IN ALL THE UNIVERSE:
PLACING THE TEXTS OF CULTURE AND COMMUNITY
IN ONLY ONE SCHOOL

by

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Abstract

At this *fin de siècle*, when educators are pressed with finding curricular alternatives to the sociocultural canon of literacy, this case study explored the intertextual nature of discourse communities in a culturally diverse elementary school in Vancouver, Canada, over the course of two school years. Through hermeneutic inquiry and critical action research, by means of video and audio recording, field notes, researcher narratives, and ethnographic interviews, the study documented how children between the ages of six and nine from a variety of sociocultural and sociolinguistic backgrounds engaged with texts within a literature reading program.

The following interconnected questions undergirded the study: How did students and teachers work with different kinds of texts within a curriculum that is multicultural by mandate? Were these texts, in the form of print and other communicative occurrences, inclusive, relevant and meaningful with respect to the participants' backgrounds? How did language and culture influence this process, and was it possible for teachers to foster community-building and responsible social attitudes and actions in a world which, despite the mandate of multiculturalism, is increasingly fragmented by racism and nationalism?

When teachers engaged in the complex and at times difficult processes of becoming deeply connected with their students' lived experiences as well as their own personal and pedagogical praxis through meaningful multicultural language and texts, opportunities for community-building and responsible social action were created through the curriculum. Indeed, it seemed vital in this process that the participants engaged with texts that reflected the cultural diversity within this local setting but also issues of cultural pluralism and heterogeneity within the larger societal and global context -- *in all the universe*, in one of the children's words.

Through texts that celebrated the joys, the differences as well as the difficulties of communal belonging within both local and universal intertextual frames, they came to locate multiple communities in diversity. In this curricular *turn*, hermeneutic inquiry opened up spaces for textual dialogues between teachers, students and the multiple discourse communities they created with/in a caring and coherent curriculum.

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Thank you, Jeffrey, for the title.
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1
earth
only 1
2 poles
only 2
3 climate zones
only 3
4 oceans
only 4
5 islands
and many more
6 deserts
and many more
7 continents
only 7

....

7 seas
and many more
6 mountains
and many more
5 lakes
and many more
4 winds
only 4
3 rivers
and many more
2 hemispheres
and 2 more
1 earth
only 1

Mother Earth's Counting Book

Dedication

Les grandes personnes ne comprennent jamais rien toutes seules, et c'est fatigant,

pour les enfants, de toujours et toujours leur donner des explications.

Toutes les grandes personnes ont d'abord été des enfants.

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

To Charlotte

(only one)

Chapter 1

Und so Weiter...: In Lieu of an Introduction

To try to move the force in language from the noun/verb centre. To de/centralize the force inside the utterance from the noun/verb, say, to the preposition. Even for a moment. To break the vertical hold. To empower the preposition to signify and utter motion, the motion of the utterance, and thereby Name ...

It's the way people use language makes me furious. The ones who reject the colloquial & common culture. The ones who laud on the other hand the common and denigrate the intellect, as if we are not thinking. The ones who play between the two, as if culture is a strong wind blowing in the path of **honour**. *It takes us nowhere & makes me furious, that's all.*

<div align="right">

Erin Mouré, *Furious*

</div>

Sous la demande générale de relâchement et d'apaisement, nous entendons marmonner le désir de recommencer la terreur, d'accomplir le fantasme d'étreindre la réalité. La réponse est: guerre au tout, témoignons de l'imprésentable, activons les différends, sauvons l'honneur du nom.

<div align="right">

Jean-François Lyotard, *Le postmoderne expliqué aux enfants*

</div>

Man kann Sprache nur verstehen, wenn man mehr als Sprache versteht.

<div align="right">

Hans Hörmann, *Meinen und Verstehen*

</div>

Naming and Placing the Text: Thinking in Between Language and Culture

In a collection of writings by Jean-François Lyotard, the French philosopher states that any writer is his or her first reader and that no-one indeed can write without re-reading (Benjamin, 1989). In this sense, the following text does not present an entirely new *opus* but rather proposes a re-reading of texts, my own and others', and of discourses and dialogues that have shaped my reading and research during the past few years. Similarly, it also resists a conventional introduction to its readers and instead can be perceived as *und so weiter*, [1] as a continuation of re-constituted meanings and insights:

> The work ... can be described as centering around the possibility of a philosophy that takes place in and after -- though not simply in and after -- the refusal of both the complacency of tradition and the complacency in advance of meta-narratives (or grand-narratives). ... Part of the difficulty here is thinking the 'in' and the 'after' as not designating simple temporal locations within an unfolding sequential continuity. Rather they need to be understood, at least initially, as moods or to use Lyotard's own expression as states of mind. These simple observations are an adequate preparation for prereading. They are because they are not. The deferral before -- in front of -- is pointless. There is no way in but the way itself.
> (Benjamin, 1989, p. xvi)

I therefore invite my readers to take up Lyotard's challenge of *thinking the 'in' and the 'after,'* to enter this text *without a 'before'* -- and to take seriously that "our role as thinkers is to deepen our understanding of what goes on in language, to critique the vapid idea of information, to reveal an irremediable opacity at the very core of language" (Lyotard, 1986/7, p. 218). In this sense, my own text is situated within the questioning of established meta-narratives and a critique of language, which, in Roland Barthes' understanding, create a new perspective on reflection:

> Literature and language are in the process of recognizing each other. The factors of this rapprochement are various and complex. ... Hence, there exists today a new perspective on reflection -- common, I insist, to literature and to linguistics, to the creator and the critic, whose tasks, hitherto absolutely self-contained, are beginning to communicate, perhaps even to converge, at least on the level of the writer, whose action can increasingly be defined as critique of language.
> (Barthes, 1986, p. 11)

Together, reflection and critique with a view toward language, literature, and culture create an opening of the spaces *in between* for re-thinking, re-writing, and re-reading research. Placing this text in a context that transcends strict temporal and spatial limitations yet at the same time claims a geographically distinctive locus may seem contradictory *per se*. However, this apparent dichotomy indeed characterizes many socio-cultural and educational phenomena in these postmodern times where contradictory notions and values about society, culture, and curriculum struggle to co-exist and, ideally, flourish without negating each other entirely within the parameters of place and time. In this way, for instance, it is possible to enter a dialogue about the many-faceted relationships between language and culture, about diversity with/out unity, about individual rights versus communal needs, about local realities in the face of global truths.

We must honestly and *honourably* face these issues by not giving in to the general demand for *relâchement et apaisement* (too often synonymous with the kind of backlash mentality that seems to dominate much of the media and popular educational discourse) and by actively questioning false assumptions and attitudes about language that centre on wholeness and representation. Lyotard (1986) challenges us: *activons les différends*; Mouré (1988) demands that we *break the vertical hold*, that we *name* and *honour* language and its multivocity in many different forms and meanings. Perhaps, eventually, we thus will be able to see that we can *only understand language when we understand more than language* (Hörmann, 1976).

From this context and perspective, the shaping, framing and naming of this dissertation reflect the process of hermeneutic inquiry and thinking about ways of languaging and culture in which I have placed myself throughout my teaching practice and graduate studies.

> I have come to believe in the sanity of living amidst contradictions, in the richness of being immersed in seemingly contrasting frames. Action and reflection, local truths and global significance, individualism and community: opposites that, like the proverbial saying, attract and complement each other,

blend together in idealistic visions of unity -- or notions that are statically defined by their irreconcilable differences between part and whole?

Along this continuum of polarization in established educational frames emerge the constructs of self in the face of institutionalism, of many diverse home cultures clashing with only one school culture, of mosaic contrasting with melting pot, of multicultural versus anti-racist curricula, of East in conflict with West, of Pacific vis-à-vis Atlantic, of quantitative research projects as opposed to qualitative case studies.

The list of such often-cited dichotomies seems indeed endless. Some educators, in order to avoid the contentious overtones of conflicting models, ideologies, and methodologies, would rather choose the politically correct, yet often vaguely defined and superficially applied 'paradigm shift' phrase to describe the current pedagogical landscape -- without, however, addressing essential questions about the deconstruction of assumed realities and the notion of *being* in this postmodern pedagogical world.
(Researcher Narrative, 01/05/94)

Inter/textual/disciplinary Reflection

Immersed in this context, my questions and reflections took on an intertextual nature with respect to this present text and its relations with prior and future texts, all of them socially constructed within a conceptual framework that recognizes intertextuality as a significant force in literary, linguistic, educational, and philosophical discourses (Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993; Derrida, 1967; Plett, 1991; Scherner, 1984). As a teacher and as a learner, by being part of a world in which sociolinguistic and sociocultural differences interact with other complex factors to affect both children's and adults' educational progress, I have experienced these relationships between language, culture, and education as truly *rhizomean* in nature:

> Drawn into deeper consideration, I found myself in the midst of a multiplicity of meanings, interwoven and in constant motion. Meanings relate as rhizomes grow, intertwine, new shoots springing forth from the humus formed by the old. Each shoot its own yet inseparably intertwine with others [sic]. (Richter, 1993, p. 58)

Out of this continuous search for meanings, amidst this at times overwhelming complexity of influences at work, I have come to contemplate and re-think the following connections and questions in an interdisciplinary and intertextual fashion:

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How do students and teachers with vastly divergent sociocultural and sociolinguistic backgrounds come to live/life within a pedagogical community based on a curriculum that is multicultural by mandate? How do language and culture influence this community-building process? The provincial curriculum reform initiative in British Columbia, known as the *Year 2000*, was mandated to "enable learners to reach their potential" (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 1989, p. 3) and states that "Curriculum and programs will respond to the growing cultural diversity of learners. Cultural understanding and respect among students will be promoted. All students will understand the values of their cultural heritage and be prepared to contribute to Canadian society" (p. 42). What does it mean for children from diverse backgrounds to become literate in today's 'cultural mosaic' of a society? This seems particularly poignant in a province and country that declare themselves committed through legislation to multiculturalism as a progressive political and ideological force (Moodley, 1992; British Columbia Ministry of Social Services, 1992) How *do* children come to *understand*, to *know* their place in this cultural multiplicity and how do they relate to their heritage?

The guiding principles expressed in The *Year 2000* curriculum reform initiatives, in turn, are based on the findings of the Sullivan Royal Commission, entitled *A legacy for learners* (British Columbia Royal Commission on Education, 1989). Both documents undergird this thesis throughout and will be referred to in subsequent chapters in further detail, for instance in chapters three and four, with regard to reading instruction and community building. The *Year 2000* document, and especially its subsequent *Primary Program Foundation Document* (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 1990)[2] strongly express educational beliefs and positions that are based on current understandings and findings about children's development. These are well documented with both research- and field-based resources and place children's educational progress in a comprehensive framework of socio-psychological, socio-cognitive, aesthetic and physical variables. In particular, the section entitled *Philosophy of the Primary Program* recognizes

that children are individuals and every child is unique. The Program accommodates the broad range of children's needs, their learning rates and styles, and their knowledge, experiences and interests to facilitate continuous learning. It achieves this through an integrated curriculum incorporating a variety of instructional models, strategies and resources.

The Program honours the development of the whole child. It reflects an understanding that children learn through active involvement and play and that children represent their knowledge in a variety of ways. It recognizes the social nature of learning and the essential role of language in mediating thought, communication and learning. (p. 15)

In connection with this focus on language and being responsive to individual needs, the language arts curriculum is recommended to be *literature-based* (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 1991), a term that is not without controversial overtones and has lately been critically examined with respect to the authenticity of materials used (Freeman & Goodman, 1993). How exactly do students and teachers engage with literature, with different kinds of texts within the curriculum, and are these texts, in the form of print or other communicative occurrences, inclusive, relevant and meaningful to them with respect to their socio-cultural backgrounds? In its section on *Multicultural and Race Relations Education*, the *Primary Program Foundation Document* (1990b) states:

In acknowledging individual differences among children, the *Primary Program* emphasizes that all children enrich the culture of the classroom through the diversity of their many origins, beliefs, values and first languages. The *Primary Program* affirms the cultural pluralism that is the essence of our society.

A recent aim, in British Columbia as in other parts of the world, is to develop anti-racist policies to address prejudice and discrimination built into the education system and to focus on changes in attitudes and practices. (p. 362)

How then, for instance, do children relate through language to being part of a conflict-ridden world that is in the midst of redefining the very nature and scope of literacy? Finally, how is it possible for students -- and in particular the children in my classroom and school -- to engage in building community and for teachers to foster responsible social action in a world which despite -- or perhaps because of --

multiculturalism "shows every sign of being increasingly torn by struggles rooted in racism and nationalism" (Willinsky, 1994, p. 2)?

Much writing on issues connected with these questions, in various pedagogical contexts and places, has come forth during recent years. My own understanding of the theory and practice of teaching has certainly profited from the discourses these texts have engendered -- texts that speak to the multiple challenges of curriculum and language teaching in our postmodern multicultural communities, such as Aoki (1993a, 1993b), Caputo (1993), Corlett (1989), Gunderson (in press-a, in press-b), Jardine (1994), and the Miami Theory Collective (1991), to name only a few recent thought-provoking readings. Nevertheless, more than anything else, it is the ongoing reading of and listening to my students' languaging embedded and framed in this contemporary pedagogical landscape that has given me the motivation and the curiosity to pose questions and to paint an intertextual and multi-layered picture of language and culture at work, in *action*.

This dissertation, therefore, does not present a finished product or a report on a sequential, linear plan of research that one might expect to lead to definitive answers or conclusions. Instead, it constitutes a re-posing of questions about practice and a posing of yet more new ones -- new shoots of multiple meanings embedded in layers of re-visited intertext -- informing each other much in the way that. The paint on this portrait of one special *community of inquiry* is still wet, new colours are being created, new shades of understanding are emerging as I write and re-read. ...*Und so weiter* ...

This *rhizomean* nature of de-centred, constantly emerging meanings relates to Kristeva's (1967, 1974) notion of *intertextualité* which in turn is based on Bakhtine's [sic] (1978) literary theory and confirms that "any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of *intertextuality* replaces that of intersubjectivity, and poetic language is read as at least *double*" (Kristeva, 1980, p. 66). As part of this intertextuality, writings and references that have been influential in shaping my thinking and questioning are interwoven between the layers of the

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paligraphic text and transposed into the textual systems of narrative journal entries, documentations and samples from the classroom observations.[3]

At the same time that this text refuses a one-dimensional centredness with respect to exploring issues about language, literature, and culture, it demands a focusing on the respective understanding of several crucial terms and themes that undergird this exploration. I begin this process here and will continue with it in a recurring fashion as it applies contextually throughout the following chapters.

> inter-text. Using and repeating my own and others' earlier texts. Pulling the old poems thru the new, making the old lines a thread through the eyes of the words I am sewing. Sound & sense. The eeriness. *(Mouré, 1988, p. 85)*

> *Interdisciplinary* studies, of which we hear so much, do not merely confront already constituted disciplines (none of which, as a matter of fact, consents to *leave off*). In order to do interdisciplinary work, it is not enough to take a "subject" (a theme) and to arrange two or three sciences around it.
> Interdisciplinary study consists in creating a new object, which belongs to no one. The Text is, I believe, one such object. (Barthes, 1986, p. 72)

These thoughts seem highly appropriate and eerily poignant almost a decade after they were written, continents apart, in Europe and North America, in light of the ever-more urgent need for creating new understandings about language, culture, and their surrounding contexts, at the same time that we must come to terms with the legacies of our own and other's 'old texts'. Interdisciplinary study, in this sense, presents a challenging notion for me on a personal and professional level when thinking about old and new texts. In a paper I wrote on *Reflections on teaching ESL in the context of Canadian multicultural education* (Hasebe-Ludt, 1991) at the very beginning of my graduate studies in curriculum and language education at a North American university, I recalled my previous experiences with interdisciplinary studies in North American language, literature, and culture at a European university. I found it ironic and disheartening that my different cultural and educational background hardly seemed to fit the mode of the narrowly defined field of study I encountered when I first arrived in Canada to continue my previous studies

with a research scholarship in Canadian English. I commented on feeling disconnected and outside the mainstream of the academic canon whenever I tried to explain my program of interdisciplinary graduate studies at the Freie Universität Berlin which focused on critical examination of linguistic, sociocultural, and historical factors related to literary production. There was hardly anybody here at any academic institution that could relate to such a course of studies or tell me which program I would fit in. I also wrote about the impact of place, of the experience of moving to Vancouver, British Columbia, from the former West Berlin in the late 70s:

> When I was able to obtain a scholarship to the University of British Columbia to study sociolinguistics in the context of Canadian English for one year, I felt both exhilarated and skeptical, wondering whether I would be able to adjust to a cultural environment I had not much in common with through my upbringing. I wanted to get a better understanding of how to define Canada's linguistic and cultural diversity in terms of a 'multicultural mosaic'.
> No letters, friendly visits or university studies could have prepared me for the reality of actually living in this Canadian urban environment.[4] I had to see with my own eyes the reality of the not always harmonious coexistence of different races, make my own judgments about racial prejudice in the media, among people I met at the university and in other places. Above all, I had to feel for myself the isolation and homesickness of the first few months of living in a foreign country and speaking in a language that was not my mother tongue.
> Although I was able to stay in close contact with friends and family back home, I began to witness and understand the implications of this "culture shock" for immigrants from places to which no lines of communication could be maintained -- which often happens to refugees from war-torn countries. (Researcher Narrative, 10/10/91)[5]

'Old lines and new ones' -- my own and others' -- mark my journalizing and journeying into culture, my own and others'. They document the disruptive force, 'the strong wind' that culture can turn into, as Mouré feels, blowing in the path of human lives.

> I suspect my interest in approaching questions of pedagogy as questions of culture arises inevitably from the long after-effects of the culture shock I experienced as a young person coming to Canada in the early sixties. ... Feeling strange or alien is the first prerequisite to a life of interpretation, as Wilhelm Dilthey once suggested, so after many years of suffering through the typical immigrant agonistics of trying to fit into the patterns and codes of dominant culture, years of self-abnegation and reclusiveness, eventually I began to realize that a life of difference, or a different life, is what makes possible a refraction of normalcy into 'strangeness', and that

such work may be precisely what is necessary to the enormous contemporary task of mediating differences across cultures, that is to the hermeneutic task of making the world less fearful, more ecumenical. (Smith, 1994a, pp. ii-iii)[6]

During the same time, in a journal reflection on a research article (Wallace & Goodman, 1989) during one of the courses in my own teacher training in multicultural and language education, I also wrote:

> The authors "view the knowledge and use of more than one language as a remarkable resource" and equate multicultural education in this sense with "good education" as it increases our understanding not only of languages but also of ourselves and others as language learners and members of multicultural communities. This, to me, brings back memories of my schooling in a European setting where I was always told that "languages are good for the brain!" Although it seems to me only natural and logical to regard multilingual/multicultural education for ourselves and for our children as thoroughly positive and enriching, until very recently the overall trend in literacy education has achieved the opposite: Educating children towards mastering the linguistic 'standard' of a White, English speaking, middle class majority has resulted in more or less open discrimination of language variables and speakers that do not fit into that category. (Researcher Narrative, 03/29/90)[7]

With this thesis, I am re-connecting, at last, going back to what feels like a comfortable, sensible, and enriching way of academic research through interpretive inquiry. At the same time I am attempting to find new ways and methods of connecting through intertextual and interdisciplinary work with a new world order, a new way "in which we come to think about the world" (Willinsky, 1994, p. 15). The world, in this frame of an interpretive system of textual hermeneutics, can be seen as a text itself (Rogers, 1994), a text in which philosophical, educational, literary, and socio-linguistic as well as eco-linguistic concepts come together to re-interpret "what is thinking", four decades after Heidegger's (1954) attempt to interpret this fundamental human facility that gives us the capacity for survival and, ultimately, improvement of the conditions for living on this planet.

> I will give my world peace. I think we should stop wars.
> (Roddie, age 7, *My Wish List for the World*, 12/07/94)[8]

Only quite recently, the mode of interpretive critical inquiry has come to the attention of a larger circle of scholars here in North America as part of a shift toward a postmodern hermeneutic perspective (Smith, 1994c); yet, in light of the increasing complexity of postcolonial developments in all areas of academic and other educational endeavors, there is an urgent need to explore this concept much further and more fully. Within the 'hermeneutic circle', it seems fitting that the three inter-connected themes are "the inherent creativity of interpretation, the pivotal role of language in human understanding, and the interplay of part and whole in the process of interpretation" (Smith, 1994c, p. 104). These are indeed the themes that undergird my own thinking in the context of language, culture, and community in my students' classroom. *The interplay of part and whole*: This, once again, re-connects me with the question of *where* in this world we situate ourselves, the question of our engagement with place:

> The question of "place" is curiously cogent to our present political, social, and environmental condition. Economically we're in misery, politically we are hopelessly stagnant, economically we're a disgrace, and socially we are watching the emergence of a multi-racial multi-ethnic population that will radically shape the future direction of the culture of our country. We are also seeing the reemergence of a crude racism and chauvinism that may destroy us all.
> (Snyder, 1993, pp. 261-262)

These words, spoken in reference to the Californian landscape and watershed, a region of the United States strikingly close and similar in many ways to the Canadian West Coast where my own life and work are taking place at present, only ring too true for other parts of this continent and the world. Indeed, the author continues to warn us: "Although framed in terms of California, the same points may be made for the whole country" (Snyder, 1993, p. 261).

In much the same way that Snyder sees the possibility of one local paradigm becoming a building block for continent-wide governance and therefore for having a broader relevance, the following case study of a local educational setting must be seen as

an effort to contribute to a better, more informed understanding of a system in change. It also is a documentation of "our need for community and the ways we struggle to find it" (Walker, 1993, p. xiii) and the urgency for improving the quality of the lives of people within their communities.

> This book is about black and white elephants, some of the good elephants didn't fight.
> (Jimmy, age 5, Reading Response to *Tusk, Tusk* by David McKee; 11/15/94)

> I like the part when the Elephant use there tunks as guns.
> this is about a war.
> and peace.
> (Naomi, age 7, Reading Response to *Tusk, Tusk;* 11/24/94)

> I would try to help the Animals from being endangered and trying to help other people from not polluting. and maybe helping other from getting in a fight. I would help plant trees and be peaceful. I will Help countries work together.
> (Bethany, age 7, *My Wish List for the World*, 12/07/94)

The Language of Curricular *Kehre*

> Les hommes, dit le petit prince, ils s'enfournent dans les rapides, mais ils ne savent plus ce qu'ils cherchent. Alors ils s'agitent et tournent en ronde ...
> (De Saint-Exupéry, 1943, p. 78*)*

> In recent years, increasingly, curriculum scholars have opened themselves to the realm of language, linguistics, discourse and narratives to understand their own field. Within this curricular **turn** [emphasis added], language is understood not so much as a disembodied tool of communication caught up in an instrumental view of language, but more so language understood in an embodied way -- a way that allows us to say, "we are the language we speak" or "language is the house of being." (Aoki, 1993a, p. 88)

> I re-examined Heidegger and his thoughts on language; his notion of *Kehre* (a strangely formal and solemn word) being a fascinating and powerful one to me: not only does it mean a turn or turning point, it also implies, especially in its verbal mode, *kehren,* a sweeping, cleansing motion (*neue Besen kehren gut:* new brooms sweep clean; *das Oberste zuunterst kehren:* to turn things upside down); at the same time, *Kehre* and *kehren* imply the notion of care and caring (*sich um etwas kehren:* to care about something), of turning inward, inside oneself, reflecting. I can somehow identify with this semantic complexity more

than ever before -- it seems to fittingly describe some of the processes, past and present, in my own research, thinking, and reflecting. Action research/inquiry research certainly has all those elements of *Kehre*. (Researcher Narrative, 07/10/94)

The notion of *Kehre/turn* frames this dissertation in multi-faceted ways. On one level, it implies a turn in the sense of turning around and looking back (*um-kehren)*, a searching for roots, for a hold so as not to get swept away by the fast rapids of change, both progressive and regressive, in the currents of postmodern pedagogy. It is easy to lose our way, as de Saint-Exupéry (1943) warned us half a decade ago, and to forget what we are looking for in human and global relations. Turning back, though, we need to re-think and re-flect why we have come on this dangerous journey in the beginning. Re-reading Heidegger's thoughts on the term of *Kehre*, it emerges as intricately linked to *thinking:* "Diese Kehre bedeutet: Die Analytik des Daseins 'entdeckt' zuerst die Zeit, kehrt sich dann aber zurück auf das eigene Denken ..." (Safranski, 1994, p. 205). We eventually overcome our fixation on time and turn back to our own thinking when trying to analyze our being.

On another level, yet semantically and etymologically linked, there is *Kehren* in the sense of a cleansing and caring action. This dissertation marks my own *Kehre* in the understanding of pedagogy and culture. Through both synchronic and diachronic analysis and presentation of thoughts and texts on this theme, I have created the *scaffolding*, the *Gestell* in Heidegger's language, that frames the work ahead. This has been attempted through the three-fold intertextuality of a personal and pedagogical narrative that has evolved from these texts, in the form of reflections on readings in language, pedagogy, and culture, observations and interpretations of my classroom practice, and thirdly, the presence of the voices of others, such as those of the children, their parents and teachers.

Finally, this work moves toward a *Kehre* in the representation of the researched material. As a transitional text and a creative action in writing, it aims at a *turn*, a breaking away from the straightforward path in the display of ethnographic discourse and

documentation of data. Instead of presenting a mere window on reality through a separate display of the entire body of the collected materials, this thesis weaves a mosaic of texts by refracting the realities of lived experiences in a different optical and scholarly density through the lens of critical hermeneutics. By constructing an architecture of intertexts that recursively act upon each other and in the world, it transcends methodological and epistemological borders and creates a new embodied language of research and curriculum. Rather than separating the body of empirical realities from their textual interpretative re-presentation, it proposes an epistemological development toward a composite, de-centred view of data as a constitutive part of this propositional intertext and new paradigm.

It has occurred to me that putting these interconnected and multi-layered themes into a conventional chapter format might be a difficult and perhaps unrewarding task. However, as long my readers bear with me and bear in mind the intertextual nature and interwovenness of my topics -- which can be likened to the complex web of living amongst children -- they might, so I hope, feel inclined to read between the chapters, lines, and words.

"Right now she wants to put her ear to the ground, listen to the squirrel's heart beat, as George Eliot put it, and prowl among the webs of little things." (Belenky, McVicker, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986, p. 199)

    Naomi: Me, Felicia, Tawnya, Frankie, Lee.
                    We are playing Squirrel Family. We Will have fun.

    Teacher: Who will be the mother squirrel?

    Naomi: Me
                    (Journal, 10/25/94)

Right now I want to begin elaborating this intertextual frame by introducing the 'reading relations' (Sharratt, 1992) with whom I have become familiar and by starting to connect some of the theoretical models of thinking, learning, and research with the children, the little ones who have spun their webs around me.

Chapter 2

What we Care About: Communities of Inquiry in Postmodern Times

The status of theory could not be anything but a challenge to the real. Or rather,
their relation is one of a respective challenge. For the real itself is without doubt
only a challenge to theory. It is not an objective state of things, but a radical
limit of analysis beyond which nothing any longer obeys the real, or about which
nothing more can be said. But theory is also made to disobey the real, of which it
is the inaccessible limit. The impossibility of reconciling theory with the real is a
consequence of the impossibility of reconciling the subject with its own ends.

Jean Baudrillard, *The ecstasy of communication*

Et c'est bien cela l'inter-texte: l'impossibilité de vivre hors du texte infini -- que ce
texte soit Proust, ou le journal quotidien, ou l'écran télévisuel: le livre fait le sens,
le sens fait la vie.

Roland Barthes, *Le plaisir du texte*

Whereas in the past the philosophical frame of mind had always been linked to
the attainment of a single viewpoint upon life and its events in general, Nietzsche
suggests in Human, all too Human *a different path to the enrichment of*
knowledge: rather than attempting to make themselves uniform, philosophers
should listen "to the soft voice of different life-situations." This insistence upon
the value of plurality is one of Nietzsche's enduring commitments. Accordingly,
the philosophers of the future will shun any pretension to universality. ... As such,
this is a paradoxical teaching.

Paul Patton, *Nietzsche and the body of the philosopher*

Within the last few decades of educational theory and practice, we have experienced profound changes with respect to the understanding of key concepts in the philosophy of education. Immersed in the postcolonial and postmodern debates about the Eurocentric hegemony of values, texts, as well as philosophical and curricular paradigms, we are forced to reflect on the notions and concepts of the canon of textuality that postmodernism has challenged and deconstructed, in particular with reference to culture and "the currents that flow between its multiple terminals" (Adair, 1992, p. 25).

In this context of the current questioning and deconstructing of the 'great narratives' of the social, cultural, political, and educational status quo, this inquiry has led to further probing into the definitions of knowledge in a society that seems to be so fond of contrasting information and 'savoir faire' -- "the hard facts" -- with the ambiguity of our experiences of dwelling among others on this earth. This tensionality is further expressed between what Lyotard names the *inhuman and* the *human* in his volume on *Reflections on time* (1991). Through a unique and startlingly powerful as well as provocative body of literature, this 'postmodern habit of thought' (Klinkowitz, 1988) reaches into many pedagogical fields.

Within the area of language education, for instance, a fundamental shift has occurred through this new mode of thinking; perhaps this was made possible because language itself, in its various forms, is being re-affirmed as a vital driving force and change agent amongst postcolonial, post-structural and postmodern thinkers. The titles of some of these seminal discourses bear witness to this: Roland Barthes' *Le bruissement de la langue* [The rustle of language] (1984/1986) and *Le plaisir du texte* [The pleasure of the text] (1973/1975), Derrida's (1967/1978) *L'écriture et la différence* [Writing and difference], *Lyotard: Writing the event* (Bennington, 1988), *The ecstasy of communication* (Baudrillard, 1988), and Jardine's (1988) *Speaking with a boneless tongue.*

Postmodernism is about language. About how it controls, how it determines meaning, and how we try to exert through language. About how language restricts, closes down, insists that it stands for some *thing*. Postmodernism is about how 'we' are defined within that language, and within specific historical, social, cultural matrices. It's about race, class, gender, erotic identity and practice, nationality, age, ethnicity. It's about power and powerlessness, about empowerment, and about all the stages in between and beyond and unthought of. (Marshall, 1992, p. 4)

In this chapter I therefore want to dwell on the *languaging* and the conceptual foundations this dissertation builds on. These include a hermeneutic approach to pedagogical inquiry, together with a critical interpretive approach to ethnographic research. From this perspective, aspects of postcolonial and post-structural literary criticism, as well as phenomenological and postmodern philosophical propositions on language, literature, and community will be explored. With/in this ethnographic exploration of 'reading the word and reading the world' (Freire & Macedo, 1987), I present a longitudinal case study, conducted over the course of approximately two years of becoming a teacher researcher in a multi-age, multi-ethnic primary open area classroom in a community school in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. In this context of action research, an exploration of holistic approaches to text and reading undergirds the dissertation.

It seems that the amount of controversy generated by the discussions about 'literature-based' programs in connection with whole language approaches has only been surpassed by the number of books, articles, presentations, and discussions generated and recorded on this subject. I now will give a brief overview of the important literature, salient characteristics, and recent developments in whole language. Although the whole language movement is certainly not a new one and is firmly rooted in much earlier pedagogical concepts, the discussion around its application in contemporary school systems has dominated professional academic and pedagogical circles during the last decade in particular. Gunderson (1989), for instance, states that

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thousands of teachers across North America have adopted and adapted something called whole language as a philosophical base ... to support the particular form of literacy environment ... they have chosen to create in their classrooms. No other approach to teaching has produced such dedicated disciples and advocates. (p. 3)

Lehr (1990), in an overview of theory and research on whole language as applied to the classroom context, characterizes these "disciples" as follows:

Teachers who are risktakers, who respect the child as an active learner capable of critical thought, thought worth hearing, who set up a challenging environment with solid content at its core where children can query and learn from each other, are whole language teachers in whole language classrooms. (p. 13)

Gunderson (in press-b) questions whether one can indeed consider whole language a philosophically-based concept within the western philosophical tradition since "it does not seek to formulate meta-narratives" (p. 11). Rather, whole language has evolved as a text in the postmodern sense of text in that it attempts to communicate the multiplicity and intertextuality of voices within complex discourse communities. In this sense it can be viewed as a "theory of voice that operates on the premise that all students must be heard" (Harste, 1989, p. 245; as quoted in Gunderson, in press-b, p. 10). Following from this theoretical conceptualization, Gunderson suggests that

A propositional intertext may contain philosophical, educational, sociological, perceptual, and literary propositions generated by an individual teacher in response to the multiple sources that inform her. In this respect a propositional intertext is an individual view of teaching and learning, one that varies from teacher to teacher, from school to school, from region to region. In this sense it does not represent universals, it represents local belief, the interpretive voice of the teacher. This is an advantage in that intertexts evolve over time as new propositions are added or existing ones are altered or eliminated. Individual teachers develop their literacy programs on the basis of a propositional intertext that is complex, one that evolves. (p. 13)

In contrast to these beliefs stand the models and methods traditionally used in classrooms in North America and some other post-industrialized countries with highly developed school systems. These typically rely heavily on basal readers that focus on

skills in isolation, without context, and sight-word vocabulary that may not be culturally or individually meaningful to the students. They are aptly summarized by Mickelson (1987):

> Traditionally in North America, reading and language have been taught as separate "subjects" and even these have been broken down into constituent parts such as oral reading, silent reading, phonics, comprehension, vocabulary, skills or, in the case of language, into spelling, grammar, usage, writing and punctuation. Stated differently, this approach was called a "bottom-up" one focusing on sequential skill development (albeit arbitrarily determined) and was consolidated through the use of basal materials which presented programs in a controlled, linear and hierarchical fashion. (p. 2)

When whole language advocates started to question the effectiveness and appropriateness of such an approach and -- with it the use of the basal reader as the cornerstone of reading material selection -- a fierce controversy began among reading researchers, applied linguistics, curriculum planners, classroom practitioners, and, last not least, parents. In a conversation with one of the Open Area parents, for example, Jodi , expresses her exasperation and frustration with this debate. Starting with a big sigh, she is trying to make sense of all the different opinions and conflicting information from various sources parents are faced with:

> Well -- I've, I've struggled to learn what whole language is. I find it a very abstract concept, and I find it very hard to really get a handle on it. What my understanding of it is is looking at words in context, okay, and and I can see that this is very important, and I know that that I have done that with Hilary as well, but I also see a very strong role for phonics, in my mind they have to go together, and especially with the English language the way it is where there are words that, you know, have many, multiple meanings, there are words that spell similarly that sound completely different when they're sounded out. To understand the phonetics and the phonics or workings of the phonics, the way they are working in the English language is really important, I can see that as very very important with ESL students. So, in my mind, you know, I would have a hard time with a teacher who is focusing on whole language, and I know that the way I was teaching Hilary to read, it was more on the phonetic side than on the whole language side. But I also thought: "Well, I teach the phonetic part, and then, you know, in school she can get more of the contextual side." (Parent Interview, Jodi, 05/95)

I don't know if I succeeded in pointing out to her that this dichotomy is not

necessarily accurate and that whole language does not exclude phonics instruction *per se*,

but she is aware that

> That's part of the problem too, that that whole language thing has had bad P.R.
> I think that a lot of parents are walking around with a completely different
> concept of what whole language is, and every time I try to read on that topic, I
> find it very very hard to figure out what it is. (Parent Interview, Jodi, 05/95)

Typical of this kind of debate is also the argument for structure and "scope and

sequence" that basal believers see as necessary prerequisites for learning (Baumann,

1992). On the other side, we find the rejection of this static sequential view by whole

language supporters who see it predominantly as a "deskilling" device used to render

teachers powerless with regard to choosing their own reading materials (Goodman,

Shannon, Freeman, & Murphy, 1988; Shannon, 1989, 1993). Most recently, this debate

has focused on the continuous and renewed basalization of children's literature and

especially of picture books:

> There's good news and bad news in the newer versions of basal readers. The good
> news is that newer basal readers *are* including more literature in their current
> versions. Some go so far as to call themselves literature-based and even use the
> term whole language in their promotional materials and manuals. ... The bad news
> is that the literature is being basalized. As part of a second look at basals we've
> begun a careful examination of their use of literature. Part of the good news is that
> a lot of picture books are being used in the early levels of basals. The bad news is
> that in order to fit them into the format and structure of the basals they're being
> changed from picture books to illustrated stories. And that makes them less
> authentic, harder to read, and less enjoyable. (Goodman, Maras, & Birdseye,
> 1994, p. 1)

In response to this kind of accusation, some authors rise to the defence of the new

basals by declaring that they have much improved in quality compared to the ones from a

decade ago (Greenlaw, M. J., 1994). Since there has been a sanctioned shift away from

basals and toward a 'literature-based' curriculum, publishing companies have been eager to

bring out new materials that fit into that mold, such as 'literature-based anthologies' and

'whole language classroom libraries.' However, these materials, as pointed out above, are often very different in content and appearance from the original story or book and can by no means meet the variety of needs and interests of students in any classroom (Short & Pierce, 1990). Hade (1994) goes as far as to stress that these new, "more attractive" materials are still conveying the same message of rationalization born out of a capitalist system, and that only too often children's literature scholars have been accomplices in this process. There is no substitution for authentic literature jointly selected by teachers and students for the creation of a multitude of real literacy experiences (Harste, Short, & Burke, 1988). As can be seen from this ongoing debate, the controversy surrounding holistic literacy instruction is far from over. Against this colourful background, and with an awareness of the constant changes in perception of this literacy paradigm shift in progress, I will attempt a brief historical overview of the principles of whole language before further exploring specific characteristics and aspects of its implementation.

Despite being frequently labeled a new insubstantial and short-lasting "fad" by skeptics and opponents, the origins of whole language go back to earlier 20th century educational beliefs and practices and are based on evidence from investigations into the nature of language and from as yet sparse, but convincing classroom research data (Freeman & Freeman, 1992, 1994; Gunderson & Shapiro, 1988; Shapiro, 1988; Wells & Chang-Wells, 1992). While some do not hesitate to call whole language a philosophy in its own right, it is most commonly described as a world view, a stance, or a perspective on language and language teaching (Blake, 1990; Gunderson, 1989, 1991; Manning & Manning, 1989).

The roots of whole language can be found in a synthesis of such varied sources as the educational philosophy of Dewey (1938), the cognitive socio-psychological models of Bruner (1960) and Vygotsky (1962), the writings and teachings of Ashton-Warner (1963) and, as well as research in psycholinguistics, applied linguistics, reading and writing by Cazden (1972), Clay (1975), Goodman (1962), Graves (1983), Halliday (1978), Loban

(1976), Read (1971), and Smith (1978), to name only a few key influences. Thus, it is not one doctrine or model that has initiated this movement; rather, it is truly multi-dimensional and holistic in origin and nature, not only in name, making it at the same time harder to define and easier to attack. However, while whole language incorporates elements of Dewey's progressive education, Ashton-Warner's language experience approach, the British open education system, Freire's critical pedagogy, and of transactive and interactionist perspective on reading (Mickelson, 1987), it is nevertheless a movement in its own right, "one of many attempts in recent history to alter education" (Edelsky, Altwerger, & Flores, 1991).

Based on the above theories, research, and practices, whole language teachers believe that the acquisition and development of literacy are an interactive and non-linear process in which the individual areas of reading, writing, listening, and speaking are not separate, as used to be claimed by the traditional "scope and sequence" reading programs (Rumelhart, 1984). Instead, these areas are seen as integral parts of language development at any point in time and are therefore consistently integrated across the curriculum, each informing and reinforcing the others. This is a definite departure from teaching skills in isolation or predominantly focusing on the 'bottom-up,' lower-level skills, such as phonics instruction (Froese, 1994; Mickelson, 1987). Being child-centred in nature, it focuses on the individual, fostering each student's learning in developmentally appropriate ways through meaningful materials that incorporate prior knowledge and real life experiences and that are conducive to stimulating the students' interests (Kostelnik, 1992; Maria, 1989). At the same time, the social nature of learning is acknowledged by creating classroom communities that foster positive cooperative learning experiences through authentic language across the curriculum in content area studies such as social studies, science, and history (Altwerger, Edelsky, & Flores, 1987; Lim & Watson, 1993; Tunnel & Ammon, 1993).

In connection with this focus on authenticity, whole language attempts to connect the child's real life environment, at home and in the community, with the classroom, making parents and community members an essential and welcome part of the learning process (Forrester & Reinhard, 1989; Hanson, 1989; Langer, 1992). In this sense, literacy is set within a social framework that recognizes the importance of cognitive and socio-psychological processes in order to develop new knowledge, comprehension and critical thinking (Manning, Manning, & Long, 1989; Snow, Barnes, Chandler, Goodman, & Hemphill, 1991; Wells & Chang-Wells, 1992). By providing an encouraging and nurturing environment and by involving learners in critically assessing and evaluating their own progress, children begin to look at learning as an empowering process for themselves as well as a shared responsibility (Chow, Dobson, Hurst, & Nucich, 1991; Goodman, D., 1989). In this way, whole language empowers both learners and teachers by replacing traditional methods of evaluation, such as work sheets and tests, with personalized, growth-oriented documentation through portfolios, a "kid-watching" kind of observation and negotiated reporting (Anthony, Johnson, Mickelson, & Preece, 1991; Goodman, Y., 1989).

Finally, whole language, in asserting the learners' ultimate right to their own, individual successful ways of "reading the word and the world" (Freire & Macedo, 1987), it is in tune with the critical pedagogy tenet of questioning the *status quo* and replacing it with a culturally responsive and socially just curriculum (Dressman, 1993; Shannon, 1991). When attempting to "read the word" in a holistic sense, the words of the text need to connect with and reflect "the world," as opposed to representing the decontextualized language of traditional mainstream reading programs (Cummins, 1986).

A key component of whole language is the rejection of this decontextualized, artificial language of basal readers. Instead, whole language promotes the use of authentic materials, such as environmental print, the learners' own stories, and high-quality literature, selected with the criteria of relevance and interest with the learner's point-of-

view in mind (Cameron & Mickelson, 1989; Harlin, Lipa, & Lonberger, 1991; Laughlin & Swisher, 1990). However, the use of literature in the teaching of reading is not a unique feature of whole language, by any means; literature has been recognized as an important foundation of language arts curricula in various historical and cultural settings and contexts (Marckwardt, 1978; Sawyer, 1987). Nevertheless, in the past, and particularly in North America, education systems have only been too eager to replace literature with basal readers especially designed and manufactured to cater to skills-based, "teacher-proof" reading programs and a flourishing textbook industry (Goodman, 1993; Shannon, 1989b, 1993).

In contrast to these commercial interests have stood the attempts of educators who believe in the power of real stories and literature to enable learners to experience language as a meaningful tool for communication and to perceive reading as an enriching and enjoyable act. Matthew Arnold, F. R. Leavis, Louise Rosenblatt, and Northrop Frye, for example, are earlier examples of literary theorists and critics who have stressed the importance of literature as an essential part of a liberal and progressive education (Willinsky, 1991). More recently, numerous other educators and researchers have written on various aspects of literature as a basis and tool for holistic literacy instruction (Asselin, Pelland, & Shapiro, 1991; Cox & Zarrillo, 1993; Miller, 1984; Phelan, 1990; Purves et al., 1990; Ralston & Sutton, 1994; Routman, 1988; Short & Pierce, 1990; Wason-Ellam, 1991). In particular, these vary from studies on the enhancement of students' imagination and aesthetic appreciation of literature (Egan, 1988; Degenhardt & McKay, 1988) through evidence on the benefits of cooperative groupings, as opposed to ability groupings, in the form of literature circles (Neamen & Strong, 1992; Short & Burke, 1991), to the documentation of the collaboration of teachers with librarians in setting up classroom libraries (Fractor, Woodruff, Martinez, & Teale, 1993). Other areas covered range from the study of content areas (Short & Armstrong, 1993; Tunnel & Ammon, 1993) to the

teaching of moral values through literature (Dodson, 1993; Lamme, Krogh, & Yachmetz, 1992; Suhor & Suhor, 1992).

In ascertaining the aesthetic, social, political, and philosophical dimensions of literature in the classroom, the links to literary theorists and philosophers of the existentialist, modernist, phenomenological, and post-structuralist schools of the 20th century are strongly reinforced in a postmodern context (Fuhrmann, 1985; Hutcheon, 1988; Knight, 1957; Pinar, 1988). The profound and seminal thinking on text and narrative as genre by scholars and philosophers such as Bakhtin (1978, 1986), Barthes (1973, 1984; Sontag, 1982), Derrida (1967; Attridge, 1992), Foucault (1972; Gore, 1992), Kristeva (1974, 1980; Eagleton, 1983), and others, has become visibly reflected in the argumentation for a curriculum based on and permeated by literature that reflects fundamental human experiences:

> The world of literature is human in shape, a world where the sun rises in the east and sets in the west over the edge of a flat earth in three dimensions, where the primary realities are not atoms or electrons but bodies, and the primary forces not energy or gravitation but love and death and passion and joy. (Frye, 1964, p. 28)

From the modernist literary criticism of Northrop Frye to the postmodern reflections of Richard Rorty on Lyotard's rejection of "metanarratives" in favour of the kind of narratives that "define what has the right to be said and done in the culture in question, and since they are themselves a part of that culture, they are legitimated by the simple fact that they do what they do" (Rorty, 1985), the arguments that are brought forth in defence of literature and narrative as salient components of culture and society are continuously reaffirmed.

In this universal way, literature opens the door for students to live through and reflect on shared human experiences, to identify with characters in stories and poems, and to express their own personality, ideas, and feelings by responding to the respective content of the narrative. This corresponds with Rosenblatt's theory of reader-response that sees

literature as the basis for "growth toward more and more balanced, self-critical, knowledgeable interpretation" (Rosenblatt, 1990, p. 100) and at the same time "provide students with frameworks for thinking about the social, psychological, and aesthetic assumptions implied by the literary work and by their own and others' responses" (p. 100).

> It has been said ... that the only two things we can give our children are roots and wings. Properly conceived and implemented, whole language programs do just this -- provide children with roots that reach to the essence of being human expressed through the power of shared language, be it written or spoken, and with wings that allow them to soar beyond the bounds of their perceived limitations, so many of which, incidentally, appear to have found their genesis in our schools. (Mickelson, 1987, p. 13)

Mickelson's claim expresses a strong belief in the power of a holistic approach to language and language teaching, together with a skeptical outlook toward a 'status quo' curriculum that limits students' potential. In much the same way, the following case study originated from my own view toward language and literacy, one that encompasses socio-cultural and socio-political realities as important factors of language acquisition and development. However, the premise of a holistic approach to instruction that can reach *the essence of being human* requires further exploration and questioning in the context of the diversities and differences of cultural and literate geographies.

> I'm re-thinking about whole language
> a whole that is not a whole
> but frames of composite propositional intertext
> a re-reading and re-writing
> of partial truths:
> no global truths but local truth
> of layers of intertextuality.
> It is and it is not.
> (Researcher Narrative, 08/08/94)

With this study, I want to engage in just such a probing based on the documentation of my own and others' lived experiences. Starting from the description of *scenes* of classroom events through ethnographic narrative inquiry in a local setting, this indeed includes and extends to the questioning of approaches that are centred around a canon of

texts in the sense of the 'grand narratives' that, for so long, have been exclusive with respect to racial, cultural, and linguistic minorities. In particular, the study draws on the works of scholars and researchers who have been instrumental in laying the groundwork for bringing such discriminatory practices to the attention of the education community, such as Cummins (1986), Cazden (1991), Edelsky (1991), Fillmore (1991), Heath (1983), and numerous others.

Schools, and in particular their curricular mandates, have been the channels through which exclusion has been accomplished too often by far through political, cultural, and linguistic hegemony, leading, in Freire's (1972) words, to a *pedagogy of the oppressed.*

> Curriculum in the broadest sense involves not only the programmatic contents of the school system, but also the scheduling, discipline, and day-to-day tasks required from students in schools. In this curriculum, then, there is a quality that is hidden and that gradually incites rebelliousness on the part of children and adolescents. Their defiance corresponds to the aggressive elements in the curriculum that work against the students and their interests.
> School authorities who repress these students might argue that they are only responding to the students' aggressiveness. In fact, students are reacting to a curriculum and other material conditions in schools that negate their histories, cultures and day-to-day experiences. School values work counter to the interests of these students and tend to precipitate their expulsion from school. It is as if the system were put in place to ensure that these students pass through school and leave it as illiterates. (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. 121)

By challenging the world view of these dominant groups as oppressive and discriminatory, proponents of critical pedagogy had taken the first necessary steps toward emancipatory action. For many of them, the tireless work and inspiring teaching of Paulo Freire confirmed the social construction of reality as the foundation of their beliefs and theoretical reasoning (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1990). Freire, in devoting his life to the cause of literacy and working with students and educators from all over the world, has had a far-reaching impact on the transformation of curricular thinking on a global scale. For North American progressive educators in particular, the powerful pedagogical implications of

Freire's model of a radical critical and emancipatory literacy seemed to present a solution to the sanctioned racism and elitism within public schools (McLaren, 1991).

By creating, instead, different spaces where teachers and students can do the work of curriculum together and by describing these spaces at the level of local paradigms, of *partial truths* (Clifford, 1986), I am at the same time opening up a possibility for considering the voice of the *other*, one that is not normally heard, and for acknowledging the part of the *other* in the self. This, according to Derrida (1978), is what writing is about, "it is one and the other simultaneously" (p. 13).

The Methodological, Pedagogical, and Philosophical Frameworks

The role of schools as the places where curriculum is implemented has undergone a profound change within the last few decades of this century. Notions of a prescribed syllabus as 'transmitted' to students via an instrumentalist mode of teaching have been exchanged for an approach to curriculum in which teachers and students 'negotiate' learning within a student-centred model (Aoki, 1988; Weis, Cornbleth, Zeichner, & Apple, 1990). With this, the role of the teacher is also undergoing a profound change. It is moving away from a one-dimensional authoritarian model that focuses on direct, systematic instruction toward more democratically oriented, facilitating approaches that encourage students to construct their own knowledge and empower teachers to reflect critically on their own practice (Britzman, 1991; Throne, 1994). Indeed, the whole question of what constitutes *knowledge* in relation to literacy and schooling is being redefined from critical socio-cognitive and constructivist perspectives (Anyon, 1981; Goodlad, 1983a; Spencer, 1986; Von Glasersfeld, 1989; Wells, 1986; Wells & Chang-Wells, 1992). It seems, however, that despite the recognition of the un-soundness of the former autocratic models that defined knowledge in an absolute, non-negotiable way, there is a noticeable recent backlash. It consists of a call 'back to the basics' of a teacher-

driven, skills-based schooling -- most evident in the media and publications such as Nikiforuk's (1993) attack on holistic learning approaches and Hirsch's (1987) warning about the failure of school systems with respect to "cultural literacy."

As teachers, apart from these pressures from the public, we are faced with yet another opposition in pedagogical being, with what Ted Aoki refers to as the 'curriculum-as-planned' as opposed to the 'curriculum-as-lived' (Aoki, 1993b; Hinds, 1994). It seems that for too long we have only concentrated on the former and neglected the latter.

> I have suggested that what seems urgent for us at this time in understanding what teaching more truly is, is to undertake to reorient ourselves so that we overcome mere correctness so that we can see and hear our doings as teachers harbored within pedagogical being, so we can see and hear who we are as teachers.
> (Aoki, 1989, p. 27)

Together with the call for authenticity in curriculum and learning, there is a strong demand for entering a discourse about curriculum in the form of an active participation and engagement with content and context on the part of teachers and learners alike (Pinar, 1988; Pinar & Reynolds, 1992). This discourse, over the last two decades, has encompassed phenomenological, feminist, constructivist, and deconstructivist texts in various combinations of historical, socio-political, aesthetic, and critical theory and *praxis* (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985; Cherryholmes, 1993; Grumet, 1988a; Lather, 1991; Van Manen, 1982). Common to all these late 20th century pedagogical studies is the recognition of the cultural and social aspects of curriculum and schooling in a time of tremendous change characterized as the age of information, electronics, and global communications (Jones & Maloy, 1993). Educators are challenged more than ever before to provide their students with the knowledge and skills for a new century of rapidly increasing information, intercultural connections, and technological expertise.

> Knowledge in context is an essential component of efforts to improve practice. Too often the examination of teaching and learning has been stripped of the many real life variables that affect children. Because many educational studies have examined discrete elements of a problem at the expense of the ever-changing

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context of the classroom, teachers often find research meaningless and irrelevant. Without a regard for context, action is uninformed. With a respect for the realities of the classroom, action becomes relevant and meaningful.
(Miller & Pine, 1990, p. 56)

The realities of the classroom, my own classroom, have provided me with the motivation and, at times, desperate urgency to question assumptions about curriculum and the soundness of educational decisions that are not thoroughly informed by the context of place and students' lived realities.

> A teacher cannot build a community of learners unless the voices and lives of the students are an integral part of the curriculum. Children, of course, talk about their lives constantly. The challenge is for teachers to make connections between what the students talk about and the curriculum and broader society.
> (Peterson, 1994, p. 30)

> Tomorrow is Saturday and on Saturday I always get to eat noodles but not just noodles chinse noodles because everybody likes to be nice to me and everybody in the world and universe.
> (Jimmy's Journal, 12/16/94)

> On every Saturday i go to Chinatown School because i am a Chinese girl.
> On Mon. to Fri. in Franklin school no one will play with me.
> Ever day I'm sad and longly except today because today I play with Wendy and Ruthie and Mitcho and Sera and me
> we had a gret time. THAT'S WHY
> (Amy's Journal, age 6, 10/25/94; 01/11/95; 01/12/95)

In my classroom, children indeed constantly express the joys and difficulties of making meaningful connections between what they experience in the different places of their lives, both at home and at school. As teachers, we continuously experience the joys and difficulties of becoming part of their world and of trying to understand and support their voices. In my own classroom, situated in the heart of this West Coast Canadian inner city, I sense many sociocultural and sociopolitical variables at work; they deeply affect my students' lives on a daily basis. In order to be able to make educational decisions informed by this context, I believe that it is imperative for me as a teacher to make sense of this

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situatedness and to describe it in a way that does justice to its complexity, its uniqueness, and its connectedness.

Action and Reflection as Pedagogical Praxis

> The self-reflective community established in action research is not only concerned with the transformation of its own situation. It is also forced to confront the non-educational constraints of education. ... It invites the group to consider education as a whole, and thus the general need for educational reform in society. It is not only a process which reflects or responds to history; it envisages a profession made up of educational action researchers who see themselves as agents of history who must express their practical judgments about needed changes in education in their own considered action -- in *praxis.* (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 208)

The kind of preoccupation with methodology so typical of the research dogma that looks for absolute 'truth' can no longer be relevant in a post-structuralist context where "our values are suspended in the air and cannot be deduced from descriptions" (Lyotard, 1979). In order to stand on firm ground with regard to research methodology and its inherent values, we must commit ourselves to building more inclusive frameworks. Through this, it is the collaborative, negotiated and informed process of knowing, doing, and understanding that can guide us towards the kind of reconceptualized praxis and methodology that best suits this purpose regardless of any preconceived labels.

In this respect, action research has the potential for overcoming some of these imposed categorizations and for reaching beyond the localized action of an individual teacher researcher (Kirby & McKenna, 1989). In forming a community of investigative practitioners, truly transformative and emancipatory action can occur:

> Teachers and other educators in British Columbia today are involved in the continuing processes of change and reflection. An increasing emphasis on learners -- both students and teachers -- has led quite naturally to an increased interest in teacher research. As the Year 2000 programs develop in B.C. classrooms, researching teachers explore a wide range of critical issues ....
> (Jeroski, 1992, p. 1)

The realization that teachers must play a crucial role in this process in order for positive changes in teaching practices to happen in a meaningful way seems to make common sense. However, although the concept of teachers as researchers is certainly not a new one, reaching back to Stenhouse's (1975) ideas about curriculum reform in the 60s and 70s in Britain (Elliott, 1992) and Schön's (1983) concept of the teacher as reflective practitioner, it has not been widely accepted into the canon of educational research methods and approaches until quite recently (Belanger, 1992; Fullan, 1993; Winter, 1987). Not only was classroom research traditionally carried out exclusively by trained scholarly 'experts' with impressive institutional affiliations, it also was -- and undoubtedly still is -- conducted from a particular point-of-view of political and economic interest . This agenda can be characterized as that of the status quo of the educational hegemony of power positions (Giroux, 1992; Pennycook, 1989; Phelan & Lalik, 1993).

Despite the recent controversy about the above mentioned Year 2000 curriculum reform and an alarming number of 'back to basics' voices coming from various academic, bureaucratic and other public sources (Baumann, 1992; Bloom, 1987; Kline, 1993), the voices of teachers who are involved in critically and reflectively researching their own and their students' classroom realities are heard more frequently and in different places of praxis (Aoki, 1990, 1991b, 1993c). This new mode of investigating praxis implies a paradigm shift in the sense of Kuhn's (1970) notion of a fundamental change in the beliefs, values, and problem-solving techniques of an established scientific community from an abstract construct of shared scientific rules and practices toward a new, more mature world view that allows "an even greater precision of fit between existing paradigms and 'empirical reality'" (Brown, 1988, p. 19).

The phenomenological focus on the concept of pedagogical reality and *being* -- or rather *becoming*, acknowledging the evolving, non-static nature of our praxis -- also strikes a new key in writing and researching about language through language. In Barthes' understanding of this new rapprochement between language, linguistics, and literature, this

involves both a reflective and a critical action on the part of the writer with respect to language (Barthes, 1986). This new kind of 'action writing' is one in which the action of writing itself is understood as a powerful act:

> It would be interesting to know at what moment the verb *to write* began to be used intransitively, the writer no longer being the one who writes *something*, but the one who writes -- absolutely: this shift is certainly the sign of an important change in mentality ... it is paradoxically at the moment when *to write* seems to become intransitive that its object, under the name *book* or *text*, assumes a special importance. (Barthes, 1986, p. 18)

This turn fits well within the conceptual and methodological framework of action research and reflective, interpretive inquiry as part of a new theory of pedagogical practice (Van Lier, 1994). The discovery of an approach and a methodology rooted in practice directly responds to the many tensionalities that are inherent in the multi-layered realities of teaching, studying, and learning. It was designed to give practitioners tools with which to identify questions or problems that are crucial to the successful learning of their students and to address the challenges of everyday teaching in classrooms composed of students with a wide variety of backgrounds and futures ahead of them (Patterson, Santa, Short, & Smith, 1993; Wong, 1994).

Two years ago, together with a group of colleagues from the Vancouver School Board,[9] I began to look more closely and systematically at my own teaching situation as a member of a primary open area classroom in which a team of five teachers and approximately 65 children aged five to nine were engaged in living amidst different linguistic and cultural communities.

> This search for understanding of pedagogical living directly relates to the realities of the children in my classroom. Their experiences of being both in their world 'at home' and the world of 'the school' -- two communities that are often very different from each other -- are also part of living amidst tensionality. (Researcher Narrative, 05/25/94)

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Action research, situated within a qualitative methodological approach, can be characterized as a 'messy' concept of research: It does not apply, for the most part, 'neat' statistical procedures nor does it rely heavily on other quantitative measurement but instead uses ethnographically-based techniques such as observation and anecdotal note taking, video and audio recording, informal interviewing, and reflective journal writing (Carroll, 1994; Duff, 1994; Oberg, 1990; Peterat & Vaines, 1992; Van Lier, 1988, 1994). Often, this can result in a vast amount of potentially rich data on students', teachers', and other participants' interactions over extended periods of time; its analysis can present many challenges and tensions in terms of the time it takes to categorize, analyze, interpret, and summarize the information (Hubbard & Power, 1993).

> In many ways, the above frames have shaped my own being as a member of a variety of communities, belonging -- as a student, educator, scholar, parent, woman, and daughter. As part of a community of teachers, students, and colleagues that has engaged in a year-long discovery process about teacher research, I have come to celebrate the tensionality in the co-existence of many of these apparent dichotomies. (Researcher Narrative, 06/15/94)

> Entering into these spaces of tension, we are never certain what will come to be; each time we invite the lived world of students into the dwelling places of our classrooms, we place ourselves in a position of uncertainty. In the midst of uncertainty, we have come to experience our responsibilities as leaders to involve a withdrawing from the authoritative stance of the know-it-all. Here, we find ourselves drawn to a questioning of our responsibilities as educational leaders. In the space of tension amidst differences, we have found ourselves drawn into a questioning which calls into play a multiplicity of possibilities. Such multiplicity brings ambiguity and uncertainty in its offering forth a vibrancy of pedagogic possibilities. (Chamberlain, McGrath, Richter, Stevens, & Timmins, 1994, p. 6)

As a result of this tension, I have never felt more inspired to continue living amongst a *community without unity*,' which, in William Corlett's postmodern vision, affirms the notion of community in which togetherness does not sacrifice individuality and difference: "Bringing unity seems always to require silencing the so-called parts that do not fit the holistic vision, and I want no part of that" (Corlett, 1988, p. 6).

In this group of reflective practitioners, I wanted us to celebrate the individual parts, especially those that might be seen as not fitting in with a certain concept of unity defined by the status quo of educational power structures, which equates unity with notions of homogeneity and monoculturalism (Christensen, 1992; Fyfe & Figuera, 1993). Each teacher's voice needed to be heard between the layers of a communal voice that could emerge through our coming together and belonging together in this community of inquiry based on common beliefs and values. Two of teachers, for example, commented on the value of being involved with this action research group in this way:

> The knowledge of the others involved in the network helped me to NOT become too single-minded or 'tunnel-vision oriented.' My understandings and 'knowledge' became decentred. This process helped me to remain open to new ideas and new understandings and not become 'caught-up' in my research. Group problem solving of individuals' questions and research dilemmas brought forth solutions that may not have occurred outside the network.
> (Teacher Narrative, as quoted in Hasebe-Ludt, et al., 1995, p. 13)

> Identifying and communicating to others how one perceives situations can be elucidating in itself. Listening without judgment to the views of others and reining in our assumptions are not always easy to do, but may be a prerequisite to widening our perceptual lenses. I have come to feel that many examinations of teaching and learning experiences are participatory and would benefit from collaborative processes among teachers, students and other members of the school community related to the question at hand. Strategies to guide and support teachers in an exploration of classroom processes and outcomes have the potential to help focus on many important questions. They enable school members to respond thoughtfully to change and diversity, resulting in meaningful steps towards our educational goals. (Teacher Narrative, as quoted in Hasebe-Ludt, et al., 1995, pp. 16-17)

In Aoki's (1991a) interpretation of Heidegger's (1954, 1968; Schulz, 1969) phenomenologically perceived notion of *belonging together* (*Zusammengehörigkeit*), this involves the event of appropriation of both identity and difference through becoming thoughtful, *das zu Denkende* (Pöggeler, 1969).

Action research has prompted me, first and foremost, to question established ways of knowing perpetuated through the hegemony of the educational decision-making hierarchy

(Pennycook, 1989; Schulman, 1991). This exercise in deconstruction fits the postmodern frame of questioning the *grand narratives* in the Lyotardian and Derridian sense (Lyotard, 1991; Wood, 1993), as well as of the *master narratives* through feminist readings of text (Belenky et al., 1986; Clark & Hulley, 1990/91; Eagleton, 1986; Greene, 1986). In affirming the notion of intertextuality amidst multiple readings of text through holistic interpretations of language learning and teaching (Gunderson, in press-b), we came to acknowledge that "intertextuality invites us to use multiple texts, splicing them, interweaving them with each other, with our commentaries, with our questions. ... There are no sacred texts" (Grumet, 1988b, p. 469).

> Through our shared pedagogical journey of weaving such webs of meaning through language and by reflecting on our own practice while at the same time celebrating our individual interests and differences, we came to validate these multiple and intertextual processes of inquiry. Our questions were testimony, in forms ranging from oral discussions and presentations to both individual and collaborative narratives, to the numerous trials we felt faced with: Misgivings, doubts, and confusion were indeed part of the scenario and forced us to revisit and reshape our questions. Gradually, our discussions became more grounded and centred around the notion of change for improving practice, firmly anchored in our individual classrooms, shared school and district environment, and a concern with larger nation-wide and global implications of *praxis* in culturally diverse societies. (Researcher Narrative, 05/06/94)

Always, as we took yet another step toward linking and sharing our local practice with a wider audience of educators, we continued to probe, to assure each other of the necessity to validate the concept of the self-reflective community of action researchers (Aoki, 1992; Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Carson & Sumara, 1992). At the same time, through this continuous oral and written dialogue with each other, we were finding our own voices as well as articulating a message of 'belonging together' that included both affirmation and new discovery, unresolved dilemmas and unanswered questions, as well as a good portion of laughter and celebration.

> In this joint process of searching and researching for the roots of and remedies for the disintegration that educational institutions have created for our children, the concept of unity emerged as an artificial construct and an undesirable goal

to aim for in the context of a critical postmodern education. Affirming individual rights and differences in principle, yet sacrificing them for the totality of 'the common good' of a present and future sustainable economy constitutes a hypocritical lip service we must critically examine and expose. In this sense, the quest for change cannot merely involve a change in strategy, a shift in the *way* we arrange the pieces of the educational puzzle. Instead, we have to commit ourselves to truly transforming the *nature* of the game by exchanging the pieces with new ones. (Researcher Narrative, 06/12/94)

In my individual understanding of pedagogical praxis, which has become more informed yet also more challenged than ever before by postmodern philosophical and curricular theory and practice (Bennington & Derrida, 1991; Pinar, 1988), these frames of intertextual thinking are expanding once again. At the same time that the notions of emancipatory and critical action research were emerging as central aspects of my inquiry into the complexity of literacy processes in connection with cultural pluralism in the classroom, some of the problems connected with postmodern approaches needed to be addressed. As Jardine (1994) points out, there is an inherent danger in taking for granted that the replacement of an old paradigm with a new one will inevitably result in a better way of reading the world, in a kind of *essential* or *perfect* knowledge:

> [The post-modern love of novelty-items: the desire to unanchor the sign altogether and simply have our way with it is the licentiousness that comes from the first adrenalin rush of the fall of the old foundations. Post-modernism too easily confuses a critique of foundationalism with a proof that *nothing* sustains us. Our culture is easily confused between the loosening of signifier and signified and their severance.]

> [Consider: post-modernism as the cultural and linguistic and philosophical and literary versions of our current ecological crisis
>
> Re-reading post-modernism: it is the portal through this crisis].
> (Jardine, 1994, pp. xxx-xxxi)

Throughout these ambivalent and often contradictory notions of reading the world of postmodern educational languaging, of writing and speaking in a new, different language myself, I have felt supported and enriched by the reflections and actions that our group has endeavored on this topic. I have been affirmed in my own research and inspired by that of

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others, by the many ways we were able to articulate and collaborate through focused working cases. In this way, we started to build bridges between people, educational organizations, institutions, and venues (Hasebe-Ludt, Duff, & Leggo, 1995; Hasebe-Ludt, Hawkes, Miller, & Nishi, 1994; Hasebe-Ludt et al., 1994). As a result we felt supported, individually and as a community, and celebrated in our endeavors to become more knowledgeable about 'what we care about.' For me, this has truly become an experience of 'authentic dwelling' amongst that special and precious community of "beings who belong together in this neighbourhood" (Aoki, 1992, p. 28).

As Louise Berman and her colleagues discovered in their journey 'toward curriculum for being' (Berman et al., 1991), we also found that "as we reached out to others, so others reached out to us. ... Perhaps as we have attempted to dwell in the larger community we have tried to establish contexts in which enlivenment, support, and courage can flourish" (pp. 186, 187).

In this way, action research presents a particular attitude on the part of the practitioner who, according to Richards & Nunan (1990), "is engaged in critical reflection on ideas, the informed application and experimentation of ideas in practice, and the critical evaluation of the outcomes of such application" (p. 63). In perceiving the need for a theoretically grounded rationale for a pragmatic concept, Carr & Kemmis (1986) base this critical action research model on the theoretical foundations of Habermas' critical social science (Habermas, 1968/1972, 1990), the critical, action-oriented pedagogy of Freire (Freire & Macedo, 1987) and Gramsci (1959) which was aimed at the emancipation of underprivileged groups in society (Lather, 1986). Furthermore, an understanding of the school culture as part of the larger sociopolitical context is reflected in elements of a practical, change-oriented democratic philosophy in Dewey's tradition (Dewey, 1938; Dewey & Dewey, 1915).

The key notions in this critical framework are those of interested knowledge, reflection, understanding, as well as communicative action and competence (Carson, 1990;

Habermas, 1990; Schrag, 1986). Thus, critical action research has the potential to reach beyond some of the pitfalls of postmodern nihilistic tendencies and to effect change through emancipatory action that reverses discriminatory practices related to race, class, gender, and other related parameters. This needs to be achieved by advocating social justice for all students based on the values of informed moral and ethical decision-making Gauthier, 1992; Smith, P. L., 1986) within a *humanizing pedagogy* (Bartolome, 1994) and within a multicultural educational framework (Coombs, 1986).

With the increased focus on active participation and critical thinking in recent educational curricular reforms such as the Year 2000 document, the teacher as a reflective practitioner and action researcher has indeed become a key concept for modeling this role through classroom-based research. In addition to endeavors in which individual teacher researchers investigate issues in their own classrooms, the possibilities for collaborative work, such as with academic institutions and/or boards of education seem a natural extension of such an approach (Barnsley & Ellis, 1992; Carson & Sumara, 1992; Burton & Mickan, 1994).[10]

> But what if we were to commit ourselves to work on our common aspects of community while together engaging in various kinds of enquiry? John Dewey, for one, would be happy. After all, he wrote with tremendous persuasiveness about schools as communities of inquiry. Community-mindedness, he thought, was essential for human bonding and therefore, education. Education, being in large part about inquiry, means initiating students into finding out, assessing, agreeing, disagreeing, balancing "evidences," drawing evidenced conclusions ... but doing all of this in an atmosphere of trust, mutual respect and cooperation. This is what he wanted schools and institutions that prepare teachers to be like.
> (Bruneau, 1993, p. 1)

The Cogency of Community Education

> Learning to look through multiple perspectives, young people may be helped to build bridges among themselves; attending to a range of human stories, they may be provoked to heal and transform. Of course there will be difficulties and, at once, working to create community. (Greene, 1993, p. 18)

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Maxine Greene, in this quotation that poignantly sets the theme to my multi-layered journeying and journalizing with/in this community school, expresses the kind of pedagogical reaching that will be necessary to truly transform the lived experiences of the young people whom we as teachers treasure. Over and over I come back to the question of how this community-building is carried out in the reality of the 'curriculum-as-lived' of a designated community school with a large number of ethnic, linguistic, and cultural groups. It constitutes a difficult question that seemed to constantly confront me in my daily teaching praxis. How do the sociocultural backgrounds of the teachers, the staff, the students, and the parents impact on the difficult everyday decisions about living in the midst of the communities that are situated within the classroom, the school, the neighbourhood? Typically, as Dean (1989) points out, in many of the multicultural educational settings in North America, the teachers are of White European racial and ethnic origin. The five teachers in this Open Area as well as the majority of the staff in the school are no exception to this.

> My year of living reflectively in the pedagogical landscape has created many beginnings. It has marked a *Kehre*, a turn -- but also a renewed understanding of *kehren* in the sense of *caring* and the recognition of *difficulty* as an essential and not necessarily negative component of learning. (Researcher Narrative, 07/15/94)

The notion of difficulty in researching and teaching within such communities of inquiry and learning is embedded in a larger context in which difficulty must be acknowledged as a necessary and beneficial component of thinking and learning, and, consequently, of *reading* as an activity intimately connected with thought. Helen Reguerio Elam observes that this idea of difficulty is not easily accepted in contemporary (North)American society:

> Our penchant is for one-step, one-stop solutions to problems, and we demand it in all areas of life, including reading, an ease of achievement that is antithetical to thought. ... The quest for solutions is synonymous with a reductiveness that leaves aside the problematic movement of thought. ... Students often tackle

"education" as if it were a puzzle to be considered solved when every piece is in place. But an education -- or reading -- worthy of its name will recognize that when the puzzle is finally put together into a perfect whole, there is always one piece left over which forces us to rethink the edifice we have erected.
(Elam, 1991, p. 4)

Our "agenda" (whose agenda, overt or hidden)? for the two Community Interaction Days the Education Ministry has designated for all schools in the province is centred around multiculturalism, anti-racism, and conflict resolution. Together with Templeton Secondary, Kathy and I help organize a day of panel discussion, workshops, and information sessions for all the feeder schools in the area. Yvonne Brown's keynote address on the very real consequences of racism evoked a heated discussion in the staff room the next day. Most teachers, with the exception of a few, find her too radical, too controversial, and too preoccupied with a personal agenda. Once again, the experience of racism is devalued on both a personal and an institutional level; it becomes something on somebody else's agenda. Once again, there is the complacency of the majority of people who feel good when they engage with these issues as long as they do not get too controversial. (Researcher Narrative, 04/30/94)

To start our day, focused on professional development planning for next year, we are watching "Listen with your heart" which documents the experiences of young immigrant students to Canada through a play directed by Carol Tarlington with the Vancouver Youth Theatre. After the mixed reactions to our community day focus on multicultural and anti-racist issues, I am extremely skeptical about the staff's willingness to commit themselves to this focus. All through the video, I keep thinking about my experiences with teachers in the "Education of immigrant students" course I'm teaching at UBC: the engaged discussions, thoughtful questions, impassioned and emotional reactions to issues of language and culture. Is this staff going to open up to the lived experiences of students who "speak from the heart"? Are they going to listen with their hearts? I am succinctly aware of my own position *in between,* as both part of this community of teachers and at the same time representing an outsider, a teacher of teachers -- I feel on shaky ground, not certain whether I can find a safe place to stand in this going back and forth between different communities of inquiry. How can I be sure that my goal of opening up spaces for communication between communities, between cultures will not create more tensions and barriers?

In reflecting on the discussion that followed the video I realize that I still have not found a safe place, a space above struggle and tensionality -- but I am also becoming more accepting of living on this shaking, quivering ground. I felt very much alive and inspired by the discussion about racism that followed the video. Three teachers from whom I least expected it engaged, in very personal ways, with the topic of discrimination toward speakers whose first language is other than English. They spoke of memories about relatives, friends, and students they had made connections with; they spoke from their heart. One of them asked me about my own experiences about having a different mother

tongue and living in a world dominated by English. I talk about the difficulties I remember so well when first coming to Canada but also about the privileges I feel I have compared to others: of being able to maintain connections, of traveling to my country of birth, Germany, to see my family and to maintain my mother tongue -- an impossibility for so many immigrants and refugees. We are able to enter into a dialogue; we are creating an opening for thinking, for thoughtfulness, for *in between*. (Researcher Narrative, 06/15/94)

Wiederum geht es also dem denkenden Vorblick Heideggers um jenes Zwischen, das sich als Differenz in eins mit der Identität ins Spiel bringt. ... "Die Zusammengehörigkeit von Identität und Differenz wird ... als das zu Denkende gezeigt. Inwiefern die Differenz dem Wesen der Identität entstammt, soll der Leser selber finden, indem er auf den Einklang hört, der zwischen Ereignis und Austrag waltet." (Franz, 1969, pp. 198-199)

Once again, Heidegger's foresightful thinking is concerned with the **in between** which comes into play as **difference in unison with identity**. ... " The **belonging together of identity and difference** is shown as the **becoming of thinking**. I leave it up to the reader to find out to what extent difference originates from the essence of identity by listening to the **harmony which dwells between the event and the action**." (E. Hasebe-Ludt, Trans.; emphases added)

The names, faces, indeed the entire make-up of what we have come to call 'community' are changing rapidly in this age of electronic communication. The possibilities of connecting through interactive multimedia networks are seemingly endless and often beyond our imagination which still seems to be centred around traditional notions of physical or spiritual communities of past experiences. Through the creation of 'virtual villages' and on-line communities "that are beginning to redefine personal relationships, political organizing, even democracy itself" (Catalfo, 1993, p. 164), all levels of society will eventually be influenced by the technological capacities of the computer age.

Whether we agree with the positive, exhilarating potential of these new virtual communities or reject them as negative, inadequate surrogates for the real human sharing experiences that community entails, we need to reflect on the undeniable existence of

these new forms of interactions as expressions of the need to come to terms with our changing world.

> All my life I have pursued a romantic involvement, even a textual affair with words. But I must confess that I am still ill-literate. ...
> With confession comes not absolution but more confession, a flood of self-revelation that reveals the ubiquity of my ill-literacy. I suffer from technical, historical, geographical, cultural, linguistic, political, legal, medical, industrial and commercial ill-literacy.
> I am at best literate in some aspects in one language; yet I live in a country that is officially bilingual, in a world that is solidly founded on words.
> (Leggo, 1995, p. D2)

Since the complex interactions required for such daunting literate ways with words are dependent on people being able to access text in various ways, through writing, reading, and interpreting, it is crucial that we place these interactions in the context of education as potential pedagogical paradigms. As Long (1993) points out, it is a curiously challenging thought that with regard to the practice of reading, for example, electronic access to texts through computers and on-line communication has both elements of a return to the historically established notion of reading as solitary, isolated activity as well as of emerging new forms of sociocultural identity.

> The rebels Have distroed the Deth Star and notist The empier is BiLDing annthr one (Erin's Journal, age 6, 09/16/94)

> I have a computer. It has lots of games on it. Lots of good games on it! One of them is called Rescue (Leo's Journal, age 7, 11/30/94)

> At recess Erin me and Marcus and Curtis and Hugh played Power Ranger tag. And then Erin and me and Howard played Power Rangers.

> Yesterday when I was in bed I had a dream about a new Ranger, and his name was Rechy his zord was cool, and he was good, and he was figting goldare. (Jimmy's Journal, 10/13/94; 10/14/94)

This implies far-reaching consequences in the context of "reading the word and the world" (Freire & Macedo, 1987) with respect to an egalitarian group process which, in

Habermas' language, "enables people to mobilize communicative rationality in order critically to reflect on the presuppositions undergirding the instrumental reason that, in his view, has deformed the life world" (Long, 1993, p. 205).

> We have arrived at the "'midpoint of the '90s, the last lap, the final act before we all hit the big 2-0-0-0, ... " I am reminded by a newspaper article I am reading. I also watched and listened to David Suzuki this morning on a TV. program about the *World Council of Canadians*, and I am struck by the coincidence or maybe the not-so-coincidental but curiously appropriate and well-timed coming together of messages from such varied sources as the above to reflect about the past, present, and future configuration of landscape/ecology/biosystem we situate ourselves in. The emphasis on ecology, the urgent need for paying attention to the ecological model in nature as a base for human relations, the even more pressing urgency for change that begins at the grassroots level in our communities, the interconnectedness of everything, the importance of children, the insignificance and at the same time crucial role of the individual human being, the re-searching and re-creation of community). "We are creating solitude, a place where we don't have to have social skills, ..., computer voyeurism; living through rather than actually living ..."
> (Researcher Narrative, 12/29/94).[11]

> As the chasm widens between the haves and the have-nots, dual careers will be essential, not an option, and the resulting fallout will be essential: "Where's the discipline and accountability for the kids? Where's the solid base?" Her questions are rhetorical, the answers unknown. She predicts that, hammered by crime and freed by technology, more and more of us will head for the hills. If the first part of this century was the slow, ratchety climb to the major peak on the roller coaster, are we now perched at the summit, techno-wrapped and fearful, aware that any second we'll be speeding downward out of control? Coombs doesn't think so. "This is a part of history. We are crafting a new course. I'm extremely optimistic. I have utter faith in human values, worth, and potential."
> (Murrills, 1994/1995, p. 15)

These words attest to the growing complexity and, with it, difficulty of life on the eve of the 21st century. Even without the highly specialized know-how of a traveler in cyberspace and virtual reality, one can easily imagine the literacy challenges students will face in just a few years from now. The difficulties and possibilities of building community and to find a common language will be very different from the challenges societies have

historically encountered with forms of print as either solitary or collective practices (Long, 1992) and with nature rather than technology as a powerful force.

On kindred relations in the Waswanipi Cree universe:

> No longer disturbing, alien, or aloof, all of nature is revealed as a community in the fullest sense of the word. It is a vast, scintillating web of social memories, conversations, and relationships -- each potentially replete with the same dimensions of pleasure and sorrow, misunderstandings and mysteries as are ordinary human ties of blood kinship, love, and camaraderie.
> (Suzuki & Knudtson, 1993, p. 204)

On kindred relations in the Waldo universe:

Erin :   This is my Waldo book. and I brout it for Sharing today.
             [Picture: Book with title 'Ware's Waldo in Starwars,' sign with writing 'NO Parking on my Woldo book']

Erin: Today I am definitly share my Waldo book! ok?
             Or I will faint !!!!!!!!!!!!!! OK?

Teacher: OK! I will give you some time to share.
             (Journal, 10/13/94; 10/17/94)

On kindred relations with/in the community of little misses, men and *sort of* animals:

> Someone from our home area has discovered the little books from Roger Hargreaves' collection of the Mr. Men, Little Miss, and Timbuctoo stories in the Open Area book nook. I think it must have been Leo, Erin, or Jimmy, knowing how they appreciate all kinds of funny stories and thinking that this particular kind of British humour and language would be exactly their cup of tea.
> (Researcher Narrative, 12/17/94)

Little Miss Scatterbrain was just a little bit forgetful.
You can say that again!
Little Miss Scatterbrain was just a little bit forgetful.
She met Mr. Funny.
"Hello, Miss Scatterbrain," he said.
"Hello, Mr. Bump," she replied.
She met Mr. Tickle.
"Hello, Miss Scatterbrain," he said.

"Hello, Mr. Strong," she replied.
She met Mr. Happy.
"Where are you off to?" he asked her.
She thought.
And thought.
"I bet you've forgotten, haven't you?" laughed Mr. Happy.
Little Miss Scatterbrain looked at him.
"Forgotten what?" she said. (Hargreaves, 1981, unnumbered pages).

LittLe Miss TROUBLE
This story is abuot a girl who loved to make trouble she said that little Mr. small wass saying names so Mr. small sed that Miss trouble was saying names and she got in trouble!
[Picture of Little Miss Trouble and Mr. Small with speech bubble "HERE COMES TROUBLE"]
(Felicity's Reading Log, age 7, 12/14/94)

Suddenly, there is a craze in our classroom for these stories. The children choose them for shared reading in the morning; they seem to really enjoy talking about them, about the silly, funny, and mischievous mishaps in which the characters are involved. They choose them for silent reading, too, literally stacks of them, and they write about them in their reading logs and draw delightful pictures of *Mr. Clever, Little Miss Late,* and *Snap, a sort of crocodile.*
(Researcher Narrative, 12/17/94)

Late for this.
Late for that.
Little Miss Late was late for everything!
For instance.
Do you know where she spent last Christmas?
At home.
Earlybird Cottage!
But, do you know when she spent Christmas?
January 25th!
One month late!
For example.
Do you know when she did her spring cleaning at Earlybird Cottage?
In the summer!
Three months late!
For instance.
Do you know when she went on her summer holiday last year?
In December!
Six months late! (Hargreaves, 1981, unnumbered pages).

LITTLE MISS LATE

This story is about a girl who is late so shy cowd not get a Job. But one day shy saw Mr. Lazzy. He was lazzy so shy cleand his plase and shy was good at that. Mr. Lazzy gets up at Lunch. and Miss Late got ther at Lunch and shy was Happy.

[Picture of Little Miss Late and Mr. Uppity with speech bubble "LATE AGAIN!"]

Mr. FussY

This story is about a man who was fussy. if there is a spek of dirt he gets all fussy. One day his cusin Mr. Clumsy came to visit. it was his long lost cusin from Australia. Mr. Clumsy made a big mess. when he went home Mr. Fussy got all fussy and then clened up. Then Mr. Bump came.

(Felicity's Reading Logs, 01/09/95; 01/31/95)

Bronwen and I are having fun responding to this flurry of character studies, commenting between us on how the particular whimsical languaging by this British author, along with the at times different vocabulary, fascinates and works so well for our students. (Researcher Narrative, 12/17/94)

Leo: Mr. Bump
          This is a funny story. I think that you should read it.

Teacher: This sounds interesting -- I like funny stories, so I will read it!
          Thanks for the tip!

Leo: LITTLE MISS GIGGLES
          This is weried. I think you should read it.

Teacher: Why is it a weird story? Maybe we will read some of the Mr. or Miss
          collection of books next week.

Leo: CHIRP
          CRASH! Poor Chirp. This is a good book. I think you should read it.

Teacher: O.K. What happens to Chirp?

Leo: Buzz
          He helps a lot. he's fast too. I wonder how he takes so many walks?

Teacher: Yes, I wonder how he does it! Did you find out?
          (Reading Responses, 01/11/95; 01/12/94; 01/13/95; 01/16/95)

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We prepare a special bin for the collection, and Felicity and Franny design a special label, beautifully and brightly coloured, portraying a grinning *Little Miss Trouble* and a mischievous-looking *Mr. Tickle*. For days, Jimmy, Erin and Hugh are preoccupied, with the help of Leo and some of the girls, collecting, sorting, counting and making a list of them all (it turns out we have 12 Timbuctoo books, 18 of the Little Miss ones, and 34 Mr. Men stories)! Then the children proceed to list all the ones we *don't* have in the classroom or in the school library and need to get from either the public library or the book store (*Croak* is a definite must!) We prominently display the list on our bulletin board. We are the lucky owners of this collection thanks to Charlotte's generous donation of her dear childhood reading relations. I remember countless times of reading and re-reading and talking about the adventures of these characters with Charlotte and the fun we had predicting and talking about their mishaps. There is always a surprise ending, one that really isn't an ending at all but opens up spaces for new speculations, interpretations, conversations, and questions. It seems that I am now re-living these conversations with my students, discussing favourite titles (*Mr. Tickle* and *Little Miss Scatterbrain* feature high on that list), ones that we *absolutely* need to get ("Remember, Ms. H., *Little Miss Magic* and *Mr. Messy*??") and how to go about it ("Maybe we could do fundraising?" someone suggests), then we try to figure out how much it would cost, and so on, and so on ... *und so weiter* ...

There is so much to learn from the world of these little characters: They are always faced with some problem, they are different from the norm, struggling and scheming, often in hilariously funny ways, to swim against the stream, to overcome the odds. They are always learning from their mistakes (well, most of the time), and I have no trouble seeing how the children relate to the outrageously silly and suspenseful scenarios and that Mr. Tickle, for instance, invites them to come along with him.
(Researcher Narrative, 11/17/94)

It was a warm, sunny morning.
In his small house at the other end of the woods Mr. Tickle was asleep.
You didn't know that there was such a thing as a Tickle, did you?
Well, there is!
Tickles are small and round and they have arms that stretch and stretch and stretch.
Extraordinarily long arms! ...
So later that morning, after Mr. Tickle had made his bed and eaten his breakfast, he set off through the woods.
As he walked along, he kept his eyes wide open, looking for somebody to tickle.
Looking for anybody to tickle!
Eventually Mr. Tickle came to a school.
There was nobody around, so reaching up his extraordinarily long arms to a high window ledge, Mr. Tickle pulled himself up and peeped through the open window.
Inside he could see a classroom.
There were children sitting at their desks and a teacher writing on the blackboard.
Mr. Tickle waited a minute and then reached through the window.
Mr. Tickle's extraordinarily long arm went right up to the teacher, paused, and

then tickled him!

The teacher jumped in the air and turned around very quickly to see who was there.

But nobody was there!

Mr. Tickle was enjoying himself so much, he tickled the teacher again.

The children in the classroom laughed and laughed and laughed.

(Hargreaves, 1971, unnumbered pages).

Erin: Mr. Noisy!
            I liked this book because Mr. Noisy was so loud!

Teacher: Did he learn to quiet down?

Erin: Yes!

Erin: Mr. Clumsy
            I liked the part were Mr. Clumsy triped on the rock and fell into the
            water.

Teacher: Oh dear! Poor Mr. Clumsy ... He is not very coordinated.

Erin: Mr. Dizzy!
            I liked this book because Mr. Dizzy was'ent clever at all! until the
            end!
            (Reading Responses, 12/13/94; 12/15/94; 01/11/95)

I like these stories a lot -- because the unexpected happens, leaving lots of spaces for questions, lots of room for wonderful words, everyday words yet metaphorical and idiomatic so that children can predict and wonder about what is happening with the story and about the languaging in it. When the children ask me which one is my favourite, I have a hard time deciding. *Meow* is definitely one of them, about a very literate cat who learns about the fine art of reading the world through the word on the page and that it takes more than just the printed word to understand language. (Researcher Narrative, 12/17/94)

Meow was a sort of cat.

A Timbuctoo cat.

He lived in Marmalade Cottage.

In Timbuctoo.

He woke up one morning.

"What a nice day," he cried, leaping out of bed.

"How shall I spend it?"

"I know," he thought. "I'll go fishing!"

Meow had never been fishing before, and because he didn't know anything about it he went out and bought himself a book.

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All about it.
And off he set down to the river.
He sat himself down under a tree and opened the book.
"Fishing, " said the book, "is easy!"
"Good, " said Meow.
"First," said the book, "find a river."
Meow looked up.
"One river," he said. (Hargreaves, 1978, unnumbered pages).

Meow faithfully follows instructions step by step, and just about everything that could go wrong with his fishing lesson does indeed happen through hilariously funny misinterpretations. The cat never manages to catch a fish; he catches a cold instead and learns a lesson about going by the book too much.

Erin liked *Mr. Impossible* "because he could do everything," *Hiss* "because Hiss didn't crawl at all" the way a *sort of* snake is supposed to, and *Mr.Grumpy* "because he "was SO grumpy! until the end!" Leo delighted in *Moo* because he didn't mind trying new things, such as the taste of honey, and approved that *Mr. Happy* and *Mr. Tickle* taught *Mr. Grumpy* a lesson "about being "not quite so bad-tempered quite so often." He was relieved when *Hiss* "finnaly finds out a way to get around." And Jimmy thought *Snap* was "the greatest" because he could make magic by snapping his fingers, *not* his teeth!

Roddie is getting all these character studies and survival lessons first-hand from his friends' conversations about them, then finally gets really hooked on these delightfully whimsical reading relations himself. I am delighted when they finally stimulate him to respond beyond the previous one-sentence literal repeating of the title, "this story is about Mr. ..." For days in a row, he is responding to the antics of Mr. Bounce, Mr. Clumsy, Mr. Silly, Mr. Dizzy, Mr. Daydream, Mr. Bump, and Mr. Snow, writing more complex sentences and, finally, expressing his opinion. (Researcher Narrative, 11/17/94)

Roddie: MR. DIZZY.
             This book is about a character Mr. DIZZY who lives in CleverLand
             but he wasn't clever. But one day he went in the woods and he
             found a well and he didn't no what kind of well it was. It was a
             wishing well and he took a wish and it came true!

Teacher: How lucky! So, was he clever after all?

Roddie: Yes!

Roddie: MR. SNOW
             This book is about Mr. Snow. I like the part when he helps Santa
             Claus. It is a good story!

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These personal responses to literature by children with very diverse ethnic backgrounds (all the way from Eastern and Southern Europe to South-East Asia) share an appreciation of common fundamental human experiences through storying. In their paper entitled *The cogency of multicultural education,* Ian Wright and Jerrold Coombs state that "multicultural education is often defined in terms of knowing about the whats, hows, and whys of human experiences" (Wright & Coombs, 1981, p. 5). The characters in these stories modeled such experiences in a way that appealed to the students and let them live vicariously through their adventures. In the same way, culturally sensitive education about the multiple communities we live in includes the knowing about people's experiences and the relations between them. With the expanding cultural composition of these communities, the socio-cultural elements of human relationships become increasingly important, with variants more refined and inter-related than ever before through the possibilities of establishing communication and creating audiences on both local and global planes (Greene, 1993; Rosen, 1985; Said, 1982). John Caputo (1987) perceives these possibilities as a truly hermeneutic task in thinking about change. According to him, it is the radical thinking of "restoring life to its original difficulty" (p. 1) which will make a difference in the future. Luke (1993) further speculates on some of the future challenges for societies:

> 'Thinking locally' and 'acting globally' means making several radical shifts towards some social forms conventionally regarded as 'dead and gone.' Such a society would cultivate a new subjectivity grounded in new kinds of empowerment -- technological, economic, political, and cultural. Since the 'good life' would no longer be the endless consumption obsession of contemporary permissive individualism, it could be redefined in more demanding moral codes of hard work, frugality, ecological responsibility, humility, and skill perfection. This, in turn, will generate new community institutions suited to the new context. Here the real advances of secular rational civilization might counterbalance potential regressions to a reactionary irrational culture. Racism, provincialism, xenophobia, sexism, and class hatreds need not be part of any populist society. Indeed, loyalty to community, ecoregion or place need not become lines of cultural conflict or group warfare. (pp. 217-218)

Within the framework of current educational and societal change in progress, the above quote, along with an encouraging amount of writing on this subject evoke the sense of an urgency to re-think the meaning and configuration of community for present and future sociocultural contexts. Titles such as *Communal crisis* (Conley, 1993), *Community without unity: A politics of Derridian extravagance* (Corlett, 1993), *Linking home, school, and community literacy events* (Early & Gunderson, 1993), *Lost in the Land of Oz: The search for identity and community in American life* (Kolbenschlag, 1988), *School and community: Embracing diversity* (Naylor, 1994), *The soul of the community* (Shore, 1993), *Recalling a community at loose ends* (Singer, 1993), as well as an entire issue of the TESOL Journal, *Bringing culture into the classroom and students into the community* (Judd, 1993), speak to the widespread attention to this topic in a variety of disciplines and genres.

Constructs of community and in particular historical and curricular concepts of community education in the Western world (Poster & Krüger, 1990) therefore need further probing and will be explored in more detail against a background of racial and cultural complexity with particular reference to the local realities of the communities depicted in my study. One of these concepts, that of the community school, is based on the principles of community education that advocate life-long learning, the interrelationship of home, school, and community, and the empowerment of the involved stakeholders through community-based decision making (Decker & Romney, 1992; Ozar, 1993).

In British Columbia, in order to become a designated community school, the school and community have to initiate a needs-based assessment process which, together with the support of the school district, the school's staff, and other community organizations, can lead to the establishment of a joint school and community association. These local associations are members of the provincial and national community education organizations, ACEbc (Association for Community Education of British Columbia) and

CACE (Canadian Association for Community Association), respectively. The school-based organization functions in a similar way to traditional parent teacher associations; however, it has a larger community base as well as the additional benefit of a community office staff (a coordinator, programmer, and secretary). The community coordinator in particular is responsible for establishing links with teachers through regular co-planning with them, bringing in resources, arranging field studies in the community, and recruiting volunteer individuals and organizations to participate in curricular activities in and outside the classrooms.

In addition to giving the community's stakeholders a voice and an opportunity to influence future educational directions at a local level, the principles of community education open the doors for teachers and their students to connect curricular goals and practices directly with the environment they live in, thereby tying the curriculum directly to students' and their families' life experiences and, on a larger scale, to the ecological issues of a larger global community. By providing the organizational and conceptual structure and support through the integrated delivery of services to the community, community-serving schools indeed facilitate the implementation of such curricular goals for teachers. In their article *Linking home, school and community literacy events*, Early and Gunderson (1993) show how for students of any age and cultural or linguistic background, the exploration of issues and involvement with people in their community can open their minds and hearts to the many different faces of our multi-ethnic communities in an authentic, meaningful way. In addition, this inclusive curricular practice gives students, their parents and families an opportunity to connect with their own background and heritage.

By offering programs after regular school hours and on weekends, students and community members benefit from the direct delivery of services in their neighbourhood. In combining the resources of the school and the community, community schools, for example, can initiate essential skills training and social planning and assist in carrying out

community projects that are relevant to local residents (Association for Community Education in B.C., 1988). Within this new vision of a society that honours the vital role of schools in the context of their surrounding constituents and environments, the provincial government, in conjunction with its "Kids-at-risk" initiative, recently recognized the value and promise of existing and developing models of community education, be they in the form of community schools all over British Columbia or other institutions at various levels of educational delivery in line with the aims and goals of community-based decision-making. Indeed, for the first time after a long budgetary drought in funding, community schools are being financially rewarded through governmental monetary support. The Association of Community Education for British Columbia, ACEbc, together with representatives from the Ministry of Education's Social Equity Branch and various school districts' organizations, has recently developed a set of criteria for recognizing schools as designated community schools (Charbonneau, 1995; Domaas, 1995). They include, for example, the existence of an association that involves parents, teachers, administrators as well as community groups' representatives or individual residents in decision-making relevant to their community's issues.

> My own involvement in this teaching environment has been shaped considerably by the community school aspect. I have come to increasingly appreciate the holistic and contextualized approach to teaching and learning that seems to thrive in community schools -- so much so that I am now a member of the Board of Directors of ACEbc. Throughout this involvement and largely due to experiencing community education first hand as a resident and parent, my beliefs in the need to become more knowledgeable about students' backgrounds and in the importance of a meaningful connection between home, school, and community have been reinforced. Moreover, my dealings with students from such diverse sociocultural backgrounds, often very different from those of their teachers, have made me realize that the school system as well as individuals in charge of educational delivery need to be much more aware of and in support of making these connections. There seems to be an emerging recognition of the importance of community building in the pedagogical field as well as a reconceptualization of the notion of community in postmodern sociological and philosophical writing. (Researcher Narrative, 04/12/94)

Responsible, to a large part, for this rapid change in the conceptualization of what community education at the end of the 20th century may mean have been socio-political, socio-economic and socio-ecological forces of far greater global impact than ever before. Through these, we have witnessed such paradoxical phenomena, exhilarating and disturbing at the same time, as the disappearance of nation-states (Hannerz & Löfgren, 1994; Walker, 1993), the increasing urbanization and ghettoization of many living areas throughout the global landscape (Gundara & Jones, 1993) along with the rise of innovative ecological models (Berry, 1993), and political re-formations based on culture, race and ethnicity (Moodley, 1992). As one author demonstrates in the case of one urban landscape, we witness how *it all comes together in Los Angeles* (Soja, 1989a) at the same time that we are *taking Los Angeles apart* (Soja, 1989b).

Public institutions such as schools have traditionally been charged with establishing communal values and establishing links with their surrounding communities (Ashworth, 1985). By accepting the legitimacy of the social constructivist perspective to learning and literacy, governments, school boards, and educators themselves must also accept the challenges that a global rearranging of societal values and roles can bring. In particular with respect to literacy in a multicultural education system, this paradigm shift might have consequences that we can only speculate on from our present perspective (Asselin et al., 1993). The discussions about the re-defining of literacy have never been so complex and controversial; they include, among others, the incorporation of multiple forms of literacies (Froese, 1990; Sarris, 1992; Scarcella & Chin, 1993), the reconceptualization of genres (Chapman, 1994; Reid, 1987) and the revitalization of the teaching of reading and writing through literature that is multicultural (Early & Gunderson, 1994; Harris, 1992; Jobe & Sutton, 1990).

> My life has gotten just a little more complicated than my ability to describe it.
> That used to be the definition of madness, now it's just discontinuous overload.
> My project is a little more complicated.
> Bharati Mukherjee, *The holder of the world* (1993)

Propositions on Literacy

Writing is a kind of magic. It allows you to share your thoughts with anyone who can read. Maybe your ideas will be read by people hundreds of years from now! Reading other people's writing lets you travel to other places and other times. And when you read writing you can learn things -- how to make a chocolate cake, raise a rabbit or build a glider. Knowledge that is written down is there for everyone to use. (Lewis, 1992, p. 5)

Renata :   I like to rit sorybooks. I am woking on a new sorybook.
               do you like to rit sorys _____?

Teacher: Yes! [in provided blank underlined space]

Renata: I like to rit poms to. do you lik to rit poms _____?

Teacher: Yes!

Renata: It is fun to rit sorybooks

Teacher: What kind of story are you writing this time?
               (Journal, age 7, 10/04/94)

Erin: A Few days ago I finiht Mario is Mising!

Teacher: Was this a story you were reading or writing?
               Maybe you could tell us about it?

Erin: No! Way!
               (Journal, 10/20/94)

Everyone reads life and the world like a book. Even the so-called 'illiterate.' The world actually writes itself with the many-leveled, unfixable intricacy and openness of a work of literature. If, through our study of literature, we can ourselves learn and teach others to read the world in the 'proper' risky way, and to act upon that lesson, perhaps we literary people would not forever be such helpless victims. ... Mere literary studies cannot accomplish this. One must fill the vision of literary form with its connections to what is being read: history, political economy -- the world. And it is not merely a question of disciplinary formation. It is a question also of questioning the separation between the world of action and the world of the disciplines. There is a great deal in the way. (Spivak, 1988, p. 95)

We no longer partake of the drama of alienation, but are in the ecstasy of communication. (Baudrillard, 1988, p. 22)

The above texts strongly advocate literacy as a socially constructed phenomenon. My own experiential perspective also speaks to the cogency of this approach in many of my journal entries and through my observations and readings of the texts and speech of the children in my classroom:

> In the same way, in my particular home area of twenty-two grade threes, the degree of acceptance of others, the willingness to work with others regardless of personal preference, and the need to be recognized individually are constantly negotiated, evaluated, and celebrated in different ways. This process is certainly not easy for many children: Learning to get along with others, regardless of age, gender, and race is often difficult and challenging, but it is always a learning experience that requires growth towards acceptance of others from students and teachers alike. Perhaps, this living and learning through difficulty needs to be recognized as an integral, necessary part of the sociocultural construction of literacy. The unfolding of this literacy as a social and cultural process through which students negotiate learning through multiple layers of texts needs to be further documented. With my own research I hope to contribute to filling this gap. (Researcher Narrative, 06/14/94)

> Following the work of Bakhtin and his colleagues, no text -- either conversational or written -- exists in isolation; every text exists in relation to previous and forthcoming texts. But which texts are and will be related is not a given; it is a social construction. People, interacting with each other, construct intertextual relationships by the ways they act and react to each other.
> (Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993, p. 311)

However, the way we communicate as literate and literary people, through literature and other language-related means, has traditionally been defined through a transmission model of literacy acquisition and development (Anderson & Reeder, in press) and, with it, a canon of texts that has indeed alienated a large percentage of our schools' populations (Au, 1993; Banks & Banks, 1993). In this particular North American context, as in other continents, it has resulted in the marginalization of students from backgrounds outside the cultural and linguistic mainstream, those living on the borders, the margins (Giroux, 1992; Villegas, 1991). As numerous research studies show, the Eurocentric bias of the school curriculum and of literacy and literature programs in particular is as pervasive as ever despite the emergence of apparently progressive new approaches such as 'literature-based'

or 'multicultural' reading programs (Freeman & Goodman, 1993; Greenlaw, M. J., 1994; Willinsky, 1990).

In contrast, we are beginning to see that the multiple authentic literacies that do exist in our classrooms, whether teachers acknowledge them or not, are fundamentally different from the kind of contrived texts that have been taught in schools for so long under the mantle of being both instructionally sound as well as liberating (Cairney & Langbien, 1989; Myers, 1992). This officially sanctioned literacy has in fact achieved the opposite through a hidden curriculum aimed at conformity to the standard of cultural hegemony and "the cultural romantics" of dominant methodologies, such as in the case of the current mainstream practice of the "workshop" approach, in particular that of the 'Writers' Workshop' (Dressman, 1993). In the reality of these institutionalized forms of literacy, "plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose" (Edelsky, 1991, p. 59). In order to escape this irony and instead truly affect change, authentic narratives need to be heard and told over and over again, in many linguistic and semiotic systems. The memories that are with us, that frame us in our presence, need to be holistically integrated into our literary and literate endeavors, much like the visual images of a *scene* that leave a lasting impression:

> Stepping out of the carriage, Werther sees Charlotte for the first time (and falls in love with her), framed by the door of her house (cutting bread-and-butter for the children: a famous scene, often discussed): the first thing we love is a *scene*. Is the scene always visual? It can be aural, the frame can be linguistic: I can fall in love with a *sentence spoken to me:* and not only because it says something which manages to touch my desire, but because of its syntactical turn (framing), which will inhabit me *like a memory*. (Barthes, 1978a, p. 192)

Barthes' and other contemporary probes into both the apparent and underlying psychological, cognitive, emotional and sociocultural phenomena very much reveal the lens of the ethnographer. Ethnography has indeed become a favoured mode of investigating language and culture: from Bauman & Scherzer's (1974) *Explorations in the ethnography of speaking*, which includes Hymes' *Ways of speaking* and Basso's *The*

ethnography of writing, through Heath's *Ways with words* (1983) and Clifford's & Marcus' (1986) *Writing culture,* to Boyarin's (1992) *The ethnography of reading,* containing Fabian's *Keep listening: The ethnography of reading* (1992). These works all focus on the relations between the various language skills and their functions as sociocultural manifestations of a society or community. With my own study, I hope to contribute to expanding the body of *memories* and *manifestations* of literacy communities in this postmodern era. Throughout this documentation, however, I am succinctly reminded that, as valuable as these descriptions are, we need to keep in mind that

> we are living *in* this web of interrelations and these interrelations are always already at work *before* the task of writing *about* those relations has begun. ... Ecology tells us that there is no center or foundation to this web of living interconnections, just small, lateral, interlacing relations of this to this to this, splayed in moving patterns of kinship and kind (wonderful terms for pedagogy to consider). (Jardine, 1994, p. v)

I am re-thinking about the de-centred subject theme, 'subjects without selves,' in Gabrielle Schwab's term, about the *transitional* nature of texts: a poignant and powerful metaphor that is difficult to define, however. It refers to the 'dynamic change within an ongoing process' and in this way relates to the kind of languaging/theming in David Jardine's work about writing and pedagogy in connection with ecology. And I am re-thinking, once again, back to thoughts about the kind of 'composite propositional intertexts,' in Lee Gunderson's words and examples, which students and teachers create and negotiate in whole language classrooms. Texts that stand out by themselves, insist on their subjectivity, are composed in different spaces, yet come together in this composition -- connectedness, rhizomean in nature: seeing Chinese lanterns, reading about the Californian watershed, walking across Japanese Canadian bridges on the Pacific, listening and responding to musical scores from the hills and valleys of Troldhaugen, receiving poetry and languaging via e-mail across continents and time zones, longing for/lingering with German and French phonemes over phone lines, forever part of me, strangely and yet comfortably distant. *Entgrenzungen ... beyond borders,* yet bordering on the *other.* The memories of two intense years of influences and interpretations, thinking with/in/(ab)out cultural differences and pedagogical and emotional struggles ... *Différance* and *difficulty* go hand in hand.
(Researcher Narrative, 11/30/94)

I am re-thinking about the past few weeks with the children, re-living *scenes* of preparing for our concert with the ecological theming of peace around Christmas and other Festivals of Light: the children listening to music, writing and singing about "What can I give my world for Christmas," thinking such awe-inspiring

thoughts about kindness to others "in all the universe," in Jimmy's favourite expression, and about making the world a better, cleaner, more caring, healthier place to grow up in. Am I starting to grasp a sense of their lives, of what matters to them, the future generation in charge of this planet?
(Researcher Narrative, 12/26/94)

Rapphel is fiting Shreder.
I migt go to Naila's Cirsmas party insted of waching Ninja turtles.
(Leo's Journal, 11/14/94)

What can I give my world for Christmas?
How can I show I really care?
For all the many gifts to me,
All the blessings that we share?
What can I give my world?[12]

I would like to help people in other parts of the world to give them lots of Food and Water toys and Homes Beds and schools and no Wars. Thats what I'll give my world for christmas.
(Naomi's *Wish List for the World*, 12/07/94)

What can I give my world for Christmas?
How can I show my gratitude?
For all her beauty and her many joys,
Sunlight, water, air, and food?
What can I give my world?

I can help my world to keep the world clean and help the children from other parts of the world and care for the animals.
(Rita's *Wish List for the World*, 12/07/94)

What can I give my world for Christmas?
The season's message is very clear.
Peace and goodwill and kindliness
That lasts through all the year.
That's what I'll give my world.

I'll give my world healthy food so people won't get sick. and make sure everyone is healthy even animals. That is what I'll give my world.
(Sara's *Wish List for the World*, 12/07/94)

We must believe in the inherent goodness of human beings, and 'the season's message is loud and clear' at the end of this year of reading/writing *within* this tangled web of interdependent teaching, learning, and living: As pedagogues, we have a constant, serious responsibility to open our students'

minds/heads and hearts to facing the challenge of learning and practicing ecologically sound living in a world that is troubled by too many mis-guided practices. The notion of difficulty once again enters into this thinking about opening heads and hearts, making me remember Robert Graves' poem and his metaphor of 'walking on hills' ...
(Researcher Narrative, 12/29/94)

To walk on hills is to employ legs
As porters of the head and heart ...

>*To walk on hills is to see sights*
>*And hear sounds unfamiliar. ...*
>>*Heart records that journey*
>>*As memorable indeed;*
>>*Head reserves opinion,*
>>*Confused by the wind.* (Graves, 1959, p. 133)

It will be difficult at times to decide which is the main trail and which is the aside, for all of the threads do wind together in an interweaving web of interdependencies. It will depend, in part, on where you want to go and on where you have been. But it won't only depend on this. Sometimes the trails will lead to places that are connected to where you want to go or where you have been, but that are more difficult or more complicated and convoluted and dangerous than any of us might want to admit .... (Jardine, 1993, p. vii)

I can relate to this need of *making a difference* through my teaching and to the

difficulty of it in connection with the children's many-numbered needs and their

manifestations in literacy events. It is, in David Jardine's words,

>indicative of an urgent necessity to speak and write differently than so much of our inheritance has allowed. It aspires to the ways of the voice and the hand and the heart that embody the generativity and wildness and interdependence and ambiguous kind-ness that is also its topic. (p. ix)

>The eeriness of connecting to these words, recognizing them in my own texts, and in others', creating *inter-text*, evoking thoughts/emotions often too uncomfortable to consider, yet knowing they are necessary, inevitable, perhaps ultimately beneficial for my personal/professional development and for what I believe to be the task and meaning of pedagogical endeavor. And, once again, re-connecting with *meaning* and *place*.
>(Researcher Narrative, 12/30/94)

It may be that the meaning and place of children in our lives is the most important consideration to be taken up in education today, not just because of the voice of

the young has been translated out of any meaningful involvement with the powers that be, but also because of the question of the young (their conception, care, and nurturance) devolves precisely on so many of the defining issues of our time such as the meaning of power, gender relations, and the matter of how we might learn to live more responsibly within the earthly web of our planetary home.
(Smith, 1994c, p. 102)

But again, ecology is reminding us that there is nothing easy, clear and simple about the Earth's textures and the ways we are culpable for and implicated in this "text" (Jardine, 1993, ix). Once again, the theming of the *difficulty* of living within a global consciousness is struck, a recurring notion in many of the texts about embodied language and text.

We have traveled a long way down the road of literary expeditions into the cultural world -- from the journeys of the past that delighted the reader with colourful, exotic, and often dangerously naive accounts of native and foreign ethnicity at the cost of pejorative and prejudiced speculations about others. Examples such as *The Five Chinese Brothers* (Bishop & Wiese, 1938) or *The Indian in the Cupboard* (Banks, 1980) are painful reminders of this kind of literature. They stand in sharp contrast to George Littlechild's (1993) authentic autobiographical narratives and art in *This land is my land,* the poignant and compassionate portrayal of the Japanese Canadian experience of deportation in *Naomi's Road* by Joy Kogawa (1986), Paul Yee's tales of the Chinese immigrants' exploitation in *Tales from Gold Mountain* (Yee, 1989), or the beautiful bilingual edition of the ancient Chinese folk tale *A Letter to the King* (Vá, 1991).

The recent celebration of these narratives is a promising beginning in the acknowledgment of a new humanism that needs to be further documented and critically evaluated with respect to the significance of these experiences for the development of both personal and socially constructed realities. If stories and narratives have indeed the power to communicate common concerns and to teach universal human values such as tolerance, respect, and the belief in the principles of freedom, social justice, equality, and commitment to human rights, we need to let them speak much louder to positively

overcome the limitations of race and class and other factors that remind us of the 'monstrous lessons' of imperialism (Willinsky, 1994). The latter are still the predominant causes for the breakdown in communication among those who really hold the power and those whose powerlessness is perpetuated within our educational institutions (Coombs, 1994).

> Only if more and more persons incarnate such principles, we might say, and choose to live by them and engage in dialogue in accord with them, are we likely to bring about a democratic pluralism and not fly apart in violence and disorder. (Greene, 1993, p. 18)

Alice Walker believes in the power of the writer who can transcend these boundaries through language that speaks authentically and universally about the suffering and pain but also about the beauty, wholeness, and joy our ancestors experienced (Winchell, 1992). Through reliving and learning from the life histories of people who have been subjected to horrific injustices and discrimination and yet have lived on through the words of the writers and artists of this present world, we can gain a deeper understanding of the power of our own stories and those of our parents, grandparents, and elders in a global narrative. With reference to *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*, Alice Walker places herself in the context of an embodied literacy that transcends time and culture, yet affirms it at the same time:

> In that story I gathered up the historical and psychological threads of the life my ancestors lived, and in the writing of it I felt joy and strength and my own continuity. I had that wonderful feeling writers get sometimes, not very often, of being *with* a great many people, ancient spirits, all very happy to see my consulting and acknowledging them, and eager to let me know, through the joy of their presence, that indeed, I am not alone. ... It is, in the end, the saving of lives that we writers are about. Whether we are 'minority' writers or 'majority.' It is simply in our power to do this. (Walker, 1983; as quoted in Eagleton, 1986, p. 31)

In the following chapter, I want to dwell more deeply on the languaging that speaks of the presence of the children in my classroom and of the cultural connections that are *with* them, that are part of their heritage *behind* them, and that, perhaps, lie *ahead* of them in their future. This is also the time and place to portray the specific site of this study in detail, to explain the situatedness of my questioning against the background of *where* it takes place and *who* the stakeholders are in this process of learning and teaching.

> I live in three time zones simultaneously, and I don't mean Eastern, Central and
> Pacific. I mean the past, the present and the future.
> (Mukherjee, 1993, p. 5)

Chapter 3

Living Ethnography: Cultures of Learning/Learning About Cultures

The aim is to urge the engagement across social and cultural edges, to break frames, disciplinary rules, received notions, and the conventions of fieldwork with its repetitious intellectual labors. My purpose in reading the poetic of cultures in contact is the result of finding there a nonhierarchical approach to knowledge, a refreshing directness of experience between one segment of humanity and another.

Dan Rose, *Living the ethnographic life*

was würdest du tun?

kulturelle unterschiede sind die stärke der menschheit

Esprit Advertisement, In *Brigitte: Das Magazin für Frauen*

I went to school at Strathcona School, which was a conglomeration of everybody and everyone, and we knew each other's swear words very, very well. That's the first thing you learn in a foreign language.

Benny Pastinsky, In *Opening Doors: Vancouver's East End*

Yet women have always survived

dans une autre langue

Nicole Brossard, *Installations (avec et sans pronoms)*

Many notions about place in relation to culture and the language we use to describe it undergird our representations and interpretations of 'the real world' we live in. In the readings I have engaged in throughout this dissertation, those from the field of cultural geography have presented many insightful and thought-provoking connections with the educational and linguistic dimensions I set out to describe. If there is one discipline which has indeed begun to embark on an interdisciplinary dialogue in ways that are meaningful for the understanding of human lives with/in their environments, it is that of cultural geography. Many of the *maps of meaning* (Jackson, 1989) that scholars in this discipline are sketching speak of the inter-connectedness of our human lives with *where* we are situated and with *who*, in the past, present, and future, we align ourselves. Titles of monographs such as *Writing worlds* (Barnes & Duncan, 1992), *Geography and social justice* (Smith, 1994), and *place/culture/representation* (Duncan & Ley, 1993) open up a landscape of interconnected variables between local and global sociocultural sites. In articles such as *Sites of representation: Place, time, and the discourse of the other* (Duncan, 1993), *Multiculturalism: Representing a Canadian institution* (Kobayashi, 1993), *Reading, community and a sense of place* (Stock, 1993), and *The politics of diversity in Monterey Park, California* (Horton, 1992), the authors draw maps of intercultural processes in progress and give us yet another perspective on how we might come to understand the complexity of the factors at work in the construction of postmodern landscapes. Key phrases that use language such as *the moral landscape, the politics of language, restructuring,* and *reading the texts of Niagara Falls,* for example, establish contextual and semantic relations to a variety of social sciences fields, among them sociology, political science, anthropology, ethnography, philology, linguistics, and education. These are all linked by elements of cultures at work and play, of people living within and outside of cultural boundaries in these postmodern times. Derek Gregory, from the University of British Columbia, in a foreword to a series of texts on cultural

geography entitled *Contours* (Gregory, 1989), outlines this decidedly interdisciplinary context of these writings:

> The ideas with which we are concerned in these books are of vital importance for *anyone* standing on the threshold of the twenty-first century. Living in multi-cultural societies in an interdependent world, in which events in one place are caught up in rapidly extending chains of events that span the globe; depending upon an increasingly fragile and volatile physical environment whose complex interactions require sophisticated analysis and sensitive management; recognizing that the human impact on the face of the earth has become ever more insistent -- we have no choice but to enlarge the geographical imagination. (p. x)

Enlarging the geographical imagination, in this postmodern framework of reference, involves a process of deconstructing the notion of the centredness of our geographical and cultural world to include "places on the margin" (Shields, 1991) as alternatives to modernity's maps. Much of the postmodern perception of the world is concerned with this marginality that stretches beyond a purely geographical space but reaches other dimensions that touch human lives:

> To be 'on the margin' has implied exclusion from 'the centre.' But social, political, and economic relations which bind peripheries to centres, keep them together in a series of binary relationships, rather than allowing complete disconnection. In this way, 'margins' become signifiers of everything 'centres' deny or repress; margins as 'the Other,' become the condition of possibility of all social and cultural entities. (p. 276)

Communities are social and cultural entities that are affected by these binary relationships and by their placement relative to the two locations: whether they are in or close to the 'centre' or are identified with the margin. The geographical dimensions that define certain communities can be a powerful force pulling in either direction; however, the *where* itself in turn is shaped by an increasingly complex web of factors that encompass historical, sociopolitical, socioeconomic, and other variables. Above all, communities are shaped by the people who belong to them. Whereas in earlier times, the earth was considered a vast and mysterious unexplored space, we now imagine our world

as a 'global village;' as a result of the expansion of our geographical reality and imagination, our communities are more divergent and heterogeneous than ever before, making it increasingly difficult for some of us to find our individual place within these communal spaces.

Out of Place: Reading Between Cultures and Continents

Several months ago, when traveling to Germany, I found myself experiencing personally the impact of this phenomenon of *enlarging the geographical imagination* through the peculiar displacement in between geo-cultural identities that had also marked the beginning of my life in Canada. In the airport, on the plane, by myself, without a traveling companion, self- consciously, (oh so slightly) un-comfortable with the label of *woman traveling alone* in this oh so emancipated western world, my thinking about cultural and linguistic identities came into focus once again through my immediate environment. As I was shifting back and forth from one linguistic mode to another, English to German and vice versa, I was also shifting through different comfort levels. I had brought along two texts, a novel, in English, *The Lost Language of Cranes*, the book the women in my reading group had chosen for next month's meeting, as part of our ongoing discussion about issues of gender, language, and culture (remembering Bill Pinar's inspirited lecture with that title, constituting treasured conversations of reading relations that have become dear to me in my personal and professional life) -- and, also in English, *Reading Ethnography*, a book that came recommended via another academic and reading relation (a title passed on passing in the street: fleeting, yet significant encounters within sites *littered with literacy*). These two texts firmly displayed my present immersion in thinking about *reading life* as a teacher, a scholar, and a woman, my groundedness in issues of *living* pedagogy. Somewhere along the journey, in between continents, I picked up one of the German magazines provided by *Lufthansa*, the German airline, and started

reading about current women's issues, social and political commentary, relationships, and fashion trends in *Brigitte: Das Magazin für Frauen.* I shifted between feelings of curiosity, comparing the writing with Canadian and American magazines I occasionally glance through at the orthodontist when waiting for my daughter, and feelings of slight panic, recognizing my strangeness, my unfamiliarity with many of the issues and events. I found myself challenged, almost exhausted by the mental -- not the purely linguistic efforts of reading the world of relationships, German style: I was out of touch with the cogent and casual outspokenness with which women, young and old, publicly discuss anything from sexual preferences to career decisions to styles in clothes and art. In between, I was carrying on a conversation, in German, with the man in the seat next to me, who had just spent a dream holiday in a fishing lodge in Northern B.C. and still could not believe the phenomenal amount and size of salmon he and his group of male friends now had stashed away in our plane's cargo, neatly packaged and frozen for admiring friends and relatives at home in a small town in Germany. I felt thoroughly Canadian when speaking with him, wanting to substitute *salmon* for *Lachs, float plane* coming much easier to the tip of my tongue than *Wasserflugzeug,* resenting the familiar gendered tone of voice of assertive male bonding experiences and adventuring in foreign lands. I found myself wanting to speak English with the flight attendants who politely went about serving meals and drinks in German, not for lack of linguistic knowledge but for reasons much more deeply connected with cultural identity crossing over into the linguistic realm. Even through I was very much looking forward to seeing my family, being with friends and colleagues again, I found myself resenting leaving behind the linguistic and cultural comfort zones in which I have placed myself for the past few years. What used to be my home, my mother tongue, for close to three decades of my life, does not *feel* entirely natural any more -- it is difficult to re-connect, it takes work to open myself up again to a world of German, *being German* myself, despite the outward ease with which I am able to cross time zones and

continents and despite the oh so politically correct sounding *Esprit* ad: *cultural differences are the strength of humankind* (Esprit, 1993, pp. 40-41).

On the trip back from Germany, when talking to a high school student who was sitting next to me on the plane, headed for a year's English immersion experience in a Vancouver public school, translating for her the puzzling lexical details of the Canada Customs form, I was struck by the memory of how, just a few years back, that comfort zone for me too resided in the *other* language and culture, and of how the feeling of displacement had occupied my being almost entirely when I first came to Canada. Now, I am fondly collecting postcards of the type of airplane I am traveling on to bring back to my students, and I am composing the message I am going to write to them on the card, translating cultures and connecting places somewhere between the coasts of Scotland and Greenland, *living ethnography*.

I recalled Gabrielle Schwab's experience of moving back and forth between Germany and California while translating her dissertation, *Entgrenzungen und Entgrenzungsmythen*: "I often found myself an ethnographer in two foreign cultures. Some of the stages of this travel are reflected in the folds and fissures created by the contact between two very different cultures and historical moments" (Schwab, 1994, p. vii). Curiously, Schwab finds the title of her dissertation "virtually untranslatable," an experience that I can easily recreate within my own life circumstances, forever trying, for example, to translate North American English pedagogical jargon into German in discussions with family, friends, and colleagues.

> *Entgrenzung* is a word whose connections run from the action of the lifting boundaries -- their transgression, transformation, or expansion -- to the syncretistic experience in which details and structures are grasped holistically. Moreover, *Entgrenzungen* also recalls the fragmentations and dissolutions of form and structure prominent in modernism and post-modernism. It is a word that calls up such different realms of discourse as geography and geopolitics, morphology, psychoanalysis and aesthetics. To my knowledge, no English word combines all of these connotations and resonances. (pp. vii-viii)

Where we are from, where we are now, where we place ourselves in the landscapes of cultural and linguistic identities constitutes an ongoing, changing process of connotations, of meaning making, of making sense of our lives and work. This chapter opens the doors to the ethnographic exploration of the cultural encounters at work in my present place of living and working. For over a decade now, I have called this neighbourhood my home, my foreign home, on the second continent that I have come to (dis)place myself. For the past four-and-a-half years, I have also called this *place called school*, in Goodlad's (1983b) well-known phrase, in this neighbourhood my place of work, a place where my pedagogical experiences were and still are developing. In between, the school, as a community school, was the place where the community ties formed slowly that became a lifeline of support when trying to survive as a new parent in a foreign cultural space so different from my own childhood environment.

My first involvement with this small community school, tucked away in the farthest north-east corner of the city, was through a parent group that met regularly once a week to discuss issues of a wide and bewildering variety: They ranged from health care to child care, from children's literature to women's rights, from compiling recipes to coordinating a cultural awareness celebration. I distinctly remember feeling strange and not at all at home in this parent culture and in my role as a new community resident -- until the doors of the schools literally opened to a whole world of complex and challenging educational, social, and cultural experiences and opportunities. Gradually, my family and I grew more familiar with the neighbourhood and the school, with the neighbourhood *through* the school. My daughter started going to the pre-school attached and run jointly by the parents and the community school association, then to the school itself from Kindergarten to grade seven. By the time she was in grade five, I was both a parent and a teacher at the school. My own grade three class loved saying hello to Charlotte in the hallway and welcomed her in our classroom; she became a well-known and well-liked member of our

classroom community both through my stories and by being a member of the larger school community.

I perceive my role as a teacher in much the same way as the above life/lived experience. It constitutes the processes involved in coming to know my students as part of my world, of my cultural experience in this connected web of human relations. From the beginning, I have conceived this as an ethnographic exploration in the sense of building bridges, of being part of the engineering, the constructing, the meaning making. As Rose's (1990) volume on *Living the ethnographic life* expresses in its very title, we therefore can no longer subscribe to a methodology that surrenders to the current *backlash* mentality that pervades the general public, media and administrative and political decision-making bodies. This conservative and at times reactionary attitude is anathema to a new ethnographic action research paradigm. Instead, we need to engage in case studies of participatory and reflective educational action. These documentations are needed, I believe, in order to ward off and render ineffective the trends to take educational research back to a passive and inert state of "resting on the verandah."

In a panel presentation on classroom-centred research at a recent international TESOL (Teachers of English as a Second or Other Language) conference, a number of researchers and teachers discussed various research approaches and methodologies that have emerged within the last few years as part of the reawakened interest in "what is really going on in the classroom."[13] The participants stressed the importance of ethnographic action research as a means for redefining and obtaining answers to questions arising from day-to-day teaching and learning practices in order to create a more positive and successful learning environment for all children. This questioning of practice applies to both the critical examination of teaching and to the critical reconceptualization of research practices prevalent in education and other social sciences. This hegemony of educational power structures has often been transferred to curriculum implementation practices. However, although the descriptive, qualitative nature of ethnographic inquiry has provided

a starting point for action research approaches, especially in the methodological domains of field observation (Clifford & Marcus, 1986), data collection (Wolcott, 1990) and autobiographical method (Pinar, 1988), its objectives have not remained entirely compatible with more recent developments in the field of teacher research. Richard Blot, for example, in the TESOL forum mentioned earlier, accused the more traditional school of classroom ethnography of remaining "at rest on the verandah," implying that the researcher was typically cast in the role of the participant observer, which was in fact the empathetic outsider, wanting to portray the subjects' point-of-view and experiences, but in reality being a passive observer, removed from actually *living the situation* as part of his or her professional involvement.[14]

> If you're not from B.C.
> you don't know the sea
> you *can't* know the sea.
>
> The waves are so big,
> the sand is so hard to dig.
> The water is so cold,
> but the sea is bold.
>
> If you're not from B.C.
> you *don't* know the sea.
> (Jordan, age 8, 05/94)

For me, *living the situation* in multiple ways, *seeing* this pedagogical landscape with a variety of different eyes, those of a teacher, parent, community resident, and an immigrant with English as a second language, has been a necessary part of the research process in order to arrive at my present pedagogical stance. It provided the motivation, the curiosity, the *sense* for undertaking this endeavour in *making sense* of my own and others' lived cultural realities -- as well as the *making*, the act of shaping and re-shaping my identity in relation to others. I have often questioned the sanity and the cogency of this endeavour during the past two years of intense (pre)occupation with the students, staff, and community members of what has become, technically, my research site.

This process has been difficult at times. I often wondered: What about the so-called professional neutrality and detachment that supposedly makes for sound and objective judgment? What about the comments I was warned to expect from staff and parents along the line of "too close for comfort," meaning that living in the neighbourhood and being a teacher researcher would create conflicts rather than encourage confidence and trust in me as a professional?

Despite these perceived problems with situating myself in this complex web of relations, I carried on living these different roles, and I received much support along the way. I needed the challenges of stepping into new territory and re-defining pedagogical practice for my own environment. I have not stopped yet to do this re-(de)fining; and I know that every time I walk into the doors of my school and my classroom, I feel the same kind of excited curiosity and suspense as when I first became a member of this community of inquiry; only now, it goes together with a sense of belonging, ownership, and responsibility for being part of this cultural and pedagogical landscape. With this responsibility in mind, I am succinctly aware of the problems related to *identity* in a place of cultural pluralism:

> *We are what we do, especially what we do to change what we are:* our identity resides in action and struggle. Therefore, the revelation of what we are implies the denunciation of those who stop us from being what we can become. In defining ourselves our point of departure is challenge, and struggle against obstacles. (Galeano, 1988, p. 121)

This theming of identity, my own and others', in relation to the cultural geography I am describing and with reference to other *maps* -- of places and people within cultures -- that have been documented in ethnographic studies, is re-occurring throughout this and the other chapters. It is interwoven into textual layers of community, neighbourhood, school, and classroom and reflected in the *folds and fissures*, in Schwab's words, created by the contact of these different textual, geographical, cultural, and human relations. Through this, I hope to be able to contribute to what Ted Aoki calls

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... the opening up of spaces where teachers really dwell, where they're doing their work, where they're struggling. What the teachers constitute in these spaces, as they struggle through making sense simultaneously of the curriculum-as-planned and of the kids' lives in the classroom, is a tough game. Living in the spaces is what teaching is. (Hinds, 1994, p. 10)

We start with the tangible, the geographical *where*, to find our place. We follow the plan of the curriculum only to discover much more than a map of topographical and curricular variables. We discover geo-cultural and global human relationships, *maps of the human heart* (Ward, 1993) that transcend local and individual cultures of learning.

Into the City: Mapping Landscapes of Linguistic and Cultural Variables

Somewhere deep within the Chinese psyche exists a highly stylized image of paradise. It is depicted in Chinese watercolor landscapes and given life in the gardens that peaked as an art form during the Ming dynasty. The characters that make up the Chinese word for "landscape" include the symbols for "mountains" and "water." Vancouver consists of mountains and water. Vancouver's typical mood is exactly as depicted in those landscapes: watery blue grays, edged only where rocks meet water.

There are many people who find Vancouver pretty otherworldly. But nobody invests Vancouver with the mystique the Chinese bring to it. Their contribution dates from Day 1, but it is barely under way. (Rossiter, 1995, p. 70)

Vancouver	Across the Universe
In Spring it sprinkles,	Words are flying out like endless rain
In Summer too.	Into a paper cup,
In Fall it pours	They slither wildly as they slip away
Buckets on you.	Across the universe.
In Winter it rains	Pools of sorrow, waves of joy
Cats and dogs	Are drifting through my opened mind,
From heavy clouds	Possessing and caressing me.
Through soupy fogs.	
All year long	...
Rain drops and drops	
In Vancouver	Nothing's gonna change my world
It never stops.	Nothing's gonna change my world.
(Heidbreder, 1985)	(Lennon & McCartney, 1970)

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The two citations that deliver messages about Vancouver, one from a recent magazine, *Canadian Living,* and the other a poem by local poet and teacher Robert Heidbreder, from his book *Don't eat spiders* (1985), define Vancouver through its climate, through its weather. The Beatles song next to it points to the simultaneous fascination we experience with a larger cosmic context. Many of the students in our Open Area, and especially Jimmy, with his favourite expressions *in all the universe,* and *"the hole entere world and hole universe,"* frequently referred to these cosmic parameters, along with *the earth* and *the sky* as reference points when comparing and measuring objects, making judgments about likes and dislikes close to home, *their* home, Vancouver.

Throughout the past two years of documenting the curriculum materials my students have been working with in our Open Area, landscapes with references to climatic conditions have been a frequent source of integrated input and output, initiated by both teachers and students. The *Vancouver* poem, for example, served as an excellent starting point to discuss weather and rainy day things around town at the beginning of fall.

> The students were eager to participate in an art display in the school's main hallway. Centred around the poem by Robert Heidbreder, they showed off their creativity in reproducing the Vancouver landscape featuring mountains, water, buildings, and skyline by using a technique of layering strokes of paraffin wax, gray and blue water colour washes, torn construction paper for the mountains, magazine cut-outs for the buildings, and silver tin foil pieces for raindrops. Looking at these variable landscapes all together resulted in stunning images of children's diverse perceptions of their environment. Ranging from towering mountain-scapes to ocean-dominated views sprinkled with varying degrees of human habitation, the children have created vital interpretative scenes of the interplay between climate, nature and urban living in this local landscape.
>   I am struck by the force of the lines in the paintings, both vertical and horizontal but *especially* the horizontal ones, reminding me once again of the postmodern image of *the city on the edge,* of the border mythology that comes with this location, and of the simultaneous promise of freedom and new beginnings it evokes: *The gateway to the Pacific ...* Art serves as a delightful and effective way to represent *who* we are in relation to *where* we are, regardless of linguistic or cultural background.
> (Researcher Narrative, 11/05/94)

Vancouver, the largest urban centre on the Canadian West Coast, has played a

significant role in the development of Canada's sociocultural and educational mosaic. The

tensions that have developed from the mixed streams of relationships in this urban culture

are just as visibly and vibrantly reflected in today's human and pedagogical landscape as a

century or two ago. From very early on, the city's climate, location, and openness first

from sea and then from land, through the building of the Transcontinental Canadian

Railway, have made it a desirable place for immigrants from all over the world (Davis &

Hutton, 1989; Robson & Breems, 1985). In a 1994 collection of essays on *Vancouver:*

Representing the postmodern city, Paul Delany (1994a) speaks to this distinctive

geographical situatedness with particular reference to the present cultural landscape:

> The rapid change and growth of this city have always been the product of external
> forces: Vancouver has been discovered, developed -- colonized, some would say --
> by global migrations and shifts of capital. If these global powers are identified with
> postmodernism, then Vancouver has become postmodern through its excessive
> openness to movements that originated elsewhere. (p. 1)

Vancouver is, in multiple ways, defined by its geography as a city on and of the edge,

like San Francisco, Hong Kong, or Amsterdam, illustrating

> the ecological principle that the greatest variety of life-forms will be found at the
> boundary between different habitats. ... It is not a bullseye or spiderweb city that
> extends uniformly to all points of compass, like Paris or Berlin, but a city where
> fault lines pile up against each other. (p. 19)

Located "about halfway between Europe and Asia" (Rossiter, 1995, p. 70),

Vancouver is one of North America's fastest growing cities "with proportionally the

largest single ethnic community of any Canadian city" (p. 70). It is the place where the

majority of Canada's Asian immigrants come ashore and create or join communities with

complex ethnic and cultural patterns, settling in the inner core of the urban metropolis and

in the surrounding suburbs on the road to a better life and more prosperous future. In an

article entitled *The lessons of Vancouver* (Wood, 1994) in the popular Maclean's

magazine, the author depicts the changing tide of immigration within urban educational settings:

> Because they accept 60 per cent of all immigrants, the country's three biggest cities -- Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver -- are being most profoundly reshaped by the newcomers from Asia, the Middle East and Latin America. But if Canada has a laboratory in which its new ethnic chemistry is being most acutely tested, it is surely Vancouver. The city's position as a magnet for Asian immigrants means that change there has been most far-reaching. In typically Canadian fashion, established (mainly white) Vancouverites have for the most part expressed their concerns only in guarded fashion. But the changes are so profound that even many who regard themselves as liberal are bound to ask themselves: Is it all going too quickly? Is the city I knew being transformed into something alien? Will my children be well served by schools increasingly geared to serving youngsters whose greatest need is simply to learn English? (p. 27)

Rossiter (1995) predicts that "the Chinese will soon make up one-quarter of the population of Greater Vancouver and they have created a cultural stir that reverberates throughout the city" (p. 70). It seems ironic to this author that the Chinese contributions to building this city and province are being recognized only now:

> Chinese capital is building the Vancouver of tomorrow on the old Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) yards along the north shore of False Creek. Chinese labor extended the CPR to the site of Vancouver, giving the city its reason to be. The workers, many of whom died for the project that united this country, are Confederation's unsung heroes. Their reward? To be exiles, voteless until 1947 and unrepresented until 1982 when Bill Yee stormed city council. (p. 70)

Max Wyman, in *Vancouver forum: Old powers, new forces* (1992b) elaborates on this theme of the changing image and reality of this city by assigning this present decade of the 90s a crucial role in the process of redefining and reorienting the city's directions:

> We are witnessing what appears to be the radical disintegration of an established cultural order, with all the social chaos such disintegration can bring. ... On one side are the old powers and anchors -- the Eurocentric thrust that, in the form of two colonizing cultures, helped construct modern Canada; the residual isolationism (even in an era of international communications of unprecedented speed and ease) of a city on the far side of the mountains from the centre of national political control; the lingering reluctance to embrace change in a city that is still without a sure sense of itself; and the reawakening powers of the region's first people. On

the other are the new tugs and forces -- a burgeoning immigrant population, primarily from the Pacific Rim; the siren call of the new Pacific as the panacea for our economic ills; a new awareness of the importance of that rising indigenous voice; and that old wish-myth, the dream -- surely, we tell ourselves, as close as it has ever been -- of Vancouver finally taking its rightful place as a player on the world stage (Wyman, 1994a, pp. 10-11).

This "old wish-myth" of becoming a "player on the world stage" evokes images of the *Hollywood North* reputation that Vancouver is fast acquiring as a place where reality is being redefined by the movie industry from Southern California (Miller, 1994). This expression, once again, conjures up the curious Canadian dualism of north and south and reminds us of the *other* myth associated with this *northern* place, that of *The True North Strong and Free* and the associations of political, economic, and sociocultural power in relation with people (Shields, 1991). Today, more even than in earlier times of colonization and immigration, the northern part of the map faces strong competition from the pull of the South with its "advanced" patterns of urban civilization. Scenes such as the one from the film *Map of the Human Heart* (Ward, 1993), which draws a portrait of the hopeless struggle of the Innuit against the inevitable White conquest of the Canadian North by tracing the pervasive imprint of the map maker from Montreal, are hard to imagine in this laid-back West Coast temperate climate. Yet, images such as the one Margaret Atwood evokes, proclaiming that "the north is at the back of our minds, always. There's something, not someone, looking over our shoulders; there's a chill at the nape of the neck. The north focuses our anxieties." (Atwood, 1987, p. 143; as quoted in Shields, 1991, p. 167). Instead, to escape this cold northern place, Canadians today cast their glance toward the South and the East; to the fare of the Southwest and Mexico, to the exotic flavours of the oriental Pacific Rim that spice up the menus of trendy restaurants and businesses. The dualistic nature of this geomancy is expressed in the contrast between "The Canadian Tradition," an established image of northern landscape and human dwelling

therein, and the postmodern plurality of chiasmatic influences and traditions that denies the validity of one single tradition:

> "The Canadian Tradition" involved enduring snow and fearing wolves, and leaned toward Frye's picture of Protestant enclaves in the landscape deep freeze. From the west edge, at least, it is not hard to see that such unitary myth-making is exclusionary. What did it say to a person such as Roy Kiyooka, whose father stood on whales in the winter rain of the Northern B.C. coast.
> (Bowering, 1994, p. 135)

> If you're not from B.C.
> you don't know the P.N.E.,
> you *can't* know the P.N.E.

> The rides are so long,
> they will go to Hong Kong.
> The candy is so yummy,
> it feels good in my tummy.

> If you're not from B.C.
> you *don't* know the P.N.E.
> (Roy, age 7, 5/94)

Yet, this chiasmatic dichotomy is a defining characteristic of the landscapes that surround us. No longer can we claim this city, Vancouver, as a homogenous or separate entity. It has become a divergent and heterogeneous set of references to diverse groups of people. Shields (1991) reminds us that

> places or regions only mean something only in relation to other places as a constellation of meanings, that is, the North makes sense only with reference to other regions: the 'urban jungle,' the southern agricultural fringe, or the commodified consumer landscape of Toronto's suburban strip developments. The images are oriented towards each other in a mutually supporting dialogical exchange. (Bakhtin, 1984, pp. 10-12; as quoted in Shields, 1991, p. 199)

It is indeed telling of the interrelatedness and interdisciplinary approach which cultural geographers have started to pursue that the author here likens this phenomenon in cultural geography and geomancy to the literary and linguistic processes described in Bakhtin's (1981) work on *The dialogic imagination.* I am reminded of the dialogue my students spontaneously created in response to the poetry of Dave Bouchard's *If you're not from the*

prairie (1993), such as Jordan's poem about B.C.'s oceanic landscape or Zelda's response

to the book's prairie images with memories from her own childhood experience,

remembering the prairies as a cold, wintry place:

> If you're not from the prairies
> you don't know the sun
> you can't know the sun
>
> Diamonds that bounce off crisp winter snow,
> Warm waters in dugouts and lakes that we know.
> The sun is our friend from when we are young,
> A child of the prairie is part of the sun.
>
> If you're not from the prairie,
> You *don't* know the sun.
> (Bouchard, 1993, p. 6)

> If you're not from Winnipeg
> you don't know the snow,
> you *can't* know the snow.
>
> The snow is so cold,
> you'll wear gloves when you're told.
> You wouldn't go without your hat,
> it's very hard to get fat.
>
> If you're not from Winnipeg
> you *don't* know the snow.
> (Zelda, age 8, 5/94)

These comparisons and the tensionality surfacing in these descriptions also strike a

personal note. Mapping Vancouver indeed brings back memories of prior experiences:

documenting, collecting variables of speech through interviews with people who grew up

in Vancouver, genuine Vancouverites, writing research papers on the *English spoken here*

in this Northern place, influenced by its large Southern neighbour, the United States, with

its American English, and its overseas British and French linguistic heritage (Hasebe-Ludt,

1981, 1986a, 1986b). In this context of Canadian English, a socio-dialectal mixture of

British and American English and a linguistic variety in its own right (Gregg, 1984;

DeWolf, 1992; McConnell, 1978), I was also analyzing historical, sociocultural, and sociopolitical influences that shaped the unique idiolect of this city. Vancouver: a city on the edge, on the *rim*, the Pacific Rim, influenced by the mixtures of cultures and languages brought to its shore from distant continents. East Vancouver in particular, loosely defined as east of Main Street, demonstrates, in the words of residents of this part of town who put together a book on *Families of East Vancouver: Our multicultural neighbourhood* (Tse, Olgui, & Klassen, 1988) a great diversity of culture and "offers us a wonderful opportunity to see the world" (p. v).

Vancouver, British Columbia, plays a central role as the largest city of this Canadian province. *Naming* Vancouver: an English captain from a country that continues to have a stronghold in many of the names of places in this city and province: *British* Columbia, make no mistake ... What does it mean for someone of German linguistic and ethnic origin and citizenship (now with a European Community passport) to be writing a dissertation at the University of British Columbia, *in English* (mostly -- with a spattering of other Indo-European variables represented) on the mixed cultural influences of the children she teaches in Vancouver (mostly of Asian heritage) while at the same time raising a daughter whose first language is English and whose heritage, through her father's family, is Japanese-Canadian (fourth generation Canadian, *yonsei*, make no mistake), German through her mother's.

Make no mistake ...? In many ways, my own daughter is a representative of the students in our schools -- of the present, past, and future generations of "mixed-up hybrid kids," in Ted Aoki's words, positioned in the midst of continents, homelands, languages, cultures, and histories (Aoki, 1995). In grade two, she learned about how people in other parts of the world live through a letter exchange her teacher had set up with a twin class in the Philippines. Together with a friend, she was interviewed and, showing the photo album with pictures the class received from their pen pals, told how "they make houses out of strong bamboo and wood, and they move them from place to place with sticks."

Watching herself on video almost ten years later, she remembers this learning experience well. Laughing, she comments: "Well, I sure knew what I was talking about!"

CHORUS OF NISEIS:

Home, we discover, is where life is:
Not Manitoba's wheat
Ontario's walled cities
nor a B.C. fishing fleet.

Home is something more than harbour --
than father, mother, sons;
Home is the white face leaning over your shoulder
As well as the darker ones.

Home is labour, with the hand and heart,
The hard doing, and the rest when done;
A wider sea than we knew, a deeper earth,
A more enduring sun.
(Livesay, 1993, p. 78)

In an essay entitled *The future of Vancouver education* (Kilian, 1992), the author refers to the images of geography and climate, to glaciers and weather, in particular, to describe this city's pedagogical landscape. He describes our local schools as part of a changing landscape, locally responding, like a glacier, to general climatic conditions:

> ... education in Vancouver depends largely on influences far beyond the boundaries of School District 39. Political decisions made in Ottawa or Beijing may trigger a crisis at Magee Secondary. Falling stumpage revenues may doom a new arts program in inner-city elementary schools. Birthrates in Quebec in the 1960s may make French-immersion teachers for L'Ecole Bilingue hard to find in the 1990s. (Kilian, 1992, p. 125)

With both the increasing accessibility and emphasis on connections to the Pacific Rim, Vancouver's schools indeed visibly display the influence of immigration from this geo-political domain. At present, over half of Vancouver's students speak English as a second or other language, and of that number, the majority are from Pacific Rim countries (Farrow, 1994). Since Vancouver is still the largest urban school district in the province

of British Columbia, and "with almost ten percent of the province's children living in this one district, Vancouver does indeed create much of B.C.'s educational weather."[15]

Linked with the challenges of a multicultural student population are sociopolitical and socioeconomic factors that in turn influence the attitudes of those who are in the business of educating these children from many cultures. We have seen many valid attempts to document and condemn historical incidents of prejudice and racism, overt or disguised, that have occurred in the past, and we have been eager to bring discriminatory practices into the light of day through factual accounts, such as Mary Ashworth's (1988) poignant portraits of immigrant children's plight in the British Columbia school system, Ken Adachi's book on the Japanese Canadian experience (1976), Robson's and Breems' (1985) study of racism toward Indo-Canadians in South Vancouver, entitled *Ethnic conflict in Vancouver*, to name only a few. Among the various fictional portraits that have arisen out of these *cultures at work*, there is SKY Lee's powerful novel about four generations of Chinese Canadian women, *Disappearing Moon Cafe* (1990), as well as many short stories, essays, and autobiographical pieces such as *Keep fighting* by Shyrose Jaffer in *Home and Homeland* (Fanning & Goh, 1993), and Anne Jew's *Everyone talked loudly in Chinatown* (1994). And we like to congratulate ourselves, in this age of political correctness, for having overcome these barriers of race through policies of multiculturalism and anti-racist action plans. Yet, when scrutinized carefully, many of these policies in fact reveal either a superficial treatment or a pervasive 'band aid' approach to solving the problems that occur in our schools in connection with racism (Fisher & Echols, 1989; Department of Social Planning, 1987). In addition, as revealed by the many powerful personal narratives of minority students, such as the elaborate published ones by George Littlechild (1993) or Joy Kogawa (1986), or the not-so polished yet equally honest and painful ones by students in everyday classrooms, racism is not a phenomenon of the past at all but rather a part of some of our students' and teachers' daily life experiences in this very city and province. A recent article by a student teacher, entitled

Racism, in spite of multiculturalism and published in the B.C. Teacher's Federation

Teacher magazine, includes the following comment:

> "Go back to Hong Kong where you came from!" This has been said to me several times in my 24 years of life. Ironically, I am not even Chinese -- I am Japanese. But this fact does not matter, because "all Orientals look alike anyway." I still feel the sting of these words just as much as if I were Chinese, because of the obvious hatred with which these words are spoken. Am I bitter? Yes and no. I hold no grudges toward these people; I feel sorry for them because I realize that their words are spoken out of ignorance of human equality. What I am bitter about is that I live in a country with an unprecedented multiculturalism policy, a country that is proud of its efforts to combat racism, yet a country where racism is rampant. (Yamashiro, 1994, p. 11)

In this city that claims the second largest Chinatown on the North American continent next to San Francisco and whose suburban areas, such as Richmond, Surrey, and Coquitlam, are experiencing an unprecedented influx of Asian immigrants, racism toward "Orientals" is indeed on the rise. The wealthy Hong Kong Chinese buyers, in particular, who are significant players on the real estate market are facing resentment from the general public through the popular press:

> In contrast to newcomers in previous decades, most of whom arrived with little money and a humble willingness to accept whatever work was offered, many of those who now come to the city, particularly the roughly one-fifth of them who arrive from Hong Kong, possess both wealth and high expectations. Both as investors and consumers, their presence has profoundly visible consequences. (Wood, 1994, p. 28)

Overseas money, for instance, is changing the looks of urban and suburban streets through the construction of new condominiums, "monster houses," Asian supermarkets and shopping malls.

> Vancouver's condominium boom not only buffered the city from recession, it may in time save farmland and mountains from being paved. That many of the units it has produced are owned by people overseas strikes many as worrisome. Then again, who else is willing to shell out the highest prices in the country to keep open the possibility of someday living on these blessed shores? Some Chinese are property-tax payers years before they ever arrive in Canada. (Rossiter, 1995, p. 70)

Educational institutions are also visibly changing with the increasing presence of Asian faces around the school yards, being dropped off in expensive Mercedes, BMWs and Volvos, especially in suburban areas such as Richmond but even in areas that were originally part of the urban immigrant "ghetto," such as Strathcona, or in previously solid working class neighbourhoods, such as Mount Pleasant and Vancouver Heights (Marlatt & Itter, 1979). The changes in each one of these neighbourhoods reflect the varying degrees of ethnic clustering that have always been a part of the consecutive waves of Vancouver's immigration history.

Into the neighbourhood: Changing Community

The twentieth century's technological miracles produced an incredibly shrinking world that has made us all one neighborhood, separated only by a phone call, a few hours' flight, or a tv screen. Even in the most far-flung areas of our neighborhood, people wear the same adver-t-shirts, the same running shoes, and hear the same stories told around the televised campfire. (Walker, 1990, p. vii)

Erin: This is Jeffrey's Green-Ranger toy. That he took out for reces!

Teacher: Yes, I saw Jeffrey's Green Ranger toy toy at recess! You drew it well! (Erin's Journal, 10/12/94).

Erin: For the next few days I'm going to draw Power Rangers!

Teacher: You're good at drawing Power Rangers! (01/13/95)

Erin: This is the white-Ranger. Gues how many you think are left!

Teacher: I'm going to guess: three? (10/16/95)

Erin: This is the Pink Ranger. how many are left?

Teacher: Well, how about two? (01/17/95)

Erin: This is the Blue Ranger. Guess how many are left?

Teacher: Two?

Erin: No!

Teacher: Do you watch Power Rangers very often? (01/18/95)

Erin: Today I am doing two Power Rangers.

Teacher: Your yellow Power Ranger is impressive! (01/19/95)

Erin: Guess how many are left?

Teacher: Is this the last Power Ranger for the last page of your journal?

Erin: Yes! (01/25/95)

During the past few years, an increasing number of authors, educators, politicians, sociologists, and of other creeds, have expressed their growing concerns with the rapid and unprecedented changes in social structures that keep accumulating on the world's shoulders -- and with it, the world's children's bodies and souls -- at the end of this century (Kolbenschlag, 1988). Along with a renewed interest in understanding what seems to be a fundamental need for forming and affirming community, we are witnessing a surge of writings about alternative ways of creating communities that reflect these different emerging sociocultural patterns and point toward possible new contexts and constructs of communities of the future (Laclau, 1991; Wiggington, 1989). Notions of communities as homogeneous entities, united by common backgrounds and characteristics of their group members, apply in few instances only to today's culturally and ethnically diverse societies (Hasebe-Ludt, Duff, & Leggo, 1995).

Just as in the larger societal context, local exemplars of communities are undergoing rapid changes, experiencing crises and, perhaps, attempting to redefine their constituting elements, their goals, and memberships. The community surrounding Franklin Community School is but one of these: It has changed demographically within the last few decades and is currently in the process of re-shaping with respect to the people and places that form its substance. In previous decades, from early in this century on, this east end neighbourhood, Vancouver Heights, named after its elevated hill-top location at the very north-eastern periphery of the city, close to the Second Narrows Bridge, overlooking the

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North Shore Mountains and the downtown harbourside, was predominantly a working class area with many immigrant families of European ethnic origin, such as Italian, Scandinavian, and British, together with a few Asian single men, especially Japanese and Chinese, working on the waterfront in the fishing industry, canneries and sawmills (The Working Lives Collective, 1985). Gradually, the area became more of an extension of the first truly multicultural neighbourhood around Strathcona, which developed into the centre of Chinese and Japanese community activity (Marlatt & Itter, 1979). As more Asian immigrants and second-generation Oriental families settled in the Vancouver Heights area and contributed to the multicultural character of the neighbourhood delineated by Cassiar Street and the Pacific National Enterprises (P.N.E.) grounds to the west, Boundary Road to the east, Adanac Street to the south, and the waterfront to the north, a shift to a more solid residential character occurred. In the following decades, a distinctly more multicultural character of East Vancouver, and of its far north-east corner respectively, developed, still with a European racial pattern, but with fewer Anglo-Saxon names on the school register. Instead, the communities and neighbourhoods became more ethnically diverse with more Italian, Finnish, Swedish, and Norwegian names in the city's directories and school records:

> Some of the earliest immigrant children were from European countries. I had students from Norway and Sweden. No one had heard of English as a second language programs. All I did was speak slowly and repeat and enunciate words. And I made sure the children didn't gang up on the new students.
> (Gosbee & Dyson, 1988, p. 97)

One of the present teachers at Franklin School who actually grew up in this neighbourhood and went to the school during the 60s, remembers the neighbourhood as predominantly occupied by people from a mixed European Caucasian heritage. A lot of Italian first generation immigrant families made up the core group of this working class residential area. Her family was one of them, with strong connections to the neighbouring families. She recollects that she can remember only one friend from a different, non-

Caucasian background, namely Japanese, and remembers being fascinated by the customs and objects in her friend's home when she was invited over. "I wanted my own mother to do things like that too" (Teacher Interview, Bella, 06/95). All her other friends were Italian like herself or at least from Caucasian homes.

Other interviews with community residents also revealed a strong sense of neighbourhood that seems to run like a continuous stream through generations. The school secretary grew up in this neighbourhood and raised her own children here. Some of the present Franklin parents also grew up in the neighbourhood or at least had grandparents whom they remember visiting.

At the same time, there was conflict between home and school culture. For Bella, the message that everybody in her peer group read very clearly was that her home culture was not valued at school. Often, the Italian immigrant children had to repeat a grade because they were not "catching up" fast enough with their English. The Anglo-Saxon English-speaking children and the curriculum that was catering to their background only was the standard everybody else had to aspire to. She remembers, when coming back to Franklin as a teacher, how the memory of her own schooling was a vivid picture in her mind:

> Looking at the school ... when I walked up those front steps, when I got this job here in 1989, I still remember the feeling of it being a big cold school. And when I walked into the principal's office, I remembered that you never went into the gym unless you were allowed to. When you were allowed to go in there, it was a big, big event, and they had a film, and the whole gym would be full of children, and it was foreboding. And I was on the top floor here, and I remember everything about it being big. This was when I was in grade one. (Teacher Interview, Bella, 06/95)

Bella also remembers this place, Vancouver Heights, as a safe place to grow up in, a neighbourhood where children would play freely in the street together for long hours, where there was a community of families who helped each other through the many hardships that immigration brought with it. Especially the women, who often had to work outside the home for a living, experienced the complex stresses of working and raising a

family in a foreign culture but also within the constraints of the traditional European patriarchal family structure. Bella remembers that her mother made a special effort to speak English rather than Italian to her children.

> My parents, just like a lot of other parents, worked; they worked very hard, because they all .... Now, you have both parents working; well, then, I think, in some ways it was harder, years ago, because the mother was working, but also they had the stress of all the factors that were prevalent at that time, you know, trying to find a job because you just immigrated, the language, for instance, trying to help your children because you don't have the knowledge that they need. So that's why everybody depended on children in the neighbourhood. And there was a lot more interaction in the family.
> (Teacher Interview, Bella, 06/95)

Despite the discontinuity between school and home, it seems that there was always the security of community in the neighbourhood, of parents helping each other out, children having a secure home and being welcomed in each others' homes, and the reassuring knowledge that within this ethnic community, you could always rely on others. In contrast, the picture at school was different, and there was no connection between those two worlds. Immigrant parents wanted their children to do well at all costs in the established school system but, as Bella remembers, there was no involvement by her or other parents in the school:

> My parents couldn't ... you know ... When it came to the teacher: "Is she doing well? If not, well, we'll make sure she does, make her study at home." That was the way it was, and the teacher, you listened, no matter what. There were no questions, nobody went in to question anything.
> (Teacher Interview, Bella, 06/95)

Similarly, one of the present Franklin parents, who is also of Italian background, remembers her experiences as an immigrant child and reflects on how these memories have shaped her own parenting:

> Immigrant children are different than kids that are raised here with an understanding of the system. Immigrant kids are the bridge for their parents. You may, as an immigrant child, have a lot of responsibility because your parents telling: "We have sacrificed to come over here so you have a better education," and I recall some of the times when I had to figure out things that

were way beyond my years, right, like "Find Jimmy Jones in the phone book." "Well, Dad, there's a million ..." "Well, what do I send you to school for?" A lot of immigrant kids, they're supported, but it's also, you get thrust into this responsibility a lot sooner because you are the bridge for them. It's not a very happy ... it's too sad.

I made a big mistake, and that was not to speak Italian at home, big mistake, my husband and I. And the reason I did that -- because I remember thinking: "I want her to excel in understanding the English words." That was a big mistake, and so I enhanced ... I mean I made ... she'd always ask for bigger words, right, because when I was a child, I walked around with a dictionary in grade five, I bought myself a Webster's dictionary, I still have it, this big thick thing, because my parents could never explain to me words that were ... words that for other people were common, everyday, but not for me, I didn't use them in my home, it was only at the school, so I didn't understand a lot of things, right, it wasn't explained to me. So I swore that ... the confusion inside of me, thinking my child would never have that problem, she would understand these words, perhaps even more words than she really should at her age. That was a mistake. If I could go back now, I would enhance, I would still, you know, keep up with the reading and teach her bigger words, but I would certainly have spoken to her in Italian. She understands all of Italian, however, because my mother speaks Italian, but she will not speak it: "I'm Canadian. Yes, I'm Italian, but I am Canadian first." I wanted her also to have that pride of being Canadian, that she's Canadian-born, but I made a big mistake. And now I do realize, no, I should have spoken in Italian at home with my husband. But because we all, when we grow older, try to patch up what happened to us as little children, right, we make a mistake, we always are healing that inner child that's always there. (Parent Interview, Elena, 04/95)

This story reminds us of the power of our past experiences, of how present realities and actions are informed and constructed by prior histories, both personal and sociocultural and sociopolitical. This place, Vancouver Heights, has been and still is a place of such histories and of contrasts, a place on the margin, as Shields (1991) would say, socio-geographically constructed, bordered by major thoroughfares and bodies of water. Yet it also is a place of openness to the next shore, with its closeness to the Trans-Canada Highway and a major bridge, connecting it to the rest of the country in all four directions:

> Drifting, he thought of driving through Vancouver's East End, all the way through to the Second Narrow's Bridge, which killed eighteen men in its making and throws itself so gracefully on to the further shore. Charlie thought of the northern abutment of the bridge, where roads incline east and west and north. Here the traveler could choose, could even choose to describe a loop and turn back again. (Flood, 1992, p. 104)

However, far from being able to turn back the time to a more cohesive type of neighbourhood, the marginality of and within the neighbourhood began to manifest itself in different ways. Starting from the 70s, when the transiency rate of the population seemed to climb as a general result of a new immigration wave, the Vancouver Heights area also experienced a higher rate of new immigrants and, with it, short-term occupants and transients. As documentation by Fillipoff (1978) shows, the many problems surfacing at that time in the Hastings-Sunrise school board administrative sector (together with Grandview-Woodlands part of the former so-called North East Sector), were mostly related to socioeconomic and sociocultural factors.

> The teachers from the North East section of Vancouver had identified a number of social, economic and political problems existing in the areas served by their schools. They linked these problems directly to the educational problems of the children in these schools. The paramount problem as they perceived it was that many of the children did not speak English. The problem was compounded by the fact that the children also came from a variety of cultural backgrounds characterized by values and mores not fully understood by the teachers. The teachers also felt that the children in the public schools of the North East Sector of Vancouver were not receiving equal educational opportunities despite the fact that there was the same pupil-teacher ratio for all students in Vancouver.
>   The problem was one of reducing or eliminating differences in schools in the Vancouver School District. The social concern with group inequalities arose from an interest in social justice and the need to make up for differences in environments (Fillipoff, 1978, pp. 1-2).

Franklin School, established in 1912, was an example of these east side schools that are described here.[16] Some of the problems that Fillipoff and others (Barman, Sutherland, & Wilson, 1995) list as typical facing education in the first half of this century in this area were poverty and, along with it, poor health and hygiene standards in the homes of those children attending schools. Often, economic necessity overruled school attendance, with the result that many children in this part of town had to work rather than get an education or at least have part-time jobs while still at primary school age. Even though this latter problem seems to exist to a much lesser degree, the other factors listed

are still as real today as they were half a century ago. In addition, a pattern of racism and overt discrimination that emerged in the early decades of immigration still haunts today's education system:

> For children of non-Anglo-Saxon background, school life could be particularly stressful. Not only did different groups not socialize outside of school, in some cases they were openly hostile in school. ... A Chinese Canadian pupil of the mid-twenties remembers always walking to school in a group of protection against white children. Moreover, many immigrant children were expected to go to school twice each day, the second time for two or three hours in the late afternoon or evening to study their native language and culture. Thus, not surprisingly, it was not until the late twenties that virtually all Vancouver children were completing a primary education. (Barman, 1985, p. 119)

Nowadays, the Vancouver Heights area is becoming less affordable for low income families; the steadily climbing real estate market is attracting a more affluent group of young families as first-time home buyers. Next to the existing subsidized cooperative housing development, referred to as "the co-op" by everybody, a more upscale condominium development with two- and three-bedroom units is just starting to be constructed and will impact on the school's future numbers. The area on the southern side of Hastings Street, as well as the few blocks immediately surrounding this major thoroughfare differ considerably from their northern counterpart in that they have a much more transient character, with more rental housing and basement suites, particularly catering to students from nearby Simon Fraser University for whom the nearby major bus loop provides convenient transportation access in all directions.

Along the northern expanse, between the school and the harbour front, stretch blocks of residences along streets with solidly British names such as Oxford, Cambridge, and Trinity. There, a mixture of charming old wooden frame houses exists rather comfortably along with a spattering of upscale, newly renovated or newly constructed residences built with large window and deck spaces to take advantage of the view of mountains and water that the Heights offers. More young families that can afford this investment are moving

into the neighbourhood and are planning to stay here to raise their children. Planned for the near future, with construction already started, is a new condominium project, next to the subsidized housing co-op, with three-bedroom complexes catering to a more upscale market of young families, professional couples or single residents. However, once again, as one of the parents notices, there is another change visible right next to this more affluent trend:

> But I noticed lately that the neighbourhood has got more transients, I see a lot of it, you know, I get around in the neighbourhood, and I notice a big difference. (Parent Interview, Dan, 05/95)

Another couple, parents and community residents, who grew up in the Prairies of Caucasian heritage, commented on the benefits for their children of living in a neighbourhood with a mixed socioeconomic and sociocultural grouping. They believe it gives them a much richer exposure to the reality of our multicultural society.

In the midst of these demographic changes, we find the school, perched on a slightly inclined slope just one block from the major traffic zones, yet somehow remote and serenely unaffected by its noise, with a breathtaking view from the western classroom windows to the ocean, the mountains, the downtown business core, and the vast green expanse of Stanley Park.

Into the School: Mixed Blessings of Diversity and Place

> It is a lazy Saturday morning and Charlotte Hasebe-Ludt, an engaging 8-year-old with an infectious, toothy grin, is playing hopscotch with a couple of friends. The girls are skipping about the grounds at Sir John Franklin community school, a typical 1929 brick structure in a quiet, working class corner of Vancouver. What do they think of Franklin? "It's a cool school," says one girl. "And they've got good teachers here" Charlotte adds. (Knickerbocker, 1989, p. 52e)

Before I became one of those teachers in this school, I experienced it from a parent's perspective. In an interview on parental choices of schooling for a local magazine, Nancy

Knickerbocker, the writer of the above excerpt, spent some time with my family and concluded that

> Erika and her husband Ken, a Japanese Canadian, reviewed their priorities: both felt strongly that Charlotte should attend a school with a broad racial and linguistic mix; philosophically, they were drawn to the Waldorf schools, which are based on the work of Rudolf Steiner. ... They both wanted a school fairly close to their home ("It's really important for children to have their friends close by," says Erika). The nearest Waldorf school was too far. So they settled on Franklin, which has a good variety of ethnic groups and is close to their home. "I don't expect it to be perfect, but I don't see a better alternative than the public schools at the moment." (Knickerbocker, 1989, p. 52e)

Only after re-reading the account of this interview from several years ago, I realized how important the schooling experience of my daughter was for my own choices in professional development. When my daughter was in grade one, I started thinking about switching from research in linguistics to teaching in the public school system with a focus on multicultural education. My experiences as a parent volunteer in my daughter's classroom gave me a first glimpse into the reality of multicultural education. I remember being fascinated by the multi-ethnic diversity in this little neighbourhood school, and I was impressed by the enthusiasm with which my daughter's grade two teacher promoted and put into action a curriculum that encouraged respect and cooperation of students from many different cultural backgrounds as well as learning about other cultures around the globe. When I started looking at the possibilities of working within a school system that promotes and practices multicultural and multilingual education, this very teacher, my conversations with her, in which she shared her knowledge and involvement with anti-racist curricular development, influenced my choice in my own future pedagogical development.

I was extremely excited when I discovered that the University of British Columbia offered an education degree with a specific focus on multicultural and minority education. I felt that my background in linguistics and my love of languages could benefit my future

teaching in such an environment. I had no idea then how much I had to learn, not only about educational practice, but also about the political dimensions of school systems and pedagogical power struggles. Years later, reading the following comment on the historical role of schools in Vancouver, I realized that not quite as much I had naively presumed has changed in the pedagogical landscape since the early days of this urban settlement, other than perhaps with regard to the Lord's Prayer -- and that only fairly recently (Norman, 1995).

> Schools were a focus of community life for many residents. Those built before World War I were usually impressive brick monuments to the formality and hierarchy of both education and society; the single-storey sprawling structures of a later period testified not only to concerns about fire hazards but to a more progressive and liberal spirit abroad among educators. Children in any case often found their curriculum foreign to their experience. The Lord's Prayer with which for so many years the day commenced could speak little, if at all, to many students. Elementary school texts, which ignored the contributions of Indians, the working class and women, likewise failed to help students understand their lives. Yet for some, education did open doors beyond the cramped world of the city, and considerable sacrifices were often made in return for that knowledge. (Strong-Boag, 1985, p. 95)

This latter statement was particularly and painfully true for the families of immigrant children who had come to this city with the hope for a better future, a better education for the next generation. Instead, as has been documented widely, overt racism and discrimination were a daily item on the menu of Vancouver public education (Ashworth, 1979; Gosbee & Dyson, 1988; Marlatt & Itter, 1979).

> Despite free public education, the experience of schooling has not been the same for all Vancouver children. Only at the very first school at Hastings Mill did all the young come together in a single classroom: Indian and Kanaka with white, the children of mill employees beside those of its manager. But with the arrival of the railroad, Vancouver became a city of neighbourhoods differentiated by socio-economic status. The children of working people congregated together in their own schools in the city's east side. (Barman, 1985, p. 119)

If you're not from B.C.
you don't know the schools,
you *can't* know the schools.

The schools are so big,
but I can't bring my pig.
They are full of great kids
who often flip their lids.

If you're not from B. C.
you don't know the schools.
(Carry, age 8, 05/94)

East Vancouver Schools, traditionally magnets for immigrant children of the lower socioeconomic groups, vary from so-called *inner city schools* that deal with poverty and children at risk in many other ways on a daily basis to schools almost solidly attended by students from one particular ethnic group, such as some schools in the south east sector with predominantly Indo-Canadian ethnic profiles.

The school I describe more closely in the following pages is only one of the approximately fifty schools on the city's east-side. It is, within the various perimeters outlined in the previous sections, situated within a socio-geographical context that means many things to many people from many cultures -- yet, it is at the same time unique in its own situatedness and place within the geo-cultural and socio-historical parameters that have shaped just *one* school (Centre for Educational Research and Innovation, 1989). Located in what has come to be, once again, one of the more stable residential pockets in the east side of this city, it has been influenced by local, national, and global developments of a demographic, economic, and sociopolitical nature that I have attempted to sketch above.

The approximately 280 students from Kindergarten to grade seven who call this school *their* school come from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds, making this learning environment an example of the ever-expanding multicultural nature of Canadian society, a demographic trend that is becoming more typical for countries all around the world (Moodley, 1992). Since its beginning, Franklin School's student population as well as the

neighbourhood it is nestled in have always been a true 'cultural mosaic,' representing a mix of Canada's many ethnic minorities as well as a good proportion of the English-speaking White Anglo-Saxon majority group. Within approximately the last decade, the general shift from European to Asian immigrant children as representatives of the minorities has been remarkably visible in the yearly school pictures proudly displayed in the school's entrance way.

What has changed hardly at all, however, in over fifty years, is the teaching staff in this multi-ethnic community school: The faces of the teachers and other staff steadily remain White Anglo-Saxon. This contrast, which can be witnessed over and over again in the majority of North American schools (Dean, 1989), bears powerful testimony to the racial dominance of the colonial education system derived from British Empire standards. In accordance with this norm, the five teachers who share the teaching responsibilities in this open area are of White European racial and ethnic origin. Three of them learned English as their first language, two have Italian ethnic backgrounds, the others are of English (Irish, British, and Scotch), and German origin. I am the only teacher in this school who came to this country as an adult immigrant and who is functionally bilingual. Furthermore, despite an officially sanctioned policy of multiculturalism on both federal and provincial levels, the resurgence of racist and back-to-basics attitudes is as pervasive in this particular school as in many others across Canada and North America (Aronowitz, 1993; Shannon, 1989a; Willinsky, 1991).

> I know it is early in the year, and I have to give the children time to form friendships that are not entirely gender- and culture-based by working together cooperatively. But on a day like today, I feel like stepping in, like breaking the patterns that seem to have established themselves after only a few weeks of being in this class together. Even though the Open Area facilitates grouping in many flexible ways, I am noticing that when given free choice, there is inevitably a group of grade three girls, with Karen, Fiona, Ellen (blond, blue-eyed) as their leaders who separate themselves from the Chinese boys, Sung, Daniel, Martin, Chung (black hair, brown-eyed). I am also noticing the friction between them, the resistance to work together in partner activities, the obvious resentment when the boys, engaged in a game of cards, speak Chinese among themselves. I know I have some work to do with these children when Fiona

writes in her journal: "I am so glad I am not Chinese." Shades of *A Class Divided*, thinking of Jane Elliott's lessons about discrimination way back in Iowa, with her brown-eyed and blue-eyed grade threes. Wondering what to do ... Who should be in charge, whose agenda should control the classroom? (Researcher Narrative, 10/05/94).

Franklin School traces its beginnings to approximately this time, the early decades of this century when, in 1912, "the population in the extreme east of Hastings Townsite having grown sufficiently to justify the erection of a school, the Vancouver School Board acquired Block 44 in 1912" (History of Sir John Franklin School, undated, unnumbered pages). In a history of the school that was written in 1952, by an anonymous committee, reference is made to the names of the principals (all male) and teachers (mostly female) of the school, all of British, Irish and Scottish origins, such as Finlayson, Riley, and Shine. The pupils of those early days, who bore names such as Grant, Ross, and Simon, names that resonated of more of the same Anglo-Saxon heritage, were proudly mentioned: "All turned out to be first-class citizens." The only exception was of somewhat lower rank, albeit of important duties: "The janitor was old Fritz Schneider, a German by birth, but a Canadian by thirty years residence here. ... One of the duties of the janitor was to arrive early on cold winter mornings, and thaw out all the plumbing with a blow torch before the arrival of the students." This particular part of Vancouver was still considered to be on the outskirts, very sparsely populated, and the total number of students attending what was initially called "Block 44" School, was 40 children from grades one to four. In 1913, the school was officially designated as "the Franklin School" and grew in numbers to 130 in 1914-1915.

> The pupils came from homes that were widely scattered. Most of the blocks around the school were only roughly cleared and one seldom saw more than two houses in a block. The section of land from McGill to the Inlet was still in virgin timer [sic]. It was cleared by the Government in 1913 and only four houses were built in the whole section during 1914-15. ... Hastings Street from Renfrew to Cassiar was well timbered on both sides. In 1913 the children reported seeing a bear and her two cubs near Rupert and Union, and the last cougar in this area was

shot on the land above the C.P.R. tracks a few blocks east of Boundary Road.
(History of Sir John Franklin School, undated, unnumbered pages)

Judging from the multicultural character of the east Vancouver of that time that was documented in most other historical sources, it seems unlikely that the demographic realities of the area were reflected in the early days of Franklin School, but rather that the privilege of schooling belonged only to a certain sector of the population. In the following decades, when the school grew to an average of between 300 and 400 students, the sparse documentation of the actual names of the students, and particularly those of the parents involved with the "Franklin Parent-Teacher Association" still resound of an overwhelming British heritage, except of the exception of Mrs. Sang, who was in charge of the Country Store at regular fundraising teas.

Only from approximately the middle of the century on, an ethnically more varied school population reflected the neighbourhood's growing multicultural demographic make-up. Earlier, we heard about the Italian and other Caucasian ethnic backgrounds that were prevalent in the 50s and 60s. In the 60s, this pattern continued, and the neighbourhood seemed to establish itself into a rather quiet residential working class area, with the children of the first generation immigrants first struggling to learn English, then most of them succeeding to acquire English as a second language and losing their first language at a rapid rate (Ashworth, 1979, 1988).

Starting in the 70s and even more drastically in the 80s, the school population began to reflect the overall new immigration trend in Canada. Whereas in 1966, for example, 87 percent of Canada's immigrants were of European descent, "only four years later, 50 percent came from new regions: The West Indies, Guyana, Haiti, Hong Kong, India, the Philippines, and Indochina" (Knowles, 1992, p. 161). This is substantiated for the Franklin neighbourhood by one of the teachers who has been teaching in the school since the late 70s and recollects:

When I first came here, there was a lot of English as a second language; that was 16 years ago. We had quite a few, and we also had an ESL resource person at that point. And then we had a lot of boat people, really recent immigrants; there was quite an influx at that point. So we had quite a few children, and we had quite a bit of support which was that the teacher would take small groups out, working on vocabulary development and things like that. And that kind of dissipated for a while, there wasn't as much movement in the community, it seemed, in between, maybe after about five years, and we didn't have a lot of children who didn't speak any English, hardly any compared to what we used to have, so we lost our ESL support.

And then in the last few years we seem to be getting more children that are from different countries. But as far as the population, I think, of children from another culture or whose parents were born in another country, I think that's remained pretty well stable. It's just that the proportion of children who don't speak English now is a bit higher than it was about five years ago or six years ago. So it seems to in waves like this, but as far as the general population of the school, I think it's remained of fairly mixed cultures and races.
(Teacher Interview, Angela, 5/95)

Today, the school's student population once more reflects the changing demographic profile of this Vancouver east side urban community, with a predominantly Asian first and second generation immigrant profile (Tse, Olgui, & Klassen, 1988). The community school coordinator who interacts with community residents and agencies on a daily basis, reflects on the changing background of Franklin's clientele:

Things have changed here over the past ten, fifteen years from the predominantly Italian background to becoming more and more Asian and more and more mixed, actually, with different kinds of cultures coming in, Venezuela and wherever, South America too. (Staff interview, Peter, 05/95)

Franklin, according to a survey conducted a few years ago (Franklin Survey Team, 1990) as well as the official School Profile document (Franklin Community School, 1994-95), has a multicultural student population, with mostly second generation English-as-a-second language families. The School Profile mentions English as the prevalent ethnic background, followed by Chinese, Japanese, Indo-Canadian, First Nations, and Fijian. The breakdown by linguistic background for the present school year at Franklin, according to the 1994 Vancouver School Board's Home Language Report by School,[17] is as follows:

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- English (61% or 165 students)
- Chinese (29% or 78 students; not specified whether Cantonese or Mandarin)
- Vietnamese (4% or 12 students)
- Spanish (3 % or 7 students).

Information from the school's own demographic screening profile also identifies Bulgarian (1), Italian (1), Serbo-Croatian (1), Tagalog (2), and Yugoslavian (1) as home languages present at Franklin, with one or two speakers for each of these languages. Of the 271 students at Franklin, 240 were born in Canada. Sixteen students participate in an Aboriginal Cultural Awareness Program and receive Aboriginal Support Services. Sixty-five students have been identified as requiring program modification for ESL (English as a second language). However, there is no ESL teaching position at the school since, compared with some other schools in the district, Franklin's ESL population is not high enough to warrant any officially designated ESL support according to the Vancouver School board quota system. As a designated Neighbourhood School, Franklin provides learning assistance support for 14 students with identified special needs through a team of Neighbourhood and Learning Resource Teachers and Special Education Assistants.

Another distinguishing feature of this small neighbourhood school is its status as a community school. As part of a larger network of community schools, the school staff has a commitment to building and maintaining close connections between the classroom curriculum and the texture of the surrounding neighbourhood (Association for Community Education in British Columbia, 1992; Vancouver School Board, undated-a). Since the early 70s, a smaller network of these schools exists in the Vancouver District, some jointly funded by education as well as recreation dollars, such as Champlain Heights and Britannia Schools, some solely supported by the local and provincial school boards and governments, as well as funding agencies (Vancouver School Board, undated-b). Across British Columbia, approximately 20 community schools exist under the umbrella organization of ACEbc (Association for Community Education in British Columbia) and,

on a national and international level, CACE, the Canadian Association for Community Education and the International Organization for Community Education, IOCE (Staples, 1992; Stevens & Grieve, 1986).

In a joint ethnographic study by the Vancouver School Board and the University of British Columbia Child Study Centre entitled *The whole world in our schools*, teachers from three Vancouver community schools, including Franklin, shared and demonstrated their interests and perceptions of multicultural education in their school and communities.

> Community schools are charged with the mandate for meeting the expressed needs of neighbourhood families they serve. They are sensitive too, and cognizant of both the delights and dilemmas of providing quality programs for a multicultural society.
> Community schools use their mandate to create opportunities for parents and children to learn together, both during and after school hours. (The Whole World in Our Schools [video recording], 1988)

Franklin became a community school in 1975 when the school staff, together with the parent and community association, applied to the Vancouver School Board to be recognized and funded in this special way. It seemed that, with an increasingly multicultural student and community population, it was felt that the school needed to expand its mandate in ways that were more inclusive and community-based.

> The 1970's [sic] saw a dramatic change in the life of Franklin. Because of the isolated nature of the school and the lack of park and recreation facilities, Franklin was designated by the Vancouver School Board as a Community School. The focus now for Franklin was broadened not only to serve elementary school age children, but also an attempt to provide services for all members of the community [sic]. (Franklin Community School, 1986, unnumbered pages)

Since that time, the community-based administration of the school has been an integral part of the school's overall philosophy and is reiterated in its Mission Statement on a yearly basis:

> We believe that education is a lifelong active process for all members of society. Our Community School interacts with the community to best meet the needs of its members through programs that address social, cultural, and recreational needs by

integrating community issues and resources into the curriculum. (Franklin Community School, 1994, unnumbered pages)

On a daily basis, the community school office connects with a large variety of individuals and groups, providing a place and programs for adults and parents with very young children in the morning, school-aged children in the afternoon, and youths as well as seniors in the evening.

One of the things that community schools do well is that children learn not just from their school, from what they're doing in the school but also from their environment because they're involved more in what's going on, in issues in the community. In the community school we have volunteers coming into the school, we have parents coming into the school, so the two of them coming together, they learn more from each other, whether it be culture, whether it be language -- we have a Cantonese course going on here every Thursday all year. We had other courses like Italian before, but of course now that's changed, it's more of an Asian community, we seem to have more of an Asian influence here from the kids at the school. I see it changing, becoming, you know, a greater population every year. What I'm also noticing is that we're getting more of a population from South America coming into the school.

When it comes to curriculum, we in a community school have an advantage because we're open beyond three o'clock. So it's not just in the classroom that things are going on. I noticed there are other initiatives going on now where they are trying to see what the demographics are in the community to see whether a certain language is going to be taught with that particular population, as opposed to French as a second language being taught. So districts have been looking at the population of their area to see what language might be taught. But the advantage that we have here is that after school hours we can have instructors come in to teach children how to speak the language as well, so that's a real advantage, being open until nine o'clock at night, we can also enhance the curriculum. Whether it's in the classroom or not, we can also do it in the evening as well.

I think it's really important that we all know where our heritage comes from. I know, myself, I got a Dutch and Swiss heritage, I know you have a German heritage, and because of this, it's nice to know where our roots are and to know those cultures as well. And not only that, it's good to have, to know other languages and that we recognize each others', especially this being a global market now, it helps so much more. I know English seems to be the predominant language around the world for people to have learned, but that was because it's been so strong here economically for so many years that business seemed to be English-based.. However now, with the common market in Europe and everything, things are changing drastically, and perhaps we need to know more than one language in this world. And I think it's important that we try to do that -- especially if a little boy comes here from China and he can't speak any English, it would be nice to have other kids speak that language, so why not go to a Cantonese class and have them learn that second language.

> We have a few children who are not Asian who are in the Cantonese class, they are trying to learn the language as well, which I think that's just super, it's really neat, so they can learn again from the other people and their culture because, well, we're all here together, this is a community -- what better way to learn, learning first hand from them. (Staff Interview, Peter, 05/95)

Many of the principles of community education, such as fostering the well-being of all citizens within a given community, strengthening an inclusive, culturally diverse curriculum, and increasing the involvement and leadership of local community members, make good sense within our overall educational framework. There are, however, some fairly recent trends in community and parental involvement that need to be taken into consideration and looked at seriously if one wants to escape the dangers of a superficial approach to these issues. One of the parents commented on what he sees as a counterproductive trend of people expecting to be provided with services as opposed to participating and actively engaging in the educational process:

> There's an expectation that the government has to solve this. We have become a nation of dependency, letting someone else take care of any of the problems that are out there. To me, that's the same fundamental basis, that you're expecting someone else to raise your kids, provide the discipline, and teach them reading and writing and arithmetic, and lick them if they're bad.
> (Parent Interview, Gregg, 05/95)

> I don't know all the answers, but I just know that there's a lot of really intelligent people who don't spend any time with their children, and the children suffer as a result of this, and they're not learning. And there's a lot of people who are really ignorant who spent a lot of time with their children, and the children seem to learn well, they're just there, you know, they go with the kids, they're gung-ho. And then there's a lot of people in between who just expect the teachers to do it. (Parent Interview, Michelle, 05/95)

Invariably, when talking about such issues of control and dependency, attitudes about cultural expectations and preferences come into the conversation. Fueled by the considerable attention multicultural and ethnicity get in the popular media, people seem to invariably be able to relate to some real-life incident that demonstrates the difficulties

arising when cultures come in contact. Michelle, a family doctor by profession, here

recounts her experience as a parent with another mother's culture shock:

> Well, I just remember in pre-school, there was a very nice woman ... from Vietnam ... I just really liked her, and she was always smiling at me. And I remember Miss N. and another teacher going out ..., they went out and they were going to get this kid .... He was all over the place, all over the place, completely disruptive, all over the place in the classroom. He was completely hyperactive, you would have called him attention deficit disordered 100 percent, and nobody could get him down, he was often in the corner, nobody could do anything with him. And they were trying to work with the situation, so they went and did a home assessment, and they had very little furniture, and he was corralled off in a section of the living room by a made fence, in front of the television. And this is all he had, and all his behaviours mimicked Power Rangers, no, not Power Rangers, Ninja Turtles, it was Ninja Turtles at that time ... it was just phenomenal. They went to her home, very sparse, very nice lady, but obviously needed, definitely needed to go to school with her child. And she was a very nice lady, and very smart, and she would have learned by being corralled in there with the kids, you know what I mean. She needed to be, and she wanted to be ... she wanted to keep her culture, she was a positive woman; she didn't know what to do with this child, so she stuck him in front of the tv, there were no toys, only a tv. I mean, you'd call it social deprivation, the social workers would go into that situation, but I would look at that woman, no, no, she's not a bad person, it's just culture shock, it's coming to this country and not having your community. Nowadays, women are isolated, very much so, mothers are isolated, the mothers who stay at home, they don't go for coffee break with everybody else and learn what everybody else is doing. ... So they're at home, and they're extremely isolated in our culture, because what did they use to do? They used to make pickles, and they used to make jam, and they used to make quilts, and they used to get together, and they had a community to relate to, and they talked it out. There was a lot of emotional support there. (Parent Interview, Michelle, 05/95)

In addition, recent research in local educational settings points to some of those

difficulties surfacing within a culturally inclusive or holistic curriculum that states:

> ... educational programs that promote multiculturalism and anti-racism through a variety of means, are essential at Franklin School.
>
> Our programs support cultural diversity. We support the concept that cultural diversity reinforces heritage thus providing cultural ties. Multicultural programs seek to provide a knowledge base and promote cultural understanding between cultures. Empathy and tolerance are increased which lend to a broader global view. This broader cultural base provides the benefit of many cultures and the possibility of many choices, i.e., medicine, celebration, religion, education,

language, philosophy. Multiculturalism helps us define our Canadian character. (Franklin Community School, 1994, unnumbered pages)

Gunderson (in press-a) found that parents from different cultural backgrounds do not necessarily subscribe to the all-inclusiveness of this kind of curriculum. He points out that

> Those of us who encourage students to be curious, interested, critical, communicative, to hold a plurality of points of view, and a desire to question and make sense of it all, need to be acutely aware that we are teaching a value system. Moreover, it is a value system potentially in opposition to that held by the families of many of our students. (p. 11)

Gunderson illustrates some of these difficulties with case studies from three different schools and classrooms where differing cultural values and belief systems have caused discomfort, miscommunication, and eventual cultural conflict and a widening of the gap between the home and school within, ironically, curricular models that attempt to bridge exactly that gap.

Into the Classroom: *It's Rude to Interrupt*

> In the culturally inclusive classroom community, multicultural students are given continuous opportunities to apply their cultural knowledge and their previous language and literacy experiences to their learning of new concepts and language and literacy skills. When you integrate students' home lives and languages and previous experiences into the curriculum at this deep level, you are taking the first step towards realigning your students' school context with their home contexts and towards creating a new compact between the school and the home. (Enright, 1989, pp. 183-184)

The concentrated influx of non-English speaking students into the Lower Mainland school districts has both resulted in some innovative policy initiatives as well as some disturbing trends in educational decision-making, affecting classroom teaching directly through allocation of funding for services such as ESL and material resources for curricular innovations, such as literature-based reading approaches.

Starting in the 60s and more so in the 70s, the Vancouver School Board, for example, like many other neighbouring districts, faced this reality by implementing multicultural and

English-as-a-Second-Language programs for both elementary and secondary classrooms. By the 80s, there existed an explicit race relations policy and the position of a race relations officer had been created (Fisher & Echols, 1989). This policy has made parents of non-ESL students speak out against funding for ESL students that, in their opinion, takes away the moneys that should be spent rightfully on "regular," English-speaking children (Phillips, 1994).

Franklin School experiences the same kind of tensions as other schools in the same and neighbouring school districts. In conversations with some of the parents and teachers, statements about the unfair spending of tax dollars on ESL students by the school board were reiterated, expressing the frustration of parents who think their own children are being disadvantaged and kept from reaching their true learning potential.

Against this background of pedagogical, sociocultural, and sociopolitical power structures at work, we must ask how community building is carried out in the realities of both the 'curriculum-as-planned' and the 'curriculum-as-lived' in the classrooms of this multicultural community school (Aoki, 1993c). What kind of bridges are students and teachers constructing and walking across to connect the culture of the school and the different cultures that dwell in the surrounding community? In *Other solitudes*, an anthology of voices speaking to "the *lived* experience and the *literary* expression of multiculturalism in Canada," Linda Hutcheon (1990) reflects on a peculiar Canadian phenomenon:

> ... the historical settlement patterns -- island by island, across the country -- created socially and culturally disparate groupings that were internally linked by networks of local and kinship traditions. Our country, in other words, was set up -- historically and demographically -- in such a way that the eventual formulation of something like multiculturalism might seem to have been inevitable. (p. 10)

In the following section, I revisit the questions surrounding community building and language learning by describing more closely the actual classroom environment in which this diverse community of students dwells. As children and learners, they are actively

engaged in the process of becoming actors in the multiple plays of language for the purpose of both local and global communications. As future adults they are, together with their teachers, negotiating their roles in this linguistic staging of making sense of and thinking about the world they live in. As teachers and researchers, we must ask what particular kind of languaging comes into play in this process and how are realities negotiated and understood in the context of socioculturally constructed literacy practices.

The setting of this *dramatic* play, in Barthes' sense of a reflexive negotiation of knowledge through language (Sontag, 1982), is an 'open area' of three multi-age, multi-ethnic classrooms in this small elementary school in the Vancouver Heights neighbourhood. The 65 students in the Primary Open Area who take the centre stage in this descriptive production represent the truly mixed sociocultual spectrum that was described previously: Apart from English, Chinese, both Cantonese and Mandarin, Tagalog, Spanish, Norwegian, German, Punjabi, Japanese, feature in the linguistic backgrounds of the students; First Nations cultures of the Pacific North West as well as Australian and Arabic ethnic heritages are represented in addition to Italian, Dutch, and other European origins. Most of the children with the latter backgrounds represent the second generation of immigration, whereas most of the Asian and other racial groups except the First Nations children belong to the first generation of immigrants.

> We have been mapping our heritage. Outside the Primary Open Area, on the big bulletin board, Bethany has helped me start the 'P.O.A. Connections' map. She is quite excited about being the first one to put her picture on a spot around the periphery of the world map that forms the centre of the display, connecting it with a colourful string to Norway and proudly attaching underneath her picture: "Bethany's grandfather came from Holland. Her step-grandpa came from Norway." "What do you think I could write for underneath *my* picture, Bethany?" "How about: Ms. Hasebe-Ludt grew up in Germany and she went to school there?"
>   We both stand back and contemplate the look of the unfinished work: It looks bare, still, but I think we both are feeling the anticipation of constructing this map piece by piece, picture by picture, string by string. This afternoon, during our student-led conferences, the parents, grandparents, or other family members will get a chance to add to the display together with the children. All the materials are carefully arranged beside the bulletin board, a chart stand

explaining our project and inviting the families to participate, together with instructions, are ready. Bethany thinks it's set to go. She can't wait to show her dad and step-mom. The pictures we took of the students engaged in one or the other classroom activities are adorable. I can't wait for our visitors to see and, together with their children, compose a sentence or two about their family's geographical origin. (Researcher Narrative, 11/28/94)

The teaching situation in the Primary Open Area is characterized by a team of five teachers who share three classes of primary children aged six to nine (grades one to three) in a spacious area that allows the sixty children to move among the three 'home areas' and accommodates easy interaction between teachers and students through physical and organizational arrangements. There is a meeting space where the whole P.O.A. group meets three times during the week on a regular basis, for sharing, story time, or other whole group projects and events, such as when special guests are invited.[18] In addition, the physical set-up includes numerous centres, usually about ten to twelve, where the students are involved in learning activities related to the curricular areas, such as math with manipulatives, water and sand tables, a book nook and listening centre, or art and craft areas. Students from mixed age and classroom groupings gather at the centres and cooperatively play and work, doing, for example, bubble experiments at the science table or feeding and taking care of the P.O.A. guinea pig, Kiwi. The children are devoted to their pet, and on a rotating basis the "Kiwi Keepers" are responsible for his well-being. They care about him through their actions and their thoughts, and the spontaneous writings they post on the wall around his cage show how much he is one beloved pet.[19]

What if there was a fire at the school and everyone was out except Kiwi. I still love him. I like Kiwi because he is so cute. (Martha, age 7).

What would you do if ther was a fire or an earthquake and Kiwi was still in the cage. I would take Kiwi and somone will take the cage. Then Kiwi will be happy and so will I. (Tara, age 7).

I wish Kiwi had a play mate. They would play. they would eat and drink. I like Kiwi. I like Kiwi Kiwi. I like Kiwi. Kiwi is nice. (Naomi)

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I wish I could have an animal like Kiwi. I like Kiwi and Kiwi likes me. (Jan, age 8).

Last year my teacher took home our guinea pig. This year she brought him back to The Open Area. He likes to hide under his little house. Kiwi is so so so so so cccute. I like Kiwi. Kiwi is so furry. I love Kiwi. (Bethany).

Kiwi eat carrots and I wish Kiwi would win the Kiwi race and I wish I could get Kiwi home. (Hugh, age 8)

I wish Kiwi won first Place in the Kiwi race. Kiwi eats Howard's carrots, and Eric's. I am going to Take Kiwi home. Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha. (Erin)

Throughout the day, the children work with other students as partners, either in groups of two, in small cooperative groups, or as a whole group. They also work with all the teachers in the P.O.A., in addition to their home room teacher. They know, for example, which teacher to turn to when needing help at the games centre or who is responsible for the current painting or craft project if advice is needed. The common P.O.A. day plan consists of a steady routine that is flexible enough to accommodate special events, individual projects by the home area groups, or whole school assemblies. Generally, scheduling of regular and special events are planned cooperatively by the team of teachers in weekly meetings. Toward the second half of the school year, with the students being very comfortable and familiar with the routines and cooperative interactions, the children have quite a bit of input into the planning through brainstorming ideas for celebrations, themes, and activities. At the beginning of the observations and journalized reflections, for example, the children were getting ready to decide on a new topic of study within the broad area of the environment; according to the graph generated from their votes, the interests ranged from pets and wild animals to the human body and space. When I was winding up the collection of data in the Open area, the students and teachers were moving from a theme of Communication into that of Space, voted most popular among the themes.

In order to capture these lived experiences, I felt that it was most suitable to continue working within a qualitative methodological framework, focusing on ethnographic, interpretive inquiry within a hermeneutic framework (Caputo, 1987, 1993; Chambers, Oberg, Dodd, & Moore, 1993). I thus began to sketch a research plan for collecting data over a three- to four-month period, from December/January to March/April 1994. Only then, close to half-way through the school year, had the school's organizational roller coaster ride slowed down enough to allow for a chance to get to the field work without too many distractions for the students and staff.

Full of enthusiasm, I had naively thought that it would not be very hard to set aside three to four periods per week in which I would collect data in the following ways: observation and anecdotal note taking together with reflections on the former, video and audio recording of classroom activities, as well as interviews.[20] I very soon realized that my expectations were unrealistic. It wasn't as easy as I had imagined to set aside time for the planned periods. Admittedly, I was by now quite familiar with all the usual last-minute changes in schedules (of teachers, including myself, and students), whole-school and staff activities one needs to be involved in (frustrations about endless committee meetings seem to figure prominently in my journal entries), and the generally busy, bubbly daily routine of an open area classroom. There never seems to be enough time for planning, for teachers getting together to assess the success or failure of a strategy or session, and for catering to individual children's needs. Thus, it was extremely hard to deal with the difficulty inherent in "getting down to business" and of "just" sitting down to observe or operate the video camera, or worse, finding the time to reflect on the observations sometime between teaching, graduate work, and family.

I did manage, nevertheless, after my initial frustration, to collect a sufficient amount of data during that time period for this preliminary look into classroom life. The focus of the observations was four children who were randomly selected by computer out of the sixty to seventy P.O.A. students.[21] They turned out to be all grade three students, two

males and two females, three from Chinese-speaking families (two boys, one girl) and one girl from an English-speaking Caucasian background. In addition to the classroom observations -- roughly equivalent to two thirty-minute periods per week over eight weeks -- I collected data from Informal Reading Inventories that were conducted to assess the students' reading levels, reading response logs, writing portfolios, and reading conferences. These methods of data collection were initially chosen since they seemed to be the most common ones among those used within qualitative research frameworks and particularly in action research. In particular, the step-by-step articulating and focusing of individual and specific questions in connection with procedures in our action research group meetings was invaluable in becoming familiar with the options and methods for data collection with the help of field-based research guides (Hubbard & Power, 1993; Jeroski, 1992).

I began the initial data collection by documenting various activities the students were involved in with respect to reading and writing materials through this rather broad spectrum of methods (see Table 1). Apart from the pre-planned video and audio recording involving the four randomly selected students, I also found that I kept observing and reflecting on literacy events by other students, choosing interactions that struck me as significant in terms of the ways the students interacted with literature and text. It seemed natural to observe in this more holistic way, and I finally realized that the random selection procedure was actually distracting and therefore not that useful in the first place.

> It seems that, just like teaching, qualitative research requires flexibility and
> readiness for those special moments when literacy practices are acted out -- in
> the same way as the 'teachable moment,' they cannot just be arbitrarily planned
> or projected onto specific actors: 'curriculum-as-lived' as opposed to 'curriculum-
> as-planned,' literacy as socially constructed by the participants themselves
> rather than teacher-driven. (Researcher Narrative, 04/04/94)

After having learned those lessons from the pilot investigation, my methodological concerns became less preoccupied with rigid scheduling. Instead I started to place greater

emphasis on selecting from the vast amount of data I had at my disposal in a way that made sense to myself, the other participants in my study, and my varied audience. I needed to and wanted to be selective, sensing that it was ultimately a much more challenging task than including all that could possibly fit into the pages of this dissertation. The criteria for selection ultimately were created by my own writing evolving from action research, by this particular kind of *action writing* which involves a creative act: "What I do within myself is philosophize, reflect on my experience" (Barthes, 1985, p. 307). At the same time, the layers of text I working with, my own, the children's, and others', created an interwoven picture of writing and reading in which a personal, an emotional involvement and engagement emerged and became part of the criteria for the selection of different texts:

> Text of pleasure: the text that contents, fills, grants euphoria; the text that comes from culture and does not break with it, is linked to a *comfortable* practice of reading. Text of bliss [*jouissance*]: the text that imposes a state of loss, the text that discomforts (perhaps to the point of a certain boredom), unsettles the reader's historical, cultural, psychological assumptions, the consistency of his tastes, values, memories, brings to a crisis his relation with language. (Barthes, 1975, p. 14)

In the process of this *method in process*, I discovered that, indeed, research *from the margins* (Kirby & McKenna, 1989) meant that it was continually unfolding, always in process, changing as I was changing in the way I read and wrote research.

Doing research on the margins in this city on the margin, on the edge ...

> Thinking back to when we started to plan teaching cooperatively in this open area, I remember the almost endless discussing and sorting out of each others' ideas about teaching and learning. Into the second year of working together, it still is a constant process of balancing individual needs and common goals for both teachers and students. It is both exhilarating and frustrating -- as well as extremely time-consuming. In the same way, in my particular home area of twenty-two grade threes, the degree of acceptance of others, the willingness to work with others regardless of personal preference, and the need to be recognized individually is constantly negotiated, evaluated, and celebrated in different ways. This process is certainly not easy for many children: Learning to get along with others, regardless of age, gender, and race is often difficult and

challenging, but it is always a learning experience that requires growth towards acceptance of others from students and teachers alike.

Perhaps, this living and learning through difficulty needs to be recognized as an integral, necessary part of the sociocultural construction of literacy. The unfolding of this literacy as a social and cultural process through which students negotiate learning through multiple layers of texts needs to be further documented. With my own research I hope to contribute to filling this gap. (Researcher Narrative, 06/06/94)

TABLE 1

Methods of Data Collection		
Description	**Example**	**Method**
Informal Reading Inventory (Johns, 1978)	**Teacher assesses reading level of student through miscue analysis**	**Student orally reads teacher-selected passage (e.g. *The world of plants*) and orally answers questions on content**
Recording of students' reading/writing conferences	**Regular individual student-teacher meetings about student's reading/writing in progress in student's log**	**A student reads a selection from a story she wrote and discusses it in a dialogue with the teacher.**
Collection of students' work samples	**Reading logs** **Writing portfolios** **Special integrated theme projects (art, science, social studies)**	**A student responds to a story with multicultural content, such as *Tree of Cranes* (Say, 1994) as part of a theme on Peace.**
Classroom observations **field notes** **video and audio taping**	**Anecdotal descriptions of reading and writing activities through teacher's notes, video camera and tape recorder**	**A student orally reads with a partner during *buddy reading* time and discusses the book; the teacher observes and makes notes during the interaction.**
Reflective journal notes	**Teacher researcher's log reflections in narrative form on impressions from observations**	**After video taping of group story time, the teacher writes reflective notes about the material selection.**
Teacher, staff and parent interviews	**Open-ended ethnographic interviews of volunteer participants (See Appendix 1)**	**"Tell me about your/your child's/your student's experience with the home reading program."**

In the three classrooms that comprise this Open Area, there has been and still persists difficulty in dealing with perceived notions of classroom organization and control. Into the third year of co-planning and collaborative teaching, it has almost become a ritual to go through explaining to parents the benefits of this teaching approach and emphasizing that a cooperative learning experience for the students does *not* mean lack of organization or control; instead it involves active, healthy (sometimes noisy) interaction that is not synonymous with chaos -- the latter a notion that, alas, many parents and educators instantly call up in their minds when "open areas" are mentioned. Many times, especially at the beginning of the year, the team explains the above, in letters home to the parents, at the school's Open House, through presentations at the Community Council meetings. Still, there is resistance to this approach of child-centred, collaborative teaching and cooperative teaching and learning, more than the teachers at times feel they can handle along all the other pressures of daily classroom life.

> The paradoxes of post-modernism become real, ironically, when, in the Open House at the beginning of the year, the Open Area is once again considered "a deep dark mystery," in the words of the chairperson of the community association -- and in the opinion of some very vocal parents (and maybe some other teachers), despite year-long efforts by the teachers to have parents come in and observe, spend time with the children and teachers can it be that they really haven't noticed that the doors are always wide open, indeed?
>
> So what else to do but preserve our sense of humour and present a tongue-in-cheek slide show, an invitation to a *Magical Mystery Tour* at another assembly? It is just a glimpse of the varied activities in our classrooms, featuring the children and the few parents who do volunteer -- to the lively tune and verses of the Beatles song:
>
> *The magical mystery tour is hoping to take you away, coming to take you away, dying to take you away* ... It was a great success; endearing, inspiring images of children engaged in sharing books, smiling, grinning, absorbed faces, negotiating their work with one another and explaining to their parents and other family members at the student-led conferences. Colourful art, inspired by our literary train journey across Canada, print-rich environments, *littered with literacy*, in David Jardine's words. The children want to see and hear it all over again, watch themselves and their friends, their work imprinted on the celluloid, hearing the tunes:
>
> *Lend me your ears and I'll sing you a song, and I'll try not to sing out of key, I get by with a little help from my friends ...*

> I am convinced that they are the best advocates of this Open Area, holding
> the key to convincing those who are reluctant readers of successful learning
> and teaching *in a new key.*
> (Researcher Narrative, 10/31/94)

There are, however, parents who do support the approach we have taken. One of the mothers whose daughter had been in the Open Area for a couple of years and then moved on to the intermediate program, felt this strongly about it: "It's sad how our schools are still structured. I'm sad that the Primary Open Area hasn't continued. I'm sad that there's closed classrooms, I am." (Parent Interview, Elena, 04/95)

These examples show that communication and interaction with parents is an important factor in any teacher's successful teaching; however, it becomes especially crucial when the cultural background of parents influences either their educational values or their ability to communicate with the educational institution their child is attending. As mentioned earlier, in a community school the teachers have a distinctly expressed mandate "to be familiar with not only the children's home background but also the composition and customs of the community which affect their daily lives" (The Whole World in Our Hands [video recording], 1988). However, when the values, customs, and beliefs of parts of this community are distinctly different from the those promoted in the classroom, conflict is not easily avoided. How and what is being taught becomes a controversial issue and, depending on various power structures, can result in situations like those Gunderson (in press-a) describes in local classrooms where interaction patterns ranged from confrontation to avoidance and, at best, uncomfortable co-existence. One of the Franklin parents, having witnessed some of these signs of conflict in her own practice as a family doctor and as a parent, when dealing with a neighbouring family's differing cultural views of what constitutes significant classroom content, reflects:

> This is something that we as a family and parents in the community are not
> going to change overnight. We're going to change it by examples, we're going
> to change it gradually by example. I mean, I work in a field where I see, like
> teachers, probably even more so, I see the very very insides of peoples' lives. I
> think *you* see the very insides of peoples' lives, but not as I see ... I know, I look

at somebody, and I've been in practice long enough that I look at somebody and I see patterns, and the cultural patterns are phenomenal. And in the world it's going to take probably two or three more generations, or maybe more, to actually ... because the male-female problem is huge, I mean, in Africa it is so bad, Africa, India, and China I do not see as critical as Africa and India, just the actual male domination of women, the extreme male domination of women ...

You know that Jasmine, you know that there are some Chinese people she is close too who ... their parents ... she brings home their work, their art work, a lot of their art, their journals, any of their stories, particularly their art work, because they throw it in the garbage. Their parents are not interested in that, only in math. But Jasmine thinks pictures are alive, so she can't throw it out, she's so sensitive, so we have them all down in our basement, all their art work ... because the parents are only interested in math, their parents only want to see their math.
(Parent Interview, Michelle, 05/95)

As a teacher, as a parent, as a woman, as a mother, I am deeply disturbed by the conversation with Gregg and Michelle. This interview had happened around the same time that I was reading about Lee Gunderson's observations of cultural views on whole language. I feel "furious," in Erin Mouré's words, about the way we use language, about the power of discriminatory practices with/in language, more doubtful about my ability to effect change, less sure about my right to impose my value system onto the children in my classroom, yet, paradoxically, more than ever aware of the difficulty of interpreting what is right and wrong with respect to cultural beliefs. All my good intentions of *thoughtfully negotiating change* are flying in my face, mocking me through the voices heard on the tapes and the words written on the pages. *Nothing's gonna change my world ...* (Researcher Narrative, 05/15/95)

Sylvia Ashton-Warner, in her pioneering work with the language experience approach, teaching children from a Maori background in New Zealand (Ashton-Warner, 1963) told us that *it's rude to interrupt*, that we must respect where our students are coming from and *not* impose our own value systems onto their cultural traditions and heritage but rather affirm their self-expression in a natural, stimulating environment. Still, how *is* it possible to build communities where both literacy and harmony flourish in the context of diversity that creates exclusion instead of inclusion on so many levels, on the level of the cultural and curricular canon as well as the beliefs of some cultural minority groups? When and where is it indeed *rude to interrupt*? In her reflections on her own teaching practice, local teacher Corey Denos comments on the tensionality between the teacher's and the children's control of the curriculum,

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When I was very young, being a teacher meant being perfect and perfectly in control of a perfect world. Later on, being a teacher meant saving the world or at least some of its children by giving them knowledge, by giving them what I had and they lacked. Because of these views of my world, I used to spend hours and hours of planning, I planned all of the time. The resulting plans conceived and defined, away from them, were then imposed on them. Within the classroom, there was a constant sense of tension as I tried to make my plans work, to get the children to want to do what I had so carefully planned for them. My view is so different now. Now I feel much less distinction between myself and the children. It's not that I'm not always an adult with a special responsibility, but I have a sense of being part of a community in which I am working in harmony with the other parts. (Denos & Rotheisler [video recording], 1993)

Anne Haas Dyson (1986) at one time referred to this changed attitude as *staying free to dance with the children,* bringing to my mind once again scenes from Sylvia Ashton-Warner's classroom where she indeed danced with the Maori children (Ashton-Warner, 1958; 1963).

It just happened one bright spring morning when I was playing some Schubert to please no one but myself that a child stood up from his work and began composing a dance, then another, then another, and there it all was. And here it all still is.

Although most of the interpretations come from them, I indulge myself by providing them with a further selection of movements to use as they choose, to supplement their own movements. But I haven't noticed much of it being used voluntarily in their interpretation of new music. The old story of imposition again. (Ashton-Warner, 1963, pp. 91-92)

How *do* you dance with children and with parents whose culture and upbringing do not allow the playful steps of musical exchange to enter into classrooms meant for different skills, for computing rather than composing, for decoding rather than dancing? In this time of sociocultural complexity, there is no longer a simple sequence of steps for the partners -- children, parents, teachers -- to learn. The moves become difficult rather than dynamic; mastering the mechanics of the skill overrides the harmonious moving together. The results echo the jarring notes of dis-comfort, dis-harmony, dis-ease.

When *is* it rude to interrupt? The uncomfortable coexistence of cultures is nothing new in our classrooms and schools, in our neighbourhoods and in our city, and the

language we learn from cultures in contact is often laden with stereotypes and racism. The language of children on the playground of our schools, in particular, as we have heard at the beginning of this chapter, and as Gunderson (1983) and Hasebe-Ludt (1992a, 1992b) affirm from observations several decades later, is often rude and decidedly different from the academic discourse of the classroom, whether the geo-cultural landscapes are named San Francisco, California or Vancouver, British Columbia. They seem linguistic worlds apart, separating the curriculum-as-planned and the curriculum-as lived. We must ask ourselves *where* in this chiasmatic languaging we can find a new key, a *turn* in how we come to speak and dance with the children.

Chapter 4

Intercultural Connections of Literacy in Action: *Entgrenzungen*

Literature, I argue, creates a cultural space whose primary function consists in a continual shaping and reshaping of the boundaries of language and subjectivity on both an individual and a collective level.

Gabrielle Schwab, *Subjects without selves*

The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture.

Roland Barthes, *Image, music, text*

I do not mean to suggest that simply overhearing a foreign tongue adds to one's understanding of that language. I do know, however, that being exposed to the existence of other languages increases the perception that the world is populated by people who not only speak differently from oneself but whose cultures and philosophies are other than one's own.

Maya Angelou, *Wouldn't take nothing for my journey now*

In an article entitled "Cultural literacy, national curriculum: What (and *how*) does every Canadian student really need to know?" Patrick Dias (1993) responds to E. D. Hirsch's (1987) canon of cultural literacy on "What every American needs to know" and a dictionary of cultural literacy that complemented it (Hirsch, Kett, & Trefil, 1988). Dias, in contrast, questions the validity and legitimacy of establishing such a list from a revisionist Eurocentric perspective and research agenda.

> Cultural literacy, like language, must live and develop in use. ... For one, we do not trivialize the use of language and literature in schools by reducing using language and reading books in school to mere means and mere preparation for using language and literature elsewhere, like real people. We need to put away those taxonomies, those hierarchical scaffolds which mean to promote autonomy but more often than not cultivate dependency, by saying generally one cannot move to D unless one has gone through A, B, and C. (p. 18)

We live in a world where the cultural boundaries of language, literacy, and literature are rapidly expanding through global connections made possible by the technological advances of the information age (Dollahite, 1993; Jones & Maloy, 1993). In addition, in this "*fin de siècle* questioning of the foundations of theory building" (Carson, 1992, p. v), on the threshold of the 21st century, the issues surrounding culture, cultural literacy, and literary theory are becoming increasingly complex, controversial, and seminal (Langer, 1992; De Castell, Luke, & Egan, 1986). These include "the issue of current curricular theories and their definitions of text and reader and writer, and the issue of what literature and literature study is" (Purves, Rogers, & Soter, 1990, p. 35). Together with this questioning and redefining, one can also perceive a paradigm shift in the definition of genre and an ensuing debate on the meaning and significance of literature and narratives in particular within a post-structuralist framework (Bernstein, 1991, Carter, 1993).

More specifically, in the heated discussions about what constitute "real" literacy practices in the "real world," the *reading* debate has recently achieved considerable attention among reading researchers. Taylor, for instance, in her 1994 commentary on

West's, Stanovich's, and Mitchell's (1993) article *Reading in the real world and its correlates* calls for the need to establish different critical sites for inquiry and literacy research "that could provide us with new understandings and significant insights into the ways in which personal understandings of literacy are socially, culturally, economically, and politically constructed, and also individually situated in the practical accomplishments of people's everyday lives" (p. 279). Gregory (1994), in her work with children of Bangladeshi origin in a community school in East London, England, found that a different view of reading exists in the homes, warning us that "if the teacher rejects this interpretation as inappropriate, then the child may well experience school reading difficulty" (p. 120). In a recent edition of *The Reading Teacher* with a focus on family literacy, several authors explored different sites and situations of literacy in school and home contexts in the United States (Unwin, 1995; Shanahan, Mulhern, & Rodriguez-Brown). Hudson-Ross and Dong (1990) compare language learning in the People's Republic of China with that in elementary schools in the United States. Within the Canadian context, Anderson (1994), Anderson & Matthews (1995), Early and Gunderson (1994), and Gunderson (in press-b), provide us with insights about diverse literacy practices and processes within our local multicultural communities and classrooms.

Against this background, the following chapter sets out to explore the connections between such practices, innovative models of literacy instruction, and current trends in societal attitudes toward *back to the basics*, such as the question on the cover page of a popular magazine: "Are we cheating our kids?" (Dwyer, Ming, & DeMont, 1994) Within the context of the Canadian education system, and, when applicable, from a wider perspective of North American schooling or global educational trends, I examine the rationale for these models in light of recent research and practices in reading and writing across the curriculum and against the background of recent understandings about the sociocultural dimensions of language and literacy. By describing features of a literature program in this multicultural classroom setting within the Canadian public school system, I

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point to the benefits as well as the difficulties of such an approach in light of current societal and cultural attitudes and beliefs.

The ABCs of Intertextual Discourses: Interpreting cultural literacy

Lob des Lernens	**In Praise of Learning**
Lerne das Einfachste! Für die	Learn the simplest things! For those
Deren Zeit gekommen ist	whose time has come
Ist es nie zu spät!	it is never too late!
Lerne das Abc! Es genügt nicht, aber	Learn the Abc! It is not enough, but
Lerne es! Laß es dich nicht verdrießen!	do learn it! Don't let it get you down!
Fang an! Du mußt alles wissen!	Begin! You must know everything!
Du mußt die Führung übernehmen.	You must take the lead!
(Brecht, 1966, p. 21)	(E. Hasebe-Ludt, Trans.)

In this poem, Bertold Brecht points out the necessity as well as the limitations of learning the basics, the ABC. Important insights into the sociopolitical foundations and dimensions of language and literacy within the last three decades of this century have also affected the field of pedagogy and have resulted in a new level of critical examination of the hegemony of power connected with the process of schooling (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985; Freire & Macedo, 1987). Giroux (1992), in particular, employs the notion of a theory of *border pedagogy* to indicate the need for an alternative to the centred unified pedagogy of the past in order to recognize "the situated nature of knowledge, the partiality of all knowledge claims, the indeterminacy of history and the shifting, multiple and often contradictory nature of identity" (p. 26; as quoted in Greenlaw, J., 1994, p. 15). If we can lift these borders of pedagogical and cultural constraints, Giroux claims, students will eventually benefit from multiple border crossings by moving back and forth between different cultural spheres and identities. *Entgrenzungen,* made possible by pedagogical reaching, lifting, transgressing borders. Lucy Lippard, from within a similar

American cultural and national landscape, is aware of the inherent challenges posed by these borders:

> The boundaries being tested today by dialogue are not just "racial" and national. They are also those of gender and class, of value belief systems, of religion and politics. The borderlands are porous, restless, often incoherent territory, virtual minefields of unknowns for both practitioners and theoreticians. Cross-cultural, cross-class, cross-gender relations are strained, to say the least, in a country that sometimes acknowledges its overt racism and sexism, but cannot confront the underlying xenophobia -- fear of the other -- that causes them. Participation in the cross-cultural process, from all sides, can be painful and exhilarating. I get impatient. A friend says: remember, change is a process, not an event. (Lippard, 1990, p. 6)

These words remind us of a wider global trend toward revisionist and reactionary educational policies that is threatening this new understanding of pedagogy, this *new literacy* by adhering or retreating to traditional and *status quo* modes of curriculum and instruction (Willinsky, 1990). This backlash against holistic, innovative educational philosophies, programs, and strategies includes the rejection of a widening of the literacy and literature canon and instead advocates a populist *back to the basics* approach. Examples of this trend, which has been particularly widespread throughout the media and popular press, are book titles referring to the "catastrophe in public education" (Nikiforuk, 1993) and newspaper articles deploring educational reforms such as British Columbia's *Year 2000* as a "cruel hoax" (Kline, 1993).

> In British Columbia aspects of the Sullivan Report implemented through the Year 2000 initiatives came under hard scrutiny. A growing "back to the basics" movement found much to criticize in non-graded integrated primary classrooms. The supposed advantages of private schools encouraged some parents so to seek to refashion local public schools in their generally more conservative image. The NDP provincial government was forced to redraw its educational priorities. ... The new conservatism soon extended into the classroom. While not publicly disavowing Year 2000 or the Sullivan Report, Premier Michael Harcourt committed the Ministry of Education to putting greater emphasis on "the basics" and job-related curriculum, giving parents a set of standards against which to measure their children's performance and progress in school ... If fast approaching,

Year 2000 was also receding from view.
(Barman & Sutherland, 1995, pp. 423-424)

In particular, as the above authors point out, advocates and practitioners of the whole language approach to teaching literacy were among those in the crossfire of criticism directed towards this and other education systems that are struggling to prepare students for the challenges of the next century (Edelsky, 1991).

In an earlier section, I dwelt on the research and readings that strongly support and acknowledge the socio-cognitive and socio-cultural co-construction of language in various contexts. I now want to further exemplify, from the observations and materials brought forth from my study, how such processes were carried out in the particular context of these classrooms with the students actively engaged in constructing knowledge in both local and global perspectives and how "our capacities and opportunities to engage in discourses has been re-shaped by this expanding geographical imagination. The language, the texts we use in these discourses is varied and variable, constructed" (Barnes & Duncan, p. 8).

This, in turn, directly relates to the selection of materials used for reading and writing instruction. When looking at choices of such materials for multicultural classrooms, questions about the cultural inclusiveness and responsiveness of the readings must be asked. This is set against the background of an examination of the importance and meaning of text and stories in our lives "as part of a narrative way of knowing that is basic to the ways in which human beings understand the world and communicate that understanding to others" (Gudmundsdottir, 1991, p. 207).

However, only within the last two decades have we begun to question the universal value of being members of what Frank Smith (1986) has called the "literacy club." With reference to the educational, literary, and philosophical maxims of the postmodern and post-structuralist schools as well as earlier and contemporary criticism within the existentialist and phenomenological schools of thinking, we have begun to critically

examine both affirmation and rejection of these conceptual models within current

curricular frameworks.

> However, attitudes to reading vary widely according to the ethnic and cultural
> group to which one belongs. The western secular and mundane view of literacy
> contrasts sharply with the quasi-religious significance given to reading in many
> Asian cultures. ... Likewise, expectations on how reading is learned and should be
> taught contrast clearly between cultural groups. Western interpretations of what
> counts as reading have also led to assumptions of deficit in non-school-oriented
> groups whereby the absence of reading for pleasure indicates that no reading at all
> takes place at home; a lack of appropriate books means that no reading material at
> all is available and untypical adult/child interaction patterns reveal that no initiation
> of the child into reading is taking place outside the classroom.
> (Gregory, 1994, p.113)

With a view toward a viable definition of literacy and literature in the 21st century, we

need to examine and speculate on the respective consequences of the implementation of

innovative beliefs and practices for a future generation of school children.

> We require an education in literature ... in order to discover that what we have
> assumed -- with the complicity of our teachers -- was nature is in fact culture, that
> what was given is no more than a way of taking. (Howard, 1974, p. ix)

Once again, the tensionality between nature and nurture/culture re-surfaces with

pervasive obstinacy. Literacy, so often assumed and hailed as a fundamental characteristic

of an educated citizen of the world in many of our curriculum reforms, becomes

problematic with a view toward the future educational climate in and outside our schools.

We can read the forecast, at best, as *partially cloudy, with a chance of clearing* according

to the weather words we digest daily through television, radio, and the newspaper, and the

warnings about an unsettled landscape of literacy in these stormy postmodern times.

Edelsky (1991), for example, reminds us that

> progressively intended work in language and education might turn out to be
> conserving rather than transforming ... That is, aside from the "ordinary"
> difficulties in making an institution such as education bite the dominant societal
> hand that feeds it by transforming that hand (into a foot perhaps?), a growing

postmodernist mentality that often smirks at the earnestness of projects of transformation may well exacerbate those difficulties. (p. 1)

Therefore, if the context of a postmodern society has the potential to negate the liberating force of emancipation through educational processes, such as language and literacy teaching, it can be fundamentally counterproductive and needs to be re-evaluated -- not just through intellectual debates but rather by examining the actions and methods used to counteract progressive practice.

Thus, while the general theoretical maxims of critical pedagogy spoke a universal language that was applicable to a wide range of educational settings in Western democratic societies, the reality of transforming conservative and reactionary educational practices into student empowerment seemed to grow more and more challenging with the ever increasing multicultural and multilingual composition of Western postindustrial states (Au, 1993; Jennings & Purves, 1991; Richard-Amato & Snow, 1992; Samuda et al., 1981). In this vein, we need to keep in mind the complex nature of multiple literacies: Even though English can be considered a language of social empowerment, as Eggington (1992) states, there is a cost to the sociopolitical prestige this language carries with it. "Along with the benefits associated with the acquisition of English come a host of dangers involving the inevitable imposition of cultural values -- dangers which, if not considered, can lead to English teachers participating in forms of cultural imperialism" (p. 4). Consequently educators recognized the urgent need for realistic and effective methods to implement change and to abolish existing discriminatory structures (Pennycook, 1989). Willinsky (1991) very fittingly states:

> For my part, I would remind the modern critic that the hegemony and complicity of literary theory requires a more specific distribution system than the vagaries of "the State." My contention is that the principal playing field of these ideas achieved and won has been located in the neighborhood schoolyard. The school site constitutes something of a factory outlet for the hegemony of literary instruction, an outlet that French Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser (1971) has bluntly described as the dominant Ideological State Apparatus. Both literacy and literature constitute an introduction to an ordering of language that seems to be to

many students as intent on limiting access and participation as it is on expanding the realm and reach of meaning. (p.15)

Therefore, we need to look into schools and classrooms where the everyday negotiation of meaning takes place and where the power play between the participants in the battle for hegemony continually affects the individual lives of students and teachers.

> I hear that today's schools -- or least some of them -- are built on different principles than at the time I went to school. Nowadays, children supposedly are treated fairly and with understanding. If this is true, I regret it very much. We were taught about such things as class differences -- it was part of the curriculum. The children of better folks were treated better than those of working people. If this has indeed been removed from the curriculum of today's schools, young people will only find out about this immensely important difference in treatment when they get out into the real world. Everything they learned in school in their encounters with teachers will only entice them to the most ridiculous actions outside in real life, which is so entirely different. They will have been artfully deceived about the way the world will treat them.
> (From Brecht's 1967 *Flüchtlingsgespräche* [Refugees in conversation], as quoted in Richter, 1972, p.23; E. Hasebe-Ludt, Trans.)

As this quotation so poignantly and satirically warns us, there is no use denying the existence of a class structure in society nor can we close our eyes to the different realities and practices of schooling and of "real life." How then can this basic dichotomy and its detrimental consequences, particularly for the lives of underprivileged minority group members, be dealt with in the framework of a critical approach to educational and social organizations? How can the multiple realities of contemporary multicultural classrooms in different parts of the world benefit from the postulations of a liberating pedagogy that proclaims freedom of thought and speech together with a celebration of cultural diversity as its cornerstones?

Multicultural education -- or rather education that is multicultural.[22] Much doubt has been generated about the radical potential of a separate curriculum that caters specifically to the implementation of multiculturalism in education through so-called 'satellite' programs which in essence only maintain the isolationist tendencies and pejorative

attitudes of the majority point-of-view (Cummins, 1989). Such an approach too often

stops at superficial activities about the "three Fs:" food, festivals, and famous people --

and in reality sanctions the existing mainstream system of cultural hegemony.

Instead, a curriculum that strives for emancipatory action within the framework of

critical pedagogy could be characterized as containing the "five Ms:" meaningful,

motivating, multicultural, multidimensional, and multiplicative -- thereby integrating the

multicultural component as a natural part of a whole (Enright, 1989). As Gay (1992)

points out in the case of the United States, there seem to be efforts to place

multiculturalism into broader structural contexts and ideological frameworks. In addition

to supplying teachers with instructional strategies, activities and resources appropriate for

various multicultural settings (Carrel et al., 1988; Chamot & O'Malley, 1986; Lim &

Watson, 1993), educators working within the field of multiculturalism have made

substantive progress in analyzing the structural, environmental and procedural routines of

mainstream schooling that discriminate against students from culturally diverse

backgrounds (Fyfe & Figueroa, 1993; Gay, 1993; Harris, 1992). In this way,

> multicultural education scholars are providing conceptual paradigms for
> determining how to make better decisions that are more responsive to cultural
> pluralism at all levels of the educational enterprise....The results constitute the
> bases for deciding what reform interventions are appropriate for multiculturalizing
> the educational process. They represent a paradigmatic shift in understanding the
> implications of cultural pluralism for schooling which leads to the personal
> empowerment of teachers with respect to multicultural decision making.
> (Gay, 1992, p. 49).

How does this projected paradigm shift affect students' realities? If it is empowering

teachers to make culturally appropriate and sensitive decisions, does it bear in mind, for

example, the different roles students from Non-Western cultural backgrounds expect to

perform in school? Does the emphasis on active participation, critical thinking and

questioning on the part of students, which is an essential part of recent curricular reform in

North America- such as the *Year 2000* in British Columbia (Ministry of Education, 1989)

-- devalue and marginalize the educational experience of students from geo-cultural landscapes where different models and modes of learning, instruction, and communication between teacher and student are considered appropriate (Saint-Jacques, 1995)? This involves a constant process of decision-making and evaluation on the part of the teacher who wants to use children's experiences and ways of knowing as a valuable resource in the classroom and who, therefore, has to respect these in their own right (Holmes, 1993).

How can this paradigm shift toward cultural pluralism help bridge the many gaps that still exist between students' experiences at home and those at school? That the content and context of the "curriculum-as-lived" differs considerably from that of the "curriculum-as-planned" is certainly not new for either students or teachers. The reality of what students learn at school, *the forces that shape them*, in Mary Ashworth's (1979) words, are not just transmitted through the formal language of the classroom. Rather, the language of social interaction with peers on the playground, for instance, is a powerful teaching force -- and that particular language is often in conflict with the one of the school authority and the teacher as the designated voice of the official curriculum. Here is what some of these voices tell about coping with the diverse student population in the beginnings of the public education system in this city, during the first years of the 20th century:

> Some of the earliest immigrant children were from European countries. I had students from Norway and Sweden. No one had heard of English-as-a-second-language program. All I did was speak slowly and repeat and enunciate words. And I made sure the children didn't gang up on the new students.
> I was appointed to Seymour School where there were a lot of children who knew very little English. I just had to watch my vocabulary and keep it very simple. We did half a year's work in a year. (Gosbee & Dyson, 1988, pp. 97-98)

In his article *The triumph of formalism: Elementary schooling in Vancouver from the 1920s to the 1960s*, Neil Sutherland (1995) describes the typical initial schooling

experience of youngsters during that time period, brought forth by the memories from oral interviews with Vancouverites who attended public school in the city:

> ... however they came and whatever their expectations of how the school would be ordered, most beginners shared one very clear idea of what they would do in school. They were going to learn to read. After a half century many can recall stories such as "Chicken Little," and even phrases and sentences such as "Pretty pink ice cream from a pretty pink glass," "Cut, cut, said the king," "I am a boy. My name is Jerry," and "See Spot Run," which were among the first that they decoded. (p. 103)

In contrast to this scenario emerges the picture of our six, seven, eight, and nine year old students who are also children of immigrants, first, second and third generation Canadians, such as Bethany, whose step-grandfather immigrated from Norway and is teaching her some Norwegian:

> This book was about a Badger and he has boat and sings:
> *Row Row Row your boat gentley down the stream merily merily merily*
> *life is but dream.*
> I can sing Row your boat in Norwegian it goes like this:
> *Rew Rew Rew Tim boat Tidon on the fut vucina vucina vucina vucina*
> *all Tis ba tiggua.*
> (Bethany's Reading Log, on *Row, Row Row, your boat*, 10/04/95)

Bethany's reading of a familiar, song and rhyme, transposed to a non-traditional story book about a singing badger, has now created a third level of connectedness for her -- both linguistically as well as personally meaningful. Erin has developed a keen interest in German, built on his background knowledge. Erin's father is a second generation Canadian of German origin and lived in Germany for some years as an adult. Erin is also picking up German vocabulary from his nanny, a young German woman whom he adores. When she comes to pick him up and we exchange greetings and bits of conversation in German, Erin and the other children form a delighted and delightful chorus line. Erin has taught the class a few lessons himself by now: he convinced everybody that learning another language is as easy as pie:

Erin:	"It's easy to learn German!"
Teacher:	"What makes you think that?"
Erin:	"A lot of words are the same -- like *Canada:* it's *Kanada!*"

And he demonstrates, with an enduring, knowing expression on his face, eager to share that there's almost no difference in the pronunciation except for the vowel shift, which he performs masterfully. We have a lot of discussions about German language and culture and family connections when, in November of last year, I went to Germany to visit my family. It was a very real opportunity for the children to live another culture vicariously through the picture books, posters, and photos I shared with my students before I left and through the new books I brought back.

> Der Hut ist für den Kopf.
> I liked this book because you could learn German. I like learning different langueges.
> (Brittany's Reading Response to Margret Rettich's *Der Hut ist für den Kopf*, 11/14/94)
> Good for you! I like learning about languages too!
> (Teacher's response).
>
>
> FAMILIE BABAR
> I like this book because it like to learn othr langwiches in the whl world. do you like to Ms. Dyer?
> (Amy's Reading Response to Jean de Brunhoff's *Familie Babar*, 11/24/94)
> Yes, I do! This book is written in German.
> (Teacher's Response).

Before I left, in October, Amy, who was usually quite reserved about entering conversations with others, started to ask a lot of questions about my trip. One stands out in my mind: "When you go to see your family in Germany, is it going to make you feel happy or sad?" In November, another conversation picks up the thread of this questioning:

> I am very excited to be back with the children. Reading familiar and new texts together after a joyous reunion the first day back in the classroom, we make connections, literally, tracing the airplane's journey on the globe, estimating the

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approximate spot where I was writing to them from somewhere over Greenland, with the photo of the airplane in front of us.

Then Amy, whose father is often away in Hong Kong, asks me very solemnly:

Amy: "Did you feel happy when you saw your family again?"

Teacher: "Oh yes, Amy, I was so happy and excited I didn't want to go
            to sleep for hours."

Amy: "Were you sad when you had to leave?"

Teacher: "Yes, I was very sad, but I know I'll be visiting them again
            sometime soon, and I was looking forward to seeing my daughter
            and all of you again."

Amy: "I'm sad when my dad leaves."

Teacher: "I know ... it's hard," and we just hug.
            (Researcher Narrative, 10/11/95)

This conversation has created a new intertext, has moved from 'discourse a' -- the teacher's text, the story of journeying to my roots -- to 'discourse b,' Amy's text of her own story of family dynamics building a layer onto mine, recognizing and interpreting the theme of family connections and dis-connections over geographical and cultural distances, Canada, Germany, China. We have something in common now, an understanding of painful partings and joyful reunions, and the universal emotions that come with relating to others.

> Furthermore, it is not simply our accounts of the world that are intertextual; the world itself is intertextual. Places are intertextual sites because various texts and discursive practices based on previous texts are deeply inscribed in their landscapes and institutions. We construct both the world and our actions towards it from texts that speak of who we are or wish to be. Such 'texts in the world' then recursively act back on the previous texts that shaped them. (Barnes & Duncan, 1992, pp. 7-8)

This intertextuality stretches from our own stories to the kind of literature we use with students in our classrooms. Cairney (1992) reminds us that "the sharing of literature with students is much more than simply a pleasurable way to spend time. It is an

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important way in which classroom communities build common ground" (p. 507). In the following interactive exchange of poetic language, we can recognize how intertextuality is created through the constructing and re-constructing of meaning by readers and writers who "transpose texts into other texts, absorb one text into another, and build a mosaic of intersecting texts" (Hatman, 1990, p. 2; as quoted in Cairney, 1992, p. 502).

Sun, Sun
"Sun, Sun overhead,
What's your colour?"   *My favourit poem*
"I am red."   *"Sun Sun."*
"Sun, Sun, fiery fellow,
What's your colour?"   *"Moon, moon overhead,*
"I am yellow."   *What's your colour?"*
"Sun, Sun in sky of blue,   *I am blue.*
What's your colour?"   *"Moon moon sad fellow*
"Orange too.   *What's your colour?"*
I'm golden yellow,   *I am blue.*
Orange and red,   *My poem.* (Maggie, age 8, 1994)
A burning fire above my head."
(Heidbreder, 1985, p. 9)

Children's sense of identity is co-constructed with/in the reading relations and other personal kinds of relating with people and places around them. Often, the boundaries between these are stretched, transgressing from the world of others, fictional or real into the children's lives. With her *Sun Sun* poem, Maggie, one of our Mandarin ESL children whose progress in learning English is still slow, has re-created her favourite poem, Robert Heidbreder's *Sun, Sun* from his book *Don't Eat Spiders* (Heidbreder, 1985). She did so in her own way, with the vocabulary she feels comfortable with in her second language at this point, expressing how she feels through the language and her accompanying artwork,

beautifully articulate on yet another level through the cool blue colours surrounding the pale yellow of her magnificent moon in a landscape of sadness. This poem made sense to Maggie, the artist, within her own reality. It allowed her to express herself through a favourite medium, painting, with language that was facilitated, modeled after the original poem through its secure and simple yet beautiful patterning. And that is why it became her "favourit poem" among the many other texts she was trying to read and make sense of in our classroom.

Constructing and Negotiating Knowledge: Passports to Understanding

The above examples illustrate that the implementation of curriculum and the teaching of reading and writing, in particular, are not set within a vacuum but, on the contrary, are intricately connected with the students' -- and the teachers' -- sociocultural and sociolinguistic background and environment. This has been confirmed in research in other settings, specifically with reference to the effects of background knowledge and cross-cultural schemata that operate during the acquisition of literacy in multicultural settings. Johnson (1982), for example, in a study on the effects of building background knowledge to increase reading comprehension, found that readers use both information from text as well as from their own background knowledge to understand the content of a text. Based on Goodman's (1971) psycholinguistic model of reading as well as elements of schema theory (Carrell, 1983), reading can be described as an interactive process in which previous information from both text and the reader's world knowledge is used for prediction of meaningful content (Morrow, 1992).

> Readers bring to a text a wide range of experiences with the world and with discourse, which they can use in constructing a meaningful representation of the text. Their prior knowledge, organized in topical clusters (Schemata) provides a context for comprehension. (Andersson & Barnitz, 1984, p. 103)

These studies outline the need for teachers to incorporate these knowledge structures in the choice of reading materials in combination with instructional methods such as the

Language Experience Approach (Ashton-Warner, 1963) or the Experience-Text-Relationship based on the former (Au, 1993; Rigg, 1991). The former method uses students' own stories as reading material while the latter expands on it by comparing culturally different texts to students' own sociocultural experiences of a topic or issue, thereby building and enhancing their cross-cultural schemata in meaningful ways. As Andersson and Barnitz (1984) point out, these methods and strategies are particularly crucial in so-called 'regular' primary classrooms with a number of ESL children, a common scenario in schools all over North America. For students with ethnic and linguistic backgrounds outside of mainstream North American sociolinguistic and sociocultural norms, it is often difficult to construct the schemata that will facilitate learning within these norms, both in and outside of classrooms. This is particularly difficult when students have previously experienced divergent culturally based methods of reading practices, instruction and teaching strategies, such as is often the case with students and parents from China and other Asian countries. In the case of reading instruction, for example, the kind of schemata that develop are culturally conditioned based on a reader's knowledge of the world. Personal knowledge, in turn, is conditioned by a person's culture, with factors such as race, gender, ethnicity, age, and so on, playing significant roles in the construction of this knowledge and consequently of the schemata needed for reading comprehension (Reynolds, Taylor, Steffensen, Shirey, & Anderson, 1982). This interactive model can be extended to the larger context of language learning and of learning the language of the curriculum.

> As the trend towards 'learner-centred curricula,' 'whole language,' 'process learning' and the like grows stronger, pedagogical approaches based on notions of risk taking and personal empowerment [sic], so does the population of students that comes from cultures which espouse different ideologies. In the Vancouver, Canada School District, for example, 50% of the students speak a language other than English at home, representing thirty distinct ethno-cultural groups, and their numbers continue to grow. (Early & Gunderson, 1994, p. 4)

From the teacher's perspective, this can also mean a difficult learning and adjusting task when faced with making decisions about reading strategies for learners with diverse cultural and personal background knowledge. This difficulty is an important part of teaching and in turn is instrumental in building cross-cultural schemata for both teachers and students. One of the teachers at Franklin reflects on her students' background knowledge and finds

> that they are so much more sophisticated than I am or -- even still -- you know, with their world view, I mean, some of them have had much more life experience than I have. They come from countries that are war-torn, you know, traumas that they've lived through ... Some of the children have a completely different view of the world than my little corner, and I think that teachers are having to let go of their pre-conceived ideas of what kids can do, what kids own, what kind of experience kids have, and also of their abilities. I am constantly at myself to let the children take more responsibility ... all of a sudden, it's kind of a letting go and a letting go, and it's not an easy thing when you've been doing things a certain way for a long time, and then to let kids take more responsibility for either learning or for structures in the classroom. (Teacher Interview, Tara, 06/95)

These issues center around notions of control and, as Tara reflected, the question of who owns the curriculum, "whose classroom it is." She also thinks that

> maybe sometimes children need to have a different point-of-view from what is being espoused at home. I don't think you can always go with, you know, your mom and dad say this kind of thing, so ... it's interesting to hear other's opinions, that's how you grow and incorporate different points-of-view. So, I think you can be sensitive to it, but you can't just sort of put off, you know, everything else that might offend somebody. (Teacher Interview, Tara, 06/95)

Within these power structures and struggles, there is the matter of the curriculum to take care of, the task of building knowledge according to the prescribed and recommended content of the curriculum in the various subject areas.

> To focus on curriculum knowledge is to direct attention to the knowledge that is selected for inclusion in school programmes and made available to students in classroom practice. Knowledge made available to students refers to opportunities to construct, or critique knowledge, as well as to the more common offering of knowledge as if it were a product or object to be acquired. Curriculum knowledge might include social and world knowledge as well as so-called academic knowledge from the recognized disciplines.

Questions of multicultural curriculum knowledge are important because how we understand ourselves, others, a nation, and the world is shaped in part by that knowledge. Curriculum knowledge contributes to the shaping of identity, capacity, attitude, and action both individually and collectively. Questions of control are important because different values and interests are sustained or modified by one or another selection and distribution of curriculum knowledge. I see the question of *'whose knowledge?'* as less important *per se* than the question of *'who benefits?'* from particular knowledge selections. Further understanding of curriculum knowledge control, empirically and theoretically, would enhance understanding of larger issues of curriculum policy, practice, and change. (Cornbleth, 1995, p. 166)

Against this background, some researchers argue that ESL and minority students, when reading and interacting with texts for the purpose of comprehension, are at a particular disadvantage because of their lack of cross-cultural background knowledge that facilitates interaction with a text (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983). It is important therefore for teachers to use texts and strategies with which students can comprehend through a second language the words and the world in a meaningful way.

Some of these strategies, such as the Knowledge Framework (Mohan, 1986), aim at building six explicit knowledge structures such as description, classification, and evaluation in relation to thinking skills, and observing and comparing, understanding concepts, and critical decision making. Each of these knowledge structures can be represented graphically by "key visuals" (Early, Mohan, & Hooper, 1989).

> The workshop that I took dealt with Anansi the Spider; it was the Knowledge Framework, and part of that Knowledge Framework workshop was dealing with Anansi the Spider, and once you got those ideas for using that book, even though on the surface it seems like a simple picture book, all of a sudden there's a lot you can do with it, and it's no different than a novel, so I think that's a way for teachers to deal with books other than from their own culture. (Teacher Interview, Tara, 04/95)

Realizing this necessity to go beyond one's own limited perspective, we now see a move toward further *Entgrenzungen* within a constructivist framework. Out of the Australian literary and pedagogical community comes a move toward a paradigm shift that views literature as a tool for overcoming ethno-centric views of curriculum and for distinct

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cultural criticism (O'Neill, 1993) which goes beyond the ideologies of literature as *cultural heritage* (Leavis, 1972), beyond even the personal and social reality of the *new literacy* (Willinsky, 1990). Based on Halliday's social-semiotic perspective (Halliday, 1978; Halliday & Hasan, 1985), this new literary mode instead transcends established boundaries of genres and redefines them as staged, goal oriented social processes in which members of a culture participate in a variety of ways (Martin, Christie, & Rothery, 1987). According to O'Neill (1993), this more radical definition of literature and genre-based literacy asks for readings that students actively construct, reconstruct and change:

> Inviting students to consider ways in which readings change over time can be a productive means of looking at shifts in cultural values -- shifts in what readers bring to texts and shifts in what is possible or permissible to say about them.
> (p. 23)

In Canada, the attempts to expand the traditional canon of predominantly British-Canadian and American narratives are becoming more frequent and are evidence of this paradigm shift through the prolific writings of authors and illustrators of children's books such as William Bell, Dayal Kaur Khalsa, Joy Kogawa, George Littlechild, Jean Little, Stéphane Poulin, Barbara Smucker, and Paul Yee, to name only a few, who represent and promote the rich cultural mosaic of the Canadian literary community (Jobe, 1993; Jobe & Hart, 1991, 1993; Jobe & Sutton, 1990).

Not only have they and their colleagues opened doors to a wider world of experience for our students, they also have actively contributed to the dialogue about culture and literature among educators, writers, students and researchers. This dialogue needs to continue and expand, facilitated by greater availability of resources and a shift in priorities when it comes to multicultural issues. In their case study on *Literature and Reading in a Multicultural Society* (Jobe & Sutton, 1990), the authors found that "the fulfillment of the vision of a socio-political climate that encourages the recognition and full participation of various cultural and linguistic groups in Canadian society has been far slower than

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anticipated" (p. 2). In the same way, "multiculturalism, although stressed in the British Columbia curriculum guides, continues to be a low priority in many schools in the lower mainland" (p. 41).

A wide variety of texts that facilitate the use of prior knowledge as well as the building of new background knowledge must be made available to all students. These texts include narratives of a different kind than the ones traditionally found in schools and classrooms and certainly those driven by a *back to basics* approach. They comprise the kind of stories that arise out of an authentic need for sharing and communicating beyond cultural, social, and personal boundaries. They engage the individual voices of both students and teachers in a meaningful and purposeful learning context.

In his work *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds,* Jerome Bruner (1981) argues that there are two modes of thought: the paradigmatic and the narrative. The paradigmatic is employed most often, he suggests, in the construction of our knowledge of the natural world; the narrative, on the other hand, is instrumental in our understanding of human affairs (Hansson, 1991). If our goal is truly understanding, then, as Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule (1986) explain, the personal experience of relationships needs to be part of our storying:

> By *understanding* we mean something akin to the German word *kennen,* the French *connaître,* the Spanish *conocer,* or the Greek *gnosis* (Lewis, 1983), implying personal acquaintance with an object (usually but not always a person). Understanding involves intimacy and equality between self and object, not distance and impersonality, while *knowledge (wissen, savoir, saber)* implies separation from the object and mastery over it. ... Telling and hearing our stories helps us to understand. The story, a product of language, can bring forth our experiences to consciousness. (pp. 101-102)

In this way, the notion of understanding also speaks to the intertextual nature of our stories and of other texts, incorporating yet another layer, another important element to this complex cognitive process, that of evaluation. In the seminal thinking of his later work, Bakhtin (1986) perceives this as a creative act, one which is necessary to elevate a

given text to reveal the multiplicity of its meanings: "Thus, understanding supplements the text: it is active and also creative by nature. Creative understanding continues creativity, and multiplies the artistic wealth of humanity. The co-creativity of those who understand (p. 142)."

The Power of Our Stories: Literature as Texts for Reading the World

> Our stories are the masks through which we can be seen, and with every telling we stop the flood and swirl of thought so someone can get a glimpse of us, and maybe catch us if they can.
> Madeleine Grumet, *Bitter milk*

Whether we speak of our own stories or the stories of others, whether we speak of our own education or the education of others, story-telling does give pause to find the details, examine the subtleties and nuances, and be with the experience. In doing so, it serves well as a tool, a method, within which one is able to think of an experience, to reflect upon and make sense of interactions, to imagine the experience of others, to consider a dilemma and ponder solutions, to contribute and share in collective story-telling. Virginia Shabatay, Carol Witherell and Nel Noddings, in *Stories Lives Tell* (1991), speak of the "wholeness of the human" that is brought forth in the story.

> Stories allow us to break through barriers and to share in another's experience; they warm us. Like a rap on the window, they call us to attention. Through literature and people's stories we discover a variety of situations that make people feel like strangers. We discover what strangers have to teach us. (Shabatay, 1991, p. 137).
> The power of narrative and dialogue as contributors to reflective awareness in teachers and students is that they provide opportunities for deepened relations with others and serve as springboards for ethical action. Understanding the narrative and contextual dimensions of human actors can lead to new insights, compassionate judgment, and the creation of shared knowledge and meanings that can inform professional practice. (Witherell & Noddings, 1991, p. 8)

In this way, Tara found that these texts can also build that connection for students, to bring forth their own stories:

> I know that when the children have been read to or have read something that really strikes a cord in them, they find that their own writing is so much ... they really want to write about it, whether it's about something they experienced or thought about, or fear. (Teacher Interview, Tara, 04/95)

If we invite the children in our classrooms to become part of this narrative way of experiencing, reflecting, and sharing, we can together create a rich web of meaning-making and understanding through the stories woven from this common thread of humanity. It is through this process that we let others see through our masks, in Madeleine Grumet's words (1988a), and at the same time become writers and storytellers that have, so Alice Walker believes, the power to save lives.

> I wonder why Santa didn't like going out giveing presents to children because he said when it is December 24 I have to do everything because I hate Christmas because I hate children and everything in the hole entere world and hole universe.
> (Jimmy's Reading Response to *Father Christmas* by Raymond Briggs, 12/02/94)

In his response, Jimmy was trying to come to terms with a very different portrayal of the Santa Claus figure we traditionally encounter in story books centered around Eurocentric beliefs and values about Christmas. In Brigg's (1973) unconventional, tongue-in-cheek cartoon version of *The Night before Christmas*, the benevolent Father Christmas figure turns into a grouchy, overworked, yet lovable character. Jimmy's fascination started with questioning this particular adult conception of the world and continued with comparing this image with others he was encountering. During this time, we were reading a variety of books clustered loosely around our Peace theme in December. Other books that the children eagerly read and re-read were, for example, Allan Say's (1991) *Tree of Cranes*, and Eleanor Coerr's (1979) *Sadako and the 1,000 paper cranes*. Especially the latter text presented a compelling and thought-provoking picture of a world in which global issues and individual lives are intertwined in a complex and powerful way.

> You can really see that ... like the books that we have read with the kids, and we've got a lot of books upstairs, we got tons of them, and it's interesting, they

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really learn from the content of those books. They're very simple, you know, they're kids' books, they have beautiful art work, for one thing, but the content always, you know, has a moral, most of them, anyway, and it's really interesting, they really do pick that up.

Interesting thing, you know *Sadako and the Cranes*, that book, great little book, Jasmine read that one ... and it's so interesting, her perspective on it. I was raised in a generation of the ... that the Japanese were the aggressor and the basically the atom bomb wasn't a negative thing from our perspective. It was basically brought about to eradicate the negative thing, right? When she was reading that book, and it was talking about why, you know, the atom bomb disease and all that, and she said: "Why, Daddy, why would the Americans be so bad and do that?' I can't remember exactly what she said, but her perspective from reading that book was really, gave my head a shake, because it was exactly the opposite perspective of how I learned, but it was learned from the book. And the book was a very positive thing, it was a very good book, actually, talking about the other perspective, and just about: here's what happened, there's a victim to everything, these were ... like, she said: "Why would they drop a bomb on innocent people, on children?" It was such a ... on a little kid. And I, so explained quickly about the whole thing, you know, how it got started and all about war, and that that's the problem with war, and it really did bring in a good sort of lesson there, but I was struck by how the perspective, her perspective of that situation was totally different from mine by interpreting, by what she read, from that book. And in a way, you can talk about the content, the book, in a way, forming a sense of community. (Parent Interview, Gregg, 05/95)

In the situation described above, the interactive negotiation and meaning making between the reader and the text forms a crucial part of one child's developing understanding of the world. In addition, the relationship between child and adult, the community-building process as part of a shared reading and discussion of the content of the text, are necessary in order to build background knowledge and facilitate understanding. The role that literature can play in helping children understand our multicultural world should therefore not be underestimated or judged simplistically and superficially.

Books can make a difference in dispelling prejudice and building community: not with role models and literal recipes, not with noble messages about the human family, but with enthralling stories that make us imagine the lives of others. A good story lets you know people as individuals in all their particularity and conflict; and once you see someone as a person -- flawed, complex, striving -- then you've reached beyond stereotype. Stories, writing them, telling them, sharing

them, transforming them, enrich us and connect us and help us know each other. (Rochman, 1993, p. 19)

In the same way, the following researcher journal entry reflects the awareness of the complex and often difficult intertextuality of reading and a beginning understanding of the situatedness of texts within the lives of both students and teachers:

> We were talking about Paul Yee's *Tales from Gold Mountain*. The children especially wanted me to read *Rider Chan and the night river,* a story about two brothers' tragic entanglement in the greed and selfishness of the gold rush in the mountains of British Columbia. They laughed when I told them I was worried it would be *too* scary -- never underestimate the passion for gruesome details by a bunch a grade threes. I think they got a kick out of the fact that their teacher thought this story scary at all, and the discussion that followed was a lively bragging session about scary stories, mostly horror movies they had seen in the vein of *Freddy Kruger* and friends ... Once again, I was dismayed at the exposure to violence on television and through videos the children seem so used to. Most of them hadn't found a movie yet that was too scary!
>
> The story we eventually decided to dramatize through role play, readers' theatre, and art, together with a grade six/seven class, was *The spirits of the Railway,* a tale about the sacrifices and exploitation of the Chinese workers who build the railroad through the mountains of British Columbia. This story had its scary elements too -- ghosts, skeletons, and violence in the treatment of the workers on the part of the 'white bosses.' The students worked hard for several weeks in small groups. I was amazed at the amount of cooperative effort they came to at the end when we performed our drama in the Chinese New Year assembly in front of the whole school.
>
> Chung, who is Chinese himself, was fascinated by the story from the beginning. He kept asking questions about the historical details of the railway building, so I was glad when the librarian supplied a film on the history of the railway in Canada. We all watched and listened to the rather dry and pompous-sounding voice of the narrator, telling about the 'official' historical facts and figures, culminating with 'the last spike' of the transcontinental railroad. Into the silence that followed the scene of a crowd of dignitaries gathered for this historic moment, Chung, who sits next to me, wonders out loud: "Where are all the Chinese workers, Ms. H.?"
> (Researcher Narrative, 02/06/94)

For Chung, literature, through a re-reading of history in the form of Paul Yee's *Tales from Gold Mountain* (1989), had opened up spaces for his own, genuine questions, for finding out about the hidden curriculum, for learning about identity, exclusion, and institutional racism. At the same time, working with this text had opened up spaces, exemplified another perspective for the other children in the class, especially the ones who,

in the beginning of the year, had not been open-minded about different cultural backgrounds, like Fiona, looking down on the Chinese children because of their language and manners.

There is obvious difficulty involved in this process of building and re-defining a community with the help of texts for both these children -- a difficulty that involves interacting with language and literature in new and challenging ways that move beyond restrictive and canonized texts. When looking at the students' responses to the literacy tasks they were faced with, there is one insight that stands foremost in my mind. The children, when helped to make connections with the texts they were reading in ways that were meaningful to them, were immersed in the tasks through a multi-layered intertextuality. They connected with the materials by re-reading stories, taking books home to their parents and sharing them together, by writing stories about Canada, the world, and their own sense of place, by inventing chants and poems based on patterns they had become familiar with, and by talking to each other about what they liked to read. Through this, they demonstrated how literacy can be actively expanded by the learners beyond the traditional definitions of reading and writing to affirm the social and cultural nature of intertextual literate events (Chapman, 1995).

Community in diversity: Through the active negotiation of socio-cognitive and socio-cultural processes such as the above, which involved the grasping of historical global events and their representation through different eyes -- of official sources *and* of the voices of people from ethnic minority groups -- children step-by-step can come to understand important parts of their role as players in this vastly expanding global community of learners. There is difficulty in community building involved in this, a tensionality that needs to be acknowledged as a necessary part of learning, of learning through language, of learning to read -- especially in the context of reading texts in a second or other language (Elam, 1991; Heidegger, 1968; Wood, 1993).

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This prompts me to revisit Heidegger's notion of 'belonging together', in which he emphasizes the first word of the phrase, *belonging*, invoking a sense of community that incorporates the *being*). This communal space thereby creates the texture of diversity, the striving, the *longing* for past and future connections -- unlike so much of the current educational and political rhetoric where the stress is on 'belonging *together*,' on unity defined as universality, in a static and finite frame -- without listening to the authentic voices *in between* and the voices of the *other*. (Researcher Narrative, 07/25/94)

Language, understood as text in the sense that it encompasses creative language use for the purpose of communication, whether read, written, or spoken, represents an interwoven tapestry, a *textus*, which allows us to transcend borders, to move beyond the limitations of the imposed *limit-language* of the curriculum (Scherner, 1984). This, once again, connects me with Schwab's (1993) notion of texts as *Entgrenzungen*, as creations which push for a transition, an opening toward a more inclusive vision of a community of learners.

My day begins with observations of the shared reading time during the first period. I am curious about the progress the children are making with reading *together*. I know I don't have to worry about that with the "Waldo group," as I have started to call them in my mind. Erin, Hugh, J. R., and Jimmy have developed a routine of their own. They invariably pick up one of the Waldo books we have in our classroom, negotiate whether it is possible to get the one the resource teacher next door has, then form a circle around the book on the floor. Usually, there is lots of talk happening between them, mostly quietly but once or twice I have to remind the boys about chatting a bit more quietly. I catch myself being reluctant to do that, though, not really wanting to interfere with the kind of "good noise" that originates in such intercultural conversational exchanges and that I have come to appreciate so much.

The participants in this nuclear speech community are Erin, our bright 6-year-old native English speaker who reads and writes about two years beyond his age level and wonders about all kinds of things in imaginative, rich language that reflects his thinking and understanding of the world around him; J. R., age 6, Jimmy, age 5, and Hugh, age 7, are ESL students, J. R.'s native language is Tagalog, Hugh's and Jimmy's is Cantonese. They are learning English with enthusiasm, without being aware of it, talking about what really interests them: the hidden characters in the book -- a friendly competition and joint endeavor to solve the puzzles in the pictures and the text.

Today, I have a special surprise for them: I brought another Waldo book from home -- one that my daughter, Charlotte, is graciously donating to the class: *Where's Waldo?* The boys comment excitedly that they know it, tell each other details about it and then, in pairs, divide their attention between the two books. Two others, realizing that there is some novel event happening, come over to join: Leo who, being new to the school, has a hard time making friends

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up to this point in our time together as a class, now joins this community, and so is Jan who also has difficulties relating to others. There is an atmosphere of intensive communal negotiation as they jointly search for the hidden objects on the pages, making predictions, telling each other about the funny and exciting details they notice in the drawings. When I call the class to the carpet for our morning gathering, they are reluctant and need a couple of extra invitations. The last part of their communal bonding consists in a conspiratory negotiation about which will be the best hiding place for this new treasure. Even though I know this is going to result in future complaints and protests from other children in the class, I can't help but smile at the group's enduringly clever, clandestine ways of claiming ownership of the texts in their classroom.
(Researcher Narrative, 10/01/94)

The world according to the Waldo universe ...

Literature can reproduce the diversity of sociolects, or, starting from this diversity, and suffering its laceration, literature may imagine and seek to elaborate a limit-language which would be its zero degree. Because it stages language instead of simply using it, literature feeds knowledge into the machinery of infinite reflexivity. Through writing, knowledge ceaselessly reflects on knowledge, in terms of a discourse which is no longer epistemological, but dramatic. (Barthes, 1978b, p. 19; as quoted in Sontag, 1982, pp. 463-465)

Reading the world according to *National Geographic:*

We went to the Vancouver Art Gallery, to a participatory workshop in connection with an exhibition called *Out of place*, featuring seven artists from diverse cultural backgrounds whose life experiences speak and display feelings of alienation and displacement through imposed power structures.[23]
One of the installations draws my students like a magnet: When the docent is leading small groups of children into what gives the illusion of a small room surrounded with suspended high shelves of National Geographic magazines, hundreds of them, my curiosity is peaked, too. We have a shelf with these magazines in our classroom, too, brought in by one of the children from home. Some of the children seemed to like looking at them during silent reading, particularly enjoying the photos in them. Now I see astonished looks and hear surprised comments about the masses of magazines in this room, as part of an art display. Even more astonished looks and languaging ensue when we discover that the artist, Panya Clark, has re-created cultural objects from the original magazine pages, such as a kind of toque, a sail boat, and a pair of earrings. The objects, displayed side by side the magazine page that framed them, look stunningly like the originals. The children are full of wonder, asking questions: "How did it get here?" "Did the artist find this?" "How did she get the exact materials to copy these?"
They are fascinated by the puzzle of how real objects were re-created, used as art, used to deliver a message about authenticity, ownership, and appropriation. They don't tire of asking questions, responding to the docent's

thoughtful comments and open-ended questions: "Which things did the artist make? What do *you* think? Why do you think that Panya Clark decided to present the objects and the pictures side by side?" This installation is such a powerful statement, immensely complex, yet simple in a way that children can understand about the powers of words and images on the printed page. They are reading the words and imprints of culture according to *National Geographic*, and they are reading the world according to a certain perspective that puts culture on display. Then, by visually adding another layer, they experience the displacement and interrogation of practices of cultural hegemony in a way that leaves them spellbound with the power of artistic questioning.

The learning continues after the children have had a chance to create their own installations after the gallery tour and take them back to the school to be displayed in our classrooms and hallways. They are writing in their journals about their impressions of *Out of Place*. For weeks, they have become eager readers of the National Geographics in our classroom, sharing them in "book talks," putting the world in the centre of our classroom. The globe is becoming a permanent fixture at group carpet time; we are constantly finding places from articles featured in the magazines, the children are posing questions about the places that catch their attention. A lot of the stories and the compelling pictures that accompany them are about animals and people's exploitation or eradication of them, such as the coverage of the practice of hunting elephants for ivory. Some of them sound like budding journalists reporting on endangered species in a global space.
(Researcher Narrative, 10/12/94)

In another space, in what now seems like yet another world, another time zone, my own journey of discovery in the landscape of language and literature led me to the writing of a thesis on the connections between power and language/literature:

> This work is conceived a contribution to the field of women studies ... will show that the status of women writers depends on the social, political, and economical structure of society ... portraying the development of cultural patterns that define the role of women within society ... attitudes about female character traits influence the image of women in society and are reflected in literature ... the treatment of women's literature by male critics ... stereotypes of women are identified with those of women's literature ... (Ludt, 1977)[24]

Reading life and reading the world: coming back, over and over again, to the power of the stories of our past, to the importance of prior educational and family connections. The mapping exercise about "P.O.A. Connections" described earlier was received with overwhelming enthusiasm, generating many discussions in the hallway between teachers, parents, and students. The globe in our classroom was a very popular learning tool for

months before and after this visual testimony to multiculturalism. The students became fascinated with time zones, learning about them with the help of literature, such as the delightful *Nine O'clock Lullaby* (Singer, 1991), in which young readers, through a series of sixteen simultaneous happenings on six continents, are introduced to the concepts of time zones and cultural similarities.

10 P.M. in Puerto Rico
Sweet rice, fruit ice, coconut candy.
Papa playing congas, Tio his guitar.
Swaying lanterns in the branches,
dancing people on the grass.
Bedtime is forgotten on a special party night.
10 P.M. in Puerto Rico is ...

Midnight on the mid-Atlantic
Nothing blacker than the water,
nothing wider than the sky.
Pitch and toss, pitch and toss.
The Big Dipper might just ladle
a drink out of the sea.
Midnight on the mid-Atlantic is ...

10 A.M. in Guangzhou, China
On the way to Goat City
auntie pedals quickly,
flying like a dragon.
On the way to Goat City
elder sister pedals slowly,
flapping like a goose.
10 A.M. in Guangzhou, China, is
...

11 A.M. in Japan
In the pond
grandfather floats a tulip
so the fish can greet the spring.
11 A.M. in Japan is ...

Noon in Sydney, Australia
At the barbie, five cousins, four
uncles, three aunts,
two sheepdogs, six lizards, and one
sly kookaburra
stealing sausage right off the
plates.
Noon in Sydney, Australia, is ...

6 P.M. in Los Angeles
The sun eases down
like a big golden dinner plate
at the end of the day
on the beach.
6 P.M. in Los Angeles is ...

9 P.M. in Brooklyn, New York
The vroom and shush of traffic
outside the bedroom window
while Mama turns the pages of a
sleepytime tale.

(Singer, 1991, unnumbered pages)

Today Jimmy was telling the class with a beaming face that his mom came back from San Francisco on the weekend. He wrote it in his journal, too, and I write back to him that I've always wanted to go to San Francisco, and that I really hope that I'll be able to go there some day, maybe even next spring, to a conference. When he was telling the whole class, we find it on the map, together with Los Angeles, the city from the *Nine o'clock lullaby* poem (Felicity is getting excited, she tells everybody THAT'S where Disneyland is, and SHE IS going there in the spring, FOR SURE, her mom promised), and San Diego, where Bethany's mother and step-father live and where she is going for Christmas this year. She misses her mom ... Other children share connections: Melanie's family, her aunt, uncle and cousins, live in San Francisco, and she is looking forward to visiting them soon. We found a lot of things to talk about, and we are reading California through our own stories and others, such as Allan Say's stirring, bittersweet *Grandfather's Journey,* which I decided to read to the children emerging from our spontaneous real and imaginary travels to this southern place. (Researcher Narrative, 11/16/94)

My grandfather was a young man when he left his home in Japan and went to see the world. ...
> *Of all the places he visited, he liked California best. He loved the strong sunlight there, the Sierra Mountains, the lonely seacoast. ...*
>> *The last time I saw him, my grandfather said that he longed to see California one more time. He never did.*
>> *And when I was nearly grown, I left home and went to see California for myself.*
>> *After a time, I came to love the land my grandfather had loved, and I stayed on and on until I had a daughter of my own.*
But I also miss the mountains and rivers of my childhood. I miss my old friends. So I return now and then, when I can not still the longing in my heart. The funny thing is, the moment I am in one country, I am homesick for the other.
(Say, 1993, pp. 4-31)

This book speaks to me in a way that not many others do. It is unique in the way it makes me relate to the emotional messages of belonging and displacement, of love and caring within families in between continents, makes me think of my own family between continents.
PEOPLE IN MOTION ...
   Reading San Francisco: This city holds a strange and beautiful fascination; the intertextuality of its geo-cultural landscape, evoked through language, music, and art -- made meaningful through my students' and my own personal relations: Living in Berlin, a student myself, relating to professors and students from Berkeley, trying to speak their language, listening to their music, and wishing I could go there some day: It seemed like such an exciting, progressive, on-the-edge, yet paradoxically peace-minded place. Years later, still hoping to see San Francisco for myself ... Am I just hopelessly nostalgic? And if so, what is wrong with that?

California dreaming
on a such a winter's day ...

IF YOU'RE GOING TO SAN FRANCISCO ...
All across the nation,
such a strange vibration,
people in motion ...
there's a whole generation,
with a new explanation,
PEOPLE IN MOTION

San Francisco days, San Francisco nights
San Francisco days, San Francisco nights ...

Listening to the song on the radio
and still hoping to see San Francisco some day
listening to stories about walking on the beach in San Francisco
thinking that I really wanted to be able to tell a story about San Francisco too ...
I went to Long Beach, L.A. instead, to another conference -- it made more sense.
What made me think so?
How does this thinking make sense?
I can't think of a story about Long Beach, L.A. ...
(Researcher Narrative, 04/11/95)

Naomi: Me and my dad went to the park on the weekend. Me and Tara are going to Alaska. We will have fun.

Teacher: Alaska is a beautiful place!

Naomi: Today we are going back to Alaska. Yesterday we had lots of fun but it was very cold. But we had fun anyway.

Teacher: Is it always cold in Alaska?

Naomi: Today we are going to California with Sabrina and Meleana.
We will have fun.

Teacher: What will you do on your trip to California?

Naomi: Today we are going back to California with Miata, Tara, Sally, Meleana, Angela. We will have fun.

Teacher: What kind of fun things are you going to do on your trip to California?

Tara: Today me, Naomi, Meleana, and Sally are playing house and we are pretending that we are going to California.

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Teacher:	What will you do in California?
Tara:	Today me Naomi, Sally, Meleana, Miata, and Angela are going to California for pretend. We will have fun!
Teacher:	What kind of fun things are you going to do in California?
Sally:	Today I'm going to play with Meleana and Roddie and Naomi and Tara and Angela and Miata. We will have fun. We are going to California!
Teacher:	What will you do?
Renata:	Today me and Gemella are going to Disneyland. I will be making the tickets. We will have some fun on our imagining trip!
Teacher:	Great! Enjoy yourselves!
Renata:	Today at recess me and Gemella are going on a trip to Alaska. We will have a great time!
Teacher:	I'm sure you'll have a great time on your pretend trip! (Journals, 04/15/95-04/18/95)

During the observations and reflections on the kind of texts that were used in the Primary Open Area, it became obvious that a lot of the theming and subsequent choices for reading were an interactive process between teachers and students. At the beginning of this year, for example, when we began our theme of 'Me and my Family,' a lot of personal connections influenced the selections for reading in the classroom and in the homes of the students. After that, all year long, it almost seemed that, through books and stories, we were going on a trip around the world: Australia, Norway, China, Japan, Germany, Alaska, California -- we were all over the map, and indeed the globe never collected dust in this classroom with eager small hands locating countries and cities that had become meaningful through our own stories and those of beloved characters in books.

Bethany, inspired by our reading of Jan Brett's Trouble with Trolls (1992) and Christmas Trolls (1993), featuring beautiful border designs with intricate details of the trolls' homes set against the Nordic wintry landscape, brought in a Norwegian *Trolls*

children's book in translation (Lidberg & Loeoef, 1991), with more beautiful drawings of the mischievous creatures, and she delights in reading it to the class. The other children and the teachers then became eager to find other books with trolls and from Scandinavian cultures, from the school and classroom libraries, and for day, we were occupied with describing, contrasting and comparing, wondering about real and imaginary characters in folktales and the mythology of these Nordic countries. We discover *Pippi Longstocking* (Lindgren, 1950), Roland Dahl's *The Witches* (1983), *This troll that troll*, a pop-up book by Mike Inkpen (1993), and somebody even notices that another one of our favourite stories, *A letter to the king* (Vá, 1987) had been translated from Norwegian.

The languaging the children experienced through these dialogues and through the voices of the characters, such as the confident female narrator, Treva, from Brett's troll books, held them spellbound with its beautiful patterning and humorous emulating of the speech of the trolls who seem to have trouble with a foreign language.

My name is Treva, and I have had trouble with trolls.

"I need you to push me."
"Can't push!" they cried. "Hold dog!"
"Okay," I said, sighing. "I'll hold the dog."

I'm Treva, and the day my brother Sami and I went to our neighbor's farm to pick out a Christmas tree was the beginning of the most unforgettable Christmas I ever had. ...

I showed them how to jump rope.
I told them how much I liked their tail knots and earrings.
They smiled shyly and started tucking in their shirttails.
"Nice hair. Pretty belt," they said, grinning at me.
And they taught me a little troll dance. They were catching on.
(Brett, 1992, 1993, unnumbered pages)

Trouble with Trolls
By Jan Brett
I like this story because I lik reading storys about trolls. The sory was about greety troll's who cept on steeling her dog but she cept on geting it back.
My favorit part was wen she trick the trolls and when she got all her stuff back

from the troll's.
(Renata's Reading Log, 01/03/95)

This trol that trol
I like this book. it has difrent trols in it.
I thot ther was only one cinde.
(Felicity's Reading Response to Mick Inkpen's *This troll that troll*, 11/28/94)

This troll that troll
by Mick Inkpen
I picked this Book Because I like trolls.
So dose Ms. Hasebe Ludt.
I love trolls so much.
I just LIKE IT!
(Naomi's Reading Response, 12/08/94)

Through Treva and the trolls, the children also caught a glimpse into a different cultural environment and got a sense of a role model in the determined girl who teaches the trolls, who don't understand about Christmas, a lesson about communication but also about the spirit of generosity and getting along with each other, set against the background of a northern snowy landscapes, with a reindeer named Arni, a dog named Tuffi, two trolls Mig and Tig who communicate at a telegraphic level of language development (I want dog. Can't push! How fly? I got dog), their pet hedgehog, and a wild and wonderful troll horse.

During this time, we also participated in a music listening program though which the students learned about music styles and composers from around the world. I took this opportunity to introduce the children to Edvard Grieg and his music, coming from the hills of Norway and his home *Troldhaugen* in the "valley of the trolls," we listened to some of the Nordic melodies and the students wrote down their impressions afterwards. I had to smile when I read how the trolls, together with images of seasons and landscapes, figured largely in the imagination of the children:

It was winter and the trolls were skating. (Renata)

I liked it because it sawndid like trolls were iceskating in the winter. (Fran)

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I notice That the composers song was The best song I hive hrd. (Sara)

It Sounds like peace and day light. (Naomi)

This tape is about trolls in Summer I think. (Erin)

I learned that Edvard Grieg is a very famise composer and I felt like I was
playing the music. (Jimmy)
(Responses to Edvard Grieg, *The First Meeting, One of the Nordic Melodies*,
25/11/95)

Through music and poetry in particular, the children were able to experience the
aesthetic and emotional dimensions of language and texts that transcend the borders of
perceived or traditional genres. In the following poem, Debra Frasier's *On the Day You
Were Born* (1991), which we used as part of our read-aloud storytime to the children, the
relationship between the earth as our global environment and the uniqueness of the
individual is portrayed in stunning verbal and visual images. The poem tells a story about
creation, about fitting in with the universe, about ecology, about the changing yet
constantly recurring patterns around us -- a soothing and at the same time breathtakingly
stimulating listening and comprehension experience for the children. The aesthetics
involved in this exquisite languaging go hand in hand with its sociopolitical relevance, its
appropriateness in this age of re-awakening of ecological consciousness, and, above all,
the message of caring for both the earth and each of its individual inhabitants.

On the day you were born
the round planet Earth
turned toward your morning sky,
whirling past darkness,
spinning the night into light.

On the day you
were born
gravity's strong pull
held you to the
Earth
with a promise that
you
would never float
away ...

... while deep in
space
the burning Sun
sent up
towering flames,
lighting your sky
from dawn until
dusk.

On the day you were born
the quiet Moon glowed
and offered to bring
a full, bright face,
each month,
to your windowsill ...

... while high above the North
Pole,
Polaris, the glittering North Star,
stood still, shining silver light
into your night sky.

On the day
you were born
the Moon pulled
on the ocean
below, and,
wave by wave,
a rising tide
washed the
beaches clean for
your footprints ...

... while far
out at sea
clouds swelled
with water drops,
sailed to shore
on a wind,
and rained you
a welcome
across the Earth's
green lands.

Naomi: I like the pictures. This is about on the day you were born, and I like
           when it talks about the world!
Teacher: Me too!
Tara: I like it because it talks about the earth, and there is a boy, and he
           falls into the earth.
Teacher: Yes, the boy was very special!
           (11/09/94)

In *Peace begins with us* (Brown, Denos, Montgomery, O'Connor, & Scott, 1993), a locally developed resource which suggests further activities with this and other books for primary teachers and their students, the authors state: "When we meet a story, each of us automatically makes connections to our own experiences and to familiar stories. We bring our own world to the story" (p. 17). Other stories, such as the timeless *Good night moon* (Brown, 1947) and *The crane girl* (Charles, 1992), which the children were choosing for their reading around this time connected with our conversations about peace and also with the feelings of peacefulness that such texts evoked for them:

> Good night Moon
> by Margaret Wise Brown.
> I like the part when it is Quiet. this is about a Book that said Good night to the Whole house. I like It Because It talks about night and night is the Best time of the Day. I like it Because it is fun. I like the pictures of the Fire place, the window. I wonder Why it is so quiet. I think Because they are sleeping in there Beds. I like All of the pictures. they are nice. I Wonder How they do the pictures so Good. I like this Book Because I like to write about Books like this. they are fun Books.
> (Naomi's Reading Response to Margaret Wise Brown's *Goodnight moon*, 11/15/94)
> I love your ideas about this story. Did you read the big book? Do you know some other stories by Margaret Wise Brown?
> (Teacher's response)

> The Crane Girl
> I liked this book because it is about Peace and love.
> (Martha's Reading Response to Veronika Martenova Charles' *The crane girl*, 11/15/94)
> Have you ever felt like Yoshiko?
> (Teacher's Response)

> The Crane girl
> I liked this book because it was about peace and love. it was beautiful. and I liked Yoshiko and this book brings peace to us all.
> (Bethany's Reading Response, 11/17/94).
> Yes! This is a lovely story. I think I felt like Yoshiko when I was a very small girl.
> (Teacher's Response).

These are the kinds of literature and responses that, as Frye (1964) and subsequent literary and philosophical critics and scholars ascertain, illuminate the world of texts as an embodied world, reflecting fundamental human experiences (Rorty, 1985; Rosenblatt, 1900). In re-living these experiences and constructing their own literary relations through the interactive processes of reading and writing, students came to connect their own world with the world at large, *in all the universe*. In these intertextual dialogues, students began to create discourses that spread from their personal imagination to classroom discourses that were more inclusive, productive and richer than individual languaging. In connection with Bakhtin's (1981) work on the dialogic imagination, we can thus perceive the possibilities of creating classroom discourses that reflect community building, allowing students:

> to become aware that there are different ways of viewing the world encoded in language. They become aware that language is not a window on reality but a refracting medium, and that they must make decisions about which perspective to adopt. They become aware of discourses seeking for their allegiance and competing for dominance. Through these processes a shared (although not necessarily harmonious) language gradually emerges; if the process has been a successful one, this shared language is enriched by the many perspectives and ways of making meaning that the members of the group bring with them.
> (Maclean, 1994, p. 237)

By allowing multiple discourses, the voices of the others, into the textual experiences of the classroom community, aesthetic experiences become invaginated with cognitive, social, and critical learning and growth experiences, constructing, in Rosenblatt's words, "frameworks for thinking" (Rosenblatt, 1990, p. 100) that are "whole, bright, deep with understanding" in both a personal as well as a community sense (Pinar, 1988). These philosophical and literary connections are reinforced in British Columbia's language arts reform which elaborates on the importance of literature in the development of literacy:

> The reading and study of literature enhance the aesthetic, imaginative, creative, and affective aspects of a person's development. Literature preserves and extends the imaginative power of the individual. It allows young people to explore imaginatively the places where they live and provides them with an understanding

of cultural heritage and a historical perspective, exposing them to points of view other than the present and personal. (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 1990a, p. 13)

This belief in the empowering nature of literature is mirrored in the Ministry's *Literature Connections* (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 1991) which elaborates on the importance of the partnership between teachers and teacher librarians in order to help students fully explore the world of literature and, through it, their own personal world. Through these positive experiences that lead to understanding and enjoyment of the books they choose to read, so the goal statement reads, "students will develop the disposition to become lifelong readers" (BC Ministry of Education, 1991, p. 35).

Just a couple of decades ago, in this very same school, the contexts of reading the words and the world were set by standards very different from the above recommended curriculum:

> And I remember, we were, there were 35, and you sat there, and everything was very stereotyped. You see, for me, I'd read these stories and think: "Wow"! Because I knew different kinds of ... I had a different culture at home. I would read these stories and think: "Oh, that's what I want. You know, Dick and Jane -- everything was so stereotyped, and you know, you didn't see anything different, and I remember that it was important for us not to be different, even though I was Italian; and I had security within my group, the Italians, but when I was at school, I wanted to be Canadian like everybody else. And there was a strong influence of the Anglo-Caucasians, they were the ones that you wanted to be like. (Teacher Interview, Bella, 05/95)

How has the language arts curriculum changed? Angela, one of the teachers from that very same generation, having herself grown up in Vancouver and having taught at Franklin for 15 years, thinks back to when there were hardly any materials available that reflected the multicultural nature of the school (except for *The Five Chinese Brothers*, she remarks with an ironic smile, alluding to the racist overtones of this book). Then, in the early 80s, Franklin was part of a pilot program for the multicultural primary social studies text *New Friends* (Alternatives to Racism, 1984),[25] and teachers for the first time were

encouraged to integrate multicultural issues into the curriculum with meaningful materials. Angela remembers how she and her teaching partner used this text at the time:

> We piloted some of the materials ... we used it in the classroom, almost like a social studies theme, we'd sit down, look at the book and talk about it ... for a couple of weeks, we did a little section each. Actually this would be good to use again. When I look at it again, I remember it's more about relationships with others, and it just happens to use multiculturalism, which is what you want to do, you don't want to say: "Oh, lets' learn about this country and all the things that are done there." So when you look at the suggested activities in here, it's just basically about getting along with others, but they're using different cultural groups. Yeah, it's actually pretty good. It's a good theme to use in September, *New Friends,* and to have something like this which is a good guide, you could use this and the activities, and it would save a lot of time for the teacher, and yet you are doing something that is very valid, yeah, let's do that again, it's a good idea. It would be nice if you sat down and read it with the children, it would be nice maybe for grade two and three, particularly, but certainly you could read it out loud to the other kids. (Teacher Interview, Angela, 06/95)

A decade later, the scenario has changed considerably with respect to materials. As part of a whole-school curriculum focus during the past two years, Angela and the other team teachers in the P.O.A. have worked together with the Curriculum Implementation Teacher Associate (C.I.T.A.), the school librarian, the curriculum committee as well as a small group of parents and students to supplement and change the focus of both classroom and school library texts to be more culturally inclusive. As a result of this work, criteria for selecting and purchasing new books were developed. This became an interesting and spontaneous area for reflection for me.

> I find myself on another committee ... At the same time that I am interested in this topic from both my research perspective and my classroom practice, I'm starting to feel exasperated by the slow progress, lack of both interest and awareness by other staff members. How can we establish a policy on criteria for selecting books with multicultural content in this climate? Even though I know that these processes need time and that there is much potential for growth thanks to Kathy's support and initiative, I feel I am once again fighting an uphill battle against apathy, superficiality, and the pervasive perception of multiculturalism as an add-on curricular activity.
> (Researcher Narrative, 01/12/94)

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TABLE 2

Criteria for Selecting Multicultural Material
Franklin Community School
April 1994

- Authentic language and authorship

- Non-sexist and non-racist portrayal of characters (cf. guidelines/checklist)

- Quality of illustrations/art work in combination with rich language

- Variety of genres: folktales, fairytales, poetry, rhymes and chants, big books, contemporary fiction and non-fiction for different ages and reading levels, i.e., wordless books, easy picture books, story books, short chapter books, biography, novels, etc.

- Authors from a variety of ethno-cultural backgrounds, in particular from those present in Franklin's student population (cf. statistics on ethnic percentages), including Indo-Canadian, Central America

- Include books in first languages of these groups as well as bilingual books (English/L1)

- Include Canadian authors/illustrators with multicultural background and/or theme/topic relevant to multicultural Canada

- Include international children's literature in translation (cf. IBBY books)

- Emphasis on narratives: stories from different cultures in order to encourage students' own story-telling and story-writing

- Include narratives from both visible and non-visible minority/ethnic groups

The policy that was eventually established with support and input from some staff and parents stresses the use of authentic children's literature written by authors from diverse cultural backgrounds, especially those represented through children and parents in the school, with an emphasis on narratives that include the experiences of immigrants and visible minority communities (see Table 2). However, it was felt that a balanced selection also needs to ensure that, for example, white writers are not excluded -- as long as the content of the literature is not racially, gender- or otherwise biased.

Two major purchases of texts were made during last year for both the school library as well as for individual classrooms. 'Book buying' for the latter was done in conjunction with professional development workshops on available choices for children's literature and how to use them in the setting up of classroom libraries and implementation of a classroom literature program. Compared with the first purchase, which concentrated on fiction, the second one later that year focused on information books and autobiographical narratives and biographies, arts from Canada around the world (e.g., shared visions, lives, drama, dance, First Nations), and texts specifically focusing on anti-racism, such as *Naomi's Road* (Kogawa, 1986). These texts complemented the theme for the Professional Development days for that year, *Culture and Conflict*. Resource materials were purchased mainly from the following sources: Vancouver Kidsbooks, Pacific Educational Press, the Vancouver Art Gallery, Museum of Anthropology, as well as a limited amount of from catalogues through United Library Services.

> Our professional day is themed around book-buying for classroom libraries. Both Kathy and I have taken the responsibility to organize it collaboratively in various ways. We have invited a speaker to talk about reading 'with real books,' we have established links with two publishers and a bookstore, and we have developed an agenda to structure the day. Everything seems set up efficiently, yet I am worried. How will individual teachers respond to this challenge of a day immersed in thinking about books, choosing books, and reflecting about their own approach to teaching reading? Once again, I am succinctly aware of the differences among them, the wide span of pedagogical and professional belief and knowing that exists in the school. How can I ever think that I could be effective in helping to build a bridge between these? What will they think of me,

a fairly inexperienced teacher, setting up a workshop in literature? Who is feeling challenged, threatened?

We went book buying. People felt good about discovering the rich diversity of children's literature in an authentic place: Vancouver Kidsbooks was the place most people went -- and I felt glad that there was much one-on-one conversation between teachers and the knowledgeable staff of the store, quietly absorbed reading, and excited sharing of new discoveries. Yet, this episode, in its singularity and specialness, once again left me feeling dismayed at the prospect of implementing this 'literature-based' curriculum. What is it based on -- whose beliefs and values about literature? *Where* is the base in the space between the children's lived experiences and the teacher's world of teaching reading? Who is setting the standards for quality?
(Researcher Narrative, 04/95)

Angela, when reflecting on the progress we have made with respect to materials for reading instruction, recognizes the long-term effort that is involved when working with issues of cultural inclusiveness and responsiveness:

> I think there's more ...I still don't think there is adequate ... it's just ... I think we're at the beginning, at a time when people are beginning, writers are considering, Canadian writers are considering their family histories as valid and important to be written down; people just didn't write about it before, they didn't think it was important, or ... I don't know what. Now this is becoming more important, and I think because the world is getting smaller, you know, you can get materials from other countries and, there are storytellers that can come in and bring their stories, and I think that has changed. I think the materials are important, but even more I think it's really that what the teachers say and do, I think that's most important, no matter what materials. I think without any materials you could still manage; for example, if you take a book that is based here in North America, or animals for that matter, animals can be non-cultural, and then turn it into a cultural experience, or 'How does that fit in with your family?', or not even cultural, a family, 'How does your family handle that?' and it might be completely different, even within cultural groups, and I think that's what's really changing. And the literature is helping, it definitely helps, it gives you a base to talk about things, it also makes children think: "Gee, maybe I'm not so different ..."
>
> I would like to see ... I bet there are so many books published in different countries, if we could get our hands on that, I would love that, like, published in Africa, in translation, that would be really good. But that's probably something that will come over the next ten years, it's probably starting ... and bilingual books too ... (Teacher Interview, Angela, 06/95)

Having texts available in the students' first language is a difficult task, not only from an availability perspective. It also involves value judgments about the importance and the appropriateness of such texts in classrooms where English is the designated language of

instruction. With respect to the connection between home and school, the school-wide home reading program that was initiated at the beginning of the year seemed to give teachers a unique opportunity to build a bridge between literacy experiences at home and those at school and to try to communicate with parents through a common interest in helping children along the road of literacy. ESL children and parents could read together either in their first language or in English, depending on their preference. According to Walters and Gunderson (1985), there are substantial positive effects when L1 reading is practiced in both home and school. However, this view is not always shared unanimously; there are different expectations, constraints, and motivations on the parents' side:

> I was really fascinated by that in the Read-it-up this year. Some people really objected to that Read-it-up program. I was aghast at that. It was an imposition to their life. (Parent Interview, Gregg, 05/95)

> Sung's progress in English is moving ahead in leaps and bounds. Both his parents are tremendously motivated to help him with his second language. It is a pleasure to watch them interact with their son during the student-led conference, their interest in his portfolio, especially in his reading log. Afterwards, they talk about how the home reading program has been such a help for them. I know -- their extensive and enthusiastic comments on Sung's record sheets tell their own story. Especially Sung's father's comments reveal his great interest in his son's progress in English, but he doesn't think that he should be reading anything in Chinese at all.
> (Researcher Narrative, 03/05/94)

> These two books are too easy for Sung. I have told him to read harder books which are challenging. (*Philippa and the dragon* by Susan King/Diane Vanderee, *The hungry chickens* by Kathryn Pond).

> Sung can read this book pretty good! It's a significant progress compared with what he could a few months ago. (*The hare and the tortoise* by Janet Hillman).

> Sung likes FOOLISH JACK. He thinks that FOOLISH JACK is somewhat like Amelia Bedelia. Nice book. (*BUZZ* by Roger Hargreaves, *Foolish Jack* by Lucy Kincaid/Eric Rowe).

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Great book. We enjoy it. (*Good work Amelia Bedelia* by Peggy Parish and Lynn Sweat).

Hard book. (*War and peas* by Michael Foreman).

Very smart boy. Sung likes the book. (*Don't worry* by Pauline Cartwright & Ian McNee).

We discussed Peevish's behaviour: sour -- loser. *(Little monster's bedtime book* by Mercer Mayer).

Nice book. Sung can not [sic] understand the book good enough to know the fun of the book. (*Amelia Bedelia's family album* by Peggy Parish and Lynn Sweat).

(Father's comments in Sung's Home Reading Log, 03/14/94-03/21/94)

Sung had chosen a mixture of books to read at home: some fables and folk- and fairytales such as *Foolish Jack*, some from series such as the *Amelia Bedelia* books and the *Literacy 2000* series designed as a multidisciplinary ESL text series,[26] some from authors who were popular among the students in the P.O.A. such as Michael Foreman and Roger Hargreaves. Sung's father was his only reading partner, switching back and forth from being the reader to that of the listener, and he was quite involved in directing his son's reading choices. Judging from our conversations and the comments in the reading logs, Sung's father was very motivated to have his son learn English and therefore sat down with him to read -- in English -- on an almost daily basis. His own command of English was sufficient to discuss the books with his son, but Sung's mother hardly spoke any English at all. There was no way the father wanted his son to read in their first language, and I was concerned about the mother's exclusion in this process of literacy acquisition compared with the following scenario:

> I am immensely excited by the response from the parents we invited to be part of our multicultural literature committee. With their culturally diverse backgrounds, such as Caribbean and Australian, they have shared some delightful perspectives and materials with us. Leila, Maya's mother, is a

treasure to have as a parent in my classroom -- her love of literature is obviously catching. Her interaction with the children in the classroom through storytelling and reading is making a big impact on them. They are looking forward to her sharing stories from the Caribbean with them whenever she can make the time to come in. I am prepared to put everything else on hold for these precious occasions. We are also becoming quite knowledgeable about Australian culture, places, and animals thanks to the wonderful books Darlene, Paul's mother, is bringing into the classroom from home and from the book-buying she was part of.
(Researcher Narrative, 03/30/94)

Australia has provided us with many enjoyable reading experiences. Once again this year, one of the children, Sara, has family connections 'down under' through her mother, who was born there. When I brought in a stack of Australian children's books which my daughter bought for me (with the help of a teacher friend in Melbourne) while she was visiting there this summer, Sara and the other children were immediately hooked. They adored the combinations of storytelling and art, some of it from the cultural context of the aboriginal people of Australia and New Zealand, such as the story about *Mungoon-gali, the giant goanna* (Trezise, 1991), the legend of *Enora and the black crane* (Meeks, 1991), and the delightful *Possum in the house* (Jensen, 1986). Over the next few days, Renata and others brought in more Australian books, *Koala Loo, Wombat Stew, My place.* The children's librarian from the local library was wondering what is going on ...

Together with Charlotte's photographs from her trip and Sara's and her mother's stories and pictures from their home country, the other children and I were able to create a picture of a landscape that is exactly opposite to our own geographical position on the earth. When reflecting about the impact of such stories from different cultural and geographical landscapes, Bronwen sensed a feeling of understanding, belonging and *comfort* building among the children through this teaching approach that integrates language into global issues and landscapes throughout the curriculum:

> Yes, I think it is working for the kids, and I think it makes them feel really comfortable, excited in a way to maybe hear a story about their culture, you know, and kind of proud in a way. I could really see that in some of our kids with some of the stories, *Grandfather's Journey*, and you know you see that in

Jan, he was just beaming -- those kinds of stories. Yeah, I think it's working for the kids, and they go back and re-read, if you look closely at what they're looking at, reading it again, and if you shared a story they can relate to. Not just those kids but all the kids, you know, they are choosing it again, it's really neat ... The same with the stories from Norway, you know, that we had at the beginning of the year, you know, we've shared lots of stories from all over the world. (Teacher Interview, Bronwen, 03/95)

Talking about the books her daughter was bringing home, Loren commented on how stories about children in different geo-cultural settings and backgrounds were appealing to Felicity:

The read-it-up program is just great, because Felicity gets very proud of herself when she realizes how many books she's read, and she likes to keep track of them with her log. I like the read-it-up program because you teachers have this great selection of books, and she's my first child, so I'm not that aware of the authors even though we go to the library and look around, but this has introduced me to a lot of very good writers, so it's great.

There was one story about some African kids by a river, and they go across the river and get into all this trouble; and she really liked that one. And there was another book about a black girl, a single parent family, and she wanted to be Peter Pan, and they said: "No you can't, number one because you're a girl, and number two because you're black." And she really liked that one.
(Parent Interview, Loren, 06/95)

Jodi, one of the parents who has been involved in the community school programs by teaching an after-school children's art class, believes in the importance of incorporating multicultural elements visually into art and across the curriculum:

One of the things that I grew up with that made a very strong impression on me was my mother celebrated multicultural holidays, so we celebrated Girls Day in Japan, we celebrated a Swedish holiday, I don't know what it's called, and so on. We would celebrate different nationalities' holidays, and my mom would do the research and would know all about, you know, do the whole customs that were involved, and that made a very strong impact on me, and I know has made me, instead of having some bias or racial attitudes, I'm more curious about the cultures because I find that really interesting. I found that focusing on the holidays is a really good way of introducing a culture because holidays tend to be the time when the culture really shows, right? So that would be something that I can see, see doing, is planning units around holidays, and getting literature and that.

The other thing that I've been thinking about is research, getting the kids involved in doing the research, and showing them how books can be involved in the research process, even at grade two or so. I certainly see Hilary doing research, even if it's just with a very simple picture or map, that sort of thing, getting them as a team to work together, to find out about a certain holiday, for

example. Certainly Hilary has brought home a few books that had a multicultural slant; I know she brought home one that was about Chinatown, about the dragon dance, that was a lovely book, I loved that. And I think that's really really important too, I really feel very strongly about that too, introducing a culture so that way to understand what goes on in the culture and get the kids involved that way. (Parent Interview, Jodi, 03/95)

At the end of this year, I too felt that we indeed shared a lot of stories in this classroom and that the children responded to literature in ways that were both comfortable and meaningful. The following table (Table 3) intends to give only a sampling of all the meaningful texts *in all the universe* that were part of our geo-cultural exploration of stories that spoke to us about the earth, our cultures and the need for relating through an understanding of both personal as well as universal human experiences. They are by no means the only ones; there are many more, and such texts are becoming more visible in the libraries and bookstores in our schools, city, country, and all over the world (Abbott & Polk, 1993; Brown, 1994; Harris, 1993; Jobe & Sutton, 1992; Kezwer, 1995; Miller-Lachmann, 1992; Miller & McCaskill, 1993; Simon, 1993a, 1993b; Teale, 1993).

TABLE 3

A Sampling of Multicultural Children's Literature: *In All The Universe*	
Titles	**Authors**
A letter to the king	Leong Vá and James Anderson
A light in the attic/Where the sidewalk ends	Shel Silverstein
Anansi the spider: A legend from the Ashanti	Gerald McDermott
Aunt Harriet's underground railroad in the sky	Faith Ringgold
Chin Chiang and the dragon's dance	Ian Wallace
Cloudy with a chance of meatballs	Judi and Ron Barrett
Christmas trolls/Trouble with trolls	Jan Brett
Don't eat spiders	Robert Heidbreder and Karen Patkau
Enora and the black crane	Arone Raymond Meeks
Father Christmas	Raymond Briggs
Follow the drinking gourd	Jeanette Winter
Goodnight moon	Margaret Wise Brown and Clement Hurd
Grandfather's journey/Tree of cranes	Allan Say
If you're not from the prairie	Dave Bouchard and Henry Ripplinger
Legends of the sun and moon	Eric and Tessa Hadley and Jan Nesbitt
Moonhorse	Mary Pope Osborne and S. M. Saelig
Mother Earth's counting book	Andrew Clements and Lonni Sue Johnson
Mungoon-gali and the giant goanna	Percy Trezise
Naomi's road	Joy Kogawa
Nine o'clock lullaby	Marilyn Singer and Fran Lessac
Only one	Marc Harshman and Barbara Garrison
On the day that you were born	Debra Frasier
Pippi Longstocking	Astrid Lindgren
Sadako and the thousand paper cranes	Eleanor Coerr
Sing to the stars	Mary Brigid Barrett and Sandra Speidel
Some of the kinder planets	Tim Wynne-Jones
Tales from Gold Mountain	Paul Yee and Simon Ng
The elders are watching	Dave Bouchard and Roy Henry Vickers
The crane girl	Veronika Martenova Charles
The faithful elephants	Yukio Tsuchiga and Ted Lewin
The little prince	Antoine de Saint-Exupéry
The nutmeg princess	Richard Keens-Douglas and A. Galouchko
The witches	Roald Dahl
The Wump World	Bill Peet
This land is my land	George Littlechild
Tusk tusk	David McKee
Where the forest meets the sea/Window	Jeannie Baker
Where's Waldo?	Martin Handford

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The Many Webs of Charlotte Revisited

How then can we grasp how this multi-faceted reality of *reading the word and the world* translates into the actual print sources, the literature used for reading in today's classrooms? Literature continues to speak to our hearts, bridging chronological and geographical boundaries. Just as Goethe's Charlotte has endeared herself to us as a character who inspired love and devotion throughout the course of two centuries, E. B. White's Charlotte, this truly remarkable writer and friend, re-enters the pages of pedagogical discourse.

> No student should ever be asked to answer worksheet questions about a good book. Asking nine-year-olds how many webs Charlotte spun after reading *Charlotte's Web* ruins the purpose of the story. Alas, the tradition of assigning students worksheets, or, perhaps worse, the dreaded book report, has resulted in hundreds of thousands of adults who don't enjoy reading books and, in fact, don't read books at all (Gunderson, 1995b, p. 26).

> Re-reading Charlotte: a family name, my grandmother's and now my daughter's, old and new, re-surfacing in print around me: many a dedication on the front page of a book, reading aloud from *Charlotte's Web* in classrooms where I am a student and a teacher, coming across an article in a German magazine on *Charlotte: Ein Name macht Karriere:* "Suddenly, an almost forgotten name is on everybody's tongue -- *a name that gets on well with/in the world* -- and a daughter who indeed lives the promise of her name. Other Charlottes' lives: In Berlin, writing my thesis about writers, among them the Brontë sisters, Charlotte and Emily, who, in the isolation of the windswept Yorkshire moors, spent their short lives struggling with the difficulty of being women writers in a male-dominated world, yet whose literary endeavours were passionate and inspired generations to come. Years later, visiting Charlottenburg, the palatial residence of Charlotte, Queen of Prussia, with *my* Charlotte, six years old and a writer in her own right whose tongue-in-cheek autobiographical notes read just another couple of years later:

> *Charlotte Hasebe wrote the award winning novel "Share With the World" to make other people aware of the problem with racism. Other novels by Charlotte Hasebe include "Share With Saturn" and "Share With the Black Holes." All her books deal with one problem of the world today. Charlotte Hasebe's books have all won at least one prize. "Share With Saturn" won the prize for the best book in 1989 and again in 1990. The book "Share With the World" is now being made into a movie by Steven Speilberg [sic]. Charlotte is hoping for a promotion for "Share With Black Holes". Charlotte Hasebe was born on October 1, 1980. She*

*enjoys reading, Bike riding, and badminton. Charlotte loves all animals
including snakes, lizards, and frogs. She currently lives in Vancouver B.C.
(Share with the world, by C. Hasebe, 1990)*

Other Charlottes ... re-reading *Children's literature in the classroom: Weaving
Charlotte's web,* which refers to yet another Charlotte whose love of literature
has inspired many students and colleagues. Remembering yet another queen
from yet another historical landscape, and islands inhabiting generations of
aboriginal people who have been denied their own history for centuries ...
Charlotte has a seriously beautiful resonance -- and is at the same time
capriciously suitable for famous spiders and irreverent basset hound puppies.[27]
(Researcher Narrative, 01/31/95)

More frequently than we like to admit, we ask children to stretch, to use their

imagination to relate to a character in a work of literature in ways we as teachers think

will be cognitively enriching and put those higher thinking skills in place. We have good

reasons for that in the Vygotskian framework of the Zone of Proximal Development

(Vygotsky, 1962; 1978) and Bruner's scaffolding (Bruner, 1981). Pretending they are

Wilbur and re-creating the details of life in the barnyard within the framework of

characters and the plot, such as finding new adjectives for describing Wilbur and

decorating a T-shirt, and numerous other job cards related to Charlotte's web: This may

work, sometimes, for some children, but it can be a dangerous way to stifle creativity, to

achieve the exact opposite: staying fenced in, never leaving that barnyard to see the wider

landscape, to make sense of a geo-cultural landscape from one's own perspective.

In the context of postmodern pedagogical practice, we are concerned with the

simultaneous deconstruction and construction of identities through reading and writing,

with the search for new concepts of literacy that allow for the multiple realities of lived

experiences in our classrooms through interpretation and adaptation. Looking at different

Charlottes revealed many different stories for me and made me appreciate the complexity

that lies in just one name.

Mary Ashworth, over breakfast, tells of a former student of hers, a nun who was

going to one of the Near Eastern countries to teach in a Muslim school. For a class

project, she decided to examine the possibilities of adapting her favourite book, *Charlotte's Web*, to this particular cultural environment. She decided that, alas, the book was not going to be suitable at all within the cultural constraints of a Muslim society and educational system with regards of the character of Wilbur, the pig, and his destiny of being slaughtered for food, the relationships within the family and in particular the strong female character of Fran that would contradict the strict patriarchal hierarchy within the Muslim community.

Lynn Thomas, a colleague who has taught Native children in Northern Quebec, on the contrary, remembers the popularity of this particular book with the students in the remote village where she was a teacher. *Charlotte* had a particular appeal for these children, it seemed, even though, or perhaps despite of, the foreigners of the landscape and the characters in the book. In this particular northern geo-cultural setting, hearing and reading this story about friendship and devotion set in a southern American White farming community and family seemed to transcend cultural and climatic differences through its masterful languaging and universal appeal of human values that touch every reader's heart. Maybe it would have achieved just the same in the Far East for a nun trying to teach English to Muslim children.

Maxine Greene (1993), in an earlier quotation, had acknowledged the value of legitimizing a *polyphony* of voices by telling and bringing such stories into our classrooms and. At the same time, by seeing the world through multiple texts from multiple perspectives, we may be able to transform traditional classroom practices and prescribed text lists into a working community of inclusive voices (Sutherland, 1993).

Texts that allow us to construct and interpret within multiple frameworks, such as the varied and variable readings of the *Charlotte* texts above, are essential components of literacy instruction that aims toward building coherent and caring curricula and communities in the context of cultural diversity. Spinning the webs of stories that challenge children to creatively question their world and at the same time construct their

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own understanding of the world based on these experiences will ultimately enrich their lives. As teachers, we must create windows of opportunities for students to observe, incorporate and participate in the weaving of webs of rich intertextual literacies. Janet Hickman and Bernice Cullinan (1989), in honouring Charlotte Huck, re-create *the many webs of the many Charlottes* we have come to love and honour:

> A point of view that honors children's response and an attitude that makes the teacher one of a community of readers and learners are both important contributions. All together, this interwoven idea about literature and learning form a web of support for its use in the classroom. Had this been the work of another Charlotte (Charlotte A. Cavatica of E. B. White's *Charlotte's Web), the words written large in the web would surely be "ENJOY" and "LEARN."* (p. 11)

Chapter 5

Re-tracing the Paths and Places of Community in Languaging

Midnight, not a sound from the pavement.
Has the moon lost her memory?
She is smiling alone.
In the lamplight the withered leaves collect at my feet,
And the wind begins to moan.

> *Memory,* from Andrew Lloyd Webber's musical *Cats,* based on *Rhapsody on a windy night* by T. S. Eliot

The future of the hyphen will, I believe, trace a path into the past as well.

> Una Chaudhuri, *The future of the hyphen*

In den Flüssen nördlich der Zukunft
werf ich das Netz aus, das Du
zögernd beschwerst
mit von Steinen geschriebenen
Schatten.

> *In the rivers north of the future*
> *I cast out the net, that you*
> *hesitantly weigh down*
> *with stone-written*
> *shadows.*

Paul Celan, In *Hans-Georg Gadamer on education, poetry, and history*

In his 1986 volume on the poetry of Paul Celan, *Spur des Worts* [Trace of the word], Otto Pöggeler interprets the words of the writer and poet as a trace that enables us to stay close to what has escaped, to find a way of one's own and, most importantly, to help others to join us on this path. At the same time, however, the author asks the question:

> But whose life and work can trace a path in this sense? ... Only a few "traces" are indeed such that they will truly remain in people's memory. Only those who take risks for themselves and bear testimony to what at first glance might not be recognized as the decisive movement of a time can leave behind such a trace. It is life itself that engraves the traces that matter, and only the word that can bring such a trace into language will find lasting attention (pp. 20-21). (E. Hasebe-Ludt, Trans.)

Memory ... Brighter than a thousand suns:

> To remember that pedagogy is concerned with the formation of memory means to be fully responsive to the conditions by which a person learns to remember well. And remembering well does not mean just remembering happy times, that is, suppressing the fire by which we might be refined. More importantly, remembering well means remembering how each of us might struggle through life's bittersweetness with the kind of courage that enables life to go on. (Smith, 1988, pp. 281-282)

In this chapter, I want to re-visit and re-connect with some of the sites from which this pedagogical questioning started out in order to assess the important landmarks of learning that have come into view. In remembering, as Smith tells us above, we are able to make connections with our own past through the many webs of influences -- be they textual or personal -- on our developing sense of self. Moreover, the particular kind of remembering through language that writing and re-writing allows, constitutes, in Borgman's (1992) words, "the recovery of the world of eloquent things, a recovery that accepts the postmodern critique and realizes postmodern aspirations" (p. 6). I join Borgman in including among these aspirations "focal realism, patient vigor, and communal celebration" (p. 6).

When writing about the journey of coming to live reflectively within a community of inquiry, I had addressed the notion of *caring* with regard to the pedagogical landscape I found myself constructing and inhabiting. I had created a dialogue within myself, moving from 'discourse a' to 'discourse b,' both informing each other and becoming invaginated through layers of meaning-making that re-constituted prior texts and produced new understandings of myself in relation to others within the multiple realities of pedagogical and personal caring.

When re-reading these reflections, I realized that within the theme of *caring*, underneath and in between the first two narratives of individual and joint experiences as teachers, colleagues, and human beings, there runs another story that is my own and that I had not told yet: a story of personal meaning-making and journeying which was surfacing in this ongoing process of re-searching and questioning about myself, my praxis, my values, and my relationships with others.

The Tensionality Within Textual Communities

Pedagogy as lived experience -- in re-discovering and re-shaping my beliefs and values within a philosophically coloured light and from a social-constructivist perspective, I have come to see that my individual lived experience has been altered dramatically through the presence of certain people and through my reactions to them while learning, teaching, and starting to live and write more reflectively.

Robert Graves, in his poem *To walk on hills*, has expressed this kind of experiential learning that seems to have characterized my path up to this point: It has been and still is a climb uphill. In many ways, this journey has not been a solitary one but rather a joint venture together with other teachers, colleagues, and mentors whom I have come to care for deeply. However, on another plane of journeying, there has been -- and still is -- the

solitude and the separateness of 'head' and 'heart' that echo in the poem -- tensionalities within communities of inquiry.

What milestones have I reached along this path of journeying toward making sense of things, amidst the *con-fusion* (in the sense of working *against*, resisting a fusion) that seemed to inhabit both 'head and heart,' and which were the *memorable* moments that gave me the courage to look ahead, move on, and draw from past experiences? Somewhere in this re-discovery process it became clear to me that the building and developing of some very special relationships have played a decisive role in shaping my pedagogical persona and in re-shaping my personal profile. While my head reverberated with the impact of the readings of such seminal philosophical writers as Aoki, Derrida, Foucault, Grumet, Heidegger, Noddings, and Pinar, among others, my heart resonated with a growing genuine communal belonging with the teachers, mentors, and children who inspired me to keep on walking uphill, to climb more mountains, to risk standing on the edge of a cliff in order to see more clearly and to achieve harmony. 'True equanimity,' Heidegger's *Gelassenheit*, not a goal within easy reach, by far, when faced with the turmoil of students' lives and my own beliefs and emotions -- yet, until recently, it seemed a desirable one to strive for.

I came to realize that the striving for unity, for harmony, which I felt was so important in the past, has often disguised the danger of silencing the voices *in between* and *underneath* the multiple layers of realities that make up our lives. In Derrida's notion of intertextuality, he uses the term *invagination* "pour essayer de décrire comment une surface extérieure se replie en surface intérieure," to try to describe how an outside layer repeats itself in an inside layer and, eventually, can become "une double invagination chiasmatique des bords," a doubly chiasmatic invagination of the borders of a text (Bennington & Derrida, 1991, p. 210). This multi-layeredness invites us to probe for the meaning hidden away underneath the folds of different readings and writings of texts, texts

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that reverberate with the lived experiences of children and teachers dwelling together in cultural diversity.

However, as I felt myself journeying amidst the tangle of postmodern intertext, I was starting to, once again, question my goals as too idealistic, deterministic, and finite. I see the need for more questioning, for adding yet another layer -- *the third time around, encore une fois, und so weiter ...*

I am less secure in my search for *being*, in myself (my self) as a *researcher in action research*. In so many ways, as researchers we have been preoccupied with searching for either objectivity or subjectivity, which both can be described as *unmoving*, static positions -- as *essence* in the phenomenological tradition, a notion I am finding myself increasingly un-comfortable with while trying to move toward transitional spaces that create new meanings.

In this joint venture, who are my companions, and where do I see us traveling? Who am I asking to become partners in equanimity? My mentors, colleagues, the children, their families, my family? The *calmness*, the *composure* the dictionary speaks of -- is that really what we should be striving for? Or is it the opposite, the chiasmatic notion of turbulence, of quaking, of living amidst difficulty that is needed in order to move forward, to truly transform? Underneath, in yet another layer, I am caught in the confusion of postmodern deconstructing of seemingly established notions of unity. How can we live in community, though, when there are only 'partial truths,' as Clifford and Marcus (1986) remind us? At this pedagogical moment of writing, of creating layers of text within texts, I am finding small comfort in the etymological promise of *confusion* as a semantic signifier which, in its truest sense could mean a togetherness, a *fusion*, of multiple realities and voices.

> Through holistic interpretations of language learning and teaching, we must oppose the formulation of meta-narratives and, instead, acknowledge the existence of a composite propositional intertext that represents the communication of multiple voices. In embracing this view, in Madeleine Grumet's words, "intertextuality invites us to use multiple texts, splicing them,

interweaving them with each other, with our commentaries, with our questions. ... There are no sacred texts." (Researcher Narrative, 07/07/94)

> We are being swept downstream by a torrent of change. Each year, each month, and almost every week, the landscape alters. The familiar vanishes, and within it the effectiveness of the ways we have made decisions as individuals, families, groups, and communities. (Theobald, 1987, p. 29)

The metaphor of *torrent of change* in the pedagogical landscape relates to the transformative change that critical action research intends to initiate. It also reminds us of the need for building bridges across the turbulences created by change. I am re-thinking the possibilities of a renewed dialogue, a bridge indeed, between the ivory towers of the academic landscape and the open fields of our schools and classrooms, between theory and praxis. Action research, perhaps, has the potential to become such a bridge -- or to become the stream that flows from underneath and, in multi-layered strands, informs the different plateaus of professional inquiry. This languaging of fluidity as a powerful force for change echoes in the following poem from a volume on Heidegger's power with language (Jaeger, 1971):

Der römische Brunnen

Auf steigt der Strahl, und fallend gießt
Er voll der Marmorschale Rund
Die, sich verschleiernd, überfließt
In einer zweiten Schale Grund;
Die zweite gibt, sie wird zu reich,
der dritten wallend ihre Flut,
und jede nimmt und gibt zugleich
und strömt und ruht.

Conrad Ferdinand Meyer

The Roman Fountain

Upwards climbs the jet, and in falling fills
the roundness of the marble bowl
which, in veiling itself, overflows
into a second bowl's base;
the second one, becoming too rich,
gives its flood to the third one seethingly,
and each one takes and gives at once
and rushes and rests.

(E. Hasebe-Ludt, Trans.)

In this joint process of searching for the roots of the disintegration that educational institutions have created for our children, the concept of unity emerged as an artificial construct and an undesirable goal to aim for within the framework of a critical postmodern intertextuality that legitimizes the 'spaces of dwelling in between' (Aoki, 1993). Affirming individual rights and differences in principle, yet sacrificing them 'for the common good' when it comes to the future of a sustainable economy constitutes a hypocritical lip service we must critically, yet thoughtfully, examine and expose.

I am re-thinking the notion of *thoughtfulness*, once again, in connection with the notion of pedagogical *responsibility* that establishes an intricate relationship between two individuals. It speaks of *belonging*, of an *obligation* in connection with caring about another human being. This notion creates a change in of a teacher's obligation toward his or her students, a *Kehre* in the way we care about our pedagogical relationships with others in the diverse community of teaching and learning. I am further enlightened by reading Terry Carson's (1992, 1994) writing about *not ethics, but obligation* and about what it means to collaboratively teach and dwell in action research in our schools. In connection with this responsible action comes a global perspective that transcends borders of different kind and is concerned with working toward a caring, just society:

> I believe that we need a conception of a global perspective that incorporates a view of the nature of responsible value deliberation and justification. This new conception, which I will call a constructivist conception, should provide the intellectual resources for approaching value conflict in a responsible manner. A person who has a constructivist global perspective will see all of the peoples of the world as having equal moral worth. In addition she will believe that an integral part of the task of bettering the lives of persons is the task of constructing elements of a genuine world moral community out of our disparate value heritages. (Coombs, 1989, p. 6)

For me, this year has truly been an experience of 'authentic dwelling' amongst that special and precious community of *"beings who belong together in this neighbourhood"* (Aoki, 1992, p. 28). However, as Louise Berman and her colleagues discovered in their earlier mentioned conversations with Ted Aoki, the reaching out to others, the journeying

toward and dwelling in larger communities are also necessary to create a 'curriculum for being,' for creating contexts in which hope, courage, and inspirited dialogues can flourish (Berman et al., 1991). This is an important landmark in the context of research through hermeneutic inquiry. I felt that many of the conversations I took part in during the past two years enabled me to gain meaning beyond the strictly personal realm; *in between* the lived experiences of others, meaning was constituted and re-constituted through the exchange of languaging. In this way, language itself, "the language of postmodernism has crucial critical force" (Borgman, 1992, p. 3).

> My year of living reflectively in the pedagogical landscape has created many beginnings. It has marked a *Kehre*, a turn -- but also a renewed understanding of *kehren* in the sense of *caring*. Maxine Greene, in the quotation which sets the theme to my multi-layered journeying and journalizing, expresses the kind of pedagogical reaching that will be necessary to truly transform the lived experiences of the young people we as teachers treasure. As pupils and as pedagogues, by building bridges, by learning to look through multiple perspectives, by celebrating diversity in community, we might come to locate multiple communities in diversity.
> (Researcher Narrative, 07/07/94)

Community in diversity: a phrase that comes easily to our lips, a geopolitical slogan, as Ted Aoki (1995) warns us:

> I see inscribed in the word "community," the words "common" and "unity," which I sense are prevailing signifiers in articulating the conventional imaginary of "community." ... But such an imaginary that gives birth to the metaphor of community as diversity produces, in its seeming liberal openness and tolerance of other, a silent norm that both contains and constrains differences on the underside of diversity. (pp. 5-6)

Similarly, Carl Leggo and his co-authors reflect on the dangers of equating community with unity:

> There is a grave danger of erasing the differences among people when community and unity are equated. In order to achieve unity an homogeneous complexion is promoted, and conformity is demanded. In this approach, the emphasis is on people toeing the party line, obeying the strictures of the majority or a powerful minority, adhering to rules, speaking in a single voice or at least in harmonious

voices. We have felt silenced in communities where unity has been emphasized as the foundation of community. And we have not been alone in our experience of silence. Many others have been silenced, too, when unity is emphasized as the foundation of community. What we have observed is that an emphasis on unity in community leads to a small group of people being served while most people are significantly erased, rendered invisible. (Hasebe-Ludt, Duff, & Leggo, 1995, p. 1)

However, through the active negotiation of socio-cognitive and socio-cultural processes such as the ones described in this dissertation and which involved the grasping of historical global events and their representation through different eyes -- of official sources *and* of the voices of people from ethnic minority groups -- children step-by-step can come to understand important parts of their role as players in this vastly expanding global community of learners. There is difficulty in community building involved in this, a tensionality that needs to be acknowledged as a necessary part of learning, of learning through language, of learning to read -- especially in the context of reading texts in a second or other language (Early & Gunderson, 1993; Elam, 1991).

> This prompts me to revisit Heidegger's notion of 'belonging together,' in which he emphasizes the first word of the phrase, *belonging*, invoking a sense of community that incorporates the *being* (Heidegger, 1968; Wood, 1993). This communal space thereby creates the texture of diversity, the striving, the *longing* for past and future connections -- unlike so much of the current educational and political rhetoric where the stress is on 'belonging *together*', on unity defined as universality, in a static and finite frame -- without listening to the authentic voices *in between* and the voices of the *other.*
> (Researcher Narrative, 07/25/94)

> The children are falling in love with poems. The poetry books are out on their tables before silent reading, and they are eager to read out a poem of their choice afterwards during book sharing. They especially like Dennis Lee, Shel Silverstein, and David Bouchard's *If you're not from the prairie ...* They are writing their own poems spontaneously, picking up on the rhythm and patterning of the language, improvising, making them meaningful with their own sense of place. (Researcher Narrative, 04/11/94)

If you're not from the prairie,
You don't know our trees,
You can't know our trees.

The trees that we know have taken
so long,
To live through our seasons, to
grow tall and strong.
They're loved and they're
treasured, we watched as they
grew,
We knew they were special -- the
prairie has few.

If you're not from the prairie,
You *don't* know our trees.

If you're not from B.C.
you don't know the trees,
you *can't* know the trees.

The leaves are so green,
bigger than you've ever seen.
Climbing way up,
looking down at that tiny pup.

If you're not from B.C.
you don't know the trees.

(Amelie, age 9, 05/29/94)

Poetry, in many instances, has created these spaces in between, for the children and for adults alike. Certainly, poems have figured prominently in the landscapes of cultural geo-graphing of this thesis for me. The poetic language of music has entered these intertextual spaces and has accompanied the children throughout the school year, just as it has kept me company throughout my writing of this text.

Language, understood as text in the sense that it encompasses creative language use for the purpose of communication, whether read, written, spoken, or sung, represents an interwoven tapestry, a *textus*, which allows us to transcend borders, to move beyond the limitations of the imposed *limit-language* of the curriculum (Scherner, 1984). This, once again, connects me with Schwab's (1993) notion of texts as *Entgrenzungen*, as creations that push for a transition, an opening toward a more inclusive vision of a community of learners. I have experienced some of this pushing beyond the borders of conceived conventions of cultural literacy with other, teachers, parents, and students. I have numerous times felt pushed myself, have felt that I have had to stretch my pedagogical and personal understanding of *what goes on with/in language* beyond a comfortable level. Yet, I still feel the need for further stretching, for myself and for all those who are

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involved in *the matter of the curriculum* and who care about *a curriculum that matters*, as Madeleine Grumet put it in a lecture last summer (Grumet, 1994).

Différance and *Kehre*: A Turn Toward Coherent Curriculum

By allowing different multiple authentic literacies into the classroom, teachers and students together are creating new literate communities that legitimize a polyphony of voices and languages together with a beginning critical understanding of lived experiences. My years of living reflectively in the pedagogical landscape, amidst this community of children, had indeed created many beginnings. As my journal entries pronounce, it had marked a *Kehre*, a turn -- but also a renewed understanding of *kehren* in the sense of *caring*, along with the recognition of *difficulty* as an essential and not necessarily negative component of learning and living. *The polyphony of voices*, in Greene's (1993) words, creates different communities *within texts* as well as within its communities of readers, communities that reveal multiple perspectives and that are not without tensions:

> Different textual communities found within the ... document alternative meanings and, consequently, multiple readings. ... I would argue that these tensions and ambiguities are inherent within the discursive field of liberal ideology, with its attempt to manage society for the public good while supporting the rights of individuals. The difficulty of achieving this balance is highlighted by the varied interests within a community. Defining the public good becomes a matter of power. ... As Terry Eagleton describes, the act of reading provides 'a frame of reference within which to interpret what comes next' ...
> (Kenny, 1992, pp. 191-192).

Kenny here refers to Eagleton's (1983) introductory volume on literary theory in which he outlines the tenets of post-structural engagement with text as an interpretive endeavour rather than one that claims objectivity, therefore making it possible to create multiple readings of a singular text.

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We Sing to the Universe

And, our voice is timeless
Pure
Emotion without structure
Directed nowhere

And sent everywhere

Falling down from the sky
And rising up from our bowels
Carried in our bloodstream
And resonating in our minds

Our voice belongs here

...

These parts of a poem by Ron Hamilton (1994) exemplify our fascination with figuring out the world at large, *across the universe.* In our theme of *Peace* last December, the children were, together with their teachers, constructing meaning about *peace on earth* in the context of celebrating Christmas and related Festivals of Light. The books that we read during this theme were challenging for them, among them *The faithful elephants* (Tsuchiya, 1988), *Sadako and the 1,000 paper cranes* (Coerr, 1979), and *Tree of Cranes* (Say, 1991). Through brainstorming about the different places and emotions in between war and peace, we generated sentences that became part of the environmental print in our classroom all year long.

Peace sayings

Peace means harmony.

Peace means there is no war.

Peace means that people don't fight with each other.

Peace means that people need to care and love one another.

Peace means accepting others who are different and celebrating differences.

The students owned these sentences; they had together created them, written them down for anybody who came into the Open Area to see and read. This act of writing had come out of their questions about the world, their inquiry into stories from their own experience and from literature in the classroom: This kind of *literary ethnography*, in Schwab's (1994) terms, indeed holds the promise of a new understanding of curriculum and the creation of communities in inquiry. The languaging that went on during those two years in this classroom community reflected culture in context and culture being reshaped both locally and perhaps eventually transforming global practices. Through these meaningful acts of reading and writing, the children were able to share with the world what they had come to understand about *peace, on earth* -- far beyond this one classroom setting. I watched their desire to communicate, I saw them engage in writing almost *ferociously* at times, I read their stories and letters with delight and wonder and sadness, and I shared their difficulties in building communities when they let me enter with them into those transitional spaces they were co-constructing with each other's texts.

> Dear Bethany,
> Why are you not playing with me and Tara, tim.
> It is not fair to us
> I have to say this I don't want to But I have to say this
> We can't be your Friends any More I'm sorry
> I am sorry I had to say that. I know you feel sad. I know how it feels.
> that's how we feel. I feel like I have to cry. So do you. think about my letter.
> From Naomi K. (Naomi's letter, 01/23/95)

> Dear Bethany,
> I am sorry what happened.
> I was out of control
> I was so exited to turn 7 I missed you
> Lots and Lots
> I wish you can come over to my house Soon
> I want to know What Happend in winter vakation!
> I went to see the Little Women
> their names wor Meg Joe Beth and Amy
> Beth Deid from this poor Baby
> Hilary (Hilary's letter, age 7, 01/95)

to Bethany from Sara
Sorry, I do not want to be in The witch group.
anymore.
If you make up another secret I might keep it, if it is nice and true.
(Sara' s letter, age 6, 01/30/95)

Writing and reading need to encompass these authentic structures of making meaning and of telling others about it. Britton, Burgess, Martin, McLeod, and Rosen (1975) talk about this as 'impelled writing,' writing that is totally self-initiated and embodies a child's prior knowledge and thinking, with a "capacity to generate their own reasons for writing and to define their own audiences" (p. 64). As teachers, we must foster our students' active and authentic engagement in this kind of negotiation of making sense of their worlds, be it through literature or other kinds of reading and writing. Only when students become self-motivated to engage in purposeful dialogue with others, to *communicate* with their friends and to *share with the world*, in Charlotte's words, can they become literate in a truly holistic way that will benefit both individual and community.

> The opening of self to the non-self involves primarily an opening of our stories to each other, an acceptance of how we are always everywhere already living in the midst of stories, involving a surfacing and a sharing of that which constitutes us. This is difficult, but it provides the necessary means by which we can see one another in a deep way -- to get beyond pure difference to creative relation and the possibility of true care.
> As a teacher it is impossible to reach and teach children effectively without knowing their stories, just as it is impossible to be available to another person's story unless one undertakes in an ongoing way the profoundly challenging, often fearsome task of desconstructing one's own. (Smith, 1994b, p. 79)

Therefore, teachers themselves need to remember to embrace this notion of shared literacies and become more engaged through writing, through reading the words and the world in a humanistic and personalized framework of curriculum. Only then will we be able to build communities and curricula rich with the texture of individual voices and stories. For too long, Patrick Shannon tells us, we have been constrained by closed spaces

and notions of knowing that separate the personal from the pedagogical and therefore do not permit the opening up of the *person* to pedagogical inquiry:

> I believe that many of us think of teaching as a private matter that we're consumed by and ashamed of at the same time. We're full of desire to teach and of joys from teaching, but we think that to share what we know and do is much like kissing and telling. It's too personal. ...
>
> Many of us teach behind closed doors with little or no adult supervision, but teaching is not like adolescents kissing, although both should be joyous, sincere, and creative endeavors. Teaching is not a private matter at all. In fact, it is a most public display -- like baseball. Your audience -- your fans so to speak -- only begins with your students. It includes their families, other teachers, community taxpayers, and more. Think about it. The lives of the children you teach and have taught can touch all of the people in the world. (Shannon, 1995, p. 465)

Teaching, then, needs to create spaces where the private, the personal, through the telling of our own stories, can become public in a meaningful way. Nel Noddings, in her *Postmodern musings on pedagogical uses of the personal* (1994) affirms the value of this element of the personal as an integral part of the curriculum:

> Personal stories are, then, allowable, desirable and vital. They may even be morally obligatory. A teacher's responsibility is not fully discharged with the competent handling of subject-matter. Rather he or she has a special responsibility to help students grow as persons in all their fullness (p. 357).

Therefore, part of this responsibility or obligation is that as teachers we also take seriously the meaning of *différance*, that we leave behind the superficial treatment of difference and diversity in our multicultural curricula. It is not enough to simply accept "the polyphony of curricular and pedagogic voices in teaching today, or within the culture generally (Smith, 1994b, p. 71) warns us since it contains the dangers of the isolation of individuals in their difference.

> If I merely accept you in your difference without exploring *how* you are different and how *your* difference reflects *my* difference from you, that is, how knowing you invites self-reflection on my part -- without such conversation we merely exist as two solitudes. And that is what strikes me as the chief danger in the postmodern condition, namely the increasing isolation of persons within the cages of their own subjectivity without any historical, philosophical or linguistic means for establishing deep and meaningful connections with others. (Smith, 1994b, p. 72)

For teachers and students, living creatively with our differences *together* is the challenge without what Smith calls the "loss of capacity for intimacy" (p. 72). We face even further challenges if we want these communal connections to reach outside the classroom, to extend to conversations between school communities and other local and global communities. In order for these dialogues to indeed become effective all stakeholders must become involved in, for example, establishing guidelines for joint decision-making and for how parents and other community members can support educational processes and programs in constructive ways. This is essential in order for teachers, parents, and other community stakeholders to become comfortable with working together and to build the trust so necessary for meaningful, collaborative decision-making. In addition, since these processes require not only a philosophical commitment by those involved but also actual time and resources, it is necessary that teachers' and administrators' time spent working with the community and its issues is recognized and facilitated as a valuable professional engagement. In British Columbia, with the new initiatives by the provincial government mentioned earlier, community-serving schools are finally no longer "waiting at the crossroads" (Stevens & Talbot, 1986) but are moving ahead confidently into a new century of community-based learning and teaching. And finally, Carl Leggo (1995) tells us that

> to foster schools as places of community in diversity, we need to celebrate. ...
> By acknowledging and celebrating diversity we can create communities in which
> security and dignity and compassion and care are all joyfully present. Genuine
> community will be known in the experience of unity in diversity and diversity in
> unity (p. 6).

However, in order for this celebration to become a truly communal experience that transcends established borders, a greater recognition of community education on a global scale needs to be facilitated, through community schools and other integrated community-based projects. In the presence of many different voices, Ted Aoki (Hinds, 1994) challenges us to speak "a new language of living practice," a language with which "we

begin to see a new relationship between self and others (p. 10)." By also celebrating and honouring these voices of others and the connections between the various communities we belong to, we indeed have the potential to make cogent educational decisions and turn meaningful educational change into a reality.

Chapter 6

Con-fusion: The Difficult Pleasure of the Text

> One moon in space air
>
> One moon running through my hair
>
> Whisper of the moon.

<div align="right">Kristopher, age 9, In The Franklin Gazette</div>

These are the days of miracle and wonder
This is the long distance call
The way the camera follows us in slo-mo
The way we look to us all
The way we look to a distant constellation
That's dying in a corner of the sky
These are the days of miracle and wonder
And don't cry baby, don't cry
Don't cry

<div align="right">Paul Simon, The boy in the bubble, From Graceland</div>

SHE WANTS TO write a book about the wind, about the weather.

She wants the words *constancy* and *capriciousness* to move in and out of the sentences the way a passing cloud changes the colour of the page you read outside on a variable day. She wants there to be thunder, then some calm, then some thunder again. She wants to predict time in relation to change and to have all her predictions prove wrong. She wants recurrence.

She wants to write a book about disturbance; about elements that change shape but never substance, about things that never disappear. About relentlessness.

About sky, weather, and wind.

<div align="right">Jane Urquhart, Changing heaven</div>

Reading Weather/Weathering Reading

The weather we experience by day and by season, the climate we live in, the landscape we dwell in, the universe that surrounds us: They all have found their way into the language we speak, read, write, and sing. Thousands of metaphors and similes relate to the atmospheric and geographic influences we praise and loathe continuously. In elementary primary classrooms we chart the weather as a daily morning exercise, we celebrate the coming and going of seasonal landmarks, the beginning and the passing of the cycles of nature connected with climatic changes from the perspective of the unique place on earth we inhabit -- lexi-co-geo-graphy: We are graphing the earth through the eyes and words and of our lived/living experience.

David Smith, in his article *Brighter than a thousand suns* (1988), speaks to the connections between knowledge and cultural beliefs and the persistence of many of our perceptions about the world despite their obvious lack of 'scientific truth:'

> Take, for example, a simple statement often taught in primary grades: "The sun rises in the east and sets in the west." Such a statement is loaded with cultural memory. It reminds us that we once believed the earth was the center of things and that the sun actively circled the earth. But such a statement, residual in our common speech, could also remind us that we have a deep tenacity to forms of knowledge which will not be overcome by scientific knowledge, and that even though science may inform us that we live in a heliocentric universe, we know too that we are still at the center of our own knowing about it. (pp. 180-181)

This curious need for centredness, for placing ourselves *in the middle* does far from cease after the so-called egocentric stage that children supposedly leave behind after their early childhood years. We can locate this need to identify ourselves in the midst of a multitude of planes beyond the personal one: within families, communities, nations, and *in all the universe*, as Jimmy so poignantly put it. Much of the postmodern interpretation of our world has been about coming to understand this need for centredness in a world that is displaying more and more obvious signs of fragmentation, of *coming apart at the seams*, of moving toward the edge of previously valid notions of self as part of a whole, of the

whole as part of the other. Postmodern thinking *is* about moving away from the centre, it is *being on edge*. In the case of this one school, bordering on the Pacific Rim, it means a unique kind of *living on the rim/Rim*, with all its geographical and cultural advantages, challenges, and difficulties.

Much of this dissertation has been about attempting *to urge the engagement across geographical, social and cultural edges, to break frames*, in Dan Rose's words at the beginning of Chapter Three. Yet, it is just as much about re-framing, about re-building a coherent frame within which we can work, about pointing to a new framework, defined as a frame that works. The pictures that are inside the frame are different, need to be allowed to be different for each local pedagogical landscape, but all these pictures are held together by a shared way of constructing the frames.

This framing and re-framing also relate to the loss of so many of our cultural memories and our attempts to revive traditions, to revisit treasured symbols of common heritage, to re-interpret our past. A couple of years ago, for example, on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the composer Edvard Grieg's birth, we saw and heard a re-reading of this musician's role in one country's identity:

> ... a picture emerged of Grieg as the artist who gave his country a sense of identity at a time when it most needed that identity. For Norway today, as it continues to preserve and discover a cultural identity outside mainstream Europe and the EEC, Grieg remains a catalyst to self-discovery. (Horner, 1993, p. 22)[28]

Just as present-day Norwegian school children, in the inspiring landscape of rural Scandinavian fjords, hills, and valleys revive and reinterpret Grieg's message to their country and to a global audience (Horner, 1993), children in the inner city of a Canadian ocean-fronted, mountain-framed metropolis are finding ways to interpret their environment through the eyes of living with/in texts, spoken and written -- books, moving pictures, musical notes, chants -- communicating with/in cultural frames.

When writing about the journey of coming to live reflectively within a community of inquiry, I had addressed the notions of identity and caring for others with regard to the pedagogical landscape I found myself inhabiting. I had created a dialogue within myself and with others, from 'discourse a' to 'discourse b,' both informing each other and becoming invaginated through layers of meaning-making that re-constituted prior texts and created new understandings of myself within the multiple realities of pedagogical and personal caring.

Through this dissertation, I have now created a new layer, added a new letter to my discourses, 'discourse c.' It is astonishing indeed how **many** meaningful notions begin with this letter, the third one, in our basic litany of literacy, abc ... It stands for many more things than only phonemes and graphemes: It resonates with the values of community, and caring, and coherence -- *and many more*:

Charlotte

capriciousness,

cogency

communication,

continuation,

constancy,

change ...

Culture

Canada

conflict

contrast

celebration,

constancy,

change ...

Children

co-operation,

curriculum,

crisis,

calm,

constancy,

change ...

Children construct their identity with/in the climate of their reading relations **and** the **other** kinds of weather or climate created by the people and places in the world around them. Often, the boundaries between these cannot be clearly defined. There are opaque spaces, like clouds obscuring the clear lines of the borders, moving from the landscape of fiction into children's actual reality, building bridges that make it possible for lived experience to be shaped by both. In one of the picture books with which the children have joyfully blended mathematical and scientific concepts and categories with linguistic -- morphological, syntactic, semantic -- ones, the composition of the world through both global and local, universal and unique features is playfully brought home:

There may be a million of stars,

But there is only one sky.

...

There may be 50,000 bees,

But there is only one hive.

...

There may be 100 patches,

But there is only one quilt.

...

There may be 9 players,

But there is only one team.

...

There may be 7 peas,

But there is only one pod.

...

There may be three musicians,

But there is only one trio.

...

There may be two ropes,

But there is only one swing.

...

But the best thing of all

is that there is only one me

and there is only one you.

Marc Harshman, *Only One* (1993, unnumbered pages)

This beautifully thoughtful book closes with a re-affirmation of the importance of the *one*, the individual child, yet not alone, always with reference to the *other*, the connecting conjunction AND being, after all, the *best thing of all*. The one is a group, a unity made up of many diverse ones. Only in the relation, the con-junction of human beings lies the redeeming worth of individual worth. Coming together to form a group makes each one indispensable. Ted Aoki, in conversation, recalls another conversation about the meaning of the word for "individual" in the Japanese language, "ko-jin," coming about through a to-and-fro of languages, languages-in-intercultural-movement.

> It is a hybrid; it is both Japanese and English, yet it is neither Japanese nor English. It is a space of paradoxical ambivalence with its built in contradiction. Yet, it is a generative space of difference, an enunciatory space of becoming, a space where newness emerges. (Aoki, 1995, p. 9)

"How many webs did Charlotte spin?" Lee Gunderson asks in *The Monday morning guide to comprehension* (1995b, p. 16). Once we move beyond the need to focus on numerical correctness, literal retelling, and dissecting and translating literature and other texts into teachable units and blocks, into subject matter it was never intended to represent (such as a science lesson about the life cycle of spiders), we can indeed discover the magnitude of Charlotte's message. Rather than asking the above question with a focus on exact recall, we should stop and think instead: How many children did she inspire through the sheer pleasure of the text? Just like the magnificent legacies of Charlotte's own children, generations of other children and adults have come to love and treasure her through the power of language and a message that transcends cultures and geographies.

The incandescent glow of her radiant and glistening web needs to be left intact, unharmed for our students to be able to weather reading in the climate of our classrooms and schools. Too many original webs have been broken, never to be re-constructed; too many students have been deprived of experiencing the joy of reading and re-reading and living and growing with/in a book's pages. On the other hand, too many artificial webs have been constructed in the name of instructional expertise, never to be de-constructed, questioned for the sake of those children who do not fit the norms and patterns of the architectures of the pedagogical empire. As Ann Haas Dyson earlier stated, *staying free to dance with the children* is an obligation we have as teachers who are committed to stay in touch with, to touch children's lives with/in a caring and coherent curriculum.

Connection and Obligation: *What Indeed is a Bridge?*

Near one end of the Nitobe Garden on the campus of the University of British Columbia is a small unassuming bridge of several wood-trodden, weather-bleached planks, slightly angled, bridging a small pond. There are no guard rails.
As strollers approach the bridge, they forego strolling to pause a while. As they pause, the bridge gathers into a unity the hundred iris plants in the shallow waters reaching for the sunbeams that pass through the foliage of the pines sheltering the bridge, the landscapes beyond that acknowledge their bond with the

bridge and the sky above, and the strollers themselves who receive inspiration as they sense the link between their mortal finitude and the divine infinitude.

Such a moment is authentic dwelling, as Heidegger would say, made possible by the way mortals *are*, on this earth beneath the sky, beings who belong together in this neighbourhood. (Aoki, 1993, p. 3)

Throughout this dissertation, the strands of various themes have emerged in an intertextual fashion, brought forth from the explored themes in the classroom, the related readings in both children's literature and adult texts on pedagogically connected topics, and, finally, the reflections on the theming and texts.

The documentation of my observations and reflections over two consecutive school years, together with the vivid recollections of interviews with students, teachers, and parents, still make me ponder about the incredible difficulty of capturing educational change in progress and coming to terms with decision-making as a stakeholder immersed in this change and, at the same time, trying to find the "right voice" to negotiate and bring it to a varied audience of educators, parents, and community members. The memories of the inspirited and instructional conversations I have engaged in with my students, the participants in my study, my colleagues, my dissertation committee members, and those who are captured in narrative format in these chapters, are also precious reminders of the privileged position I have been in as a teacher researcher. These memories have provided me with many moments of the kind of *authentic dwelling* Heidegger and Aoki speak of.

The theming of authenticity has also reached into the methodological domain of my research endeavour, bringing about the *Kehre*, the turn, in how I have come to view *doing research*. I join Kirby & McKenna (1989) in celebrating what they call doing research *from the margins*:

> We care about the accessibility of research skills because we believe that people should have the opportunity to inform themselves, to participate in discussion and policy formation and advance their interests through political action. Demystifying research skills challenges current social relations in which expertise remains a source of power for a few rather than a resource available to all. Doing research

allows us to begin to rename our experience, and thus participate in creating knowledge we can use. (p. 170)

In this process it became inevitable for me to be living my research and to experience the need to tell this story, to share it with others who care. The theming of the power of our stories resurfaces here, once again: "There is power in being able to tell your story and hearing others tell theirs. Sharing experiences triggers some life, some anger, some need to create change" (Kirby & McKenna, 1989, p. 170).

In the end, the theming of *difficulty* is the one that I choose to address once more and leave my readers to reflect on. The foremost difficulty I am faced with in this text *in front of me* is, once again, the perceived need to bring closure to this venture of a textus, a tapestry placed within the constraints of a certain academic tradition, to *leave behind,* to *close the door* of this school and classroom I set out to describe in the beginning. I realize the difficulty of making an arbitrary incision into the lifeline of this vibrant place. I want to continue charting the weather day by day, to keep observing the ongoing changes, celebrate the recurring and reassuring small successes, the *constancies* of the educational climate, yet, most of all, to revel in the anticipation of *what will happen next*, of the unknown that builds on what is already known. I feel related in this suspense-full tensionality to yet another writer, Italo Calvino, who reminds us that "reading is going toward something that is about to be, and no one yet knows what it will be" (Brossard, 1990, unnumbered page).

> In typically Postmodern fashion Calvino reassembled and recombined already existing themes, characters and plots from his own personal library, in a process of both replenishment *and* exhaustion. ... The scheme is simple: on the one hand there is the immediate task, whatever it may be (playing, traveling on a train, reading, thinking), on the other is the unknown, the unconscious, the ominous void. ... All of the tales are qualified by the adjective *difficile* and indeed a disturbing aura pervades the work, coloring the actions of the characters with tones of despair. (Ricci, 1990, pp. 5, 16)

The powerful writings by Italo Calvino, like many of the other voices heard in this dissertation, remind us of the very real dimensions of despair in both children's and adults' lives throughout the processes of reading, writing, and living within cultural, social, political, and educational systems that rule and run against the natural stream of individual personalities and the cultural beliefs of those outside the *main stream*. Here I come back, finally, to the notion of *responsibility*, or *obligation*, in Terry Carson's (1993) terms, connected with teaching in this world of difficulties and paradoxes of identities. He has poignantly placed these notions in the context of Gadamer's (1987) and Caputo's (1993) philosophical frameworks on ethics, referring to their deconstruction of Ethics (with a capital E and in the sense of the Western philosophical tradition) as "caught in the bind of creating general rules to handle what is essentially individual and specific (Carson, 1994, p. 6). This also applies to educational contexts in that pedagogical responsibility, in real situations, among individual teachers and students, means *being in no other place except where one is already -- in the middle ...*

Re-discovering the joys of this challenging task, and *in between*, un-covering the radiance with which students create new contexts for meaning and new meanings for contexts has made this dissertation a true labour of love for me. David Jardine, when speaking about the "potentially painful process" of pursuing interpretive inquiry, once again connecting with Gadamer, alludes to the emotional involvement of the pedagogic heart and the danger of such work which "can pull you in so many different, often incompatible ways" (Jardine, 1992, p. 60). Yet, it is also a joyful, heart-felt emotional task that builds understanding and renews the possibilities of living thoughtfully **and** capriciously with/in situations "that we must learn to live well" (p. 60). *Capriciousness,* so often associated with children, their un-reasonable demands, their mostly messy, sometimes spoiled, frequently fanciful actions, needs a new appreciation, along with a more playful *and* thoughtful languaging within cultural and textual difference.

This thesis, in David Jardine's (1994) words, has been "littered with literacy." In many of its places, I have written about languag*ing;* I have placed many of its vital parts, playfully and earnestly, within and outside of linguistic arrangements and conventions; I have spoken of prefixes and suffixes, of *re-* and of *-ations* and told of the importance of including the extra-linguistic dimensions of language, thought, and culture in a rich and varied but most of all meaningful, mind-ful curriculum. Thus I linger here with a suffix in the shape of a poem, "Ations", a *re*-cre-*ation* of meaning-making through languaging across cultures. My re-assembling of some of the thoughts and voices of others, and my re-interpretation of what it means to be teaching and learning does, after all, call for a concluding note, if not for an ending. As I search for a way to bring closure to this intertextual enterprise, I believe it appropriately fitting to let the children speak once again, through the language of an "other" they have come to understand and to connect with in a meaningful way.

It is spring, a new season, and the children are excited about extending our *Communication* theme into *Space,* launching into ever-new ways of communicating with/in the future, becoming explorers of and *in all the universe.* As part of a celebration of this theme, they, a sixty-some strong group of Primary Open Area children, brought as a message to their school community, chanting *playfully* in front of a school assembly one of the children's favourite poems by Shel Silverstein, *"Ations"* from *A light in the attic* (Silverstein, 1981, p. 59). A re-arranging of yet another reading relation in a different place, a relation the students have come to love and re-cite throughout the year, over and over again, and which so poignantly reflects the many kinds of languaging that continue to surface and spread among the voices of the actors in this dramatic play of becoming citizens of this world. "We" and "I" go together in this exchange of words; they are linked through a dialogue that represents thoughtfulness and understanding and caring for *each other*:

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If we meet and I say, "Hi,"
That's a salutation.
If you ask me how I feel,
That's consideration.
If we stop and talk awhile,
That's a conversation.
If we understand each other,
That's communication.
If we argue, scream and fight,
That's an altercation.
If later we apologize,
That's reconciliation.
If we help each other home,
That's cooperation.
And all these ations added up
Make civilization.

(And if I say this is a wonderful poem,
Is that exaggeration?)

What is it that we spend a great deal of our time doing when we come together
with other people? We talk and we listen. We argue. We agree and we disagree.
We negotiate and we compromise. We ask questions and we provide answers.
We describe and we explain. We tell stories. We praise. We promise. We laugh.
We cry.

In other words, what stands out when we look at what people do together is
language as communication in action. Because we have become so intent on
searching deeply within the individual's psyche for the answers to all our questions
about human nature, we usually fail to see what sits right before us, a dominating
feature of our lives with others: conversations. It is time now to take
conversations seriously. (Sampson, 1993, p. 97).

I have chosen parts of two other *wonderful poems* as examples of conversations to

conclude this dissertation text which itself has elements of a conversation in intertextuality.

Dave Bouchard's and Roy Henry Vickers' (1990) *The elders are watching* exemplifies, to

me, the forward-looking ecological spirit we need to embrace through pedagogical action

now and in the future; at the same time it is evidence of the conversation and cooperative enterprise between pedagogy, culture and place, by a West Vancouver school administrator who grew up in the Prairies and a First Nations artist deeply connected with the geo-cultural spaces of Northwest Coast Indian art. It is the kind of collaboration which we need to celebrate and encourage with our colleagues and students. It is also a reminder to cherish the *Elders,* our past experiences, and to reflect on them as well as to put into action what we have learned from the mistakes we have made and the successes we have had. These lessons have to be taught to our children *thoughtfully* and *respectfully,* as Roy Henry Vickers reminds us in his *Thoughts* in the foreword to this collaborative project:

> Change comes from understanding ourselves -- our weaknesses, our strengths. That understanding can be fostered from knowledge of our past, our cultural heritage and our environment. This priceless wisdom is available from our elders, who like us, received it from their ancestors. ...
>
> Such changes can affect our many relationships -- intimate ones, social and professional ones, and the one we have with our environment. These actions will help us to turn the tide, letting it wash over the land, healing those wrongs we have had a part in creating. (Vickers, 1990, unnumbered page)

Dave Bouchard, in turn, in *Whispers,* reminds us once again how difficult it is for some of the students in our classrooms to fit in. He urges us to learn more about them, to listen to what these students have to share with us and to build on their stories.

> The boy looked much the same as the other kids in his class. New faces arrived almost daily from far away places, so it wasn't his appearance that made him different.
>
> He had always tried his hardest, but try as he might, somehow he didn't seem to be able to get excited about the same things his classmates did. This year was no different.
>
> ... Of all the tales his grandfather told, none captured his heart more than the stories of the Old Ones -- the Elders. And as the stories slowly became part of him, by the seashore in the clear red sky of early evening, he began to see them.
>
> They appeared as images suspended in the air, up toward the sun. Their lips were still, yet he heard them speak. Their message, like the words of his 'Ya-A,' was clear and true, a message gone too long without being passed to other hearts.

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> He and his 'Ya-A' would share the words of the Elders often with all those who cared to listen -- with all those who cared at all. (Bouchard, 1990, unnumbered page)

Both authors' voices are heard loud and clear, one's through poetry, the other's through powerful visual art images. Their voices are distinct, different, yet the message is a joint one, united by the spirit of collaboration and sharing of cultures that have much to give to each other and that can both contribute to creating a better, more harmonious place to live for our children, our students, and ourselves, *to dwell together humanly*, in Ted Aoki's words (Aoki, 1993, p. 3). The poetry and the art are firmly placed within the environment the authors call their place of work and their home, and they affirm the importance of place in both local and global dimensions. Vickers' art that accompanies the poetry connects images of such local place names as *Carmanah*, *Capilano*, and *Vancouver* with the spiritual and ecological interplay of humans and natural environment, through paintings entitled, for instance, *Summer Solstice*, *Going to the Potlach*, *Reflections*, *Guardians of the Pass*, *The Two of Us*, and, from beginning to end, the powerful message of *The Elders are Watching*.

Here, yet another message is spoken once again, the warning is repeated that *It's rude to interrupt*, Sylvia Ashton Warner's lesson she learned from her teaching of children from a different cultural background than her own (Ashton-Warner, 1963). For too long and too often we have done just that: interrupted or completely ignored the stories that our students have brought with them to our classrooms.

In the other poem, *Der Lesende (Some-one reading)*, Rainer Maria Rilke portrays one person, quite possibly the author himself, actively engaged, reconnecting, through the act of reading, with the life-affirming cosmic processes around him; reading creates a dialogical exchange, constitutes a window to the world outside, lifts the broders, creates an ecological empire without borders, simultaneously simple and complex, serene and serious -- *difficile: mein Buch war schwer ... my book was heavy ... difficult ...*

Ich las schon lang. Seit dieser Nachmittag,
mit Regen rauschend, an den Fenstern lag.
Vom Winde draußen hörte ich nichts mehr:
mein Buch war schwer.

...

Und wenn ich jetzt vom Buch die Augen hebe,
wird nichts befremdlich sein und alles groß.
Dort draußen ist, was ich hier drinnen lebe,
und hier und dort ist alles grenzenlos;
nur daß ich mich noch mehr damit verwebe,
wenn meine Blicke an die Dinge passen
und an die ernste Einfachheit der Massen, -
da wächst die Erde über sich hinaus.
Den ganzen Himmel scheint sie zu umfassen:
der erste Stern ist wie das letzte Haus. (Rilke, 1955, pp. 214-215)

The first star is like the last house...: the borders between the natural world and

human dwelling places, between beginning and ending are interwoven; they truly have

become transient, and *the earth embraces the whole of the universe.* And Brecht, in his

poem *Lob des Lernens*, quoted in a previous chapter, urges us to take charge of our own

learning: "Du mußt die Führung übernehmen" -- "You must take the lead" (1966, p. 21);

he speaks directly to the need to grasp both the fundamental, the simple things, the Abc,

and a more inclusive knowledge of our world. This is where the spaces for responsible

social action open up, through active reading and writing of the geo-cultural spaces that

surround us. The time has come for all of us to re-tell the stories, to re-build the bridges,

and to create new understandings and connections, new conversations. The heart and

body of pedagogical inquiry remains with the hope and trust in our children and their

future. Thus, *the future of the hyphen will, I believe, trace a path into the past as well.*

Through a new way of writing, language has indeed become a crucial critical force for

cultural and educational change and constitutes a strong wind blowing across the path of

the *status quo.* With it comes a clearer vision, a chance of a clearing of clouds toward a

change for the better in how we weather cultural literacies and pedagogy in the future, if

only, in David Bouchard's (1990) words, we *look toward the sun.*

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They told me to tell you the time has come.
They want you to know how they feel.
So listen carefully, look toward the sun.
The Elders are watching.

Now friend be clear and understand
Not everything's dark and glum.
They are seeing some things that are making them smile,
And that's part of the reason I've come.

The colour green has come back to the land.
It's for people who feel like me.
For people who treasure what nature gives,
For those who help others to see.

And there are those whose actions show.
They see the way things could be.
They do what they can, give all that they have
Just to save one ancient tree.

They told me to tell you the time has come.
They want you to know how they feel.
So listen carefully, look toward the sun.
The Elders are watching.

Of all the things that you've done so well,
The things they are growing to love,
It's the sight of your home, the town that you've built.
They can see it from far up above.

Like the sun when it shines, like the full moon at night,
Like a hundred totems tall,
It has brightened their sky and that's partially why
They've sent me to you with their call.

Now I've said all the things that I told them I would.
I hope I am doing my share.
If the beauty around us is to live through this day
We'd better start watching -- and care.

The told me to tell you the time is now.
They want you to know how they feel.
So listen carefully, look toward the sun.
The Elders are watching.

In revisiting once more the questions I set out with on this intertextual journey into new pedagogical landscapes, I now perceive the presence of new understandings for myself and for the community of teachers and learners who are my readers. Through writing, through the particular language of action writing/research, I have come to live with my texts and those of others, old and new, in a different way, in *différance*. This has created, as Barthes in *The rustle of language* (1986) so aptly observed, a new perspective on language, on reading and writing, and pedagogical experience has become meaningful in a way that is both unique and common/communal, transitional -- *entgrenzt/without borders* -- and therefore liberating.

When we, as teachers, engaged in the complex and at times difficult tasks of becoming deeply connected with our students' lived experiences as well as with our own personal and pedagogical praxis through diverse languaging and texts, spaces for community-building in and outside the classroom as well as responsible social action began to open up within the curriculum. The construction of meaning, the *making sense of the world* around us was influenced by this language in a crucial way. It seemed vital in this process of co-constructing meaningful connections between our diverse and often divergent backgrounds that teachers and students engaged with texts that reflected the cultural diversity within this local setting but that also spoke to issues of cultural pluralism and heterogeneity within the larger societal and global context, *in all the universe*, in one of the children's words. Through texts that celebrated the joys, the differences, the difficulties and the paradoxes of communal belonging within both local and universal intertextual frames, we came to locate multiple communities in diversity. This indeed constitutes the power of our stories.

Notes

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¹ The title of this section mirrors a choice of phrase from Benjamin's (1989) *The Lyotard Reader. Und so weiter ... [and so on ...]* expresses the continuous movement within a writing process that builds on prior texts and at the same time progresses toward new texts.

² *The Primary Program* documents include, in addition to the *Foundation Document*, the *Resource Document* (B.C. Ministry of Education, 1990) and the *Learning Resources Catalogue* (B.C. Ministry of Education, 1990).

³ The paligraphic nature of this text reflects its layered textuality in the form of different types of fonts and spatial arrangements (e.g., altered indentations and margins) for the shifting voices of researcher, students, and other participants, in the form of reflections in journal entries, quotations by students, teachers, and other stakeholders from interviews and other work samples, such as creative writing and reading responses.

⁴ This refers to an earlier recollection of the visits by my brother's Canadian friends who were traveling abroad and spent time at my parents' house in the southwestern part of Germany.

⁵ Excerpt from a narrative paper entitled *For richer or poorer: Reflections on teaching ESL in the context of Canadian multicultural education* for R. Berwick's ENED 543 course on Research and Theory in Teaching English as a Second/Foreign Language, University of British Columbia, 10/10/91, p. 7.

⁶ Smith's mentioning of Wilhelm Dithey here strikes a further familiar inter-cultural note: Much of Dilthey's (1905) work was written when he was professor of philosophy and history in Berlin, my own *alma mater*.

⁷ Excerpt from a journal critique of Catherine Wallace's and Yetta Goodman's 1989 article *Research currents: Language and literacy development of multilingual learners*, written for L. Gunderson's READ 477 course on Teaching ESL/EFL Students to Read: Kindergarten to Adult Level, University of British Columbia, 3/29/90, p. 15.

⁸ From *A Wish List for the World*, part of the study unit entitled "Peace on Earth" in *Under the tree*, a global education package for elementary classrooms by Elizabeth and David Morley, p. 15. The students who worked with this unit are in a Primary Open Area of three multi-age classes in an east-side community school in Vancouver, British Columbia, which is the site of this study.

[9] The members of this group were Andrea Hawkes, A. J. Miller, Judy Ann Nishi, and Ron Rumak, all elementary teachers but with different areas of expertise, such as art, English as a Second Language (ESL), and Learning Assistance Centre (LAC). Dr. Sharon Reid, Supervisor of Research for the Vancouver School Board, and A. J. Miller, an ESL district resource teacher, became the coordinators and facilitators of the teacher research group, supplying many of the resources in the form of materials, release time, meeting spaces, and, last not least, the much needed good humour, coffee, and cookies at the end of a long teaching day. Currently, J. A. Nishi is the chairperson of the local network.

[10] A recent special issue of the *TESOL Journal* (Autumn 1994) focused on issues, processes, and outcomes of 'teacher research' (Burton & Agor, 1994).

[11] In this newspaper article, Murrills quotes from an interview with Anne Coombs, a Vancouver-based futurist who works extensively with educational agencies.

[12] The students performed this song and responded to it with their own *Wish List for the World* in a school concert. From the British Columbia Primary Teachers' Association's 1990 publication *Teaching global responsibility* and E. & D. Morley's (1987) *Under the tree.*

[13] From a panel presentation of the Research Interest Section on "Classroom-centered Research: Perspectives from Teachers, Teacher Researchers, and Researchers" at *TESOL '92*, March 5, 1992. Participants included Diane Belcher, Richard Blot, Patricia Carrell, Craig Chaudron, Ulla Connor, Scott Enright, Nadine Watson, Vivian Zamel.

[14] "At rest on the verandah ..." was the metaphor Blot used in his paper "Ethnography in Classroom Research" at the above *TESOL '92* conference.

[15] Some of the Greater Vancouver area municipalities, such as Richmond, Surrey, and Coquitlam, are experiencing staggering growth rates and, connected with this, a rapid increase in the number of ESL children. These demographic trends might change the statistics considerably in the near future (Gunderson, in press-a). Also, a recent study of the background characteristics of students entering the Vancouver School District confirms the high rate of immigrants from China and Southeast Asia (Gunderson, 1995a).

[16] A study by Rodgers, Slade, & Conry (1974) on the relationship between socioeconomic area of school location and oral language competency of Grade one students in three Vancouver schools "representing, respectively, high, middle, or low-income populations" (p. 318) used 1961 census data to determine the sample of the schools. According to this information Franklin School represented the school in the middle, which was characterized as a solid "blue collar, artisan" socioeconomic area (K. Slade, personal conversations, October 20, 1994 and July 26, 1995).

17 This information of 09/30/94 lists the major home languages for each school in the district (Vancouver School Board, 1994).

18 One of the highlights this year was a special "workshop" presented by one the children's parents. Hilary's father, a local filmmaker, gave a presentation on his award-nominated animated short film of Earle Birney's poem *TRAWNA TUH BELVUL BY KNAYJIN PSIFIK* (Birney, 1991), narrated by the poet himself especially for this film. He talked about the special language of this poem, featuring the onomatopoetic sounds of a train ride, and introduced the children to the special art technique he had used involving layers of water colours and boxes of "paper eyes" for the characters. The next day, the students had a chance to produce a short animated film of their very own with the help of Hilary's mother, who also teaches an after-school art program at the school.

19 Unfortunately, Kiwi is no longer with us -- he was peacefully laid to rest after four years of devoted service to children of all different kinds. He created, through this act, one of those truly "teachable moments." The children's letters, pictures, and the special "shrine" they set up in his corner were a touching homage to a very special friend. A successor for Kiwi, Grover/Glover (honouring the linguistic variability within Asian and Indo-Germanic languages, his name remains appropriately ambiguous) is in the process of being gradually trained for the assault of the masses of eager new "Glover/Grover Guardians" in September. Some of the trusted "Kiwi Keepers" are in charge of this responsibility-laden task.

20 For samples of the letters of permission and open-ended interview questions, see Appendix 1.

21 Sharon Reid, Supervisor of Research for the Vancouver School Board and coordinator of the teacher research group, supplied the computer assistance for the random sample selection. The number of students in the P.O.A. varied between 60 and 70 over the two years depending on residents' movement in the neighbourhood.

22 "Education that is multicultural:" I am referring to the terminology used by Kofi Marfo in his presentation at a conference on *Multiculturalism in Early Childhood Education* at the Centre for the Study of Curriculum and Instruction/Child Study Centre, University of British Columbia in May 1993.

23 In the Teacher Preparation Materials for this exhibition, we read that the artists' work

is not meant to be representative of their geographical locations. Each of them strives to represent human experience informed by specific historical and social contexts. By acknowledging their cultural traditions, histories and locales, the

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seven artists in **Out of Place** invite us to consider our own hybrid identities (Vancouver Art Gallery, 1994, p.1).

24 These excerpts are taken from the English abstract of my master's thesis on *Mary McCarthy: Probleme der literaturkritischen Rezeption von women writers/In the crossfire of male literary critics* (Ludt, 1977).

25 This study unit (student text and teacher guide) was published by Alternatives to Racism, an organization devoted to "educate people, particularly children, to live at peace with each other." The materials were developed with the assistance of the Faculty of Education at the University of British Columbia, the Victoria and Vancouver School Boards, and the British Columbia Teachers Federation, as well as various other non-profit groups (Alternatives to Racism, 1983, 1984).

26 The first two the books that Sung's father comments on, *Philippa and the hungry dragon* (Level 4, Set B)and *The hungry chickens* (Level 4, Set C) are from the *Literacy 2000* series, one of the Recommended Learning Resources from the B.C. Education Ministry's (1991a) *Catalogue of learning resources*, designed for "ESL Beginning Level K-12" and published by Ginn & Company.

27 This book, edited by Janet Hickman and Bernice Cullinan (1989), is a Festschrift for Charlotte Huck, the well-known scholar and teacher of children's literature. Other sources mentioned include Kathleen Krull's (1994) Currer and Ellis Bell: Charlotte and Emily Brontë, In *Lives of the writers: Comedies, tragedies (and what the neighbors thought)*, E. B. White's *Charlotte's Web*, and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Die Leiden des jungen Werther*. Charlotte the basset belongs to Carl Leggo and his family.

28 Just recently, in 1995, Norway **has** joined the EEC (European Economic Community). Further accounts of Grieg, "Norway's greatest composer, a national hero and collective symbol of the Norwegian identity," as well as a documentary of his musical heritage can be found in *Celebrating Edvard Grieg*, a CBC Stereo production produced by Keith Horner. In addition, *Soul for sale*, an article by Anders Johansen (1994), documents this country's struggle with its cultural and political heritage.

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Appendix 1
Letters of Permission and Interview Questions

Letter of Permission A

Dear Parent(s) or Guardian(s),

We would like to ask for your cooperation in helping us to better understand the factors that influence students' learning at school. For this purpose, we are conducting classroom research in the area of language education through a study on *Communities of inquiry: Language, Literature and Culture in the Classroom* (Teacher researcher: E. Hasebe-Ludt). This study is part of a continuing project sponsored by the Vancouver School Board and is also part of the requirements for Ms. Hasebe-Ludt's Ph.D. degree in Curriculum and Instruction/Language Education at the University of British Columbia (Faculty advisor: Dr. Ken Reeder).

The data collection involves video and audio taping of classroom activities as well as informal interviewing of students as part of regular instructional practices (no intervention or testing will be required). Participation is strictly voluntary, and your child's standing in school will not be affected if you decide not to allow her or him to participate. Children not participating in the study will simply continue with regular instruction. All information obtained will be kept confidential and anonymous.

If you have any comments or questions, please do not hesitate to contact either Ms. Hasebe-Ludt or at 294-8626 or Dr. Reeder at 822-5764.

Sincerely,

_____   _____   _____
(E. Hasebe-Ludt)   (K. Reeder)   (K. Toye)

I give permission/do not give permission for my child _____
to participate in the classroom research project at Franklin School as described in this letter of 94.11.12. I also acknowledge receiving a copy of this letter for my own files.

_____
Parent(s)'/Guardian(s)' Signature   Date

<u>Letter of Permission B</u>

Dear Parent or Guardian,

We would like to ask for your cooperation in helping us to better understand the factors that influence students' learning at school. For this purpose, we are conducting classroom research in the area of language education through a study on *Communities of inquiry: Language, Literature and Culture in the Classroom* (Teacher researcher: E. Hasebe-Ludt). This study is part of a continuing project sponsored by the Vancouver School Board and is also part of the requirements for Ms. Hasebe-Ludt's Ph.D. degree in Curriculum and Instruction/Language Education at the University of British Columbia (Faculty advisor: Dr. Ken Reeder).

The data collection involves informal interviewing of parents/guardians of students in the Primary Open Area. Participation is strictly voluntary, and all information obtained will be kept confidential and anonymous.

If you have any comments or questions, please do not hesitate to contact either Ms. Hasebe-Ludt or at 294-8626 or Dr. Reeder at 822-5764.

Sincerely,

_____   _____   _____

(E. Hasebe-Ludt)   (K. Reeder)   (K. Toye)

I agree/do not agree to participate in the classroom research project at Franklin School as described in this letter of 94.11.12. I also acknowledge receiving a copy of this letter for my own files.

_____

Signature   Date

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Letter of Permission C

Dear Teacher/Community School Staff Member,

We would like to ask for your cooperation in helping us to better understand the factors that influence students' learning at school. For this purpose, we are conducting classroom research in the area of language education through a study on *Communities of inquiry: Language, Literature and Culture in the Classroom* (Teacher researcher: E. Hasebe-Ludt). This study is part of a continuing project sponsored by the Vancouver School Board and is also part of the requirements for Ms. Hasebe-Ludt's Ph.D. degree in Curriculum and Instruction/Language Education at the University of British Columbia (Faculty advisor: Dr. Ken Reeder).

The data collection involves video and audio taping of your classroom activities as well as informal interviewing of teachers, community school staff, and students. Participation is strictly voluntary, and all information obtained will be kept confidential and anonymous.

If you have any comments or questions, please do not hesitate to contact either Ms. Hasebe-Ludt or at 294-8626 or Dr. Reeder at 822-5764.

Sincerely,

_____   _____   _____

(E. Hasebe-Ludt)   (K. Reeder)   (K. Toye)

I agree/do not agree to participate in the classroom research project at Franklin School as described in this letter of 94.11.12. I also acknowledge receiving a copy of this letter for my own files.

_____

Signature   Date

Interview Questions
(Parent/Teacher/Staff Open-ended Interviews)

I'm interested in finding out about children learn about language and literature at home and as part of how we teach reading at school.
Can you tell me what kinds of books your child/students in your class read

- at home?

- in school?

Any specific titles or authors?

Do you approve? If not, what kinds of books do you think your child/students should be reading instead?

- at home?

- in school?

Any specific titles or authors?

Parents: What language does_____/do your students speak at home? Is a language other than English spoken in the home or family?

Tell me about your/your students'/your child's experience with Franklin's home reading program.
What kinds of books did your students/your child take home?

Do you have any comments about your students'/child's reading?

Franklin is a community school. How is that different from other schools?
What are the advantages/disadvantages?

What kinds of things are you involved in through the community school?

Other comments: