activity students did as part of the Chief Project (Appendix B-2) was examining and interpreting two documents. The first was an excerpt from the Squamish Nation’s Xay Temixw (Sacred Land) Land Use Plan, and the second was an excerpt from the Stawamus Chief Management Plan that outlines land use priorities for BC Parks in the creation of the Stawamus Chief Provincial Park (BC Parks, 2007). Though we didn’t have a document from the Squamish Nation that directly related to the Chief, comparing and contrasting these two documents gave students an idea of how the groups – Squamish Nation and BC Provincial Parks – differed in their perspective on and use of the land. The Parks document also allowed students to learn more about the Chief Park itself. This comparison built on ideas we had previously discussed in the class, such as how different world views affect how people view and treat the environment. It
also sparked some discussion of different views about land “use” that each of these particular groups holds. Students noticed that both groups prioritized care for the environment, but the Chief Park document focused on preservation primarily for sustained human recreational use (though also mentioned its importance as habitat for flora and fauna, including as nesting grounds for the Peregrine Falcon); whereas the Xay Temixw document focused on protecting the land for sustainable cultural practices and hunting, fishing, and gathering. There was more emphasis on healthy land and how that relates to healthy people in the Xay Temixw document, but both documents focused on maintaining and improving the health of the land for the sake of the species that exist there; not all decisions were made solely for the benefits directly related to humans. Overall, this activity brought our focus to how and why different individuals and groups view and treat land.

An unexpected yet interesting discovery I made while researching this activity was that the story of the Two-Headed Serpent was also a part of the Chief Provincial Parks documents; it is included as an appendix in the Stawamus Chief Study Area Final Report (BC Parks, 1997). Students and I were both interested to see that this version of the story varied yet again from the one Charlene had told and the one printed for our school. Students’ questions about this in class serves as evidence that they were indeed engaged in the story itself and with the broader issues of sharing traditional stories.

4.3.1.3.3: Place/storytelling: Class brainstorm on the Chief

Before beginning the final project portion of the unit, we used the board to compile our collective knowledge about the Chief, including a list of words that describe its physical appearance (though we didn’t get a chance to do that outside, which would have been my
preference, we were lucky enough to be able to see the Chief from our classroom window, so could still focus on its visual qualities). During the discussion that occurred while we were compiling information, students shared other stories and knowledge they had about the Chief. One interesting story that came out of this discussion was another Chief legend, mentioned by a Skwùxw7mesh student. This led to some more discussion about when and under what circumstances certain stories can be shared, and an interesting discussion about E. Pauline Johnson, who I had learned about in the Place-Based Learning Course that was a part of my Master’s. My understanding of Johnson was that she was a woman who truly lived “between two worlds,” dressing up and performing as both a stereotypical “Indian woman” and also in the European dress of the time. I also understood her to be a well-respected writer, and was unaware of any conflict surrounding her in regards to appropriation of stories. It was especially interesting for me to see the perspective of this student, which was that E. Pauline Johnson had stolen the stories of the Skwùxw7mesh people and used them for her own profit, even copyrighting them so that no one else, including the Skwùxw7mesh people, to whom the stories truly belong, could profit from them or claim them as their own. His understanding was that some of these stories had also been changed from the original telling, so that not only were they stolen, but they were inaccurate. This opened my eyes to the differences in perspectives about people and events I had thought I understood.

I have a personal interest and some early undergraduate experience in geology, so we also discussed the scientific perspective of the Chief's formation. Students were aware of the Chief's renown as the "second-largest monolith in North America", but weren't sure exactly what that meant or whether it was accurate, so some spur-of-the-moment research also occurred. Again, students’ willingness to spontaneously research these things (on their phones, mostly) and
then share what they learned with the class is evidence of their engagement with this local topic, since it showed intrinsic motivation to further their learning in this area.

4.3.1.3.4: Place/storytelling: The Chief Project

The Chief Project (Appendix B-2) was the final assignment in this unit, and a way for students to show evidence of the range of learning they had about the Chief. They were required to synthesize the learning from two or more sources (including, if they wanted to, their own experiences outside of class, such as from hiking or observing the Chief) into a creative project of their choice. Below is an excerpt from my journals describing my thoughts about it at the time:

December 17, 2014

Though the unit started off well, now it is complete I am disappointed with the way it has gone. This was the biggest test of my hypothesis that students would be more engaged in learning that related to their own place and experiences. It is the fully place-based unit, incorporating our local land and history, as well as local people and organizations. I thought that they would love it. And yet, it is now past due, and students who seemed engaged, at least initially, haven’t handed in their completed project. I can only interpret this as a lack of interest in the material or the assignment. Though most of the projects that have been handed in are thoughtfully done – some even powerfully personal or incredibly creative – less than half the class has completed it. I know that they started these projects, since I watched their in-class progress, but they must not have been motivated enough to finish. And it’s the Winter Break the day after tomorrow. I’ve set
the deadline for (or rather, extended the deadline to) tomorrow. I guess I’ll see what happens then, but I don’t feel overly optimistic. (Author’s personal journal, December 17, 2014.)

At this point in the semester, I had come to the conclusion that students must not have been interested in the project. I thought that I must have projected my own excitement about it onto them; perhaps the signs that I thought were genuine interest I had misinterpreted, by doing what researchers are not supposed to do: seeing what I wanted to see rather than what was really there. Going into Christmas holidays, I received a few more completed projects, but many students—just under half—still hadn’t handed it in at that point. From my previous 10 years of teaching experience, I was not optimistic that students would work on the project over the holidays. Even those with the best intentions often forget or become distracted during holiday time. However, as you can see from the next journal entry, I was happily mistaken.

January 10, 2015

Now that another month has gone by, I have almost all of the missing projects. And from the looks of them, it may not have been lack of interest that was the reason for their lateness. In fact, these seem to be very thoughtful and show more attention to detail than many of the earlier ones. This later batch of projects seem to have much care taken in their execution compared with those that were handed in later than the original due date, but before the Christmas holidays (many of which seemed to be chosen more for simplicity’s sake than that the students were truly engaged in the work). These ones, though, are detailed, personalized, and even powerful. I’m delighted to see this change. Perhaps they are late because students did care. Perhaps they
cared enough to take them home over the holidays to spend time on them. (Author’s personal journal, January 10, 2015."

Engagement with the project can also be seen in many of the final projects themselves: though there were some students who seemed to “take the easy way out” and write brief brochures for the Chief that didn’t seem to involve much reflection on their learning through the unit, the majority of students clearly put time and effort into the work, sometimes melding a personal perspective or message into the work. Sommerville (2007) mentions the importance of viewing place through story, and many of my students did just that, creating fiction or non-fiction narratives about experiences with the Chief. There are a few that stand out as representative of understanding and synthesizing information and complexities from the unit, and in some cases other aspects of the course.

One of these is a story by a non-Indigenous student who writes as though she is of the Skwùxw7mesh nation (Appendix C-1). In first-person perspective, she writes a story about an 18-year-old girl who has lost her parents. She is rebellious, and shows no respect for the land and feels little connection to her Native heritage. As she hikes the Chief, she is suddenly surrounded by ravens, whose figures also mark her parents’ tombstone, and is spoken to by two shadowy figures, who tell her stories of her ancestors and her connection to nature. The experience changes her, and she learns to be proud of who she is and to respect the land.

This story subtly shows evidence of this student’s understanding of many things from class: the reference to Raven relates to Charlene’s storytelling presentation, where Raven came up both in a traditional story she told and in one of her own personal stories, where a raven chattered at her and scolded her from the roof of a building shortly after she had changed the
ending of a traditional story: Raven was teaching her a lesson, just as he did in this student’s story. The shadowy figures are reminiscent of the relations and ancestors in Eden Robinson’s novel *Monkey Beach*, which was the book this student chose for her novel study; the main conflict the narrator faces is one of identity, a topic that we had discussed in class in relation to other works; connection to land and place are dominant themes in the story, as they were in this unit; and, of course, the location where the learning in the story takes place is on the Chief.

One was a piece called *The Hidden Lessons* by a Skwùxw7mesh student (Appendix C-2), an expository essay that was focused on the importance of storytelling to his people rather than on the Chief; he draws from his own prior knowledge and experience, as well as from the storytelling presentation and the following discussion, in order to explain why storytelling is such an important tradition in his culture. He also focuses on Raven as an important teacher, and how lessons from stories may differ depending on the listener’s experience. He also goes into greater detail in the story of E. Pauline Johnson as an example of someone who appropriated stories from his culture (Skwùxw7mesh), and the problems with appropriation of stories. This essay clearly demonstrates that allowing the student to focus on his own area of interest and knowledge results in an outcome more relevant and important to the student than had the project been less open.

Two international students wrote poems about the Chief (“The Chief” [Appendix C-3] and “If Mountains could speak [sic]” [Appendix C-4]). Both of these poems focus more on the idea of the Chief as a teacher, from whom we can learn lessons about respecting land and environment. Both use descriptive language in describing the Chief, and also personify it, touching on the idea of the Chief as having strength and wisdom from what it has observed over the years. “The Chief” refers to the Chief as a protector, whereas “If Mountains could speak”
imagines the breadth of knowledge it has, and includes references to different Skwùxw7mesh stories the student learned about, as well as a historical reference to the epidemics that affected the people of this land. This poem ends with:

“Maybe he’ll tell us enough is enough
That we’re damaging our home
That we need to quit polluting
And start caring for what we have left
That we need to take a stand
Just like the chief. [sic]”

These two poems, though they are not long, still manage to successfully synthesize understandings from different aspects of the unit. They focus more on the visual qualities of the Chief and what it can teach us about how to treat the land, but still include implicit reference to the Chief’s significance to Skwùxw7mesh people.

Another project was an expository essay titled Stawamus Chief that touches on a number of ideas we discussed in class surrounding the Chief: the monolith’s tourist-attracting characteristics, the student’s own love of hiking the Chief, the story of the two-headed serpent, and the importance of storytelling to Indigenous culture (Appendix C-5). It focuses primarily on the story Charlene told of the two-headed serpent, which the student paraphrases in the essay, and relates this to the physical appearance of the Chief (the black dike that cuts through the Chief being the serpent’s trail) and to the connection between the people all along the Squamish river (since each village, in gratitude for his slaying the serpent, offered one member to go with him). Though it doesn’t go into great detail in the other areas, it nonetheless smoothly integrates different areas of learning from the unit, and clearly shows the student’s understanding of the
Chief’s importance to the Squamish valley’s local people, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, and to the author himself.

The final piece that is important to analyze from this project is a narrative of a typical school day from the perspective of the student (Appendix C-6). Bored with school, the student has trouble concentrating, and the Chief catches her eye out the window. She begins to daydream and reminisce about hiking the Chief as a child:

“Shortly, my eyes wonder [sic], they’re drawn to the window.

Finally I find myself staring at the same big old rock I see every day.

There are so many mysteries in that rock. The formation of the colours on the side and the shapes it makes.

The rocks [sic] name is ‘The Chief’ it’s commonly mistaken for a mountain, due to its enormous size, but it’s not, it’s a rock.

When I was a child I remember hiking it, I hated the pain in the side of my stomach I would get when stopping to catch my breath.

Then we would reach the ladders that would take us to the first peak, and all the energy that was lost bolted back faster than you could imagine.
It was like a sugar high only to reach that one point. Just to have that feeling I would get when I stood on the top.”

This student weaves different aspects of her learning into this narrative, touching on physical, personal, and storied aspects of her knowledge of the Chief. With this particular student, her writing is much stronger in personal essays than in formal literary writing; the opportunity afforded all students in doing place-based work that allows them to choose how to present their work is especially important for a student such as this. She was able to showcase her knowledge much more successfully by choosing to write this personal narrative and drawing on her own experience, as well as class learning, than she would have in a literary essay (a more typical end-of-unit project in English). In a literary essay, with its formal structure and tone, discussion of personal experience would be considered off-topic.

These samples of different projects suggest a number of benefits to place-based learning. This collection of work suggests that place-based learning was indeed beneficial to students. The reasons for which this is so are listed below:

1. Showcasing of strengths: students’ choice in what to focus on for their project allowed them to showcase strengths in their learning from the unit, and also encouraged them to continue their learning about and reflection on those parts of the unit had been of most interest to them. Choice in how to present their learning also allowed them to draw on their strengths, since they could choose from a large number of visual, oral (though no students chose this option) or written forms, rather than being forced to present their learning in a format that was unappealing or too challenging for them.
2. Student engagement: the large number of students who included their own personal perspectives and experiences in their final projects suggests that having a personal connection to the unit’s focus (in this case a local landmark) increased student engagement with the topic.

3. Empathy and knowledge retention: it is widely understood in cognitive and neuroscientific fields that emotions and feelings play an important role in information processing, through attention and perception, as well as in memory (LeBlanc, 2015). Since learning is likely to be better understood and remembered when students attach emotions to what they learn (Sprenger, 1996, p. 75-76), focusing on a local place and issues related to it makes sense in the classroom, since this encourages a personal and emotional connection to the subject matter. Students have preexisting feelings about those things with which they are already familiar, so learning about places and/or people that students know increases the chance that emotions will play a role in students’ learning. These emotional and personal connections, and the development of empathy through that connection, is evident in the stories and poems that students wrote; in some work this empathy is not only toward humans, but to the earth and its other-than-human inhabitants. In the learning of this unit, this familiarity with the subject matter seemed to indeed play a positive role, as students went through processes of adding to, challenging, changing, and reflecting on their understanding of the Chief, its place in this community, and the people who are connected to it.

4. Personal development: allowing personal response as a part of their projects resulted in many students who included this to reflect on memories, values, and emotions around the topics we covered; this kind of reflection is not only important to a richer understanding of the subject matter, but also to personal development in teens.
4.3.2: Compilation and analysis of student responses

In this section, I have gathered evidence more directly, from student responses to questions. These responses give a broader, more detailed body of evidence for positive outcomes of place-based learning.

4.3.2.1: Questions about place

The activity following Charlene’s presentation entailed students answering a series of questions about place. These responses came with very little discussion beforehand; I wanted them to be reflections of students’ understandings of place before we delved into the concept as a class. Below, I’ve included each question with a summary and analysis of student responses. In Appendix D-1, I have also included a compilation of all student responses.

1. What does the word place mean to you? Is it just a specific location? Or does it have other meaning?

The purpose of this first question was simply to get students thinking about place as a concept, rather than a word. It elicited a range of responses. With no prior discussion on the topic, some students (5) felt that place was simply a specific location, and had no other meaning. Other students, though, who felt it had meaning only to do with location still took it a little farther than “just a location.” One (Student 3) explained place as describing where a person is, but also pointed out that this has an effect on who an individual becomes. He points out that though he and another student are both similar, they are different because they grew up in different places, and that “even in your own city people are different.” Two students implied in
their responses that there may be more to the meaning of place, but didn’t give specifics about why.

Others, though, felt that place could be a state of mind as well as a physical location. A slight majority of students (11/18) made some kind of association between place and feelings, showing an understanding of the distinction between place as a physical location and place that relates more to mindset or feeling. One student (Student 13) pointed out that it might mean “to have a ‘place’ or a ‘spot’ in the world and in your group of friends.” Another few connected place to a mental state, one describing it as a “mental mindset,” another “how I’m mentally feeling,” a third “a state of mind,” and yet another “a place in my heart,” in addition to having a meaning to do with physical place. Three students combined feeling and location in their definitions, describing place as “a location with memory and feelings” (Student 10) and (along with a location for people and things) “a connection you have in your head to a certain location or to a person/thing” or where “surrounding is comfortable or negative [sic]” (Student 18). Two students explicitly connected the meaning of place with the idea of home, as well: Student 17, “a place to feel at home” and Student 16, “somewhere that feels like home.”

These responses show that, for most students, the word *place* had connotations beyond just the physical before we began the unit. This set them up well for the creative projects we would later do, where many of them would incorporate different feelings about the Chief into their fiction or non-fiction work.

2. *It is likely that your mood – how you feel or what you want to do – is affected by where you are (e.g. in the forest, in the classroom, in your home, in Squamish, in a city, by the ocean...). Give examples of places where you feel comfortable and usually have positive emotions, and*
where you feel uncomfortable or have negative emotions. Circle either “positive” or “negative” for i, ii, and iii below, and then describe a place that fits that description and why you think it has that effect on you.  

I asked this question with a goal similar to the first question in mind: to get students thinking about what place means to them, and in this case, how certain places make them feel. Again, there was a huge range of responses. Fourteen responses identified negative places, and, though many responses were unique and didn’t show a specific pattern, it is interesting that six responses of the fourteen – almost half – mentioned school or something related to school (bus, office) as negative. Some reasons for the negativity that students identify are having to do things they don’t want to do, loneliness and too many people. Four students also mentioned other places that felt impersonal or overcrowded, such as cities, as negative.

In the positive places students identified, the most common themes were home/family and outdoor places. Of thirty-four responses that identified positive places, nineteen mentioned an aspect of home or family. Concepts that came up as reasons these places were positive were safety, comfort, security, ownership, and familiarity. This contrasts the impersonal nature of the negative places. As for outdoor environments, some students were non-specific with their identification of an outdoor location, simply saying “outdoors” or “nature” (4). Others identified specific outdoor locations, including warm beaches (3), forests/woods (5) and rivers (1). Still others didn’t identify a specific outdoor place, but instead outdoor activities, such as hiking, biking, snowboarding, and walking (4). Altogether, students connected outdoor places with positive feelings seventeen times (the numbers equal more than 34 because some students identified more than one positive place in a single response).

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2 This question had room for students to choose three places, choosing either “positive” or “negative” for each response; therefore, there are many more responses to this question than the others.
Student responses clearly show that students feel more positively in places where they are with people they know well (family and friends), where they can be outdoors, and where they are able to move around/get exercise. Howe Sound Secondary School (and secondary schools in general) are not set up to facilitate these things in academic courses, but these student responses suggest that doing so could help students to feel more positive about their schooling experience.

3. Do you think the idea of place has any special significance in a course focusing on First Peoples? Explain why or why not.

This third question was in order to learn whether students understood the importance of place to Indigenous cultures. Three of eighteen students who completed these questions gave no response, but the fifteen responses given agreed that the concept of place was especially important in a First Peoples course. Twelve of these responses thought place was important because it is integral to an aspect of many First Peoples’ way of life and/or culture. Six of these students also explained how stories were often connected to specific places and said that place was especially significant in this course for that reason, showing their understanding of both place and storytelling to Indigenous people in so doing.

4. We have been lucky enough to have Charlene Williams, a member of our local community, present to our class on residential schools and then again on storytelling. Did having the presentation from someone in Squamish with personal experience in these areas affect how/how much you learned from it, do you think? Explain.

In the fourth question, I hoped to have students reflect on the difference between learning about Indigenous cultures from literature and from a non-Indigenous teacher, and learning about
a local culture from someone who belongs to that culture. Though they didn’t all agree that her being local was important, all 18 student responses clearly indicate that they value the learning from Charlene. This means that 100% of students appreciated having a local guest come into the classroom. Their reasons for doing so vary.

Of the eighteen responses, ten explicitly said that they thought it was more effective to learn from someone who had personal experience with the topic at hand. Most of these students attributed this to the emotion (or ‘feeling’) that they saw, and a couple of students also thought that this made the topics seem more important and real, since they could see the person who was living them.

Other reasons for students preferring a guest with personal experience are that it was more entertaining (2), because they could better connect to their own experience, and/or visualize where events/stories occurred (4), and because they liked the style of her presentation, which was both oral and visual (2).

Regardless of the reason, the students’ reaction to having Charlene as a guest in the class was overwhelmingly positive. Many students point out that having her teach about these topics from her perspective and experience improved their learning.

5. Part of being connected to place is being connected to the community. If you were to share something you learned in this class with a wider community – other students/teachers in our school, or elementary school classes, or the community of Squamish- how do you think you might go about doing it?

I asked this question with a future project in mind, and the idea that I would incorporate students’ responses to this question in their final project. Responses for this were varied (and
some students seem to have understood the intent of the question and were sure to mention that they did not like speaking in front of people!), but they did come up with a few ideas that I incorporated into their final project. It was interesting that students who had come up with an idea didn't necessarily choose that option for their project. Despite the relevance of this question to my teaching practice, because it was designed primarily to inform that practice rather than my research questions, no more needs to be said about it here.

Important evidence gathered from this set of questions is as follows:

1. A majority of students believe that the word *place* means something other than a specific location. Those who do most often associated place with emotions or a particular mental state.

2. All students make connections between certain places and positive or negative feelings. Although in the first question not all students believed that place was any more than a specific location, they all made connections between places and feelings they associate with those places. The clear positive connection with outdoor places and familiar, personal places (including places connected with home) as positive stands in sharp contrast to the negative spaces that are most often impersonal and cold. Also significant is that places connected to school are most often identified as negative, suggesting that students do not associate schools with comfort or familiarity.

3. All students who responded understood the importance of place to Indigenous people. They cited a number of valid reasons why this was so, and these reasons often related to other learning we had done in the class.

4. Most students feel that they learn better from someone who has personal experience with the topic at hand. Ten out of eighteen students indicated that they learned more from Charlene
because she had lived the history she was teaching them; all students indicated that they liked
learning from her, though, again, some of their reasons varied.

4.3.2.2: Indian Act Presentation: Social justice and cultural understandings

I invited Charlene into the EFP class on three different occasions, to present on the
residential school system, the importance of storytelling (where she also told two Skwxwú7mesh stories), and the Indian Act. In her presentations, Charlene always approaches the information she presents in a personal way, relating historical events and cultural learnings to her own experiences and those of her relatives and community. After Charlene gave a presentation on the Indian Act, I had students write down three things: (1) what they learned; (2) what they found interesting; and (3) what they already knew. For the purposes of this section, I’m going to focus on the first two questions together: what they learned and what they found interesting. A compilation of students’ responses can be found in Appendix D-2. The numbers indicate different students: for this set of questions, student 1, 2, 3, etc. remains the same. Responses are recorded in Appendix D-2 as they were written by students, including any language and spelling errors.

These responses clearly show students’ learning about (Question 1) and engagement with (Question 2) two main areas: social justice and Skwxwú7mesh culture.

Social justice issues come up more frequently than any others in these responses. Over half of the students mention having learned something to do with social justice in the responses to the first question. Of a total thirty responses to the two questions, social justice issues are mentioned in fifteen, exactly half. In these responses, students mention issues to do with prejudice (racism and sexism), inequality, unfair treatment and broken policies. Eight of these
responses (8/15) are mentioned as something students learned, and seven (7/15) are mentioned as things students found interesting.

In the above numbers I don’t include land issues, though they are also related to social justice issues. These are also mentioned in eight responses of thirty (three students mentions both land issues and other social justice issues). Students were clearly shocked to learn that only 0.05% of the Skwxwú7mesh’s original territory is currently recognized as their land. Charlene used a combination of maps, stories, and images in her presentation, and the map comparing traditional territories with today’s reservations had a significant effect on students. Since land issues are also to do with social justice, it is perhaps more accurate to say that twenty out of thirty (20/30) responses – two-thirds of students – indicate that they learned about or engaged with social justice issues for Canadian Indigenous people. One student sums this learning up nicely: “I have learned that the first people shouldn’t be discriminated. They should be respected because they are (also people) just also living their lives just like us. They treated the first people unfair.”

The second issue that stood out the most in these responses was students’ changing perspectives on Skwxwú7mesh culture. Six responses from these two questions and one additional response to the last question (“What is one thing you already knew?”) show evidence of increased understanding and appreciation for Skwxwú7mesh culture (the response to the last question said, “I knew they had Potlatches but I didn’t know they were that generous.”). Students’ understanding was increased in the areas of Skwxwú7mesh generosity and wealth (three responses), education (one response), trade routes/collaboration between nations (two responses), and collaboration within the nation (two responses). One international student said simply “I didn’t know how healthy and social the Indigenous (sic) system was.” The same
student continued with, “And i (sic) recognized that some of my freejustice (read: prejudices) are wrong.” Clearly, this student’s attitude towards Indigenous people changed through learning about the culture from one who is a part of that culture.

Finally, in the responses to question #2 (what was interesting to students) a few students (3/15) mention stories or anecdotes that Charlene told in her presentation. Two particular stories were mentioned, one about Charlene’s grandfather, and the other about traditional Skwxwú7mesh sharing of wealth. I think it’s significant that these come up in part because it shows that stories have power. One student said simply, “The story about the bulldozer and her grandfather! (shocking).” The two stories also have to do with cultural understanding (sharing of wealth) and social justice (a Skwxwú7mesh home being bulldozed without the government authorities even having notified the family).

Johnson (2012) and Sommerville (2007) both stress that to understand a people we must understand the struggles (and, I would add to that, successes) of their community. The responses to these questions show students’ understanding of many of the struggles of Indigenous people in Canada, and, I think, provide strong evidence for two important aspects of “a critical pedagogy of place:” inviting community members into classrooms so that students can learn from those with “real-life” experience, and incorporating a critical perspective into learning experiences.

4.3.2.3: Course Assessment/Understanding

On the last day of the term, I requested that students answer some questions about their experiences in the course. The first two questions were about what their favourite project or class activity was and why (“Which of the assignments listed above did you enjoy the most?” and “What made you enjoy this more than other projects, do you think?”).
Questions #1 and #2:

Interestingly, the project that was designed as the truly “place-based” unit in the course was the one students mention most often as their favourite: the Chief Project (Appendix B-2) was identified as a favourite in a third (6/18) of student responses. Two reasons were identified equally for why it was the favourite. Three students liked it because they had much freedom within the project: they “didn’t have to stay in a limit,” as one student wrote. Two other students liked it because it was about their own experiences and something they knew, and that “made it fun.” (The final student had identified more than one project as a favourite and focused on a different one for this question.)

Second in the list of favourites, mentioned in five responses (27%) were the two research projects: Inspirational Person Project (Appendix B-3) and the Final Inquiry Project (Appendix B-4). I have put these two projects together since they were quite similar in the requirements for the projects. Both projects were research-based, both involved some kind of a sharing component (at minimum with the class, and ideally with an audience beyond the classroom), and both encouraged students to focus on their own families or communities if they so desired. The reasons students chose these projects as favourites were similar to those given for the Chief Project: two students liked the “creative freedom,” (Appendix B-3) as one student put it; one student enjoyed talking with a family member about her past; and one student enjoyed the topic of learning about the lives of important Indigenous people. The response about enjoying working with a family member stands out as evidence of a significant experience for the student, who writes, “...usually [the family member] would felt ashamed rather not talk (sic). She was able to open up so I could show other people these issues exist.”
The third most popular assignment was a writing assignment called *An Event that Impacted My Life*, which was part of a short unit on identity. In this assignment, students had to write about the assignment title’s topic: an event that had somehow impacted them and affected their lives or who they are today. It was difficult for some students to get started on this project, but the work that came out of it was some of the best writing students did all term. Again, the reasons for this project being chosen as a favourite overlap with the previous two: they enjoyed how “open” the project was (two students), the topic (one student), as well as working with family (one student chose it because he/she “worked with my mom talking about my past.”) The remaining class activities that were identified were Charlene Williams’ talks (3/18), the novel study journal responses (3/18), and a trip to the Museum of Anthropology at UBC (2/18). Charlene’s talks were chosen by two students because they love listening to and learning from the stories she tells (the third student who chose this chose other activities as well and didn’t give a reason for choosing these). The novel journal responses were chosen primarily because students enjoyed the books they chose to read (3/3), though one also mentioned that he liked reflecting on the story and expanding his/her vocabulary.

It is significant that the museum trip is the only activity mentioned that was not in the list of possible examples I gave them (I suspect giving this list influenced their choices, and in hindsight would have asked the question with no possibilities given.) However, the fact that this trip was the only activity that students came up with outside this list is indicative of how much it stood out to certain students; one student who chose this activity did so because he/she found it fun to look at the art, and the other enjoyed finding things on his/her own and said he/she “learned a lot.” While we were at the museum, two students very excitedly pulled me aside to show me works that had come from the communities from which they or their families came.
One, who sometimes had difficulty engaging in class and who had often isolated herself from other students and from me, proudly showed me the section of the museum where her people’s works resided. She shared with me a bit about her home, her grandmother, and her family, and also the fact that she was a person of high status in her community. I had never seen pride in herself before, but it was incredibly clear at this time. That event was a turning point in our relationship, and in how much she participated in the class: we had a connection after that, and her effort in class activities also improved.

**Question #3:**

The next question I asked students is one I ask all my classes at the end of the year: “What do you think would improve the class or my teaching?” Though of the 18 students who submitted responses, there were three who left this with no response (NR), I was delighted to also get many positive responses: over half (8/15) responses mentioned how much students enjoyed the class; I believe it’s significant that, though I hadn’t asked for what they liked, they told me anyway. Though most students were fairly general in their positive remarks, saying simply that they enjoyed the class or had fun, two students mentioned that they liked the variety and versatility in assignments, and one said that he/she learned a lot. As well in these responses it is abundantly clear that what students wanted most was to get outside the classroom more. Just under half of students who responded (7/18) mentioned either going outside or going on more field trips. Though I was sorry that we never got to do our outside days (primarily due to Squamish’s cold, wet winter weather), I was delighted to see that students wanted this to happen as much as I did. (It did contribute to decision making the next time I taught the course.) The one other suggesting that came up, that I had recently spoken to students about, was having a EFP 10
and an EFP 11/12 course, rather than EFP 10/11/12. Two students mentioned that they would prefer separating the classes; however, this has not yet been a viable option due to student enrollment levels.

**Question #4:**

The fourth question I was interested in was, “What is the most interesting or important thing that we talked about in class this term, in your opinion, and why?” The response to this had half of students identify the same issue: residential schools. Of sixteen responses (two NR), exactly half (8/16) identified residential schools as the most important issue we studied. Though not all students gave a reason for this choice, three said that they thought it was “important,” and three said that they believed people should know about the past in their country. One also mentioned that “they don’t teach you much about it in other classes.”

Of the remaining responses, three students mentioned either guest speakers or stories (which I can assume means the stories the guest speakers told, since I didn’t tell stories myself). Reasons weren’t given for these choices, but the power stories have to entertain and teach can likely be discerned from this. Two other students mentioned learning about Indigenous people was most important, one in regards to Indigenous communities in Canadian society, and the other in regards to “native history.” I also was surprised and delighted to see that learning about the concept of hegemony was mentioned by one student, who valued this because there are “many things we don’t usually think about.” Another student mentioned the film “Schooling the World” as most important since it changed his/her perspective of what was happening with schooling today (that “bad things are still going on around us”); in some ways, this choice of
films is also about the concept of hegemony, since it focuses on the hegemony of schooling as a way to teach children.

Question #5:

The final question was simply to see whether there was anything else students wanted to tell me that I had neglected to ask about: “Any other comments?” Of eighteen submitted questions, seven had no response (NR, or “no comment” from one) to this question. Of the remaining eleven responses, all of them were positive (11/11). Students clearly enjoyed the class (4/11), my teaching style (7/11), and two students said they liked it better than they would have English Language Arts 12 (or “regular english [sic]” as one student puts it).

4.4: Conclusion: Final Thoughts on the Study

Jan 30, 2015

My first English First Peoples class ended today, and I feel a combination of emotions. On one hand, I feel surprisingly sad that it’s over. There’s something about this class that made me feel especially connected to these students. Partly it’s the students themselves, who are a unique, interesting, thoughtful group. They inspired me to want to inspire them, which is an important ingredient for a good class, I think. And, of course, it’s that this is the class in which I’m doing my Master’s study. It was fun to talk to them about what I was hoping to do, and to see them connect with the material on a personal level. Also, I think, it’s because of the course itself: English First Peoples. Because all the works we studied were written by Indigenous people, there was a depth of understanding that occurred in this course that I don’t see in other classes, when
we are looking at works from diverse sources. Having the same themes and ideas come up through different mediums, discussions, authors, and places allowed for students (and I) to see them from multiple perspectives and therefore have a much more thorough understanding of them.

Reflecting on this journal entry written on that last day of classes, I suppose one of the important elements of an English First Peoples class is a sense of unity. The fact that all works relate to Indigenous peoples’ experiences unifies the course, and so does the importance of connection to place that comes up in virtually all the works and presentations we studied.

The most important findings in regards to the overarching research question, *What stories of learning have I identified regarding a First Peoples English course that makes use of place-based methodologies?* are outlined below. This study suggests the following:

1. Despite many challenges to place-based learning in secondary schools, its many benefits made incorporating place-based methodologies where possible worthwhile.

2. Most students’ understanding of place included feelings and/or a mental state connected to specific places; students believed that place often has especial importance to Indigenous peoples.

3. Students preferred having choice in topics and options in how to show their learning in class work; this also appeared to give increased opportunities for personal development and engagement.
4. Certain place-based activities encouraged connections with students’ family, culture, and community; a strong majority of students preferred learning from someone who had personal experience with the issues being taught.

5. Incorporating Indigenous place pedagogies in an English First Peoples class benefited both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students.

6. A focus on place supports development of critical inquiry skills.

7. Place-based pedagogies encouraged empathy and care in students, for humans, other-than-humans, and the land.

Not only were there these benefits, but most students seemed to appreciate the place-based activities that were offered to them in this course, as evidenced by the most popular project being the Chief Project, from the only fully place-based unit of study. The reasoning behind their choices and the comments on the Course Assessment/Understanding emphasize what they liked about place-based opportunities, and the fact that the comments on the course assessment are some of the most positive I have read in thirteen years of teaching tells me that this shift towards place-based education was well-received.

The opportunity for students to connect personally to the short story “Legend of the Sugar Girl” encouraged a depth of understanding and an opportunity to reflect on the consequences of residential schools. This was clearly beneficial for both Indigenous and non-
Indigenous students; it provided an opportunity for Indigenous students to reflect on and share how residential schools had affected them and their families, and therefore gave non-Indigenous and International students an understanding of the story and its themes that was connected to lived experiences. Those students who took advantage of doing research projects that related to their families or communities also mentioned the importance of that opportunity in their responses. The students who chose to do this, and their families, were appreciative of the opportunity.

Charlene William's presentations were clearly effective in encouraging students to critically reflect on their previous understandings and prejudices, as evidenced by their responses to the *Indian Act Presentation* questions. In the discussions that followed Charlene’s presentations, students were usually more engaged and seemed more curious and passionate about the issues that came up, likely due to an increased interest in and level of care for the subject matter and people it affects; learning directly from someone who was him or herself involved in or affected by the events made the issues more immediate, real, and poignant than learning about the same events by someone removed from these issues. In their responses to both sets of questions, it is obvious that all students appreciated Charlene’s presentations. Certain non-Indigenous students began to imagine what it might be like to be an Indigenous person today, and to value that perspective. Evidence for this appears both in the responses to the short-answer questions about Charlene’s presentations and in the *Course Assessment/Understanding* questions (Appendix D-3). It seems that the strongest evidence, though, lies in the fact that two non-Indigenous students, one an international student and one Canadian, chose to write stories or poems wherein they “became” the Indigenous narrator or speaker. This was not a requirement of any of the projects, but simply how they decided to respond to the task. In so doing, they needed
to “examin[e] the economic, social, historical, and political forces” involved in shaping specific environments (Meek, 2011, p. 292), in this case, the Squamish Valley and the history that has shaped not (only) the valley itself, but its people.

Though there were many ways in which I felt restricted by the system of schooling and frustrated by factors outside my control, reflecting on students’ work has made clear to me that any effort to make class work place-based is worthwhile. As evidenced by the list above, there are, indeed, many benefits to conjoining place-based learning and a course focused on Indigenous perspectives. Two benefits, in particular, stand out as most important: 1) when students are better able to relate what they do in class to their own lives and experiences, this improves student engagement, since they are more invested in the issues they are learning about, and this, in turn, increases their interest in (and sometimes even passion for) these issues; and 2) connecting with people, community, and personal experiences seems to lead to increased empathy. Both of these outcomes of place-based learning encourage students to engage in critical inquiry; critical inquiry can only occur when students are interested in the subject matter, and believe that issues they are studying relate to lived experiences and/or are important. Looking at the work of the students in this class, it seems that perhaps what Johnson (2012) says about critical pedagogies is accurate; they are inherently place-based. Perhaps the most valuable story of learning I’ve found in this study is that they also seem to be inherently empathetic.
Chapter 5: Conclusion

5.1: Reflecting on the Process

Looking back on the past three years, since I began the research for this thesis, I can see that, ultimately, this work achieved my goal of gaining a better understanding of benefits and challenges of place-based learning in a secondary school setting. Perhaps more importantly, this research has also shown that there are indeed connections between place-based methodologies and the concept of encouraging empathy and care. This has reinforced my belief that making place-based learning a priority in schools is a worthy goal.

Despite these successes, I also understand that there are a number of my original goals that were not achieved, or not achieved in the way that I had envisioned: I haven’t started a new program at my school; I haven’t found a way to regularly get outside the classroom with my students; and I didn’t figure out one final project where students would work in collaboration with a community member or organization on a change-making program they felt was important. However, I did achieve other important goals, such as: 1) exploring ways to make place-based learning occur despite challenges of the school system; 2) finding clear connections between place-based learning and student engagement; and 3) engaging in activities that allowed students to explore their own values and interests through engagement with local places and/or issues. Also important to mention in what I consider to be the success of this study is how much I learned, and how this personal growth has improved my teaching practice in all of my classes.
5.2: Major Findings and Value of the Study to the Field

During the study conducted I found a few important findings in relation to the thesis questions. The overarching question, *What stories of learning have I identified regarding a First Peoples English course that makes use of place-based methodologies?* revealed learning from myself as well as my students. The first sub-question, *What challenges exist in introducing place-based learning at Howe Sound Secondary School, and, if possible, how may these challenges be overcome?* focused on my learning, and the second, *What are benefits of conjoining place-based learning and a course focused on Indigenous perspectives?* focused on the learning of the students in the study class.

5.2.1: Findings on challenges at HSSS

This study found that the biggest barriers to place-based learning are: 1) class organization; 2) grades and provincial exams; 3) timetable organization and time constraints; and 4) administrative requirements.

The organization of the school system (scheduling, timetabling, collection of grades, etc.) is a barrier due to the nature of secondary school courses as single-subject and marks and content-based. This may result in teachers feeling that they have to focus on teaching only their own subject and hurrying through the content of the curriculum to make students are exposed to all that is expected before final exams. Indeed, it is impossible (and perhaps undesirable) to ignore the curriculum, especially where provincial exams exist (though it now appears that provincial exams may not long be in existence in BC, as they will soon be replaced by only two exams on literacy and math skills [BC Ministry of Education, 2015b]). Even when exams are not an issue, teachers cannot ignore the curriculum, as has sometimes been suggested, since we have
a legal responsibility that prohibits this: public education is funded by the provincial government, and the provincial government requires teachers to teach the provincial curriculum. Grades are a barrier since so much of value in place-based learning is very difficult of impossible to mark. Since to some, schools are still considered places to determine how students rank academically, it may be difficult for teachers to justify learning experiences that don’t contribute to final marks. Students may also be less willing to take risks or be creative, having been conditioned to do what will get them the best marks, rather than what will best further their learning. There are ways to mitigate these problems, such as not marking everything, and having students design their own criteria and/or use self-evaluations, but even with these changes grades can get in the way of learning. They also affect students, since some students may become discouraged if these kinds of activities that should be about personal learning and experience are indeed graded: it can be very discouraging for a student to receive a grade that is lower that he or she believes he or she deserves. Some students have been so discouraged by the system of ranking through grades that they have trouble engaging and motivating themselves by the time they reach secondary school.

Provincial exams are a barrier for similar reasons, but also exacerbate the problem of rushing through curricula rather than, perhaps, having the freedom and flexibility to follow the interests of, or the pace set by, the class. Ignoring what students are required to know on the provincial exam does a disservice to the students, since it is not fair to allow them to walk into an exam for which they are unprepared. This means that a certain amount of time for each provincially examinable course must be spent on exam preparation. In my observations of students outside this course, it is clear that when this doesn’t happen, students become more anxious; they are not likely to do as well if they have increased anxiety about their final exam.
The secondary school timetable is another barrier to place-based learning. The short classes and rotating blocks mean that it is difficult to take students on trips away from the school, since 75 minutes is not long for an off-campus trip, and taking longer than the set time means students will miss other classes. These timetable characteristics also make it difficult for teachers to collaborate, especially across disciplines. The timetable is organized for efficient learning of content, not cross-curricular experiential learning. The short amount of time students have with each teacher also means that stronger relationships between teachers and students are often just beginning towards the end of a semester, if at all. Since there is a good chance that students will never have another class with this teacher, these relationships may end just as they are becoming meaningful.

Administrative requirements, though perhaps necessary, are restrictive and so also become barriers to place-based learning. The paperwork and supervision requirements to leaving school grounds can be overwhelming to teachers, and, with already busy schedules, can add a prohibitive amount of extra paperwork and time to already busy teachers’ workload.

5.2.2: Recommendations for mitigating challenges at HSSS

Below is a list of recommendations of possible ways to mitigate these issues in secondary schools and to more easily incorporate place-based learning in a standard secondary school class.

- Keep it small, keep it simple: introduce place-based options wherever possible, whenever it’s easy to do so. Some possibilities of less challenging ways to do so may be such things as offering place-based options for assignments; inviting local guests into the classroom; or having activities on hand that can be used outside on school grounds when the weather is good.
• Ask for shortcuts in administrative areas, such as blanket permission forms that allow students to leave school grounds within walking distance and school hours at any time during the course. This reduces the number of permission forms required for trips.

• Explore options for simplified permission form systems, such as a digital system for forms and money (though it should be noted that this might be a barrier for some families; alternative non-digital methods would still need to be in place).

• Increase the teacher student ratio for senior secondary students from 1:12 to 1:15 to facilitate walking-distance field trips, allowing the teacher plus one additional adult to take a class of average size (30) off school grounds (rather than three adults).

• Avoid automatically categorizing all activities outside School District #48 boundaries as “higher care trips” for secondary students; since higher care trips require much more paperwork and therefore time, and higher supervision, this practice makes it less likely teachers will take their students outside the school district boundaries.

• When appropriate, once community partners are established maintain these relationships in order to facilitate lines of communication, relationships, and understanding of expectations for both parties; this may reduce the amount of teacher time required to arrange having guests in the classroom.

5.2.3: Findings on conjoining place-based methodologies and Indigenous perspectives

Two significant benefits of conjoining place-based methodologies and Indigenous perspectives are apparent through this study: (1) the stronger connection to people and places
experienced by students through place-based learning; and (2) the impact of place-based learning on Indigenous student success.

1. Increase in respect and understanding

One benefit of conjoining ideas and instructional methodologies around place with Indigenous work and perspectives that was apparent in this study is an increase in respect for and understanding of Indigenous peoples. This increased respect was apparent in student responses to two sets of questions (Indian Act Questions [Appendix D-2] and Course Assessment/Understanding [Appendix D-3]). In these questions, a better understanding of the history and current circumstances of Indigenous peoples lead to this increase in respect. Raised respect and understanding was also apparent in student work in a number of other assignments: The Chief Project, “Legend of the Sugar Girl” Creative Responses, and the Inspirational Person Project. Another area that relates to respect is that of pride. Indigenous students clearly showed pride in their culture and, in some cases, for what their families or communities had overcome, in a few different activities. The Inspirational Person Project also showed this, as did the visit to the Museum of Anthropology. Having adult members of the Skwxwú7mesh and other BC Nations as regular visitors to our class also increased respect and understanding, as evident from responses to the Course Assessment/Understanding [Appendix D-3]. As is mentioned in much of the literature about place, connection to community and environment leads to and increased sense of respect (Cajete, 1994, 2001; Gruenwald, 2008; Knapp, 2005; Smith & Sobel, 2010; Sommerville, 2007; Tooth & Renshaw, 2009).

2. Indigenous student success

The second benefit of conjoining these two areas is that of Indigenous student success. Though this is a difficult area to assess, since I can’t possibly know how successful students
would have been in this same course *without* place-based learning, Cajete (2001) makes it clear that, especially for Indigenous students, having their own culture and experiences reflected in schooling is incredibly important; alignment of education with Indigenous students' world views isn’t always common in schools, making it especially important in an English First Peoples class. It may also do something to mitigate the cultural domination/neocolonial problems of western schooling (Marlens, 2010). Place-based methodologies are inherently part of Indigenous cultures, it follows that they have an especially important place in a course focused on the cultures and experiences of Indigenous peoples. Also, in topics that directly affected students, such as the residential school system, students were clearly more engaged than with other topics.

The obvious increase in participation and engagement of the one student who proudly talked about her culture after finding works from her community exhibited at the Museum of Anthropology certainly exemplify this. When students were able to connect to what we were doing on a personal level, their engagement in the work, as well as the work’s quality, improved.

In addition to these benefits of conjoining place-based methodologies and Indigenous perspectives, some benefits of place based learning were not limited to their being conjoined with Indigenous perspectives. These benefits suggest that inclusion of place pedagogy would indeed be valuable in any course.

It is evident from this study that the value of place-based learning is not limited to a course focused on Indigenous perspectives. In addition to the two benefits of place pedagogies outline above, there are three others that would be valuable in other courses and subject areas: the development of *student engagement, critical inquiry skills, and empathy and care*. 
3. Student engagement

As mentioned above, student engagement increased in activities where place pedagogies were employed; this is a desirable outcome in any course. The use of “reflective response” (Tooth & Renshaw, 2009) used in the “Legend of the Sugar Girl” responses immediately got students finding personal meaning, thinking about their own knowledge and experience in relation to the story; through this, their engagement seemed to increase as well: many students showed evidence of being involved in the work for its own sake, rather than for marks or simply to do what was asked. In other assignments, those who took advantage of the place-based options offered to them showed evidence of increased effort in their work as compared to non-place-based assignments, and reported these projects as their “favourites” on the Course Assessment/Understanding [Appendix D-3]. The project from our place-based unit was cited most often as the “favourite” here as well. Engagement was most obvious when students took ownership of the work, putting in more effort or time than was required in order to complete the task or further their learning; this was often those who connected learning in the class to their own families, cultures, and stories.

In this course, the clearest indication that students were engaged with the course as a whole is that 12 of a possible 14 eligible students chose to take English First Peoples again the following year, rather than English Language Arts. In other words, 86% of students decided to continue on with the course the following year. In secondary school, that’s an “A.”

4. Critical inquiry skills

Another area that suggests that place-based learning would be valuable to a broad range of courses and subjects is its contribution to the development of critical inquiry skills. First of all, engagement and curiosity are necessary for critical inquiry to occur, since critical inquiry
requires genuine effort, not simply a desire to get a certain grade. Also, Smith and Sobel (2010) point out that place-based learning encourages problem solving and analytical skills, which are also essential for critical inquiry.

Gruenwald’s (2008) concept of decolonization and reinhabitation is also relevant to critical inquiry. Throughout the course, various place-based activities and experiences examined context and experience of past and present people and situations, as well as possible future scenarios. The class discussion about hegemony also engaged students in aspects of critical inquiry. They came up with an impressive list of examples of hegemonic ideas from their own experience and observation; the discussion in itself was evidence of their engagement and thoughtfulness about life-centered, immediate issues. In this year’s EFP course, a student from last year brought up the idea of hegemony during one of our discussions, much to my delight. This resulted in a situation where (with some help from me) the older students (grade 11/12) taught this concept to the younger ones (grade 10). Both years, students also employed critical inquiry skills in reflecting on and verbalizing their own values and how they believed things should be in the world.

Another area related to critical inquiry that is an inherent part of place-based learning is in different ways of knowing (Johnson/Sommerville). Place pedagogies are often more individualized, social, interdisciplinary, collaborative, and cooperative. Use of learning from local places, as well as simple things like sharing circles, medicine wheels, and increased student choice offer the chance for students not just to learn about different ways of knowing, but also to experience these ways of knowing and learning firsthand in their course learning. Integration and unification of subject matter is also beneficial for critical inquiry (Cajete, 1994, 2001; Johnson, 2012; Sommerville, 2007; Tooth & Renshaw, 2009); some degree of integration of other subjects
(especially history and “social studies”) was necessary for virtually all that we did in the class, but in the *Chief Project* and some of the research projects, other subjects were also integrated (visual arts, biology, geology, for example).

Looking at examples of similar situations (such as residential schools) affect people in different places also encourages critical inquiry. The focus on local examples emphasizes how understanding of a place can reach beyond that particular place by giving students an understanding of how global issues manifest themselves locally (Sommerville, 2007).

5. **Empathy and care**

The development of empathy and care is also encouraged through use of place-based methodologies. Evidence for this is outlined in #1 above (*Increase in respect and understanding*), but all of the other benefits outlined above also connect to empathy. Since the caring relation is reciprocal, it requires something not only from the students, but from the teacher (and perhaps school) as well. When students see that teachers are paying attention to their needs, students are more willing to respond to that care, often in the form of acknowledging it through increased effort in an assignment or participation in activities; this, of course, connects to student engagement. This may be especially important in regards to Indigenous student success, since Indigenous students may come to school with more barriers to school success than non-Indigenous students because of the history of residential schools. Paying attention to the needs of these learners and embracing in an empathetic approach to teaching may be especially important for these students. Emotional and academic needs in schools are inextricably linked, and all students need continuing compassion and care from adults in their lives (Noddings, 1995).
Also, since engagement is a prerequisite for critical inquiry, care and empathy are essential to engagement as well. In fact, it seems that if empathy and care aren’t present in the classroom, none of the benefits to place-based learning outlined above are likely to happen. After all, learning often requires risk, and feeling cared for helps people to feel safe. When students know that the classroom they enter is a caring space, it is likely that they will be more willing to participate in creative, collaborative, and unfamiliar activities, all of which can enhance their learning. This applies to all classrooms, regardless of subject or grade level. Since incorporating place-based methodologies strengthened the *caring relation* (Noddings, 2012) between teacher and students, and between students themselves, it follows that place-based pedagogies would be an asset to any class.

### 5.3: Post-research Experience and Directions for Practice

As I incorporate the learning from this research into my current teaching practice, I understand clearly that it is here that the value of this process primarily lies. Part of that is due to the high degree of self-reflection necessary to write a study that is focused on my own classroom; but an equally valuable part is seeing how important it is to continuing learning from my students. Through improved attention to myself and my students, I’ve come to better understand the importance of the concepts of “slow pedagogy,” (Tooth & Renshaw, 2009, p. 97-99); “reflective response” (Tooth & Renshaw, 2009, p. 98); and *recursion* (Doll, 1993). Some of these appear simply in the form of small pauses in the classroom: pausing to take a moment to talk to students about the purpose of certain activities, or the direction of a unit of study, for example, in order to connect to the “bigger picture;” pausing to ask students which of a few possibilities they prefer to pursue in class, in order to ensure that students feel their opinions and
interests are valued and that the focus of the class fits these as well as possible; pausing to reflect on experiences we have had in order to identify and understand what we will take with us from those experiences, or to connect experiences to previous learning in our class or students’ lives; or pausing to ask what is working for them in class, what could be different, and what they need to succeed. All of these pauses help to refocus the class.

These types of pauses also solidify the feeling that, though our time is limited, for the duration of the class, my students and I are unified; we are a team who supports one another and works together toward common goals. I’ve realized that, though it is often tempting to try to push quickly through material and topics, to charge on to the next unit, the next activity, to make sure it all gets covered in time for the provincial exam, it is vitally important to students’ learning and to the class atmosphere to take these pauses.

Something else I have learned through this process is how to better use my strengths in the classroom. I’m good at understanding and communicating ideas, as well as people and emotions, and am finding that using thematic units incorporate these strengths in a way that works well for me and my students. I’ve recently expanded the thematic units I use in all my classes, not just EFP, and have now taught a unit on prejudice and colonization to two English Language Arts (ELA) 12 classes. I had been concerned that since these classes are English Language Arts, not English First Peoples, classes that students wouldn’t be as interested in this theme. It turns out, however, that students in the two classes have shown tremendous interest. Also, using thematic units in a more widespread manner enriches the other units (novel, film and play studies, for example) as well.

Recently, my ELA 12 class has chosen Environment as a theme to study. We began the unit with a brainstorm about what were the most pressing issues facing the world today, of which
they came up with three (environmental issues, distribution of wealth, and prejudice). They were regularly involved in interesting and complex discussions about a variety of issues related to environment, including science and ethics, during this unit. In an attempt to bring in some place-based activities, they created imagery and figurative language from observation while outside on a sunny day, and then wrote poetry from these observations. They also completed a research project (Appendix B-6) that allowed them to follow their interests to learn about any local and global issue that they felt was important and that connected to any of the three pressing issues they came up with at the outset of the unit. Here, finally, without really expecting it, was a project where many students were motivated to do place-based work (9/17 student projects [53%] were about local issues, many being based on studies students had done in the school or community). Some did primary research of their own, and some explored possible solutions to the problems they are investigating. Having chosen their own topics of study about something they feel is important, the students’ work had more depth and complexity than I have seen in any other project. Every student completed the project and did work that showed evidence of personal motivation and connection to the topic; some were incredibly detailed. Many presentations ranged from a 10-15-minute presentation length, and a couple ranged from 25-50 minutes, including a discussion/question period. The presentations about local issues had much more involvement from the class in the form of questions and discussion afterwards.

Changes such as this, in the classes I’ve been teaching for years, are more noticeable to me than those in English First Peoples, which I taught for the first time while doing this study. ELA 12 is a course I’ve been teaching multiple times a year for 12 years, and the improvements to my practice is most obvious in that course. Continually working towards an increasingly place-based practice is having clear positive results with my students, especially in terms of
engagement. This study emphasizes that changes are worthwhile. They allow me to focus on what I can do, rather than what I wish I could do if I could teach “outside” the system. Though I will continue to work on bringing in an academic cohort to our school, the changes I have so far made in the small world of my own classroom are noteworthy, I think.

There is one other activity, from my latest English First Peoples class (my second one, with many of the same students) that is also worthwhile mentioning here, since it turned out to be a powerful example of place-based learning. It was a visit to a nearby school, Stawamus Elementary. Stawamus is home to a unique program that is in its first year in our school district: Cultural Journeys. The program is a Program of Choice, meaning that students from any catchment area in the district can choose to attend this program, described as follows on the school website:

“Cultural Journeys is a Kindergarten to Grade 6 program guided by the principle that all learning is grounded in understanding the connected relationship of Language, Land and Culture. In this program, students learn to respect a shared worldview of environmental livability and sustainability related to their physical, emotional, spiritual and intellectual learning.” (Sea to Sky Learning Connections, n.d.)

This program is one that clearly connects to a caring relation between Indigenous populations and the school district. It was created in collaboration with Indigenous members of the community, and the concepts of respect and care underlie all aspect of the program. The previous year in my English First Peoples class, when this program was still in its planning and proposal stages, three students in EFP chose to investigate this program as their final research project, and shared information about it with the class. I thought it would therefore be appropriate to visit the school this year, now that it is up and running, to see what and how these
students were learning, and to have the older students from my class prepare activities for the younger ones.

In preparation for the visit, students (in small groups of 2-4) read and created an activity around a children’s story or legend that they chose from a selection of books by Indigenous authors (or written in collaboration with Indigenous people). They practiced reading the book aloud, and prepared teaching activities around the stories. Though most students felt comfortable with this idea, some students were nervous about reading aloud and being in charge of a small groups of younger students. One in particular said, “I’m just not good with kids.”

The day of this activity we walked the 20 minutes from our school to Stawamus. We had a brief meeting outside the school, and then went into the classroom where we were welcomed by the teachers and students in the program. They told us a little about themselves, and then broke into groups, the younger paired with the older students. After one session (about 25 minutes) the younger students switched to a different book, so that each group of older students was paired with two different groups of children.

I have rarely been so proud of an entire class at once. Every student, even those with learning disabilities and serious challenges reading, participated in the reading of their stories to their group. Many groups also facilitated discussion with the younger students about the themes of the stories. All groups guided an activity where the younger students created something – usually based in drawing – in response to the story. The students in EFP (though not all of them behave this way in their own classes) while leading the younger students were all responsible and on-task. When the younger students became distracted or lost focus, the older students attempted to pull them back in and get them on track again. It turned out that the boy who had thought himself “not good with children” was a natural leader and, actually, very comfortable
with the younger students. Another adult who came with us from Howe Sound Secondary said of a student he knows fairly well, who is in a special education program, “I didn’t know he could read!” It turned out he certainly could: he read his full half of the book aloud.

While the younger students had a recess break, the EFP students debriefed their experiences. It was interesting to hear them talk about the difference in teaching the same thing to different students, and how they stopped being nervous once they got going. The student who had thought himself “not good with kids” said in this circle, “I learned that I am actually pretty good with kids.”

It was apparent in this reflection, and in other discussions with students about this activity, that they truly valued the experience. It encouraged stronger connections between students in the class (collaborating on a project for which they were entirely responsible to others), between older and younger students, and also between the students and I. This connects to care as well.

We used circles regularly in this year’s EFP class. We opened and closed each week with a sharing circle, and ended the year with a final circle where I asked students to share what they would take with them from the course or what they most enjoyed. Most students mentioned the Cultural Journeys visit below, though some also mentioned the themes we had focused on (colonization and cultural appropriation) and their final Changemaker Project (Appendix B-5). Though I didn’t want to record student responses for privacy reasons, I wrote down a list of responses I could remember right after our last class (paraphrased, though as close as I could remember to the students’ words):

“I didn’t know much about my culture and didn’t have much interest before. I learned about my own culture in this class.” (Indigenous student)
“I took this course because I wanted to learn more and go deeper in understanding Squamish Nation culture, and this course definitely did that.” (non-Indigenous student)

“I learned I actually am good with children and I became more confident speaking in front of others from the circles.”

“I now understand what cultural appropriation is- before I used to see it but didn’t understand it.”

“I didn’t know anything about colonization before, so I learned lots. Everything was new.” (International student)

“I liked the Cultural Journeys visit because in school we don’t often have this kind of opportunity.” (Two other students also said something similar to this.)

“The Cultural Journeys visit was good because I got to see my cousins there.”

Also important in this final circle was that 100% of students who participated in the Cultural Journeys visit reported having a positive experience, and many also talked about how much more confident they felt; this resulted in three students who had opted not to go or had been absent that day expressing sincere regret for not being a part of the activity.

Despite having positive results from the changes made in this year’s EFP class, there is still, of course, room for improvement. Seeing the students’ positive reactions to the place-based work we did is evidence that it is worthwhile investing time in this as opposed to more traditional classroom-based English work; the reading and writing they do as a part of place-based projects is more meaningful, and therefore stronger than the work based only on, for example, a day’s reading, and when they are accountable to other people outside the classroom – like the younger students – they really “step up” and take their work and responsibility seriously.
Next year, I would like to do a project where students create a story around a specific small piece of land. Students would observe the flora and fauna of their chosen patches of land and create a story that personifies the creatures and plants within. This would encourage empathy for land and living things, as well as have students participate in the storytelling process, and time spent in the outdoors could be more easily justified by increasing the amount of course content included in the project. This might include requiring students to use literary devices, stages of plot, and purposeful language in their writing. They could then share their own stories with the students at the Cultural Journeys school, and create activities that emphasize their own themes.

Though I did attempt to incorporate important curriculum (storytelling) and students’ reflection on place through the Chief Project, I’m curious to see whether a project like the one described above could do so more effectively. I also think this new storytelling project would be a greater factor in mitigating the disconnect that students may feel between their classroom experience and the natural world (Smith & Sobel, 2010) than any of my other projects so far: this is the area that I have the most room to improve in place-based learning, I think. The beauty of this research is that, really, it will never end, but continues informally for as long as I keep teaching.

5.4: Conclusion: What matters?

At the end of this process, I can say with confidence that employing place-based methodologies in my classroom has been worthwhile for many reasons. The one that is most important to me, and relates to my very first thoughts about my Master’s program (before I had even heard of place-based learning) is that it does, indeed, contribute to the broad concept that first motivated this research: encouraging empathy and care.
In the introduction to this thesis I wrote, “Perhaps, through a place-based education, our education system could begin to embrace the guiding principle of ‘two-eyed seeing,’ where we ‘see from one eye with the strengths of Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing, and from the other eye with the strengths of Western knowledges and ways of knowing ... and [learn] to use both these eyes together, for the benefit of all’ (Kavanagh, 2004).” Now that this research is done, I am confident that approaching learning from the strengths of these two cultural perspectives (Indigenous and Western) is being achieved more fully not only in my English First Peoples courses, but in the other courses I teach as well. Equally importantly, this study strongly suggests that connecting learning to students’ own communities and landscape does indeed result in better effort, engagement, and quality of work from students, and contributes to cultivating care, empathy, and a sense of belonging. As I complete this thesis, I also understand that, in improving teaching practice, the work is never finished. This, then, is what matters to me in the future: that I, Howe Sound Secondary School, and Sea to Sky School District continue to develop more effective methods of incorporating place-based learning strategies, for the benefit of all students.
References


Learning%20and%20Memory%3A%20The%20Brain%20in%20Action
Stawamus Chief Provincial Parks management plan (South Coast Regional Planning Services for Garibaldi/Sunshine Coast, Comp.). (1997). Retrieved October 21, 2014, from BC Parks website:


Appendices
Appendix A: Letters of Permission
Appendix A-1: Letter of Invitation: Principal

LETTER OF INVITATION – Principal

Towards caring: The role of place-based learning in a secondary school English First Peoples class

A study of what stories of learning students tell regarding a First Peoples English course that makes use of place-based methodologies.

Principal Investigator: Don Krug, Ph.D., Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy

Co-investigator: Sara Price, BA, BEd, MA candidate in the Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy

Dear Dr. Perkins,

As a graduate student at the University of British Columbia (UBC) in the Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy, I am writing to request permission for your school to participate in a research project. Don Krug of UBC Department of Curriculum Studies is the Principal Investigator of this study, and I am the Co-Investigator.

The research project in question would take place in my English First Peoples (EFP) class between January and June, 2015. Your permission is sought for this research because work from the English First Peoples 10/11/12 class at Howe Sound Secondary is the focus of this study. If you choose to allow your school to participate, your permission will allow Dr. Krug and I, after the semester is over, to analyze work that participating students have done related to the concept of place in their EFP class. Please note that the purpose of this study is to gain better understanding of the significance of bringing concepts of and experiences with place into the classroom; it is not about any one student in particular, nor will any students be named in the study.

Participation in this study will contribute to understanding how inclusion of place-based teaching methodologies affects students’ views of their community, the course material, their surrounding environment, and their own identities. It will help teachers to understand whether, and if so, how, place-based learning can improve education.

For the period of the study, students will have an opportunity to learn using place-based methodologies. This opportunity includes having community members as guests in the classroom, visiting surrounding areas as inspiration for writing and/or to understand stories of place, and researching topics that are relevant to the students and places that have meaning to them. Since this is an English class, students will be doing writing in a number of different forms in response to these activities; for the semester of the study, their work relating to place and place-based teaching methodologies will be photocopied and kept until after the course is complete. To ensure that students have no concerns about their marks being affected by the decision whether or not to participate in the study, this form will be returned to another teacher in the school. I will not see them, nor know who is participating, until after final marks for the course have been submitted. After final marks are submitted, I will dispose of work from those
students who have declined to participate; I will review the copies of relevant participating students’ work for use in the study. When the study is complete, the student work that was used will be kept securely for 5 years at UBC, in the office of the Principal Investigator.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Students or parents may withdraw consent at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. All data collected during the study will be retained for analysis. Participation in the study will not affect students’ grades or progress in the class. The identity of all research participants will remain anonymous and confidentiality will be respected.

If you have any further questions or concerns regarding this project, please contact me by email, and, if you like, we can arrange a time to meet.

In closing, I am excited to embark on this study in my English First Peoples class. I believe this research will contribute to improved learning environments for future students, and a rewarding classroom experience for the students in this course.

Sincerely,

Sara Price
MA Candidate in the Faculty of Education
Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy
University of British Columbia 2118 - 2125 Main Mall
Neville Scarfe Building
Vancouver, BC CANADA V6T 1Z4
Appendix A-2: Administration Consent Form

CONSENT FORM – School Administrator

Towards caring: The role of place-based learning in a secondary school English First Peoples class

A study of what stories of learning students tell regarding a First Peoples English course that makes use of place-based methodologies.

Principal Investigator: Don Krug, Ph.D., Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy
Co-investigator: Sara Price, BA, BEd, MA candidate in the Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy

Purpose: The purpose of this research is to develop an understanding of the significance learning in place (that can otherwise be termed place-based learning or place-based methodologies) has for students.

Study Procedures: This consent form applies to the study period taking place between January and June, 2015. Your permission will allow work relating to place, completed by students at Howe Sound as a part of their First Peoples English course, to be photocopied, with names removed and replaced with pseudonyms, and kept for analysis after the course is complete. The students will not be named anywhere in the study, nor will any identifying characteristics be included. Students’ work will be used solely for the purposes of better understanding what significance connecting class work to place has for them.

Risks: By taking part in this research the privacy of your students and your school will be protected according to SD48 security policy. To help ensure data remains confidential, no identifying information or names will appear in any document, file or report about this research. All documents and files will be identified by code number and kept for five years securely in the Principal Investigator’s office.

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Potential Benefits: Students are likely to learn from having this study conducted in this class and by having their learning connected to the place in which they live and to their own interests, which, as evidenced by other studies done in this field, is likely to result in more meaningful learning experiences. Wider benefits include the contribution this research will make to professional practitioners, policy-makers, and researchers interested in strengthening secondary education by increasing relevance to students of course content. This study will be used in a Master’s thesis, further contributing to educational research and scholarship in the field.

Contact for information about the study: If you have any questions or you want further information about this study, you may contact Sara Price by email.

Contact for concerns about the rights of research subjects: If you have any concerns about your child’s treatment or rights as a research participant, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at 604-822-8598 or email RSIL@ors.ubc.ca.

Consent: Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and participants may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without jeopardy.

Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records and that you consent for your school to participate in this study.

_____________________________  __________________
Principal’s Signature   Date

_____________________________
Printed Name of Principal signing above

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Appendix A-3: School Board Letter

Towards caring: The role of place-based learning in a secondary school English First Peoples class

Outline of Objectives as They Pertain to SD48 Guidelines and Criteria

Research Purpose

The purpose of this research is to develop an understanding of the significance learning in place (that can otherwise be termed place-based learning or place-based methodologies) has for secondary school students. It will help teachers to understand whether, and if so, how, place-based learning can improve education.

Introductory Statement

This research proposal is submitted by the principal investigator, Dr. Don H. Krug, from the Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy, in the Faculty of Education, at the University of British Columbia. He is joined in this research by co-investigator Sara Price, Dr. Krug’s Master’s student, from the same department.

Certificate of Approval

This research proposal will be followed by a Certificate of Approval from the Behavioural Research Ethics Board in the Office of Research Services at the University of British Columbia as soon as possible (estimated date is mid-December). No research will begin until this certificate has been forwarded to SD48.

Completed Proposal Packages

This submission package contains a summary of research tasks, a complete collection of Letters of Invitation and Consent Forms, as well as an Assent Form.

Disclosure of Personal Information

This research will not be collecting personal information from the District’s possession. It does not seek access to student, teacher or administrator files.

Abstract of Completed Report

An abstract of the completed report will be sent to both the Superintendent of Sea to Sky School District and Howe Sound Secondary School’s Principal.

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Care Has Been Taken

Care has been taken to ensure no contentious or personal topic that may be considered an invasion of privacy by students or parent/guardians will be studied. There will be no demands on the time of students as a result of this study.

Option of Not Participating

All students have the option of not participating, or of removing themselves at any time from this study. This decision will in no way affect students’ grades or the benefits they receive from having the study conducted in their class.

Parent/guardian Permissions

Letters of Invitation and Consent Forms are attached to inform parents/guardians of this research study. In addition, an Assent Form is included for students who will be affected by the presence of research activities in their classroom. All students in this class are English speaking, so translations will not be necessary.

Administrator Permissions

Letter of Invitation and Consent Form for the principal are included in this package.

Anonymity/Confidentiality

Students’ names will not appear anywhere within the research findings, and protocols to protect their confidentiality are in place.

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LETTER OF INVITATION – Parents / Guardians

Towards caring: The role of place-based learning in a secondary school English First Peoples class

A study of what stories of learning students tell regarding a First Peoples English course that makes use of place-based methodologies.

Principal Investigator: Don Krug, Ph.D., Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy
Co-investigator: Sara Price, BA, BEd, MA candidate in the Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy

Dear Parent or Guardian,

My name is Sara Price. I have been a teacher at Howe Sound Secondary for 11 years, and am currently your child’s English First Peoples teacher. I am also a graduate student at the University of British Columbia (UBC) in the Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy. Don Krug of UBC Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy is the Principal Investigator of this study, and I am the Co-Investigator.

This letter is to invite your child to volunteer in a research project that will take place in his/her class between September 23, 2014 and January 30, 2015. Your permission is sought for this research because work from your child’s English First Peoples 10/11/12 class is the focus of this study. If you choose to allow your child to participate, your permission will allow Dr. Krug and I, after the semester is over, to analyze work that your child has done related to the concept of place in this class. Please note the purpose of this study is to gain better understanding of the significance of bringing discussions around, and experiences with, place into the classroom; it is not about your child in particular, nor will your child be named anywhere in the study.

Your child’s participation in this study will contribute to understanding how inclusion of place-based teaching methodologies affects students’ views of their community, the course material,
their surrounding environment, and their own identities. It will help teachers to understand whether, and if so, how, place-based learning can improve education.

For the period of the study, your child will have an opportunity to learn using place-based methodologies. This opportunity includes having community members as guests in the classroom, visiting surrounding areas as inspiration for writing and/or to understand stories of place, and researching topics that are relevant to the students and places that have meaning to them. Since this is an English class, students will be doing writing in a number of different forms in response to these activities; for the semester of the study, your child’s work relating to place and place-based teaching methodologies will be photocopied, with the name removed and replaced with a pseudonym, and kept until after the course is complete. To ensure that students have no concerns about their marks being affected by the decision of whether or not to participate in the study, this form will be returned to another teacher in the school. I will not see them, nor know who is participating, until after final marks for the course have been submitted. After final marks are submitted, I will dispose of work from those students who have declined to participate; as for those who are participating, I will review the copies of relevant student work for use in the study. When the study is complete, the student work that was used will be kept securely for 5 years at UBC, in the office of the Principal Investigator.

Your child’s participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may withdraw your child at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. All data collected during the study will be retained for analysis. Your child’s participation and all information produced by your child during the study will not be used to mark or evaluate your child’s progress by the teacher. The identity of all research participants will remain anonymous and your confidentiality will be respected.

If you have any further questions or concerns regarding this project, or to request a copy of the research report when it is complete (estimated completion September, 2015), please contact me by email. If you have concerns or questions, we can arrange a time to meet.

In closing, I am excited to embark on this study in our English First Peoples class. I believe this research will contribute to improved learning environments for future students, and a rewarding classroom experience for students in this course.

Sincerely,

Sara Price
MA candidate in the Faculty of Education
Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy
University of British Columbia, 2118 - 2125 Main Mall
Neville Scarfe Building, Vancouver, BC, CANADA V6T 1Z4

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Appendix A-5: Parent Consent Form

CONSENT FORM - Parents/Guardians

Towards caring: The role of place-based learning in a secondary school English First Peoples class

A study of what stories of learning students tell regarding a First Peoples English course that makes use of place-based methodologies.

Principal Investigator: Don Krug, Ph.D., Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy

Co-Investigator: Sara Price, Master of Arts Candidate, Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy

Purpose: The purpose of this research is to develop an understanding of the significance learning in place, or what can otherwise be termed place-based learning or place-based methodologies, has for students.

Study Procedures: This consent form applies to the study period taking place between September 23, 2014 and January 30, 2015. Your permission will allow your child’s work relating to place, completed as a part of his/her First Peoples English course, to be photocopied and analyzed after the course is complete. In the photocopying of student work for research purposes, names will be removed on the copies and replaced with pseudonyms so as to protect students’ privacy. Your child will not be named anywhere in the study, nor will identifying characteristics be included. Your child’s work will be used solely for the purposes of better understanding what significance connecting class work to place has for students.

Risks: By taking part in this research your child’s privacy will be protected in accordance with SD48 policy. To help ensure information collected for the study remains confidential, no identifying information or names will appear in any documents, files, or

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reports about this research. In the photocopying of student work for research purposes, names will be removed on the copies and replaced with pseudonyms. All documents and files will be identified by code number and kept for five years securely in the Principal Investigator’s office.

**Potential Benefits:** Your child is likely to learn from having this study conducted in this class and by having their learning connected to the place in which they live and to their own interests, which, as evidenced by other studies done in this field, is likely to encourage more meaningful learning experiences for your child. Wider benefits include the contribution this research will make to professional practitioners, policy-makers, and researchers interested in strengthening secondary education by increasing relevance to students of course content. This study will be used in a Master’s thesis, further contributing to educational research and scholarship in the field.

**Contact for information about the study:** If you have any questions or you want further information about this study, you may contact Sara Price by email.

**Contact for concerns about the rights of research subjects:** If you have any concerns about your child’s treatment or rights as a research participant, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at 604-822-8598 or email RSIL@ors.ubc.ca.

**Consent:** Your child’s participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you or your child may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without jeopardy.

Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.

Your signature indicates that you consent to have your child participate in this study.

_______________________________________________________
Participant Parent or Guardian Signature Date

_______________________________________________________
Printed Name of Participant Parent or Guardian signing above

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Appendix A-6: Student Assent Form

ASSENT FORM – Students

Towards caring: The role of place-based learning in a secondary school English First Peoples class

Principal Investigator: Don Krug, Ph.D., Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy

Co-Investigator: Sara Price, Master of Arts Candidate, Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy

We are asking you to take part in this study because we are trying to learn more about connecting teaching and learning to the place- the landscape and community- in which you live, and to your own interests and experiences.

If you agree to let us do this study using your work, you will allow me to look at assignments you’ve done in relation to place in this class, after the course is complete. I will not know whether or not you are participating until after your final marks in the course are submitted. I don’t want you to feel pressure to participate if you don’t want to. If you do decide to participate, I will look at photocopies of your class work in order to better understand what significance, if any, connecting our class activities to place had for you. Your name will be removed from the work when it is photocopied, in order to make sure that it is anonymous.

Your participation in the study will NOT affect your mark or workload in the class in any way.

Signing this form will allow me to use your class work to gain a better understanding of place-based learning in secondary school classrooms.

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I encourage you to talk this over with your parents or guardian before you decide whether or not to participate. We will also ask your parents or guardian to give their permission to allow you take part in this study. Even if your parents or guardian say “yes”, you can still decide not to do this.

If you don’t want to be in this study, you don’t have to participate. Remember, being in this study is up to you. You have no obligation to participate, and are welcome at any time to change your mind later and withdraw your permission for us to use your work in the study.

Please ask any questions that you have about the study. If you have a question later that you didn’t think of now, you can ask me at any time.

If you would like to see a copy of the study when it is complete, you can contact me by email to let me know. It will likely be completed by the beginning of next school year (September 2015).

Signing your name at the bottom means that you agree to be in this study. You and your parents or guardian will be given a copy of this form after you have signed it.

________________________________________
Name of Child (please print)

________________________________________  __________
Signature of Child  Date

________________________________________  __________
Signature of Investigator or Designee  Date

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Appendix B: Assignment Outlines
Appendix B-1: Chief Brainstorm
Appendix B-2: Chief Project

Chief Project (Place/Storytelling) Name________________
EFP 10/11/12
Ms. Price

To prepare for this project, you should have already done a number of things:
1. completed the reflection handout on the idea of “place”;
2. heard a Skwxwu7mesh (Squamish Nation) story of The Stawamus Chief;
3. recorded your own knowledge and experience of the Chief;
4. learned about local issues and priorities different groups have related to The Chief (through your comparison/contrast chart);
5. experienced this place yourself, through hiking, climbing, or observing it.

Your task now is to synthesize these different stories of and experiences with The Chief in a piece of writing or visual representation.

You can approach this task in any number of ways. Here are some possibilities:
1. Write a poem that expresses what you have learned about the place and how you feel about it.
2. Write an essay discussing local issues to do with the Chief.
3. Write a short story about this place. The story must include themes or events that relate to what you have learned about the place. The story could be a narrative of your own experience, so long as it also connects with issues we discussed and/or the story we learned in class.
4. Create a work of art that expresses what you know/feel about the Chief.
5. Make a short documentary film or commercial about the Chief. Include its significance to local people of different backgrounds, including Skwuxwu7mesh, in the film.
6. Other ideas? See me.

Whatever you do for this project, it must meet the criteria outlined in the marking rubric on the other side of this page. Make sure to read through it carefully before you begin!

*Note: there is no class presentation for this project. “Presentation” in the rubric refers to visual presentation of the work.

OVER...
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Rubric: Chief Project</th>
<th>9-10</th>
<th>7-8</th>
<th>5-6</th>
<th>1-4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Synthesis of ideas</strong></td>
<td>Ideas from many or all aspects of our learning about this place are synthesized in the project. Synthesis is insightful.</td>
<td>Ideas from many aspects of our learning about this place are synthesized in this project.</td>
<td>Ideas from at least two aspects of our learning about this place are included in this project. May not synthesize ideas.</td>
<td>Ideas may be included from only one aspect of our learning about this place; no synthesis between ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Understanding of local place</strong></td>
<td>Thorough understanding on an interpretive level of many aspects of the local place. Student draws on personal experience and/or opinion, as well as information from class.</td>
<td>Clear understanding of many aspects of the local place. Student draws on both personal experience and/or opinion, as well as information from class.</td>
<td>Some understanding of aspects of the local place. Students may draw only on personal experience and/or opinion OR information from class, or the information may be presented in a way that is unclear or seriously lacks depth.</td>
<td>Little understanding of local place is shown on either a personal or informational level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Creativity</strong></td>
<td>Project is unique. Creativity is used effectively to express student’s ideas.</td>
<td>Project is original. Creativity is used to express student’s ideas.</td>
<td>Project may be somewhat expected, or creativity is used less effectively to express student’s ideas.</td>
<td>Very little or no creativity shown, or creativity doesn’t effectively express student’s ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Presentation and Medium (poem, artwork, story, essay, etc.)</strong></td>
<td>Student has chosen a medium that expresses his/her ideas in an interesting, engaging way.</td>
<td>Student has chosen a medium that expresses his/her ideas in an interesting, engaging way.</td>
<td>Medium effectively conveys ideas, but may appear to have little thought put in, or be chosen for simplicity’s sake.</td>
<td>Medium is not used effectively or project seems to have little effort put in.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B-3: Inspirational Person Project

Inspirational Person Research Project
EFP 10/11/12
S. Price

For this project, you are going to choose an Indigenous person who has positive influence on his/her community, or who has achieved or is working towards positive change. This positive influence might be on a small or large scale. Your task is to find out more about this person and how they make, or plan to make, positive change.

This may be someone you know, or someone you know of, or someone who is famous or well-known. In some cases, we may be able to find contact information for the person you wish to research if they live in BC so that you can get first-hand information.

1. Create your research plan.

2. Develop questions to investigate about your subject (the second part of your research plan). These might change as you learn more about your subject.

You will need to change these questions in order to fit your own curiosity and the person you are researching, but here are some areas you could look into:

- Where did he/she come from? What is his/her background?
- What inspires him/her?
- In what does he/she believe? About what is he/she passionate?
- What are his/her biggest accomplishments or most important achievements?
- What are some struggles or challenges he/she has faced? What has she/he learned from these struggles?
- How is he/she working towards positive change?
- What impact has he/she or his/her work had on others?

3. Once you have done your investigation, figure out what you have gained from learning about this person, and incorporate this into your presentation.

4. Presenting the story of this person’s life/achievements to the class. How you do so is up to you. Some options are…

- An electronic presentation format, like PowerPoint or Prezi
- An oral presentation. If you do this, please print off at least one image of your person, or an example of his or her work, to show the class.
- A poster or other type of visual image, which you explain to the class.
- If you are choosing someone you know, or who lives in Squamish, you could do an interview, and either record a video of the interview and show it to the class, or invite the person to our classroom and do a live interview. PLEASE let me know if you are inviting a guest!

OVER>>>>>
Here are some people you could research. This list is not exhaustive! Feel free to choose someone not on this list.

Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun (Canadian political activist artist)
Bill Reid (Haida artist)
Roy Henry Vickers (Tofino artist)
Elle-Maija Tailfeathers (filmmaker, Indigenous women’s rights activist)
Jesse Gouchey (Graffiti artist)
Banchi Hanuse (Bella Coola filmmaker)
Takaiya Blaney (youth singer and activist)
Jerilyn Webster (JB The First Lady- Hip Hop artist, Idle No More activist)
Beat Nation artists (many different Canadian Hip Hop artists- choose one)
A Tribe Called Red (Electronic music)
Kinnie Starr (BC singer/songwriter/hip-hop artist)
Drew Hayden Taylor (Canadian author, playwright, journalist)
Richard Wagamese (Canadian author, journalist)
Joseph Boyden (Canadian author)
Lee Maracle (poet/author/activist, granddaughter of Chief Dan George)
Eden Robinson (Canadian author)
Beatrice Culleton Mosoinier (Canadian author)
Thomas King (Canadian writer)
Gregory Cajete (American advocate for Indigenous education)
Chief Dan George (North Vancouver poet/author/actor, 1899-1981)
Nina Wilson, Sylvia McAdam, Jessica Gordon & Sheelah McLean (Idle No More movement founders)
Thomas Vincent Ramos (Belizean civil rights activist)
E. Pauline Johnson (Vancouver dancer/actor/poet/activist, 1861-1913)
Chief Seattle (1786-1866)
Chief Theresa Spence (hunger strike for her people of Attawapiskat, N. Ont.)

Turn over the page for the Assessment Rubric…
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research and Information</th>
<th>9-10</th>
<th>7-8</th>
<th>5-6</th>
<th>1-4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information is interesting, thorough and in depth. Research questions are interesting and open-ended.</td>
<td>Information is thorough. Research questions are open-ended and encourage inquiry.</td>
<td>Information is accurate, but less thorough. Presentation may be brief. Research questions are appropriate, but some may not be open-ended.</td>
<td>Information is very brief or may have inaccuracies. Research questions may not be open-ended.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Connection to Inspirational Person</th>
<th>9-10</th>
<th>7-8</th>
<th>5-6</th>
<th>1-4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student clearly explains why the person is inspirational and how learning about him/her affected the student personally.</td>
<td>Student explains why the person is inspirational and gives an idea of how learning about him/her affected the student.</td>
<td>Student explains why the person is inspirational. May not explain clearly how the research affected the student, or this may only be implied.</td>
<td>Mentions what the person does that is inspirational, but doesn’t mention or suggest how it affects the student.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization and Preparation</th>
<th>9-10</th>
<th>7-8</th>
<th>5-6</th>
<th>1-4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presentation is well-organized and students are well-prepared.</td>
<td>Presentation is organized and students are adequately prepared.</td>
<td>Presentation is somewhat less organized or students seem less prepared.</td>
<td>Unorganized material or presentation seems to be thrown together.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Presentation Skills</th>
<th>9-10</th>
<th>7-8</th>
<th>5-6</th>
<th>1-4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students speak clearly, and at an appropriate volume, facing audience. Presentation is done in an appropriate manner for class.</td>
<td>Students speak clearly, usually professionally, at an appropriate volume and facing audience. Presentation is done in an appropriate manner for class.</td>
<td>Students may speak very quietly or often turn away from audience, or discuss amongst one another during the presentation.</td>
<td>May be difficult to understand presentation, or presentation may be very disorganized.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B-4: Final Inquiry Project

Inquiry Project
FN 10/11/12
S. Price

Your task is to take a close look at an issue or event in a specific community that relates to Indigenous people. This might be your own community or school, or another community in BC, Canada, or the world. In order to delve into the issue, you will create a set of questions that will help you to narrow the focus of your project. This is called inquiry.

If you like, you may use the articles we looked at in class as a starting point, and do further research into the issue on which the article focuses.

Follow these steps:

2. Choose an issue or event that interests you and you feel is important for others to know about or understand. You may want to look at problems that arise from colonization (or neocolonialism: the practice of using capitalism, business globalization, and cultural colonization to influence a country) in a specific place. The issue or event might also be about solving these problems.

3. Base your research on the set of inquiry questions you've developed following the instructions below (Inquiry Process).

4. Use a minimum of three different resources. These resources can be people you know, or people you can reach by phone, or internet/book-based.

5. Keep track of the sources of your research, and include them in your work in the form of a Works Cited list (see attached page).

6. Figure out how you will share your results with your classmates, AS WELL AS the school and/or our community. This project must involve some sort of "public" sharing.

Ideas for sharing:
- Create a website, to be linked to our school website
- Make a poster to put up in the school library
- Create a Prezi or PowerPoint to be made available on the school and school district websites
- Create a lesson to teach to another class at our school or at Squamish Elementary
- Write a play, song, speech, or other performance piece to share with another class
- Create an app or a game that teaches people about the issue
- Write an article for the school paper. Include at least one picture, with its source.
- Other ideas? See me.

Inquiry Process

1. **Come up with an inquiry topic** that meets the criteria above. You are going to spend the next week working on this, so come up with something you find interesting!

2. **Formulate open-ended research questions** around that topic. Create three to four specific questions.

3. **Do the research** necessary to answer your questions to the best of your ability. Not all questions will have a clear answer. If that’s the case, simply explain what you have learned and why the answer is unclear. (E.g. perhaps there are many different perspectives.)

4. Keep track of ALL of your sources, and **formulate a Works Cited list using EasyBib.com** (see instructions on attached page).

5. **Create a creative presentation** in which to share your research.
Sample Topic: Resource extraction in the Amazon

Focus Questions:

1. What kinds of resources are extracted in the Amazon, and what processes are used to extract them?
2. What countries or companies want to extract these resources, and why?
3. What is the impact of this resource extraction on local Indigenous people in the Amazon?
4. What do local Indigenous people think about the companies being on their land?
5. What has the reaction of the Peruvian and Ecuadorian governments been

*HINT: Open-ended means that a question that has a one word, yes/no, or very brief answer. These are not good enough for inquiry; instead, your responses should take some time, thought, and effort to answer! For example, instead of the question, “What kinds of resources are extracted in the Amazon?” which only takes a few words to answer, I added “what processes are used to extract them?” to make it more open-ended.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Excellent (9-10)</th>
<th>Good (7-8)</th>
<th>Satisfactory (5-6)</th>
<th>Poor (1-4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>Research time was consistently used well; research is thorough, interesting, and well-organized.</td>
<td>Research time was usually used well; adequate research has been done. Research is organized.</td>
<td>Research time was at times used poorly; some research has been done, but may be less organized or lack depth.</td>
<td>Research time was used poorly; little research done.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding of Topic</td>
<td>Deep understanding of the topic is clearly shown. Much evidence is provided. Sophisticated connections are made between ideas.</td>
<td>Understanding of topic is clear. Evidence is given for ideas. Logical connections are made between ideas.</td>
<td>Little depth of understanding. Some support is given for ideas, but support may be meager or unclear.</td>
<td>Topic partially misunderstood or very little support given for ideas. Disorganized or illogical connections between ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>Professional presentation. Student is well-prepared, speaks clearly and with enthusiasm, and faces audience.</td>
<td>Solid presentation. Student is prepared, speaks clearly, and usually faces audience.</td>
<td>Done presentation, but little effort appears to have been put into preparing the presentation. May be difficult to hear student.</td>
<td>Presentation appears to be rushed or thrown together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>Research questions are clearly articulated. There are at least three focus questions which clearly focus the ideas.</td>
<td>Research questions are clear. There are at least three focus questions which focus the ideas in the overarching question.</td>
<td>Research questions are completed, but may be either too broad or too narrow, or the focus questions may be too few.</td>
<td>Research questions are absent, unfocused, or don’t relate to research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sources</td>
<td>Sources are included in an MLA style Works Cited list. There are three or more different reliable sources used.</td>
<td>Sources are included in a bibliography; may not be formatted according to MLA. At least three sources used.</td>
<td>Three sources are included, but may not be formatted in a bibliography, or may not be as reliable.</td>
<td>Source information is missing, unclear, or incomplete, or only one-two sources used.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Choosing your research sources…
It is important to make sure your sources are reliable!

DO…

- Use a MINIMUM of THREE different sources for your research (see marking rubric below).
- Make sure your sources are reliable. Use people who are knowledgeable about the topic, and electronic sources with a clear website title, publisher, date and author if possible. Government agencies and educational institutions are also good sources, as are published articles and books.
- Be aware of bias when using corporate websites. Publishers may have their own agenda.
- Keep track of all information from your sources. This way you can cite them easily.
- Cite your sources using MLA style- use EasyBib.com to help you do this properly.
- Start with Wikipedia. Wikipedia is a great place to start. Spend some time searching for keywords related to your topic, browsing the links on each page, and following suggested resources. Take notes, especially of good sources they recommend. By the time you get ready to write, though, you should have better sources than Wikipedia.

DON’T

- Use blogs, social media websites, etc. It is too difficult to know where information is coming from.
- Use ONLY Wikipedia. It is a good place to start, but as it can be edited by anyone, is no good on its own.
- Use sites that don’t have an author, publisher, etc.
- Use fewer than three sources.

CREATING A WORKS CITED LIST

- Keep track of ALL sources, whether human, electronic, or book, in your presentation or on a spare piece of paper that you will not lose.
- When you have all the sources you need (at the end of your project) go to EasyBib.com.
- When you are on the EasyBib home page, you will check to see what type of source (it defaults to Website), and enter all relevant information about the source. For a website, you might be able to just enter the website and have EasyBib come up with all the rest (except access date, which is simply the date that you looked at the website). If it doesn’t recognize the URL, you will have to separately enter author, title of article, website title, etc. If you are using a real-life person as a resource, go to “All 59 options” and click on “Interview.” Enter relevant information.
- After each new citation (each new source you enter), click “Continue” (if necessary) and then “Create Citation.” You can enter the next source right away, and do the same, until you have entered them all.
- When you have entered all of your sources, click, “Export” then “Print as Word Document.” Save the document, then copy and paste it from word into your presentation, create a link to the document in a website, or print it for use in a poster, lesson, or performance piece (just give it to me in case of a performance piece.)
Appendix B-5: Changemaker Project (2015)

Changemaker Project  Name________________________
EFP 10/11/12
S. Price

This year, we have been focusing on the ideas of colonization, colonialism, identity, prejudice, and cultural appropriation. Your task is to look at how these issues are manifested in the “real world.” Your task, in a nutshell, is as follows:

1. Choose a specific situation that relates to one or more of these issues.
2. Research the situation. Find out as much as you can about it. KEEP TRACK OF ALL SOURCES!
3. Do something to influence change or bring awareness to this issue. It might be in the form of writing a letter to someone or to a newspaper, preparing a Voicethread, video, work of art, or poster to share in the school or with the public, or even creating a presentation to a group like our school board or staff or another group.
4. Create a bibliography of the sources you used in your research. Depending on the type of sharing, you may also need to include this on your poster/in your letter/etc.
5. Share your work with the class during a sharing circle. At this time, you will also hand in a bibliography of the sources you used, and this booklet (with your planning sheet and self-evaluation completed).

The issue could be in our community or elsewhere in BC, Canada, or the world. The topic you choose should be one with which you feel a connection, or one that you believe is important.

Anytime you are doing research in this class, you must…

- Use a minimum of three different sources in your research. Included in your sources could be books, magazines, newspapers, real people (e.g. through interviews or conversation in person, or e-mailed question and answer), radio programs, documentaries, web-based resources, or even your own experience.
- Cite your sources! Whether these are real people, articles from the internet, or books, you MUST create a bibliography that has ALL of your sources listed on it.

Ideally, you will already have an idea in mind! If not, feel free to peruse the ideas listed below.

Canada and North America
- Woodfiber LNG plant proposal, Squamish, BC, Canada
- Pipeline proposals (Northern Gateway, Keystone XL, Trans-Mountain…), Canada/USA
- Attawapiskat community housing crisis, Ontario, Canada
- Attempted erasure and assimilation of Sinixt (Arrow Lakes) people, BC, Canada
- Appropriation of Indigenous names in professional sports
- Appropriation of Indigenous traditional clothing in fashion
- Site C BC Hydro Dam proposal, BC, Canada
- Effects of the Indian Act on Canadian First Nations people
- Treatment of Indigenous people in Mexico
- Canada’s Supreme Court ruling over Tsilhqot’in land rights
- Creation, rise, and influence of Idle No More Movement, Canada
• Missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada
• The “Sixties Scoop” (the issue of Indigenous children being taken from their families and adopted or fostered by non-Indigenous families)

South and Central America
• Resource extraction on Indigenous lands in Peru, South America
• Effects of Genetically Modified (GMO) corn on Indigenous farming
• Ban of GMO foods in Peru
• Treatment of Quechua people by Mestizo population in Peru, South America

Africa and Asia
• Educational reform in Indigenous communities in Ladakh, India (see Schooling the World website)
• Mining of Rare Earth Minerals in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Africa
• Treatment of Pygmy people in Democratic Republic of the Congo, Africa

Self-Evaluation: CIRCLE the area that best suits the work you have done and hand this completed booklet in to me on project sharing day.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Excellent (9-10)</th>
<th>Good (7-8)</th>
<th>Satisfactory (5-6)</th>
<th>Poor (1-4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research (10)</td>
<td>Research time was consistently used well; research is thorough, interesting, and well-organized.</td>
<td>Research time was usually used well; adequate research has been done. Research is organized.</td>
<td>Research time was at times used poorly; some research has been done, but may be less organized or lack depth.</td>
<td>Research time was used poorly; little research done.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding of Topic (10)</td>
<td>Deep understanding of the topic is clearly shown. Much evidence is provided. Sophisticated connections are made between ideas.</td>
<td>Understanding of topic is clear. Evidence is given for ideas. Logical connections are made between ideas.</td>
<td>Little depth of understanding. Some support is given for ideas, but support may be meager or unclear.</td>
<td>Topic partially misunderstood or very little support given for ideas. Disorganized or illogical connections between ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation and Sharing (10)</td>
<td>Student has chosen an appropriate and effective method of sharing with the target audience, and has followed through on connecting with audience. The information is shared in a manner that is interesting and engaging.</td>
<td>Student has chosen an appropriate and effective method of sharing with the target audience, and has followed through on connecting with audience. The information shared is usually interesting and engaging.</td>
<td>Done presentation, but little effort appears to have been put into preparing the presentation. It may seem that the information isn’t effectively communicated, or doesn’t reach the target audience.</td>
<td>Presentation appears to be rushed or thrown together, or is not shared with an audience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sources (5)</td>
<td>Sources are included in MLA style Works Cited list. There are more than three different reliable sources used.</td>
<td>Sources are included in a bibliography; may not be formatted according to MLA. At least three sources used.</td>
<td>Sources are included, but may not be formatted in a bibliography, or only 2-3 sources are listed.</td>
<td>Source information is missing, unclear, or incomplete, or only one source is used.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prep work (5)</td>
<td>Student consistently uses class time well and completes all aspects of planning/assessment work.</td>
<td>Student usually uses class time well and completes planning/assessment work.</td>
<td>Student’s use of class time is inconsistent and/or planning/assessment work is incomplete.</td>
<td>Student rarely focuses in class time and does not complete planning work.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. Why am I doing this? Why does it matter (in the world, in our community, to me)? Why should anyone else care?

2. What is the overall goal of my group (if applicable)?

3. What are my individual goals?

4. How will I know if I/we achieve my/our goals?

5. What are the steps I need to take to achieve these goals?
   a) What do I need to plan to do each work day (be as specific as you can—instead of writing “research” write what you will research and how, if possible)? *(You can change these if necessary, but it helps to have a timeline to help focus your work.)*

   Monday: **Complete the planning process (this sheet!)**

   Tuesday:

   Wednesday:

   Thursday:
Friday:

b) Where am I likely to get stuck in this process? What am I likely to find difficult?

c) What can I do, and/or who can help me to get past these obstacles?

(Keep this sheet to help focus your work, and then hand it in on project sharing day.)
Earth Week Research Project

There are three options for this project.

Option 1: Come up with a question or two inspired by one of the articles we read in class that you would be interested in researching further. An example for “Coffee” might be What is the life of a coffee farmer like? For “Blue Gold” one could be, What is the state of water sales in Canada today? For “Our Oceans…” it might be, How much has the amount of plastic in the ocean changed in the past 10 years? What affect does this have on ecosystems?

Option 2: Think about an environmental issue you would like to know more about in our local school, land or community. Design your own primary research project in order to better understand this issue. (Primary research means that you are designing research questions that may not have been asked [or not to this group or in this way] and finding the answers by, for example, interviewing people, using on-line surveys, conducting garbage audits, contacting Carney’s or the school board for stats…).

Option 3: Consider what you think the most important issues are today. Come up with a detailed and specific plan that could help to address this issue on a local, national, or global level.

I have chosen topic #____.

1. Do as much research as you need to do to adequately answer your question(s).
2. FIND or WRITE a short arts-based piece (poem, song, novel/essay excerpt, movie clip, Youtube video, visual artwork…) that relates to what you learned.
3. Figure out what relevance your research has (why it’s important, how it might result in positive change, either your own or others’).
4. KEEP TRACK OF YOUR SOURCES! Create a formal bibliography that includes all of the resources you used (make sure to use a minimum of three different sources). You might want to use Easybib.com for this.
5. Create a presentation to share what you learned, and incorporate your creative piece in this presentation. You will share this with the class (and probably a school administrator and/or board member). Your presentation can be informal, but make sure you convey your information clearly.

*This project is designed to be done individually, but with the second two options a partner or two might strengthen your ability to be successful. Therefore, if you would like to work with one or more other people, please talk to me and justify this choice. For the first option, you may work with a partner if you choose multiple closely-related research questions (i.e. each person is still responsible for his/her own research, but the project would be created and presented together).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Excellent (9-10)</th>
<th>Good (7-8)</th>
<th>Satisfactory (5-6)</th>
<th>Poor (1-4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research and/or Action Plan</td>
<td>Research time was consistently used well; research is thorough, interesting, and well-organized. Shows a clear understanding of the complexity of the issue. If students have formulated an action plan, plan is clear, specific, and realistic.</td>
<td>Research time was usually used well; adequate research has been done. Research is organized. Shows an understanding of some complexities of the issue. If students have formulated an action plan, plan is clear, but may be somewhat less realistic or specific.</td>
<td>Research time was at times used poorly; some research has been done, but may lack depth. May show a lack of understanding of the complexities of the issue. If students have formulated an action plan, plan exists, but may be somewhat less clear or realistic.</td>
<td>Research time was used poorly; little research done. Inadequate understanding of issue is shown.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts-based Piece</td>
<td>Arts element adds to presentation through increased interest, learning, and creativity.</td>
<td>Arts element adds to presentation through increased interest, learning, or creativity.</td>
<td>Arts element minimally adds to the presentation through increased interest, learning, or creativity.</td>
<td>Arts piece missing, difficult to understand, or disconnected from rest of project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding of Topic</td>
<td>Deep understanding of the topic is clearly shown. Much evidence/information is presented. Sophisticated connections are made between ideas.</td>
<td>Understanding of topic is clear. Adequate evidence/information is presented. Logical connections are made between ideas.</td>
<td>Some understanding of topic is shown. Understanding may be unsupported, lack depth, or be confusing or inaccurate at times. Support is given for ideas, but support may be meager or unclear.</td>
<td>Topic is misunderstood or very little support is given for ideas. Disorganized or illogical connections between ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>Professional presentation. Student is well-prepared. He/she clearly conveys information, speaks clearly with enthusiasm, and faces audience.</td>
<td>Solid presentation. Student is prepared. Student conveys information, and usually speaks clearly and faces audience.</td>
<td>Adequate presentation. Some information may not come across clearly, or presentation may be very brief. May be difficult to hear or understand student, or student may seem less organized. Presentation may be brief.</td>
<td>Unacceptable presentation. Appears to be rushed or thrown together, or is much too brief.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sources</td>
<td>More than three different reliable sources are included in MLA style Works Cited list.</td>
<td>Sources are included in a bibliography; may not be formatted according to MLA. At least three sources.</td>
<td>Sources are included, but may not be formatted in a bibliography, or only 2-3 sources are listed.</td>
<td>Source information is missing, unclear, or incomplete, or only one source is used.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**DO…**

- Use a MINIMUM of THREE different sources for your research (see marking rubric below).
- Make sure your sources are reliable. Use sources with a clear website title, publisher, date and author if possible. Government agencies and educational institutions are also good sources.
- Be aware of bias when using corporate websites. Publishers may have their own agenda.
- Keep track of all information from your sources. This way you can cite them easily.
- Cite your sources using MLA style- use EasyBib.com to help you do this properly.

**Start with Wikipedia.** Wikipedia is a great place to start. Spend some time searching for keywords related to your topic, browsing the links on each page, and following suggested resources. Take notes, especially of good sources they recommend. By the time you are ready to write, have better sources than Wikipedia!

**DON’T**

- Use ONLY blogs, social media websites, etc. It is too difficult to know where information is coming from.
- Use ONLY Wikipedia. It is a good place to start, but as it can be edited by anyone, is no good on its own.
- Use sites that don’t have an author, publisher, etc.
- Use fewer than three sources.
Appendix B-7: Thinking about Place

Thinking about PLACE
Name________________
EFP 10/11/12
Ms. Price

Think about each question below and answer as best you can. You may write in point form if you like.

1. What does the word place mean to you? Is it just a specific location? Or does it have other meaning?
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

2. It is likely that your mood—how you feel or what you want to do—is affected by where you are (e.g. in the forest, in the classroom, in your home, in Squamish, in a city, by the ocean...). Give examples of places where you feel comfortable and usually have positive emotions, and where you feel uncomfortable or have negative emotions. Circle either “positive” or “negative” for i, ii, and iii below, and then describe a place that fits that description and why you think it has that effect on you.

Positive/Negative Place
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

Positive/Negative Place
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

Positive/Negative Place
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

3. Do you think the idea of place has any special significance in a course focusing on First Peoples? Explain why or why not.
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
4. We have been lucky enough to have Charlene Williams, a member of our local community, present to our class - on residential schools and then again on storytelling. Did having the presentation from someone in Squamish with personal experience in these areas affect how/how much you learned from it, do you think? Explain.

5. Part of being connected to place is being connected to the community. If you were to share something you learned in this class with a wider community - other students/teachers in our school, or elementary school classes, or the community of Squamish - how do you think you might go about doing it?
Appendix B-8: Course Assessment/Understanding

Course Assessment/Understanding

1. In this course, I have tried to connect your learning with your own experiences and/or the place in which we live. Examples are...
   - Inspirational Person Project,
   - Charlene Williams’ talks,
   - Event that Impacted My Life writing assignment,
   - Chief project,
   - novel study journals, and
   - final project- either Sharing What Matters or Contemporary Issues.

   a) Which of the assignments listed above did you enjoy the most?
   ___________________________________________________________________________

   b) What made you enjoy this more than the other projects, do you think?
   ___________________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________________
   _____________________________________________________

2. I hope to keep teaching this class next year and in years beyond, and I want to continue to improve it for future students. What do you think would improve the class or my teaching?
   ___________________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________________
   _____________________________________________________

3. What is the most interesting or important thing that we talked about in class this term, in your opinion, and why?
   ___________________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________________
   _____________________________________________________

4. Any other comments?
   ___________________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________________
   _____________________________________________________

Thank you for taking the time to answer these questions!
Appendix C: Samples of Student Work
Appendix C-1: “I am Native, and I am Proud of It.”

I am Native, and I am proud of it.

My name is Eva, I’m 18 years old, and hiking the Chief changed my life. When I was five years old, my parents died in a car accident, so my grandparents raised me. My whole family is Native, and for 17 years I thought being Native was a bad thing, I didn’t believe. I hated it, I wanted to be “normal”, but now I have learned to be proud of it, I’m proud to be Native.

My parents loved the Chief, it was their “holy” place, I never understood why. But every year on my birthday I hike the Chief. I bring a picture of them, sit on top of the Chief and try to remember. It’s easy to forget, that’s why I think it’s important to take time to remember both the good and the bad thing.

Turning 18 is a big thing in my community; it’s the day you can call yourself a grown up, and it was hard for me, celebrating that day without my parents. So I did as I usually do on my birthday, first I go to visit their tombstone. They share a beautiful tombstone. Their names are engraved with gold, and on the top of the stone there are two ravens. My mom always told me that the raven is thought to provide long-distance healing, so I think they fit perfectly on top of their tombstone.

After visiting their grave, I pack a lunch, bring a small photo album and start hiking. Since I am Native, I’m supposed to love mother earth, that’s what my grandparents told me to do. Appreciate everything around you, and be grateful for it. I liked to defy the rules. I could not care less of what my grandparents told me to do. Halfway there I ate my granola bar, and tossed the paper behind a tree, out of sight, out of mind, I usually told myself. I kept walking until I came to the second peak. I sat down and found the photo album in my backpack.

It was a beautiful day, windless and no clouds. All of a sudden, dark clouds were covering the sky, and a strong wind came with it. I almost got scared the wind would blow me off the mountain since it was so strong. I started to pack up my stuff so I could head down, but then this light started shining around me and over a dozen ravens circled me. The weird thing was that I was not scared. There was something about those ravens that I did not find scary at all, I felt some sort of comfort. Then I heard something, someone was whispering to me, but I was all alone. I tried to capture what the voices were saying, but all I heard was mumbling. Then everything stopped.

The ravens landed in a circle around me, the wind stopped blowing, and the whispering got quiet. Then these shadows came out of the sky and started talking to me. They told me stories about being Native, our nature and about our ancestors. They got me to appreciate the fact that I’m Native, and that that’s something to be proud of. I felt bad for everything I had done to harm our beautiful nature, and after that day I never tossed anything on the grown – ever. Before they left, and everything went back to normal, they said something I’m always going to wonder about. They said, “Good bye our dearest Eva, remember, the raven will always protect you.” That’s something my mom used to tell me, she used to tell me stories about how the raven is always there, and will heal every wound. I don’t know if the two shadows were my parents or something else. Guess I’ll never find out.
The Hidden Lessons

The Skwuxwu7mesh people have a variety of stories. They have stories that are funny and are not likely to have actually taken place in history that are for children. They also have stories that are very serious and are only shared with family and the people in the community. There are a lot of stories that are told to children and adults. Many of these stories have lessons within them. But the person who is telling the story will not tell the listeners what the meaning is because there are many different lessons in a story and many things to be taken from it. I have heard many storytellers say that “I have never thought about that before” after they have asked “what did you guys take from that story” or “what do you guys a think the lesson behind that story is”. For example there are a lot of stories about Raven, the trickster, in our stories he has done a lot, he brought us the sun and the rain and many other things. But he is very pompous and he is really silly and is very sneaky. These stories are for laughter but there also many lessons in these stories, they teach us that the bad things that raven does are funny and teaches us that if we do these things or act like him they will be laughed at or made fun of. There also good teachings in these stories, they teach us how not to be. They also teach us that nobody is perfect and that everyone makes mistakes, but you just need to learn from them.

The stories in First Nations cultures are the people’s way of teaching their values, culture, history, and their way of life. But not all stories are shared outside the community or outside of families. This could be because they are sacred, they may be stories about our history that they don’t want shared because they don’t want them to be changed, retold incorrectly, or misunderstood or misinterpreted. When someone shares a story with you they’re not obligated to, they don’t have to, it’s a gift that has been passed down from person to person for generations.

There has been a case in which stories have been stolen from the Skwuxwu7mesh people and were copyrighted to a writer that is no Skwuxwu7mesh. This person asked one of our past Chiefs, Joe Capilano to tell her some stories. After she heard the stories that Chief Joe told her she had the stories published and copyrighted to herself. This means that these stories are not our stories anymore according to modern law even though they have been ours for thousands of years. This shows that not everyone one can be trusted it doesn’t matter what there nationality or there religion is some people just can’t be trusted that some people just want to take advantage of or traditional knowledge for there own profit and gain.
Appendix C-3: “The Chief”

The Chief

Like an ancient rock of ages
home to a thousand nations
filled with everlasting pages
within their meaningful locations

Contaminating corruption
Making the marvellous marble
seem grey and dull
like the narquois November

Like a mother bear protecting its cubs
home to a thousand stairs
Dancing in First Nations clubs
Might meet some humble bears

We may learn from this giant granite
Take care of our land
It is hardly grey
The evocative rock

Even though our world changes
As rapidly as the river current
The sturdy rock still remains
next to a painted pastel sky
Appendix C-4: “If Mountains Could Speak”

Big and strong he stands as one
Mighty and tall he will never fall
Stored with legends and stories
If mountains could speak
What would the Chief say?

Would he tell us about the two-headed sea serpent
Or would he tell us about he’s love that’s across the sound
Maybe he will tell us about the epidemics
Maybe he’ll tell us enough is enough
That we’re damaging our home
That we need to quit polluting
And start caring for what we have left
That we need to take a stand
Just like the chief.
Appendix C-6: “Memories”

Memories

Five out of Seven days, I awake and struggle to find the motivation to leave my quiet and warm bed.

For the exchange of sitting in awkwardly cramped desks, in a classroom surrounded by noisy conversations.

Monday’s first class is English, it’s agonizing to try to think so early in the morning.

Consistently I find my eyes wondering elsewhere, while others stare blankness at the white board.

Trying to learn the lesson we’re being taught, but I’m annoyed.

I’m annoyed by my irritable mind.

It won’t let me, my thoughts, or eyes focus.

So I stop fighting the withdrawal.

Shorty my eyes wonder, they’re drawn to the window.

Finally I find myself staring at the same big old rock I see every day.

There are so many mysteries in that rock. The formation of the colors on the side and the shapes it makes.

The rocks name is “The Chief” it’s commonly mistaken for a mountain, due to its enormous size, but it’s not, it’s a rock.

When I was a child I remember hiking it, I hated the pain in the side of my stomach I would get when stopping to catch my breath.

Then we would reach the ladders that would take us to the first peak, and all the energy that was lost bolted back faster than you could imagine.

It was like a sugar high only to reach that one point.

Just to have that a feeling I would get when I stood on the top.

“TOWERING” is really the best word I could describe it.
“I’m looking at a town made out of Lego I’m bigger than the kite boarders way out there, than the cars driving to different places,” I would say proudly.

It doesn’t matter when or where I look at The Chief, it brings me a smile.

Memories of my dad when he’d try to scare us, He would say “it’s the witches’ mountain she takes all the children who don’t clean their rooms up to live there.”

His stories scared my brother and I for a while. At least until I turned 11.

When I hiked the chief at the age of 6, my little head was bursting with all these questions, why is that there, who built so many steps on a mountain, how did it get here, why do we call it “The Chief”, and in the caves why are there markings.

Now I’m 17, and graduating.

I’ll go back to Monday’s English class.

We have been learning about The Chief by storytelling, stories from the First Peoples. How they use stories to share and pass down history, the ways of the environment they live in, their tradition and spirituality.

Here I am staring out that same window I look out every day wondering.
Appendix D: Compilations of Student Responses
Appendix D-1: *Thinking about Place* Questions

1. What does the word *place* mean to you? Is it just a specific location? Or does it have other meaning?

S1: place can be a mental mindset or a physical place. Like most words, they can mean more than one thing. Place is what you make it.

S2: Place means to me a variety of things. Place to feel at home – location – quiet area – where to put something

S3: The word place describes wher you are. We are all different, and place and location indicate wher we are. For intence, Helene and I are similar, but also different because we grew up in different places. Even in your own city people are different.

S4: For me place means how I’m mentally feeling at the time or for a period of time. I can find myself in a good place surrounded by friends and hapy. Or I can feel bad and then [?] is a bad place. A place that’s good will be a place were I can fee free to be me. I will have bad associates with a place if it gave me awful memories or negativity.

S5: A place is for me a place wher its quite and peaceful wher I can go and think about stuff

S6: Place could mean a physical location, or a state of mind

S7: To me it means a location. Sometimes it means to have like a “place in my heart” that’s a different meaning to me

S8: to me it means somewhere people/other species live and it has many locations and meanings.

S9: it’s just a location

S10: place is a location with memory and feelings

S11: just A location

S12: I think it means the place you are at right now and an area

S13: No it also mean to have a “place” or “spot” in the world and in your group of friends

S14: It’s a specific location cause it’s a specific location

S15: the word place to me means a specific location. No other meaning to me

S16: A place is like home or somewhere that feels like home. It could be anywhere that feels like home.

S17: - it is a location for humans and things where you can be or things sit
   - it is also a connection you have in your head to a certain location or to a person/thing
   - feelings to a place (or emotions)
   - surrounding is comfortable or negative

S18: specific location
2. It is likely that your mood—how you feel or what you want to do—is affected by where you are (e.g. in the forest, in the classroom, in your home, in Squamish, in a city, by the ocean...). Give examples of places where you feel comfortable and usually have positive emotions, and where you feel uncomfortable or have negative emotions. Circle either “positive” or “negative” for i, ii, and iii below, and then describe a place that fits that description and why you think it has that effect on you.

*Whether students circled positive or negative is indicated with a plus (+) or a minus sign (-).*

**i) Positive/Negative Place**

S1: - I am not going to say that school is a negative place but I never feel excited to come to it.

S2: + At home when my boyfriend comes back Being with him makes me feel positive.

S3: + When I’m surrounded by positive people, eg my family or friends. And we are in my house watching a movie or talking. Going hiking with my friends in Norway.

S4: + My home. Especially back home in Norway. Where I feel comfortable and free and relaxed to be me. Wherever I want to be crazy or just relaxing. It’s also a place were I feel sheltered.

S5: (not circled) I feel comfortable when I am outdoor in the nature or in my room especially with family or friends. I was [?] in my live allot outdoor so that is pecially [partly?] the reason why I like it so much.

S6: + When I’m in the woods Im always automatically happy. I feel like im where I belong, no one could judge me on who I am.

S7: + Being with family [happy face]

S8: + The gym is a positive place for me because you get everything off yor mind along with earning confidence.

S9: + At my house sometimes or with friends.

S10: + In the forest it makes me happy and helps me too clear my mind

S11: + Whenever I go out for a walk in the forest, I always feel more peaceful and comfortable

S12: + Home

S13: + On the ice. It is positive because I really like to play hockey that’s why I like it there.

S14: + On the beach because then you feel free and you can hang out and it doesn’t remind you of school or something.

S15: + A place where I feel the the most safest is at my house

S16: (no circle) Negative place could be in a city where your close and theres a lot of people

S17: + nature – especially good view,bike trails
    - because it gives me energy (silence, sound of nature) and that’s how I grew up and so used to it

S18: + home

**ii) Positive/Negative Place**
S1: + Whistler, I have never had a bad experience in Whistler. I am either biking, snowboarding, or hanging out with friends.

S2: Neg School, sometimes I feel okay here, but a lot of the time its just a lonely place I don’t like to be.

S3: neg When I’m outside and its cold and windy.

S4: neg I’m always superduper uncomfortable in big sterile places surrounded by people I don’t know. It makes me feel bare and completely alone.

S5: no circle forest, nature, my home I don’t have really negative places, maybe dangerous places but there is not a specific place.

S6: + I’m comfortable in my room because its my space where I could be/do what I want.

S7: - being around negative people, or somewhere I feel unwelcomed.

S8: - being home alone is a very negative place for me because I feel like you have all the time to sit around and feel like crap about yourself no matter what.

S9: - at school

S10: - in the city because it’s overcrowded and loud and the air is gross

S11: don’t really have negative places

S12: + Grandma

S13: + in my bed. It is nice, cozy and warm in my bed, that’s why I don’t get out of there in the morning.

S14: - School, because you have to be there and you have to do things you don’t want to do.

S15: + My nana’s house feels just like home

S16: + could be a forest where there is no one.

S17: + Somewhere with my family or good friends. Because my family is important to me and is kind of a symbol of “protection” and “security”. They make the area/surrounding different, surrounding I am used to.

S18: + Grandma’s house

iii) Positive/Negative Place

S1: + Any place that is warm is usually enough to make it [word?]

S2: + The beach, I feel awesome at the beach or when I’m hiking I love exploring new paths.

S3: + on the beach with my friends, or a place where its warm. Thailand, Spain

S4: + When I am outside, singing, playing, skiing or just talking and walking with friends or family. And just do whatever we feel like doing.
S5: No response

S6: - School Busses! – not like I’m being bullied or anything, but there’s usually too many people and some of them are immature, and that really bugs me.

S7: no response

S8: + I like being with my positive friends and mom. They just bring positive vibes.

S9: no response

S10: + in the river, being by or in is really refreshing and makes me feel really connected.

S11: no response

S12: + Auntie’s

S13: no specific response where I have negative feelings

S14: + at home cause it’s a familiar aria and you know where everythin is

S15: - sitting in the office your small

S16: - negative place. It could be where I don’t like at all

S17: - very busy city with unlovely, not nice and unfriendly people. Nervous behaviour of people, cars etc. Because I don’t feel then I can be myself and I am just a part of all and not an invidum – maybe not used to it

S18: + Nana’s house
Appendix D-2: Indian Act Presentation Questions

1. What did you learn?

1. I have seen her presentation many times and somehow I always get something out of it. Whether it is some pictures I didn’t notice before. The way she presented it. I always try to get some new knowledge out of it.
2. I learned that the treatment towards the first peoples were incredibly unfair, sexist, and their hands were tied and lots of their culture were being illegal.
3. I learned how healthy and social the Indigenous system was. And I recognized that some of my freejustice are wrong.
4. That the Natives were treated really bad, girls and boys were also treated differently.
5. I have learned that the first people of Canada are not being treated fairly.
6. That only 0.5% of the original territory is left!
7. I had seen this particular presentation over a number of times, so it's hard to pick something out of it.
8. I learned that natives weren’t allowed to go to pool halls and were not allowed alcohol.
9. I learned that the government banned a lot of the aboriginal culture like potlatches, political rights, so natives were not allowed to vote. Native lands were taken away and the people were put in reserves.
10. I learned everything new I didn’t know what the Indian act was before.
11. I learned that indigenous people today, want to keep the Indian act. I thought it was only a “racist” document. I also learned that only 0.05% of the traditional lands are recognized as property of the natives.
12. I have learned that the first people shouldn’t be discriminated. They should be respected because they are (also people) just also living their lives just like us. They treated the first people unfair.
13. I learned that the Canadian government is very racist and that had no choice or voice in anything.
14. I found surprising that only 0.05% of traditional land was still reservation.
15. and 16. (Done together) 0.05% is recognized today as traditional land by government in Indian Act.

2. What is one thing you found interesting?

1. The one thing I always find interesting is the goat [...?] story and how they share wealth.
2. The map was really interesting and shocking to see the tiny red patches they were given from their original land.
3. I found interesting how racist the government and country's still are.
4. The map. That they had a big area, and the white people keep taking pieces from them all the time. Now.
5. that the Squamish people have lost their land.
6. The story about the bulldozer and her grandfather! (shocking)
7. how racist the Indian Act is/was. like really a girl can lose her status because she married the person she loved, but if her brother did the same he would keep his status. Another thing I found interesting was how the govt didn’t even have the decency to tell that one family their house was being demolished.
8. I really find the Indian Act interesting because there are people who say why not get rid of it but we can’t get rid of it because if we do we will lose some of our rights.
9. I found it interesting that they would throw you (natives) in jail if you were caught in the bar drinking.
10. I found interesting to learn about the feeling of that everybody was apart of a big family and that everyone shared.
11. I thought that the trade routes was interesting. How they found the rock in California, and the cali rock here.
12. I found interesting is (the map) how they teach the children. Because when you compare it today, this time we have the technology and resources but before they just tell a story to the children.
13. that alcohol was illegal
14. I already knew that they banned potlatches for many years.
15. and 16. Chiefs - speakers for the people
   - take care of the people
   - Agreements between nations
   - families
   - not allowed to act alone
   - through Potlatches

3. **What is one thing you already knew?**

1. I may know a lot of this...
2. I knew they had Potlatches but I didn’t know they were that generous.
3. I knewed already about all the diseases who come with the white man.
4. I had lack of acknowledge about the Natives, so there is nothing that I can remember to have heard before. But I found everything very interesting.
5. That some Illuminati members were taking away rights
6. That lots of people died because of European diseases.
7. Because I heard that presentation before, I pretty much knew everything in it. (I even had to present it in grade 9)
8. I have seen the presentation many times before so I have already known most of the stuff
9. I already knew that they put the natives in residential school.
10. I did not know anything except that Indians died for diseases and illnesses.
11. I knew that the caucasian government was extremely racist
12. I already knew that the first people is treated unfair because of the (old) movies I watched and some book that I read.
13. I knew about the epidemics
14. I found interesting that the Indian Act was originally put in place to take away rights but eventually gave back some of their rights.
15. and 16. Pre-contact Education
   - storytelling
   - Apprentice under someone
   - Potlatches/relationships with other nations
   - families, ways, protocol, etc.

4. What was one thing you found surprising OR one thing you liked?

1. I always like how she can present the same presentation in different ways and I like that.
2. I found it surprising how different Indian boys and girls were treated.
3. I found surprising how organized the system was
4. That it took so long until boys and girls were treated the same way. I didn’t know they were so sexist.
5. That they had specialized jobs
6. That a “squamish” rock was found in California
7. NR
8. I really find it interesting that the first nations people always fought for their rights even though their hands were tied. And that they didn’t break the law in this process.
9. I found surprising that the native people could not grieve probably for their loved ones when whole villages became sick and died. Also they started to lose faith in their own medicine “Shaman” to be able to treat their own people
10. I was surprised how many Indians died of diseases and that Indians today only have about 0.05% of the land.
11. When the government moved all the residents on to that barge. That was terrible.
12. I found surprising is about how they know that one child is gifted.
13. I found surprising is the rock found from California.
14. I learned that only specific familys were allowed rights to have their own hunting/fishing, gathering spots. If other people wanted to use their land they would have to ask permission and give the family some of the stuff they got.
15. and 16. - 1867 law passed by government (Indian Act)
   - Gave Gov. got total control of abiriginal land, rights, politics, culture, education, and personal lives
Appendix D-3: Course Assessment/Understanding

Note: “No response” means the student had left the space blank. “No comment” is the student’s words.

1. In this course, I have tried made to connect your learning with your own experiences and/or the place in which we live. Examples are…
- Inspirational Person Project,
- Charlene Williams’ talks,
- Event that Impacted My Life writing assignment,
- Chief project,
- novel study journals, and
- final project- either Sharing What Matters or Contemporary Issues.

1 a) Which of the assignments listed above did you enjoy the most?
- event that impacted my life written assignment
- novel study
- Charlene Williams talk
- the trip to the museum
- chief project
- museum trip, novel study
- chief project
- inspirational person project! or Charlene W. talks
- final project
- I am most proud of my Chief project I liked the event that changed my life project
- Chief project. Charlene Williams talks, final project
- Chief project
- Chief project
- event that impacted my life
- novel study journals
- event that impacted my life writing assignment
- The Inspirational Person Project
- final project

1 b) What made you enjoy this more than the other projects, do you think?
- I worked with my mom talking about my past
- the book that went along with it
- Everytime Charlene tells her stories it always touches me. I always learn something new listening to her.
- cause it was fun to look at all the indian art
- it was free work and we didn't have to stay in a limit and we could work free
- we got to find things ourself and I learned a lot. Novel study because reading was interesting and entertaining.
- I enjoy inspirational person project
- I got to talk to my aunty about her past, where usually she would felt ashamed rather not talk. She was able to open up so I could show other people these issues exist. I
loved listening to the stories Charlene told.
- some students don't like when you give them creative freedom but I do
  - just because I enjoyed the topics
  - We got to pick what topic we were most passionate about
  - It was about something I knew and it made it fun
  - what you had experience by yourself or with others
    - A very "open" assignment, could be creative. Also liked Charlene Williams talks.
- I enjoy this because I learned something from the book that I read and by writing
  journals my vocabulary expands more! I used new words for the study journals.
  Also I like reflecting from stories (happy face)
- I like writing more "open" projects, and it was also an exciting topic which made
  you think and remember.
- I liked learning about the lives of important people in the native community.
- being able to pick the subject the student wants

2. I hope to keep teaching this class next year and in years beyond, and I want to
continue to improve it for future students. What do you think would improve the
class or my teaching?
  - I can't say, it was done well. It had good variety and we didn't do poetry so that
    was good
  - Nothing much, you did very good, I had a good time
  - I think you did an awesome job, the fact that it was your first time teaching this
    class...WOW! I don't think theres anything to change (happy face) (Maybe go on
    a outside field trip?)
  - more field trips
  -No response
  - No response
  - maybe go on more field trips like to the museum UBC
  - Over all I enjoyed your class and you did an fantastic job considering, it was
    your first year teaching this course. I would just say maybe have lessons where
    we have to go outside
  - more projects, more writing, more oral teachings and…
  - Definitely have 11-12 class then a 10 class
  - Nothing. I loved this class
  - going outside more!
  - go on field trips more and go outside more often
  - Have a class for grade 10s and another for 11/12s. You are an amazing teacher
    and I have bee learning a lot [happy face]. And you are very flexible which is
    good and I like all the different and versatile assignements we get.
  - just always make the class fun and continue to help your students. Thanks for
    the help!
  - I think you did a great job. keep up the good work! Be more strict on when
    assignments are due.
  - no comment
  - going outside
3. What is the most interesting or important thing that we talked about in class this term, in your opinion, and why?
- I think the presentations Charlene Williams presented I think this because I thinking important to know about residential school and the Indian act
- probably the residential school stuff, I've always been interested in it.
- residential school
- residential shool cause everyone should learn the past of his own country
- the residential school because that a important part and it's important to know how the generation before us lived and that we can be glad with that kind of school
- Residential schools because I had rarely heard of it before and I did not know much
- Residential Schools Because people need to know the history of Canada
- I already know a lot about residential schools (not everything, but didn't really learn anything new) but I'm glad we went over it, because it is important I don't think everyone knew about them.
- I always really liked it when we had a guest speaker
- I really like learning about Residential school just because it is something of Canada's history and they don't teach you much about it in other classes
- How aboriginal communities are reflected on Canadian Society and the impacts caused by it.
- no response
- no response
- I liked the idea about hegemony. How many things we don't usually think about
- the literary devices. I think because it will help me in my English.
- When we watched and talked about schooling the world, because I thought forcing children to school only happened a long time ago, but the documentary showed us/me that bad things are still going on around us.
- to me it was really interesting to learn about the native history, which I didn't know much about.
- the stories

4. Any other comments?
- I'd like to say thankyou and that I'll remember you as one of my favorite teachers
- nope. this was a good class
- I hope you teach this next year. Cause you did an awesome job!
- no response
- no response
- very much fun and interesting. It was relaxed which made it easier to want to learn something
- Over all, I loved your (sic), and I'm glad they ran it this year because I heard not enough people signed up so it almost didn't happen. Way better than regular English
- I like it a lot better than I would have like English 12. Also my favorite english teacher in the school.
- you're a good teacher [happy face]
- no response
- no response
- no response
- You are an amazing teacher [happy face] keep it up
- You are a great and helpful teacher! Thank you!
- You are a really good teacher! I have learned a lot.
- I have to say thank you Ms. Price, for making my days and my English better.
- no comment

Thank you for taking the time to answer these questions!