DEVELOPING THOUGHTFUL, RESPONSIBLE, ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP BY
EXPLORING CONTROVERSIAL TOPICS WITH A GRADE 9 CLASS: A
TEACHER’S JOURNEY

by
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Abstract

This study originated in response to a change in my teaching position. As a teacher new to secondary social studies, who transferred from the elementary ranks in the school year 1995-1996, I was intrigued by the rationale of the Social Studies 8 – 10 Integrated Resource Package which was stated as “the overarching goal of social studies is to develop thoughtful, responsible, active citizens who are able to acquire the requisite information to consider multiple perspectives and make reasoned judgments”, but I wasn’t sure how to implement it. I needed to clarify what “responsible, active citizenship” might involve and what “thoughtful” meant in this regard. Furthermore, how would I teach students the ability to make reasoned judgments?

A second question was inextricably linked to the first, although it arose in a different way. I quickly found that I enjoyed discussing controversial topics with secondary students, but was unsure of how to promote discourse as opposed to shouting matches. Additionally, I wondered how to teach skills of reasoned inquiry and how we might resolve issues of injustice in a hopeful manner?

I decided to investigate my own practice in regard to these questions. My teaching journal, student work, and some audio taped evidence, were the primary sources of data for the study.

I first share my research into concepts of democratic citizenship best promoted by a public school system. Next, I outline how I developed a teaching unit, utilizing aspects of the Shared Learnings curriculum, that focused on controversial topics. Third, I share the experiences in teaching that unit, and the reflections that ensued as I did so. Finally, I look at the changes that resulted in my social studies teaching and the possible
implications for other educators. Generally, I conclude that teaching the skills of philosophy, in combination with discourse and an ethic of care, can promote active, responsible citizenship even in young secondary school students. I encourage other educators to explore similar avenues for themselves, and their students.
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Chapter 1

Introduction to the Study

The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.

Eleanor Roosevelt (1946)

Integrated Resource Package for Social Studies 8 to 10

In 1997 the Ministry of Education, Skills and Training developed an Integrated Resource Package for Social Studies 8 to 10, replacing the Social Studies Curriculum Guide Grades 8 to 11, last revised in 1988. I found I was given more flexibility and autonomy in the “content” of my social studies teaching, with the new emphasis on a multidisciplinary approach designed to develop the skills and processes necessary for active responsible citizenship. The learning strategies provided as models would encourage in-depth study from multiple perspectives (e.g. time, place, culture, values) leading students through a critical thinking/evaluative process.

I was excited at the prospect of helping students develop understanding, make connections, apply knowledge, and practice active citizenship. This contrasted strongly with the way that social studies was often taught, where students memorized a discrete commonly accepted body of factual information, considering historical or current issues in a cursory fashion, if at all. The overall identified outcomes of this new document sounded stimulating and rewarding for both students and myself to work with. I was ready to implement such powerful objectives!
However, when I considered the overall rationale and approach of this curriculum, I found myself mired in a curricular dilemma. The rationale is stated as: “The overarching goal of social studies is to develop thoughtful, responsible and active citizens who are able to acquire the requisite information to consider multiple perspectives and to make reasoned judgments” (p. 1). The curriculum document advises that students can learn to consider multiple perspectives when they engage in critical thinking skills. Students are asked to consider evidence against their views, stand up for firmly held beliefs, and give fair consideration to alternative points of view. I felt confident that I could encourage these skills to blossom in students and began to envision what active responsible citizenship might look like in a social studies class. For assistance in this regard I turned again to the Integrated Resource Package, which defined active citizenship as taking a public stand on matters of personal concern.

Asking students to take a public stand would not be an issue – many already enjoyed the opportunities to do such. However, that deceptively simple directive stated in the rationale of the curriculum, to “make reasoned judgments”, still gave me pause. This would mean not only encouraging students to take a public stand, but a stand where they were able to articulate how they arrived at the judgment that something was right or wrong. The following questions arose:

1. What vision of responsible citizenship should we create? What are the best possible ways to respond/act in Canadian society?

2. How would one develop the ability to make reasoned judgments in students?

3. What topics might be appropriate to address in this regard, making reasoned judgments about matters of personal concern?
4. What might a unit of study look like that has as a focus the making of reasoned judgment?

Teaching Social Issues

The role of controversial topics in a public education system had drawn my attention as an education student in 1989, at Malaspina University-College. In a social issues education course taught by Mike Grant I was introduced to hard questions about the purpose of education and the social ramifications of the work we were training for. In that class we studied some of the writing of Henry Giroux (1988) and discussed his notion of teacher as a “transformative intellectual”. That term continued to resonate through my psyche as I went on to enter the public school system as a teacher. To what are we transforming? What can we base the need to transform upon? What indeed is an intellectual? I was unsure how any of this could come about without raising topics of morality. If we consider something to be “not right”, then we want to change it. I wanted to teach the social issues we had talked about in class back in 1989, but I wanted to do so with the purpose of initiating resolution to those issues.

It was in this fashion that I began to wonder how social issues and the topic of morality might be connected. In 1989 I pondered the theoretical teaching of social issues, in the naïve fashion that only education students can possess. By 1997, and now a Humanities teacher at Woodlands Secondary in Nanaimo, I was mandated to do so.

I have been reading, thinking and writing about this topic of morals and the public school system, from various angles, since I was first drawn to teaching, but in most particular since I began my masters degree. It has always been my intention to include as part of my research a unit of study, a project that I implemented within my classroom that
utilized theory in concrete ways. Wonderings, possibilities, action and transformation are parts of the cycle that I operate from within my two educative worlds of teacher/student. As a reflective practitioner, working to improve pedagogy for students, it is imperative to me that I utilize the theory of what I am learning in concrete ways.

Certainly the curriculum, and its stated mandate, was encouraging me to think deeply about the purpose of teaching social studies. I don't believe goal statements should exist in a vacuum, as they give coherence to the multiplicity of disciplines and topics that we undertake in our social studies classes. Although I see the importance of vision as a driver for curriculum, I was uncomfortable with this goal. The tendency in my current professional practice had been in the opposite direction, away from making judgments. I avoided making public stands about historical and current issues; and I seldom encouraged students to take their analysis to that extent.

Class Discussions and Current Professional Practice

Daily interactions in social studies classes were stimulating, as some time was usually devoted to discussion or debate. The topics might be drawn from the news, a historical event currently under review, or matters of interest to the students' lives. No matter the source, whether voted upon for a debate topic, or impromptu musings by someone, one of the reasons students look forward to class is because of the interesting discussions that we have. Although students enjoyed the discussions, I worried that other matters of greater curricular importance were being neglected.

Students raised many topics in class. Some of the recent issues that have arisen include child abuse, new gambling casinos, prostitution and thugs downtown, alcoholism, Kosovo and NATO, shootings in Colorado, strip-searches of students, teenage pregnancy
and abortion, family cycles of learned negative behaviours, white supremacy groups on the Internet, firearms legislation, AIDS, and parents concerns over WWF. It is a never-ending, always changing list. It is here that issues are exposed (often for the first time for many students); where we look behind, within, from all sides of a topic. Some topics concern moral issues, some do not; but all are of interest and consequence to students.

When we investigate current issues well we see that things may be different than they appear at first; we attend to other stories, other voices. We raise our questions, our thoughts, our fears, and share our epiphanies.

In addition to the time that discussions consume, other concerns plagued me. Some of the issues we discussed contained more controversy than others, such as the topic of abortion. I wanted to feel clear about the purpose of discussing controversial topics within a democratic society of free and equal citizens. I wondered about the "equal values" nature of relativism and how to honour diversity, without sinking into a morass of subjectivism. As a teacher I didn’t how much to share about my own judgments and I didn’t want these public forums to a place where exchanges of intolerance could take place. Furthermore, it was difficult at times to start a discussion; other days it was hard to stop them. All in all, I wondered about the role of the teacher during intense, emotional discussions. Was I a mediator between opposing views, a facilitator who strove for fair and equal voice for all participants, or a censure, quick to condemn inappropriate comments?

Aside from the appropriate role to assume in a discussion, it was the scepter of indoctrination that I grappled with. If I stated my own beliefs, some students might adopt those as their own. If I censured comments yet didn’t say why I felt strongly about
something, then I worried that the silence spoke more succinctly than not. I knew that someone should address negative views and/or hatred in the class. Overall, there were many reasons why it was difficult to welcome the discussion of controversial topics, which at times raised moral questions, into the discussions of current events.

**Historical Issues and Current Professional Practice**

Social studies teachers examine historical issues and issues of topical or personal interest, as in the study of current events. For instance, this might happen around a historical topic such as the Komagata Maru incident, or the late franchisement of Aboriginal Peoples in Canada. In these two cases I would introduce several moral concepts. I would teach that the "Continuous Passage Act" was racist; that denying suffrage to First Nations people wasn't fair because it didn't respect their right to equality. Such issues clearly illustrate to students that what is commonplace now, such as Aboriginals' right to vote, was not always the case. It is also evident views held in the past have targeted specific groups of people, creating human suffering and misery for many, but not all. In my social studies classes we have judged these events as "wrong".

Our modern sensibilities, which allowed the quick judgments of "wrong", led to politically correct wrath and amazement at the stupidity of people in the past. However, I left those discussions feeling that a key component was lacking, whether investigating Japanese internment, the Chinese Immigration Act, Chinese labour on the CPR, or looking at poverty in the Victorian era. All of the historical issues we examined this year are fascinating topics, and pull students into the "human stories" that are part of what we call history. However, the conversations stopped too soon – we did not attempt to analyze why we think differently now than we did in the past. Left lacking was
comprehension of the ethical principles underlying current thinking about equality. It is of greater importance to understand how we have come to know that denying Aboriginal Peoples the vote is wrong, not just the circumstances of the change in legislation, but I didn’t know how to teach that.

Without thinking about “why” some historical events or circumstances were “wrong”, case studies can become mere stories about strangers, peaking prurient interest for a short time. Looking askance at how people were treated in the past, in and of itself, does little to raise awareness about what we value. Examining what we believed in the past about Aboriginals, then comparing it to what we believe now, allows students the opportunity to apply ethical principles in order to determine why they understand such actions to be “wrong”. Without practice in this area of reasoning, it would difficult for students to make connections from the past to the present; to identify what is right or wrong about the behaviours and beliefs that are taken for granted in their world.

In consideration of historical case studies a deeper examination of how we come to judge human conduct as wrong is necessary. I had done little in my teaching in the past ten years to cause students to wonder about the way we judged history, or to reflect on current circumstance around a similar issue. If what was done in the past was wrong, how can we now judge it wrong when it seemed right at the time? If we apply those same criteria that we used to judged the historical incident, how are we doing in this regard in the modern circumstance? For instance, even though Aboriginals now have the right to vote, how many First Nations people actually vote? Do Aboriginals have a political voice beyond their right to cast a ballot? How many First Nations people put their names
forward to run for political office? I wanted students to consider not just injustice done in
the past, but how those circumstances continue to impact the lives of people today.

If we do not give students the skills to question their own worlds, confront their
own realities, how will they understand when something is wrong? They will continue to
perpetuate the status quo, never realizing their potential as questioning citizens,
thoughtful agents of change. As adolescents, learning how to judge would be a central
tenet to achieving responsible, well-actualized adulthood. That indeed is how wrongs are
righted, and the ways in which we structure our lives can change. These are the powerful
lessons to learn from history.

Questions Regarding Reasoned Judgment

Aside from the angst generated, I believed that discussing “hard cases”, whether
they are historical or current issues, form the heart of teaching social studies. Therefore, I
continued to encourage them, as messy as they were at times. Not all of the above topics
would require that students make “reasoned judgments”, but many times judgments were
articulated. Although I valued the worth of such public stands, we didn’t have a
framework for examining judgment statements together. I wanted students to enter into
conversations of thoughtful citizenship, which would include the ability to judge what
they see, hear, and think. My reflections prompted the following questions:

1. How can I help students make sense of the world and what is happening around
   them?

2. How can students come to recognize injustice and seek to improve circumstances for
   themselves and others?

3. How will students decide what is right or wrong about what they see/hear/do?
It is this third question, which I saw as implicit to worthwhile class discussions, and the mandate given to develop students’ ability to make reasoned judgments; which underlay my planned classroom study. Question two would, I hoped, be a natural function, or outgrowth of the study. Question one is constant to my practice, and the thinking I do about social studies pedagogy.

This thesis then revolves around the question:

*Can I teach in ways that asks students to fairly consider multiple perspectives and prepares them to make reasoned judgments about controversial topics? As I plan, teach, then reflect; what are the pedagogical and social issues that arise?*

The title of the classroom project is:

**Multiple Perspectives and Reasoned Judgment: A Teacher’s Experience Using the Social Studies Curriculum to Develop Moral Reasoning Abilities in Grade 9 Students**

**Clarification of Terms**

As I continued to reflect on the questions which came to mind regarding developing “reasoned judgment” I found it useful to clarify some of the terms which seemed to inform the matter – morals, moral reasoning, moral literacy, and ethical principles; all aspects of teaching toward establishing moral worth. In order to make a judgment we must ask the basic questions of moral/philosophical inquiry defined by Matthew Lipman (1980) as “what’s good/bad?” , “what’s right/wrong?” , “what’s fair?”, and “what matters?” (p. 39). In answering those questions we speak of the following:

1. **Morals.** This term is used in an appraisal of either human conduct or thoughts. Our conduct, or our expressed ideas, can be either good, bad, right, wrong, better or worse. In the sphere of social studies it includes both the social-political morality
(social policies and desirable institutions), and the everyday morality (when we decide how to act and what to say) identified by Mike Martin (1995) in his book *Everyday Morality*.

2. Moral reasoning. Moral reasoning is the process of reflecting on human actions or ideas to determine whether they are moral or not. The reflection may include some or all of the following – access intuition; compare means and ends; question rules and consequences; create rules and consequences; define excellence in thought and action; examine premises and conclusions in arguments; universalize actions; look for ethical assumptions; “flesh out” ideas with examples; formulate powerful questions; juxtapose opposites. Students and teacher can work through a process of moral reasoning by utilizing these techniques, which are drawn from both philosophy and current understandings of critical thinking.

3. Moral literacy. The teacher’s role in enhancing this ability lies in helping students “read” a situation. In regard to developing moral “antennae”, students may need assistance to determine that certain situations or events are cause for reflection. People can practice discussing instances that require one to pause, and then engage in a reflective process – calling upon moral reasoning abilities to determine correct course of thought or action.

4. Moral intelligence. The role of the teacher would be to encourage the continued maturation of a human’s innate ability to reason about what is right or wrong. It may include learning about ethical principles, and bringing them to bear, particularly upon matters of practical importance, to the everyday morality of teenage life. Such ethical theories are based upon devising broad principles that can help solve moral
predicaments, or to aid in the examination of a hasty moral decision. These ethical theories may resonate with intuitive moral conceptions or serve to enhance intellectual engagement in reasoned moral practice. Robert Hannaford (1993) offers a caution regarding this ability - that a human being will never be able to develop the potential of this intelligence alone, that it is a function of community. As Hannaford defines it: “Moral intelligence exists through that reciprocating awareness and concern of persons who are bound together in a community of concern: it cannot be understood as the work of individuals who calculate or reason in isolation” (p.177).

Teacher as Researcher

I had decided to focus on a moral reasoning project, one that took place in my classroom. The idea of researching my teaching appealed for several reasons. First, I was able to develop real materials to use with real students, a necessary step arising from the questions I posed for myself regarding my ability to teach students to make reasoned judgments. Second, I wanted to reflect not just on student learning, but on how my teaching changed. This thesis became the story of the whole process involved in my questioning not only the rationale of the curriculum, but the perturbation I felt in my own practice around discussion, controversial topics, and stated judgment. It is referenced to some of the reading I have done on the varied nature of this topic, yet it hopefully reflects the pedagogical worlds I engage with in planning a unit for teaching, and the wonderful insights demonstrated by students I work with.

Looking at morality in a public school system is a complex and critical task. Complex, because morality is human-centered. As Martin (1995) declares, “It involves factual uncertainty, vagueness, conflicting reasons, and conflicting perspectives.” (p.7) It
can be emotionally charged and carries the potential to do harm if it is not handled sensitively and well. Critical, because moral decisions, moral worth are intrinsic to the new focus on issues addressed within the Social Studies IRP. As I have argued earlier in the chapter, issues in social studies need more than just an “airing in public”; we need to explore problems in depth, analyze consequences, devise just common understandings.

Researching as a teacher would give me an opportunity to look closely at my objectives and how they meshed not only with the curriculum but with the larger societal trust placed in me as a professional, working with all children. Bruce Thomas (1990), writing in the *Moral Dimensions of Teaching*, describes this responsibility in the following straightforward yet eloquent manner: “Parents entrust their children to school. Trust obliges teachers to be careful. Teachers are to proceed carefully with the work of empowering students.” (p.266). The curriculum that I work with had been introduced a year earlier, and I was eager to explore its potential to develop moral reasoning, with careful regard to the social trust implied within our practice. This curriculum was designed to integrate BC Aboriginal content through grades K-10, and was called *Shared Learnings*.

*Shared Learnings Curriculum*

The *Shared Learnings* curriculum was developed by the Ministry of Education, and is designed to explore the dynamics of Aboriginal culture; their world view, the strengths and direction of Aboriginal peoples, including defining their individual rights and freedoms. It does not skirt the issues of controversy that are embedded within these areas. The types of sensitive topics that might arise in implementing the *Shared Learnings* program include residential schools, land claims, racism and treaties. I began
to devise a unit that focused on two controversial topics that lent themselves well to moral examination; residential schools and land claims.

The topics of residential schools and land claims have a fairly high profile in the city of Nanaimo due to extensive media coverage. A recent residential school trial (which affected many Nanaimo people) had been well reported in the local press. The question of compensation for the churches that were currently being sued by residential school victims was also widely reported in the media. The second issue, that of land claims, have been an ongoing issue for the S’nuneymuxw (Nanaimo) nation, who have been negotiating for several years with all levels of government. The land claims process seems to generate much confusion amongst the citizens of Nanaimo. For instance, there were rumours that people would lose their houses, and that the school would even have to close (a rumour no doubt generated by Woodlands students), once the treaty process was complete. Therefore, I considered the curriculum topic to have personal concern, plus heightened interest, for the students I would be working with.

Residential schools and land ownership rights, in both historical and current contexts, have had a profound effect on Aboriginal people. Yet many people remain uninformed or apathetic regarding these issues, a situation which is important to change if we indeed value equality, freedom and justice for all citizens of Nanaimo/Canada. One of the primary aims of the Shared Learnings curriculum was to lead to enlightened discussion of Aboriginal issues and give Aboriginal students a sense of place and belonging in the public school system. Supporting enlightened discussions and confronting issues that demanded moral inquiry made this curriculum an appropriate one to integrate what I hoped to also teach – moral reasoning abilities.
Applying moral reasoning processes to these strong issues provides students with the skills to critique what they hear at home, in the media, or on the school yard about Aboriginal Peoples. Certainly, within the community of Nanaimo, many prejudices and stereotypes exist regarding the local Aboriginal population. Furthermore, I sensed that many students had already made up their mind about the court cases they had been hearing about, particularly the land claims issues. There is a divisiveness that exists in our communities (school and otherwise). We have a fairly significant First Nations student population at our school (10% to 12%), even though we do not draw from a First Nations reserve. I see some evidence of social interactions between the First Nations students and the rest of the population, but for the most part First Nations students hang out together on their breaks. There doesn’t seem to be much acceptance of the “other” from either camp. Perhaps teaching the Shared Learnings curriculum and making explicit empathic understandings of what is wrong or right about the “treatment” of Aboriginals will allow all students to see the “other” in new ways; leading to new communications and social interactions – the kind of morality envisioned by Brian McCadden (1995) that is at the heart of kindergarten, indeed all instruction.

An important directive found in the IRP goal statement, not to be overlooked in the teaching of Aboriginal experiences, is to have students consider multiple perspectives when making their “reasoned judgments”. In order to validate this directive in the Shared Learnings curriculum I plan to include considerations of differing worldviews, centering on cultural notions of family, school, land ownership, religion/spirituality, and nature. Making reasoned judgments will involve taking differing world views into account when determining morality, and discussing how the understandings of such can
lead one to see specific situations such as land claims in a different moral "light". For our purposes, the judging will not be to lay blame, but to determine the morality of situations, even given that cultures can have very different values.

As the Shared Learnings unit is mandated curriculum, all students in the Social Studies 9 class that I teach will be invited to participate. Parents and/or guardians are required to give permission for the students to participate in the study. The study, and the information package for parents, has been approved by the U.B.C. Behavioural Research Ethics Board. Students will work on assignments as they would in their regular course of studies for this curriculum. That work will include assigned projects, personal response entries, reflections on current events, participation in class discussions, thinking process worksheets, and a unit test. Several lessons will be audio taped to examine in detail my teaching practice, the interactions/interplay of student dialogue. I also plan to keep a journal for ongoing recording of my observations regarding evolving ideas and concerns.

At the time of the study I was employed by School District #68 (Nanaimo), teaching grades 8 – 12 at Woodlands Secondary. I enjoy working with the students who attend this school. Our school is not classified as "inner-city" but it is also not the "high-brow" school at the opposite end of town. The majority of students are from working class families with a significant percent of parents (over 50%) not having completed their secondary education themselves. I have students in my classes from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds, but few ESL students. As with most secondary schools, we struggle with issues of attendance, respect, and literacy but have worked together as a staff to address all three with continuing success.
In the five years that I have been teaching at Woodlands Secondary I have noticed two important trends. One is that students show more respect for one another. On a less positive note, more students, especially those at the junior high level, struggle with literacy. I work hard to create positive, creative, working environments when we come together as a class for our studies. Most days we even have fun. I readily share myself with students, through stories and pictures. All of these circumstances will impact my perspective and analysis to some degree.

The unit will be taught in my Social Studies 9 class from April 25th to May 5th, 2000. We are on a semester system, with second semester beginning in February. This class has been together for several months so the dynamics and tone are already well established. There are twenty-four students, two of whom just started in the class at the time of the Shared Learnings unit. For various reasons, five of the students did not return their permission forms to me, so I have not been able to reference their work in this thesis. There are far more female students in the room as only seven of the twenty-four are males, with one of the male students seldom attending.

I would have preferred to see a better gender balance, as the boys are definitely not as vocal as the girls are during discussions. Furthermore, the girls can turn upon them as a group, so they now tend to stick together, both in their seating and their viewpoints. They have learned to self-censure by keeping comments to their inner circle, or to aggravate the girls by saying something outrageous that will make them angry. I am certain that the male voice will be underrepresented, or at times misrepresented in this study. This is unavoidable due to the extant social dynamics.
The students range in age from fourteen to sixteen. There are a wide range of abilities and home circumstance in the class. I welcome and encourage all students into my room. Therefore, the class includes one “resource room” student who works on a modified program; and several students, with special learning needs, are on partially adapted programs. Two of the students were, or are, on probation this year. Several are involved in distressing home circumstances and are constantly moving foster homes, or meeting with their social worker. I have no teaching assistant.

Overall, this is a social studies class that is extremely diverse, yet tends to be very helpful and supportive of each other. Discussions are lively, and most students seem to feel comfortable expressing themselves openly. I enjoy working with this group, but the wide variety of student circumstance makes it challenging at times. For the most part though, it appears to be an average urban class for the year 2000 in Nanaimo, B.C.

**Teaching Moral Reasoning Skills**

In my experience as a social studies teacher I was afraid of judging, yet I knew that my classes formed judgments all the time. It seemed not only intrinsic to human nature but also a critical aspect of what we consider in social studies. My new project meant that I could no longer avoid the issue of teaching how to make “reasoned judgments”. I wondered if part of teaching towards this goal lay in an examination of the morality of situations, then discussing with students how we arrived at that moral decision. I came to think of this process as teaching moral reasoning abilities, defined earlier in this chapter as the ways we examine how a moral judgment is arrived at. It would involve the skills of argument analysis found in philosophy, an examination of the principles found in applied ethics, and the strategies of critical thinking pedagogy. I
thought philosophy would be key in teaching the reasoned inquiry that would assuage my fears about forming judgments.

The term judge implies having to move beyond formulating excellent arguments, to an area of valuing. To judge, one must determine that something is right or wrong – hence the necessity of discussing morals, and the ethical principles humans have grappled with in order to determine exemplary behaviour both individually and collectively. I hoped to implement moral reasoning abilities into both “types” of educative scenarios I was struggling with, the discussions of current topical concerns, or examining historical case studies that emphasized an issue. Using Shared Learnings would achieve this dual purpose, as it attempted to draw historical issues forward as the basis for consideration of present day concerns of Aboriginal Peoples.

My thesis project, including the classroom study, arose from the desire to explore what making reasoned judgments together might look like. I struggled with the concept that this entailed, which involved assigning moral worth. Additionally, far more practical issues arose, those of classroom delivery and student abilities. How might I teach philosophical concepts in ways that grade 9 students might understand them? How to discuss moral issues while honouring the multiplicity of values in student/familial orientations? Furthermore, what of maturity, and the ability of young students to make reasoned judgments?

To sum up, the purpose of the classroom project is to examine the process of considering, designing, using and analyzing pedagogy that asks students to consider multiple perspectives and make reasoned judgments, using mandated curriculum from the Ministry of Education. Shared Learnings would be the curriculum of choice for the
project. I wanted to pull this curriculum from the sidelines, never forsaking its mandate of raising consciousness about First Nations history, while using it to deliberately incorporate controversial topics into my social studies teaching. These topics, residential schools and land claims, would provide the basis for considering multiple perspectives and making reasoned judgments.

I wanted to talk about controversial topics in new ways, to not fear what we believe, nor fear the beliefs we can imagine. Wondering how others envisioned teaching reasoned judgment forms the basis of my investigations in Chapter 2.
Chapter 2

Investigating Teaching Moral Reasoning

For this philosophy seeks, above all, to develop an education that can powerfully contribute to rebuilding, not merely to perpetuating, hitherto dominant structures, habits, and attitudes. The citizens it would therefore cultivate are capable of maximum sensitivity and penetrating criticism. They are constantly engaged in achieving agreement about the details and relations of the ends they desire – ends that emanate ever more clearly from their critique of past and present cultures and energize their united and purposive actions in behalf of future goals.

Theodore Brameld (1950)

When I began to teach social studies at Woodlands Secondary in 1995, I had moved up from the ranks of elementary school teachers, hopeful that I could make a “difference” with this particular age group. The confidence I first felt when applying for the job quickly turned to panic once I accepted the position. However, I was reassured by the reasons that drew me to the job at Woodlands. In thinking about the purpose of teaching social studies, I framed two specific orientations to my craft. Before I examined the specific curricular goals necessary at the secondary level I wanted to establish a personal vision of teaching social studies.

I dreamed of being a social studies teacher who implements curriculum that is both interesting and relevant to adolescents. Foremost, I envisioned social studies classes as active forums for public discussion, where space was provided for all to speak. I hoped students would engage in stimulating conversations where their ideas shifted, reformulated, resonated. Second, my approach to the discipline involved considerations
of our common humanity - across time, place, and cultures. Implementing this dream involved thinking critically about the ways human societies are organized, and how that might translate to a social studies class. In that class youth would imagine new possibilities of living well together; human to human, human to earth. Students would be actively involved in clarifying humanistic, ethical principles as guideposts for their society. This chapter represents my investigations into the thinking others have done regarding the role of social studies in encouraging philosophical, critical thinking and empathic dispositions in students.

After clarifying my ideals and philosophical orientation toward social studies teaching, the next step was to incorporate the vision mandated through the 1997 Social Studies Integrated Resource Package. After all, I was not teaching in a vacuum. I was responsible to parents, students and the community. I could see that making reasoned judgments and considering multiple perspectives alluded to in the IRP were an indispensable part of my transformative mandate, which was the development of humanistic ethical principles. Signifiers, if you will, of living together well. To define these signifiers students would have to decide what was “not well” in our human realms, and confidently imagine how exemplary human conduct or society might look. To do this we needed to say what is right, wrong, better and best about ourselves. It meant basing such on moral understandings and reasoned analysis of arguments. This scared me. I had no idea how to teach secondary school students these abilities, or even of my right to do so, as a public transmitter of democratic values.

Intuitively, I taught with a point of view that encouraged new possibilities of human progress. I interpreted civilization to mean a society where the human agenda is
constantly under discussion, where possibilities for change exist and injustice is not
tolerated. I believed in my dream of shared vision that maintained the honour of the
individual, perhaps best called a constructive postmodern ideal of humanistic ethical
principles, but I was unsure how to proceed in the teaching.

Historically, the social studies curriculum has included ethical components, and
reflected strong moral orientations through its political structures. Before WWI many
Canadian schools were non-secular but the morals reinforced retained elements of
religiosity. The influence of Egerton Ryerson was most strongly felt, and his version of a
common, theoretically secular curriculum nonetheless continued to reflect the Protestant
values held by many. Furthermore, between WWI and WWII, the American movement
in education focusing on character building and citizenship training was reflected in
Canadian curriculum revisions (Tomkins, 1981, p. 162). In the past there was little room
for the teacher to discuss/interpret/clarify moral positions as the morals of the church, the
foundations of “good character” were well known, and agreed upon.

Teaching reasoned judgment and moral reasoning abilities in the year 2000 has a
completely different flavour. The curriculum provides opportunity, but no clear
direction. Society has compelling reasons (individualism, consumerism, manipulation by
media, decline of religion), but no clear purpose. I felt left to arrive at a curricular
decision, of great importance to the broader community, on my own. I sought guidance
both to ally my fears and enervate my agenda. My idealistic teacher-self had
promulgated a public creed for my social studies teaching, which I called developing
humanistic ethical principles. It was the tenets of that creed, the public values it might
represent, which unsettled me. What could it legitimately encompass, given our liberal
democratic parameters of secularism and individual freedom?

The linking of school and public orthodoxy speaks a hard truth of the role
schools play in society today. Parents, and the public, support the school as an agent of
socialization for the most part passively, seemingly oblivious to the potential of
absolutism. It is this power (to shape values), and the notion of abuse (indoctrination),
that can both drive the topic of moral reasoning underground, or suddenly bring it to the
forefront of the media. A recent example of this occurred in the reporting of the murder
of fourteen-year old Rena Virk in Victoria. Although Rena was not killed at school,
schools were called into question regarding gang prevention and their programs for
dealing with violence. Generally, schools are asked to stop a plethora of social ills
including racism, violence, poor life-style choices, amongst young people. The role
schools are to play in promoting an accepted public creed seems confusing at the best of
times. There is either silence about the function of schools in teaching moral reasoning,
or shrill demands that they do more.

Most important, bearing in mind the moral imperative of teacher as agent of social
change (Fullan, 1993; Giroux, 1988; Nussbaum, 1997), I wondered if social studies could
embrace a notion of public orthodoxy such that young people will go on, buoyed by
eloquent hope, to create better human worlds? This thesis explains the experience of
implementing my classroom project, but it also includes, of necessity, the views of others
that I found relevant both in revealing the function, and directing the form of that project.
Morals and the Public School System

What I was proposing, teaching moral reasoning skills, did not preclude the proper position of other moral agents in an adolescent's life; whether parents, church or community/societal forces. What I needed was reassurance that one could achieve a balance between moral domains or influences, that all the sources of input into forming a student's moral self would be respected. The school system, by teaching a sound process of moral reasoning, could play an important role in helping students to determine the worth of particular moral orientations. To my mind this art of reasoned inquiry embraces a reflective rationality where one knows and forms a self of one's own choosing. The moral reasoning skills students learned would encourage the development of an expressive, adaptive self that is ever aware of others and works vigilantly to create new connected, communicative human worlds. I wanted the threads of conversations we held in class to weave their way into outside dialogues, all adding texture to the tapestry that society creates.

I foresaw, yet welcomed, tension between moral influences. Morality is not, cannot be a static concept. Martin (1995) tells us that "Morality concerns how we should act, but also concerns the kinds of persons we should become, the kinds of relationships we should have, and the kinds of communities and institutions we should promote" (p. 6). Morality, by definition, is evolving and therefore it leaves room for difference. I wanted to provide a philosophical lens to examine moral issues carefully, to inquire into what it means to be human and live a good life. Parents would be involved in a similar process at home, while helping their children build core beliefs and values. The
combination of the two influences, home and school, would assist students in articulating moral decisions in a framework of reasoned analysis. They would be able to rationalize in the following manner, "this is what I believe, this is why I believe it, and this is why it is important".

The work of Kenneth A. Strike (1982) includes determining what might constitute public values, and the role of the public schools, in encouraging students to participate in a liberal democracy. He characterizes public values in the following way: "Kohlberg’s moral views include a set of concepts such as fairness, justice, equality, and respect for persons which form the basis of a liberal democratic view of society. These concepts are thus public values that are legitimately promoted by public schools" (p. 126). Strike (1982) argues that for all learning to be effective, including teaching moral reasoning, knowledge must be combined in a coherent fashion with a student’s private understanding and personal experience. Therefore, a natural interplay should exist between the public and the private in the spheres of moral reasoning. Student life experience and established moral understandings are relevant, and must be considered when teaching moral reasoning. As in teaching any concept, there is incredible power, when a topic under study is brought to fruition, and highlighted, through student example.

It should be a natural function of education to illuminate public morals whilst respecting private morals, through critical analysis. However, it is the flow of information between the two; the interchanges, the junctures, the tensions arising, that I anticipate will be of particular interest. Learning to morally reason together will demand skillful facilitation by the teacher to keep dialogue flowing, yet ease the fears of those who may be afraid of exposing too much of themselves through this process. With a
teacher focusing on open respectful communication in the classroom it seemed possible that the public and private moral spheres of a student would not necessarily compromise one another. The flow of dialogue in the class would be to share our understandings, not to demean or raise points of conflict.

Our Common Humanity

Everyone has a role in the process that Jean Vanier (1998) calls “becoming human”. Vanier (1998) describes this process of becoming, this discovery of common humanity as a challenge:

How difficult it is for human beings to move from the recognition of the ultimate value of their own particular culture and way of life to the acceptance of the value of other cultures and ways of living. This movement implies a weakening in our own certitudes and identity, a shifting of consciousness and a lowering of protective walls. The discovery of our common humanity, beneath our differences, seems for many to be dangerous. (p.49)

The role of the school, the church, the home and the community should, in the best of all possible worlds, be mutually supportive in this regard. It does not mean that we all come to hold the same beliefs. However, acknowledging our common humanity should lead us to see that there are shared moral understandings that help determine right from wrong, because we have similar needs in order to be happy, live well, create, communicate, and be loved; to name but a few.

Crucial to this goal of articulating our common humanity is an empathic and compassionate disposition. As we come to see that the needs of others are the needs of ourselves, so we can become liberated from prejudice and ignorance. We demonstrate sensitivity, understanding and tolerance. Martha Nussbaum (1997) argues for the promotion of empathic dispositions as appropriate public school “practice”. She reminds teachers that the most powerful venue to enhance empathic understandings is through
literature, often considered "outside" of the venue of social studies. The "narrative imagination" Nussbaum (1997) speaks of can develop powerful fellow feeling:

This means the ability to think what it might be like to be in the shoes of a person different from oneself, to be an intelligent reader of the person’s story, and to understand the emotions and wishes and desires that someone so placed might have. (p.27)

This definition of empathy clearly captured for me the attributes of a compassionate individual, and reminded me of the power of fiction/narrative/story to communicate what is often left out of everyday discourse, the voice that lets you into the true being of “another”.

Hannaford (1993), writing on the development of moral reasoning abilities in young children, believes that we are able to understand the wishes and desires of other humans from the age of three, or younger. He claims that one of the most important tasks that we face as a society is to build upon this ability. In Hannaford’s eyes, even young children, “within the limits of situations they can understand, they accept responsibility; they reason and act morally. It comes easily and naturally” (p.75). He gives as examples the ability of pre-school age children to share, cooperate, comfort each other. Brian McCadden (1998) also talks about the interactions between young children in his month long study of kindergarten students. Where the work of Hannaford and McCadden intersect is their shared premise that very young children “care” about other human beings and express that care through their strong need to play and connect with others, a need that McCadden calls relational morality (pg. 71).

As teachers we can continue to build on a child’s empathic tendencies, McCadden’s relationality morality, when we focus their attention from within to without, whenever we seize opportunities to consider the other. As children move to secondary
school we cannot neglect this task because they are older. There is an even greater need to insist on compassion and tolerance as mantras, at this period in life when strong emotions can overpower regard for others. We can help adolescents understand that as their outlooks and dispositions are changing, so are those of their peers. They still need to reach out, include and comfort one another; and they may need help in breaking down the barriers of "coolness" in order to do so.

On a positive note, teenagers are idealistic. They tend to see the problems of human relationship/community as straightforward and easily solved. In teaching social studies we can build on that adolescent quality by helping students envision an ecologically sound world with a wisely considered core of humanistic values. The challenge of our job lies in not just identifying such a world with them, but in helping them see how they could effect change and to move beyond the conversations that we begin in dialogue.

British Columbia, indeed Canada, is a multi-cultural, multi-denominational mosaic. Is it possible to find core humanistic values without stepping on the toes of some students and their beliefs? Nussbaum (1997) argues it has been possible, since the time of the Stoics, and that "certain norms of human well-being and respect for rights will survive critical scrutiny in all places. Confrontation with the different in no way entails that there are no cross-cultural moral standards and that the only norms are those set by each local tradition." (p. 33). Common human needs and responsibilities must be highlighted, and critically compared to particular cultural orientations. The purpose of this analysis is not to offend cultural particularities, but it means living life in the following way:
This means a life that accepts no belief as authoritative simply because it has been handed down by tradition or become familiar through habit, a life that questions all beliefs and accepts only those that survive reason’s demand for consistency and for justification. Training this capacity requires developing the capacity to reason logically, to test what one reads or says for consistency of reasoning, correctness of fact, and accuracy of judgment. (Nussbaum, 1997, p. 9)

It is important to remember that such critical inquiry should not isolate individuals, or remain static after conception. Instead, a new openness to ideas is demanded, and in this state of receptivity, connect humans not only to each other but to their essential humanness. It should bring students together, in logical and heart-felt ways.

Notions of the “Other” as “I”

One of the hurdles that can exist in teaching “reasoned judgment” in a liberal democracy is the deeply entrenched relativist theories held by many youth. In my experience as a social studies teacher students often use the following line of reasoning in their arguments: if I believe it, feel it deeply, it must be true. Fortuitously, the work of Nussbaum (1997) helped me to understand how I might straddle the gulfs of relative values without falling into the voids of subjectivism. One of the foundations of her work in education is that the humanities should be taught through a philosophical framework. She advocates embracing the “other” not as difference to be accepted or respected, but towards establishing the commonalties of human experience. Nussbaum (1997) gently urges education systems to encourage the growth of an ideal world citizenship where “we should not allow differences of nationality or class or ethnic membership or even gender to erect barriers between us and our fellow human beings. We should recognize humanity – and its fundamental ingredients, reason and moral capacity – wherever it occurs” (p.58). It is this broader understanding of human complexity – how we are the
same yet interestingly different that also speaks deeply to me through the writings of Jean Vanier (1998).

Difference is dependent upon personality/self/soul, gender, race, class, religion, national/regional/familial origin, and types of life experiences. Yet, we are all human, and there are common values that allow us to thrive. What I hear in the words of Vanier (1998) and Nussbaum (1997) revolves around a fascinating paradox. Some difference is immutable, exists and is valued. Correspondingly, difference is always in flux, in fluid motion. Every minute that we breathe, interact, live, encapsulates potential for change in the self, or change in our perceptions of difference, through a process of “reasoned judgment” that determines how we might be. Just imagine the possibilities around our conceptions of gender. According to genitalia we are one sex or the other. The construction of the rest is open to negotiation, interpretation, and discussion. Change is possible, and new understandings will flourish if we engage in a continued dialogue of what it means to be male or female. How we are the same/different, in all of the nuances of difference, including gender, is of primary importance as a reference point for class discussions. Within colloquy lies the opportunity for fine-drawn interpretations of “human”, the basis of ethical humanism.

The other, in terms of philosophy and critical theory, is a person different from you, in ways as noted above. In a curious manner though, to empathize with the other, is to lead to understandings of self. I suspect that the central irreducible “I” of the self is often an “other” to many people, but most particularly to adolescents. I agree with Diane Margolis (1998) that self is not a solid construct, indeed as she states, “The self is process. It is ever changing. The images it uses in its reflections are many” (p. 6).
Teachers can work toward creating a comfortable setting for self. It is my aspiration that creating an environment that encourages self-expression allows a truer self to emerge. What I imply by a truer self is one that develops with an awareness of possibilities, that is not thoughtlessly assumed. As teachers of adolescents we are working with at a critical period of wondering who they are, and the ideas we allow in our classrooms can impact developing psyches. We do an injustice to the terrain of all (our) selves if we do not allow ideas of human difference to be explored.

During these heady times of the continued rise of the individual, we have been encouraged to express our individuality, to make our needs known. Perhaps this is one of the reason adolescents today accept difference well, yet retain a strong focus on their own needs, not necessarily those of others. A teacher needs to be aware of a complex interplay of honouring human individuality, yet stressing human commonality, in teaching moral reasoning. Finding what is of common importance to people will make it easier to connect with other human beings, and to consider the broader needs of society, both central to making reasoned judgments. Honouring the particularities of difference will allow these rationalizations to encompass the broad perspective necessary to compose the ever-changing postmodern understandings of what it means to be human.

Schooling in a Liberal Democratic Society

The process of schooling in a true liberal state would play an important role in providing its citizens with the tools to examine and reflect upon itself. The school system is the most logical way in which to achieve this – to teach students the skills to reflect upon the common, the norm, the acceptable. The purpose of acquiring such an ability would be to determine if we wish to continue the ways we currently conduct
human existence upon this planet. Nussbaum (1997) sums it up: “Ethical inquiry
requires a climate in which the young are encouraged to be critical of their habits and
conventions; and such critical inquiry, in turn, requires awareness that life contains other
possibilities” (p.54). Inappropriate ways of living which negatively impact
humanity/world environment can be ascertained, hopefully changed. H.A. Alexander
(1989) describes the orientation of a society that is open to criticism in this way:

Knowledge is neither absolute nor relative but, following Socrates, dynamic.
It changes in response to criticism. Whether in the hands of a few or many,
power ought to be limited and subject to critique. The task of liberal education
on this account involves teaching future citizens the arts of criticism so that
they can uncover the mistakes of their leaders and take responsibility for
themselves. (p. 12)

Determining Inappropriate Discourse

The social studies class can legitimately claim to be a public place where
perceptions of a “good life” can be aired, and checked against standard philosophical
procedures. Asking that private values be articulated as part of such a process might lead
to difficulty. In today’s society youth struggle with many issues – the rise of technology,
rampant consumerism, global networks of corporations, fragmentation of family, little
community spirit (in urban areas particularly), and a heightened discontinuity between
nature and self. The world that Strike (1988) and Alexander (1989) were writing about is
very different from the world youth have been raised in today. A student may bring
strong cultural values into the classroom that the teacher vehemently disagrees with as
they do not reflect the principles of ethical humanism she is trying to call attention to.
These might be matters related to violence, consumption, gender or race. Statements
made in support of these values distinctly undermine principles under exploration in
order to make reasoned judgments. If the teacher abruptly shuts down the speaker there
is an issue of freedom of speech, not to mention personal self-worth, for the individual whose beliefs have been vigorously attacked.

To address the question of freedom of speech calls to mind the importance of teaching moral reasoning abilities. Yes, one must proceed carefully in valuing student input and thought. I intend to tread lightly with the following thoughts in mind. It is important to give voice and let self establish a venue through speech. However, it will be equally important not to allow dialogism to disintegrate into expressions of hatred, violence or disrespect for others. The relationship of teacher to students is extremely important in how such statements are handled in the classroom. It is critical for students to feel that the teacher understands and values them, even though their behaviour is questionable at times. This is the type of care that a parent can demonstrate for a rebellious teenager. Parents of such a teenager let them know that they will always love them no matter what they have done, but there are boundaries for civilized human conduct. These parameters are clearly defined, with relevant justifications and the expectation that their behaviour will change accordingly. The role of the teacher is somewhat different because they are not the parent, but the mandate of our profession, that we act always in the ways of a judicious parent, is a wise guiding principle for class discussions around controversial topics.

The teacher’s role in class discussions that involve reasoned judgment is one of promoter/encourager/facilitator/clarifier, not a censor. However, censure may be directed toward student comments by either students or the teacher. This is done not to stop students from talking, but because the questioner is seeking clarification, asking for an opportunity for rebuttal, or to clarify if the statement made is a valid point one would
raise in an argument. Once the students have acquired moral reasoning abilities this will be a very natural aspect of classroom discourse. If a student asks “I wonder how you know that to be right?” we now have the beginnings of an interesting debate, not a shutting down of an individual and their ideas.

It must be made clear to students it is appropriate to disapprove of ideas being espoused, not the individual themselves. A line of reasoning, a methodology of inquiry, must be evidenced in what students say. Seyla Benhabib (1992) advises that as democratic citizens we are participating in a debate where all moral arguments legitimately belong in public conversation. In her words, “For it is only after the dialogue has been opened in this radical fashion that we can be sure that we have come to agree upon a mutually acceptable definition of the problem rather than reaching some compromise consensus” (p. 99). This conversational and democratic ideal can only be achieved if students have a level of rationality where they are able to self-monitor their arguments, by working to identify the underlying ethical humanistic principles.

There will be instances where the teacher needs to take control of the discussion, such as a statement where a student advocates or demonstrates blatant underpinnings of racism or violence. The goal of such an intervention should be to call student attention back to the ideals of moral inquiry, which include considering the common good and supporting one another in developing our human potential. As students develop greater facility in moral intelligence they will readily discern poor moral arguments in their own thinking, hopefully before adding them to the class conversation. Looking within, they will be able to detect lines of reasoning that only promote hatred, without intervention from the teacher. Benhabib’s democratic ideal of arriving at consensus, not compromise,
may not always be possible. However, it encourages the teacher to have faith in the reasoning process, to not fear what students may say, and to work towards establishing what we believe to be important ethical principles. These are principles we can agree upon, thereby achieving the consensus Benhabib advocates.

**Questioning Liberal Democratic Society**

According to both Strike (1982) and John Gatto (1992) public schools currently occupy too large a piece of the educational pie. As Strike states “the expansion of public schooling has occurred at the expense of the educational capacity of family, community and church” (p. 89). Whether the expansion of schooling has caused decreased educational input from outside sources, or is directly related to the decline of such is an arguable point. However, due to a variety of factors, schools have an increasingly important role to play in the area of public values.

Unarguably, the weakening of socializing influences is related to the changing circumstances of an increasingly industrial “modern” society. Some of those factors include both parents involved in the work world, children who are raised in day-care situations for much of their youth, the decline of organized spirituality, the rise of mind-numbing television, expanding urban centres, and increased pressure to acquire an ever-expanding pile of consumer goods. It is not my intention to insist that this “shopping-list” of some of the outgrowths of modernity should compel us to provide philosophical instruction and teach moral reasoning skills in our public school systems. However, it is apparent that the social phenomena of growing ease of life in the 21st century, offset by a culture on the cusp of social change, may be of great interest to explore in our classrooms.
A school creates and is a community; albeit a community segregated as to age and institutionalized as to structure. Strike’s rather depressing view that “public schools can be seen as ideal institutions for a society that wishes to commit cultural suicide” (p. 89), does not have to be realized. If people gain the skills both inside and outside of school where they can make “reasoned judgments” in a manner that enhances their ability to envision themselves as contributing members of society then schools will have an opposite effect. We could utilize the potential within the community of school to encourage participation and contribution by its youthful members. Such change would arise from a position of heightened awareness and the capacity to formulate other ways of being human, in a school, together.

There is an inherent difficulty with the broad-reaching capabilities of a schooling system within a liberal democratic society. If the Canadian school system, which involves all citizens from the ages of five to eighteen, takes its responsibilities to democratic principles seriously it would instruct students to critically analyze, perhaps even develop, the set of principles on which such a liberal democratic society should be based. As Giroux (1988) puts it, “Within this perspective, critical reflection and action become part of a fundamental social project to help students develop a deep and abiding faith in the struggle to overcome economic, political and social injustices, and to further humanize themselves as part of this struggle” (p. 127). This level of analytical ability threatens some of the present ideological underpinnings of our society. Public schools and teachers have a moral obligation to promote liberal democratic norms through careful philosophical analysis even though some of those same norms may be called into question. This is a logical consequence of asking that students in our secondary schools
are encouraged to make "reasoned judgments". Having students question norms can be unsettling, but sits well with a transformative mandate.

The discussion in this chapter has focused on the curricular dilemma I agonized over. I wondered how to teach in ways that honoured the discussion of difficult, controversial questions while maintaining the egalitarian ideals of our society. I wanted to uphold democratic principles while encouraging students to consider multiple perspectives and make reasoned judgments. I started with a belief that we study the social sciences in order to learn how we can live well together. My research, which I have attempted to summarize in this chapter, leads to the following vision for my practice:

To teach social studies is to enable citizens to acquire the dispositions/abilities to continually redefine their society and its structures. We teach this subject to honour individual rights, purposes, and notions of the good life. This must be balanced with the notion that a just society is one that must guarantee individual rights without negating or sacrificing essential conceptions of the common good.

One of our most complex tasks in social studies teaching will be to refine the guiding principles of our liberal Canadian vision of society towards the continued enhancement of our created, human worlds. We can become wiser and act in better ways, if we acknowledge that our structures and ways of knowing are not absolutes. For human society is truly a "work in progress". All concepts, most particularly the ideals of fairness, justice, equality, and respect for persons, which Strike (1988, p. 126) purports to legitimately form a theory of moral education in the public school system, need clarification, continued adjustment. In scrutinizing our ideals we better see how we
might be. This is the lesson to learn as we attend to the world around us, as we listen to the stories from history, as we hear one another give voice to human sensitivity and creativity.

The potential to be an ethical humanist resides in all of us. Each person has an intuitive framework that only requires prompting and fleshing out to become an autonomous, rational, moral agent. Students may already have a sense of their own moral intelligence but at their youthful stage in life are often unsure of their own voice, and the voice of others (peers, popular culture, etc.) tends to issue forth from their bodies. Somewhere inside lurks that strong self, capable of creating a purposeful life and treating others well in a just, equitable, free society. One needs to search within for self, while simultaneously reaching toward the “other”, a duality of allowing/giving that extends the meaning of humanity throughout our communities.

I felt invigorated by my investigations yet nonetheless challenged. How could this vision be translated into lessons with students? In chapter 3 I will discuss the more pragmatic side of developing the Shared Learnings Unit for use in the classroom.
Chapter 3

Developing a Pedagogy of Moral Inquiry

But it isn’t facts that deaden the minds of young children, who are storing facts in their minds every day with astonishing voracity. It is incoherence – our failure to ensure that a pattern of shared, vividly taught, and socially enabling knowledge will emerge from our instruction.

Matthew Lipman (1988)

Researching Teaching

In writing this thesis I am exploring the process that I work with and through in my practice as a secondary social studies teacher. It is a teacher’s experience, the lived practice of questioning the overarching goal and purpose of teaching social studies, as stated in the curriculum document we work with. It involves finding out what others have thought on the topic of active, responsible citizenship; wondering how to teach toward achieving this goal in students; watching and reflecting during the teaching; then drawing some conclusions about what transpired. It is an undertaking teachers approach daily, as they mediate and negotiate the text of curriculum between self, theory and others (students). I share what I have learned about the complexities of our endeavours as social studies teachers when we raise controversial topics such as land treaties, or the impact of residential schools on First Nations peoples.

In my investigations and reflections I listened to the perturbations felt within as potential for further insights. I have attempted to put myself forward honestly, to identify the struggles and successes felt in learning how to teach people to make reasoned
judgments, and why it might be important to do so. In the last ten years, since I became certified as a teacher, I have struggled to combine the complimentary, yet distinct worlds of university thinking about teaching, and the reality of the craft. The world of theory, and the world of school; I wondered how to better connect the two. And so I looked to teacher research as a means of resolving some of this personal dilemma. Could theory better inform my practice, and could the practice enhance the theory I was studying? I wished to belong to the community of researchers, speaking out from within the classroom, although I did feel what Stenhouse (1985) so astutely pinpoints, “What teachers most often lack is confidence and experience in relating theory to design and in the conduct of research work” (p. 16).

I also wondered, as does John Willinsky (1992), what education makes of the world, what we make of education, and most importantly that “This basic premise – that we are accountable for this education that we live by – calls for an active researching of this faith or investment (depending on your metaphorical tendencies) in education” (p. 331). If to no one else, I needed to be accountable to myself for what I made of the curriculum, and the teaching I wanted to do to support my understandings. Additionally, I believed as Eleanor Duckworth (1986) did, that my research would contribute to “knowledge of curriculum possibilities” (p. 493), for it questioned curriculum boundaries, and what is of importance to learn in school. This research signals a new phase in my professional practice; whereby I am striving to raise socially critical consciousness and consistent thoughtfulness in students. It has given me an opportunity to firmly ground my reasons for doing so, and to experiment with the ideal in authentic ways. My boisterous grade nine class would serve well as the experiential vehicle.
I have looked at myself, and the research is written through myself; but this piece of teacher research also embodies other voices and perspectives. I hope that the childrens’ voices will sound strongly through the text of Chapter Four. I have tried to situate my work in a broader societal context. I have looked to other sources, some with a view to the particulars of education; but many that discuss moral reasoning from other fields, primarily philosophy but also sociology, anthropology, theology, and psychology. In striving to find a balance in my research between analyzing the theoretical and examining the practical (the preparation and teaching of my unit) I agreed with Newby (1997) that it is important to avoid the “extreme of undertaking academic research in education without grounding it in real practice and the real circumstances in which education is being undertaken” (p. 84). I sought to create this balance, to honour the particularity of my teaching experience while considering the larger pedagogical and social framework that exists around moral reasoning.

I thought teaching moral reasoning to be a socially critical aspect of teaching social studies but I had not resolved how to include it in my practice. Through teacher research I am seeking to understand the “fit” between what I feel is important to do, what the school system is asking me to do, and then how I might do it. I am in no position yet to challenge whether the social studies curriculum has a goal statement that is appropriate. What I am questioning is what to make of the “mission statement”, and how to teach toward it; keeping within our understandings of what is appropriate social studies content in a public school system.

This research is an investigation of the personal, wrapped up in the professional self. I started from a place that made me nervous and uncertain of my role, which was
how to teach people to make reasoned judgments. I had to first examine this place of uncertainty, to get down to the bottom of it. This meant that I read, wrote and reflected on the meaning and implications of active, reflective citizenship, which became the focus of Chapter 2. Next, I wondered how you learn to judge in a reasoned manner and that process forms part of this chapter, where I explore what I included in the Shared Learnings unit, and what I based those inclusions upon. The unit itself is included in the appendix. It is a tentative exploration, one way of honouring the controversial topics that are critical to the Shared Learnings curriculum, of teaching those topics to grade 9 students.

During the teaching of the unit I will employ data collection methods which include keeping a personal journal, collecting samples of written student work, and recording discussions that took place in the classroom. In analyzing the data I hope to subsume myself within it; on the one hand with as much distance as possible for fresh perspective, and on the other as one intrinsically bound to the research as a co-participant, to plumb the depth of that experience. In this research process I am looking to identify new questions that I asked, persistent questions that arose, new insights as they developed, and fresh interpretations of the larger purpose of teaching social studies.

Planning a Moral Reasoning Unit

The Shared Learnings unit I have developed examines controversial topics by looking at the construction of valid arguments, involves moral reasoning, and draws attention to ethical principles. In speaking of moral reasoning I envisioned the model proposed by Robert Hannaford (1993) and stated thus: “Moral reasoning focuses on what we ought to do in a situation where we consider what others want or might want to do:
it's about doing” (p. 5). Central to moral reasoning then is the ability to consider what others want or feel, to comprehend the equality of persons, and to care about outcomes for others. It is my hope, and my work is predicated upon the belief, that this ability is intrinsic to human nature. I agree with Hannaford (1993) that we are fundamentally oriented to be interested in one another, and that “openness before others and respect for them are its natural expressions, and thus, honesty and justice are fulfillments of that natural interest” (p. 99). Although I accept that the ability to morally reason already exists within students, the purpose of the *Shared Learnings* unit is to facilitate a “drawing out” of critical capacity in students, in all of their reasoning processes, including this one.

When working with my Grade 9 class from February to April 25th, 2000, I paid attention to the kind of critical climate created in the classroom, in preparation for the *Shared Learnings* unit. I placed more emphasis than I had in the past on the work of the anthropologist and how cultural characteristics come to be identified and detailed in textbooks. For instance, while studying First Nations, I asked the students to consider not just what we know about the Coast Salish before the arrival of Europeans, but how we came to know it. We wondered about the problems inherent in “summarizing” a whole long-standing human society such as the Coast Salish into two pages of a social studies textbook. We also considered the sweeping generalizations that people in the future might make about the turn of the 21st century, and how they saw themselves in those statements. Through these “foundational” activities I hoped to deepen connections and understandings between people in the past and the concerns of people today; striving to uncover the humanity and acknowledge the fallibility in the scripts we write of ourselves and others.
In addition to the climate I was purposefully creating in the classroom, I began a research process that focused on finding work that related directly to the planning of the *Shared Learnings* unit. I looked to critical thinking and philosophy, as they both contained useful information that pertained to teaching moral reasoning, within their broader mandates. Three particular sources provided additional inspiration and guidance in the planning of the classroom unit. I found Vincent Ruggiero’s (1998) thoughts and exercises to improve the “habits of the mind” helpful for structuring activities around analyzing arguments and detecting bias. I accessed a textbook called *Critical Thinking*, and in particular a chapter entitled *Moral, Legal and Aesthetic Reasoning*, separately written by Rosenstand and Silvers, for ideas. Most importantly, I drew upon the work of Matthew Lipman in *Philosophy Goes to School* (1988) and *Philosophy in the Classroom* (1980). His experiences, reflections, and palpable enthusiasm regarding teaching philosophy to students of all ages allowed me to bring my idea to fruition with some measure of confidence that it is possible, and desirable, to teach moral reasoning skills to junior high school students.

Lipman’s fundamental approach to teaching philosophy looks to the dialogical inquiry of Socrates and Plato as a basis for the classroom of today. He advocates that philosophy then, as now, should be simple, popularly accessible, yet at the same time rich and multi-leveled. His classroom model encourages children to think logically, without forsaking the affective domain, or negating the worth of their own experiences. His ability to make philosophy comprehensible for all students inform the theory and practice of my teaching methodology in the unit.
In teaching philosophy, Lipman (1980) stresses the importance of studying real issues with children, not just reflecting on abstract notions such as “free will and determinism” (p. 190). Students are certainly capable of understanding such terms but they can better relate to real events, people and their problems. As Lipman (1980) says, “This is not to say that the principles do not enter into their thinking. But they enter in as guiding ideals in their everyday behavior” (p. 201). Although the Shared Learnings topics were of broad concern, they were also stories of real people, to the extent of involving all of us in the classroom to some degree. I tried then to enhance the “human” within the topics as I planned the unit.

Lipman (1980) maintains that rigorous thinking can be taught in schools. In this regard he holds that formal logic is a helpful process, but that teaching philosophy should also include close examinations of the complexity of situations, and the human dynamics evident and imbedded within. Such reasoning would never preclude creative ideas or real-life examples from students, even if they take one outside of the rigidity of formal logic. For instance, in Lipman’s (1980) discussion of moral reasoning and logical fallacies, he argues that the framework of such reasoning is valid only if the second premise as stated, can be read by students as being clearly cruel, neglectful, abusive, etc.

I kept this principle in my mind while I planned, particularly regarding the impact of residential schools on the Aboriginal students who attended them. Although my time frame for teaching was short (three weeks for the whole unit), I knew that the complexity of the residential school situation – the views of the state, the church, and the varying experiences of individual students were all critical to achieving understanding. In other words, residential schools were cruel and abusive for many people in many ways. But
other considerations needed to be heard. What were the intents and purposes of the schools? Were there positive aspects, and if so what might they include? Why were the churches involved in schools? What are the long-term impacts for families beyond the initial cruel treatment received in the school? I understood from Lipman that it is in the inter-play of respectful dialogue that students can come to understand that “only sensitivity in our judgment – only the ability to perceive and read the situation in all its complexity – can help us” (p. 193).

Classroom Communication

In these activities, as in the rest of the unit, I incorporated Lipman’s (1980) advice that ordinary language be used for moral inquiry, for it is essential that “philosophical thinking among children should be encouraged to take place in the terms and concepts of the ordinary language with which children are comfortable” (p. 43). As an example, in writing student handouts, although I used the word “premises”, I purposely emphasized the words “claims”, and “strong words” to assist student understanding. It wasn’t that I wanted to withhold language from students, but I didn’t want to create unnecessary hurdles for student involvement. I included the terms specific to philosophy, planning to acknowledge them as such. To assist students in understanding them I thought of stories I could package them in, or “back-up” terms that were already accessible to them.

Furthermore, I sensed from Lipman’s outlook a strong embracement of the heterogeneous classroom, and the diversity contained within this most public of places. He welcomes the “other”; the different beliefs, the plurality of thinking styles, the variety of lifestyles and experiences that can be drawn from within the public classroom. In discussions, a central tenet of his methodology, the speech of all children was not only
accepted, but encouraged and supported throughout. Acknowledging Lipman’s wise counsel regarding the importance of communication, I committed to a use of language in the classroom that leads to understanding, enhances shared experience, enlivens dialogue, invigorates the atmosphere and equalizes by moving beyond issues of power and prestige.

Lipman further clarifies the teacher’s role in class communication. In examining a moral issue, he asks that students first identify and share their “gut feelings” about an event. In my teaching I planned to try this by asking students for immediate feedback on how they felt about an article we had read, or a video we viewed together. I wanted to give voice in this “free way” of accessing self, but I worried that it might leave the discussions too open. Knowing grade 9 students and their desire to impress their peers, some might feel it was acceptable to make derogatory or negative comments. Lipman (1980) is quick to point out that although he expects the teacher to be very accepting of student viewpoints that she will also provide the procedures of inquiry, to seek out the foundations and implications of beliefs, without casting blame or aspersion. This is not to be confused with what he terms “mischievously abetting a reflective relativism even more deleterious and subversive than a mindless relativism” (Lipman, 1980, p. 45). I didn’t want us to end up floundering in a sea of reflective relativism but I wanted to keep voice alive, to encourage all to speak freely, to keep the conversational ball rolling. In the classroom I would have to balance openness to verbal expression with the skills of logic, always tempered with the principles that guide a liberal democratic society, without stopping dialogue.
A Methodology of Teaching Moral Reasoning

Lipman (1980) asks that teachers encourage intellectual diversity while at the same time “giving children practice in determining the grounds on which some reasons are to be preferred over other reasons in justifying moral beliefs, training them to recognize inconsistencies in argument, and getting them to see the relationship between theory and practice (p. 47). I agreed with Lipman but the question I was left struggling with in planning my unit of study involved clearly defining the next step for students, moving beyond the initial sharings of whether something is right or wrong.

I looked first to a model of argument analysis which involved evaluating factual claims, fallacies and red herrings. These critical thinking skills would be necessary when we examined the claims that First Nations people were making regarding land, and their right to restitution related to residential schools. However, there was much more to these issues than casting a critical eye to the appropriateness of the claims. Two other notions were paramount to my vision of building constructive postmodernist ideals. These two aspects involved formulating strong empathic connections with the “other”, and understanding the ethical principles that guide human conduct. In the end, three components developed as part of my unit. These components are argument analysis, forging connections to other, and examination of our moral outlooks.

Argument Analysis

I began the unit on teaching moral reasoning abilities, off the agenda of the Shared Learnings curriculum. I did so in response to a Red Cross speaker that had come to speak about landmines and to advocate for their continued removal. I saw the potential in an article he had brought with him to examine well-presented arguments for their
validity, in better ways than what I had originally devised in the Shared Learnings unit. Students were asked to examine another point of view, after being exposed to a particular piece of writing brought forward by the Red Cross speaker. One was anti-landmine, an actual op-ed piece about cluster bombs; the other was pro-landmine, and written by an imaginary engineer I called Clive Pritchard.

To assist students in comparing the validity of both arguments, I provided an “argument analysis thinking frame” where they would identify claims, the conclusion, red herrings, and finally make a judgment about the argument. In this first activity, before we focused on the Shared Learnings curriculum, I hoped for several outcomes. First, I wanted to build a foundation of logical reasoning skills necessary to dissect an argument, and examine it for its validity. Second, we needed to practice respectful dialogue concerning an emotional topic, especially one where children their own age were involved. Third, it was a clear instance of a case the students had already been exposed to, where they could easily connect with the others involved, even though they did not know them personally – both the children hurt by landmines, and the military engineers that were working to protect people and territory.

Considering the Ethical Theories of Kant and Mill

At this point in the planning process I had considered Lipman’s advice in creating a supportive community in the classroom that allowed voice, encouraging the telling of real-life experiences, and teaching how to determine a valid argument. I was ready to move on to the next step – the reasoning and identification of underlying ethical principles that apply to large societal issues such as the resolution of land claims, or the impact of residential schools on Canada’s Aboriginal peoples. When considering how to
get students thinking beyond an emotional response to these two topics I had the following questions: If we feel something is wrong, what can we base that on? Are there some principles that can test our reasoning and help analyze the validity of our feelings? How might such principles be arrived at by a society? What principles should a society concern itself with? Critical thinking, drawing from standard philosophical argument analysis, in and of itself, did not do the complete job I envisioned.

In order to do the job well Lipman (1988) states: “In forging the policies by which we choose to live, either as individuals or as nations, we would find it costly to overlook Kant’s maxim” and “the same may be said of the utilitarian approach favored by Mill” (p. 52). Giving students some exposure to the philosophical theories of Kant or Mill allows them a fair opportunity to examine both the intuitive and logical in moral reasoning. Most importantly, using moral theories drawn from standard ethics study assuaged my fears that I was not involved in some heinous process of indoctrination, by imposing my ethical guiding principles upon unsuspecting youth. David Smith (1997) wondered, as I did, “what are the safeguards to ensure that one’s teaching practices are not simply the manifestation of a new blind narcissism or a celebration of a newly realized subjectivity?” (p. 274).

The teacher has a very sensitive role when teaching moral reasoning abilities. Lipman (1980) defines the teacher’s role in this regard as “not that of a supplier of values or morals, but that of a facilitator and clarifier of the valuing process” (p. 165). Lipman suggests the following “format” as a criteria list for helping students determine if an action is moral or not:
1. How does the action affect them? How does it affect the structure of their habits and character? How does it affect the direction of their lives?

2. How does the action affect other people around them?

3. How does the action affect the institutions of the society of which they are a part?

These questions seemed to be worthwhile to use in raising problems and issues, in drawing out experience, but I wasn’t sure that based on this alone students could decide if an action was moral or not. I planned to use these questions in discussions, but I worried that we might find ourselves mired in a plethora of experiences, impressions and emotions with no clear direction, in the end, for making a reasoned judgment. I wanted students to understand that there are fundamental ethics at work in any philosophical argument, and I planned to introduce Kant and Mill as examples of people who helped to establish the ethical foundation we currently work from to determine morality.

The philosophical theories of Kant and Mill were the touchstones of security I needed to legitimize the ethical principles students could form moral understandings around. The ethical principles I promoted included showing care and compassion for others, and developing new understandings of human dignity. In learning about the theories of Kant and Mill students would have their first exposure to the principles developed by individual philosophers by applying them to the problems we had at hand. Knowing myself, and that I can easily be sidetracked in my teaching, I anticipated using them as a way to stay focused on the task I had designed. When learning about reasoned judgment I wanted students to examine how we can legitimately decide that something is right or wrong. I hoped students would be able to apply knowledge of ethics to new moral problems as they arose within our discussions of these topics, and others.
Drawing from Lipman’s understandings of these principles, and a Philosophy 400 course I had taken called “Morals, Politics and the Individual”, I created reference sheets for students that detailed Mill’s utilitarian approach to ethics and Kant’s categorical imperative. I planned to use these during the teaching of Focuses Five and Six, when we would determine the impact of residential schools and consider the claims that Aboriginals made to land. In putting forward classical theories of ethics to students I did not propose them as the only way to reason our way through what is right or wrong. They were theories that I was somewhat comfortable using, and had been commonly used in philosophy to analyze difficult issues, especially when a multiplicity of conflicting views makes it difficult to determine right action.

To give students experience in actually working with the principle of utilitarianism I utilized a pro/con list, similar to an example given in the Critical Thinking (1995) textbook. When considering the impact of residential schools students will generate a list of both the positive impacts (pros) and the negative consequences (cons). From there they assign a numerical value from −10 to +10 to each item on the list, depending on its perceived “severity”, the amount of happiness or unhappiness that it caused. Using a mathematical calculation, the higher value will reflect minimized unhappiness, and therefore the higher utility. I wanted them to consider the overall impact of residential schools, yet to see how difficult it is to say that they were “bad” or “good”. I also wanted students to face generalizability – that capturing the experience of all people involved was very difficult. I wasn’t sure the principle of utilitarianism would be very useful in teaching moral reasoning, but I thought it did tend to draw out the complexity of the situation.
I was worried about using this principle for several different reasons. Although useful in many circumstances, it deals little with the issue of what is fair and just for the individuals involved, not just the “greater good”. For instance, if you are looking at a summation of overall consequences, you may overlook glaring injustice when it only affects a small number of people, or is only one aspect of the overall picture. Additionally troublesome is the concept of happiness. What is happy? Are happy and pleasurable different? Does happy always translate to good/right? Is the word happiness the best choice when speaking of the greater good of the community? I hoped to raise some of these concerns, or that students might notice them, when we worked with this theory.

The other principle I planned to reference in the unit, found in Focus Five, was developed by Immanuel Kant. Kant insisted that some things are always right or wrong, no matter the overall consequence on a utilitarian scale. Kant identified guiding moral principles through a "test" of universalizing the principle at stake. Utilizing Kant’s theories Lipman (1988) advises that moral law is universal and that “each of us must act as all of us ought to act . . . in other words, what sort of world would it be if everyone were to act this way?” (p. 52). Or, to quote from Kant’s treatise, Grounding For The Metaphysics of Morals:

Therefore I need no far-reaching acuteness to discern what I have to do in order that my will may be morally good. Inexperienced in the course of the world and incapable of being prepared for all its contingencies, I only ask myself whether I can also will that my maxim should become a universal law. If not, then the maxim must be rejected. (p. 15).

I intended to teach this categorical imperative, and to add three “rules” that I understood to be part of Kant’s theories. I summarized them for students in the following
manner: each person is a rational being, each person is an “end-in-themselves”, and each person operates with good will, wanting to do what is right. I made this information available on two separate reference pages for students to work from. My intention was to have students consider Kant’s ethical principles regarding the claims of “both sides” to land, in response to the question posed as the title of a video we viewed entitled “Whose Land Is This?” One of the key considerations is whether we would be able to universalize the way in which the Aboriginal peoples were given reserve land after the Europeans came to the Americas. I thought the following questions would be important in this regard: If everyone acted in this way what might happen to where they now lived? What would happen to the European concept of land ownership?

I was interested in seeing how or if ethical principles would help students of this age to reason, and found Moore & Parker’s (1995) Critical Thinking textbook served as a useful resource in this regard. The authors utilize both utilitarianism and Kant’s duty theory as ways to examine judgments. Moore & Parker (1995) argue that for a set of facts to proceed to a conclusion about what “ought to be done” often involves a missing but assumed “moral statement” based on an ethical principle. They give an example of a common type of argument that contains a non sequitur, and the missing moral statement is that “child abuse is wrong” (p. 384). The authors state that to make a valid deductive argument it is often necessary to include a moral statement about what is right, wrong or ought to be.

When we disagree about a moral conclusion (one that expresses a value) then we may have to articulate the value-expressing premise as the point where disagreement happens, not necessarily the factual premises. For instance, in the case of land claims, I
thought that a statement such as “Aboriginal peoples should be compensated with land
grants and money as recompense for the land they lost” involves a premise that “taking
land from people is wrong”. I was interested in having students first wonder about, then
investigate, how we knew this was wrong. I wanted to access our feelings on this and
other matters but I also hoped that students could tie their reaction to the philosophical
ethical principles that apply, in this case, to the social and political issue of taking/owning
land.

Kant and Mill seemed worthwhile avenues to pursue, and came well
recommended by the other educators I had referenced. Furthermore, these “orientations”
to deriving guiding ethical principles are alive and well in today’s world. Utilitarianism,
in particular, may be skewed through the lens of individualism, and the equation of
pleasure with happiness, but I thought it would be comprehensible to children. The
categorical imperative was easily explained I hoped as a version of the Golden Rule, and
Kant’s ideal of not using people as only means to an end could be brought forward
through a recent tragic event we had discussed in current events – the kidnapping of a
young girl by a friend of the family. It seemed that I could provide connections to these
principles from student experience, and frame them in language that was accessible to
grade nine students. My purpose in doing so was to give access to some of the tools that
people have used to determine moral action and greater good, alongside what they were
learning about well reasoned arguments.

Yet I did wonder how relevant the theories of Kant and Mill might be to students
and the issues they will face in the 21st century; deeply rooted as they are in the
enlightenment project, the growth of modern liberalism, and to some extent ancient
Greek philosophy. However, I thought these philosophical approaches demonstrated quite clearly that we can think about what it means to be human in a broad sense; across the religious, cultural, gendered and societal differences that exist in human worlds. Furthermore, I hoped these considerations would give students exposure to the reality and the difficulty of defining fundamental ethical principles upon which to base a well-lived life within a societal structure, called democracy, that allowed such.

**Importance of Shared Learnings Curriculum**

In the past I had emphasized the somewhat superficial aspects of First Nations peoples lives prior to European contact; how they got by in the world. There was no effort on my part to link these anthropological understandings to the lived issues surrounding Aboriginal peoples today. There are very real current issues of justice and retribution, of far greater import to people in Nanaimo, than what the Inuit ate three hundred years ago. Although not exhaustive, such issues include land claims, residential schools, persistent racism, reserves, treaties, taxation policies, graduation rates, and self-government. The fact that this list exists is cause enough for the First Nations peoples to approach the United Nations with their concerns. Although the United Nations may shame the people of Canada into addressing some of the pressing social justice issues within our country, it is also possible for the school system to raise awareness of these issues.

As a social studies teacher, raising awareness of these sensitive areas means providing an appropriate forum for open public discussion where we can critically examine what our country is doing, and how, as thoughtful citizens, we envision an appropriate response. I saw my research as “being strategic critical pedagogic action on
the part of classroom teachers aimed at increasing social justice” (Tripp, 1990, p. 161). After our Shared Learnings study students should be able to articulate Aboriginal issues in new ways, from other views.

Seeing Aboriginal issues in new ways means raising awareness of the impact of European colonization to peoples that had their cultures almost obliterated. It demands we consider how we wish to treat others, and how we wish to be treated ourselves. It involves wondering how we can come together now, with shared purpose, bridging the damage of the last five hundred years. It will mean acknowledging wrongful action with a view to establishing just, equitable relationships, both in personal and larger societal spheres.

This process of analysis, inherent within the Shared Learnings unit, will require a multiplicity of levels of knowledge, skills and dispositions. Regarding knowledge, there is some factual information to be shared, but the existence of differing worldviews must be considered. There are critical thinking skills relating to argument analysis to be learned and emphasized throughout. Much of what I hope to accomplish though will hinge upon the enhancement of disposition. It will be necessary for students, and myself, to examine what we value about the integrity, dignity and worth of persons. Then we need to examine the “fit” between our values, and the reality, as it has been expressed towards persons of Aboriginal ancestry. In examining such values, it will be necessary to speak openly about the realities of justice, equity and the good life for Aboriginals. I am asking students to demonstrate heightened empathic rationality, an exploration of reflexivity that we often avoid in the school system.
In planning this unit I do not know if this ideal of discourse will transpire in the classroom. What I do know is that as a social studies teacher, and a human being alive in Canada today, I must try. It is a project that I fear but feel challenged by. I know that much of what is essential to achieving the heightened understandings, the formation of new solutions, the building of new societies together, is based upon an ideal of communication that is most difficult to create within a school system. It is not the nature of the place to encourage honest and open sharing. Compounding that problem is the reality that values today are usually thought of in regard to what one can acquire, not what one believes. Students are of an age when they care most for what their peers think of them and they may carefully monitor what they say. Furthermore, there are the deeply entrenched roles of the “players” in the dramatic setting of the classroom. Students strive to be “right” in their answers and the teacher is trained to evaluate correct thinking. I anticipate a struggle in achieving open and respectful dialogue about real values but it will be a worthwhile one to be faced in the discussion of controversial topics.

At the end of this researching and planning phase of the project I feel torn and somewhat confused. I'm confident the project is a worthwhile one, for it raises consciousness about important social justice issues that exist in a country that espouses otherwise through its constitution, laws and established policies. Although practicing reflective citizenship and making reasoned judgments appears within the domain of the social studies curriculum, it demands careful consideration upon where the public and the private separate, and where they appropriately converge. I approach the classroom cautiously in this regard, hoping to teach and reach in ways that honour ourselves yet
elevate us to new prospects as a human collective. Implementing the Shared Learnings unit still remained to be done. What evolved is the subject under discussion in Chapter 4.
Chapter 4

Into the Classroom

What all races need to do is work together and share the land
to ensure peace and longevity.
Dora (14)

In this chapter I discuss my experiences teaching the Shared Learnings unit from April 25th to May 12th, 2000 in a Social Studies 9 class and my reflections on social and pedagogical issues that arose for me at the time. Those reflections reference how the issues changed not only unit plans but may continue to influence my practice. I examine three orientations that framed my work teaching moral reasoning, as well as areas within each of the three themes that surfaced strongly as points of pedagogical tension or personal dilemma. First, I describe the underlying principles that inform the project. Second, I explore my emphasis on teaching students to seek alternatives and develop solutions, and the impact that has on teaching how to make a reasoned judgment. Third, I look at my attempts to raise students’ awareness of injustice, and the critical import of that outlook. The final page includes an outline of the three-week unit, to identify for the reader the days when specific lessons took place.

In writing the text I have included transcribed taped comments from students, presenters, myself; and excerpts from student writing. The student writing has been unedited, appearing as originally written. Student names used throughout the thesis are pseudonyms. Hopefully this writing provides a glimpse into a dynamic classroom; a vibrant, creative group of individuals. Listening to the tapes takes me back to the atmosphere of that room with lots of giggling, a little whistling, always a hum of
wonderful human noise. As the study concluded a month before school was out, the
weather is emergent summer and the atmosphere is charged with a sense of imminent
freedom. It was a time of change, a time of possibility, a time to enter into new
conversations in a class overflowing with youthful enthusiasm.

In planning the Shared Learnings unit it was an important part of my research to
monitor the achievement of my pedagogical goal, which was teaching the ability to make
a reasoned judgment. The skills I taught were learned not only in direct instruction but
during the give and take of discussion, field experience, and listening to others. When
teaching about controversial topics contained within the Shared Learnings curriculum I
turned student attention toward empathizing and critical thinking; always promoting
strong engagement with the topics. This process of heightening awareness of human and
social issues was subtle; took spontaneous, uncontrolled diversions; and was difficult to
evaluate. Nonetheless, I was teaching the ability to make a reasoned judgment, as
evidence of ethics and soundly reasoned arguments began to appear in student work. It
was how I was teaching this ability that caught my interest, resulting in a shift in focus
from the performance of students to the pedagogy I was developing.

In the process of teaching I found partial answers to how I was promoting my
vision of social studies. I was helping students to see critical issues of justice and equity,
and it was interesting to examine how that transpired. A growing sense of this focus is
evident in my journal entry from May 5th, at the end of the second week, a day when we
watched part a video called “Kuper Island: Return To the Healing Circle”:

It is times like this if I wonder if I am teaching moral reasoning, if I am
teaching social studies at all. What I am really doing is thinking deeply with
others, examining what it means to be alive, in its full panoply of
understandings, in Canada of the 21st C. What I have to consider is why
I chose to use this video. I think I am trying to put a human face on injustice, to remove it from the remoteness of the past, and to help students to see the human connections that they have with this topic.

Student learning involved a process of internal moral reflection which was difficult to measure, but I had faith that the journey was important because they were internalizing a process of reasoning which they could possibly apply to many moral/social issues in their lives. For instance, students might not later recall what the categorical imperative was, but they would likely have internalized, to some degree, concepts such as universalizing their actions, or the innate dignity and worth of all human beings.

As I collected data and taught my classes I discovered what was clearly important to me. What I was teaching had more to do with being a thoughtful human that cared for others (past and present), than making any particular judgment. It involved a complex process, the many ways of critically assessing what was right or wrong, given any human circumstances. The subject of this chapter has become the examination of the tensions and dilemmas that arose for a teacher who plotted an intense journey for a Social Studies 9 class into the social issues of our day.

Principles into Practice

One of the purposes of the Shared Learnings unit was to teach students how to make a reasoned judgment, using moral reasoning skills. I am an individual who has worked on developing her moral intelligence, and has become attuned to drawing out this ability in others. I hold strong moral principles. These principles informed my decision both to focus on this topic, and in choosing the activities that I presented for students to examine. It is not easy to articulate those moral principles as they are so bound up in who I am. It is difficult because I believe that as moral agents we need to read each
human situation carefully and be cautious in how we apply or express our principles into action. Notwithstanding this difficulty, it is clear that teachers should give due consideration to their moral orientations, especially in teaching that addresses such. In fact, it is impossible to separate one’s moral self from a unit that teaches moral reasoning.

It is only upon deeper reflection of my project and its mandate that I have come to understand how strong my moral principles are, and the degree to which they inform my vision of teaching. These principles can be summarized as follows:

- It is important to operate from a place of good will towards others.
- Each person should be given the opportunity to develop a self of their own choosing.
- Notions of the good life may differ but we can agree on a core of humanistic ethical values as fundamental to our societies.
- Everyone’s voice should be heard.
- Injustice exists in our world and we have an obligation to expose and correct it if possible. We all play a role as critical change agents in the improvement of our created human worlds.
- One must be careful when judging issues of social concern. It is important to be sensitive, with a broad understanding of all sides of an issue. Are there better ways than judging to bring about a resolution of a problem?
- Expressing empathy is an important component of mature, responsible adulthood.
- Reasoning about moral issues is complex but important to a well considered life. It requires drawing upon moral theories, intuition, stories, empathy and thought-provoking discussions.
In designing the *Shared Learnings* unit I envisioned a starting point of neutral morality with regard to controversial topics, and that we would work together as a class to determine those moral questions of what is right or wrong, what’s good or bad, what’s fair and what matters? In teaching this unit it was apparent that even when such neutrality is planned, it is impossible to achieve. I identified the moral principles listed above when I became aware of their existence in my teaching. I had never overtly shared these principles with students, but in the teaching of the unit I sensed students were aware of what I valued.

Several examples come to mind regarding the functions and structure of the classroom, which impacted the teaching of this unit. The class constitution was predicated upon a cardinal rule regarding respect, that it was to be shown at all times. It is impossible to hide that I care deeply for students, and acknowledge their inner selves. Furthermore, discussion was central to classtime, where students were encouraged to formulate arguments. In addition, items brought to their attention in history or current events often related to instances of injustice. Therefore, most students “knew” what my moral principles were, even though I had never specifically taught them, as they were foundational in all aspects of the culture of that classroom.

This matter of my moral principles framing pedagogy surfaced in my journal writing. I had gathered together a small focus group on April 19th, the week before starting the unit, to ask them some general questions. The four students who volunteered were girls; DJ, Britney, Janice and Crystal. The planned questions for the group included what they knew of philosophy, how they would define morals, if they had any sense of the land claims issue in our area, and if they thought schools should teach morals. We
had a fascinating discussion, of the kind that you always hope for in the classroom. They listened attentively to one another, responding and building upon what each other had to say. It was such a positive experience that I wondered aloud if a philosophy club might be worth starting at the school. The evening of the 19th, after taking time to examine their responses, other concerns surfaced in my journal writing:

This group of girls what do they represent? Do good. Be right. Be perfect. What of me? Am I hoping to create more Janices in the classroom by teaching them to be good, to do right. What kind of agenda do I have? Am I perhaps most like Janice? How much does my concept of moral reasoning touch upon the traditional, the modern, the restrained way of behaving? How or why does moral = good, moral = obey, moral = perfect?

In consideration of the morals I brought to the project, a thought from Willinsky (1997) came to mind that stayed with me since my summer studies. He wrote: “This is the trust and the responsibility, not just that education will make us free, but that education defines a good and true light” (p. 331). I was responsible for the good and true light promoted in the activities chosen for the unit. There was some measure of comfort knowing that ministry directive had provided both the rationale for teaching social studies, and the framework for the Shared Learnings unit. There was assistance in defining that good and true light from others, but it was both distant and disembodied, a Ministry of Education document delivered into my hands. The curricular/personal dilemma that confronted me involved questioning if I could teach moral reasoning without being influenced by my own moral principles. I found, and accepted, that it was not possible, or desirable, to hide my principles. The teaching of the unit brought this matter to my attention, and led to a new open-mindedness of sharing with students what I thought about the topics of residential schools and land claims.
Students also came to the unit as moral beings. They used moral principles in the first activity that we did, yet they had no prior exposure to ethics, at least in this class. On April 25th, which was the first day of the unit, students were asked to consider two points of view regarding the use of landmines in Korea; one from an op-ed piece regarding the killing of children, the other from a military perspective of maintaining a safe border between North and South Korea. Approximately one-half the students decided to suspend judgment as they wanted to see more factual information. They wanted statistics regarding how many were killed or maimed by landmines, how many were saved by having the border protected, before they made a judgment. The other half of the class did make judgments about the landmine situation, and in their writing I saw moral principles at work.

As I reviewed student responses at the end of the day, I developed three broad organizers for the principles that students utilized in this first lesson. Those categories, and a sample for each one from the written activity done on April 25th are as follows:

1. Principle: use caution when judging. Sample from Heather’s writing:
   “I think that colorful bombs are wrong but the military defending the land is okay. I also think that the army should come up with a better idea but they did what they had to do in order to keep peace.”

2. Principle: seek more information. Sample from Lisa’s writing:
   “I would need to know how many people were killed by the butterfly bombs since they were dropped.”

3. Principle: to hurt or kill others is wrong. Sample from Amy’s writing:
   “why I disagree is because kids die and that is not good. and it kills animals and other things that may touch it. kids should live not die because of landmines. I strongly disagree of land mines. I would not want them here ever. I would move and lots other people would to.

Students brought these principles with them to the classroom and/or they acquired some dispositions through indirect exposure to the moral principles I upheld, and the
dialogues that ensued with their peers. The topic of landmines was one that could not be easily separated from the moral orientations to self, the underlying principles, that already existed, both for teacher and students. There is clearly a tension here that exists for any controversial topic to be studied. As human beings, we cannot put aside our principles when involved in a critical thinking activity such as analyzing an argument, a matter that clearly surfaced in the teaching on Tuesday, April 25th.

What I learned from teaching this lesson on argument analysis is that students brought their principles with them to the unit, in the same way that I did. As the unit progressed I accepted that students did not begin their learning from a place of non-existent morality. Critical thinking, in this case, argument analysis, could not be taught without drawing upon the extant moral principles held by students. Furthermore, it was necessary to validate those principles by allowing them to be shared. I began to think it was important not to determine whose principles, or which aspects of principles were right/wrong, but to examine how well the principles we hold suit a vision of ethical humanism. In this way I could honour student and teacher integrity, yet look at issues through the philosophical skills students were developing.

**Learning To Make Reasoned Judgments**

In this unit students were provided with two models of moral reasoning, one of which was utilitarianism. To look at consequences of residential schools each student was given a blank Pro/Con chart, and we listed the important points for consideration that had arisen in the videos they had viewed; *Mission School Syndrome* and *Kuper Island: Return to the Healing Circle*. We generated the lists of premises together, and I listed responses from students on the overhead. Students could copy that list, add to it, or make
up their own. Once they had completed their lists they assigned a value to each point, from -10 to +10, the negatives being on the con side, and the positives assigned under the pro column. They did this in consultation with a partner, but each worked on their own list. When they added them up they decided if there were more pros or cons.

Using this system of pros and cons was useful in having students consider both sides of the same circumstance. Through their calculations they were able to determine that the residential school system was overwhelmingly a negative experience for Aboriginal communities. This consensus was easily established because the valuations of premises were very consistent across the wide range of experience in the class. Their numerical assignments reflected an intuitive valuing system that reflected deep understandings of the human psyche. For instance, Jane’s chart contained the following information:

Con: “children which are only 5 would have to be forced to go to a big school with hundreds of big people, it was very scary for them” Value: -10
Pro: “school meant that they could become lawyers or be part of the government to make change” Value: +10

Chris’s reflections link the same values to points that share common grounds:

Con: “physically beaten, some sexually abused” Value: -10
Pro: “better opportunities from education” Value: +10

Overall, in our examination of residential schools, I found students to be diligent in striving to obtain the best information they could, and in seeking a balanced perspective to the issue. Thinking of a principle of higher “utility”, assisted students in considering the multiple perspectives of both positive and negative impacts on students in a clear, straightforward manner. As a group we had generated a fairly even list of pros and cons, so the higher utility ended up being based upon how students perceived the
impact of each of the points upon Aboriginal peoples. Students clearly understood that within the panoply of outcomes created by residential schools there were varying degrees of harm.

I was impressed that students exhibited such a high level of sensitivity and compassion in their analysis. They listened, shared, and understood the hurt born by others. In their written responses students also called attention to the difficulties inherent not just in the utilitarian method of reasoning, but in giving a fair portrayal of the residential school experience. Crystal, in her written response to her finished utilitarianism calculation clearly pointed out how bias might be reflected in our summations. She states:

*My calculation demonstrates that there is many more cons than pros on the subject of residential schools. This is partly because in the video we watched, many more cons than pros were mentioned. Probably because mostly natives were interviewed, and not as many workers at the schools were interviewed and interrogated. I believe that is why the cons heavily outweigh the pros.*

Furthermore, Crystal went on in her writing to analyze another drawback to this theory. Utilitarianism had provided students in the class with an intelligible way of determining an overall judgment. However, it does not suggest what should be done, or provide an opportunity to give fair comparison to other systems, such as the regular public school system. Crystal said:

*This method doesn’t help to compensate the victims. It is all in the past now and you can’t change the past. Their lives are forever changed. Money makes them feel better, but it can’t compensate for the suffering and extreme damage done to those children and their families. I honestly think that nothing can compensate for all this.*

Utilitarianism was an effective method of allowing students to see the injustice and overall harm created by residential schools. To just know about injustice was not
enough. Students needed to keep talking, to look beyond their utilitarianism calculation, to determine what might be done to solve the problems of today, created by the circumstances of the past. Students had been exposed to the residential school experience through stories of real people who had attended. They determined the overall consequences were negative. Now they had an excellent foundation in understanding the issue, but it was only a starting point for thinking about fairly recompensing Aboriginal communities. Utilitarianism clarified an issue of injustice, but provided little direction for solutions to the modern social concerns that have arisen from such.

In teaching this unit again I would not assume that utilitarianism would assist students in thinking about present issues of recompense before the courts. I would use it again, as a utilitarian calculation allowed them to readily assess the impact of residential schools. In the process of doing this, they shared their fundamental values concerning how you treat others, and the impact of institutions upon children. Although students had an opportunity to share ideas with their partners, we did not discuss these values as a class, and I think it would have been worthwhile to do so. Beyond that, I am no longer concerned with encouraging students to think too deeply about how to compensate residential school victims. I am more sensitive now to the importance of raising awareness of injustice, having students understand why the issue is before the courts, and must be considered fairly. It is too much, in a such a short unit, and at such a young age, to take students to the level of determining the ways to address injustice. The fact that even the most overtly callous students such as Brian determined, for themselves, that injustice exists, is enough to recommend this method again. In Brian’s words:

*Adding up the pros and cons I figured that residential schools were not the best place to be.*
Emotional Impact of Establishing Empathy

Students in the class made strong connections with the residential school students, as evidenced in this written response from Ashley regarding her utilitarianism chart:

*My chart does help to determine how to compensate residential school victims, I think. My reason for this is because if you look at how much abuse went on and how traumatized some people are its really sad and they deserve some justice!*

This level of empathic connection was what I had hoped to establish, and it was demonstrated well in student work. But I wondered how deeply some students might have been affected, especially the sensitive ones, by the videos we viewed, which showed the aftermath of the residential school experience very honestly. My thoughts, after the May 5th, Friday class, where students had watched a half-hour portion of a video called “Kuper Island: Return To the Healing Circle”, reflected this concern:

*As I saw students out the door that day I felt a certain sense of sadness/ futility in trying to present a fair view of what happened in the past, and yet make it appropriate to a grade nine level of emotional understanding. I didn’t want to just appeal to emotionality or to have them view adult situations that they were not yet read for. Some confusing ideas going around in my head as they left. Thirty minutes had been enough for students to hear and understand that the pain was real, and long lasting.*

There is an educational issue here which I remain sensitive to. How deep must the pain be that students are exposed to, as in this case of residential school victims, in order to develop the degree of empathy needed to engage with the concern in more than a fleeting manner? How can we gauge the impact on the children who watch? In what ways will they suffer, as listeners, if they take the pain to heart?

In having students consider multiple perspectives there was a responsibility to act as a facilitator of voice, to provide the circumstances where we could both speak and listen from the heart. To judge human actions and activities well involves strong
identification with the other, to the extent that we perceive that others hurt and suffer as we do. Without this critical facility of "deep" empathy we cannot consider multiple perspectives in moral ways. Lacking empathy means that other people and their concerns may only be annoying, distracting, and most likely petty. To experience pain and joy of others at a theoretical level is a very tricky proposition. The dilemma I experienced was how to fairly encourage empathy without causing undue distress or perhaps even psychological harm to students, especially sensitive students, who might take the pain of others too deeply within themselves. I wanted to animate the voice of the other, but to not have it consume students. I would think carefully before showing the Kuper Island: Return To The Healing Circle video again, and if I did, it would be with better preparation before, and a planned de-briefing session afterward.

Seeing Alternatives and Seeking Solutions

Encouraging empathy to develop and helping students to understand the complexity of human situations was fundamental to students making reasoned judgments. At every step, whether in the planning or the teaching, I found myself cautioning students to look deeper, to feel confident that they had the best information and to see other ways of looking at a situation. I seemed compelled to promote judging as rather a risky business, or least one that must be done carefully, and with the skills to do so.

When we considered the issue of land claims, and tried to answer the question in the title of the video "Whose Land Is This?" I found myself encouraging students to look for solutions and to seek alternatives, rather than judging the right to land. To start with, I asked students to look for the claims put forward by Aboriginal/non-aboriginal sides. They did this very well by attending closely to Aboriginal points of view put forward in
the video, and by brainstorming the rights of European explorers to the land. After the video was over we shared the responses we could identify for both Aboriginal/non-aboriginal claims to the land. After listing their suggestions on the overhead I immediately asked the class for possible solutions to the treaty process, without an intermediate step.

Students imagined themselves sitting at the negotiating table as “neutral observers”, presenting alternatives to everyone at the table. We generated the following class list – “share land”, “be kind, show respect, understanding, compassion”, “add to reserve land”, “get rid of any restrictions – everyone the same treatment”. Next, using Kant’s categorical imperative, students had to apply the principles we had learned to the solutions generated, ignoring evidence at this point. Each student had to chose which solution they thought was the best but were also asked to identify which solutions reflected the categorical imperative. Three-quarters of students that completed this activity picked “share land” as the best solution. As Sam said:

“shareing makes the most sence so we both get something.”

We had reviewed evidence and found a solution that a majority of students favoured. Lisa, the only First Nations person who responded to the question, identified the solution of “adding to reserve land” as the one that made the most sense to her. “Share” and “fair” were keywords in student responses, words that continued to resonate through student text, first surfacing strongly as they played the role of pretend treaty negotiators.

Students were learning how to make a reasoned judgment. Applying Kantian principles to evidence of land ownership helped students understand an ethical way of determining which evidence is more worthy of public consideration than others. This
experience, not necessarily deciding who owned or didn’t own the land, I found to be useful in helping students to become better informed citizens. I would use Kant’s principles again regarding the issue of land ownership, as these principles were easily grasped by students and worked well in providing a moral basis for understanding where injustice lay.

In looking at the question of land ownership students listened carefully to the evidence presented to them. I also considered the evidence carefully as it was brought forward in the unit, and in doing so, decided to change my focus from “right to land” to the process of colonialism. I wanted to take students to another level of listening, to see the experience from the eyes of aboriginal peoples, to feel the pain of losing land. The videos students viewed, but most importantly the treaty presenters, who spoke from the heart, provided the empathic orientation to the colonial experience that I was hoping to establish in the students. My journal writing from April 27th talks about the moral understandings I wanted to develop, after I had listened to the Snuneymuxw treaty negotiators:

"Land treaties are not just about money and land. They are about people and autonomy. Imagine being given a number, having less control than others over some basic decisions and rights."

My reaction to the presenters was one of the first instances where I changed my plans in teaching the unit because of what I was learning. Students had to judge here, but I wanted them to judge the impact of colonialism, not the inherent “legal” right to the land, as I had originally intended. In assisting students in making reasoned judgments about land treaties I wanted them to be informed about all sides of the current issue. This
meant presenting the often neglected topic of the impact of colonialism, and the continuing ramifications of resultant interventions such as the Indian Act.

Teaching About Justice

Residential schools and the land treaty negotiation process were part of the unit because I wanted students to see injustices they did not know. In doing so they could learn much about themselves, others, and the dilemmas we face in Canadian society. This project began by wondering how one might teach moral reasoning abilities. At the end of the unit I was confident those abilities were acquired by students. Even more importantly, teaching moral reasoning helped cultivate active, responsible citizenship in students. A strong sense of social justice is part of citizenship.

I considered issues of justice and injustice through the following definitional elements:

- When rights or goods are apportioned according to any parameters of difference which are outside of personal control (race, gender, familial background, religion, disability).
- When force is used inappropriately to bring about a desired outcome.

It is important to me that students are aware of the injustice done to First Nations people, and that prejudice and demoralizing stereotyping still exist. An example of this is a recent incident where the following indictment was painted in large red letters at the front of the school: “Chugs eat white man’s shit”. Chugs is local negative vernacular for First Nations people. First Nations students can tell you of the blatant racism and ugly bullying they still encounter. My hope is that through our unit a small part of that prejudice and stereotyping would be abolished within our community.
The most significant event regarding justice, and the issues faced by the community, surfaced in the following incident. On May 5th, the day after our bighouse visit, I was debriefing with the class on what we had seen and done. I asked for their feedback on the trip including positives, negatives, what they found interesting. There was an item to raise, which related to two of the boys taking bicycles they found at lunch time, riding them, and then just leaving them at the side of the road, away from where they found them. Although it seemed off the agenda of the Shared Learnings unit, I couldn’t let this particular incident go.

This issue, which seemed somewhat off topic, led to some of the best discussion, laying the groundwork to the topic of moral theories. Once I explained the troublesome incident with the bicycles the culprits jumped in. They loudly justified their actions because the bikes were just lying around, and they were old. At that point Lisa quietly raised her hand. As Lisa has once lived on that reserve land, I was most interested to hear her input into this conversation. Lisa explained that the bikes were shared bikes, to be used by anyone who needed a bicycle. I had to think quickly about how the conversation was going. I asked the class if Lisa’s explanation meant that we could use them too. Jane leapt into the discussion at this point. Although she didn’t answer the question directly, Jane told a story about having her bicycle stolen from her front yard and how lousy it made her feel. Suddenly, a chorus of stolen bike stories erupted. Jane, with a few female cohorts, began to mount a lively verbal attack on the boys who had taken the bikes.

This disruption to our discussion (which was loosely designed to tie together Aboriginal worldview with our trip to the bighouse), nonetheless communicated the
intended learning outcomes in powerful ways. My journal entry from May 5th, reflects my reaction after the above chastisement of the boys:

I cut the conversation off there because I felt uncomfortable with the blaming that was happening. I didn't want fault to transpire in this way. I wanted students to think about what they had heard about the differing worldview (which had happened in a very natural way) and to arrive at their own conclusions about what they had done.

I brought the discussion back to some order, and we talked at length about how it feels to have a bike stolen, respect for the property of others, and respect for the new values we had been exposed to about shared ownership. And so the class went, learning from each other, why taking the bikes was not a just circumstance.

In reflecting upon this event I realized how powerful a discussion amongst peers can be, and how much students can learn from each other. I learned to have faith in the directions that discussions take, to allow spontaneous diversions initiated by students. In this case of "stolen bikes" very powerful learning went on, and I had to trust that the conversation, although it didn't go as planned, was what students wanted to talk about. First, we had heard about a differing worldview regarding a personal possession held by the Chemainus people on their reserve. Lisa raised our awareness about a moral principle that had a unique solution – everyone owns and shares a limited resource. We had a chance to discuss how that was different from our views about bike ownership. Second, we had discussed the morality of taking the bikes, and why we knew it to be wrong. They stated the lessons they had learned from that experience, in their own words. As DJ said on May 8th, the Monday after our discussion:

*If some takes my basketball I would be very sad so I would never take someone else's basketball*
Differing worldviews, hearing others, empathy, and even a practical example of the categorical imperative, were all communicated far more poignantly in an impromptu discussion than I could in a planned lesson. As part of what happened that day in class I became more comfortable in accepting the unplanned, in letting students provide direction, in allowing them the opportunities to learn from each other.

Role of Dialogue

The human connections demanded by this project, although difficult to articulate, created intense and exhausting classroom sessions. Orchestrating the invigorating, often emotional, conversations about controversial topics, is difficult to do well. The teacher becomes both a director and participant in this process. In reading back over my journal writing, I see the effort and care expended in what outsiders might perceive to be a rather mundane discussion. A problem that continued to plague me was that of students’ involvement in discussions. For instance, on the first day of our classroom activities, April 25th, my journal reads:

“I am not engaging enough of the students into a dialogue. Same students are answering as before”.

To address this felt concern I did try a teaching technique from Lipman (1988), which was to write phrases from students on the board, during a discussion. It was designed to lend authority to the voices expressed, and pique additional interest, but it did not encourage the quiet students to participate to a greater degree. I watched for signs that students who didn’t speak wanted to, and worried about those who continued to stay quiet.

Genuine dialogue is not easy in the classroom. I noticed this difficulty when observing students and listening to the Snuneymuxw presenters. During their
presentation the speakers asked students if they had any questions. In an eighty-minute
class only two questions were asked. In my journal entry for April 27th I wrote:

> What they did not do, which was interesting, was ask very many
questions. The presenters kept pressing them at the end – do you have
any hard questions, and they really stressed the word hard in the way
they spoke it. I wasn’t sure if it helped or not, this emphasis on hard.
I think they wanted the students to be open and honest, and be willing
to share the questions that they thought were out there. Which I
thought were out there too but remained unsaid.

Students didn’t question these new people in the way they would question me after a
lecture. It was evident, through this experience, that open dialogue is not easy for any
group of people, especially if there are strangers involved. To create a climate of
openness I set a respectful, dignified tone that was intended to encourage participation.
Student voices were honoured by writing their comments on the board both during
discussions, and by referencing previous comments. My efforts did encourage students
such as Brian, Lisa, Sam and Crystal who did not normally speak in class discussions, to
speak out, at times catching me off guard, but nonetheless giving me joy.

The role of discussion was paramount to developing student understandings of
justice, which took place in this unit. Leading these discussions was like conducting an
orchestra. Throughout intense discussions I continually monitored group dynamics;
sensed frustrations and intervened when necessary. On my own, I was so much a part of
our discussions that it was difficult to determine, as a researcher, what had happened.
How I wished for another researcher who could help me understand the complexity of
this process by recording stories told, the responses of students, teacher interventions;
then sharing their impressions of the events. I was often frustrated by my inability to
make better sense of discussions.
Posing Social Issues to Adolescents

Students were intrigued by the process of researching the classroom experience and benefited/learned in many unanticipated ways. The day I gave out the parent permission forms there was much excitement generated by the project, prompting some initial silliness (and much fun) about code names. That sense of play, and having fun with ideas, stayed with us throughout the unit. Students marveled that anyone was interested in what they had to say, validating the worth of their thoughts in a different manner from marks or teacher approval. They questioned what the word research meant, and saw it carried out. My research was excellent role modeling of how an idea can spark a critical investigation, and that they played a key role in it.

Overall, I sensed that students took individual ownership of the study, by demonstrating a greater degree of curiosity about their own thinking. An amazing event happened during this study, which had never occurred in this class before. On May 3rd, the day before our trip to the Chemainus bighouse, three girls stayed after school to talk to me. There was excitement brewing because of the field trip, but this was the last class of the day and they chosen to stay to talk of other matters. I commented on the circumstance in my journal writing of that day:

"Britney, Chris, Janice and I had the best conversation after school, and how I wished I was able to tape that one. Chris keeps wondering why we can’t share the land, Britney is staying up at night wondering what fair compensation is for past injustice, and Janice is thinking about what it means to be Canadian and equal. To think that someone is actually thinking about some of these issues before they go to sleep does my heart glad and is the kind of thought that keeps me going not just in teaching, but at the wonder of the human spirit to figure things out, the disparity that is felt when we don’t understand. It is an inner bodily turmoil, we are restless and consumed until the matter and the thinking is resolved to some extent, until we have thought it through as best as we can."

This incident was evidence of the level of engagement on the part of some students in this project. They had embraced the ideas, and taken them outside the domain of the class to their own worlds. At the time this seemed a dream realized; to have students unsettled by new questions, and interested in solving them. In retrospect, I wonder if it was too much to ask, to ask them to care deeply about matters which they did not create, and would not be able to solve in the near future, if at all. It is a dilemma I continue to face in posing questions regarding social concerns to young students.

A partial resolution to the dilemma of posing difficult social issues to young students occurred during my teaching. I could introduce issues of justice pertaining to First Nations people on a smaller scale first, before moving on to bigger ones such as residential school victims or land treaties. Students would discuss issues that are applicable to their lives such as lack of friendships between First Nations students and others, or the lower graduation rate of First Nations students in our school compared to the general population. It might be important to raise local issues of social justice that need to be talked about, and that students can more likely relate to, within their own spheres of influence. We can grapple with the larger issues once we examine ones of more immediate concern. This sequencing might make the complexity of the larger issues less overwhelming to young students.

Critical awareness of others was heightened through the Shared Learnings unit. Students learned to care for others they had never met, whether it was children far away in Afghanistan, or children who had life-altering experiences in the residential schools close to home. This level of care is demonstrated in Dora’s response to landmines being used in Korea:
There is not such a thing as a humane bomb. The man obviously denies the fact that children are being mutilated and killed. I will never agree with what this man says about landmines.

Students expressed concern about social justice, although the term was never used. Brit’s response, from May 2nd, written after reading parts of the Indian Act reflects this concern:

I do question the effect of living under such circumstances and still accept the apologies/condolences or treaties offered by the governments. Removing such restricting laws & ideas has started and in my view, still has a long way to go. Canada is a country based on multiculturalism and tolerance and should continue for the youth and elders of today, as well as tomorrow.

She shares her view that although parts of the Indian Act have changed, that more changes are still needed to achieve parity. Brit has identified Canada as place where justice and equity prevail, in her reference to multiculturalism and tolerance.

Furthermore, she honoured these tenets of Canadian society by wishing for them to continue into her future.

Concern about social justice (racism, human rights), as it related to the Indian Act in Canada is strongly summed up by Ashley in her reflections from May 2nd:

The Indian Act was placed on Natives so that they would be more like the Europeans. I think that this is all bull, and its racist. It should be taken off. Everyone should have rights.

In the final test for the unit I purposefully included a question about the land treaty protests that were taking place in Brazil at the same time as our studies. I was interested in seeing if students’ notions of social justice would transfer to another country and a somewhat different situation. I found that students were able to apply the moral reasoning principles and abilities they had learned. One example of this orientation to
social justice, regardless of circumstance, is shown in Kelly’s response on her test of May 12th:

Some actions that might be carried out by the Brazilian government are: Share land, give the First Nations people what they want, and give them respect and the rest of their reserves. Some rules apply on what the government should act upon. “Don’t use others for your own needs”. First Nations People have the right to the land they owned so the Europeans shouldn’t take it and claim it theirs.

In developing and working with this project I believe that social justice cannot be thoughtfully investigated without teaching moral reasoning. Teaching moral reasoning promoted the cause of social justice in ways that I could not imagine when I began. Students developed a sense of what a better future/world might involve, felt empathy for others, understood another worldview and used their new ethical understandings.

Heather’s test answer from May 12th nicely embodies these components of social justice:

The government should act upon the fact that everyone knows right from wrong and the people in the government should be fair. That means giving them more land because of the fact that they were there first and that Europeans were welcomed with open hearts by the First Nation’s people. And also for the fact that they only want land to support themselves like they used to and that is a good thing.

The vision might be considered simplistic, but the responses of many students, in addition to Heathers’ above, also demonstrated deep empathy and clear statements of the moral principles they supported.

The three themes I have identified in this chapter; putting principles into practice, learning how to morally reason, and teaching about justice, stood out as recurring pedagogical and social issues that arose while teaching this unit that focused on controversial topics. I now understand the importance of the moral principles that both students and teachers bring to the endeavor. It is necessary to honour those, yet feel free
to expand or change them. Overall, moral reasoning is a complex undertaking. In the act of learning this ability students were already practicing the skills involved in active, responsible citizenship. Those skills involve how to think critically, analyze arguments and identify bias. In combination with the strong ethic of care and the emphasis on discourse I developed in the classroom, students were able to both determine injustice, and postulate how justice might be achieved.

In chapter 5 I explore what I learned in teaching the Shared Learnings unit, as it pertains to present changes and future considerations for my teaching. I was interested in developing social responsibility as an organizer for social studies pedagogy and look to my research investigations to assist in developing this critical focus.
Shared Learnings – Social Studies 9 Unit
Woodlands Secondary   Mrs. C. Brand
April 25th – May 12th, 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Focus group meeting, four students attend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>Examine butterfly bomb article for bias</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Focus 1 &amp; 3)</td>
<td>Use argument analysis thinking frame to evaluate logic of Mr. Clive Pritchard's letter</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Examine current events visual gallery – Ethiopia famine</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Focus 5)</td>
<td>Watch NFB video: Before Columbus: Conversion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Snuneymuxw nation treaty negotiators presentation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>Debrief from presentation – examine handout on land claims</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Focus 5)</td>
<td>Finish Before Columbus: Conversion video</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>Pro-D (Teaching Reading across the Curriculum)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>Examine Indian Act excerpt, free writing about Indian Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Focus 5)</td>
<td>Begin video: Whose Land Is This?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Finish watching video: Whose Land Is This?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Focus 5)</td>
<td>Complete “Seeing Both Sides” Frame, formulate alternatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Field trip to Chemainus Big House</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>De-brief field trip, stolen bike incident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Focus 3 &amp; 6)</td>
<td>Video: Kuper Island: Return To the Healing Circle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>Intro to Immanuel Kant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Focus 5)</td>
<td>Apply categorical imperative to land claims evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>Video: Mission School Syndrome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Focus 6)</td>
<td>Intro to utilitarianism, complete pro/con chart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Finish utilitarianism assignment, evaluate points of evidence numerically, complete tally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Focus 6)</td>
<td>Review Kant and Utilitarianism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Culminating activity – Virtue Ethics – personal, societal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>Test – “Our Land Was Invaded”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Evaluation)</td>
<td>Reflections on residential schools/utilitarianism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All videos were recommended in Shared Learnings curriculum guide, and were available through District #68 curriculum resource centre. Focus lessons and evaluation instruments are found in Appendix A.
Chapter 5

Conclusions

A person who will not reason about anything is no better than a vegetable.

Aristotle (4th Century BCE)

Many people would sooner die than think – in fact, they do so.

Bertrand Russell (20th Century CE)

Working with a Social Studies 9 class I took a reflective, eventful journey into unexplored territory. I taught moral reasoning in order to help students consider multiple perspectives and make reasoned judgments about a range of social concerns. It had taken years of research to gain the courage to try this endeavor, yet once the three-week classroom experience was over it seemed neither risky nor controversial only essential and enlightening. I found there is much of importance about this project relating to social studies pedagogy in general, moving beyond the Shared Learnings curriculum, into all of our teaching.

In this chapter I explore my thoughts now on the questions originally posed regarding teaching moral reasoning. Some answers have already surfaced in the thesis yet some remain incomplete or suggest avenues of future research. It is my intent to bring together what I have learned through this process, and to share questions that arose as new and interesting topics to pursue. Finally, I will reflect on transformations to my personal practice and the new ways that I frame the concept of teaching critical thinking in regard to controversial topics of social concern.
Student Development in Moral Reasoning

Attitudes and Skills of Responsible Citizenship

In posing questions to grade nine students about the controversial topics of residential schools and land treaties I encouraged them to engage with the issues as thoughtful citizens of their country. The vision of citizenship that I brought to the unit revolved around the expectation that all people in a country have a responsibility to be aware of and respond to the critical issues which surface in our time. I was teaching about critical issues because I believe students have a right to learn the skills of rhetoric, thereby giving them the potential to add their thoughtful voices to our ongoing conversations about ethical issues. The Shared Learnings unit was successful because students acquired the philosophical and critical thinking skills that will encourage their continued participation in public dialogue.

I found that students learned to analyze controversial topics maturely, in ways that were both respectful and ethical. The issues of land treaties and residential school victims were controversial because they were matters of local public discussion and had received media attention. Furthermore, there was no easy resolution to either situation as they involved a process of determining restitution. Although considered controversial, these topics seemed well within the grasp of grade 9 students. They treated the issues fairly, asking for more information if they needed it, without outwardly stereotyping or making negative, disparaging comments. Students were able to examine these topics in a rational, forthright manner. When I asked students at the end of the unit if they had any
more questions about the residential school topic, Heather responded in the following manner:

*Making an accurate decision must involve information from both sides of the story, not just one side. I think that the government should help out some of the churches because they knew about residential schools but they never stopped them. I also think that there should be another way to compensate victims without having a church go bankrupt.*

I have included Heather’s response because it represented the learning that had taken place toward matters of controversy. All students, in their final evaluation, showed understanding of the controversy that exists regarding land treaties or the impact of residential schools, and how difficult it will be to find solutions that address past injustice.

During the course of the three week unit an increasing amount of classtime was spent in discussion. We spent more time in discussion as student ability to participate improved, and their subsequent enjoyment increased. Grade 9 students, as any secondary teacher can attest to, are notoriously irrational, emotional, and full of their own importance. It can be difficult for them to listen to each other, never mind build upon the ideas put forward by a peer. The turning point for student ability to do this came during the “stolen bike” discussion described in Chapter Four. This was a student initiated, peer driven discussion, where all students were actively, yet respectfully involved. I could not plan such a spontaneous incident again, but I learned from this event to honour and encourage discussions in the lessons that followed.

In order to facilitate participation of controversial topics the discussion agenda should not always be teacher driven or proceed under teacher control. I let students speak, with less intervention or interruption from me. This gave students more freedom
to monitor peers for respectful participation, and to direct the conversation to their areas of, not necessarily mine. I also learned to let discussions continue if students were actively engaged and needed time to share ideas.

To be flexible in timing discussions, and not stop them at a predetermined time was difficult when I felt driven by my lesson plan. By the last week of the unit, I worried about the time spent in class on discussion of Kant’s categorical imperative, and how little time I had to carry on with the rest of the planned written activities. My thoughts on that lesson from my journal:

Timing was rushed. Real examples to support understanding of the rules was excellent. Nice tone in the class, very respectful one anothers’ comments. Seem interested in the topic, able to work with the ideas.

In this lesson I asked students (in what I thought would be an opening activity) to provide examples to explain, and assist understanding of the categorical imperative. This discussion ended up taking over fifty minutes of time, when I had planned on it being perhaps twenty minutes long. My journal entry of that day reveals how much time the discussion had taken, and that I felt rushed with so much left to do. I needn’t have worried. It was evident as the week progressed and students raised relevant points of moral theory, that in this peer driven dialogue students had learned much about ethics.

In talking about the categorical imperative students had given examples to teach themselves and their peers about Kant’s ethical position. In this lesson, called Focus Five, students were given a version of Kant’s maxim, on a handout, for easy reference. On the handout I had identified the categorical imperative as having three premises, and asked students to clarify what each premise meant. In the fifty minute time-frame we discussed the recent kidnapping of a nine year old girl called Jessica, in relation to the
principle that each of us is what Kant calls an "end-in-themselves", and is not to be used by others as a means to their ends. When reviewing the principle that each person is a rational being, capable of thinking about choices they face, and selecting from them on the basis of reason, students questioned how that applied to a baby that is born brain damaged due to oxygen deprivation. The final principle, which is that each person has a good will, and wants to do what is right, prompted students to question how they “know” it is not right to do something. Students were stimulated by each other’s ideas, as was I.

Peer explanations of the categorical imperative, rather than just the teacher’s, were effective and relevant to students. For instance, the class heard the strong emotions expressed by a male student, who told how wrong young Jessica’s kidnapping was. At the end of the week, when students did their final writing, I realized how much the students had learned from the class discussion that ensued on May 8th. Altea’s response to the Brazilian land claims issue is one of several responses that demonstrated student understandings of the categorical imperative heard through discussion, and their ability to incorporate those ideas into the moral reasoning process:

_I think the government should look at both sides equally. They should recognize that everyone controls themselves and nobody else so you can’t make them live on reserves, it’s wrong._

In teaching this unit I saw focused, forthright discussion as a powerful vehicle for student learning. Thus, I now think differently about the value of discussions. It may not seem like much has been accomplished when a discussion is finished, and there is no product to evaluate. Nonetheless, I have come to trust that student understandings and abilities to morally reason have been enhanced through this process, as evidenced in the
principles referenced in student writing that had only been “taught” in a discussion format.

Moral Reasoning Abilities of Secondary Students

Students in a grade 9 social studies class were learning how to make a reasoned judgment, based on evidence they had analyzed. I saw continued progress in this regard, the ability to not just present a rational argument, but one that also demonstrated empathy and utilized moral theories. At the end of the unit I introduced students to the concept of virtue ethics, which I had found intriguing, and thought would be a natural extension of the ethical theories of Kant and utilitarianism that we had been exploring. When I tried this activity, called “Knowing Your Attitudes and Values”, taken from a book written by Ruggiero called *The art of thinking: a guide to critical and creative thought*, I found it to be a dismal failure. Students had not understood the concept of virtue ethics, and I felt very frustrated at the end of the lesson.

Looking back on this experience now, I realize how important it is for me to teach moral reasoning in the structured manner of philosophy. The problem with Ruggiero’s activity was that it asked students to disclose personal information, without basing it on any particular theories or process. Students were asked to reflect on what they thought about topics such as “family”, “beauty” and “drugs and alcohol”. I felt terrible once students started on this because it quickly became evident they were unsure of how to answer. They could not be truthful with the teacher in sharing experiences of drugs and alcohol, and topics such as family could cause great distress, especially for families with conflicts. As Chris said in her response to the topic of “drugs and alcohol”: “Do I really have to answer ?!?” The lesson on virtue ethics, planned as a culminating activity,
caused angst for students, and did not give them an opportunity to synthesize what they had learned about moral reasoning.

Although students were able to demonstrate their philosophical skills by the end of the unit, the understandings they were developing did not transfer to this activity. I realize now it was inappropriate of me to ask students about their attitudes and values in this fashion. The topics were too broad, too personal and had little relation to the understandings of moral reasoning they were developing. My journal thoughts regarding the struggles of students were:

*I didn't know what to tell them. What I was asking them didn't seem to relate in any real way to what we had just done. I felt like a voyeur, peering into their private value systems. How could they answer honestly? I still think the concept of virtue ethics an interesting one but never again will I ask these particular questions with this kind of lead in. There was no feeling of dignity to it, just intrusion.*

I thought that the concept of virtue ethics might tie together what students had learned about ethics, and give them a chance to examine their own values in regard to some of the moral theories we had studied. However, it did no such thing. I would be hesitant in the future to use activities that stressed learning virtues by asking students to share personal information in such a fashion. This is not teaching a controversial topic, unless it was approached in another way. For instance, the topic of "family" could be considered controversial as societal views on the structures of families are changing. It would be interesting to explore these changing notions in a social studies class. However, that would mean discussion, and it would necessitate using the analytical tools of philosophy. For instance, we might want to define family, then look at different models of the modern family to see how they fit that definition. Next, I would focus our discussion, as I have in the past, on a particular current event, such as the desire of a
homosexual couple to adopt a child in Alberta. Putting forward arguments for and against this scenario, we could examine their validity, and reference them to ethical principles and the definition of family we had developed.

This process of a moral examination of the concept of “family” outlined above is a rational one, yet does not preclude the intuitive. The process of learning about virtue ethics, as I had presented it, was confusing and threatening to students. I am still drawn to the idea that one of the goals of teaching moral reasoning is to develop ethical character. However, it should be carried out by having students develop the defining characteristics of ethical humanism, and how that might look on both a societal and personal level. In my preface to this activity I had not listened well to students, there was little discussion, and much direction from me regarding the personal characteristics of a virtuous person. My journal entry from May 11th reflects some of the angst I felt:

> I definitely directed the responses. I listened to what they had to say, then picked what I wrote down on the overhead, as a list of what we had brainstormed. We certainly ended up with my list, not their list. Now I felt somewhat superficial, as if the whole lesson was contrived. Needless to say, it just wasn’t me. I presented my version to students, but made it look as if they had a say. Also, this is something I should have done at the start of the lesson, was to frame “humanism” in their terms, not mine.

This approach to exploring virtues did not work because the focus in the unit had shifted from epistemology and reasoning to personal feelings and self disclosure. Furthermore, I went into the lesson with an agenda of virtues, and did not listen well to students and their concepts of virtue. Although I deemed this lesson a failure, in retrospect, it taught me the importance of reasoned inquiry. Taking a reasoned approach to controversial topics did not preclude intuitive or insightful contributions, in fact, I promoted them, but not in the manner of this virtues activity.
Students’ Understanding of Injustice

All students who participated in the study were able to recognize and appreciate the consequences of historical injustice, as it pertained to First Nations peoples. For instance, when we examined the Indian Act they saw injustice and reflected upon it in their personal responses. Kelly, in her response from this free writing activity on May 2nd, makes key points about injustice that also surfaced in other responses:

*It is important to change the Indian Act because it takes a lot of rights away from the First Nation people away. It’s also not fair and cruel. They used this to controll people by using residential schools that forced them to learn to speak English and froget their Indian culture and learn the European culture. The Indian Act doesn’t treat the first Nation people right or equal.*

Common terms that relate to notions of justice, drawn from student responses throughout the unit were share, fair and equal treatment. This was a significant step for students. They learned not only that the Indian Act was wrong but they developed the ability to understand why it was wrong. They expressed this through their strong defense of human rights. Britney’s response, also written in regard to the Indian Act, reflects a passionate stand against racism and in support of changes for First Nations people:

*Strange to think that a “developed” country such as ours was so OK with the idea of taking rights away from people. To assimilate. What a disgrace, to confine a group of peoples based on ethnicity. To be scared of an educated First Nations person . . . and we were and are a developed country? I have had no personal direct experience with this situation but am truly glad that steps are finally being taken to correct the mistakes made not long ago.*

Overall, my approach to injustice/justice worked as it was intended. I wanted students to formulate notions of injustice, based upon sound reasoning and thoughtful reflection, not just what they parroted back from teacher. Although students did not use the term injustice in their writing, they were able to explain where injustice lay, and the
principles that justice should be based upon. Students were able to raise their own questions regarding injustice and define the important parameters of justice.

Teaching Moral Reasoning

Student Capabilities

When I first considered this project I wondered about the capability of grade 9 students to learn moral reasoning abilities. After the first lesson on landmines I knew that fourteen-year old students had this capacity, and that I could teach them how to improve this ability, although it would not be easy to so do. The intellectual challenge of making a reasoned judgment is much different than making a quick judgment, as we often do when giving our opinions. I found that students were able to make this distinction, and readily worked with the initial concepts of bias and argument analysis that they were introduced to, in order to refine their thinking.

Although secondary students have the capacity to learn how to morally reason, careful thought and planning on the part of the teacher is needed to draw out this ability. Reasoned judgment develops slowly and through practice. Three weeks was not enough time, although students did make progress in learning this ability. A dignified atmosphere should exist in the classroom where integrity and human worth have priority. Respect must be shown for the ideas of students, and for the philosophical ideas they are being introduced to. That atmosphere was difficult to establish with a playful group of students but a balance between having fun with ideas yet respecting them was important in developing moral intelligence. I knew when that tone had been achieved because the air was charged with the stimulus of new ideas, as students doggedly pursued a resolution to the issues they were investigating.
One interesting result of this study was the apparent difference in the moral reasoning capacity of the boys as compared to girls. The thinking of the boys was different in three ways. They were reluctant to express caring in their responses, to make a reasoned judgment, or to reflect on the experiences we had undertaken. For the most part, they did not seem to engage with the issues in the same way as the girls, whether in written or verbal responses. The boys themselves, and the dynamics of the classroom account for some of this difference. However, it is still important to pay attention to the status of the boys in the school, and how that impacted their abilities in learning how to morally reason. There were seven males in the class and seventeen females. Three of the boys did not return their permission forms to me, and one boy was away in Europe for most of the study. Of the four that did participate, two were on probation, one had a severe learning disability and the other had behavioural difficulties. All of the boys in this class, participating or not, had significant problems within the school system.

In this study then I have had to base my inferences about student engagement and development of their moral reasoning abilities primarily on the work of the girls. I was aware of how their moral reasoning abilities were developing, as I had lots of data from them to read, and responses to reflect on from their participation in discussions. With the boys there was very little for me to examine as evidence of changes in their thinking processes. This made it difficult to gauge the level of development or differences in moral reasoning ability between boys and girls due to the boys’ lack of participation.

I suspect though that the ability to make reasoned judgments in boys is different than in girls, even given this small sample. This might have been due to disinterest, lack of motivation, the gender expectations for young men; or some combination of these
three factors. If so, I didn’t discover the “hooks” needed to engage the boys in these areas of social concern. I was left wondering if girls had a greater receptivity at this age for moral reasoning, or how much of this might be due to cultural expectations defined by gender. This would be an interesting topic to pursue for future research.

Implications for Social Studies Pedagogy

In welcoming controversial topics into the public space of the classroom we do several things. First, we work toward open communication, rejecting the notion that if we are silent that problems will disappear, or be solved by “another”. Second, we provide a public forum where alternate views can be expressed. Third, we can openly come to understand why we feel the way we do, how others feel about the same issue, and identify, through moral reasoning, the wisest courses of action for society.

The purposes of teaching the Shared Learnings unit revolved around ending stereotypes, honouring other ways of knowing about the world, and facing the ghosts of our collective past – the settlement of Canada by Europeans, the usurping of aboriginal lands and lifestyle by the same.

According to Ministry of Education statistics, eighty percent of the students in my grade 9 social studies class, or any of the classes I teach, will not go on to attend any post-secondary institution. Thus, their only chance to acquire the philosophical and critical thinking skills that will allow them to voice their opinions is during their years in public school. As a teacher I hope my students feel confident of their abilities to participate rationally in such debate – whether that debate takes place internally; with another person; or in a more public manner such as writing a letter to the newspaper. In this regard I felt a responsibility to ensure that students understood not just the parameters
of citizenship, as defined in the charter of rights and freedoms, but the role they can play in public dialogue. I believe now that looking at controversial topics through a philosophical, moral reasoning lens, can be an important aspect of providing the impetus for lifelong, concerned citizenship.

**Role of Philosophy**

In the best sense, education should propel individuals beyond mere knowledge acquisition, on a path towards wisdom. The skills of philosophy support the attributes of a wise individual; a person who reasons logically, argues well and develops new insights into the human condition. In social studies the curriculum is so broad, that philosophy may be the key in helping us focus on what is of importance, across the wide variety of subject disciplines we address. As a social studies teacher I have felt torn in many directions. I hop from geography to history to law to political science to current events without always making connections between them for students, or myself. Disjointed curriculum taught as flat, one-dimensional topics (memorize this and spit it back out on a test) does little to develop the wise individual that is the goal of our education system.

Perhaps a useful orientation to social studies as a subject could be found through the broad umbrella of philosophy. The *Shared Learnings* unit was my first experience in teaching ethics to secondary students. I found that it both deepened student comprehension of the First Nations experience, and allowed a positive venue for the controversy that currently exists about recompense for past injustice to be expressed. Students had an opportunity, through the reasoning processes of philosophy, to explore how citizens might work toward consensus on real, hard issues of importance to all Canadians.
Philosophy allowed students to cultivate their public selves. They held opinions, but explored the basis of them. They discussed calmly, without insult. Most important perhaps, they saw the basis of disagreement in the situations currently facing the courts of our country. They went beyond the superficialities, rumours and stereotyping that may be called forth in discussions of land treaties, into realms of complexity and nuance. For instance, instead of an angry discussion about why the First Nations people are taking land away from us, which had occurred in previous social studies classes, this class was able to disagree about an issue, but still work towards understanding it. Philosophy encouraged students to examine the meaning of "owning" land, the dignity and worth of persons, and the importance of consequences related to human actions. It is apparent that the issues of First Nations peoples, especially the land treaty question, has the potential to tear the country apart. It is incumbent upon the school system to provide citizens an opportunity to examine this issue, and others of equally critical importance, in the calm rational manner that philosophy encourages.

Implications of Research

Teacher as Researcher and Inherent Difficulties

I was excited by the research project undertaken but it was frustrating and difficult to take on the role of researcher, in addition to the teaching role I also assumed. Somehow I had to both teach and research myself in the teaching. I sorely missed having another teacher/researcher, with similar interests, there with me. We could have supported each other with thorough written observations, taken turns in the teaching, and provided technological support for taping (video and audio) of the classroom sessions. De-briefing after a lesson to compare notes, observations, and plan changes in response
to classroom experiences would have assisted greatly in the interpretation. There were so many fascinating aspects to our classroom sessions but I had no one to share them with, as they occurred. It was a lonely experience, and tended to reinforce the isolation that already exists in the teaching profession. At the end of each day, I had my memory of events to record in my journal, and the children’s written work to review.

My journal writing was a combination of description of events and interpretive musings. I recalled what had happened, recorded what seemed important or interesting, and explored my feelings about the lesson. I did not plan a distinct pedagogical focus but I attempted to provide an honest appraisal of the classroom experience. This writing was postponed until the end of the night after I attended to the other aspects of my teaching job such as planning lessons or marking work for other classes. I also liked to review students’ written assignments from the unit and respond to them in some manner, before writing any comments in my journal. Therefore, most nights I was worn out by the time I started my journal. Furthermore, I was casting my mind ahead to what we were going to do, no longer keen to look so closely at the past.

Working as a researcher and participant posed special challenges, as did attempting to continue with full-time teaching in the process. Due to a variety of outside demands, I felt frustrated at the lack of focus I was able to apply to the project. My other classes still had to go on, with their attendant preparation, marking and teaching. A Pro-D day took place during the study, and as head of the Pro-D committee there was much involvement in making the day a worthwhile one for all staff. I was an active, involved member of the school with a wide range of commitments and responsibilities. A day
such as April 26th, when we also had parent interviews in the evening, gives a feel for the many directions I was pulled in during this time:

Looking forward to the speakers tomorrow. I've also arranged for the First Nations coordinator to be there. We are booked into the Chemainus bighouse for May 4th, Thursday. Have to do the parent notices tonite and put them out tomorrow. Will tape record tomorrow, must ask speakers if that will be OK. Parent interviews were held tonite. Not many came. Gives a nice sense of community. Wish we had more of that, the community coming in and us welcoming them. Much to do still with planning for Pro-D, and planning for tomorrow, and planning for department things to do on Pro-D. Food for Pro-D?

As teachers, and educational leaders in our schools, who try to research our teaching, our attention is drawn in diverse directions, making it difficult to honour the research with the full critical attention it deserves.

The Joy of Teacher as Researcher

Although it was difficult to work as both teacher and researcher, tying the two together created great potential for insight into pedagogy, and its intersection with my ideals. For instance, my first journal entry, which I wrote when I began to shape the Shared Learnings unit shows my concern for the students, the love of the subject, the hopefulness that permeates my teaching:

Hope. The word reverberates and bounces off my dreams, my psyche, my teaching. What do I hope for? Mostly the standard stuff – a better world, a more human world, a world where people flourish, create and work in harmony with their gifts. A world where individuals have found their voice, and are free to express it without doubt or censure.

Through the research process I was able to see how these sentiments translated into practice, and to reflect on how I might better realize these ideals in the school system.

I felt pride that I was accomplishing an important goal established during my master’s program. The goal was to combine the worlds of school and university in a way
that enhanced the experience of both. Even though I was part of both, working as a part-time student and a full-time teacher, these worlds are so separate at times. I wanted to try and draw the two together, even if it was in just one Social Studies 9 classroom. The purpose of my research as a teacher was to examine the intersection of my university investigations with an intended, then actual classroom experience. In reflecting on the school project I have been given the opportunity to clarify my intentions, improve my practice, and share the experience with others.

**Changes to my Teaching Practice**

The biggest change to my social studies practice, brought on by this study, has been a shift to an emphasis on social responsibility. As I have only taught one social studies class this year, social studies 11, it has been easy for me to reflect on the changes I brought from this study, which ended last year, to my practice. Whether it is history we are studying, government systems, human geography, or current events, I draw student attention to relevant aspects of social responsibility. I teach students to value diversity and to exercise democratic rights and responsibilities, especially in regard to defending human rights. This can happen in small ways that affect students, or by calling attention to larger instances of injustice.

For example, students in my grade 11 class were upset by a “no-hats” rule in the school. They wrote well argued letters to the principal about this issue and other concerns they had about our new high school. The principal, a thoughtful individual who values democracy, thought so highly of their reasoned, well argued letters, that he presented them to staff. Staff were divided on this rule, but it was decided to allow hats in classrooms where the teacher was comfortable with such. Students have been
respectful of honouring the request of some teachers not to wear hats. Most importantly, word spread quickly about our letter writing campaign as students were impressed to see the way they were able to influence the school system, and change a rule that was important to many.

In regard to larger issues of injustice I started the social studies 11 course this semester by looking at the colonial experience, including assimilation and the residential school experience as an important aspect of Canadian social history in the 20th Century. The unit involved role playing to establish empathy, a guest speaker who had attended residential school, and the use of several lessons I had developed during this study.

My practice, reflected in my orientation to social studies teaching, has changed in other, significant ways. My classes have a new format, centered on discussion. I teach students how to discuss, and be both respectful and considerate of the comments of others. I stress the importance of the diversity of ideas in the classroom, and that we can accept difference without attacking each other. I no longer view discussion as a waste of time. I am cognizant of the need to establish an atmosphere of trust and honesty so that excellent discussions can take place. The silence of some does not bother me the way that it did during the study. I trust now that there is much to be gained from discussion, even for those that don’t overtly participate.

Another new direction in my teaching is to bring in guest speakers as often as possible. In my social studies classes this year I have had speakers in to talk about their experiences during the depression, during the war, as a residential school student, or to discuss the local community archives, to describe their work as an MLA, or a police
Whenever I see an opportunity to provide an authentic, human voice that relates to a topic under study, I do.

This year I an opportunity arose to invite a speaker from the Snuneymuxw band who had actually attended Kuper Island School. During her presentation it was difficult for her to speak about her time at the school, and she did cry while recounting her story, but I believe the experience was both more appropriate and more powerful for students than the videos I had shown during the teaching of the Shared Learnings unit. It was a better way of honouring the experience of a residential school victim because students were able to question her afterwards, to fill in many of the gaps in information I was unable to provide. There was nothing vicarious about the experience, as there can be in watching a video. It was authentic, not remote; and the pain of being separated from family most clearly came through. Establish empathic connection is essential in teaching moral reasoning, but deserves careful consideration. Human to human, as is the circumstance with a guest speaker sharing personal experience, seems a more sensitive way to establish empathy.

This research project has also prompted reflection about the role of philosophy in social studies. The way that I introduced the concepts of argument analysis, and moral theories, to students when teaching the Shared Learnings unit was rushed. Also, I didn't like the timing of it, as it came more towards the end of the semester, when it would be more effective if showcased at the start of the course. My teaching position this year involved a change of school, and a temporary focus on primarily English classes in my teaching assignment, many of which were new to me. My thoughts for next year, and teaching social studies, involve introducing students to a core unit of philosophical
concepts at the start of the class. We will use those critical thinking, moral reasoning skills as we examine the topics under study. I have made several steps toward the ideal social studies practice that I envision by welcoming controversial topics, encouraging dialogue, creating human connections with historical and current events, promoting empathy and focusing on social responsibility. It remains for me still to teach critical thinking skills consistently, and to give students a strong foundation in the philosophical tools they will need in their social studies.

**Implications for Social Studies Teachers**

This study has implications that have changed my practice in teaching social studies, and that will continue to impact my pedagogy. As a social studies teacher it can be difficult to develop curriculum that addresses what we believe is fundamentally important to learn in this discipline. Our primary goal revolves around encouraging the development of active, responsible citizenship – giving students the skills to consider multiple perspectives and make reasoned judgment. My study arose out of questioning this goal. I wanted to clarify why the goal is important, and how we might actually teach toward it.

It is common practice for social studies teachers to pick up a textbook, and teach students to learn what is in the book, or books, as the case may be. Thankfully, many of the new textbooks raise social issues, and provide easy access to primary sources for student interpretation. Even with these modifications to resource materials it still remains for the individual teacher to interpret the overarching goals of social studies, and to personally determine what is of importance about teaching this subject.
This study has been the start of my attempt to do that, and to translate the goal the B.C. social studies curriculum for grades 8 – 10 into practice, by teaching moral reasoning. The difficulty with trying to make sense of how to teach moral reasoning is that it involves teaching an intricate, interwoven process of skills, dispositions and human connection. To teach moral reasoning meant teaching ethics and critical thinking skills to students. Moreover, this curriculum was shaped through an ethic of care, where students were expected to carefully attend to the views and experiences of others, and to feel them in some ways as their own. In my research I have determined that this ethic of care must be carefully attended to, and clearly established in conjunction with critical thinking skills, in order for any change to be effected when having students consider areas of social justice. Moral reasoning is one way of combining those two attributes (care and critical thinking) to nurture active, responsible citizenship in students; the challenging mandate we have been given to implement.
References


Kant, I. (1785). Grounding for the metaphysics of morals. In J. Ellington (Trans.), Ethical philosophy. Indianapolis: Hackett


SHARED LEARNINGS UNIT
SOCIAL STUDIES 9

Learning Proposal

These ideas are for planning purposes only, and are intended for use by an experienced teacher. Lessons generally follow a focus of sharing information; discussion; guided practice; group, partner or individual work; summarizing as a group; handing in completed written assignment. A variety of other learning strategies could be employed, at the discretion of the teacher. I have included templates of handouts for students, and information regarding resources used for the lessons, or as background information for teacher. It is intended that this unit be supported by having First Nations speakers come to the class, and a visit to a First Nations cultural site if possible. Each focus is planned to take place in one or two class periods, but the time spent on each section will vary depending upon the amount of discussion that takes place, or as other circumstances dictate.

Argument Analysis:
Focus 1: Pgs. 2 – 3 Bias – Butterfly Bomb Article
Focus 2: Pgs. 4 – 5 Argument Analysis

Shared Learnings Understandings:
Focus 3: Pgs. 13-14 Core Humanitarian Values
Focus 4: Pgs. 15-16 Alternate worldview
Focus 5: Pgs. 17-20 Colonialism/Kant/Whose Land Is This?
Focus 6: Pgs. 21-23 Residential schools/Mill
Focus 7: Pg. 24 Facilitator Guidelines

Evaluation:
Pgs. 25 - 27 Two Assessment Instruments – “Invading Our Land” and a “Final Test”
Pgs. 28 - 29 Assessment criteria for level of moral reasoning evident in written responses.
FOCUS ONE

CONCEPT: Bias. Considerations of voice in text.

Strategic questions to frame teaching/learning:
1. What is bias?
2. Is bias “good” or “bad”?
3. Why is it important to be able to identify bias?
4. In extrapolating information from a written piece, what role does language play in helping the reader to identify bias?
5. Do you know how to identify bias?
6. Does everyone show bias?
7. Why might bias play in studying Aboriginal peoples?

MATERIALS
1. Newspaper article on the “cluster” land mines currently employed in Afghanistan.
2. Shared information about military engineers, and the use of land mines in conflicts.
3. Red Cross information regarding land mines and their removal.

PROCESS
1. Group experience:
   - Students discuss their common understanding of the word bias.
   - Teacher provides notes on the overhead. One concept of bias “Undue or unfair influence”, and a broader definition – “Bias will often be inherent within any given piece of information, no matter how that information is coming to us”. Discussion point: Bias is not necessarily a “bad” thing, but a critical thinker must be able to detect it, clarify it, and place it appropriately within the rational framework of their analysis of any given information.

1. Individual work:
   - Students are asked to read the newspaper article, and while reading highlight or words or phrases that they believe will help them to identify the bias in the article. To assist understanding, ask students to highlight words or phrases that make very “strong statements” such as “blow the hands off Afghan children”. After they have finished reading they are asked to create a list of the biases they can detect within the article, and if possible the words and phrases that helped them to identify these stands. If students are struggling prior to starting this individual activity, highlight the words in the first two paragraphs that speak to bias – “evil”, “horrible”, “purpose”, “delicate child”, etc.
   - Students work with a partner or in a small group to highlight strong words, then identify bias (making a list on the side of their copy of the newspaper article).
Return to group:

-After approximately a twenty minute period of working with a partner students would be asked for the biases they had identified. Teacher lists student responses on the overhead, and students copy any they think are interesting onto their lists. The same procedure is followed, but from the point of view of a military engineer. What would the "bias" of a military engineer be if the article was written from their point of view? It is anticipated students may have more trouble "imagining" this, and more information may need to be provided by the teacher. See "key" on side of newspaper article.

Summary questions:

1. Why was it hard to create the second list?
2. What is an oxymoron? Can you have an ethical bomb?
3. Why are words so important? For instance, consider the importance of the term "submunition" rather than bomb.
4. Has the writer influenced your thinking about land mines? Is this an unfair influence? Is there a strong bias here? Is the bias here "appropriate"?
5. Did you find it a useful technique to highlight words as a concrete strategy for locating bias?
FOCUS TWO

CONCEPT: Argument analysis. Introduction to terms – logic, critical thinking, fallacy, premises, conclusion. Provide reasons and explanations for the arguments. Discover alternatives and perceive possibilities. Explore the question – Is one a better argument than another? How do we begin to come to understand the answer?

MATERIALS

1. Comparison arguments as handouts. A. Insight article and B. Voices – Letter to the Editor
2. Argument analysis thinking frames
3. Transparencies: Guided Practice
   Questions for reflection/journal writing

FORMAT

A. Useful Background Information

Moral statement exercise. Making a prescriptive claim such as “People in the world ought to stop making and using butterfly bombs because hurting people is wrong” not only expresses a moral value but is based upon a key guiding principle which I hope students will come to articulate such as – “respect for persons” or “one should not harm others”. Moore and Parker’s example (p. 384) might be useful for students to consider. The argument is:

1. Child abuse is likely to create a new generation of adults who are likely to practice child abuse. Therefore, child abuse should be prevented by all means.

The premise that is needed to make the argument valid is the following:

Child abuse is wrong.

A similar situation applies to the land mine article. There is an implied moral principle, which although unstated, we must all agree on.

B. Format for Article Analysis:

1. Identify claims.
2. Examining stated or implied conclusions within the argument.
3. Are there any red herrings that have been put forward?
4. What action is being advocated?
5. Do you have any questions about the claims?
6. Is this a good argument?
7. Do you agree, disagree or suspend judgment at this point in time? WHY?
8. Did any other questions occur to you?
9. Did your views change after you read the second argument?
10. Is there a clear right or wrong to this question?
11. Is there any action that could or should be taken on an individual or collective basis?
13. Is there a fundamental principle we could agree upon that helps us to understand why we feel one argument is better than the other?

PROCESS

This lesson will shift between a class activity (for explanation and guided practice), to partner work, to class discussion, to a reflective writing activity. The reflective writing activity is provided after argument analysis frames have been completed and discussed as a group. This lesson will likely cover two – three classes.
VOICES – LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Re: Butterfly Bombs

I am writing in response to the article by Brian Cloughley of Southam Newspapers. I am dismayed and upset that the reporter did not interview me, or any other individual from the military. I am a military engineer, now retired, but I did work for the Canadian government in the Korean War. I have personal knowledge of these butterfly bombs and I understand their purpose and use better than any newspaper reporter. I’m sick and tired of peaceniks like Mr. Cloughley who always pick on the military and find fault with what we do. Although I did not design the actual butterfly bomb, I was part of a team of engineers that worked hard to determine our needs in Korea, and brainstorm ideas for new weapons to carry out our strategies. We in the military establishment pride ourselves on our ability to work well as a team, and to come up with innovative solutions to problems.

The problem presented to us was to design a weapon that would keep land out of the enemy’s hands. We wanted to do this in the most efficient way possible, and with the least loss of life to the men in the Canadian forces. The group I was part of developed the concept of a land mine that was small, cheap to produce, but efficient. We wanted to produce something that did not kill, as a bomb would. However, we did want something that would scare people, and that they knew could act like a bomb.

This kind of a land mine seemed the most logical answer to our dilemma when the war ended. We wanted a way to keep the enemy out of certain territory, and to maintain the boundary between North and South Korea that had been established by the war. We knew that if we dropped enough of the new butterfly bombs in the border region that no one would dare to cross that border without fear of being maimed for life.

We put our best thinking into the prototype for the land mine that came to be manufactured as a butterfly bomb. The bomb does not kill anyone unless it is touched. The bright colours were carefully chosen to call attention to the land mine. If you notice it you won’t touch it. The bombs can be dropped from an aircraft so there is no unnecessary waste of military personnel to plant the bombs in the border area. The bomb achieved our military objective - which was to maintain peace in the area without the use of military personnel. Once the bombs are in place maintaining the border can be easily done. The bombs are designed to last for hundreds of years without losing their explosive capacity, therefore little or no maintenance is required to keep the agreement.

I hope that this letter clarifies the use of butterfly bombs. I ask you to remember that they were designed with the idea of peace in mind. This is an effective, cost-efficient, long-term way to maintain a safe border. Many people gave their lives to establish this border during the Korean War. These land mines exist to make sure that justice is carried out.

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter.

Yours truly,

Mr. Clive Pritchard
ARGUMENT ANALYSIS THINKING FRAME

NAME: ___________________________ DATE: ___________

INSIGHT ARTICLE

A. CLAIMS (PREMISES)

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 

B. CONCLUSION

What are some of the author’s final statements?
1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 

C. ACTION

Although the author does not state it directly, what actions would you suggest Mr. Brian Cloughley is asking be carried out?

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 

D. RED HERRINGS

Are there any other topics that are offered as smoke screens - ones that people may think of when they defend an issue, but are actually related to another topic. They are designed to throw the audience off track, and often appeal to emotions.

1. 
2. 
E. QUESTIONING

Are there any statements from section A that you wonder about, or that you think might be wrong? You might base this on something you know or have seen. Is Mr. Brian Cloughley a credible source of information? You might want to check the background given in the article.

1.
2.
3.

F. JUDGMENT

Now is the time to think most carefully. You have three choices (the easy part). The hard part is defending your reason why. Let’s try. Circle your choice then write an explanation.

Agree

Disagree

Suspend judgment at the present time

Now for the hard part. Why?
In your writing consider the following points:
Was there one piece of information that was the most important point in helping you reach this decision? If so, why is this so important? Does it relate to other principles that you have already identified as important? If there are pieces of the argument that are missing or that are puzzling, try to explain what they are WITHOUT referring to the other article.
LETTER TO THE EDITOR – MR. CLIVE PRITCHARD

A. CLAIMS (PREMISES)

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 

B. CONCLUSION

What are some of the author’s final statements?

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 

C. ACTION

Although the author does not state it directly, what actions would you suggest Mr. Pritchard is asking be carried out?

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 

D. RED HERRINGS

Are there any other topics that are offered as smokescreens - ones that people may raise when they defend an issue, but are actually off topic. They are designed to throw the audience off track, and often appeal to emotions.

1. 
2.
E. QUESTIONING

Are there any statements from section A that you wonder about, or that you think might be wrong? You might base this on something you know or have seen. Is Mr. Pritchard a credible source of information? You might want to check the background given in the article.

1.
2.
3.

F. JUDGMENT

Now is the time to think most carefully. You have three choices (the easy part). The hard part is defending your reason why. Let’s try. Circle your choice then write an explanation.

Agree

Disagree

Suspend judgment at the present time

Now for the hard part. Why?
In your writing consider the following points:
Was there one piece of information that was the most important point in helping you reach this decision? If so, why is this so important? Does it relate to other principles that you have already identified as important? If there are pieces of the argument that are missing or that are puzzling, try to explain what they are WITHOUT referring to the other article.
GUIDED PRACTICE
IDEAS TO GET YOU STARTED

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

A. Claims
1. The military works on problems together.
2. Land mines are designed to keep land away from the enemy's hands.

B. Conclusions:
1. The military should be asked for their opinion also.
2. The land mine works well for what it was designed to do.

C. Action:
1. Land mines should still be made.

D. Red Herrings:
1. Peaceniks always find fault with what the military does.

Questions:
1. What other means could be used to keep land out of the enemy's hands?
2. Why is the enemy the enemy? Why do they want in to the land? Do they have a right to it?
FINISH THE ACTIVITY WITH A PARTNER. IF YOU'RE DONE HAND IN ALL PARTS TO THE "IN BUCKET" AND THEN RESPOND TO THE REFLECTIVE JOURNAL WRITING ASSIGNMENT WHICH IS ON THE BOARD.
YOUR JOURNAL WRITING MUST BE DONE IN CLASS AND IS THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF YOUR RESEARCH INTO YOUR THINKING PROCESSES DURING THIS UNIT.

RESEARCHER'S REELECTIONS

Here are some questions to get you started:

1. Did you respect the other point of view?
2. Could you identify with the children in Afghanistan?
3. Is this important information?

These questions are tougher, but are also important to consider.

1. Is there anything else that people in Afghanistan might do aside from using butterfly bombs?
2. Do you need more information?
3. Should people in the West (Canada) care about people in Afghanistan? Why?
4. Is there anything that Canada could do?
5. Can you see how the type of reasoning we did today could be applied to other situations? Explain.
FOCUS THREE

CONCEPT: Core humanitarian values.

PURPOSE: To identify the guiding principles of a humanitarian society, and facilitate the creation of personal ideals.

MATERIALS: Guided imagery scenario
Slips of coloured paper – 15 of each colour
On Becoming Human  Jean Vanier (1998)

PROCESS

Teacher develops short guided imagery activity. Students close their eyes, relax. As teacher tells story, she places either a red or green card on the desk of each student.

An alien spaceship arrives outside your bedroom window and parks on the lawn. The aliens disembark, throw up a special ladder to your bedroom window and abduct you while you are sleeping. With their complex mind manipulation techniques they are able to keep you in a state of blissful slumber while they transport you away in your spaceship. When you do finally wake up you cannot believe the world you find yourself in. Your task today is to describe the rules of the planet that you have found yourself on (as far as you are able to determine them). Those of you with the red cards, when you arrive back, describe the planet you visited as being the most horrible place imaginable for a human being to live, yet the beings within that place did seem to operate with some kind of organization and codes of behaviour. Working from an anthropological perspective, make a list of 10 key behaviours, expectations or events that made this such a horrible place to be, even temporarily. Those of you that have the green cards were lucky enough to land on a world that was the opposite. It was a place where you felt completely comfortable, at peace, and would love to spend the rest of your life were you not whisked back here. Describe some of the rules, expectations or behaviours that would have made this planet an outstanding planet to flourish as a human being.

Examples for the red planet:

1. Every time someone spoke, the person that responded seemed to feel compelled to raise the level of their voice. Therefore, shortly after a conversation started the people talking would be shouting at each other at the top of their lungs to make themselves heard.

2. All of the beings seemed to be engaged in permanent dismal labouring work. I'm not sure what they were carrying or chopping, but all seemed to be participating in dirty disgusting hard work.
Examples for the green planet:

1. Every time someone else spoke, the others around listened attentively, gazing thoughtfully at the speaker, often clasping their hand or touching them lightly on the arm while listening. When they finished, a respectful but momentary silence followed, then another speaker would respond.

2. Whenever another person approached, rather than just say something—although they did have a greeting word, they would work very hard to make the other person laugh or smile, either by a funny act, or by telling what was obviously a joke.

PERFORMANCE

After completing their lists students will be asked to role play an incident that they have observed on their world for the class. After these have been performed, one “red” student will attempt to hold a conversation with a “green” student.

COMING TOGETHER:

Questions:
1. What intrigued you about today’s activity?
2. What made you think of?
3. What kind of world do we live in?
4. Can we create a green planet?

If time allows, identify core values of an ideal society. See if students can sum up their thinking with one word concepts. Have a recorder write them on large chart paper. If there is no time left, ask students to think about the core values they could identify, and bring their ideas with them to class tomorrow.

The idea for this lesson is drawn from several sources, but the inspiration for guiding principles comes from Vanier’s small book On Becoming Human. He identifies the following organizing principles (of human societies) for consideration:

1. Justice
2. Humanity
3. Equality
4. Redemption
5. Unity/Peace
FOCUS FOUR

CONCEPT: Alternate worldview

MATERIALS: Story - The Moose Pg. 150 Shared Learnings Guide
Student handout: The Moose

FIELD TRIP: To Chemainus BigHouse for a day of workshops, feasting, songs and blessings.

A. Read story together first. Review questions as a group activity.

B. Questions (and possible responses for handout):

1. What number is important in the story?
2. What are the four elements? (air, water, fire, rock) four seasons; four parts of the life cycle (infant, child, adult, Elder); four gifts (mind, body, spirit, emotions); four directions; four peoples (red, white, black, yellow).
3. What is the aboriginal view of life expressed in the story? See pg. 148
4. What lessons did the worm learn? To listen to the Elders, that we all have special gifts or talents that are not possessions but gifts, that we must use resources responsibly.
5. Define or explain the following terms: circle of life, philosophy, balance, inclusion, empathy, world view. What do they mean? How do they apply to the story?

C. Create your own circle drawing (circle of life). Show examples of circle drawing. The following question can frame discussion before students begin their own circle drawing.

1. The circle (energy cannot be created or destroyed but can be changed). The quadrants are air, water, fire and earth. Write, draw, or use symbols to communicate the element within and is part of all creation. How are we connected to this circle?
THE MOOSE

The number four:

Elders beliefs:
1.
2.
3.
4.

Lessons the worm learned:
1.
2.

Key words/concepts for consideration:
1. Circle of life
2. philosophy
3. world view
4. balance
5. empathy
6. inclusion

SHARED LEARNINGS

Aboriginal societies valued the land and resource in distinct ways.

Relatedness of all things in the natural world is at the heart of Aboriginal cultures.
FOCUS FIVE

CONCEPT: Colonialism

SHARED LEARNINGS:
Aboriginal societies, trade, and commerce changed following European contact.
The Indian Act continues to have a profound impact on Canada's Aboriginal peoples.
There is vocabulary specific to Aboriginal peoples and cultures.

P.L.O.’s:
Analyse roots of present-day regional, cultural and social issues within Canada.
Analyse the effects of colonialism on trade and conflict.
Analyse the relationship between Aboriginal people and Europeans and explain the role of each in the development of Canada.

MATERIALS:
1. Summary of Indian Act 1876 (from We Are Canadians, CRB resource kit)
2. Royal Proclamation of 1763 (accessed from VirtualLawOffice @ bloorstreet.com homepage)
3. Videos: Before Columbus (NFB)
   Whose Land Is This?
4. Student Handouts: Seeing Both Sides
   Immanuel Kant
   Blank proclamation forms

SPEAKERS: Treaty negotiators from Snuneymuxw nation

PROCESS

This lesson is based on lesson in Shared Learnings Guide, pg. 108.
Class/whole group activity:
1. Students read a summary/and or parts of the Royal Proclamation of 1763 or The Indian Act of 1876.
2. Class discussion: What do you think were the consequences of this proclamation for Aboriginal people? Would Aboriginal peoples still be feeling the impact of this proclamation today?
ACTIVITIES

A. Colonization of the Earth by Trafalgamorians

- Class is divided into four groups. Two groups prepare one proclamation, two groups prepare the other. The scenario is as follows. The aliens, the ones who took you away before, have decided to return to planet earth as they liked this place so much. Unfortunately for us humans, they want to take us over and colonize the earth as their own planet is dying. The aliens prepare a proclamation that includes:
  1. An overall rationale (reason) for taking over the Earth.
  2. Specific regulations which will now govern the human beings on Earth.
    Give reasons for these regulations.
Note: Due respect must be shown to the human beings in the language and demeanour of your proclamation. State how your regulations will be enforced, then thank the humans for taking into account the needs of your peoples.

The remaining two groups (which are humans) will prepare a Proclamation which states the reasons why human beings are entitled to be left alone on their world, and why the aliens should look elsewhere for a planet to colonize.

Summation:
Good copies of proclamation will be collected.
Role play the encounter between the two groups. The aliens arrive and begin reading their proclamation to the earthlings. The earthlings respond with their requests.

B. Kant and the Categorical Imperative

Process:
a) Putting together information gathered from presentation and the videos students have watched, they complete their “Seeing Both Sides” chart to establish the claims of Aboriginals and European settlers to the land of N.A. The framing question is taken from the video – Whose Land Is This?
b) Introduce Kant – background and ethical principles. Call upon students to frame these principles in their own words. Give real examples where possible – “Golden Rule”, discuss rational and good will.
c) Students see if any aspects of the categorical imperative apply to any of the “claims” made on their chart, numbering the rules 1, 2 or 3.
d) Class develops a list of “alternative” solutions to the question posed.
PROCLAMATION OF THE PLANET TRAFALGAMORE
BY THE TRAFALGAMORIANS
IN THE
CIRCUMSTANCE OF THE COLONIZATION
OF THE PLANET EARTH
Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe, the oftener and more steadily we reflect on them: the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me.

-IMMANUEL KANT (1724 - 1804)

Facts of interest:

1. First philosopher after the Middle Ages to make his living as a professor philosophy.
2. Worked in technical fields of the time – natural science, mathematics but also wrote deeply moving works on the problems of morality and philosophy.
3. Kant insisted that moral principles needed to be established outside of religion, through reasoning, and should be open to criticism and capable of a defense.
4. Kant saw moral problems in a practical sense. He believed that we all know what to do (if we listen well), but it is often hard to do it in real life.

Kant’s philosophy:

Kant argued that many times in life we make plans and do things to further or protect our own situations. For instance, take the example of cheat. You might not cheat on an exam at school for several self-interested reasons including some of the following – school rules are against it, if you get caught your marks may be affected, your ability to enter other schools may be affected, you may suffer humiliation, etc. These reasons for not cheating are not morally praiseworthy actions because you are just doing what is to your advantage. However, if a “little voice” inside your head says “I will not cheat because it would be wrong”, then Kant would say you decided to do the right thing, and therefore made a moral decision. Kant would say you now used what he came to call the CATEGORICAL IMPERATIVE, similar in effect to the Golden Rule, but more precise. Here is how his rule read:

**Act only on the maxim through which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law.**

At the heart of his maxim lie three basic rules:

1. Each person is a rational being – capable of thinking about choices they face, and selecting from them on the basis of reason.
2. Each person has infinite worth and dignity. Each of us is what Kant calls an “end-in-themselves”, and is not to be used by others as a means to their ends.
3. Each person has a good will, and wants to do what is right. Each person then is capable of creating their own moral laws, and when they do what is right they do so because they think of it, not because someone else tells them it should be so.

Discuss these three ideas in relation to the ideas we are studying.
FOCUS SIX

CONCEPT: To obtain information regarding local Aboriginal peoples in respect to the education system called residential schools, from local sources whenever possible.

SHARED LEARNINGS:
The Aboriginal peoples are unique and diverse.
Aboriginal peoples have diverse cultural traditions and spiritual beliefs.
Economic and political barriers to Aboriginal resource use and development have existed in the past and continue to exist.
Aboriginal peoples established trade routes throughout B.C.
Aboriginal social systems have changed over time.
Teaching and learning are done in distinct ways in traditional Aboriginal cultures.
Aboriginal societies, trade, and commerce changed following European contact.

PRESCRIBED LEARNING OUTCOMES: It is expected that students will:
1. Describe how societies preserve identity, transmit culture and adapt to change.
2. Assess how identity is shaped by a variety of factors including family, gender, belief systems, ethnicity and nationality.
3. Analyse roots of present-day regional, cultural, and social issues within Canada.
4. Identify the changing nature of families and women’s roles in Canadian society.
5. Assess the interaction between Aboriginal people and Europeans.
6. Evaluate the impact of western expansion and federal policies on Aboriginal peoples.

MATERIALS:
1. Videos: Kuper Island: Return to the Healing Circle
   Mission School Syndrome
2. Student handout: Utilitarianism
   A Utilitarianism Examination of Residential Schools

PROCESS
1. Viewing and discussion of videos. Both videos contain sensitive material regarding student deaths, sexual abuse and adult alcoholism. Teacher must preview before showing. Discussion must happen after viewing in order to let students express their emotional reactions.
2. Outlines pros and cons of residential schools on chart.
3. Assign numerical value to each pro or con, based on a scale of -10 to -1, and +10 to +1. Total values, determine overall impact. Discuss, discuss.
NOTE: Each point must be given a numerical representation, for each pleasure and pain you must assign a value from −10 to +10. Which has the higher utility?
Philosophers:
1. James Mill (father of, founder of utilitarianism)
2. John Stuart Mill 1806 – 1873 (son, worked on theories of liberty)
3. Jeremy Bentham (godfather of John, credited with hedonistic calculus)

"Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure. It is for them to point out what we ought to do, as well as to determine what we shall do. On the one hand the standard of right and wrong, on the other the chain of causes and effects, are fastened to their throne."

Jeremy Bentham (1748 – 1832)

The basis of utilitarianism is simple – an act is right if it produces the most good for the most people. To be right, it must be good. One way of examining the most good is to decide if the act creates the most happiness or unhappiness. To do this one can tally up the happiness and unhappiness likely to be caused by various options and pick the one that maximizes overall happiness or minimizes overall unhappiness.

Key principles of utilitarianism:
1. Happiness is pleasure, unhappiness is pain.
2. The more pleasure or the less pain the better.
3. Total happiness – producing the most good for the most people is what counts.

Drawbacks:
1. What is happiness? How is it different from pleasure?
2. How many people count as the “most people”?
3. We still have to rely on our “common sense” at times, outside of this rule to determine if something is right or wrong.

Advantages:
1. Provides a rule, not just intuitive judgment
2. Clear – calculations can be performed to help people make decisions.
FACILITATOR’S GUIDELINES

Suggest a procedure of inquiry. Remember to question the procedure.

Seek out foundations and implications of beliefs. How do we know?

Stress a method of moral reasoning, not the particular morals of particular adults.

Seek guiding principles for our world/society/country.

We are concerned with and for others – sensitivity, caring, concern are drivers.

Critical examination – for what grounds are some reasons to be preferred over others?

Recognize inconsistencies in argument. Seek clarity.

Listen/Give voice.

Pose questions.

Encourage students to formulate arguments.

Dialogue is the centre.

Reflect on new possibilities – cultivate imaginings.

Consider real justice.

The Goal: A possibility - The Other is as I. Constructive poststructuralism evidenced in empathic intercontextual understandings of the “other” by Social Studies 9 students.
OUR LAND WAS INVADED

Name: __________________________ Date: ______________

Claims (as stated in newspaper article of April 23, 2000 from Victoria Times-Colonist)

1. Land
2. Deaths
3. Lying

What does the list of grievances ask for?

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

What might the government in Brazil do? Why is the president not coming as planned?

What gives the Brazilian native groups the right to make such a list of demands?
P.S. Think about what you have seen in the Before Columbus video.

What might past conflicts between native groups have been based upon?

What is the benefit of the present situation regarding those conflicts?

Are there any moral principles at work here? What might they be? Try to explain in your own words.

Thank you for your thoughts on this matter.
SHARED LEARNINGS TEST

NAME: _______________ DATE: ______ TOTAL: /30

1. The name of the Enlightenment philosopher who formulated a theory that is similar in many ways to the “Golden Rule” is ______________.

2. This theory, that applies to the way we act, is called the ______________ ________________.

3. At the heart of this theory lie three basic rules:
   a) ______________
   b) ______________
   c) ______________

4. Three philosophers were “involved” in the development of utilitarianism. One of them is ______________.

5. Utilitarianism is based on a basic principle. That principle is:
   a) ______________

6. To figure out a moral or “life” problem a hedonistic calculus can be used. On this chart a list is made of ______ and ______, and a value assigned to each one. /10

ESSAY ANSWERS 10 marks each

A. Read the newspaper article “Our Land Was Invaded” dated April 23, 2000 and taken from the Victoria Times-Colonist. In a one paragraph answer consider the following.
   1. The claims that are made by the Brazilian First Nations people, and the claims that would be made by the Europeans in the area.
   2. What are some actions that might be carried out by the Brazilian government?
   3. What moral principles should the government act upon? P.S. Think of the three rules above.
B. Using your utilitarianism chart that we completed in class, answer the following in an excellent one paragraph response.

1. What does your calculation demonstrate?
2. Does this method help to determine how to compensate residential school victims?
3. Are there any “red herrings” in your chart?
4. Do you have questions still?
5. Finally, consider the question currently posed in the media. Should the taxpayers of Canada help the churches that are currently facing large lawsuits by residential school victims and that may bankrupt them? Remember to include what your opinion is based upon.
Assessment – Letter to the Editor

The four point scale corresponds to the following general criteria.

4. Exceeds expectations – all criteria met. Work is superb, outstanding.
   Demonstrates deep and thoughtful understanding of the issues presented.
   Creative and/or innovative, critically self-aware. (A 86-100%)

3. Fully meets expectations – all criteria met. Good quality. Demonstrates original thinking at times. Shows interest, and self-reflection in analysis. (B, C+ 67-85%)

2. Adequate. Meets expectations but at a minimal level. Little personal interest or real involvement shown with topic. May focus on self, in ego-centric rather than critical ways. (C, C- 50-66%)

1. Not yet within expectations. (D, Fail – 0-49%)

Here’s what I was looking for:

1. That students could demonstrate understanding of the parts of an argument, by adding to the list that we generated together for premises, conclusions, action (implied) and red herrings. Not yet within expectations meant that the student did not attempt to do this at all, just used what we had generated as a group. Even trying to add some of their own to any of the categories implied rated a 2. Many parts found on their own, and appropriately done rated a 3. Individuals who attempted to complete all, and therefore were able to determine another red herring (a complex task) rated a 4.

2. The questioning aspect was very difficult and mean that students had to first analyze a claim, and then raise a question about the validity and worth of that statement as part of the argument. They were asked to come up with one more on their own as we did the first two together. Any attempt at this would be within the 3 or 4 range.

3. The judgement part was the most difficult part of the assignment. I was looking to see if they related their answer back to the questions that they had about the argument. I was also watching for complexity in understanding, and if they appreciated in some way the difficulty of the situation. A rating of a 4 or 3 would have meant that the student also called upon some distinct moral principle – such as the harm done to the children must be stopped at all costs. An excellent response might also have generated another solution. If they showed an understanding of the complexity of the ex-war-torn situation, yet also demonstrated compassion and empathy for the children then that would have been the highest rating.

For the mark which they received in my mark book I gave the assignment an overall rating, based on all of the above parts; using the four point rating, and multiplied it by five. When I use this four point scale I often multiply it by another factor which I have determined identifies the weighting of this assignment in the whole picture of how their class work is being evaluated.
Samples from “Argument Analysis Thinking Frame”

4. Exceeds expectations.

Transcript:
E. Questioning – “Why is there no mention made of the children that picked up bombs?”
F. Judgement – “I disagree with Mr. Pritchard because although they have their own reasons for these so-called “ethical” bombs, it is very wrong to maim children to keep the borders safe. The military’s theory that bright objects keep people away is just dumb. Children are attracted to that kind of thing, it looks like a toy and they will be overcome with curiosity and long to pick it up. He says that the bombs do not kill. That is not entirely true. When female children are maimed, they are as good as dead.”

3. Fully meets expectations.

Transcript:
F. Judgement – “I don’t think that maiming children was the best way. It may have worked but they should have just built a wall or something. Butterfly bombs and cluster bombs were unrealistic then and revolting now.”

2. Meets expectations but at a minimal level.

Transcript:
F. Judgement – “Why I disagree is because kids die. That is not good, and it kills animals and other things that may touch it. Kids should live not die because of land mines. I would never want them here. I would move and lots of other people would too.”

1. Not yet within expectations.

Transcript:
F. Judgement – “They both have very strong opinions”
April 19, 2000

To: Parents/Guardians of Grade 9 students enrolled in Social Studies 9 with Mrs. Christina Brand at Woodlands Secondary School in Nanaimo, B.C.

From: Mrs. Christina Brand, Teacher-Researcher and Master of Arts Candidate, University of British Columbia and Dr. Linda Farr Darling, Assistant Professor and Research Supervisor, Department of Curriculum Studies, University of British Columbia (UBC)

Re: Action Research Project in Grade 9 Social Studies Class

As part of the requirements for a Master of Arts degree, I will be conducting a study in your son or daughter’s Humanities class. This study is titled: *Multiple Perspectives and Reasoned Judgment: A Teacher’s Experience Using the Social Studies Curriculum to Develop Moral Reasoning in Grade 9 Students*. I am writing to inform you of the purposes of the study I am undertaking, the reason for it, and to seek your permission for your child to participate in this study.

I am looking forward to and excited about working on this project. I take to heart the goal of the Social Studies curriculum which is to develop “thoughtful, responsible and active citizens who are able to acquire the requisite information to consider multiple perspectives and to make reasoned judgments”. The purpose of the study is to critically look at my teaching practice and see where it can be improved to enhance learning and teaching in the area of thoughtful citizenship. Specifically, I will be looking at student work for a three week period of time while we study the *Shared Learnings* curriculum mandated by the Ministry of Education for Grades K - 10. For three weeks prior to the unit, and three weeks during the study, I will be writing a journal regarding the lessons I plan, the work of students, and the climate of the classroom. Student work will not be evaluated for purposes of my study until after projects are marked and we have finished studying the unit. All students in the class will participate in the *Shared Learnings* curriculum. Your consent is needed for me to use any accumulated materials from this unit of study as evidence of the teaching and learning that occurred, which I will include in my thesis after the unit is complete.
3. Focus group interviews (maximum of 3) approximately 15 - 20 min.in duration with volunteers. These will be designed to give students an opportunity to express their attitudes and impressions of the unit, and their own development throughout the period of study.

4. Audio-tapes of selected lessons to examine in detail the teaching strategies I am using, and whether the desired learnings are reflected in the discussions that take place.

5. The teacher-researcher will also keep a journal for ongoing reflection and recording of her observations regarding pedagogical meaning and significance, evolving ideas and concerns.

**Participation or non-Participation**

All students in my Social Studies 9 course will be invited to participate in this study. I am asking for your consent so that I may use the accumulated materials from this unit to reflect on the teaching and learning that occurred in the classroom. All students must participate in the work that we do, as Shared Learnings is a mandated curriculum initiative designed by the Ministry of Education for Grades K - 10. Only photocopies of work from students that do participate will be evaluated for data collection. Students whose parents refuse permission for participation in the study will remain in the class during audio-taped discussions, but they will sit out of range of the taping equipment. Participation in the study is voluntary and will have no bearing on students’ marks in the course. Please be assured that all work will be marked as it normally is, and that your consent is to allow me to use materials and evidence collected as part of the thesis I am writing, after the unit is complete.

**Confidentiality:**

Any information resulting from this study will be kept strictly confidential. Each of the students will be assigned a code name which I will use if referring to any of their written work or oral comments in my written report. The identification key for this coded list will be held in the school safe. Any information used in this study will not include reflections on students’ personal lives, but will be chosen to demonstrate changes in their thinking as a result of instruction.