LIVING CURRICULUM WITH YOUNG CHILDREN:  
THE JOURNEY OF AN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR

The Tangled Garden

by

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Abstract

This thesis chronicles a journey for which there is no end. The journey is the author's search for authentic curriculum -- teaching and learning built around socially relevant themes, designed through an organic development process, and negotiated in relation to the interests of individual learners and the communities that support them.

In struggling to find a "lens" that would allow children to navigate change in an increasingly complicated society, the author shifted her focus from the substantive domain to the perceptual. Influenced by Case's (1995) discourse regarding the nurturing of "global perspectives" in young children, the author identified nine characteristics of a "global/diversity" perspective. Rather than infusing curriculum with more information, teachers would nurture an approach to learning that permits children to suspend judgment, entertain contrary positions, anticipate complexity, and tolerate ambiguity. Through the use of "counter-hegemonic" children's literature the author found she could nurture the "seeds" of alternative perspectives forming a strong foundation for understanding and tolerance in the classroom and beyond. It is important to emphasise that the author had to internalise a "global/diversity perspective" herself in order to nurture it in others through a generative process she refers to as "living curriculum".

The research methodology of currere was employed as a means of exorcising the unacknowledged biases, personal contradictions, and divergent influences that have fed the author's identity, and thus necessarily informed her philosophies and actions as an educator. The methodology of autobiography was a critical factor in permitting the author to recognise and take ownership of her own education. Autobiography led her into the tangled garden and compelled her to make sense of its organic cycles.
The method of autobiography typically rattles the comfort margins of educational researchers who see it as patronising sentimentality, rather than a rigorous analysis of self-knowledge within contemporary scholarship. It is important that autobiographical researchers demonstrate resonance of their lived experience in scholarly discourse and pedagogy. The author discusses a number of possible criteria that could be used to evaluate autobiographical research -- the most important of these being that the work spawns reflection and stirs praxis within the reader.

1 I refer to "praxis" in the same manner as Aoki (1983). Theory and practice are viewed as twin moments of the same reality: praxis. It is thus a practical way of knowing.
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As Gramps used to say
"take a chance, pet - look through the crack in the wall
tunnel through until you find the light - for
'the rose still grows on the other side of the wall,'
and the broadening view permits you to see
the old world anew"

May you always be open to other perspectives,
know your roots, and spread your wings.
Overview: Invitation to the Reader

A Walk Through the Garden in Full Bloom

Any piece of knowledge I acquire today has a value at this moment exactly proportioned to my skill to deal with it. Tomorrow, when I know more, I recall that piece of knowledge and use it better.

Mark Van Doren (1960)

My first significant memory of school was “reading table” time with Mrs. Brown, my first grade teacher (spring, 1963). Nine of us sat around a long rectangular table at the back of the classroom. We all knew the drill in which we were to proceed counter-clockwise around the table with each child reading a sentence, until all children had read twice. We all hated this ordeal with varying degrees of passion. Those who could read, knew that Dick and Jane never did anything interesting, and found the waits for less skilled readers a good opportunity to manufacture spit balls or finger knit under the table. The pure torture of this activity for the less skilled readers was mirrored in Mrs. Brown’s anguished face.

Although I was a good reader and came from a family rich in the tradition of storytelling and book reading, I was unbearably shy and spent every morning in anxiety until “reading table” was done. To read aloud in front of the group caused a full body blush and a lump in my throat. In order to “cope,” I would count how many children preceded me, and then count out the same number of sentences in the text to be read leaving me at the start of my sentence. Quietly, under my breath, I would memorise this sentence, ignoring all that went on around me until my name pierced the air. At this time, I would dutifully spit out the sentence without looking up and begin counting for my second bout with hell. This strategy served me fairly well, although Mrs. Brown never failed to say, “Christianne, please follow the words with your finger!”

One dreadful morning, before spring report cards, my special system failed. I did the usual counting, and memorised my sentence, but Mrs. Brown did the unthinkable - she called on me to read Tyler’s sentence for him since he was having so much trouble. Hearing my name, I spat out my sentence, even though I sensed something was wrong, because the child next to me had not read her sentence. I heard Mrs. Brown’s ruler crack the table in front of her. “Christianne, will you please read Tyler’s sentence?” There was no time to recount, no time to memorise. All I could do was stick with the plan and repeat my original sentence. Exasperated, Mrs. Brown finally called on another
classmate. The tears rolled down my cheeks despite my willing them not to.

Mrs. Brown tried to test me alone after school, but it was no use; I stared at the text through tear-filled eyes, unable to utter a word over the giant lump in my throat. Later that week, Mrs. Brown was to report to my astonished parents that I was still not reading, and would shed tears without apparent cause. She asked that my parents spend extra time reading to me at home, and see if they could rout out the cause of my unhappiness at school.

This news was a complete shock to my parents. They knew me as the budding teacher who inhabited their basement every afternoon in a classroom of my design (complete with a blackboard, teacher's desk, a table and four chairs built by my father, a "library" shelf, globe, abacus, and copious school supplies provided by my mother). I scrounged whatever student population I could (usually my brothers and their friends). I made up "real" story books to teach my pupils how to read and we learned about important things like how blind people read and deaf people spoke to their children. We studied what insects ate which plants in the garden, how to draw maps and make supply lists for field trips to hidden cubbies of the house. We made plans to raise money to help those in need and counted any coins donated by my parents. To learn their arithmetic, my pupils kept log books recording the numbers of various canned goods and preserves in the cold storage room adjacent to my classroom. I often did mini lectures to deconstruct the "secret" conversations our parents held in anti-languages at the dinner table. After that terrible spring day in Mrs. Brown's class, I closed my school despite the protestations of my parents. How could I teach if I was going to fail school myself?

Early childhood educators have come a long way in the methods they use and curricular materials they employ in literacy instruction. I tell this story because it stayed with me over the years and served as one of the lived experiences that would fuel my motivation to change the way students in my charge would experience curriculum. Whether teaching in the pool, on the ice, in the museum, in the art studio or in a school classroom, I tried to design socially relevant curricula, taking inspiration from my students. In line with Dewey (1956), I conceived of curriculum as a negotiated process to grow out of the interests of the child and community.

My teacher education (mid 1970s, Edmonton, Alberta), in both Early Childhood
Education and Special Education programmes, was designed to reflect different approaches to child development, and to prepare teachers to make educational decisions based on psychological criteria. In graduate school (early 1980s, Bristol, England), it was emphasised that programme innovations were to be evaluated in terms of developmental appropriateness, which was measured using psychological criteria. At this time, Elkind (1981, 1987a, 1987b) hit a responsive chord in the early childhood community with his message that Western societies were pushing children too hard and childhood innocence was in need of protection. Some of my colleagues seemed to interpret this to mean protection from harsh realities, rather than a call for adults to help children take time to reflect, ponder, and explore.

Although I was aware of the impact critical theory was making on general schooling (Apple, 1979; Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1983; Smart, 1983), it wasn't until doctoral studies (1990s) that I encountered critical theorists in the arena of early childhood education. Questions about the appropriateness of Developmentally Appropriate Practice were finally being raised and not solely from a cultural angle (Egan, 1983, 1988; NAEYC; Pagano, 1990; Silin, 1995; Short, 1991; Short and Carrington, 1987; Stevens, 1982). My rather belated introduction to feminist discourse (Greene, 1975, 1991; Grumet, 1981, 1988, 1992; Miller, 1990; Pagano, 1990, 1991; Witherell and Noddings, 1991), and autobiographical discourse (Aoki, 1992; Butt and Raymond, 1989; Egan, 1995; Pinar, 1988, 1994) in curriculum studies validated my belief in the use of story and narrative as primary tools in educational research. In trying to make sense of these and other contemporary discourses in the curriculum field, I walked many paths before realising my trails interconnected. I discovered I had

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1. The National Association for the Education of Young Children adopted a new position statement on Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Practice based on new discussions and research findings reported in the early 1990s.
reached a position where the various discourses I had studied no longer seemed to compete for primacy in my thinking: instead, I was able to celebrate the polyvocal nature of educational research. I felt a harmony overriding what might otherwise have been a strident and contentious assembly of academics and practitioners. Together, the educational community was testing and resisting a long tradition of hegemonic patriarchy in educational research. With this awareness, I began to believe there was room for a dissertation that attempted to bridge the commonalities between various discourses that had established themselves in opposition to this hegemony. Perhaps my work could contribute to a larger reflective awareness of teaching and curriculum.

At a personal level, this reflective awareness placed me at a central point where my trails of academic study intersected. This central point was not a destination, but can best be described as the *springboard to a new understanding*. I have come to refer to this as a “global/diversity perspective,” which I describe in more detail in chapters three and four. In short, I’m referring to the nurturing of a lens through which to view personal, local, and global interactions. Characteristics of such a lens include:

- embracing equality of opportunity,
- seeking more information,
- examining information sources critically,
- suspending judgment,
- entertaining contrary positions,
- anticipating complexity,
- tolerating ambiguity,
- empathising with others, and
- overcoming chauvinism.

The development of these characteristics forms a strong foundation upon which to build the understanding and tolerance necessary for peaceful living in a diverse society. Nurturing a “global/diversity” perspective and employing principles of generative curriculum, empowerment education, and story theming allowed me to see
curriculum as a living entity rather than a static structure.

I bring many voices to this text, each with its own influence and baggage. There is the dedicated early childhood educator, the special needs consultant, tutor and advocate, the eclectic children’s librarian and her roving library (yes, it has a voice too), the doctoral student, the professional storyteller, the harried single parent of two boys aged 9 and 10 years, the artist of many media, the 41 year old woman of Euro-heritage background, and the lucky survivor of extended domestic violence. These identities do not weigh equally in my exploration of curriculum, but are present in varying degrees according to context. In writing this work, I celebrate a place found through interconnected ways of knowing, where I can mediate the oppositions of personal and professional lives.

In the first chapter, I examine the scholarship relating to autobiographical text as a research methodology in educational curriculum studies. Specifically, I look at the concept of _currere_ developed by Pinar and Grumet (1976) as a method to gain understanding about curriculum and the way it shapes individuals. Based in phenomenological, and psychoanalytical theories, _currere_ benefitted by association with other Reconceptualist discourses, before it rose to popularity in the 1990s.

In the following chapter, which spirals throughout the text, I study the contribution schooling has made to my understanding of curriculum through autobiographical accounts of key experiences. I employ Pinar’s four suggested steps of _currere_: regressive, progressive, analytical and synthetical to make meaning of my educational experience.
In chapter three, I discuss adding a fifth step to Pinar's method of *currere* that would encourage "visioning and action" as an outcome of "synthesis." It is not enough to understand the powers involved in curriculum development or even to develop a personal philosophy if such learning does not act as a springboard for social change. Attempting to integrate the many competing discourses in contemporary curriculum scholarship with my own understanding of the field, I moved from concerns regarding content and relevant materials to describing a fluid curriculum that would flow around the nurturing of "global/diversity perspectives" in young children.

In chapters four and five, I describe more fully how I envision global/diversity perspectives and the body of written and oral literature I draw from in order to nurture these perspectives. In chapter four, I share how abstract themes of contemporary social importance emerged naturally out of the "critical literature" explored in two pilot "global" programmes run at the University of British Columbia, Child Study Centre. In this chapter, I also look at the fluidity and responsiveness of curriculum that is negotiated collaboratively between teacher and children in the language of story. The reader is asked to examine how conceptions of knower and known impede or facilitate the creation of socially livable curriculum. In chapter five, considerable attention is given to examining the developmental theories that have so firmly controlled early childhood curriculum until recently. Developmentally Appropriate Practice Guidelines were initially developed to improve practice and elevate the status of the early childhood educator. By defining and categorising children's capabilities, the guidelines also created an unintended by-product: they left room for educators to underestimate children's intellectual abilities and their need to make sense of difficult social realities, in turn limiting the potential social growth and change in the classroom. Recent amendments to the NAEYC position statement on Developmentally
Appropriate Practice acknowledge the danger caused by overgeneralisation in diverse contexts.

I also discuss in this chapter the need to include vision and efficacy in curriculum design (Werner, 1999) so as to avoid overwhelming children with feelings of insecurity and/or cynicism. I describe a body of children’s literature that encourages critical mindedness, while illuminating messages of hope. An extensive bibliography of children’s books that stimulate vicarious experience with “sensitive issues,” like death, street people, physical appearance, racism, gender, ecological destruction, social change, familial discord, the social power of literacy, and human conflict, can be found in Appendix A.

Giroux and Simon (1989) acknowledge the “substantial personal investment of time and energy” required in the practice of critical pedagogy and ask their reader if “it [critical pedagogy] requires the near abandonment of a teacher’s private life?” (p.252) In the final section, I posit that by acknowledging interconnected ways of knowing, one synergises the learning and work of private and public worlds. Personal and public lives are transformed and revitalised, creating unexpected spaces for reflection and illuminating routes to personal efficacy for both teacher and student. In chapter seven, I ask myself questions about possible limitations and implications that studies of this nature raise in the academic community. I have refrained from including a specific section entitled Implications for Practitioners, but have identified and described many personal implications for practice throughout the text. I feel it is very important not to give the impression that there are “instant pudding” instructions for internalising one’s learning. The hard work of constructing, deconstructing, and rebuilding knowledge in a personally practical way cannot be prescriptively laid out.
Living Curriculum with Young Children is about my own struggle to find authenticity in curriculum for young children who live in a time of "posts," "isms," and "nounified" verbs. Uncertainty and crisis dominate our society where many individuals are overwhelmed and desensitised by the information explosion and challenges to traditional ways of thinking. We seem to have lost touch with our ability to imagine and seek out alternative ways of knowing and problem solving, so that we may overcome fear of ambiguity. Ultimately, this is a book about facing fears and finding the stories that will help children face their own lives with understanding, confidence, hope and a sense of efficacy. I invite the reader to journey with me along the path that brought authenticity to the voice I use in "living" curriculum with both children and early childhood colleagues. If I describe the journey well enough, your stories will also come forth begging analysis and synthesis within your understanding of curriculum and young children.
Key to Narrative Voices in this Work

Pocket Guide to Wild Flowers

I love maps of all types, poring over them with equal enthusiasm. Whether they are road maps, historical renderings of Roman Britain, or coded keys for understanding Thomas King’s convoluted mind as it is represented in Green Grass Running Water.

I shy from making a key or map for this work because to do such makes it seem more than it is. I think of keys as necessary for complex texts and maps as reference guides for journeys on less travelled roads. I conceive of my writing as a simple recording of events, reflective thoughts, snatches of thought from others, and practical tips. Perhaps it would be helpful to explain the various forms of narrative I draw on in pulling together my learning.

Narrative of Autobiographical Research

This voice forms the main text of this work and incorporates all the other forms of narrative described below. I have tried to find the social forces that drive my story of “Living Curriculum” and to acknowledge the intrusion of my biases in the telling. In the second chapter the reflective component of my run with currere is recorded in bold type. I did this in an effort to differentiate these attempts to fit my learning within a larger context from the main telling of my story.

Poetic Ruminations

These poetic, if you can call them that, ruminations - why do I write them? Why do they pop up when I am troubled about expressing a particular idea?
Upon reflection,
I am most fluid and literate when I speak,
I do not censor my speech the way I do in my writing.
Ruminations are somewhere
in between speaking and writing
- they are more restricted than speech
  but freer than "writing."

Clips from my Healing Journal
Healing journals have characterised my moments of reflection since the mid 1980s. I used them to house odd scraps of writing that relate my feelings and insights as I lived and progressed through the battered wife syndrome. I shunned support groups, denying that my experience could be categorised as a syndrome or anything but a set of unique circumstances. These journals represent moments I stole for myself to try to make sense of a life otherwise on automatic pilot.

The first two of these journals were destroyed by my husband when he found them and the third was merely sheets of paper squirreled away in secret places. Eventually, as I started my life anew in Vancouver (1992), the fourth journal evolved as a file on my computer. After a home invasion late in 1997, I am left with odd pieces that I had printed from the file and the collected pieces of the third journal.

Notes about Education
I write in another journal I have kept since starting my doctoral studies in 1992. One of my classmates suggested it as a valuable data bank for future writings. Here, I keep notes on anything that relates to education, no matter how divergent from my thesis topic. For example, I have references to my first clashes with the various “isms” of education, reflections and observations that arose from my teaching (both children and adults), concerns regarding education that sprout from my sons’ schooling, and general recordings of my views regarding the education system as a whole.

Lived Experience Narrative
For the most part, these windows into my past have been integrated into the main autobiographical narrative. In chapter two I attempt to follow the life of certain stories throughout my learning journey in a manner similar to Pinar’s work.
Journey Notes

The Garden Plan

At one of my committee meetings, a question was raised regarding the actual focus of my thesis. Once over the initial dismay that my committee members did not already know this, I was able to take time to discover why they were having difficulty. I realised I was battling an old enemy: how to translate something that is for me integrated, encompassing and fluid into a concrete, sequential format for my audience.

I listened to what each professor thought my thesis was about, and found myself both relieved and concerned. Each had been captured by the passion I felt about a particular theme. One commented on my approach to counter-hegemonic literature, and the way I had challenged the borders of developmental appropriateness. Another was taken by the use of autobiography and storying as educational strategies. Yet another identified the use of narrative as a tool in curriculum development and implementation. My committee had identified key areas of my study, but at the same time had missed what I was trying to communicate as a whole. It seemed I was able to describe the individual parts of my study, but had missed the whole, which for me, was greater than the sum of the parts.

My committee had identified some of the fixed stars from the constellation of ideas present in my thesis. But it is the fluid space between stars that actually creates constellations. I realised that it was this space that gave meaning and context to the ideas I was describing. This space between the ideas was the perspective I had tried to describe: the necessary distance required to understand ideas in relation to one another. I had conceived of this as a journey, and perhaps that is still the strongest
metaphor for what I experienced. In moving between these ideas, I had developed a lens that allowed me to navigate change.

The fixed points within my thesis are the various discourses I came up against in the course of my studies, and the principles I use in my teaching. The flexible space between them is currere -- the reflective time and space allotted for self-examination. It is the contextual space I weave through "storying" when I situate stories in meaningful contexts for children. It is the journey I undertake as an educator, which shifts and changes as I move through it. The interrelated whole with its stars and space comes together as the global concerns and issues that educators must contend with. In relating between the fluid space and the stars, I was able to sculpt the lens through which I could view incidents from a global perspective. Of equal importance, however, was the ability to turn that lens and focus on local and personal issues. It allowed me to study the world in a tidal pool.

**Begin/Ending**

Reflecting on the comments of my committee, reviewing the body of my work, struggling to find sequential order, in something global, I am left with the perception -

*to read this work, you have to have read it.*
1

Autobiography as Education

Reading the Gardener’s Almanacs

* A writer is an individual who does their education in public. 
  Leonard Cohen, 1963

* It is far more important that one’s life should be perceived than that it should be transformed; for no sooner has it been perceived, than it transforms itself of its own accord. 
  Maurice Maeterlinck, 1896

Introduction

Strange as it must seem to those who have experienced the red tape of large institutions, I found space at the University of British Columbia. I am referring to the academic freedom found in the loosely knit Centre for the Study of Curriculum and Instruction in the Faculty of Education. This space was teeming with possibilities, positions, intersections, passages, detours, U-turns, dead ends, one-ways, etc. Too many possibilities indeed — a chasm to indecisiveness, but a haven to “webbers” and storytellers. For me, the Centre for the Study of Curriculum and Instruction was one of the loopholes for “abstract random” thinkers in what I perceived as a largely “concrete sequential” Faculty of Education. It opened up pathways in other departments and faculties with learning experiences far richer than I had envisioned in my narrowly framed statement of intent[^2] that gained me entrance to doctoral study. I was encouraged to investigate First Nation resistance, political, post-colonial, post-modern, multicultural, intercultural, anti-racist, and feminist discourses. Each had evolved its

[^2]: This statement of intent focused around an interest regarding the impact of culturally relevant curriculum materials on literary acquisition by First Nations children.
own identity and platform in an effort to raise distinctive issues that were otherwise lost in a traditional hegemonic approach to curriculum development. Each illuminated a separate area, providing me with an exciting opportunity to learn from a distinct perspective. However, the experience was ultimately disappointing because the opportunity to integrate my divergent voices in any one discourse eluded me.

Finding My Voice in Qualitative Methods
For my doctoral research, I had originally planned to do an ethnographic study where I would describe the characteristics of emergent literacy as experienced and understood in the homes and daily lives of a First Nation community. Consequently, I was required to take a qualitative methods course which, in the summer of 1993, was taught by Sharon Merriam, a noted scholar from the University of Georgia. I found this professor to be someone I respected both as an intellect in the area of qualitative educational research, and as a very gifted pedagogue.

In the class following our midterm exam, she described a qualitative study that produced conflicting results. She then addressed the class with the question, "What do you do when your data does not conclusively prove or disprove your hypothesis?" We started shooting back answers like: "Repeat the study," "Gather more data," "Double-check your findings," "Conduct more data triangulation using other sources." After waiting, she replied, "Good, now what do you do if your efforts still render inconsistent findings?"

When we looked rather stumped, she said, "This is where you stand back, like you do from a good piece of art, distance yourself from the data and look for some larger, more global explanation that encompasses findings from both ends of the spectrum."
I remember exactly where I was sitting when she said this, and the profound sensation
of disappointment that I felt with what seemed a "less rigorous" approach to research.
Her question did not oppose her previous teaching. Then why was I so upset?

It took me a while to understand my reaction. The process began when I went home
and pulled out that day's readings. I was arrested by the ideas Smith and Heshusius
(1989) presented on qualitative and quantitative methodologies. They pointed out that
some researchers, tired of the continual debate between supporters of each paradigm,
had begun looking for ways to draw on both styles at appropriate times and in
appropriate amounts (Cronbach et al., 1980). However, they cautioned against a leap
to compatibility between quantitative and qualitative paradigms, citing convolution in
the reading and evaluation of study results. They argued that when a claim is true to a
particular world view, it can be evaluated as sound or not only within that frame of
reference. By identifying with a particular paradigm, the researcher abides by
established norms that guide her analysis.

The dilemma described in the readings originated in an inherent conflict between
qualitative and quantitative methods. Was this the source of my problem? Reflecting
on this question, I began to realise that while I was thinking, identifying and making
meaning within the qualitative paradigm, I was unconsciously rooted in quantitative
methods of validation as a result of my schooling and social context. I also realised
that I had heard this discussion before. I started thinking about my Master's thesis,
completed in 1982 at the University of Bristol, in which I had investigated the effects of
using literature as the stimulus for developing curriculum. During my research, I
accumulated a longitudinal database on sixteen families, focusing on the involvement
of nursery-school children in literature and emergent literacy.
That same night, I was driven to search out the letter that my external examiner, Kathy Sylva, had written regarding my thesis. A light switched on as I slowly understood the import of the words that had so offended me eleven years earlier. Dr. Sylva felt that my work was seriously flawed by the application of statistical analysis to what was essentially an ethnographic study. She chastised the committee for failing to direct me to appropriate methods of analysis. She went on to say she was obligated to pass the work based on the importance of the database, the creativity of the observation tools that were developed, and the practical application of the research findings. However, she had serious concerns regarding the inappropriate application of Chi-squares and T-tests to what should have stood as "rich, thick description." In retrospect, I was clearly forcing a square peg into a round hole.

At the time I received the letter, I couldn't hear what Dr. Sylva had written, but only felt a tremendous sense of failure at somehow not measuring up to her expectations. As I re-read the letter in the summer of 1993, her meaning was abundantly clear. I had used quantitative analysis in an attempt to validate qualitative data. How could I have committed what I now knew to be such a classic error? In reviewing the methods course required for my programme, I found it heavily weighted in statistical analysis. In 1980, the School of Education at the University of Bristol offered no qualitative methods courses. (There were exciting seminars, often held in the School of Sociology, that centered around longitudinal studies using small population samples and ethnographic data collection methods.) I was trying to capture the social context of the nursery classroom through the observation tools I designed, but I had no formal teaching that prepared me for appropriate analysis of my observations.

Returning to Dr. Merriam’s classroom, I could now understand my feelings of
disappointment: she had forced me to confront a pervasive but unacknowledged assumption that had profoundly affected my approach to learning. I subconsciously felt that in order for research to be legitimate within the academy, it had to pass the test of statistical significance. Although I believed in my heart that some questions could only be answered through qualitative methods, and I could address issues of predictability, generalisability and validity within that context, there was a part of me that still felt credibility was attached to measures of statistical significance.

My schooling had reinforced the premise that valid, generalisable research results were necessarily based on the scientific method. A controlled programme of hypotheses, isolated variables and statistical analyses were my subconscious touchstones. An experience completely removed from the world of academics and teaching became a metaphor for imperfections in variable control.

The words, “Control Through Isolation,” formed the title of a brochure that profiled the characteristics of an abusive spouse. It was sent to me in the fall of 1986 by a women’s support group. At the time, I couldn’t hear the words and hid them in a file. It was only much later that they had any resonance. I needed distance from my own situation in order to perceive their meaning. And later still, the title inspired the following lines:

\textit{Control through Isolation}....

\textit{I didn't realise it at the time,}
\textit{but it was ALL about control.}
\textit{Control maintained through isolation,}
\textit{severed family ties,}
\textit{severed friendships,}
\textit{severed freedoms of space.}
His fatal error – my saving grace:
imperfection in his control through isolation
he couldn’t bring himself to destroy my career space.
After all he fell in love with my brain
or so I prefer to think-
I can’t abide other people’s theories
of ulterior motives.
Why else did he leave my work connections intact?
Oh he came close-
there were the mornings I’d address an audience
with the kind of make-up no girl should wear,
and the students who saw nothing
but quietly asked if they could help,
and the insidious web of lies
told to cover a secret life.
I have so many people to thank,
but I’ll always be grateful to him
for leaving me with something that would pull me up,
something I was good at
a part of my life that was whole
a tiny corner of empowerment.
When I was teaching I was connected,
I was strong,
inoculated against all the insults and blows.
His fatal error, my ticket out.
What a gift.
Entry in my “healing” journal – Oct. 5th, 1993

Any method of control is ultimately imperfect, whether in human relations or cognitive development. Control through isolation of variables brings clarity to isolated agents of educational activity, but it ignores the fluid, multidimensional whole that accounts for social context. Perspective is gained through integration, not isolation. Grumet (1992) summarises this point in terms which I had always known and yet somehow not internalised until that day in Sharon Merriam’s class:

Although studies of the cognitive processes and the organisation of the academic disciplines illuminate parts of the whole, they isolate one agent in the negotiation from others in order to study its activity. And if the world were experienced in discretely organised units by persons who could isolate
emotional responses from intellectual ones, past from present, present from future, I from me, and me from us, then programmed instruction, behavioral adjectives, and other products of the "divide and conquer" approach to learning might be justified (p.31).

Having put to rest any feelings that Sharon Merriam had counselled us to a less legitimate form of research, I was able to go back and try to understand what she actually was saying with respect to our need to "look for some larger, more global explanation that encompasses findings from both ends of the spectrum." What was it that she really meant? I was reminded of Riegel's (1973) work in which he posited a fourth stage of cognitive development —"dialectical operations" — in addition to the three in Piaget's developmental scheme. He believed maturation at this stage of development would mean the individual would be able to live with contradictions, understanding them as a necessary component of knowledge.

The importance of Merriam's words was to resurface at later times in my educational development. Two specific times stand out in my memory. The first was during a conference on global education in a session presented by Dr. Roland Case. His message was that, rather than infuse an already burgeoning curriculum with more content, we could achieve the same goal of helping children engage with significant social issues personally, nationally, and globally, by nurturing a perspective: a lens through which to approach pressing societal issues. Immediately, I thought of Sharon Merriam's counsel to stand back and see the larger picture. Up to that point, I had been struggling to understand how curriculum could possibly represent the diverse interests of contemporary discourses I had come to appreciate in my doctoral studies. In other words, would there ever be time to properly represent First Nations concerns, resistance themes, feminist issues, diverse cultural perspectives, political inequities, racial prejudices, and other social issues in the daily implementation of school
curriculum? By nurturing a global perspective through which to view these issues, we could move from a preoccupation with content to a focus on process: we could develop the tools children need to critically approach issues, rather than obsessing on how to identify and include every possible issue.

The second instance where Merriam's words on the need for perspective came back to me was during another conference, this time on “Lingering With Narrative.” During the course of hearing other’s stories, I was reminded of my own educational experiences and how these had shaped my understanding of curriculum. Ted Aoki's closing address seemed to direct me to stand back and linger in past lived experiences long enough to understand how they inform my present journey as an educator. For the first time, I believed that through autobiography I could make a legitimate contribution to the field of curriculum scholarship. Through the remembering and telling of these lived experiences, I would gain a new vantage point from which to view curriculum, and learn to transcend curriculum as planned, in order to live it with those I teach and learn from. Prior to this conference, where I was so moved by other people's personal stories, I would not have entertained the concept of using autobiography as a research methodology, or believed that the recording of my journey would be of any consequence to other educators. I now could see that my voice would be added to many other voices, as I realised that their stories resonated with my own experiences.

Through autobiography, I stand back and watch all the Impressionistic little dots of my different areas of learning connect together in a fluid, ever-changing whole. The discrepancies, as well as confirmations come into balance characterised by a tolerance of ambiguity and narrated in the voice of story.
Red and blue dots
distinct swatches of colour
I stand back
the lilac petal of a delicate flower
I stand back
a flower among many dotting a meadow
I stand back
a painting so fresh I can feel the dew
I stand back
a painting among many in a show
I stand back
dwellings in a life story
I stand back...

Autobiography as One of the Reconceptualist Discourses in Curriculum Scholarship

To this point, I have used autobiography to clarify an essential turning point in my acceptance of qualitative research methods. In the following pages, I will explore the academic grounding which validates the use of autobiography in scholarly writing. I will cover the strengths of autobiographical narrative as an epistemological tool in curriculum scholarship, and some points of critique.

In the 1970s a movement of curriculum scholarship emerged that would later be referred to as the "Reconceptualisation" of curriculum studies (Pinar et al., 1995). A number of studies have detailed the history of the Reconceptualisation movement (Huber, 1981; Miller, 1979; Schubert, 1980, 1986; Brown, 1988; Jackson, 1992; Lincoln, 1992), but Pinar has been the major force in documenting and mapping reconceptualising discourses in his effort to demonstrate a paradigm shift from positivism and structuralism. He tried to capture the interrelationships between individual theoretical perspectives in the formulation of a collective driven to understand curriculum in ways empirical research cannot. While diverse in their
subject pursuits, the Reconceptualists shared:

1) a dissatisfaction with the Tyler Rationale, 2) the employment of eclectic traditions to explore curriculum, such as psychoanalytic theory, phenomenology, existentialism, and 3) a left-wing political bias that drew on Marxist and neo-Marxist thought and concerned itself with such issues as racial and ethnic inequalities, feminism, and the peace movement (Jackson, 1992 as quoted in Pinar et al., 1995, p. 39).

Reconceptualist discourses sought to clearly distinguish "effects of social structure and educational or governmental bureaucracy" from the turns of human intention. Pinar describes the primary mode of scholarship and pedagogy in the movement as a drive for "understanding" curriculum rather than "developing" curriculum. This change in orientation would slow the school's overwhelming preoccupation with control over curriculum content, and make space to understand processes both explicit and implicit so that frozen structures could be transformed into more fluid and responsive ones.

The first of the Reconceptualist discourses in the 1970s were political and autobiographical, with the political gaining the upper hand under the leadership of Michael W. Apple (1975, 1979). Buoyed by curriculum theorists such as Madeleine Grumet, Janet Miller, and Sandra Wallenstein, feminist theory emerged by the late 1970s and quickly rose in force. While autobiographical discourses, as described by William Pinar (1974), took a back seat to mainstream feminist and political discourses, feminist autobiography evolved in the 1980s in an effort to reclaim voice and understand alternate ways of knowing. The influences of other Reconceptualist discourses in curriculum research (racial, phenomenological, post-structural, aesthetic, theological and global) were to further broaden and strengthen scholarship in autobiographical research. Despite consistent writings by numerous scholars since the 1970s, autobiography didn't really take hold as a significant contemporary
curriculum discourse until the 1990s (Pinar et al., 1995). Grumet (1991) recalls this period:

> When I first started working with narrative in the early 1970s, I was busy justifying it to the psychometricians (Pinar and Grumet, 1976). That defense mounted, I turned to answer the Marxists who identified autobiography with bourgeois individualism, a retreat to interiority by those unwilling to don their leather jackets and storm the barricades, or at least picket General Dynamics (Grumet, 1981). But finally the querulous visitors have left, and at last we are alone (p.67).

In 1995, Pinar et al. (p.516) identified three major streams of scholarship which seek to understand curriculum as autobiographical and biographical text. The banks of these streams are not high, and there exists a fair amount of overflow and running together of themes, methods, and aspirations between the following three streams.

1. autobiography theory and practice
   - major concepts include *currere*, collaboration, voice, dialogue journals, place, post-structuralist portraits of self, experience, myth, dreams and imagination.

2. feminist autobiography
   - major concepts include community, the middle passage (persons are made present through contact with moving curriculum), and reclaiming the self.

3) understanding teachers autobiographically and biographically
   - major concepts include personal practical knowledge, teacher lore, collaborative biography and autobiographical praxis, and biographical studies of teachers' lives.

I find myself on a tributary between the first two streams: drawing on *currere* as described by Pinar and Grumet, and the interconnectedness of "the middle passage"
as described by Grumet and Miller.

**Currere**

Pinar and Grumet formulated the concept of *currere* as an autobiographical text in the 1970s. They used the Latin infinitive of “curriculum,” which means “to run the course,” to encapsulate one’s “existential experience of institutional structures” (Pinar et al., 1995, p.518). Individuals would then endeavour to describe what they make of these experiences.

Pinar (1994) uses the question “what has been and what is now the nature of my educational experience?” (p.20) to invoke the method of *currere*. *Currere*, running the course of one’s education, is:

> a strategy devised to disclose experience, so that we may see more of it and see more clearly. With such seeing can come deepened understanding of the running and with this, can come deepened agency (p.vii).

The words “deepened agency” stand out for me because they hint at purpose and possible visions of change of the individual and society. Adherence to one’s inner voices forms the basis of new strategies and creative approaches to curriculum design that allow for shifts between private and public selves.

In seeking to understand the contribution academic studies make to one’s understanding of her or his life, Pinar suggests four steps:

1. regressive – recall lived experience as a data source
2. progressive – examine what is not yet present
3. analytic – phenomenological bracketing, biographic themes
4. synthetic – re-enter the present and find meaning in it

I would add a fifth step of “deepened agency” to encourage visioning and action. In
the process of relating to old structures, new, more fluid ones are revealed. Pinar et al. (1995) quote Norquay as reminding scholars of the problematic practice of simply using “memories of experience to explain classroom practice [and curriculum philosophy], without exploring the possibility of using memories as a springboard for change” (p.566).

Critics of autobiography, which initially included myself, have dismissed it as a “narcissist withdrawal,” referring to the mythic character, Narcissus, who dies while pining after his own reflection in a spring. This characterisation leads to the incorrect assumption that autobiography allows for an interconnectedness only within the writer, rather than acting as a means to connect to others. The autobiographer must remain connected with the ancestors who make up the plurality of her identity. Rushdie (1980) tries to describe the plurality of our identities when he explains the length of time it takes to tell of his birth in Midnight’s Children. “To understand one life, you have to swallow the whole world” (p.126). Hershlock (1994) also comments on the plurality of identity:

[T]here is nothing that we are not responsible for, nothing which we can point to and say “that is not me.” As narration, our distinction of inside and outside is purely dramatic. In actuality, there is no outside. (as quoted in Rosenberg, 1996, p.58-59).

Grumet (1989) sees the method of currere as the wrestling of individual experience “from the anonymity and generalization that had dominated social science and even literary interpretation in the heyday of structuralism and systems theories and returning it to the particular persons who lived it” (as quoted in Pinar et al., 1995, p.521). She describes her particular approach to currere as: “...an attempt to reveal the ways that histories (both collective and individual) and hope suffuse our moments, and to study them through telling our stories of educational experience” (as quoted in Pinar et al.,
Grumet’s (1981) use of the word “hope” resonates with Werner’s (1995) address, “Teaching for Hope,” that he presented to a group of “global” educators at the Imagining a Pacific Community Conference, University of British Columbia. He cautioned that in our efforts to acquaint children with the realities of a larger interdependent world, some students may construct the view of “a crisis-ridden and confusing world created by adults who seem unwilling or unable to change it” (p.1). Such a view could lead to feelings of insecurity or cynicism about individual or collective futures. Werner went on to discuss the important roles that emotion, information, vision, and efficacy play in strengthening young people’s belief/hope in their future.

**Sailing the Middle Passage**

Grumet (1989) describes teaching and curriculum as a middle way between public and private lives: informed and always changing in response to experiences of both lives. I have often felt like an errant cobweb in the clean house of academia, when I dare to introduce personal experience to support a particular observation or thought in an academic paper. Oddly, I don’t experience the same feeling of alienation when I introduce a scholarly reference into a casual conversation with a friend. The reference lends credence to what I say, but lived experience does not support a scholarly observation. Yet the relationship between what happens in schools and the events that shape our lives is precisely what motivates us to adapt curriculum and infuse it with the counter-visions that keep it moving. As Silin (1995) argues, “curriculum has too often become an injunction to desist rather than an invitation to explore our life worlds” (p.40). Through autobiographical methods, the author makes peace “between
the individuality of his or her subjectivity and the intersubjective and public character of
meaning" (Grumet, 1990, P.324).

Today's female scholar, cum teacher, cum mother, cum domestic survives through
centered ways of knowing in order to conserve energy and respond to the multiplicity
of worlds she experiences. Grumet claims that writing and reading of autobiography
provide a means of connecting public and private worlds in a "coming to form." I will
argue in chapter six that the act of "living curriculum," characterised by a will to
understand in the face of conflict, a desire to vision and revision the future, and a
careful exploration of routes to enhance personal and collective efficacy, can facilitate
a peaceful "middle passage" between private and public worlds. I want to clarify that I
do not believe this approach is exclusive to women, but agree with Gilligan (1982) that
men tend to be directed toward separate ways of knowing.

Legitimacy of Knowledge Achieved through Autobiographical
Study

There is no better way to study curriculum than to study ourselves.

(Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, p.31)

The efforts of many scholars to understand curriculum through autobiographical and
biographical text have established a growing contemporary curriculum discourse.
Defense for the use of autobiography and biography as legitimate and authentic ways
to research educational activities is substantial (Abbs, 1979; Aoki, 1988, 1992;
Archibald, 1992, 1993; Butt and Raymond, 1987, 1989; Clandinin and Connelly, 1987,
1992, 1995; Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; Daignault, 1992; Doll, 1982, 1995; Egan,
1991; Miller, 1990, 1993; Pinar, 1974, 1988, 1994; Pinar et.al., 1995; Pinar & Grumet,
The work of these scholars has been published over three decades, but real momentum as an educational research methodology has been felt in the past six years.

To make any statement about knowledge and curriculum, one inevitably comes to "self," and the way that self makes meaning of the flux of experience lived, and yet to be lived. Graham notes, “if all knowledge begins in self-knowledge, or is a function of self-knowledge, then we cannot be said to truly know something until we have possessed it, made it our own” (1991 p.3). Autobiographical work gives the researcher opportunity to gain, reflect on, and rework such insight: an opportunity lost to those confined to empirical research.

“Autobiographical work is a political, intellectual project devoted to transformation,” not only of its participants, but also of the curriculum field (Pinar et al., 1995, P.565). Few would dispute the power of story and metaphor to inspire and influence change. Listening to the radio, one hears the statistics of homeless people on the streets with little more than surface interest. When a sensitive reporter tells the lived story of just one street person, we are moved - sometimes even into action. Using accounts of lived stories in curriculum and research often provides the springboard for change, and more potential for change as the stories change.

Kincheloe and Pinar (1991) point out,

The appreciation of individual sensation can be the genesis of larger political awareness—the refusal to deny restlessness, discomfort, moral ambiguity, and the impulse to reject. As one struggles with the problematic nature of the lived world, he or she begins to sense the unity of self and situation (Kincheloe & Pinar, 1991, p 21).
In so doing, the individual can confront that which is uncomfortable, struggle in the sea of ambiguity and reconstruct a social vision and curriculum authentically her own.

Grumet (1990) writes:

Narratives of educational experience challenge their readers and writers to find both individuality and society, being and history and possibility in their texts. It is a brave company of educators who forsake simplistic polarities of the individual and society to write, to read and to do scholarly work in these ways. It challenges feminists to encode the body and idioms of meaningful lived relations without abandoning the disciplines of knowledge. It challenges teachers to listen to stories and to hear their resonance in the distant orchestration of academic knowledge (p.323).

Limitations of Narrative/Autobiographical Methods

When critics approach autobiography needing proof of truth in some verifiable way, they have missed the very essence of the method which accepts the representation of the author's consciousness as a form of "defense against all the forces that make for conformity and prediction" (Graham, 1991, p.17). Critique of the autobiographical method pools around the commonly held limitations of qualitative study: subjectivity and identity politics, true vs. fictional accounts, and practical implications of research observations (generalisability and predictability).

Subjectivity and Identity Politics

In the following poem, I tried to explore a small corner of my literary subjectivity as so much of my life centres around story and literature.

"You Are What You Read"

Well now, who am I?
My favourite novels...
the ones I've read more than once, are
Reflecting on the poem now, I find the common thread linking these novels is that the storylines defy chronological sequencing, requiring the reader to tolerate some ambiguity before the story unfolds. Also, all of the authors confront difficult social issues without rendering didactic prescriptions.

Autobiographical discourses are not preoccupied with development of standards, but are unified around a preoccupation with understanding an inter-subjectivity that exists within.
Every text is an articulation of the relation between texts, a product of intertextuality, a weaving together of what has already been produced elsewhere in discontinuous form; every subject, every author, every self is the articulation of an inter subjectivity structured within and around the discourses available at any moment in time. (Sprinker, 1980 as quoted in Graham, 1991, p.146)

By asking tough questions originating in politically transformative epistemology, autobiography scholars can work to confront the contradictory power relations that make up the plurality of their identities.

A by-product of Reconceptualisation has been the accepted practice that researchers divulge sufficient information about possible personal biases, so as to aid a critical reading of their work. Typically, the reader would be treated to a short list of categories like: Euro-heritage, middle-class, male, etc. Rather than encourage a critical reading, this practice can encourage stereotypical generalisations regarding particular group biases.

Apple, in addressing the politics of power relations, claims that "[A]ll of our discourses are politically uninnocent. They occur within a shifting and dynamic social context in which the existence of multiple sets of power relations are inevitable" (quoted in Lather, 1991, p.vii). By acknowledging this ambiguous position, we begin to guard against stereotypical generalisations and encourage critical consciousness in the reader.

Grumet has given extended thought to identity politics and admits:

I would be naive if I refused to admit influence in what we notice, what we choose to tell, and in how and why we tell what we do. Nevertheless autobiographical method invites us to struggle with those determinations. It is that struggle and its resolve to develop ourselves in ways that transcend the
identities that others have constructed for us that bonds the projects of autobiography and education. (Grumet, 1990, p.324).

Scrutiny of “place” (Kincheloe & Pinar, 1991) brings the particular into focus, and at the same time exposes embedded social forces which have shaped our subjectivities of self. While we cannot help but be framed in the categories of our time, we can use self-reflexivity to promote gradual subjectivity shifts in the direction of our longing.

**Fictional Accounts**

Butt and Raymond (1989) raise the issue that individual autobiography can be limited by the use of biased or incomplete data and marginalised by the “entropic tendency to ‘over-fictionalise’” (p.414). They place value on autobiographical accounts according to the extent that they can be checked against some previous accounting, such as a peer observation record. A large part of Butt and Raymond’s (1989) research is around what they term collaborative autobiography. This method allows for other teachers’ stories to act as counter-biographies, thereby ensuring that one’s stories are grounded in current reality.

It is true that autobiography reveals personal bias and selective recall, shapes stories according to dispositions, creates coherence where there may be cracks, flaws, and problems, and reshapes the nature of how experiences are known and understood (Graham, 1991), but such interpretation is profoundly human. I have found reader-audience to act as a control on biased, fictional, or incomplete accountings of a story. There exists a strong drive to present events as accurately as possible, so as to be true to other players in my stories.

Grumet warns of the risk involved in telling stories and how self-disclosure to teachers
and/or researchers can complicate relationships, and in turn affect content of future story tellings. As Graham pointed out in his book Reading and Writing the Self, this is a drawback of autobiographical research and must be addressed frankly between writer and reader so as to minimise fictional constructions made in response to power relations (many students put great effort into researching what they think the teacher or professor wants to hear, and then attempt to produce what will please).

Graham puts forth that "the intuitive appeal of autobiography is justified by its results rather than by the sophistication or theoretical acumen that had gone into providing the warrants for its use" (1991, p.116). On the other hand, Lather feels there is room for "a theory grounded in the 'hunkering down on detail'" that would lend some direction for the task of producing coherence and continuity from "regimes of meaning." Pinar and Grumet (1974) have attempted to lay that grounding with their narrative on currere.

**Generalisability and Predictability**

"Good narrative must go beyond reliability, validity, and generalisability: a 'plausible' one tends to 'ring true'" (Pinar et al. 1995, p.560). While fantasy may be desirable in fictional narratives, the more plausible an autobiography, the more weight it carries in scholarly discourse. Resonance inspires a sense of agency within the reader, a characteristic which would seem to mark a strong autobiographical study.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I have explored curriculum as process. Grumet (1978) describes curriculum as the process of persons coming to form; in other words, a process of understanding and reflection that leads to personal transformation. She further
describes autobiography as the method by which curriculum can do its work. Through autobiography we chronicle significant events from our lived experience, viewing them from a temporal distance that affords us clarity and perspective.

By unearthing stories of my experience, I gain new perspectives on the interplay between differing identities, differing paths of learning, and differing places of context. Analysis of how these stories transform and inform my understanding of curriculum spurs me to recover the volition I need to create fluidity in a "living curriculum" - a place with space for me and the storied lives of those I teach/learn from.

As Gordon Wells (1984) said in an address to Early Childhood teachers, we experience our lives as a series of stories. His message always rang true with me, but it has particular significance now as I make storying my methodology. The phenomenon and method have merged—Autobiography/Lifestory.
My Run with *Currere*

Grafting Hybrids

*Each man must look to himself to teach him the meaning of life. It is not something discovered: it is something moulded.*

Saint-Exupery, 1939

*One of the difficulties in seeking to develop new perspectives is the obvious and oft-pointed-to distinction between theory and practice or, to put it in common sense language, merely understanding the world and changing it.*

Apple, 1990

**Introduction**

The need to understand curriculum is a recurring theme in the landscape of my lifeworld. As a child, university student, teacher and mother, I have always been interested in what we learn and why, as much as what we don't learn. Who decides what is important and what isn't? What are the political consequences? Why can't learning be more socially relevant? As an education student, my interaction with curriculum could be likened to the rebellious teen and her parent. My rejection of what I saw to be static structures with little room for teacher creativity caused me to shun any courses or seminars that emphasized the words *curriculum* and *instruction*. What I learned about curriculum development was in spite of any conscious design on my part. Nevertheless, the bulk of my teaching experience and academic research has focused around creating socially relevant curriculum.

After reading Pinar and Grumet's (1976) work on *currere*, I was inspired to draw on lived experiences that seemed to be key in directing my educational life story. The
experiences I have drawn on for this chapter were carefully selected. Each one was an important part of the context in which I developed a global/diversity perspective myself, and played an important role in awakening global/diversity perspectives in others through re-tellings. These stories also helped me face the overwhelming spectre of multiculturalism and embrace generative curriculum. They were later to inspire me to find avenues of empowerment and routes for efficacy with my children and my students.

Pinar suggests that the central question of currere asks, “What is your experience of educational institutions?” Understanding experience involves a process of reflection, which incorporates the stages identified by Pinar as regression, progression, analysis and synthesis. While I certainly incorporate these steps in my experience of currere, I find it somehow difficult to present what I experience as fluid, in sequential units of analysis. I have chosen an organic approach that more reflects my ways of knowing. In recalling the lived experiences that are central to my run with currere, I have paused at significant points along my journey where I can see that my educational practice and personal philosophy have been affected. I found that each of these key lived experiences intersected with my journey more than once. By “bracketing” these experiences - by isolating, examining, and analyzing them - I was able to extract meaning that in turn translated into practice.

Educators borrow the technique of “bracketing” from phenomenological scholarship.

3 While I say these stories were carefully selected, it is also true that they could have been other ones. Why did I choose these? They represent difficulties that forced me to realise boundaries and horizons. Next year, I might choose different ones. At this time, these particular lived experiences stand out as the building blocks I used in developing a global perspective, and in nurturing such a perspective in the children I work with and learn from. They also link a diverse group of characters in a colourful community of learners.
This technique is employed to connect with one's lifeworld or "experienced context" (Greene, 1973). To "bracket," one reflects on the "taken for granted," in order to understand experience profoundly and authentically (Pinar et. al., 1995). Once in touch with one's lifeworld, the researcher has a place from which to ask questions and shape her learning.

Bracketing - [The Usual Becomes Unusual]
[Killing a Moth] - Thoughts That Run Through My Head

Another moth, another hunt.
What are they infesting now?
It's a never ending battle
every speck of food encased in Tupperware
(thank God for those desperate days - singing the Tupperware song)
Has this one already laid its eggs
or am I in time to prevent the dirty deed?

Perhaps the boys need a raise
10 up to 12 cents per larva
15 to 18 cents per moth
18 x 4 is 4 x 8 at 32 plus 4 x 10 at 40; yes 72 cents
that should stretch their mental math.

Ah, the goalie judge following a tiny speck of rubber
I follow a flitting speck of wing dust
The hunt is on,
I force her high,
spend her flight reserves,
she rests,
I raise my hand,
whop she's dead.

(Seven Years in Tibet
monks carefully transferring worms
the guilt - oh why do I do it
I must perfect a method to trap them live.)

Wait a minute -
wow, a chance discovery!
Her little corpse drops into the cage below
Snuggles, the mouse, rushes to the scene
Snuggles savours the taste of wing dust.
I am no longer the savage moth “waster”.
I am merely a catalyst in one of nature’s food chains.

I wrote the above poem when I got up from reading van Manen’s paper, *Practicing phenomenological writing* (1984), to kill a moth. At the time, I remember being somewhat taken aback by the number of associative thoughts and images that flew through my head in that two minute bracket. These were:

- our kitchen infestation of moths and my subsequent study of their different stages of life
- my down and out days, selling Tupperware
- my commitment to encourage mental math skills in meaningful settings
- hours spent at the rink being a hockey mom
- expertise in killing the moths
- impact of Buddhist teachings and an image from the movie *Seven Years in Tibet*
- recollection of Biology class, in which we discovered mice enjoy eating insects.

The mundane is so exotic under the microscope. As I reflect on these images now, I am also struck by the shift in perspective: moth waster to nature’s catalyst, and how this symbolises my experience with curriculum -- learning to see things in new ways.

What follows is an account of the central lived experiences relevant to my run with *currere*. Each one is bracketed: it is followed by a series of vignettes depicting other settings in which the experience lived and changed. These vignettes can take the form of re-tellings, reflections, and poems. Finally, I reflect on how these inform my present understanding of curriculum. Although these experiences do not offer generalisable data, I hope to kindle in the reader memories of like experiences, thereby sparking reflections relevant to self.
The structure of each lived experience follows the same format, loosely based on the stages of *currere* identified by Pinar:

- **Lived experience:** the original experience recalled as a data source (*regressive*);

- **Retellings:** the examination of latent meanings that surface from the original experience through re-tellings (*progressive, analytic*);

- **Reflections:** contemplations on how these meanings relate to teaching and curriculum, and how they might be integrated into practice (*synthetic, agency*).

To preserve the autobiographical flow of *currere* I have kept the **Reflections** succinct. However, the continuing significance of how these stories impact on educational discourse and practice is raised where relevant throughout the remainder of the text, particularly in chapter three where I examine my academic search for inclusive relevant curriculum and in chapter four where I look at practical implications in the classroom.

**LIVED EXPERIENCE ONE**

**Hating Math with Mrs. Sturby, (Edmonton -- Winter 1964)**

It was Grade Three, and another morning of multiplication facts with my teacher, Mrs. Sturby. Mrs. Sturby had a prosthesis, which meant some kids called her “Peg Leg.” I lived in fear of the distinctive sound of her uneven footstep up the aisle, and the heart-stopping crack of the yardstick that she always carried -- a dreaded combination. You see, even though I knew my multiplication facts from doing them with my dad on the way to and from skating each day, for some reason I’d freeze at the front of my row in Mrs. Sturby’s class. I remember writing down each equation, but by the time I made it to the equals sign, Mrs. Sturby was already starting the next question. I had to decide whether to write down the answer or go ahead with the next equation. My brief moment of indecision caused me to miss the first number of the second times fact. And then that leg would make its irregular rhythm up my aisle. That morning in 1964, I was just writing down 3 x 12 when Mrs. Sturby’s ruler cracked across the corner of my desk. “Christanne, you haven’t written a single answer.” This was true: I was at least 6 or 7 lines down, with nothing but blanks beside each equals sign. Something snapped in my head, and I hated Mrs. Sturby.
When the recess bell went, I took a tack off the bulletin board by her desk and put it, point upwards, on her seat. I then went outside to join my friends in Chinese skipping and let out a sigh of relief. My revenge was so complete that I never considered Mrs. Sturby actually sitting on the tack, or even remembered what I had done when I came back in from recess. I was lost in the euphoria of getting to "hipsies" in skipping. It was a spine-straightening shock when I heard Mrs. Sturby yell and turned to see the colour in her face. Her skin had that ruddy colouring, that gives a blue tinge to a red flush. She was wearing a tartan skirt that flapped as she stamped her good foot helplessly, demanding to know who had put the tack on her chair. My face went crimson with one of those ear-burning blushes which I thought was a sure giveaway of my guilt, yet I was dumb with fear and couldn't say, "It was me!" I fully expected that at any moment, one of my classmates would tell on me. Would it be Todd Mason? I mentally went through each one of my classmates. In her exasperation, Mrs. Sturby assigned us something to do and disappeared down to the office, grimly saying, "We'll see about this!"

The next thing we knew, our classroom "snitch" hissed that Mr. Ramsay, the principal, was coming down the hall with Mrs. Sturby. Mr. Ramsay spoke to us about the seriousness of the crime, and assured us we would be better off if we admitted our guilt. Nobody said anything. I maintained a brilliant tomato red. (In retrospect, I was probably seen as far too shy a child to do such a thing and my more boisterous male classmates were receiving the usual scrutiny.) When nobody would say anything, Mr. Ramsay tried to convince us that this was such an important incident that it would not be considered tattling (although I remember thinking, what else could it possibly be?) Finally, half an hour past the final bell, Mr. Ramsay said he had to let us go as he didn't want our parents to worry over our late arrivals home. But before dismissing us, he warned that he would see us the following afternoon and every day thereafter until one of us confessed.

I remember feeling that my world had ended, that I'd done a very bad thing and that the trouble would never go away. The clear options I had were to run away, or to appeal to my parents for help. I avoided the subject until I had to face the dark in my room alone, and I called to my dad. While my dad seemed to understand, he said the honourable thing to do was to confess, and counselled me that things would be easiest if I asked to see the principal before school - that way I could concentrate the rest of the day. I missed that opportunity, but gathered my wits at the recess bell and headed to the office.

To this day, Mr. Ramsay remains one of my educational mentors. He didn't strap me, as I expected he would. He simply asked me why I thought that Mrs. Sturby would have cracked the ruler across my desk, and asked me what I knew about Mrs. Sturby. To make a long story short, he told me about her brave battle with bone disease and her belief in the cornerstones of learning. He acknowledged that the timed element of her mathematical drills was nerve-wracking, but asked that I try to understand her
perspective at having to teach the largest class of grade threes multiplication facts by the provincial exam date (we had 31 kids in our class). Mr. Ramsay did commend me for my honesty and braveness, and as a reward, he said he would speak to Mrs. Sturby and that the matter would not be brought up in class. His parting words were that I should come to see him in future, if I had a problem.

I felt as if I had a friend. There was a lightness in my step as I headed outdoors. It was as if I was party to two important secrets: the principal was really a nice guy and the sergeant drill master was quite human! Nothing was ever said to me about the tack incident by Mrs. Sturby. A short while later, she attached a note to my drill sheet saying I need not write down the equations. Strangely, after sitting in Mr. Ramsay's office, I lost the jitters during timed math drills and very soon after was managing both equations and the answers, within the allotted time. Did Mrs. Sturby slow down or did I speed up?

Retellings:

* Student Teachers in a Methods Course at University of Alberta -- Spring of 1984.
While engaged as a Kindergarten teacher, I was asked to address an Education class at the University of Alberta. The professor who invited me was particularly impressed with my system of individualised programming, and asked if I'd be interested in talking to his students about integrating individualized programming into class curriculum. When I spoke to his students about the benefits and drawbacks of having some students perform different tasks, I had to deal with their concern that such differentiation somehow allowed certain students to "get away" with less. I used Mrs. Sturby's story to illustrate that this need not necessarily be the case. I explained the arrangement Mrs. Sturby and my parents had reached, where I was permitted to write down only the answers without listing the equations like everybody else. Mrs. Sturby recognised my anxiety difficulties and made what she felt was a significant concession. She worried that children lost their place without writing down the questions, which she felt provided a reference point. However, she realized -- and also taught me -- that individualized training is more about equal opportunity, than about everyone getting the same treatment.

* Storytelling Club, Southlands Elementary School -- Fall of 1996.
Children from grades Two to Six came together once a week to listen to me read/tell stories. A rash of tattling began to spill into my story hour. When it began to get out of hand, I used Mrs. Sturby's story, focusing on the the choice my classmates made not to tell on me. I explained how this action in the end gave me the room I needed to turn my own self in -- to confess. I let the story club members know my feeling of disbelief and euphoria at not being exposed by kids who would normally get a rush from telling on me, especially with the
encouragement of the principal. The silence of my classmates allowed me to save face, and gave me the sense that I was part of the student body, even though I was unbearably shy and only ever spoke to two or three children in the class. In finishing the discussion with my story-telling students, I asked, “as long as no one is endangered, what harm would it do to give a classmate a little space to deal with one’s own misdemeanour?” We discussed the importance of establishing an environment that affords space to individuals without jeopardising the classroom community. I did not expect my counsel to the children to be internalised that day. I had merely planted the seed with the knowledge I would need to water it many times afterward, and with the hope they would come to appreciate what Mr. Ramsay had known that day.

* A school discussion with my niece -- Fall of 1997.
My niece was complaining bitterly about a teacher at her junior high school, who seemed to be underestimating the abilities of his students. In her opinion, his choice of curriculum content was not appropriate to their level of understanding, and he spoke in a way that was better suited to a younger audience. My response was, once again, to tell the Mrs. Sturby story, this time focusing more on Mr. Ramsay’s chat with me in his office. Mr. Ramsay had taught me that teachers are really only human beings and I explained to my niece that I would never have seen Mrs. Sturby as the gardener Mr. Ramsay said she was, or as someone who had suffered tremendous personal losses and yet still believed in the ultimate importance of children developing good math skills. I had fallen into the comfort zone of branding her with a stereotype, as my peers had done.

I also related to my niece how a simple analogy that was used to explain an observation could play a part in simplifying a much more difficult concept. I urged her to give the teacher a chance to explain why he used such a simple example, which would help demonstrate a willingness to share in the responsibility for her learning.

* Jamil in the car on the way home from school -- March 1998.
My ten-year-old son, Jamil, was beginning to develop an appreciation for history that went beyond names and dates. For a project on “explorers of Canada,” he had just composed a detailed diary imagining himself as a cook on Jean Cabot’s ship. I felt this developing interest jeopardized when Jamil asked, “Mom, for our socials test tomorrow, why do we have to know all the exact dates, like when people landed and left? Why can’t we just write about what the people did?” He was quick to remind me that even his uncle, the ultimate trivia buff, couldn’t produce the exact date of Pierre La Verendrye’s last expedition to the Mandans.

I wanted to uphold my son’s respect for his teacher, yet, I clearly understood his
dilemma. In responding to his question, I began by sharing my personal belief, which was in line with his: if you need to know a specific date, remember the reference source you can turn to for locating that exact information. The emphasis in learning history is to understand the nature of historical experience, not to memorize specific dates. However, having said that, I told him some exercises at school were important for reasons which were not immediately apparent. Sometimes it's hard to see what you're getting out of an assignment -- it may not make sense to you. I explained this was part of what I had learned through Mrs. Sturby's story. The things we learn are part of a more complicated picture which takes time to appreciate. Mrs. Sturby felt that the timing element she used in teaching multiplication tables was critical to our development. It required us to use speed, which in turn led to automaticity -- a critical skill for higher mathematical operations. In the meantime, the actual exercise of memorization strengthened the associative links necessary to move items from our short term memory to our long term memory banks. This clearly made sense to Jamil as his next question was, "Do you have any tricks for remembering dates?" For the rest of the evening Jamil and I put our collective creative juices into drawing links between explorers and dates.

**Reflections:**

The message reminding educators of the need to treat children individually is a strong one in this story. The space Mrs. Sturby and Mr. Ramsay afforded me was unusual for the day, but it freed me up to confront myself and in the end, meet their original demands regarding math drills. Their actions not only left a lasting impression on me, but they have impacted on those I work with. Themes of this story and its new lives in other contexts cause me to encourage myself and those I work with to develop a problem-solving approach characterized by the need to seek more information, avoid judgments, and anticipate complexity rather than try to confine myself to the most simple, black-or-white, right-or-wrong configuration. It also reminds us how important it is to take responsibility for one's own feelings, actions, and learning.
Perhaps an even stronger implication for curriculum is the wide-ranging benefit of bringing lived experience to the classroom. Stories can easily raise moral dilemmas around which children can begin to develop and test the tools necessary to deal with such experiences in their own lives. If I were to tell this story again in a classroom of young children, I would develop “What if...” questions, in order to explore the fuzzy areas so characteristic of moral dilemmas.

What if Mr. Ramsay had actually strapped me? What might have happened if I had written “PEG LEG” on the blackboard? What might have happened if I was an outspoken child and admitted my crime in class? What might have happened if one of my classmates told on me? What if my parents had either taken my side against the teacher, or given me the strapping Mr. Ramsay didn’t? What impact does a student’s fear have on her ability or inclination to learn?

LIVED EXPERIENCE TWO

A Subtle Lesson from Two Wise Elders, (Edmonton and the Tyendinaga Reserve, Ontario -- Spring 1978)

In my final year at the University of Alberta, I wrote a paper titled *Children's literature by and/or about native peoples*. It was well received and Dr. Jon Stott, my professor and a children's literature expert, suggested I publish it. In the end, I never got around to publishing because I started addressing one of the main themes of the paper - “the lack of suitable Native legends available to children.” I had written that teachers of young children found already published legends awkward, either because of advanced content (sexual references) or the anthology format (rather than picture book). As an artist without a project, I had found a mission: I would illustrate the legends from various anthologies I had collected. In my naivete at the time, I did not understand the significance of appropriating someone else’s cultural property. This is surprising because earlier that year, I was one of the few Provincial museum staff who supported the return of a Blackfoot medicine bundle to its place of origin. Was it my passion for illustrating that blinded me in the one instance and not the other? Did I
allow myself to be seduced by the Dr. Stott’s words of praise, to the detriment of what I knew to be right?

I was particularly taken with the collection, *Sacred Legends of the Sandy Lake Cree* by Carl Ray and James Stevens. I decided to start by doing a book with two legends and illustrations modeled after Carl Ray’s distinctive style. I used India ink and colour washes on rice paper with italic lettering for the text. Each page was 10” x14” with text along the bottom and a large illustration taking up the top two thirds of the page. I divided *Geen-go-hongay’s Bath* and *Wee-sa-kay-jac and the Weasel* into ten sections each, so that with end pages, an author’s note page, and a title/contents page, I had the 24 frames of a picture book.

Shortly after finishing this first book and reading it to several groups of kindergarten children, I visited my grandfather, Mr. W. S. Blake, on his Prince Edward County farm opposite Tyendinaga in Southern Ontario. I showed him the book, and he had some questions about permission which made me squirm, but basically complimented me on the illustrations and overall appearance of the book. The next day we were going to Tyendinaga, as we often did, to visit Chief Maracle. Gramps insisted that I take the book, even though I protested saying that the legends were Cree, not Mohawk. Mr. Maracle welcomed us and showed interest in the book. He didn’t open it, but began exchanging stories with my grandfather and I was treated to a brief history of Joseph Brant’s historic victories and how the Mohawk people were split between Caughnawaga and Tyendinaga. When it was time to go, Mr. Maracle still had not opened the book and he asked if he could keep it for a few days to show the school staff.

The book was never returned, but I went back to Edmonton with a pair of moose hide gauntlets from Mr. Maracle. Was he really keeping the book for the school or was it his diplomatic way to get it out of circulation? He and my grandfather had been friends for a long time - was he trying to protect my feelings? Was my grandfather part of the plan? I’ll never know what both he and Mr. Maracle were thinking -- they have both passed on -- Is it selfish to pray that Mr. Maracle had a good fire that night? Perhaps, the book has been kept to illustrate forms of appropriation. I can live with that. If I can’t own up to my mistakes and then reframe them as lessons, I haven’t really internalised my teacher-learner philosophy.

Retellings

* Meeting with Verna Kirkness, Director of NITEP, University of British Columbia -- Spring 1992

I arrived at the University of British Columbia with definitive ideas about the focus of my doctoral study. My previous consulting work with Peigan and Siksika in Alberta (1988 - 1992) had contributed to high levels of frustration regarding the lack of culturally appropriate curriculum and in particular, the
paucity of published children’s literature written with Native content. There was even less material written or illustrated by First Nations. My study intent was to research *appropriate* materials and test effectiveness through an experimental and control group study with First Nations children. My background areas of expertise in literacy, children’s literature, and culturally diverse early childhood curriculum development fueled my confidence that I had something to contribute to the development of culturally relevant First Nations curriculum.

My confidence was put in check when I sought out Dr. Verna Kirkness, then director of the First Nations House of Learning, to ask for advice regarding the appropriateness of my study focus. Dr. Kirkness was direct in her manner and asked that I answer the following questions in writing before speaking with her again:

1) What is your burning ‘passion’ to work with First Nations people?
2) What background do you bring to the research?
3) What exactly do you want to do?
4) What do you need from me?
5) What does the community get out of your work?”

(Personal Communication, 1992).

As I laboured over answers, I slowly became aware of how disrespectful I had been: prescribing curriculum designs without first having asked the people involved what they needed and the particular constraints and circumstances they faced. Even though I often spoke of the importance of curriculum evolving from those who use it, I was caught in the dreaded “White” cliche - talking without first having carefully and respectfully listened. I had even read one of Dr. Kirkness’s papers (1991) which referred to the 4 R’s of educational research: Respect, Relevance, Reciprocity and Responsibility, and stressed the importance of listening.

Once in Dr. Kirkness’s office and twice while trying to answer her questions, my mind spun back to those two legends I had illustrated, had appropriated. I had lacked respect then and not listened carefully enough to what Native people were saying about cultural property. I burned with shame and guilt inside and tried to bury these emotions in volunteer activities at the 1992 Mokakit (First Nations) Conference on campus and by enrolling in courses taught by First Nations that addressed issues in First Nations Education. I tried in earnest to listen.

* Listening to Maria Campbell, Metis author, Vancouver Writer’s Festival -- Winter 1993

I am a great admirer of Maria Campbell’s writing and storytelling, and so when I heard she’d be at the Vancouver Writer’s Festival, I made the effort to attend her session. It was only when I entered the Arts Club Theatre and saw her sitting
with a panel of two others under a sign indicating the topic was “Appropriation of Native Stories,” that I realised she would not be talking about her books. The words on the banner seemed to come out and wrap themselves around me: “Appropriator of Native Stories.” A friend tried to engage me in conversation, but my “Sacred Legends” secret was choking me -- I couldn’t speak.

Maria Campbell’s voice pierced the air with a plaintive, “Save me from people that mean well!” (Lutz, 1991). Could she hear the voices in my head?! Did Chief Maracle forgive my transgression because he thought I meant well? I tried to think of all the well-meaning people Maria must have put up with to be so exasperated. I cringed. Why can’t I bury this story from my past? Neither Gramps or Mr. Maracle is here to make me confess.

* Dinner with Renee, Manager of Chief’s Mask -- Spring 1993
I was a frequent customer at the Chief’s Mask Bookstore and Renee, the manager, and I often discussed the challenges First Nations faced when trying to publish their work. We chatted about books, how to use them, and First Nations traditional curriculum. Now and again we went for coffee and I tried to be a good listener. I respected Renee’s knowledge of Native literature and I wanted to see what she thought of some of the books I was thinking of using with children in a pilot study. I invited her for dinner and brought a bibliography of the books in my Native collection. I hit a hot wire. She was visibly angry when she asked, “Don’t you think it would be appropriate that you reference the bibliographic sources that you used in compiling your bibliography?” I didn’t know what to say. I hadn’t used any sources; the bibliography I shared with her was merely a catalog of my collection, yet I didn’t want to say so -- it seemed so unfair that I would have this amazing collection when many schools make do with 10 - 20 titles. Perhaps I failed to defend myself, because even though I had not done what I was being presently accused of, I had done something that to me seemed even more insensitive.

Renee and I got embroiled in a discussion about appropriation which unearthed all my ugly memories about the stories I had so naively lifted. I was about to confess to Renee when she remembered she had another appointment she needed to get to and I remembered Maria’s words about those who mean well. I suddenly realised that I was trying to get forgiveness from this woman -- I wanted her to heal me. How absurd! Did I expect this woman to not only heal with her own people, but to find room to look after me as well?

No, I needed to work things through myself and save my confessing for someone who might learn to avoid similar mistakes. I needed to tell this story to my own people. That night I felt compelled to rethink the focus of my research. I had no business trying to do for First Nations what they needed to do themselves. I could best help by giving them space and taking responsibility for
my mistakes and subsequent learning.

* A chat with my son, Jamil, regarding good literature -- February 1998

I read Jamil an excerpt from Bettelheim's *The uses of enchantment* while we were eating dinner and asked if he thought that all the good stories he knew were fairy tales, as Bettelheim suggests. At first, he answered that some of his favourite stories were fairy tales, and then he corrected himself by running a list of favoured stories that were not fairy tales. Then he asked, "Mom, why do all the really good stories have such sadness in them?" We reviewed a number of the titles he had mentioned (*The Snow Goose, Pink and Say, Jacob's Story (in Stories From the Road Allowance People), Star of Fear, Star of Hope, Sadako*) and I reminded him of the hope in each of them. "I know Mom, I learn to never let such mistakes happen again, but they still make me sad." I asked him what parts and he said, "just to know my people did those things." I took a breath and tried to remember when it was that I took ownership for my people, certainly not when I was ten. How did he carry this great weight of guilt and yet love all of his relations? I clearly recall managing historical stories of injustice by carefully distancing myself -- "those terrible things were done long before my grandparents and none of my relatives would do such things," and then doing everything I could to correct the wrongs. But because I refused to integrate the bad with the good in my own ancestry, my efforts to correct injustices were always done from a place of power. I shared my thoughts with Jamil and tried to show him that my methods of coping with past injustices had led me to distance myself from the very people I so wanted to help. I told him that by feeling sorry for others without acknowledging my part in their oppression, I was not respecting them as equals. I braced myself to tell him the story of how my renditions of *Geen-go-hongay's Bath* and *Wee-sa-kay-jac and the Weasel* ended up in Tyendinaga with Chief Maracle across the bay from Gramps' farm.

I let him tell me what I did wrong -- "you copied their stories and didn't ask permission!" It didn't take him long. Why did this 10 year old child understand what I missed as a young adult? Why was he also able to acknowledge that his ancestors had been involved in social and cultural injustices, cope with the sadness, and learn from it instead of running the other way? After sitting quietly for a few minutes, Jamil suggested that I write to Carl Ray and apologise. I explained that Carl had died, under tragic circumstances, three months after I had made the book. Together, we decided my mistake would make a good story to tell others so that they would not make the same one. Jamil remarked on the way out to the car, "Those gauntlets sure have lasted a long time, Mom; you should take them with you when you tell the story."

Why after all these years did I tell my son? Why was I not concerned about

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4 Bibliographic information about titles mentioned in this section is included in the extended bibliography in Appendix A.
losing face? Renee had shown me a way I could help. It was my responsibility to listen not only to her, but to my own heart and to share what I learned in the way Coyote would - through stories of my own cultural ignorances.

Four “A’s” of Indian Control - Four “D’s” on Our Report Card

Assimilation -
 oops that didn’t work;
they’re more different than we thought
Acculturation -
take them from their families
break the links with teachings strong and true,
but somehow, as the aspen, they survive.
Anthropology
maybe we better study their ways
learn the names of the diseases we passed on
figure out the roots of all this resistance.

Heh, there’s truth, spirituality, and healing happening here!

Appropriation
(the world’s a pretty bad place right now)
How can we get some of this healing for ourselves?
Let’s get some of those fetishes, dream catchers,
sweet grass, spirit stones and oh, some of those real traditional
s-t-o-r-i-e-s

Dishonour, Destruction, Degradation, Duplicity

Reflections:

As I sit here, I know what I must do: send a copy of the above to the Sandy Lake First Nation. I can at least apologise. Printed and mailed -- wow, 20 years late!

One may ask what my true motivation is in doing this. Is it to assuage my guilt - not really - I know I am guilty. I do it because it needs to be done. Over and over I hear First Nations expressing frustration that we deny
culpability for land grabs, abuse in residential schools, acculturation, and appropriation. Am I looking for forgiveness - not really. In telling Jamil the story that day, I began my expiation in the manner of Coleridge’s Ancient Mariner.

In confronting and admitting our mistakes, we open the door to personal growth and enhance credibility in what we attempt to communicate. We also encourage an environment where teachers can be learners and learners can be teachers. Children are freed to confront their mistakes and learn from them without fear of judgment.

*If a teacher you will be,*
*by your students you will be taught.*

Other themes of relevance to curriculum emerge as I reflect on my decision to illustrate the legends. We need the opportunity to engage with sensitive cultural issues in the classroom, so that we can prepare children to anticipate complexity, seek more information, listen with respect, and accept diversity.

In order for there to be reciprocity between cultures, we have to come to understand our personal position in the oppressed/oppressor cycle. I learned that by trying to address the lack of Native children’s literature, I was thinking as an oppressor. I had not sought shared understanding through dialogue. Instead I had taken the role of “helper” to those who did not seem to be able to help themselves. I was wrong, as is shown by the burgeoning number of First Nations authors and illustrators. As
educators, we foster equality in the classroom when we promote
dialogue in a spirit of reciprocity and personal responsibility.

Would these lessons have been as powerful, if Chief Maracle had
confronted me on my act of appropriation?

LIVED EXPERIENCE THREE

Margaret Meek and the Politics of Rabbit Warrens, Spring 1981, London, England
My M.Ed. research centered around the benefits of literary theme development in the
nursery classroom. This involved my using longer selections of literature to allow for a
three to four week extension of the literary theme into the various activity centers.
Several people questioned my use of books like Charlotte’s Web, The Secret Garden,
The Wizard of Oz, and Watership Down with preschool children. My academic
supervisor at the University of Bristol suggested that I make a trip to London to meet
with Margaret Meek in the Reading Centre at the London School of Education. She
was a noted authority in the area of emergent literacy. My supervisor said that she
thought we both would have many things in common to discuss. In retrospect, my
supervisor was not strong in the area of children’s literature and may have wanted me
to work through the difficult issues of developmentally appropriate literature with
someone whose opinion would count. I clearly remember Dr. Meek’s aghast look
when I discussed using Watership Down with preschool aged children. She asked if I
had read the book and then exclaimed that with all the excellent picture books
available, she couldn’t understand my decision to use chapter books. In a challenging
tone she said “Watership Down is a political commentary on society, not a nursery
story!” Her countenance made it clear that this was a bad thing and I reacted
defensively, saying that I hadn’t found it to be political, but instead, celebrated it as a
tightly knit story about the natural habits of rabbits. She responded by saying it was a
book intended for adults and I countered by saying that Adams, the author, had written
it from the ramblings he shared with his two children while walking the downs on
weekends. I read/told the story rather than reading it word for word, staying true to
dialogue and summarising wording settings. I finished by drawing her attention to the
children’s picture plate edition I had brought with me. She responded by saying her
schedule was tight, and she felt she could best help me by giving me a copy of the
latest Reading Centre approved bibliography of children’s quality picture books. I
found myself outside her office doors 20 minutes after arriving. I had a long train ride
back to Bristol in which to think through my deviant behaviour and come up with some
kind of rational accounting for my committee of my visit with the great Margaret Meek.
Why did I use chapter books with Kindergarten children? I was searching for texts with some grit, that we could get our teeth into. I needed stories where characters were complex, rather than over simplified to make a point. I used short picture books daily during a second reading time, but I built curriculum around stories of substance that fuelled meaty discussions. *Watership Down* was perfect. We could analyse the root of evil behaviour in the villain, General Woundwort, contemplate the price of freedom with Hazel, and feel with Fiver, the soothsayer, the fear that accompanies people's right to remain ignorant of the forces that control them.

My favourite part has always been the chapters describing Cowslip's warren. The lead characters arrive at a strange smelling warren in need of shelter. All but the soothsayer welcome the shelter and the delicious food acquired from the nearby farmer's garden. Fiver is suspicious of the human smell everywhere and the strange rule about not asking questions starting with where, why, or when. There are always gasps of shock and sighs of disbelief when the children in my classes discover that the farmer gives the rabbits food, because he is actually raising them to eat them. He is cleverly by-passing the chore of maintaining man-made hutches. Cowslip's warren is a society of rabbits that make the mistake of embracing ignorance for short term gain.

When I read my thesis from the University of Bristol, I see the impact of Margaret Meek's comments that day in her London office. Her words estranged my academic appreciation of what I intuitively knew to be crucial to effective curriculum. In defending my use of chapter books, there is no mention of the opportunity to work through sociopolitical issues over an extended period and to develop multidimensional appreciation of characters -- even though this is what I firmly believed. I don't talk about using texts to confront a problem or issue so that the children may come to know their own boundaries and horizons. Rather I defend the use of chapter books because they provide continuity, and allow teachers to adapt and use curriculum theme materials over a longer period. There is no mention of the advantages children stand to gain from the use of more conceptually challenging texts.

**Retellings**

* Defending My Use of *Watership Down* to the Local Advisory Committees, Edmonton -- Autumn 1983 and 1984

While I read this story to many classes of kindergarten children, two particular groups stand out, because of the concerns parents raised about perceived undertones of the text. I had an extremely supportive principal who announced to parents that the book would be read as planned, but I would meet with concerned parents to demonstrate how I would be read/telling the story. As with Margaret Meek, I defended the text as a realistic window into rabbit behaviour. I explained how I developed individual characters and how I encouraged children to accept diversity in character sketches, rather than cast characters in stereotypical roles. But not once, did I mention sociopolitical
awareness!!

* 601 seminar in Curriculum and Instruction at the University of British Columbia -- Fall 1992
I was intrigued by a classroom discussion regarding Michael Apple's study of hegemony and ideological forces in curriculum. We were exploring the need for analysis and greater understanding of the latent assumptions that create hidden curriculum. A scene from Cowslip's Warren (chapter 13 in Watership Down) came to mind, where the rabbits were gathered underground to partake in the cultured activity of listening to poetry while nibbling on the spoils from the farmer's garden. In order to maintain this lifestyle, they had to shut out knowledge of how the carrots got there and the loss of life that was necessary to support their luxurious tastes. Suddenly, I saw Watership Down as a political text and I understood its deeper hold over me. This same story had provided the moral dilemmas around which to develop discussions in my kindergarten classrooms (I have read and worked Watership Down with 8 groups of children and each group responded differently to the moral dilemmas raised).

I use the words "Cowslip's Warren" as a code name with my favourite bookseller to refer to books that encourage children to shift gears on an accepted perspective and entertain alternative perspectives. I also refer to books of this kind as counter-hegemonic, and markers of decolonisation. By collecting and using such books with children, I hope to "rattle their cages" enough that they may glimpse the meaning behind "false consciousness" and avoid finding themselves "underground with Cowslip." Children are encouraged to wonder what have been erased and written over in the making of the modern world (Willinsky, 1998, p. 52).

* Feeling the night time hunger in downtown east side Vancouver -- November 1997
I had done a lot of work at understanding the homeless and poverty-stricken in Vancouver. I also had a fairly substantial collection of children's books that humanized street people and made them approachable. Yet when my laptop computer and backup disks were stolen, I was forced to confront downtown and east side Vancouver. I went with my two boys to the pawnshops, flop houses and neighborhood bars to post notices about my stolen computer, and advertise a $500 reward for the back-up disks. Through this experience, I realised I had much to learn about what downtown life was really like. To begin with, I was preoccupied with my own concerns: the urgency of recovering the lost data, and the expense of replacing the stolen equipment. Yet in searching for my own needs, I became increasingly aware of the environment of overwhelming need that surrounded us. I said to my children, "Feel the hunger. Feel the need. This

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is here when you go to school. This is here when we go to the beach. These people are stealing to support habits that started as ways to cope with severe hopelessness.” I compared the feeling outside the doors of our car or as we walked through Pigeon Park, to Cowslip’s warren in Watership Down. I talked about how, when we were in our apartment eating dinner, these people were out here and that as long as we and the government ignored their need and the reality of their hunger, the robberies would continue.

The boys and I have spent many hours trying to envision avenues for efficacy. We thought of making quilts, but Karim asked, “What if they don’t want them?” I said, “You’re absolutely right. What we need to do is ask them what they need.” Jamil asked querulously, “Can we ask them in the daytime, Mom?” We decided to take batches of cookies to Pigeon Park and give them out to people. Over time, perhaps we could ask what would be appreciated, what we could do to help. The key thing about Karim’s question was what pulled me up by my bootstraps -- I had to really think about the fact that people aren’t asked what they want. They are always told by someone in an office with a degree in social planning, who is coming up with schemes to solve their problems.

As we prepared to make our apartment as secure as possible following the burglary, I kept thinking that no matter what we did, there would always be ways to get in -- just as rabbits would always die in Cowslip’s warren -- until we faced the reality of the social crisis festering and boiling over downtown.

* Explaining to my children the dependence of educators on casinos -- Winter 1998.
I was asked one day, in front of my children, if I could volunteer some time to work the casino that had been applied for as a school fund raiser. I declined and if the boys had not asked me why, I probably would have missed out on an excellent discussion with my children. I would also have avoided having to write a letter to the parent advisory committee.

I explained to my sons that the reason I couldn’t help the school with this project was that I didn’t support fund raising through casinos. This nice, easy way of getting funds is strongly addictive. Many of the Lower Mainland schools have been dependent for years. What are the long term ramifications? We are actually no different than the casino employee who picks up our friend Sheila’s seventy year old mother in her bathrobe and slippers so that she can gamble away the last of the money she and her husband had put aside for their handicapped son, who will soon have to live off the state. A whole generation of children has been raised hearing the word “casino” in the same vein as “Santa Claus.” My boys got the point, but I continued, “Schools justify their position, because they’ve been told people will gamble anyway. They might as well make good out of bad. But they unwittingly contribute to others’ addiction
through their own. The provincial government couldn't pull out of casinos now; they themselves are dependent, and now so are we."

I told them that at the parent advisory meeting, the predominant feeling was that fund-raising is a drain on family time and that no other activity could give the same return for as little effort as the casino. I lamented to my boys that I hadn't said what was bursting to come out -- "I've got a great fund-raiser! Let's go out and rob some of the homes in Southlands. That's minimal effort and it's fast. You'll get tons of money -- a whole bay of computers -- free hot dog days and more!" I explained that the reason these people couldn't see anything wrong with casinos is that they were removed from the event and like Cowslip's rabbits, put off thinking about future implications in return for short term gratification.

Karim said, "But Mom, you've got to tell somebody about this!" That night I had to write a letter to the school parent advisory executive committee, outlining the concerns I had raised earlier with my boys. In reading the letter to them the next morning, I explained one of my suggestions: To slowly wean ourselves off "casino dependence," by asking for less money in our annual applications, would not constitute a cop out. I likened our dependence to the smoker. Maybe we would be more successful if we asked people to reduce gradually. Jamil was still for the "cold turkey" approach. But then, he hadn't seen the faces of the parents and staff when confronted with the consequences of their addiction.

I finished by cautioning that when people criticise, they must be ready to come up with alternatives and be prepared to roll up their sleeves accordingly.

**Reflections:**

Sometimes "walking your talk" can be very time-consuming. How am I to write a thesis, if I have to stop to write these letters; where do I find the time to go to the school parent meetings and try to present an unpopular view? On the other hand, if I don't respond to these opportunities as they arise, they may never recur and I lose the relevance of the situational context. I am reminded of the saying, "pay now or pay double later."

I realise now that Margaret Meek unknowingly gave me a precious gift.
She had difficulty dealing with the concept of *innocent children* being exposed to *adult* politics. In effect, she forced me, albeit belatedly, to confront my own perceptions of how socially relevant issues do get introduced to children. In a democratic society, it seems particularly important that we start early in encouraging critical thought as part of the ongoing process of individual growth. The challenge becomes the how and when. I have found that by using literature that engages children, we can create non-threatening environments in which to face sensitive social issues. Here children can develop and test skills needed to live in today's diverse society. They get messy with alternative perspectives, they learn to cope with levels of ambiguity, and they get practice making pro-active decisions.

**Lived Experience Four**

*A Taste of Empowerment with Dr. Colleen Stainton, 1988 and 1989, Calgary*

She was different from all the others -- she was the only one who heard my story without exclaiming, "You've got to leave him." I was referred to Dr. Colleen Stainton by the high-risk obstetrics unit for consultation regarding stress on the fetus I was carrying. I was not only dealing with unusually high levels of stress, but also had to cope with the possible outcomes of the violent domestic situation I lived in. I had been to a string of counsellors before, but had experienced little more than frustration and a huge dent in my bank account.

Colleen saw me every two to three weeks during the last three months of my pregnancy and three times after Karim's birth. At the end of each session, she would ask me, "What would make your life more satisfying?" Without the pressure of having to defend my husband, or my decision to try and work things out from inside the marriage, I was freed to reestablish connections with reality rather than sink further into the surreal environment I had come to accept as my due.

I entered a place where I could look in again at my life and take ownership of my feelings about it. I was empowered to see the part I played in sustaining the
The space and respect Colleen gave to me, rekindled my confidence as an individual capable of making informed decisions, and allowed me to reconnect with my responsibilities as a mother.

One of my biggest fears was that the cycle of violence would repeat in my sons. Colleen asked, "What do you see as your position in preventing that from happening? You're an early childhood educator: this is your field, Christianne." Back in my field of expertise, I was able to re-vision my future and take steps to make it happen.

Retellings

* Lunch with Dr. Debra Anderson, Oreste's in Calgary -- Fall 1991
We knew each other through our work as a consulting team helping "gifted learning disabled" children succeed in public and private schools. Debra gradually learned of my personal situation because my required court appearances necessitated explanations for my absences. I feared that I would lose credibility as a professional because of my domestic situation. I also worried that Debra would lose respect for me as a friend -- she is a fiercely independent woman. Her profession, as a psychiatrist, naturally left her curious about the counselling I had received. One day over lunch, I found myself telling her about Colleen's approach and why it was so empowering to me. I hoped she would see that I was taking positive steps to ensure the safety of myself and the boys. She was fascinated that this counselling style had brought about such empowerment -- a resolve to change that was unusual for women in my situation. She was so taken by what I had to say, and why I found this approach so helpful, that she asked me to record what I could remember of Colleen's questions and counselling approach.

The aspect of Colleen's approach that affected me most profoundly was her approach to empowerment. Without directly saying so, she encouraged me to take responsibility for the ways in which I reacted to my situation. She asked me for my own judgments without judging me herself. Her goal was to help me gain independence from her as a counsellor. She pointed to my strengths, rather than my weaknesses: instead of chastising me for taking the abuse, she would tell me, "You are strong for making it through this week." Others, who prescribed a course of action for me, either made me feel defensive or contributed to my feelings of guilt, and in the end only made it harder for me to leave. Her approach was not to tell me what I had to do, but to help me define what was right for me, and this kept me in touch with reality.

* Lunch with a sessional instructor colleague, University of British Columbia -- Spring 1992
This was a difficult meeting, partly because I was so unprepared for the direction it took, and partly because I let myself become defensive. My
colleague had set up the meeting to thank me for teaching a class of hers and to plan future liaisons. This instructor seemed truly appreciative of my knowledge regarding literary theming in early childhood programmes and was anxious to explore other opportunities for us to share expertise.

As the discussion turned more to personal chit-chat, I had difficulty shaking the polite references to my "husband." Finally, I explained that I was on my own with the children, and she exclaimed, "Oh I'm so sorry!" I hastened to explain that things were improving and she need not feel sorry. Before I knew it, I was telling this lady more than I intended. However, I snapped to attention when she uttered, "I just can't understand a woman like you taking it?" Old defenses regarding stereotypes of the abused woman overwhelmed me. I experienced resentment for the position in which I found myself. I also sensed a marked change in the way this woman perceived me and what I might have to offer. Coincidentally or otherwise, no further discussion of future classes I might teach took place.

I was angry and hurt by what I sensed was a condescending attitude, and felt an irresistible urge to shame her into realising her own ignorance and insensitivity. I decided to describe how an insightful individual might deal with the same topic. I went on to relate my experience with Colleen Stainton, but the impact of my story was lost because through temporary collapse of self-confidence, I had neglected to show compassion for my listener. I had much time later to analyse how pride had got the better of me and how much self repair I still had to do. As a pedagogue, I knew it was my responsibility to contextualise my learning so that others might find links to understanding. I first had to come to terms with my own feeling of shame, before others would be able to see past it.

* Speaking with Margot about Death -- Spring 1996

Margot and I were graduate students in the field of early childhood education, both conducting research on controversial topics. We worked together in the library of the Child Study Centre, and Margot came to refer to me as her storytelling mentor. She originally approached me with concerns about the introduction of sensitive themes, such as death, in the early childhood classroom. I responded by pulling out my materials around the theme of "Finding Life in Death." We had many extended discussions regarding the appropriateness of using lived experiences to put stories in context. Her own mother had recently died, and I remember her insecurities about using her personal experiences of death as a point from which to open discussion. I persisted in cajoling her to integrate her lived experience in her teaching. Upon rereading Margot's thesis and once again engaging with her intense inner wranglings, I am reminded that while I deal with many so-called sensitive issues, I have only just recently been able to address the issue of domestic violence with children in the classroom. I thought of Colleen and her faith in my
ability to steer my own path. I seem to have set aside misplaced emotions of 
shame and can finally repay her investment in me by investing in others. 
Together we knock down stereotypes and build understanding.

* Chatting with my friend, Dunbar Community Centre -- Winter, 
1998

A friend at work was lamenting about her girlfriend who was in a very abusive 
relationship. She was frustrated in her helplessness because her friend 
wouldn’t accept “leaving as the only answer.” I could feel her fear and intense 
pain at having to stand by and watch her friend “self-destruct” in her indecision. 
And then, after all these years, I felt the pain of those who had to stand by, 
watching me. I passed on what I had learned from Colleen, but this time I 
internalised her words and made them my own.

To Those Who Love Me

Don’t feel sorry for me....
I think I can understand how you must feel
then again, maybe it is impossible to feel another’s pain
I know you love me
and ache to put your protective cloak around me
to make it all go away.
I know you feel helpless just standing by
I understand your need to feel you tried,
but I need to do this myself
I need to know that I can do it,
to find strength in my choice,
know that I’m strong enough
to break the cycle that I deny exists

You can help by showing your trust in my abilities

Don’t feel sorry for me....
I use so much energy defending him, our marriage, 
and cultural misunderstandings
there is little left to entertain other perspectives.
He once levied I would help the drug addict or alcoholic -
“Why can’t you help me?”
He said the high from the adrenaline release of violence
was just another addiction.
I never had the nerve to say
I could not help as long as I was part of the cycle.
Oh, how I fought the syndrome label,
the suffocation felt in being pigeon-holed,
a woman blindly defending her man
through a veil of bruises.

You can help by giving me space to see

Don’t feel sorry for me....
I can’t stand the pity,
I am not a helpless victim.
If I let myself think that way
I will fail to gather the strength I need to get out
Yes, things are tight and I often worry how I’ll hold things together,
but what of those who do not have the supports I do?
How do they get up each day?
You hate that I give when others seem more able,
but the boys and I are rich in ways that really count
and we need to share such wealth

You can help by letting me give instead of always owing to others

Don’t feel sorry for me....
When you leave, I cry tears that refuse to slow
it’s so hard to do it on my own,
but if I hide inside your protective arms
I’ll never last the pleas to come back, once I’m out
I must take ownership for my decision
He will know if I was coerced
and lever the thin edge of the wedge
Both he and I must know that I alone make my decision
that I remember the love
even as I choose safety
Now that I have children of my own,
I think I can understand how you feel

I don’t know if I could do what I ask you to do

* Personal Journal Entry -- May 11th, 1998
“Thesis” was on Jamil’s spelling list today. It was one of his 10 “student-choice” words, to be matched by the teacher’s 10. The impact of my doctoral work on my boys is huge! When I pick them up after a day at the computer, they spill out
all their school concerns. Then, they turn their attention to me and always ask the same question. “Did you write any of your stories today, Mom?” Both boys love to have me read from the computer the very tales they were suckled on. Well, last night was different -- Jamil saw three new files on the computer (The Moth - Poem, Don’t Feel Sorry - Poem, and Book Talk - Poem) and asked me to read them to him. Karim had already fallen asleep. Jamil loved “Book Talk” because he knew the books and I’ve often referred to the “conversations” of my library. He was troubled that he couldn’t remember Emily and wouldn’t stop until I dug out the book for him. He enjoyed it on a completely new level.

He laughed at “The Moth” as something so familiar in our household. His countenance was completely different when I read “Don’t feel sorry for me...” and he quietly said “that one’s about Daddy.” I nodded, and then he asked, “What are you using these for, Mom?” Trying to flush him out, I countered, “What do you mean?” “Well, are these going in your thesis?” I could feel he was troubled about my putting in the one that referred to his father, so I waffled. “I don’t know yet, maybe...maybe not...” He interjected, “Oh well, I like the ‘book talk’ one best - it’s really neat -- just like what they do.”

Long ago, my children and I came to the understanding that as storytellers, our lives were open books, except for what we agree is private. In Jamil’s reaction, I could see I was stepping over a line by mentioning his father. I must talk with him and explain more fully the autobiographical process - I must show Jamil that “Don’t feel sorry for me...” is about me, not his Daddy. It reflects what I’ve learned.

**Reflections:**

The lessons I have learned through my contact with Colleen and subsequent developments encourage me to create opportunities for children to discuss and gain understanding of the complexities inherent in victim cycles. This helps them to avoid taking judgmental stances. The impact of Colleen’s counselling approach followed a progression from the direct experience of empowerment, to its gradual internalisation, and finally the ability to empower others. Her approach reinforced what I already knew: individuals need acknowledgement of their integrity and some area of personal strength if they are to turn the tide of
defensiveness and free themselves from reminders of their weakness. Only then can they take responsibility for their own part in whatever challenges they face. Until you see yourself as an active participant, you cannot take ownership for your own learning, or be a truly equal partner in others' learning. Pity serves only to introduce a hierarchy, when true negotiation between differing parties requires them to meet on an equal plane.

I learned from Jamil that sharing personal experiences and reflections does have a cost. How can I deal with the potential for exposure and embarrassment? I must always bring balance to the characters I portray, and grant them the dignity of complexity. Storying is a responsibility, not a right. My own sons stand as a reminder to not underestimate the ability of young children to deal with complex social issues. Often, it is the adults who are uncomfortable in answering the questions that children are comfortable asking. It seems to me, that as long as children are involved in visioning possible futures of hope, they can cope with difficult subject matter and a measure of ambiguity.

Despite the pain involved in making mistakes, there is much to be said for the depth of learning that derives therefrom. If this is true for adults, the curricular implications for young children cannot be ignored.

LIVED EXPERIENCE FIVE

My roving library speaks, Vancouver, Winter 1994
I had always considered myself an open minded, culturally sensitive individual. It was
only when I discovered, and deliberately analysed, a phenomenon at work in my private children's library (6,000 books) that I realised I still had work to do in claiming a global perspective.

Being a children's book collector for over three decades, I have developed an extensive "working" children's library. (I say working because my books are used widely by teachers, children and families. The books I collect reflect my philosophical approach to education, and the values I live by.) As Canadian society began grappling with multiculturalism in the eighties, children's picture books depicting characters from a variety of cultures ebbed into my library. I set aside a "multicultural" section for these books, while the rest of my collection was categorised into themes that mirrored my teaching curriculum interests. This area of my library grew so rapidly that I was soon subdividing it according to cultural groups. By the early nineties, I had 58 headings including Chinese, American-Chinese, Jewish, European immigrants, Cree, Dakota, Lakota, Blackfoot, and Haida. I began putting together bibliographies on this section of my library, and giving presentations on how these books could be used to make curriculum more culturally relevant.

I encouraged student teachers to think in terms of "inclusion curriculum" rather than using the more traditional isolated units depicting a particular culture. I use the term "Inclusion Curriculum" to mean the use of a broad, encompassing theme to connect books and discussion topics from a wide spectrum of perspectives. An example might be "Personal Challenges." Even as I espoused this approach to curriculum, I still kept my multicultural section and its subdivisions very separate from the rest of my library. Like many Canadians, I had been caught up in the movement that branded Canadian multiculturalism as the creation of a mosaic or quilt rather than the melting pot of our southern neighbours. In my desire to avoid assimilatory ideas, I had in effect ghettoised my library. Even though Grandfather's Dreams by Holly Keller clearly belonged in my "Conservation/Preservation" section, it was kept with its Asian compatriots. Similarly, Fire on the Mountain was filed with "Ethiopian Literature" rather than under "Personal Challenge." I remember having difficulty with some books that crossed cultures, but I quickly solved that by setting up yet another subdivision for "intercultural" books.

Time passed and I concentrated on my studies, chasing down elusive "isms" and looking for their reflections in curriculum. My library was left to fallow and I made little effort to force categorisation on particular books that seemed to have wills of their own, in that they were never in the section they were meant to be in.

In the fall of 1993, I was invited to give a presentation highlighting books appropriate for multicultural ECE programmes. As I began to pull titles from my shelves, I was surprised to find many "multicultural" titles missing. Confident that I could not have lost such a large number of books, I began searching neighbouring shelves and slowly unearthed the missing titles. It would seem I had unconsciously begun to view and
shelve my books according to story lines, rather than by cultural group represented. I found my "multicultural" books in abstract theme categories such as "Personal Challenges," "Little People Make Big Changes," and "Judging Others by Appearance."

As I struggled to analyse this roving library, I began to see correlations between my conscious efforts to develop inclusive curriculum themes and my unconscious "de-ghettoizing" of the multicultural section of my library. When faced with the task of reshelving these books after the presentation, I distinctly remember a feeling of shame that I hadn't internalised the message of inclusion I was teaching others. I celebrated that no one was in my house while I ripped out the red coroplast dividers and finished the job of reorganization that I had unconsciously started. In the end, my "multicultural" section was left with books like *All the Colors of the Earth* by Sheila Hamanaka, *Everyone Cooks Rice* by Norah Dooley, and *This Is The Way We Go To School* by Edith Baer.

**Retellings**

* Presentation to the Parents' group at the UBC Child Study Centre-- Fall of 1995. I clearly recall coming to grips with my feelings of shame regarding the discovery of Chinatown and Little Italy in my library. It occurred to me that the sharing of this story might ring true with others as it demonstrated the lag time between academic understanding and active engagement of knowledge and beliefs. The first place that I tried out the story of my roving library was in a presentation designed to educate parents about the literature available for their preschoolers and primary-aged children. I chose to talk about the sharing of literature as a spawning place from which to discuss issues of social concern within a family unit. When referring to the difficulty involved in respecting diversity, I used my library story to demonstrate how easy it is for us to categorise according to difference: to describe a person as Asian rather than as an individual wearing a brown coat. The response to my story lifted feelings of guilt and convinced me I had a powerful new teaching tool.

* "Lingering with Narrative" Conference at UBC -- Spring of 1996. Again, I found a place to tell the story of my roving library. This time, I also spoke of the noticeably different way I had treated my First Nations collection. When I had dismantled my multicultural section, I left my rather large section of First Nations books intact. I explained how this mirrored my bias regarding First Nations' need for a time of separation and healing, and for self-government to cement before they could negotiate equally with the nation of Canada. I learned from my studies in post-colonialism and aboriginal anti-languages that I was one of the people who, through my counteract oppression, was over-compensating and in doing so, inflicting another kind of oppression (Hayward, 95). Through children's picture books such as *A Coyote Columbus Story* by
Thomas King, *Onkwehonwe-Neha* by Sylvia Maracle, *The Ghost Dance* by Alice McLerran, *We Are All Related* by George Littlechild, *In Honour Of Our Grandmothers* by Reisa Smiley Schneider and Garry Gottfriedson, *Stories of the Road Allowance People* by Maria Campbell, and many many others, I came to appreciate that my well-intentioned attempts to overcompensate for cultural mistakes of the past were impeding a powerful force of resistance and revisionist writing. The cultural mutilations of the past are still manifest in First Nations’ culture today. Missionaries stole their religion, politicians stole their land, and residential schools stole their language. Education became the weapon used to force assimilation, yet aboriginal peoples have survived as distinct cultures. First Nations mastered resistance, and through its diverse forms, eventually overpowered colonial intentions (Calliou, 1992; Archibald, 1992, 1993). The message that over-compensation carried with it smothering and stagnation was one I had learned years earlier with relation to special needs children, yet somehow it had eluded me until now in this context. Gradually, my First Nations books also found new homes according to story-line rather than culture.

* Presentation on Global Curriculum as created through my pilot programme at the UBC Child Study Centre, Spring of 1997.

At the 1997 BC Early Childhood Education Conference, I made a presentation titled “Moving Toward Global Curriculum.” As part of this presentation, I told the story of my roving library. This time, I was able to stand back even further and reflect on the exodus of books from my Special Needs section to other shelves in my library. “Book migration” had affected all areas of my collection that were grouped according to diversity characteristics.

When I was preparing the bibliography for this session, I experienced more frustration than usual. This stemmed from having to either assign books that fit several themes to one particular category, or further lengthen the document with cross-references. I felt compelled to offer an apology, explaining that the list of books and the way they were arranged was appropriate only to that day’s presentation. The document and the list of books would change on another day, depending on my subconscious thinking and the subsequent movements of my library.

I also explained my observation that in accepting generative curriculum in my teaching, and through encouraging the tolerance of ambiguity as part of the learning process, I also had gained a comfort level with the roving nature of my library. In the past, I had envisioned cataloging my books when time permitted, and always carried a certain sense that the collection lacked credibility without a formal catalog. I now realized that I couldn't teach the way I do, or work as tightly with my library as I do, if it were organized in a static way. I say this because I learn so much from the reflections I make regarding the movements
of my books. By articulating this subconscious process, I was able to find new ways to link books in the classroom and share these links with my students.

* Children in Dunbar Storytelling Class, Spring of 1998.
I was telling stories around the theme “For every action there is a consequence.” The storytelling format is for me to use four or five picture books to develop a theme. Whenever I use the story, Miss Rumphius, I balance it with The Story of Rosy Dock, The Queen Who Had Bees In Her Hair, and The Ladybug Garden. When preparing to do the class, I was unable to locate my copy of The Ladybug Garden, but I decided to tell the story anyway. Jenny asked why I didn’t bring the book, and I explained that I couldn’t find it in the section of my library I thought it would be in, and didn’t have enough time to find out which book it was chatting with. In response to the puzzled look on her face, I described a library of books that get up from one set of friends and move on to chat with another set that they may have other things in common with (sometimes they even mingle with books just to get in an argument). One little boy, who was particularly attentive during the telling, came up afterwards and asked me, “Is that true? How do you know they really walk -- have you seen them?” I said to him, “I haven’t actually seen them, but I believe in many things that I can’t see -- like love. All I know is that I don’t remember moving the books, and they’re not where I put them.”

Book Talk

I know someone else who suffered the taunts of others, you remind me of her.
Who?
Emily, the recluse I was talking about the other night the one who writes poetry on scraps of paper.
You should go visit her,
she’d learn a lot from you and your poetry might improve.
I doubt that, but where does she live anyway?
You have to go down to “Friendships Can be Difficult” and just hang out.
She doesn’t open her covers easily, but her little friend who lives across the street loves company.

Heh, Rose, remember that old lady who abuses her dead husband’s cat? You’d have thought no animal could forgive what he went through true blue he was, true blue.
No I don’t, but I did go see that old dancing bear poor thing!
Next Door, the Hutterite Colony was all abuzz,
English teacher sprung a trap, freeing an old coyote.
Elders don't know what to do
punish or praise the boy --
trapping's not against their ways.
Coyote saved by a human!!
She'll lose her nose laughing so hard.
Speaking of Coyote, did you hear all the commotion
down in the "Human Conflict" section?
NOooo?!
Ghost Dance was flapping about some scraps of paper
disappearing from inside his front cover.
(Personally speaking, I've never had rags inside my covers,
don't know what all the fuss is about --
Aida strutting by with tattered ends showing beneath her skirts
recycled trash as far as I'm concerned.)
You shouldn't talk like that --
those bits of paper
are just like books
with real stories,
and some of us get real close to them.
Anyway, every book on the shelf was being interrogated
for those bits of paper
Guess who?
Coyote! Why?
Oh, she's been out for attention
ever since the Columbus screw-up.

Well, there you have it, Anise, we saved the salmon
and a little of ourselves on that hot summer night
in the middle of Coney Island.
Wow, my kind of story,
making magic happen in real life,
breaking the rules,
people who haven't died inside.
You know it sort of reminds me of Pearl --
now, there's a woman who ain't the least bit frightened by rules.
Who's Pearl, is she down your end?
I've never ventured west
of "Personal Challenge and Growth."
Oh, she hangs out with the green people,
although I saw her out this way last year
chatting to that poor trainer of the elephants
the ones starved to death in Japan during the war.
Oh I know the chap you mean, 
very sad really.
Have you ever looked at the back of his cover? 
I can’t believe that someone of Japanese heritage
would actually “tell all” like that!!
I don’t know, makes his tale stronger, don’t you think?
Come on, I’ll take you and my little friend Cindy here over to see Pearl.
I feel like some of that homemade lemonade she makes.
I don’t think we’ve been introduced.
Oh sorry, Cindy’s from “Pets Have Rights Too”
She’s been putting pen to paper
to change the way people treat animals.
You know - the power of literacy.
Now, I want her to meet the power of women.
Pearl is a woman who knows her bottom line, 
and is not afraid to act on it!!

Sometimes I don’t understand the Big Mama!
She’s moved poor little Louise back to “Human Conflict” again,
don’t she know the girl’s tight with Fritha?
Who’s Fritha?
Fritha and her beloved Rhayader
forever confined to “Finding Life in Death”? 
Why do you think the Big Mama moves them
when she is so free and easy with the rest of us?
She’s stuck in a rut,
thinking only of Louise’s father.
She likes that sentimental stuff --
Churchill’s speech,
the Dunkirk evacuation.
She gets to thinking war
and back Louise goes to “Human Conflict.”
On Louise’s part, no one’s got the time o’day
for her accounts of what she saw.
The village folk and soldiers too
say “no girl crossed the channel with Stuka’s in the air!”
On the other hand, it’s just what Fritha wants to hear
she’s powerful tired of listening to folk
mourning, mourning, moaning.
She needs to talk of love
with someone who was there.
The two of them find solace in each other.
Maybe Louise could leave her cover in “Human Conflict”
--as a sort of "cover"--
and carry on with Fritha
over in "Finding Life in Death."

Do you remember the little kitchen maid?
the one in love with the gentleman of the roving eye?
Yes, well you'll never believe it,
I heard her chatting to the young widow
who took a shining to Jonathan Toomey.
You mean the woodcarver who lost his wife and child?
Well, the maid and widow are planning a double wedding
in the common outside Jonathan's shop.
																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																										

**Reflections:**

"Hearing" my books talk in the above poem validates my rationale to avoid static catalogue referencing. Being able to tolerate fluidity in my library opens exciting possibilities for re-visionsing themes of social influence.

Accepting my library as being in a constant state of flux helps me to appreciate the value of fluidity in the creation of curriculum. I liken listening to the teachings of my library to listening to the teachings of my students.

**LIVING EXPERIENCE SIX**

*Inviting curriculum into my home, Global Issues Summer Programme, UBC Child Study Centre -- Summer 1996.*

*(I give a detailed description of this programme in Chapter 4: Nurturing Global Perspectives in the Classroom.)*

In the following account, the lived experiences evolved in the process of developing curriculum rather than as independent daily life events which one later reflects on in order to draw connections to curriculum. It was because I had to create curriculum about themes that I had little personal knowledge of, that I was forced to gather relevant lived experiences.
In an effort to balance the "human conflict" and "oppressor" themes in the programme with concerns about Mother Earth, I decided to develop two sub-units: "conservation/preservation" and "pollution and recycling." It was important to me that I chose issues that would raise controversy in class discussions. I would have an excellent literature base for both subjects if I collected a few more materials presenting perspectives from the forestry side. Although my two boys and I collected many experiences as we created curriculum, two stand out as particularly relevant: our adventure in the Carmanah Valley and the power of the pen in dealing with a large corporation.

I. Carmanah Valley: Some people might think I was crazy to take two little boys, 7 and 8 years old, subsistence camping for four days in the Carmanah Valley. After reading the *Carmanah - Artistic Visions of an Ancient Rainforest*, published by the Western Wilderness Committee, the three of us were bound and determined to see Randy Stoltmann's "Carmanah Giant," the tallest known spruce in the world. Raised a camper, I felt confident I could handle this adventure. Before I could teach about conserving watersheds and old growth forests, I needed to understand what was being protected. I was in for a small awakening in that the rainforests of British Columbia are quite different from the boreal forests of my childhood.

The clear-cuts on the way into the Carmanah helped to conjure an image of the logger as a big bad guy in the minds of my boys. As a bibliophile and user of wood, I felt uncomfortable letting this image stand unchecked. We needed to balance our Greenpeace feelings with perspectives from the forest management side. I seized the bull by the horns and drove straight into a MacMillan Bloedel logging camp about 25 minutes from the Carmanah. I doubt that a nuclear reactor plant has as many security measures as one of these camps. A truck beetled over to us as soon as I stepped under the entrance gate. Luckily, the driver was an older gentleman interested in children and ready to take a couple of hours to answer our questions. He was a non-union logger who had enough silver whiskers that he could tell stories of the change in the industry over the last three decades. He certainly had the interest of my two boys. Both boys were particularly impressed by a large sign announcing that the camp had achieved 5 accident free days. Our logger friend talked of the old days when three valleys over, they often had records of 60 days and higher. I could see Karim's image of a ruthless monster raping the forest shape-shift into a somewhat smaller Paul Bunyan figure with a bandage on his head. Our friend also explained some of the difficulties in contemporary forestry, and stood Karim against a tower of code books. They measured over his head and we all marvelled at how complex the industry must be. We left with substantial reading material, a REAL map identifying all the logging roads, a few funny stories and a more friendly image of loggers.

After six hours of hiking down into the Carmanah, it was nearly five and already getting dark, since the density of the forest occludes late evening rays of sun. I had five feet with blisters and only four bandaids. Both boys were wet, we were in a rainforest after all, and I had to make camp on a gravel bar bordering the creek, with no fire. We had
not seen anyone (and no children whatsoever), since Ten Person Hollow Tree two hours back, and the towering sitka spruce closed in around us. At the trailhead, we had seen a bear warning and I was faced with somehow caching our food 10 feet up with trees that had no lower branches. That night, we cheated and lit a metal-encased candle inside the tent until the boys fell asleep.

The trail to the Carmanah giant had been closed because of loss of human life and the desire to protect the tree. When we had come in, we discussed breaking our own trail and whether this was wise or not. After we lived and conversed with those old trees for two more days, our decision not to go to the Carmanah Giant was based more on the need to protect the tree itself, than on the inaccessibility of the trail. We could love it without seeing it -- we could love its story. This was a very powerful realisation, that would provide an excellent seeding for the global issues programme at the Child Study Centre. When it came to choosing projects to support with the money the children raised in a "conservation fair," the class sponsored two Douglas Fir trees and donated $40 for trail making, so that people could find out what they were working to save. They also donated $40 to the Seymour Demonstration Forest, to support research on responsible forest management. A good balance!

2. The Power of the Pen

What started as curriculum preparation for this global issues programme ended up becoming our life. I was compelled to confront issues of recycling that had long been put aside because of time and money constraints. I felt a responsibility to "walk the talk" that was circulating in the class, but the reality was that recycled toilet paper cost more that the regular kind and checking packaging for the right recycle logos was time-consuming. Field trips to the recycling depot and landfill cemented a family commitment to create only one bag of garbage a week. We built a homemade composter and learned to access the appropriate personnel to follow-up on the use of items recycled. We learned that the *rethink* part of the recycling motto (reduce, reuse, recycle and rethink) was the most difficult to incorporate into fast paced living.

Because I was motivated to teach my children, I did things I wouldn't normally do, like ask to speak with the manager at Safeway. I needed to purchase some juices for the field trip to the Seymour Demonstration Forest, but I could only find tetra-paks (non-recyclable at the time). The store manager was short in his manner and stated he had stopped carrying bottled juice a year ago. I remember Jamil's frustration, "Mom, why don't we get the tetra ones just this time, so we can go home." I was tired too, but if I didn't model perseverance, then I knew I would slide back down. We found some bottled juices in a little fruit store on the way home and the next day wrote a class letter to Safeway before going on our trip. We received a letter two weeks later, thanking the children for their concern and assuring them that bottled juices would be on the shelves the following week. The power of literacy was understood in a most tangible way!
Retellings

* Evening Presentation to Southlands Elementary School, Vancouver -- 1996

The topic was "Family Story Sessions: A Socialising Process" and I had prepared a list of books that spark discussion of contemporary social issues. I talked about the difficulty schools face in covering the diversity of issues today's children will need to negotiate and live with. Constructing opportunities for families to engage difficult subjects through select children's literature was the theme of the address. I emphasised the importance of building in hope when discussing difficult issues with their children. This was done through visioning and exploring routes for efficacy as a family. I also underscored the importance of parents modelling the kind of problem solving and critical thinking skills we want to encourage. I told the above two stories to illustrate these messages.

While I was putting away the books I had brought, one of the school staff came up and said that my presentation had rung true with her in a different way. As a teacher, she had fought the first 15 years of her career to keep her private life separate from her teaching and to leave her classroom in the school. If required, she would stay late rather than take things home. She said that through circumstances similar to those I had described, she was faced with teaching something about which she had little resource material. By developing curriculum at home, she was able to invigorate a lacklustre domestic life and actually got an energy boost at school.

* My Son, Karim, Internalises Lessons from a Global Summer Programme at the Child Study Centre, Vancouver -- Winter 1998

I was at a weak point, hating the whole lunch-making ritual when a coupon for Lunchmates, a ready made lunch marketed by Schneiders, turned up in my house. I bought four packages as a treat for my boys and as two lunch-making - free mornings for myself. I did so without examining the packaging, as had become a family practice. My son, Karim, came home from school exclaiming how much he loved his beef taco Lunchmate, and then in a quieter voice, asked if I had noticed that the packaging was not recyclable. Recalling the letter about bottled juice, Karim said he would write a letter if he could use the new writing programme on the computer. A family friend helped him organise his ideas for the following letter:
Dear Sir or Madame,

I am nine years old and I really like your Lunch Mate Tacos and pizza. My brother and I eat them once a week for a treat. We want to keep on buying and eating your products.

The problem is your packages are not recyclable and we feel guilty eating them. Also we have to beg our mom to get them, because she's pretty fussy about recycling. She says she will buy them for another eight weeks and then if we have no news about possibilities for recycling, we don't get any more lunch Mates.

Please help us because both my brother and I love your beef tacos.

Yours sincerely,
Karim Hayward-Kabani

PS I wrote this letter before I read about your terrible problem with food poisoning. I'm sorry for all the troubles you have, but I think it was really good of your company to take the products of the shelves before you were asked to. I hope you sort things out soon and that while you solve the cheese problem you can also think about recyclable packaging.

After six months of waiting, Karim had yet to receive a response, and mailed a second copy in case his first letter was misplaced or lost in the mail.

Reflections:

These experiences indicate to me, that as an educator, my comfort level with difficult subjects can be immeasurably enhanced through first hand experience. Educational systems might consider facilitating such
experiences through existing professional development programmes.

Controversial issues have at least two sides to them and even if it is difficult or politically incorrect, curriculum must allow for balanced presentation of differing perspectives. Students deserve access to the tools they need to make informed decisions. Readiness of the MacMillan Bloedel logger to spend some time with my boys, begs the question of whether or not educators might make better use of guest speakers to present issues with which they themselves may not be comfortable.

Presenting children with what sometimes may be opposing viewpoints, can lead to student inertia and frustration. It is not enough to merely open a can of worms, educators and their students need to work together to vision and revision responses to the issues raised.

Karim's letter to Schniders causes me to reflect on other ways I might have guided him. Would the response of Schniders have been different if Karim had taken his letter to school to be signed by all of his classmates? Would the response have been different if I had called to get the name of the company president and his address? What if he had sent a copy of his correspondence to the editor of a local paper?

**Concluding Remarks**

The process of synthesizing previous lived experiences with my present approaches to curriculum reinforced specific characteristics of the lens I call global/diversity curriculum. I didn't appreciate at the time how effective this process would be. In
reflecting on what I have written, I see this journey has helped me realize that in order to engage respectfully with others, I must first take responsibility for my own learning and behaviour. Only then can I model the values and principles that underpin my teaching.

It is the difficult experiences in life that galvanise learning and challenge us to see the broader implications for other aspects of our lives. Through storying and books, I have attempted to create situations that expose children to sensitive issues and provide them with the opportunity to get muddy in exploring opposing perspectives. Socially and culturally relevant contexts can ensure that these vicarious experiences help them approach new situations respectfully and sensitively, but with a sense of their own agency.

My intuitive understanding of curriculum through lived experiences was several years ahead of my grounding in academic theories. In my doctoral studies, I was searching for synthesis between intuitive knowledge and intellectual understanding. It is this juxtaposition that I will address in the next chapter.
Imaging a Global Diversity Perspective
Experimenting with Landscape Architecture

“There is no longer one right answer to any question worth asking.”

Pearson & Stephens, 1998

If a narrative account is to contribute anything worthwhile to curriculum discourse, it must be situated within a broader context of educational philosophy and instruction. Lines of applicability to theory and practice need to be established between personal experience and academic discipline. An attempt at establishing relevance is to locate my narrative within the fields of tension existing within contemporary curriculum scholarship. These fields of tension are created by opposing viewpoints and philosophies that permeate the discipline of curriculum development and instruction. My formal study of curriculum and instruction at the University of British Columbia led me through a series of dialectical tensions. I began to explore the various discourses that had been tugging for my allegiance -- First Nations education, feminism, post-modernism, post-colonialism, multiculturalism, interculturalism, and anti-racism. In so doing, I began a convoluted journey that would eventually illuminate connections between my experiential knowledge and discourse in the contemporary field of curriculum and instruction. In an effort to assist the reader, I have included a simple visual representation of that journey on the following page.
An Academic's Search for an Inclusive Approach to Curriculum

Studied Culturally Relevant First Nations Curriculum

Issues of Privilege Unequal Power Relations

Explored Contemporary Curriculum Discourses

Identified Key Dialectics in Contemporary Curriculum Discourse

Multicultural Ant-Bias Post-Modern Post Colonial Phenomenological Anthropological Feminist

Oppressor/ Separatism/ Infusion/ Generalist/ Advocacy/ Conflict/ Neutrality Consensus

Broadened Understanding of Unequal Power Relations in Diverse Society

Visioned Global Diversity Perspective

Internalised Global Diversity Perspective

Personal Philosophy Guide to Curriculum Development Lived Experience

VISIONING & ACTION IN CURRICULUM
Studying Curriculum and Instruction through First Nations Issues

My initial approach to the academic study of Curriculum and Instruction was to explore ways of making curriculum more socially and culturally relevant. Responding to advice that my study would best be served with a tighter focus, I decided to narrow my research to culturally relevant curriculum for First Nations children.

I had worked with Cree, Blackfoot, Siksika, and Peigan peoples in Alberta. Most recently, I had given a presentation on early literacy at a First Nations Education conference in Brock, Alberta (1991). There, I felt the frustration First Nations educators had with a system that not only did not meet their needs, but was actually harming their children. I was sobered by a pervasive sense of anger and betrayal exhibited by these teachers over inappropriate curriculum content and materials. They emphasized the need to engage communities in the act of creating those meanings and values they wanted to be presented in the education of their children. Tightening my research focus to examine culturally relevant curriculum for First nations children seemed a good fit.

I believed that my background experience working with Native people, my extensive collection of First Nations literature and my interest in early literacy behaviours would leave me well positioned to work with First Nations communities in developing culturally relevant curriculum. In my desire to effect change, which I perceived as positive, I visualised myself as a researcher/facilitator without an agenda. At the same time I was attending a doctoral seminar in which classroom participants were challenged to uncover their hidden agendas. Reflecting on what might be mine, I was forced to confront my interest in getting a PhD. I would get the accolades and prestige derived from helping these people, which would further contribute to my image as an
expert. I rationalised that the First Nations community I would work with would benefit by receiving a literacy curriculum organic to their community.

In recalling Freire's analysis of the "helper" relationship, I realise I was caught in the "expert-recipient" cycle, which put me in a position of advantage over those I was working with. Fair negotiation comes of equal opportunity to participate in dialogue and reciprocity within the relationship. I am reminded of Verna Kirkness' (Director of First Nations House of Learning) suggestion, early in my programme, that I enroll my own 2 children in the First Nations school with which I would work/research. In this way, I would be getting something out of the system that I was contributing to.

Slowly, I began to internalise the ideological foundations of First Nations control over First Nations education, and I was forced to reflect on the appropriateness of Euro-heritage individuals doing First Nations research. I decided to discuss my concerns with my department head and ask what he knew of mutually successful collaborative research models. At the time, he questioned whether Euro-heritage individuals should implement a moratorium on research in First Nations education. My idealism impeded my hearing his message or querying the assumptions beneath his advice. He felt that a moratorium would give the time needed for healing and revisioning, without premature intervention. My view was that it wasn't fair to children currently in the system to have to go through a period of waiting which would further alienate them from an impaired education system. I also felt my good intentions could be a catalyst in the healing process. What I did not appreciate was that First Nations needed a complete break to dissociate their thinking from European hegemonic structures and ideologies. They needed time to heal, regroup, and revision a way to transmit their own morals and values to their children. This was the same space and time that
Colleen Stainton knew I needed in order to reframe my own life of abuse from a position of strength. Only when I had had time to regroup and revision, was I able to identify what help would best address my needs and those of my children.

My idealism led me to think I could offer sensitive help in an area greatly disadvantaged. Just the fact that I was thinking in terms of First Nations as disadvantaged led to two problems: looking through deficit eyes caused me to miss out on strength of resistance and prevented me from treating First Nations as equal. I would easily get caught "doing for" rather than "listening to," wanting to make things better, but lacking true respect. Despite my good intentions, I was thinking more in product terms than about process. I was thinking in terms of adapting an established system rather than giving First Nations people the space and time to create something new that would reflect their own values, perspectives, and beliefs about education. I came to realise that the crux of the problem lay in the imposition of my own cultural values on a journey that was not my own. Although my plan had been to act as a "facilitator" rather than "director," I increasingly saw even this role as interventionist.

Also, at this time, I was reading *The Book of Jessica: A Theoretical Transformation* about a painful collaborative piece of work between Maria Campbell, Metis activist and author, and Linda Griffiths, Euro-heritage actress and playwright. The reader is thrown into some of the most explosive issues facing First Nations and non-natives today and cannot fail to see that the authors are trying to heal a wound sooner than is possible.

Maria Campbell stated decisively in her interview with Hartmut Lutz:

I don't need to read books written by white people about my people that show me as being oppressed and poor and colonised. I know that, and I can talk about that. It might take me a while, but I can do it, thank you. If you really are my friend, then get out of the road and let me do it. And if it takes 20 years, it will take 20 years. We will tell our own story. *(Contemporary Challenges, p. 60)*
Campbell's words struck home for me. Even though I felt the urgency of children presently in need, it was not my place to change priorities and rush time lines within another culture. While I might discern a need for culturally appropriate curriculum material, it was not up to me to define either the problem or its solution. My place in the process was "to get out of the road" so First Nations teachers (contemporary and traditional), students and families could do the hard work of reflecting, healing, revisioning, and finally, problem solving. Trying to facilitate this process was at best misguided, and at worst, presumptuous. This doesn't mean turning my back, just stepping aside. I could be ready to work collaboratively when the time was right, but at this point, First Nations must take whatever time they need.

*When a man does what needs to be done, he does not know the meaning of time.* -Chief Dan George

Appreciating that my original study plans would leave me "teaching and researching on stolen ground" (Calhoon, 1997), perhaps I was better to follow Maria Campbell's suggestion to Hartmut Lutz when he asked what non-native people could do regarding native oral and written literatures. She said that "border workers" with privilege in the "mainstream" educational community could work to promote First Nations storytellers and literature by First Nations authors in a sensitive and inclusive manner. With a recent surge of children's literature by First Nation authors, this would be easier to do now, than it has been previously.

My study moved from a specific First Nations focus to a generic need to understand unequal power relations and how these are, or are not, presented in the classroom. The reader may question why after investing three years of study in First nations literature and education issues, I would take a "leave of absence" from something that has influenced me so profoundly. Had I not made this initial investment, I doubt that
the insights I have achieved could have occurred. I also feel in a better position to ask the kinds of questions that need to be asked.

**Listen and Observe**

I went to the First Nations community and offered my help. They responded: "but you don't know the issues" I countered. "please teach me, I want to learn" They said, "listen and observe"

After listening and watching I learned that my education would unravel as a story without end. What seemed succinct and graspable before, is now every bit as convoluted and fluid as other communities.

How can I reciprocate the investment of my teachers? I cannot teach what is clearly theirs to teach I can tell my story to help break down hegemonic barriers that keep others from hearing First Nations voices.

**Exploring Contemporary Curriculum Discourses and Identifying Key Dialectics**

As I wrestled with questions of relevance and privilege, I tried in practical terms to visualise "what inclusive would curriculum look like, and how it would be implemented
and maintained." I began in earnest to explore the "isms" and the "posts" of contemporary scholarship and was, in turn, excited and disillusioned. The challenge to try to unlock a new code word, was always a thrill, followed by the sense of collegial belonging, and ultimately, the disappointment in discovering limitations and exclusionary terminology. As Dewey (1938) said,

...in spite of itself any movement that thinks and acts in terms of an 'ism' becomes so involved in reaction against other 'isms' that it is unwittingly controlled by them. For it then forms its principles by reaction against them instead of by a comprehensive, constructive survey of actual needs, problems, and possibilities (p.6).

The various curricular discourses I studied (multicultural, anti-racist, anti-bias, post-modern, post-colonialist, phenomenological, anthropological, feminist) were all struggling with the same dialectics and the implications of inherent methodological conflicts. My exploration of the field became an attempt to situate my experience within these dialectics. In the following pages, I describe a little of my interaction with key dialectics like: oppressor/oppressed, separatism/plurality, infusion/inclusion, generalist/specialist, advocacy/neutrality, and conflict/consensus. Was there an ideological stance that would bring inclusivity to this exploration? Struggling to find this stance furthered my progression toward imaging a global perspective.

**Oppressor/Oppressed - Is there a way to break away from this insidious, self-affirming cycle?**

Although I had come to understand something of the oppressor / oppressed cycle from my interaction with First Nations education, I found it to be a theme that pervaded my future learning. Oppression was a cycle that I wrestled with in my exploration of multiculturalism, interculturalism, feminism, anti-racism, post-colonialism, and diversity education. All were about power relations.
Education is never neutral. Implementing any curriculum is a political act, making the need to encourage dialogue and reciprocity between learners an essential counter-balance (Ted Aoki, 1983). I was to rely heavily on Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in learning to see how I personally carried out roles of both oppressor and oppressed. In particular, his demystification of "helping" relationships made clear for me the need to break free of old cycles of charity and to create new partnerships of reciprocal empowerment. "The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" (Lorde, 1984, p.112).

I renewed my commitment to the importance of dialogue and began to review the importance of reciprocity from a different vantage point. Take for example a quick note I wrote to the registration committee for a Mokakit conference on Sept. 9, 1992:

To whom it may concern;
I am a student at UBC and appreciate you making your conference affordable to students! I would like to volunteer some time, but am not interested in having my fees waived. I'd love to help with signs, display layout, or anything artistic. I have a vehicle (not new) and would be willing to pack, carry, or just clean up.

It sounds like a wonderful conference and I am very much looking forward to the Sunrise ceremonies!

Yours truly,
Christianne Hayward-Kabani

As I reflect on this note now, I sense my unconscious message of being more equal than First Nations students. I say this because were this not an aboriginal conference, I most certainly would have taken advantage of the offer to waive fees for volunteers (after all, I am raising two children on my own). I felt guilty taking from a people who I saw as needing the scales tipped to their side. What I missed was how my note could
sound condescending and how it could also be seen as marginalising the efforts of First Nation student volunteers who had their fees waived. My well-intentioned action was actually based on seeing First Nations as disadvantaged, a belief that encourages deficit thinking rather than respectful thinking. I had yet to own my past -- I kept trying to distance myself from a history I didn’t trust or like by giving to the disadvantaged. If I was so concerned about giving to an organisation I believed in, I might have been better to convince one of my Euro-heritage colleagues to attend the conference.

In guiding students’ approaches to issues of conflict, educators must be sure that all learners, including themselves, are equal parties with equal opportunities for participation in reflective action.

Moving away from the tradition of equating difference with deficit may be one of the most formidable challenges of our times, not only for developmental psychology but also for education and other human service disciplines and professions. (Marfo, 1993,p.7)

In the same vein, it is important for educators to demystify the teacher/learner relationship and acknowledge that learning is reciprocal in order to nurture equal participation in praxis. Non-reciprocal relationships have an implicitly oppressive character. Are there ways to help children experience reciprocal relationships and guard against cycles of oppression both inside and outside the classroom? Both teacher/learners would need to analyse personal philosophical stances in order to unearth skeletons that may be concealed in outward presentations (Derrida, 1982). Opportunity to face and get to know personal negativity in a non judgmental environment guards against the temptation to get rid of it by punching someone in the face, by slandering someone, or by repressing it altogether (Chodron, 98). This hard work can be facilitated through the staging of problematised situations in the
classroom using story. In working through these dilemmas, a process to increase self knowledge, to communicate across difference, and to encourage reciprocity would evolve. Teachers can then help children develop the tools necessary to dissociate themselves from hegemonic structures and to negotiate a learning path flexible to changing perspectives. Wrestling with this dialectic made me loosen my concerns about content, as I recognised the overriding importance of process.

Ellsworth (1990) and her doctoral seminar students came up with a statement that describes a kind of communication across differences:

If you can talk to me in ways that show you understand that your knowledge of me, the world, and ‘the Right thing to do’ will always be partial, interested, and potentially oppressive to others, and if I can do the same, then we can work together on shaping and reshaping alliances for constructing circumstances in which students of difference can thrive (p.115).

This understanding that we all have only partial perspectives of an issue sets a natural buffer against oppressive formations in the classroom.

**Separatism/Pluralism - Dilemmas and Directions**

One of the ideological problems I have struggled with regarding multiculturalism is the tendency to stash aboriginal cultures under the equalising umbrella of being Canadian. This umbrella image, while being more palatable than a melting pot, did not deal with the very different issues of First Nations as opposed to immigrants and refugees. Ogbu (1978, 1991) drew his readers' attention to the marked variance between non-establishment cultures, not just along racial or ethnic lines but also along the dimensions of historical circumstance, demographic peculiarities, social mobility aspirations, and orientations and attitudes regarding perceived minority status. Immigrants come with a purpose or run from oppression, but they know they come to a
developed country with an established government. Embodied in "being Canadian" is the responsibility of contributing to and living in accordance with the Canadian government and social justice system. Refugees come with a different set of issues because of the forced exit from their country of origin, but still acknowledge their "freedom" will be in a country with an established government and social justice system.

First Nations, on the other hand, had established systems of government when Columbus rediscovered North America. They did not leave or reject their governments, but had another imposed upon them through colonisation. Clearly, First Nations issues don't fit under the multicultural umbrella in the same way as other cultural groups. The Guswentha or Two Row Wampum treaty belt provides a metaphor used by some Nations even today. It features the image of two canoes travelling down the same river, each with its own set of "neha" or guides for living (Skonaganleh:ra, 1994). While there may be times when one pulls up beside the other, or one pulls the other through the rapids, they remain separate canoes on the same water. They share many of the same challenges of life, but the "neha" they each use to meet those challenges may be different. First Nations have been fighting for self-government and self-education, first as their right, and now as a way of promoting cultural healing, maintenance, and retention.

A Declaration of First Nations
We the original peoples of this land know the Creator put us here. The Creator gave us the laws that govern our relationships to live in harmony with nature and mankind. The laws of the Creator defined our rights and responsibilities. The Creator gave us our spiritual beliefs, our languages, our culture, and a place on Mother Earth which provided us with our needs. We have maintained our freedom, our languages, and our traditions from time immemorial.
We continue to exercise the rights and fulfill the responsibilities and obligations given to us by the Creator for the land upon which we were placed. The Creator has given us the right to govern ourselves and the right to self-determination. The rights and responsibilities given to us by the Creator cannot be altered or taken away by any other Nation.

-Adopted by the Joint Council of Chiefs and Elders

December 1980

The recent Nisga’a treaty settlement in British Columbia allows for a form of self-government which will allow Nisga’a control over education and social service and taxation, but does not exclude or displace provincial and federal laws. Some describe this as yet another form of prejudice through segregation. I question whether we can achieve equal participation of First Nations at the governing negotiation table without a period of segregation, whereby First Nations can reconnect with values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that shaped their cultural heritages before the damage done by residential schools and government assimilation policies. Changing resistance energies back into self-governing action will take time, but it would seem necessary to build the cultural strength needed in order to negotiate fairly with establishment cultures.

In 1995/96, I was invited to do some background research regarding Aboriginal Head Start programmes and participate in the imaging work being done for a Vancouver based Aboriginal Head Start programme. Early in the planning stage it was acknowledged that the staff positions should be held by those of First Nations heritage. However, difficulty in setting criteria for determining First Nations heritage was the source of much discussion. Prior to getting involved with this project, I was against segregation programmes on democratic grounds. I also felt it was advantageous for all students to be in culturally and economically mixed groups. After attending these
planning meetings, it became clear to me that this programme was needed, at least temporarily, to offset the social ills suffered because of assimilation efforts by Canadian society. While I still believe cultural diversity in the classroom is preferable, it does not supersede the need to promote social justice. In order to be equal at the finish gate, you may need to give unequally to some groups along the way. To balance the slate for First Nations preschoolers, these children need an earlier start. That start should be given by the very people whose values and morals have been denied to them by Canadian society.

Coombs (1986) describes a “Social Multicultural Education” that seeks to prepare students for responsible citizenship within a pluralistic society whose most fundamental commitment is to social justice. He maintains that the success of a culturally pluralistic society lies less in the unequivocal embracing of diversity than it does in each individual embracing equal rights. Some groups may need specialised circumstances in order to participate on equal terms with members of other groups in negotiating social justice. Coombs argues that a pluralistic society must assure equal opportunities, thereby, requiring institutions within that society to be “culturally sensitive, as opposed to culturally neutral” (p. 6).

In May 1993, I attended an Early Childhood Educators Conference on Multiculturalism. The keynote speaker, Kofi Marfo, spoke of reconstructing traditional approaches to multicultural education to support what he coined a “national macroculture.” All cultural groups would contribute norms and value systems to be incorporated in the national macroculture. Marfo emphasised that “at the heart of this macroculture will be a philosophy of valuing and celebrating diversity” (p. 17). While I certainly see merit in celebrating diversity, I feel the heart of such a macroculture must first be the
embracing of equal rights. Appleton (1983) cautions against over-generalising in our exuberance to honour diversity. He describes pluralism as,

an ideology to free individuals from social impositions based on ethnic heritage. If adopted, it would be illegitimate to coerce individuals to give up their ethnic cultural traditions and life style, to discriminate against individuals who did not give them up, or conversely, to force individuals into an ethnic identification they wish to abandon.... The condition of relative equality and opportunity would entail that we do not discriminate against individuals on the basis of their ethnic heritage, nor do we impose any such heritage upon them (p. 63).

Sustaining a national macroculture would require much dialogue, negotiation and most importantly acknowledgement that it is a process without end.

In November 1993, I attended the Fifth National Conference of Multicultural, Intercultural and Race Relations Education and heard the keynote address by Wendy Grant, then Assistant Chief of the Assembly of First Nations. Wendy held her audience spellbound with her commentary on education, race relations, and First Nations youth. One theme of her talk was to leave a lasting impression on me: "Rather than trying to reduce differences under broad categories of sameness would it not be more helpful to concentrate on building bridges or sites for intercultural connection?" She also used the term "intracultural" to address the many subcultures (age-elders, gender, religious belief, sexual orientation, occupation, cross-cultural marriages, appearance/ability, etc.) within a culture and indeed within an individual. This more inclusive interpretation of culture broke down some of the barriers I had come to see between "multicultural" and "anti-bias" scholarship (Kehoe, 1984). Perhaps we could celebrate "connections" between and within cultures, thereby furthering the embracing of "equal rights" within a "macroculture."

Taking my cues from Coombs, Marfo, and Grant, I felt I had an approach that could
support separatist actions in the pursuit of social justice within a macroculture. It seemed that I had found a philosophical grounding, but practical application in curriculum design and material preparation still eluded me. I knew I would use story as my primary instrument to build connections and deconstruct walls of misunderstanding. Narratives help us negotiate and renegotiate connections within ourselves, to those around us, and to our environment (Bruner, 1986). Yet, I still battled with whether educators were best to infuse new material into established curriculum or start over with an inclusive approach from the start.

**Infusion/Inclusion - Difficult Questions in Approach**

In the late 1980s and the 1990s, much of multicultural and anti-racist curriculum discourse centred on the implementation of culturally sensitive curriculum material. The traditional educational responsibility of schools to transmit the culture of the dominant group from one generation to another had been challenged by culturally diverse populations. Acknowledging the importance of experience and environment in the formative years, education systems tried to provide some continuity between home and school that took into account the cultural reality of all learners. Educators were asked to abandon tourist (food-costumes-customs) approaches to multicultural education, because research indicated these methods were actually reinforcing stereotypical perceptions (Zachariah, 1989; Schuncke, 1984). The words “detached,” “infusion” and “inclusion” emerged to describe approaches to implementing cultural diversity curriculum.

A detached model would involve learning about particular cultures as separate units of study. Unfortunately, this approach can separate cultural knowledge from other areas of curriculum for which cultural knowledge has relevance. A detached curriculum
study of culture subliminally encourages segregation through isolation of cultural knowledge into distinct units, stunting both intercultural and intracultural links. Children learn "distinction" through study of separate cultures, rather than learning ways to negotiate social issues prevalent in pluralistic societies.

Kofi Marfo (1993) suggests an infusion model as a strategy for cultivating cross-cultural competence where educators can "take advantage of content from across the curriculum to provide the context for addressing issues and practices pertaining to cultural variation" (p. 22). In this way, appropriate material can be infused into a curriculum base as appropriate. Although this approach is preferable to the detached model in that culture is recognised as an integral part of all learning, I still have difficulty with this approach, because the curriculum base into which cultural knowledge is infused is built on an Eurocentric scaffold. Marfo argues that educators must make efficient use of that which is already developed, but I wonder if we can truly appreciate diversity, when mainstream ideas form the underlying structure from which we learn. The image that comes to mind was a lecture in Bath, England (1981) where Shirley Hughes, a renowned author and illustrator, talked about the early attempts at multicultural children's literature where white faces were painted brown in primer reading materials.

Chud and Fahlman (1995) refer to an Inclusion model where diversity (cultural and otherwise) is one of the criteria incorporated in the curriculum planning process from the beginning. They describe diversity, "as a fundamental theme and approach within early childhood education, [and] diversity issues must be incorporated as underpinnings to all areas of study." They continue to say that, "[r]ather than adding curriculum about diversity issues, our efforts must be directed to integrating diversity
issues throughout curriculum” (p. 14). This “fresh start” approach seemed to me to have the greatest chance of imparting a respect for diversity among both educators and students. Still, one is always faced with the dilemma of which cultural groups to privilege with representation and how to respect intracultural variations. Teachers are often overwhelmed by the magnitude of diversity issues and feel ill-equipped to design curriculum that is inclusive. Christensen (1993) underscores this observation:

Concern has been expressed by teachers in multicultural settings about their level of preparation for the realities of multicultural classrooms (Kehoe, 1985; Samuda and Kong, 1986). Similar concerns have been expressed by consumers of education throughout Canada. In particular, concern has been expressed about whether: teachers are sufficiently knowledgeable about culturally-based roles, expectations and learning styles which affect student-teacher relationships and student progress (Buchignani, 1986); teachers hold biased views and stereotypical expectations of different groups (Singh, 1986); historical and current contributions to Canada of groups other than the British and French are recognised appropriately and adequately. (p. 2)

Minimising teacher bias and resolving issues around the difficulty of finding appropriate resource materials still challenge educators trying to keep up with the ever increasing demands of contemporary schools.

**Teacher Bias - Journal Entry - April 12th, 1995**

A practice that I found useful as a beginning step in combating teacher bias was to disseminate books that I wanted to use in the classroom to individuals whose cultures were represented in the stories. I was not looking for a rubber stamp of politically correct approval, but rather for the contextualising “support stories” that would breathe life into the books I would share with my students. When I was teaching at Menisa Elementary School in Edmonton, a parent of a newly immigrated Indian family asked to speak with me privately. She quietly explained that the books I had asked her to look at, representing East Indian cultures, gave the impression that there were no Christian Indian families. This woman explained the ostracism her nuclear family had experienced from other extended family members and leaders in her community, and how the move to Canada was in hope of escaping such prejudice. Here she experienced a reverse sort of prejudice in that her outward cultural practices made her religion invisible. This woman’s story made a deep impression on me and while I still do
not have any stories that represent Christian Indian families, I always remember to tell her story when explaining the dangers of making cultural generalisations.

Teachers using "emergent" and "generative" approaches to curriculum have the flexibility to integrate relevant issues as they arise. These highly interactive approaches respect students as full partners in the teaching/learning process and thereby force a certain attention to diversity. Aoki (1993) talks about "C&C landscapes" where teacher/learners live and work in the spaces between Curriculum as Planned and Curriculum as Lived. Responsive curriculum models such as these reduce concerns about content and concentrate more on processes that incorporate community (local and global) strengths, traditions, and knowledge as living elements of the curriculum. An inclusion approach to working with diversity issues was easily incorporated with my overall approach to curriculum development. It seemed to me that in order to respond to the "curriculum as lived" by my students, I would not only have to be a good listener, but I would need to be a generalist with contacts to many specialists. By nature, I am a generalist, in that I am reasonably successful in a number of disciplines, yet I am repeatedly told that to excel, one must specialise.

Generalist/Specialist - Can one be a "generalist specialist"?

I remember winning my grade 9 public speaking contest (at Stratford Junior High School in Edmonton) with a speech about how in my generation, people would change careers at least three times and that "broad base" education and adaptability training was still necessary in a time of heavy specialisation. Twenty eight years on, I find myself singing the same tune.

I have found it difficult to be a generalist in a university setting. I refer not to any one university in particular, but draw on my experience of three. In my undergraduate
years, I was told I had to choose between Early Childhood Education and Special Education -- I could not do both. I was likewise told to choose only one major, not the four I wanted. I seemed to spend all my time wheeling and dealing with the Associate Dean in order to pursue my interests. She repeatedly warned me "that by chasing everything, I would do nothing well," and then would proceed, against her better judgment, to support me in my quest. Over and over, I have been counselled to narrow my focus in graduate study and while I acknowledge that one needs to chop branches in presenting a tight argument, this is of little value if the tree cannot branch to the sun in the impossibly diverse world we live in. It must be shaped as part of the group within the context where it must grow.

That is not to say, that there haven't been attempts to weave schools of thought together or that there aren't pockets of study where compatible links between research methods and theories are explored. It is to say, that the systems upon which the institution is administrated are reinforcing of individuality and indirectly of exclusivity. George Posner (1989) writes:

Research efforts should complement one another whenever possible. Of course, we feel a competitive pressure to promote a particular approach to curriculum research and to denigrate others. We get impatient with our colleagues (competitors?) because they are not doing what we are doing. Their work represents other value systems, and we compete against them as if we were in a marketplace. However it is doubtful that there is one "best Buy" in this enterprise (p.360).

Views on curriculum that may be compatible with each other struggle against each other as researchers battle for attention and financial support through grants and scholarships.
Struggling for Attention and $$$

Am I guilty, too?
In my quest for this degree,
do I not need to prove,
at least at some level,
originality?
- distinct from and yet somehow
connected to the field.
How big is the step from originality
to exclusivity?
(I fear I may not meet the test)

Why, why then do I struggle
against all odds
to get this “blessed” degree?
Surely it would be enough to do the learning
and somehow make it fit
with my view of the world?
Why, the degree?
Some rite of passage?
Is there an education within the process
or is it a desire to be taken seriously?
(It adds credibility in the eyes of some)

Is there no way to escape the pull
of this isolating cycle?
Grants, SSHRCs, tenure, promotion
all play a part in promoting exclusivity
in a diverse society
that must promote compatibility.
Is it not in the best interest of institutions
to encourage the scholarship of
compatible individuals?
Not if they want the $$$$ (After all, competition is said to improve the product)

No I don’t want to
stand out, or keep others out
What I write about is nothing new
to the curriculum club
It is merely a new vantage point for me
that helps me understand
the spaces in between
It is not a template
but could be inspiration for others to
oil the dials on their vantage scope
and examine how and what they see

Narrative allows us to explore the spaces between established schools of curriculum thought, to listen to the silences and to appreciate how these places of in-between are as vital to understanding as the curriculum theories themselves. Pinar and Reynolds (1992) conceive of storytelling “as a firmament in which the spaces between stars are as crucial to acknowledge and portray as the stars themselves.” This firmament is in a state of constant flux, meaning that stories are never-ending and what seems precise and contained from one angle is changed when viewed from another.

Story teaches us the use of metaphor and irony, which in turn, allow us to create similarity (Egan 1997) in the act of making fresh connections and acknowledging what is absent. Getting to know these spaces and developing a comfort level with the ambiguity that accompanies “lingering with the connectors” is the job of the generalist specialising in being a generalist.

**Advocacy/Agency/Neutrality**

In my doctoral course work, it was made very clear that indication of agency or advocacy in one’s writing would be frowned upon by the academic community. Why I queried? Because the researcher must aim to be as neutral as possible, thereby minimising contamination of their arguments. The more I studied of Daignault and Derrida, the more I came to understand that there are no primary texts (texts without human mediation), only interpretations and interpretations of interpretations. Pinar and Reynolds (1995) contend that “original purity of experience cannot be achieved;
while it is implied, it does not exist in text" (p.4). All writing is political and to insinuate that academic arguments can be free of influence is to put one's head in the sand. We would be letting down our guard and reneging on our responsibility to be critical readers.

Once one begins to deconstruct discourse, the connotations or "secondary meanings" that characterise human language are illuminated. As Pinar and Reynolds (1992) wrote, "Any text is laced with human purpose and cross purposes, motives and counter motives--what is stated and what is not" (p. 6). Sometimes what is not said does more to highlight the bias of the speaker/writer than what is said. A responsibility is placed on the reader to balance what she reads and develop strategies to uncover author bias. Responsible authors reflect on and bring to the fore their biases and values. Overzealous efforts to remain neutral only serve to cloud the real voice.

Is a hint of advocacy reason to dismiss the thesis of a "scholarly" paper? To aspire to write a text that is devoid of bias would likely result in a text without passion. Without passion, we influence little change. In an article about the importance of building hope back into curriculum, Werner (1999) wrote that learning is emotion/full -- what students feel passionately about, they tirelessly pursue. We need to set an atmosphere where writers are not only encouraged, but expected to reflect on their biases and values.

Twenty years ago it was by far the exception for authors of children's books to include a note to their audience. Today, these notations giving a brief evolution of the story and background information about the author are expected by publishers and are by far the norm. When we acknowledge that some level of advocacy exists in every piece of writing and when we appreciate the fragility of truth, we negate some of the
damaging features of bias and can take measures to balance our learning. At this moment, we leave the false security of certainty to step onto a never ending roller coaster ride of differing perspectives, competing causes and ambiguous directions.

As teachers, we must support children in learning to research the context in which the material they are studying was written and the particular biases of the author. This responsibility is even greater with the explosion of unedited, unscreened and often unreferenced material on the Internet. Anyone can publish on the net; there is no editor to get past, no reviewers to appease, and no hegemonic structures of the publishing world to side step. It is a great equaliser and also a great abyss if children are not supported in developing the tools they need to be critical users. The globalisation of the net allows students to access material from a variety of sources, thereby exposing them to multiple perspectives on any one issue. Armed with strategies to research bias and accountability, students can aim to balance their vessel on the waterways of the web.

At the end of his book Learning to Divide the World, Willinsky asks, “What does it mean to be held in the throes of a past that we can no longer trust or be comforted by?” (p. 249). He refers to a past (not yet past) where knowledge is shaped and validated by a British imperial system which divides the people of the world as superior and subordinate, worthy and unworthy, master and pliant servant. Questioning the authenticity of our past, as it has been taught in school, and accepting the possibility of multiple truths is a disarming and disorienting experience for which we are ill-prepared by our education system. Schooling has traditionally presented an “official” version of knowledge and does not reinforce critique regarding the origin of that knowledge and the possibility of alternative perspectives. Children are taught what is “right” and
partial truths are avoided because they complicate the teacher-student dyad, where the teacher is all-knowing. Yet, as already mentioned, all texts contain bias. Schooling is the tireless chronicler of what divides us (Willinsky, 1998 p.1).

Again, it seems to come down to finding comfort in fluidity and opening our minds to revisionist stories tainted with elements of agency knowing that there will be revisions within revisions. Reflective awareness and responsible action are lifelong journeys.

What Are My Biases, What Divides/Connects Me from/to Others?

I believe every child has a right to an education in the public system
I also support there being options available in alternative schools

I put developing a social consciousness on the top of my list of teaching priorities
I believe a commitment to equity must be the grounding of all teaching

I believe teaching and learning are like reading and writing
- one cannot be separated from the other
the same is true of teacher/learner

I believe curriculum that evolves as it incorporates and challenges the lived experiences of class participants is relevant curriculum
I believe we under challenge children in our efforts to shield them from the less savory aspects of life

I believe those who answer the call of teaching must be prepared to toil in “watchfulness” and “thoughtfulness” fuelled by an insatiable curiosity
I do not believe there is one way to teach anything
I continually check out alternative methods
The "Mary Poppins bag" is always ready
so that I can swap tricks to connect with a child

I believe literacy
is best caught through the contagion
embodied in a love of literature

I believe in balance
scholar/practitioner
nature/humanity
art/technology
security/freedom

Conflict/Consensus - Can we agree to disagree respectfully and peacefully?

As I became more comfortable working with dialectics in curriculum scholarship, I
started to question whether early childhood curriculum had to be accredited through
consensus, or whether it could grow out of conflict? Much of today's early childhood
curriculum has been designed around consensus over "developmentally appropriate"
(by Euro/Ameri/heritage standards) goals and objectives. Prepackaged and
prestructured materials based on "developmentally appropriate" constructs strongly
influence the everyday look and feel of early childhood classrooms. (I will discuss
challenges to developmentally appropriate theory in chapter five.) Is the use of
Eurocentric support materials consistent with our desire to create curriculum that
encompasses diverse values and goals for children? Even multicultural components
of prepackaged curriculum are developed and taught from a place of consensus
regarding what is "politically correct." The push has been to draw commonalities and
hope that by avoiding differences, conflicts based in diversity issues would dissipate.
Some of this has changed since Louise Derman-Sparks began promoting anti-bias
early childhood curriculum in the 1990s. Louise maintained that children need guidance to deal with differing and sometimes conflicting viewpoints that rise out of the tough social realities they grow up in. Derman-Sparks (1989) also takes the perspective that activism has a place in early childhood curriculum:

Children learning to take action against unfair behaviours that occur in their own lives is at the heart of anti-bias education. Without this component, the curriculum loses its vitality and power. For children to feel good and confident about themselves, they need to be able to say, "That's not fair," or "I don't like that," if they are the target of prejudice or discrimination. For children to develop empathy and respect for diversity, they need to be able to say, "I don't like what you are doing" to a child who is abusing another child. If we teach children to recognize injustice, then we must also teach them that people can create positive change by working together. Young children have an impressive capacity for learning how to be activists if adults provide activities that are relevant and developmentally appropriate" (p.77).

Based on this thinking, it would seem important to develop curriculum materials that invoke issues of struggle -- giving children opportunity to practise ways of relating to conflicting viewpoints.

In my experience as a student, teacher and educational consultant, I have encountered a certain resistance among educators to address difficult questions with children. Teachers tend to avoid subjects which raise questions for which there are no clear answers, and side-step ethical dilemmas that might raise controversial issues in the classroom. Yet children come face to face with these issues through the media, and increasingly through personal experience. In the educational contexts I have experienced in my work, educators provide young children with few tools to help them negotiate a meaningful and balanced path once this inevitable confrontation occurs. (Many schools do have “second-step” programmes where children are counselled, through story and simulation exercises, how to deal with playground squabbles,
bullying, and angry feelings. Unfortunately these sessions are quite structured and rarely integrated into the generative curriculum of the classroom.) Freire claimed that in order to "dissociate ideas" legitimised by mainstream populations, educators need to teach through conflict rather than consensus. To be critically and socially conscious, children require opportunities to get muddy with difficult issues, in safe settings with the support of trained adults. I believe the time to start mixing the water and dirt of diversity issues is in the early years (preschool, primary, and intermediate), so that children are equipped to deal with the peer pressures that exert themselves more forcefully during their teenage years. This observation is reinforced in educational theory, where researchers are increasingly pointing out that involvement in social issues is more constructive than avoidance (Bruner, 1996; Derman-Sparks, 1989; McLaren, 1989; Neugebauer, 1992; Werner and Nixon, 1990). As Silin (1995) writes,

Within psychology itself, a multivocal concept of subjectivity has emerged in the last decade, one that posits the individual and the social not as binary opposites but as parts of a single reality and that asks us to rethink our ideas about age-appropriate curriculum. (p.104)

With practice and self-confidence, I believe that even young children can learn to "agree to disagree" in a respectful manner.

Teachers/learners need a framework for reaching a common understanding of a problem, but not necessarily one that imposes agreement regarding strategies for resolution. Children need to be assured that it is possible to understand alternative opinions without necessarily judging them. They are capable of learning about a viewpoint different from their own, and understanding the conditions that nurture it. Can this approach leave children with the impression that every point is permissible, in turn making it difficult for them to make decisions? I feel that children can benefit from
learning that decisions need not be permanent. You can make a decision acknowledging that it is for the moment only, conditional on the context peculiar to that issue and subject to further information. Children can learn to listen and empathise, temporarily suspending their judgment in order to understand another viewpoint. At the same time, they are free to acknowledge that they are not comfortable adopting that viewpoint themselves.

For example, in the 1996 summer programme at the UBC Child Study Centre, the children raised funds through a “Conservation Fair.” As the children investigated various causes that they could support, it became clear they disagreed on approaches to conservation. The larger group was anxious to donate to watershed preservation, while the other favoured supporting forest management education. Rather than force the children to reach consensus on a single approach to conservation, they were allowed to debate their positions. In the end, they agreed to disagree on approaches to conservation, but compromised on a division of their funds, so that they could each support the cause of their choice. The lesson learned was that you can acknowledge differing perspectives and not have to fall in line with one or another. We need to find ways to teach children to accept variance in beliefs and values brought to the problem-solving table. Some will argue that such acceptance may cause insecurity in young children who see things in terms of black and white. It is our challenge as educators to reframe the elusive greys, so that they represent the security and strength of tolerance rather than the insecurity and weakness of indecision.

If we follow Freire’s enjoiner that effective problem-solving relies on a dialectic that grows from praxis and generates theory, curriculum is grounded in experience rather than detached theory. Theory and practice become a simultaneous, reflective action.
It seemed I was spending a lot of time getting no place, but being everywhere. I needed to stand back... In seeking to understand curriculum through academic study, I wanted to glimpse a whole -- an approach that was inclusive, yet respectful of diversity. Eventually, I came to see that the whole was in no one method or approach, but instead resided in a perspective: by standing back, it was possible to see the intersections between various approaches to curriculum. This perspective encompasses diversity, and as in the evolutionary process of the biological world, makes for a stronger organism.

My engagement with various dialectics within curriculum discourse taught me that the background of a picture needs to be attended to as much as the foreground. Then, ways in which the two are differentiated and blended can be noted. We can teach children how to stand back, get in touch with their own biases, and in so doing empower themselves with the knowledge of how they make meaning. Only then will they be ready to accept individual responsibility in furthering inclusive behaviour and action.

Visioning a Global/Diversity Perspective

It was attendance at two conferences that helped me pull together an inclusive approach to curriculum that centred around the nurturing of a global/diversity perspective in young children. This involved the development of a flexible lens through which to view personal, local, and global interactions. I briefly outline the influence of both conferences in the following paragraphs.

1) “Imagining a Pacific Community” Conference, UBC (April 1995)
This conference had a broad cast of presenters and some high profile participants, but
one speaker in particular was to pluck several strings that resonated with my experience. Roland Case, a co-presenter with Walt Werner, introduced the idea of global education with young children being more about the development and nurturing of a perspective, rather than being about the presentation of specific content. Case (1995) described a "global perspective" as the capacity to see the "whole picture" whether focusing on a local or an international matter. As he was describing the characteristics of this global perspective, I saw pieces of my puzzle coming together in how I could approach inclusive curriculum in the classroom. It seemed a workable way to implement diversity of curriculum by helping children to develop a lens, a code of behaviour, and a method of attack through which to approach problematic situations inherent in diversity education.

Case (1993) claims that one can more fully appreciate "global education" by distinguishing between two interrelated dimensions of a global perspective -- the substantial and the perceptual. He refers to Coombs explanation of perspective:

> [H]aving a perspective implies: (1) a "point of view" - a vantage point from which, or a lens through which, observations occur, and (2) some "object of attention" - an event, thing, person, place, or state of affairs that is the focus of the observations. For example, to speak of various perspectives on schooling suggests looking at schools - the object - through the eyes, or in light of the concerns or interests, of various people - the points of view. (as quoted in Case, 1993, p.318).

Case used this definition of perspective to support his own distinction between substantive and the perceptual dimensions:

> the substantive dimension identifies the objects of a global perspective - those world events, states of affairs, places, and things that global educators want students to understand. The perceptual dimension is the points of view - the matrix of concepts, orientations, values, sensibilities, and attitudes - from which we want students to perceive the world (p.318).

It is the perceptual dimension that I find most interesting in relation to curriculum. In my
experience, it doesn’t matter how much exposure an individual gets to the substantive dimension; they cannot internalise responsibility if their minds are not open to alternative perspectives, trained to accept complexity, and committed to recognise equal rights of all members of the human family. Lamy (1990) expressed that “developing appropriate conceptual and moral lenses through which to view global interactions may be more crucial than acquiring extensive information” (as quoted in Case, 1993, p.319).

Case describes elements of the perceptual dimension as,

1. open-minded - suspend judgment - entertain contrary positions,
2. full-minded - anticipate complexity - resist stereotyping,
3. fair-minded - empathise with others - overcome chauvinism.

In this description, I felt Case was getting at elements of the hidden and null curriculums I was anxious to address, and I used his framework to build my own approach to nurturing global perspectives in young children.

2) “Honouring Diversity within Child Care and Early Education” - (November 1995)

I attended the inaugural (3 day) training programme/in-service for honouring diversity, put on by Early Childhood Multicultural Services and the BC Ministry of Skills, Training and Labour. The workshop was designed to train early childhood educators in methods of promoting diversity education. I was pleased that this training session concentrated more on building an ideological framework for diversity education than the more usual practice of dealing with the accessories of a “diversity” classroom. Early childhood theory and practice that respect cultural commonalities are abundant. However, theory and practice that respect diversity have taken more time to evolve.
Being that we are surrounded by cultural and social diversity, this inservice put on by Gyda Chud and Ruth Fahlman was timely. They reminded us that we have to generate "new expectations for respecting human variety and furthering equality, human rights, and social justice." (1995, p. x).

I found this inservice particularly interesting because it incorporated the philosophical stances of multiculturalists, anti-racists, feminists, and social activists into an all-encompassing fabric. The carefully guarded turfs I knew from academic study did not exist -- the simple words "honouring diversity" allowed battle-weary advocates to put down their armour and work together.

The facilitators were able to accomplish this by working through two key principles with the participants. First, they recognised the importance of knowing and owning one’s own roots. They created a neutral environment that legitimised each philosophical group, allowing individuals to take responsibility for their own intellectual position. Secondly, they fuelled the creative drive that spurs continued learning, encouraging participants to spread their wings and explore different ways of understanding the rich diversity of community life. This foundation is critical if educators are to play their part in creating an equal society. Through understanding their own roots, educators are better able to perceive the impact their beliefs have on the way they view diversity issues, in turn leaving room for them to fulfill their creative role in educating children.

Chud and Fahlman (1995) advocate two criteria essential to diversity education. The primary one is the commitment of learners to self-reflection: "The challenge of honouring diversity in the teaching and learning process is to do our best to practice what we preach" (p. x). This applies to teachers and students alike, whether they are
new to diversity education or long time supporters. The second criterion is the
acknowledgement that learning is a fluid process. "Diversity education is forever ‘in
process’ and defies closure. Tomorrow, there will be new thoughts, further insights,
more research and greater refinements. Such is the nature of the theme and the
work.” (Chud and Fahlman, 1995, p. x). One must truly internalise this fluidity, in order
to deal with the ambiguities that necessarily arise from this approach. Diversity
education must be inherently reflective: actions need to arise from reflection, and
further reflection must follow on what is done. Ted Aoki (1983) refers to this reflective
element as “praxis” and argues that “praxis has at its main interest further praxis” (p.
26).

The two volume instructor’s guide compiled by Chud and Fahlman (1995) embodied
both my views on inclusive curriculum and my belief that such curriculum is a reflective
process, ever in motion, ever evolving. What it was lacking was a good bibliography of
children’s books that help to raise sensitive issues in a non-didactic manner. Having
just done a pilot study on emergent curriculum to nurture global perspectives at the
UBC Child Study Centre (summer 1995), I was able to contribute a book list titled
“Books that Challenge Children to Deal with Sensitive Issues,” to be added to Chud’s
and Fahlman’s resource listings. An updated version of this bibliography is included
in Appendix A of this text.

Internalising Global/Diversity Perspective as a Personal
Philosophy and Curriculum Guide

I am reluctant to go to great lengths to define, clarify, and standardise what I have
found to be a very effective approach to inclusive curriculum design. I say this
because I believe that the very essence of this approach is its fluidity and its
requirement of reflective action. Loosely defined connections between ideas allow what might otherwise be disparate factions to find areas of compatibility. Yet, some description is necessary for the reader to get a feel of what I mean when I speak of a curriculum that nurtures global/diversity perspectives in young children. (In the following chapter, I give more attention to describing practical aspects of global/diversity curriculum.)

After listening to Roland Case speak about nurturing a global perspective, I felt supported in my belief that inclusiveness is more about how one approaches an issue, and less about encouraging study of specific issues. The challenge was how to develop curriculum around process rather than content. Important to the success in nurturing a global/diversity perspective in the classroom is a fastidious determination to present a balance of viewpoints. It is important to go beyond both the teacher's own perspective and those expressed by the dominant culture in prepared curricular materials. Giroux and Simon (1989) reiterate the need for multiple perspectives in structuring a classroom that respects lived difference:

... [Creating such a classroom] does not require teachers to suppress or abandon what and how they know. Indeed, the pedagogical struggle is lessened without such resources. However, teachers and students must find forms within which a single discourse does not become the locus of certainty and certification. Rather, teachers must find ways of creating a space for mutual engagement of lived experience that does not require the silencing of a multiplicity of voices by a single dominant discourse. (p. 243.)

Teachers must develop this space around a commitment to equality of opportunity. Curricular materials must engage children and reject detachment from so-called sensitive issues like death, victim cycles, AIDS, street people, human conflict, or disfigurement. Commitment to global education means a commitment to equity.
The separate elements that characterise what I refer to as the "global/diversity perspective" find their roots in Case's description of a "global perspective." I view these elements as foundational characteristics to be cultivated in educators and learners:

- embracing equality of opportunity,
- seeking more information,
- examining critically information sources,
- suspending judgment,
- entertaining contrary positions,
- anticipating complexity,
- tolerating ambiguity,
- empathising with others, and
- overcoming chauvinism.

I added the first three characteristics to Case's list in order to more fully describe the lens as I understand it. While the characteristics listed together comprise a lens for assessing and understanding complex situations, each one does not necessarily play a similar, or equal role from one problem/issue to the next. One may come to the fore in working through a particular set of circumstances, and yet recede into the background in another.

Why did I use the phrase "global/diversity" as a refinement of Case's "global" perspective? By adding diversity, I found a better description of my interpretation of global as "unity in diversity." However, I could not simply replace global with diversity, as diversity on its own did not incorporate the concept of unity embraced in global. Only by using both terms together could I convey both aspects of the perspective. I inserted a slash to give the two terms equal weight in the way I envision curriculum. I found this phrase represented my ideas more fully, and was less confusing to those who see "global education" more as a study of other countries. To me, "global" connotes the practice of studying broad issues within a microcosm that has immediate
relevance for a given group of learners. Seeing the “world in a tidal pool” allows learners to observe in detail at close hand, and then extrapolate to broader issues and contexts while retaining the vitality of that close observation.

Some elements of the “global/diversity” perspective may seem to be contradictory or even mutually exclusive. I have been asked, “How do you critically examine a situation while suspending judgment?” In fact, this is the task assigned to the “impartial courtroom judge.” To maintain a critical outlook, you have to continually make the effort to suspend judgment. For example, in the courtroom, the judge must suspend judgment and project an open mind as he critically examines the evidence given. Even so, he realises he has his own biases and any judgment taken is subject to the process of appeal. New evidence/information may be just around the corner. Thus any decision is only as good as the currency of the information on which it is based.

My Lived Experience and Global/Diversity Perspectives

Case’s characteristics of global perspective were the same characteristics that I found at the very core of the experiences that drove me to find a new approach to curriculum.

With Mrs. Sturby, I learned the importance of suspending judgment, as well as the need to seek more information, and empathise with others. I also came up against the power of chauvinist thought with respect to her exclusionary approach to skill development.

With Margaret Meek, I learned to entertain contrary positions, and to critically examine accepted practices. I also gained new exposure to chauvinist thought in her rejection of my definition of developmentally appropriate literature.

Colleen Stainton reinforced for me the importance of suspending judgment. In her ability to live with my indecision, she also illuminated the need to tolerate ambiguity and empathise with others.
My experience with Chief Maracle and my grandfather gave me perspective on anticipating complexity, tolerating ambiguity, and critical reflection. It reinforced my commitment to equality, while at the same time exposing my own chauvinism, evident in a misguided effort at cultural intervention.

With my “roving library,” I learned to tolerate ambiguity and entertain contrary positions. I again became aware of my own chauvinism, expressed in a narrowly conceived classification of children’s literature, and my ability to overcome it.

Our sojourn with the logger at the MacMillan Bloedel camp, near the Carmanah Valley, underscored the importance of suspending judgment in order to critically examine information sources. Through hearing the contrary positions of Greenpeace and the forestry industry we learned to anticipate complexity around issues of social concern.

Reflecting on my lived experience, I recognise the characteristics of that global perspective to which my academic studies have led me. When I juxtapose my intuitive knowledge with theory and scholarship, I arrive at the same place: a personalised approach to curriculum which I characterise as nurturing “global diversity perspectives.” This conjunction of experience and analysis is what Pinar refers to as synthesis, the fourth step in his definition of currere.

**Visioning and Action**

Earlier, in the overview to this text, I mention adding another step to Pinar’s four, to be labelled “visioning and action” as an outcome of “synthesis.” After making meaning of one’s own experience of curriculum and juxtaposing this learning with one’s pedagogical practices, educators are ripe for visualising social change. A “visioning and action” stage of currere would mean:

- understanding the power struggles involved in implementing curriculum as praxis,
- integrating lived experience with socially relevant curriculum,
- building in time for reflection and reflective action.
As the teacher visions an approach to inclusive curriculum and takes the action necessary to make it happen (sometimes an uphill grind), she must also build in opportunities for her students to explore routes of efficacy in the wave of social change. Louise Derman-Sparks (1989) was thinking along the same vein a decade ago:

Through activism activities children build confidence and skills for becoming adults who assert, in the face of injustice, “I have the responsibility to deal with it, I know how to deal with it, I will deal with it” (p.77).

In encouraging children to act, educators need not, and in fact should not, direct them towards particular avenues of efficacy. This is especially important when learning opportunities are presented through problematised situations that centre on an inherent conflict. As I mentioned earlier, resolution of conflict need not necessarily result in consensus. Children can be successfully introduced to complex situations if multiple facets of a problem are seen to offer multiple avenues for efficacy. The key point here is that students do not need to make exclusive choices in attempting to resolve complexity. Part of the challenge is to teach children to tolerate levels of ambiguity while continuing their process of exploration. This permits a climate within the classroom where students can think beyond consensus. They can even come to appreciate that social instability lies at the heart of social change. I will develop this further in the following chapter, and give specific examples of how to guide a class through the process of assessing and supporting various alternatives for efficacy and advocacy.

As I sit adding my formal study of curriculum to my earlier dance with currere, I see that I have been struggling to demystify my own experience of hidden and null curriculums.

Wherever the words “he” or “she” are used to refer to either a child or adult, no gender exclusivity is intended.
and to connect it to similar struggles others have faced. I don't have any prescriptions as a result of my work other than the observation that getting muddy in complexity, and tolerating a little ambiguity isn't nearly as “derailing” as I thought it would be! Further to this experience, I am committed to helping children become comfortable with the necessary period of ambiguity that accompanies responsible decision-making.

In the following chapters, I will endeavour to take the reader into the primary classroom and share what global/diversity curriculum might look like. I will also share my thoughts on children’s literature, “working” stories, and issues of Developmentally Appropriate Practice, both in a global sense and as they relate to my practice.
Nurturing Global Perspectives in the Classroom

Planting the Seeds

"If he is indeed wise he does not bid you enter the house of his wisdom, but rather leads you to the threshold of your own mind."

Kahlil Gibran, 1923

As a teacher, my reason for working with young children and their families is to further childrens' ability to thrive within an increasingly diverse and complex society, not just in their public life, but at a personal level as well. In other words, I see education as a humanising process. As I discussed in the previous chapter, I believe that this is best achieved through the use of a fluid curriculum that places greater emphasis on the perceptual domain, stressing the importance of how information and issues are approached rather than focusing on content. While teaching in both the substantive and perceptive domains is necessary, I feel that a focus on the perceptive enables us to concentrate on the process of developing viewpoints on issues of social concern and to encourage the envisioning of a range of possible actions toward resolution. This is particularly important as we negotiate our way through the Information Age, and face an unending supply of information that is both overwhelming in quantity and undifferentiated in bias.

In order to nurture a global/diversity perspective in young children, teachers need to create a supportive environment. The following three considerations are important in achieving this:

- The classroom climate must support and reinforce equality while at the same
time supporting diversity. 

- Opportunities must be provided for children to gain direct experience with global/diversity perspectives. This can be done through developing problematised situations for children to resolve, and facilitating discussions that allow children to explore visioning and social action either at the conceptual or experiential level.

- Open discourse must be facilitated on an ongoing basis in order to help children develop their rational and analytical abilities. This is particularly important in teaching children to navigate global diversity issues, which by nature are fluid and contextual.

In the following chapter, I will describe curriculum that nurtures the development of “global perspectives” in the classroom. As a foundation, I will first describe the principles that guide my teaching and curriculum planning. These are really philosophical statements that expose my beliefs and values, giving the reader a framework on which to hang my comments regarding global/diversity curriculum. Particular attention will be given to the practices of nesting literature through storying, and of using literature-based inspirational themes to integrate multiple subjects. Then, using descriptions of two “global programmes” I set up at the UBC Child Study Centre, I hope to give the reader a feel for how I visualise global/diversity curriculum for young children.

In reviewing the basic pedagogical practices on which I base my teaching and approach to curriculum development, I have found five fundamental precepts to underlie my work:

6 The following reference guides provide important background reading for teachers interested in supporting diversity while forging a classroom community - Honouring Diversity within Child Care and Early Education - An Instructor’s Guide - Gyda Chud and Ruth Fahlman; Anti-Bias Curriculum: Tools for Empowering Young Children - Louise Derman-Sparks; Deepening Our Understanding of Anti-Bias Education for Young Children: An Anthology of Readings - Louise Derman-Sparks and Dorothy Granger; Multicultural Issues in Child Care - Janet Gonzalea-Mena; Developing Roots and Wings: A Trainer’s Guide to Affirming Culture in Early Childhood Programmes - Stacey York.)
• **Emergent and generative curriculum** models foster programme relevancy by actively encouraging community participation in curriculum development and delivery.

• **Empowerment models of teaching** which build on strengths, rather than remediating weaknesses and encourage reflective action rather than apathy, spawn intrinsically motivated learners.

• I believe a key objective in education is to help students find a sense of societal unity and personal security in the celebration of **diversity through all aspects of curriculum**.

• The use of **integrative themes** is essential to achieving a holistic approach to learning in the classroom. Concepts are connected within a framework that promotes understanding by drawing connections across developmental domains.

• **Stories are the backbone of education** fortifying all acts of learning. Storying, a process of contextualising information, is a most effective way of achieving shared understanding around complex social issues. Stories, oral and written, have provided me with the most compelling themes around which to link differing learning objectives.

I will elaborate on each precept below.

1. **Generative curriculum**

   Generative curriculum breaks down the barriers between teacher and learner by involving both in the learning process. I have found this approach to be highly motivating for both teacher and child, as it distributes ownership of the programme more equally among classroom participants (Pence, 1993). Children come to understand that teachers are on the same river of life-long learning, and have simply
spent more time on the water, gaining the knowledge that comes from experience.

Educators who favour generative curriculum see teacher and student as sharing the process of choosing discussion topics, learning objectives and evaluation methods relevant to their needs and interests. These educators believe that students are intrinsically motivated when they have a vested interest in the program. Taking ownership for their learning demystifies the education system and guards against apathy that often accompanies the blind acceptance of hegemonic structures. The teacher is still responsible for ensuring basic skills and concepts are integrated into the overall programme. Indeed, generative curriculum is more than asking children to identify their interests, and building activities around those interests. It involves a thorough knowledge of the basic skills students need to develop, and strategies for using student interests to provide the motivation to gain competence in these skills.

One of the more difficult aspects of working with generative curriculum is prioritising classroom time to allow ample opportunities for discussion, critical reflection, and activities that encourage personal empowerment through efficacy. Children are not born decision makers: they need to be given guidance and practice in making decisions and expressing their interests. It is an unusual educator who can move beyond the "create and dispense" teaching format. These individuals have the ability and desire to respond respectfully to student ideas, and to help students work to achieve what they envision within the larger framework of the classroom community. It is also important to involve families in this community as much as possible in order to take advantage of possible connections to home learning projects. The educator becomes a skilled facilitator, engrossed in the give-and-take of providing stimulus, encouragement, guidance, and independence as prompted by the child. Knowing
when to intervene and when to stand back is a skill that comes with experience and
careful reflection. The teacher’s training and past experience allow her to illuminate
connections and links that will help students make the most of their creative energy
and find relevancy in what they do as part of a larger community.

Generative curriculum provides educators with a framework for consistently
introducing socially relevant themes. These themes contain the possibility of unfolding
into many other themes which call for new tasks to be explored and fulfilled (Freire,
1970, p. 83). By nature of the process, generative curriculum has a higher likelihood
of nesting concepts in contexts that are relevant to the students and their families.
This, in turn, gives students the experience they require to thrive in the diverse and
complex society of which they are a part.

2. Empowerment Education

Very much a foundation philosophy for generative curriculum, the empowerment
education model as described by York (1992) informs all facets of my teaching. It is a
holistic approach that connects with all aspects of the learner.

Participants [in education for empowerment programmes] are
empowered by increasing their knowledge and gaining new information.
Empowering education includes an affective component that promotes
self-awareness and attitudinal change. This occurs through personal
and critical reflection. Empowering education supports action by
providing an opportunity to practice skills and apply concepts in the real
world (York, 1992, pg. 21 as quoted in Chud and Fahlman (1995)).

As York states, an important component of the empowerment education model is
addressing the affective domain. Werner (1999) underscores this in his positional
paper about the importance “hope” plays in classroom discussions of global issues.
He quotes Philip Phenix (1974) as saying, “Without hope, there is no incentive for
learning, for the impulse to learn presupposes confidence in the possibility of improving one's existence" (p. 123). As educators, we must give particular attention to strategies that will strengthen young people's belief in the future and their ability to effect change (Kohl, 1998). These strategies will be discussed in chapter five as important factors in the exploration of sensitive issues with young children.

Like others in my field, I have found helping learners get in touch with their strengths goes a long way to mitigating their weaknesses. When the student feels positively about his ability, he is more easily motivated into active learning -- away from the inertia that accompanies feelings of failure. Teachers must give just enough "scaffolding" to support the child in taking steps to more complicated levels of understanding. This requires a sound knowledge of learning and development continuums, close observation of children's emerging abilities, and the ability to match educational experiences to children's competencies, needs and interests, so that they are challenged, but not frustrated (NAEYC, 1997). I have found that it takes a great deal of inspiration, creativity and energy to teach in such a way that children are empowered to become active learners.

**Empowerment**

Bogged down under never-ending demands of administrating, planning, upgrading, sorting through psycho/socio/cultural crises,

Grappling with the impossible task of adjudicating the Information Age, Overwhelmed by cyberhighways of info-search-info-search-info, Mesmerised by the ambiguity of ethics, morals and standards,
Teachers struggle to find
the time for inspiration,
and the creative energy needed
to scaffold towers of empowerment
for others.

But, it only takes the empowerment of
one child,
to lift the weighty demands
from the teacher's back,
so inspiration shines through,
illuminating fresh banks of
creative energy needed
to scaffold new towers of empowerment.

In 1991, Verna Kirkness and Ray Barnhardt wrote a seminal paper that challenged educators to entertain the notion of empowerment as the heart of their teaching and programme development work. They described empowerment in terms of four R's: Respect, Relevance, Reciprocity, and Responsibility. Addressing these characteristics in one's curriculum allows for differences of perspective, reduces cultural distances, minimises role dichotomy and helps students accept alternative approaches to problem solving. I find myself returning to Kirkness and Barnhardt's four R's as a check stop whenever I get carried away with planning new programme directions.

3. Diversity Issues as Underpinnings of All Aspects of Curriculum

Recognition of diversity (in the broadest interpretation of the word) as an integral part of the socialisation process is imperative to global learning. Issues of diversity are not colourful tidbits to be sprinkled on curriculum now and again, but rather they are integral dimensions that need to be woven throughout all levels of curriculum. Educating through diversity is a "dynamic and complex process that involves reflection, self knowledge, critical thinking, experiential learning and practical application" (Chud and Fahlman, 1995, p. 13). Like Chud and Fahlman, I believe it is
our responsibility to “gain the attitudes, knowledge, and skills to understand, appreciate, value, analyze, and synthesize the role of diversity in our own lives and those of others” (p.13). This inclusive approach to education is the grounding for what I refer to as the nurturing of global perspectives in young children.

I often use the children’s game called “SET” as a metaphor for finding unity in difference. In this game, “sets” can be scored based on both “share in common” and “share in difference” principles.

“SET” - UNITY IN DIVERSITY

You’ve got to be quick!
Find a set of three.
A set must share something
in common
number, colour, shape, texture, or all four.

There’s one more set --
the one that shares difference in common,
“consensus in difference.”
What a concept!

Different family structure,
different skin colour,
different physical stature,
different cultural texture.

Seemingly odd,
but the most difficult set to see
tends to be the one
marked by difference.

Some people are able to pick the
“unity in diversity” set
more easily than others,
but almost every time a child
will best an adult.
Why is this?
Could it be that the child
has had less of society's conditioning?

Seeing "unity in diversity" requires one to break "either/or" patterns of thinking that have been reinforced since infancy, and embrace "both/and" patterns of thinking. The National Association for the Education of Young Children, NAEYC, has recently issued a strong recommendation of such a move in thinking and practice. This seemingly simple directive is a big step toward embracing diversity in an increasingly pluralistic society and world where children not only need to develop a positive self identity, but also need to position themselves amongst others with differing perspectives from their own.

4. Use of Integrative Themes to Facilitate a Holistic Approach

It has long been accepted by early childhood educators (Asselin, Pelland, & Shapiro, 1991; Jobe & Hart, 1991; Lukasevich, 1993; Meadows & Hayward, 1982; Shapiro, 1979; Wason-Ellam, 1991) that integrating various learning objectives using a general theme helps children to maximise their learning. By integrating classroom activities around a particular theme, teachers encourage students to make associative connections between otherwise isolated pieces of knowledge. A common context evolves to which can be added the diverse background experiences of the classroom participants.

Traditionally, early childhood educators use integration themes such as "animals," "transportation," "shapes," "colours," "seasons," or "holidays." These themes all draw on simple elements in the child's everyday environment, a characteristic that stems from the theory that children develop concrete concepts before moving to abstract

7This recommendation was adopted in 1996 in a position statement about Developmentally Appropriate Practice.
ones. I found two drawbacks when using these elemental themes. One was that the curriculum materials teachers typically purchase to support these themes were largely Eurocentric. Themes like "transportation" spawn materials that examine travel by land, air, sea and space where children learn about airplanes, yellow school buses, steamers, trucks and trains rather than water buses, dog sleds, umiaks, or rickshaws. Ready-prepared materials and bibliographies of related books tend to avoid representation of cultural diversity other than through stereotypical molds. This meant that in order to weave more natural representations of cultural diversity within the general theme, teachers had to research and then make their own materials. As most teachers are strapped for time, diversity was often dealt with through detached units like "Indians," "Japan" or "cultural holidays" so that teachers could access packaged materials from school board consultants. Unfortunately, these isolated units of study gave an unspoken and unintended message that these "other" cultures were separate from the culture of the classroom and by association separate from society in general.

The second problem I encountered more as an outcome of my personal teaching style. My programmes have always been heavily dependent on literature, and I found it difficult to fit good books under such simplistic themes. I was often scrambling to find engaging pieces of literature that centred on "transportation," "colours," or "seasons." By using simplistic themes, you reduce the selection of potential books to the most basic, or else you stretch the literature to make an ungainly fit. Wonderfully rich stories like William Tell are reduced to a simple element like "apples," a popular fall theme: the meat of the story is missed, and instead, a tiny connection is exploited that links the tale to a basic theme.

My particular approach to the use of integrative themes evolved from a love of books,
and from a profound awareness of the impact good literature, both oral and written, can make on a child's imagination. Moving away from simple, concrete themes, I began to develop "literary" themes based on books I collected to use in the classroom. Initially, I used chapter books, as I found them the most successful vehicle for capturing abstract, socially relevant issues. Chapter books also provided subthemes that allowed me to explore a range of issues through one familiar set of characters. I used books like *Charlotte's Web*, *The Secret Garden*, *Wizard of Oz*, and *Watership Down* among others to provide me with the tools I needed: strong characters, interesting and well-constructed settings, issues of good and evil, and dynamic personal struggles.

**Challenging Binary Thinking: Good Guys, Bad Guys - Education Journal - April 6th, 1996**

In my early years of teaching kindergarten in Edmonton (1978-80 and 1982-85), I was keen to introduce "balance" into my students' thinking and help show them the importance of perspective in problem solving. I remember chunks of time being spent on challenging the binary thinking around good guys and bad guys. After the children were convinced of the pure evil make-up of the villain, I would help them find evidence that challenged their assumptions. As I did this, I also showed them the vulnerabilities of their heroes. This seemed to be an empowering experience for all, opening up endless possibilities for their own development.

Each day, I illustrated a sheet and wrote one or two key sentences on it that would stimulate discussion at home around the chapter we had read at school that day. After three or four weeks, the children would staple their sheets together and have a memory book of the chapter book we had read in class. Recently, I looked up some of my files of these sheets and came upon the Peter Pan collection. I was surprised to see the sophistication of character analysis I had done with young children (not that I do anything differently today - just that given the time, there must have been heavy critique from parents regarding developmental appropriateness). For example, we had tracked Hook's need to be in control and his greed back to not having a mother and having to fend for himself in the Eton's Boys School (he learned to be a valiant warrior, but had no development of heart). We noted that what bothered him most about Pan was the boy's obsession with 'good form,' because it was something Hook valued in the past and had neglected recently. As Hook prepares to meet his fate with the crocodile below the bulwarks, he is desperate to show that Pan is not all good. At the last moment, he thrusts his bottom out and manages to tempt Pan into
booting it so that as he falls he can shout, "Ah hah, bad form!" Somehow Hook’s success at showing a flaw in Pan’s character gave him a touch of dignity as he faced the jaws of the crocodile. This part of the story is left out in abridged versions for young children and by Walt Disney. Perhaps the authors feel that children are not yet ready to see greys, and do better with consistently black and white presentations of characters.

I disagree—my artistic background meant the children in my classes knew how to make secondary colours from primary ones and knew the difference between tints and shades. Many of them grasped that the black and whites in the classroom were actually shades of grey. I felt it was important for them to learn that just as our eye sometimes tricks us into seeing grey as black, our mind tricks us into seeing people and issues from a narrow perspective.

By integrating subthemes such as farm animals, spring, and spiders with Charlotte’s Web, or rabbit life cycle, river features, domestic pets, ecology of the downs, and the occupation of policing with Watership Down, I was also able to take advantage of some ready-prepared teacher materials. In other writings (Hayward, 1982, 1992) I have described how I started with social issues raised in the book and from there developed math and literacy activities, science experiments, art projects, and all other aspects of the curriculum.

In the last ten years, I have relied on a growing body of children’s picture books that have story lines rooted in socially relevant issues supported by strong illustrations. I often refer to these books as “counter-hegemonic,” either because the perspectives developed in them challenge an accepted viewpoint, or because they deal with a subject typically thought of as taboo for young children. In using several stories instead of one chapter book to explore a theme, I no longer had the continuity provided by the chapter book’s characters and setting. Shorter books necessitated that I find umbrella themes to connect them together and provide the continuity essential for effective integration of learning objectives in the classroom. At first, I tried

Since I began engaging with ideas about global education, I developed a way of integrating children's literature through what I call "inspirational links" that tie together books, themes, and learning activities. By "inspirational links," I mean sayings that have taken on almost universal application, and that spark discussion of issues of global concern. Examples of links I have used include:

- "Small people can effect big changes,"
- "Every action has an equal and opposite reaction,"
- "Different things matter at different times in our lives,"
- "Don't judge a book by its cover,"
- "Love can be painful,"
- "You win, I lose -- can we both win?"
- "Don't be furious, be curious,"
- "You have to believe in yourself before others will,"
- "Learning is a temporary loss of security,"
- "Some rules need to be broken,"
- "Few people choose poverty,"
- "Shared understanding means shared responsibility for understanding,"
- "There are many truths, but no one that stands on its own,"
- "Pets have rights too,"
- "Some of the best friendships come through patience,"
- "Change is difficult, but nothing is permanent except change,"
- "Beauty is rooted beneath the skin,"
- "Can the consequences of war ever justify the why?"
- "Losing someone is never easy,"
- "History is written by the conquerors; by listening to the stories of the conquered,
we may begin to change future histories”
• “Think globally, act locally,”
• “Facing your fears is hard work,”
• “If it’s mentionable, it’s manageable,”
• “What goes around, comes around.”

I introduced a number of “inspirational links” to children in my classrooms and was intrigued by the way they worked to adapt the slogans to suit their experience. I pulled the first links from collections of slogans in my “Inspiration File” which I had originally kept as a resource for classroom newsletters. Other links evolved from class discussions and were honed as we generated curriculum around them. The continuing process of developing and using these links was organic to both my collection of counter-hegemonic literature and my generative approach to teaching and curriculum development.

Generating curriculum around inspirational links allowed me to access a broader range of books and to respond to the diverse spectrum of individual interests expressed by my students. Because these books deal with complex issues, there are several different points of departure you can explore, based on the needs and interests of the children. For example, by using books tied together by the inspirational link, “Different things matter at different times in our lives,” I could touch on several general themes like “Aging and Death,” “Family” and “Social Change.” In this way I could work several themes all through the year and still integrate short term learning objectives under a connecting network -- as opposed to taking one theme, like “Family,” and going through it from beginning to end.

I might start with a book from the “Personal Challenge” theme section of my library and
end up using books from "Human Conflict" or "Friendship" themes, depending on the inspirational links that are pulled from particular stories. For example, the book *El Chino* by Allen Say (from the "Personal Challenge" theme) is a book about a Chinese American youth who dares to believe in the American Dream -- you can be anything you want to be if you try hard enough. However, he is forced to face unexpected cultural challenges when he comes up against age-old Spanish traditions in his pursuit of becoming an accomplished matador. One group of students I told this story to picked up the inspirational link, "Two cultures, one heart," and we went on to read *My Grandfather's Journey* dealing with the Japanese-American experience trying to juxtapose new and old worlds, and *Kookum Called Today* which deals with an urban First Nations girl visioning a peaceful and meaningful place between the reserve and the city. Other students have picked up the link, "Change is difficult, but nothing is permanent except change," and we have moved on to books like *Amelia's Road* about a transient Mexican family of sharecroppers, and *The Bracelet* about a Japanese-American family forced to leave their friends to live in an internment camp during World War II. This particular group of children then moved into books around the theme of Human Conflict through the inspirational link of "The winner always writes the history." When we read "Jacob's Story" in Maria Campbell's *Stories of the Road Allowance People*, they chose the link, "You have to embrace yourself before others will," which led back to *El Chino* and on to *The 329th Friend*. In this story, the lead character is bathed in loneliness and self-pity until he recognizes some positive characteristics about himself. It is only then that others offer him their friendship. The easy movement back and forth through themes facilitated by "inspirational links" allowed for maximum participation of the students and lively discussion and research of issues relevant to their experience of the world.
I use “inspirational links” to arouse the perceptual domain in a child’s learning field. The links tend to be emotion-full causing students to stop, reflect, and probe deeper into a given issue. I encouraged children to tease out the link they felt best described a particular story or how it made them feel. I could then use this link to move on to other books connected to their interests. Several themes can be raised from a single book depending on the links the children use to connect to the story. For example, when I last did *The Snow Goose* with a group of children, the following “inspirational links” were selected:

"Love can be painful,"
"Don’t be furious, be curious,"
"Don’t judge a book by its cover,"
"You have to believe in yourself before others will,"
"Conservation and preservation are world responsibilities"
"Some rules need to be broken,"
"Beauty is rooted beneath the skin,"
"Shared understanding means shared responsibility for understanding,"
"There are many truths, but no one that stands on its own,"
"Some of the best friendships come through patience,"
"Losing someone is never easy,"
"Learning is a temporary loss of security,"
"History is written by the conquerors; by listening to the stories of the conquered we may begin to change future histories"
"What goes around, comes around."

We discussed the relevance of each link and, as a group, came up with three directions for further discussion and research. For me, this process created an ideal environment for generative curriculum as the children were given a mechanism for participation and self-motivation. The children began to take responsibility for their own learning as they linked characters, stories, learning activities and lived experiences, both inside and outside the classroom.

*How many a man has dated a new era in his life from the reading of a book? The book exists for us perchance which will explain our miracles and reveal new ones.*

-Henry David Thoreau
5. *Stories and “Storying” as Fundamental Tools of Learning*

It is through stories that we make sense of all our experience (Wells, 1986). However, if stories are simply read as part of a daily routine, without further discussion, they are likely to remain inert and have little impact on the rest of the child's experience. The act of "storying" as opposed to "storytelling" is more than reading a good story to a group of attentive listeners. It is the work of recognising external events in meaningful contexts, through the negotiation of new information with that which is known. Wells (1986) explains that

> [r]arely, if ever, do we have all the necessary visual or other sensory information to decide unambiguously what it is we are seeing, hearing, or touching. Instead we draw on our mental model of the world to construct a story that would be plausible in the context and use that to check the data of sense against the predictions that the story makes possible (p.195).

When stories are related to the child's own experience through discussion, she is encouraged to reflect upon and ask questions about the events that occur, their causes, consequences and significance. She enriches her inner representation of the world, and also becomes more aware of how stories from others can help her extend, reorganise, and restory her own experience. Stories are the means through which class participants enter a shared world (Wells, 1986; Britton, 1983) bringing mental models of understanding into closer alignment.

I've often been asked how I choose the books I "story" with and where I get them from. While I am fairly eclectic in my book choice, I have lately fallen into collecting books that explore perspectives different from those traditionally accepted. The books I choose as teaching tools pull on one's emotions, as most intrinsically motivated learning is sparked by emotion (Werner, 1999). I particularly like books that end without a resolution, books that push you to delve deeper into an issue, and books that
present a convincing argument from one perspective and then proceed to present an equally compelling argument from an opposing perspective.

I don't get overly concerned if a book doesn't develop a perspective in a way that would feed classroom discussion. Many children's authors underestimate what a child can deal with, given a glimmer of hope and the opportunity to explore personal efficacy. Well-meaning attempts to shield children from the injustices of life may serve to create ill-equipped young adults, who once enlightened, think their elders have been conned and are therefore dispensable as potential mentors. Instead, I feel a need to concentrate on finding ways to empower children in the midst of adversity. As I become a more skilled storyteller, I find that I can infuse a book with the problems necessary to fuel class discussion. A small kernel of an idea can be developed in such a way that another perspective is demonstrated or a problematised situation is created.

Even the best literature can and will fall flat if it is not "contextualised." I place a high priority on contextualising stories and establishing links to the previously known. In this way, stories never end, but become the firmament of flux in which every student can find something familiar. Below, I will outline two examples of how I build context around a story: nesting story within story.

I have often used the book, *Jessie Came Across the Sea* by Amy Hest. It is a simple story about a Jewish girl who is the apple of her grandmother’s eye in a small European village. Jessie differs from other girls in the village in that she studies with the boys of the community and is able to read and write. When it comes time for the rabbi to choose someone to take his place on a voyage to America, he surprises all
the young men of the community by choosing Jessie. She is terrified about such an idea and does not want to leave her grandmother who has raised her from a young babe. Both grandmother and child are asked to separate heart and mind -- the conclusion of the story shows how integration of both is necessary for inner peace. Jessie faces many challenges in New York but manages to make the most of her background skills and brave spirit. Eventually, she is asked to marry another young immigrant, but she waits until she has earned the "passage" money for her grandmother to come join her. It is a story about being brave in the midst of being wrenched away from everything you know and everyone you love. There are many discussion points that can be picked out of the story to build context including:

- lace making as a cottage industry
- gender differences re: studying the Torah
- inequity of class divisions on the ship
- immigrant experience at Ellis Island
- reciprocity in relationships
- learning to live in a new country

Moreover there are different inspirational links from which it can be approached:

- "Facing your fears is hard work,"
- "Learning is a temporary loss of security,"
- "Change is difficult, but nothing is permanent except change."

Although this story could be read in ten to twelve minutes, I generally allocate an hour and fifteen minutes to build context, integrate student input, and draw connections to other readings or project study. In the story, Jessie's grandmother works hard to teach her how to make lace, so that she may always have a trade. In turn, Jessie insists on teaching her grandmother some of the reading she learns from her lessons with the rabbi. I began the story session by opening a small, grey velvet box and taking out a length of hand made lace to show the children. I tell the children that it was made by my great grandmother who sailed to Canada by herself as a ten-year old child. I tell
the story of how my great grandmother was not met by her uncle in Canada and was instead taken in by the "Sally Ann" (Salvation Army). After describing some of her early life in Canada, I explain how the piece of lace was passed down to me and worn around my waist on my wedding day. By situating the story in the context of a lived experience, I contribute to the plausibility and relevance of the text.

Next, I situate the children in an eastern European Jewish community. I dramatise the impact of a rabbi teaching a girl the lessons from the Torah and then choosing the same girl over all the strong lads who volunteered to take his place on the ship to America. Sometimes, I have to take time out to deal with children's disbelief -- for example, one group couldn't connect with it being unusual to teach a girl to read. While building the context where women were discouraged from academic study, I try to balance my comments and discuss why and how cultural divisions of responsibility, according to gender, seemed appropriate at the time. Then as a class, we discuss how as times changed, the rabbi had the vision to realize that people had to adapt in response to change. Before a teacher can "work" a story well, it is important to recognise that there are multiple perspectives for any one issue raised in a story. She does not need to deny the children the satisfaction they get when Jessie beats out the men, but such satisfaction needs to be balanced to avoid reinforcing other stereotypes. I caution the children that, as we labour to break stereotypes, we often seem to create new ones. If something feels so clearly black and white, experience has taught me that I haven't seen all angles and may need to do some inner searching to identify my biases.

As I read the book to the children, I am conscious of developing the strong bond of love between Jessie and her grandmother, fed by reciprocity. I also make reference to
the Titanic as a reference point regarding the difference a person's class made to their passage across the ocean. Using books previously read, we discuss Ellis Island as part of immigrant experience and what kind of challenges lie ahead for newcomers to America. In effect, I use the story, *Jessie Comes Across the Sea*, as the grounding for a discussion kernel -- from there, I build many links and contexts myself, and leave openings for children to build their own.

The direction of discussion is largely affected by children's needs and interests. I prepare as much as possible in advance for what I will need to expand on, so that I have resources ready at hand. If a child raises something I haven't anticipated or prepared for, we set about framing appropriate questions and designing a research plan. This often leads to another story which is later woven into the stimulus story. By situating the book in a context meaningful to the children, you increase the number of potential links to other stories and issues of social concern.

I will use the story *Beautiful Warrior* by Emily Arnold McCully as a second example of what I term "contextualising" a story. I usually lead into this story from one of the following links:

- "Small people can effect big changes,"
- "Don't be furious, be curious,"
- "You have to believe in yourself before others will," or
- "What goes around comes around."

This legend of the "Nun's kung fu" gives a wonderful introduction to Buddhism and breaks down Western stereotypes of kung fu as merely a score of combat techniques and exercise. The story line follows the lives of two women who took on the lifelong study of kung fu: one out of desperation and the other as an extension of her life learning. As with *Jessie Comes Across the Sea*, there are many points from which to build discussion:
• the Ming Dynasty
• court life for women
• marriage for protection in the villages
• Zen Buddhism- Shaolin Monastery
• one’s vital energy - “qi”
• physical and mental well-being
• kung fu as lifelong study in spiritual growth.

Again, the teacher must be careful to balance presentations of controversial (tough and tender) subjects. I remember reading this book with a group of children who got stuck on the requirement of foot binding in the imperial court. Taking time out to discuss the background of such practices and comparable customs around the world helps deconstruct stereotypes. Children may still shy from personal endorsement, but they are more open to understanding why others might have chosen to bind their feet. The teacher needs to do some background research to become comfortable enough with the cultural practices and values of a particular time, in order to facilitate open discussion. I found the “author’s notes” very helpful in making Internet searches more focused and rewarding.

During one reading of this book, I found myself in a difficult position and I told a story I had never shared in a school setting. About a third of the way into Beautiful Warrior, one of the main characters, Mingyi, finds herself in an impossible situation. A brigand rides into her village with his gang and upon seeing her, demands that she become his wife. When she refuses, the thug threatens to flatten her family’s shop and make the community pay. Mingyi’s father is terrified and begs his daughter to marry the thug to save her family and the security of the village. I often find children are very judgmental regarding the father’s request and question why the crying mother in the corner does nothing to stop the father or save Mingyi from an unhappy life. One class of children (Southlands, Vancouver, Grade 2/3, 1998) would not let me continue past
this part of the story, insisting that the father should be protecting his daughter rather than sacrificing her for his own life. From the back of the room, a child anxiously waved her hand. With a knowing expression, she informed the group, "It's because they're Chinese and the children are supposed to protect the adults instead of how it is like in Canada." This comment troubled me, because in the emotional climate it was said, it could reinforce stereotypes rather than open discussion about respecting one's elders. Like the children, I was tempted to say the father was a heartless man, but this little girl's comment reminded me that I had little contextual information. Instead, I found myself sharing a personal story to illustrate how extenuating circumstances can make a person act out of character.

I told the children about an instance where I was caught outside a door while my two year old child was screaming for help from inside. His father's temper was raging and the situation was escalating quickly. I briefly explained how my family had been caught in an abuse cycle. (This was not done in a confessional or sensational manner, but more as a matter of fact presentation of one of life's realities. At the same time, I was careful that my story did not sanction domestic violence.) I explained how my entering the room would escalate the violence further and leave me in a position where I could help neither of my children. Put in an impossible situation, I had to forsake my son's pleas for help in order to fight a bigger picture. There were many quiet children in that classroom as I went on to show how Mingyi's father may have believed he could be of more help to her if he survived and retained village support to right the injustice done to his daughter. It was an effective example because the children knew me as a teacher committed to the well-being of all children and had difficulty juxtaposing this image with the picture of me outside my son's door. While I wanted my students to appreciate the wrong being done to Mingyi, I also wanted them
to suspend judgment of her father for the reason that none of us had enough
information about the cultural context within which he acted.

*Beautiful Warrior* is a story that pulls girls and boys together as they try to understand
the deeply spiritual base of kung fu. For many of the boys, it is a relief to be able to
indulge in martial arts under a politically correct stamp. The girls quickly identify with
strong female characters who refuse to be victimised. The author works hard to
separate the kung fu that children are exposed to on TV, from the lifelong study of
connecting with your inner energies, observing the behaviours of others and finding
the inherent connectedness of all things. At first, the children feel Mingyi's frustration
at being forced to observe the bamboo bending in the wind and then snapping back,
when all she wants is to learn fighting skills so she can beat up the thug who pursues
her. Eventually, as they come to trust Mingyi's mentor, the legendary Wu Mei, you feel
them begging Mingyi to be patient-- that she'll understand everything in the fullness of
time. It is only when Mingyi's mind becomes calm that she can overcome her
enemies. By the time Mingyi reaches this state, all anger is gone and she meets the
thug only to protect her family, for she no longer yearns to return to her village.
Instead, she commits herself to the study of kung fu in the monastery.

I often use Ed Young's *Voices of the Heart* to support the message of connecting with
your vital energy. Young is a Chinese American author/illustrator, who by chasing
down stories from his parent's homeland has pursued connections with his Chinese
heritage. In learning to write Mandarin, he became fascinated with the historical
evolution of particular characters. *Voices of the Heart* explores 17 different characters
that contain the heart symbol. All are emotions associated with the heart. I ask the
children to find the emotions that surface in *Beautiful Warrior*, and then look inside for
a descriptor of their own heart. Using paper, pencils, scissors and pens they created their own collage and drawing of the appropriate character. These children feel the importance of connecting with their heart and the flow of their inner "qi" whenever they approach something challenging.

As a teacher, I think it is important to be prepared that a story will not be contextualised the same way each time, but changes to match whatever issues pique the children's interests, outside resources, and the inspirational link or theme being discussed. I have told this story with more emphasis on feminist issues and at other times shifted emphasis to the spiritual side of well being and how one connects with her vital energy - "qi." Once, one of my students had been to the Shaolin Monastery and seen the plum poles which Mingyi's mentor used to teach her about balance. With this group, we researched the history of the monks in that area and prolonged our study of Buddhist teachings through the link, "What goes around comes around."

**Storyteller/Storyworker**

Am I really a storyteller?
Is storytelling the right name for what I do?
I tell stories lived, made up and borrowed
Like others, my stories are never the same
and I never experience a book the same way
from one time to the next.
I change,
my audience changes.

I read/work books
breathing life into them by
weaving associative stories and text together
making meaningful contexts --
places to dwell/linger/reflect
and draw connections
between old and new horizons.
So, do I “tell” stories or “work” stories?
Perhaps I’m a storyworker.

A Storyteller Wavers... - Education Journal - Sept. 12th, 1998

Early this morning, my mother called from the farm on the Bay of Quinte near Deseronto (she had gone for the last time to say goodbye to the land and divide my grandfather’s treasures with her siblings). She said it was a gorgeous autumn day with a slight breeze off the lake. She described daisies and milkweed in abundance through which the rabbits ran and foxes hunted. Down at the shore she said the water was crested in lace, one to four. I can see it all so clearly from 3,600 kilometers away. The farm is in my blood and the slightest whiff of cedar, sun baked grass, diesel fuel or cherry pipe tobacco transports me back to the haven of my childhood.

My mother called to help me say good-bye to the land my grandfather tended so unfailingly. She stood where he would lean against an aged cedar and look out over the water puffing on his pipe. I could hear the water lap the shore over the line of my mother’s cell and if I listened carefully, I could just pick up the fine fiddling of the jet black crickets that baited our hooks in summers past.

I could not let my mother leave the land without sharing a secret spot where Gramps and I spun our tales and shared our fears. Gramps was master of the storytelling trade and I, his devoted apprentice. Together we would sit on a rounded stone just right for two, and put finishing touches on stories told while fixing fence, working the land, or driving to town. It was the same spot where Gramps would try to prepare me for his passage across the bridge of death. A spot bittersweet with love, creativity, and loss. When I have sat there in recent years, I always find myself smiling through tears.

So, using the cell, I guided my mother west along the shore and up through the grass to the old cedar. This amazing tree is an example of the iron will present in nature. It had dropped a stout branch two feet above the ground and then somehow defied gravity and stretched up to make a love seat just for Granny. Here, she could watch the sunsets with her mate on the last days of her life. Here she found peace before the cancer took her forever. “Get behind the tree,” I told my mother, “and look out over the water to Tyendinaga as Granny would have from her seat; now take four steps back and two to the left, sit down. This stone is the place where Gramps told me all his stories and where I learned how to spin my own. Here, I learned his religion of the land and its glorious creatures. I learned how to look inside my soul and embrace the bad with the good, and to endeavour to speak/act from a place of balance.”

I told my mother of how I cried on that rock when Gramps showed me his
vulnerable side, exposing his inner struggles. He had always been infallible to
me, or maybe I never let him be anything else. On the same rock, Gramps
promised that he would not leave me before I was ready. Like in his stories, he
issued personal challenges without being direct. As my teacher, he knew that
one day I would be ready simply because my ability to love would rise over my
insecurities.

After letting some of my memories seep out to my mother, I was surprised to
hear my voice asking her to unearth the boulder and pack it back across
Canada in a trailer. In my heart I knew the rock had to stay with the land and
that Gramps’ wisdom was in my head as well as that fragment of Canadian
shield. Yet, I felt a rushing panic at never being able to sit on the stone, feel its
energy, and reflect on details that come only in the context of place. Would I
remember what I had been told? Could I do justice to Gramps’ analogies and
metaphors? Could I capture the wit inside his stories of strength and fortitude?
Would I be able to breathe his reverence of nature into the spirited tales of
country creatures and little folk who live up in the “back forty?” Could I recreate
the stories of true love, patriotic passion, and random acts of kindness? Without
the stone to hold me true to place and detail, would the stories be taken over by
my bold style and lose the authenticity of his gravelly voice recounting a life of
learning?

It was only when my mother offered to get a crow bar from the boathouse to see
how deep the stone went, that I snapped to my senses and asked her to leave it
undisturbed. I couldn’t incorporate a raped bit of land with treasured images of
my grandfather and I engrossed in story, gazing over the water through wisps of
Old Sail tobacco smoke. I would have to find a way to draw from the stone
without being in its physical presence. After all, I have been telling Gramps’
stories for years with only the occasional visit to the farm and stone to refuel. I
guess it is the realisation that the land will no longer be with our family and as a
result visits to the stone will end, that makes me feel so nervous.

My mom called late today to say that Dad had found some Bittersweet vines and
was bringing them across the country to test my green thumb. I asked that they
pick up a few stones from the ground rich in lime to help the Bittersweet settle
out West. Ah, perhaps this will be the “place” link that will help me keep the gift.

(Going out in the fall over the land to collect vines of bittersweet for Granny’s
vases indoors was a treasured memory for my grandfather, which was one of
the reasons he called the farm, Bittersweet Farm. It was also the place where
Granny would slip away far too young for those left behind to understand. There
were many reasons to name the farm Bittersweet.)
As I wait for the Bittersweet to take hold in the garden and sit to write words that will come together as a thesis, I have a different appreciation for Kincheloe and Pinar’s study of the significance of “place” in curriculum scholarship (1991). Why is the study of place significant to education and curriculum study? Kincheloe and Pinar (1991) wrote:

In fiction, place is used to create a world of appearance—a world essential to the novel’s believability. Curriculum theory, likewise, must possess a particularistic social theory, a grounded view of the world in which education takes place. Without such a perspective, curriculum theory operates in isolation, serving to trivialize knowledge, fragmenting it into bits and pieces of memorisable waste, while obscuring the political effects of such a process (p. 5).

I am reminded of the story stones that sit at the base of the house posts in the First Nations Longhouse on the UBC campus. I was told these stones are significant both because of the place they come from and the stories they collect in their new home. They act as links between the old and the new, providing continuity in the face of change. I call artifacts or stories that symbolise other contexts “place links.” When we share “place links” with others, we are conveying information about embedded social forces that lie within the story we read/tell and indeed those that lie beneath our teaching. We “place” stories in context and bring to the fore that which seems “second nature” and inaccessible in everyday life. Teachers increase possible connections to the lived experiences of students and open up latent subjectivities. By being
cognizant of the origins of one’s subjectivities and the forces that shape them, we take the first step to being able to appreciate the perspectives of others. Teachers who are comfortable using personal stories as “place links” become models that students can refer back to when trying to “place” their own systems of making meaning.

Welty (1977) maintains that good writers create contexts in which the universal is subtly evoked in the clarity of the particular. While I too find this to be true, the storyteller can “work” a story in which the particular is less clear and provide the detail herself that will encourage different perspectives to emerge. It is the total interaction in which the story is embedded that leads the child towards reflective, disembedded thinking.

I have taken many pages to describe the precepts which form the base from which I conceptualise global/diversity curriculum. I did this in an attempt to contextualise for the reader my descriptions of global/diversity curriculum in the classroom. As I have alluded to earlier, when I refer to global/diversity curriculum I am not envisioning buttressing the classroom with more material from faraway countries. I believe that through an emphasis on the perceptual domain, mainly accomplished through “storyworking” and discussion, teachers nurture global/diversity perspectives (as described in chapter three) which allow the children to see global implications in any issue they may study.

Moving Toward Global/Diversity Curriculum at the UBC Child Study Centre

As librarian of the UBC Child Study Centre between 1992 and 1996, I used books that dealt with “difficult issues” with the preschool and kindergarten aged children who
attended my story hours every week. I challenged the children and myself to delve into subjects traditionally taboo for young children like death, racism, oppression and life on the street, using books, story, and guided discussion. However, both the students and I were frustrated at not being able to follow through some of the ideas we tackled into other areas of classroom learning. There was little continuity between our sessions and the learning themes they were exposed to in their classrooms. This was despite a conscious effort by their teachers and myself to coordinate our efforts.

Around the same time, I discovered that I didn't seem motivated to teach without an issue to tangle with. I was also being influenced by Egan's (1995) writing around the "lure of certainty." Instead of feeling emotional crisis and angst when I found inconsistencies in my general philosophical schemes, as I had in the past, I developed a perspective that was encompassing of diversity. I started looking at my books more for how they could be "worked" to present differing perspectives on an issue rather than for what "early childhood theme" they supported. Every opportunity I had to work with the children, I was nurturing the very characteristics of a global perspective that Case (1995) had described.

When the director of the Centre asked if I would consider putting some of the ideas I was studying into action in a programme for children on the older end of the early childhood continuum (6-9 years old), I jumped at the chance. This would give me the opportunity to synthesise my academic and lived experience learning in a setting that allowed for generative curriculum to evolve, in an integrative manner, from a rich bank of literary stimuli. I came to treat the two ensuing summer programmes as pilot studies for the "global/diversity curriculum" I was visioning in both my teaching and academic study.
The most satisfying and challenging teaching I have done to date has been in the two pilot studies I did at the UBC Child Study Centre in the summers of 1995 and 1996. It was a time when I truly felt my personal and work lives synergised. Rather than feeling like a negligent parent or a frustrated teacher, both my worlds seemed energised by each other. I will write more regarding this observation in chapter six.

Two Pilot Studies at the UBC Child Study Centre

Each pilot study covered four weeks with children attending 3 1/2 hours a day, five days a week. There were 21 participants in each programme: eighteen children, a teen volunteer, a teacher’s assistant and myself. In the beginning, the parents seemed unsure of what to expect and kept their distance, but as the programme wore on, they provided valuable support and were very much partners in their children’s learning.

Learning Objectives

Identifying learning objectives and a classroom motto for staff, parents, volunteers, and children was important to the success of both programmes. A large banner was made and mounted over the door with the words, “To tell or hear a story extends the bonds of humanity rather than the bondage of inhuman ignorance.” This banner soon stood as our motto, capturing the essence of the programme. A handout was prepared in which I explained that stimulus books and discussion material would be used to present problematised situations around socially relevant issues. The children would learn how to draw links between literature and real life. I described Case’s (1995) work around global perspectives and explained how I would use problematised situations in the classroom to nurture the characteristics that strengthen “global/diversity perspectives.” Through stimulus books, discussion material, opportunities for student
input, and community support, I hoped to inspire children:

• to appreciate that controversial issues are usually complex
• to suspend judgment without contextual knowledge
• to get "muddy" with an issue until they feel empathy
• to appreciate the value in entertaining contrary positions
• to be motivated to seek more information, and know the consequences of doing so
• to question information sources and be sensitive to biases
• to navigate the uncomfortable zone of ambiguity that is inherent in decision-making
• to internalize the personal impact of chauvinism and misunderstanding, and most importantly,
• to embrace the universal right to equality of opportunity.

I stressed that the approach I would be using was that of planting seeds - slipping little question marks into their consciousness that would need to be visited again and again over time, in order that growth of perceptual skills be ensured. Finally, I expressed my commitment to guide the children in finding their own ways to vision the future, to feel hope, and to experience a sense of efficacy, both vicariously and directly. I would give the children plenty of opportunity to feel the power of literacy.

Planning

As I began conceptualising how this "global/diversity" curriculum would evolve in the classroom, I started canvassing parents of children registered to see how they felt about the material we would be studying. I remember being a little taken aback by a certain skepticism about the readiness of their children to participate in discussions about difficult issues like poverty, colonialism, slavery, or the Holocaust. After all, I had been exposing their children to similar material in my story hours and had received nothing but ongoing support from the same parents. I hastened to point out that I would be careful to include visioning and avenues for efficacy in my curriculum planning, so as to avoid overwhelming the students or crippling them with feelings of
insecurity and/or cynicism. In the end, I felt my classes filled more on the basis of who the parents knew me to be, than on their belief in the developmental appropriateness of the programme.

In preparation for building the curriculum, I began as I always do, with my books. I gathered together the books that I felt dealt with sensitive issues in a nontraditional way and then proceeded to find others that took a traditional viewpoint. This would help me present a balanced view in the classroom. Then, I started gathering experience with various issues and searching out possible connections in the community that might offer avenues for efficacy to the children. This meant trips or phone calls to various organisations and the collection of resource material that would not have been readily available through the school board. These trips to the Carmanah Valley, a logging camp, a demonstration forest, a soup kitchen, the food bank, a wildlife rescue association, a reptile refuge, a multicultural resource centre, a shelter for abandoned pets, a refugee support centre, a First Nations friendship centre, a recycling depot, a sanitation plant, etc. were time consuming but extremely valuable in giving me a backdrop to my stories and helping me to be more sensitive to perspectives different from my own. I found that by internalising the elements\(^8\) that characterise what I call a global/diversity perspective, I was better able to model the skills necessary to build understanding and tolerance of alternative perspectives.

\(^8\)To assist the reader, I re-list the elements that characterise a global/diversity perspective below:

- embracing equality of opportunity,
- seeking more information,
- examining critically information sources,
- suspending judgment,
- entertaining contrary positions,
- anticipating complexity,
- tolerating ambiguity,
- empathising with others, and
- overcoming chauvinism.
After selecting the books I would use to stimulate discussion around societal issues, four general “diversity sensitive” themes emerged:

- What is peace? How does it relate to conflict?
- What is our relationship with our environment?
- Do animals have rights? What might those be?
- What is conservation/preservation and who is responsible?

I allocated approximately a week of class time for each theme and planned tentative projects and field trips. In Appendix B, I have listed books I used for each theme and a short summary of some of the activities and project work the children undertook each week. In the second programme, I abandoned set themes and worked fluidly through similar issues via inspirational links. I found the links more flexible in allowing me to respond to student interests and passions. Having been educated in the traditional format where careful planning was equated with success, I initially had difficulty “living” the curriculum and letting go of the control that thorough planning afforded me. I felt a little guilty if I didn’t have all the answers and materials at my fingertips. This quickly passed in the second programme, as I witnessed the empowerment children got from being involved in the planning and material collection stages of curriculum development. Involving them in answering their own questions was a tremendous motivator and they began taking ownership for their own learning. They found out first-hand how systems work and the hurdles that need to be jumped. For example, the children decided they wanted to raise funds for a number of conservation efforts after we had investigated several perspectives on a variety of issues. Rather than call upon parents to organise something that children could have a small part in, I encouraged the children to orchestrate their own Conservation Fair from beginning to end. They started with general meetings and broke up into committees. They had to track down deals on materials or delegate the task to others. They had to approach building supervisors to get permission to use particular rooms at specific times and to set up
booths and advertisements. They had to organise parent volunteers and set up work bees to make the crafts they would sell. Their math skills were put to the challenge when they had to balance keeping their prices competitive with the need to raise money. At the end of the day, they also had to negotiate how the funds they earned should be used. This may seem a tall order for 6-9 year olds, but they rose to the challenge and revelled in the responsibility.

I also became better at anticipating questions, so that I could have the contact information ready to help children narrow their research and action strategies. I could feel my role changing from classical teacher to supportive facilitator. I found the bulk of my work lay in setting up the classroom and resource bank such that children could pursue projects independently. I did not anticipate for all eventualities, but at least I had the resources and contact information on hand, so that the children could track down the information they needed. This freed me to interact more as a classroom participant -- I was no longer taking sole responsibility for my students' learning. I found I got better at building in time at the end of the day for reflection. This allowed me to follow up on any issues that were raised unexpectedly, and pull loose threads together prior to the next day's class.

A critical element pertaining to the success of both programmes was knowledge of the parent and volunteer community. Good communication skills were important in building and maintaining contact with what I called my resource group (e.g., public liaison staff from Department of Forestry, Greenpeace, Wildlife Wilderness Committee, GVRD, Aboriginal Friendship Centre, Canadian Immigration, Canadian Peacekeeping Corps, Parks and Recreation, etc.) -- a network of people whom I could call upon to help the children and myself make meaningful connections between our study and the
larger community. Building this resource group initially took time and confidence in oneself, but the groundwork paid off many times over in long term benefits. It seemed that one contact would yield several more, especially if they received progress newsletters or calendars outlining our activities. I received a remarkable amount of community help with these two summer programmes, which served to spur me on whenever the going got tough.

Classroom Setting
The classroom was a cheery place with high skylights and windows on two sides. A side door opened onto an enclosed play and garden area with a small asphalt pad to set up outdoor learning centres. An in-class washroom with deep utility sinks added to the general convenience of the room. Dividers, small tables, rolling shelving units, and mobile bookshelves meant it was easy to set up a warren of learning centres around a large meeting area.

I will describe the actual appearance of the classroom as if one had taken a snapshot halfway through the second programme. When entering the classroom, you walk under the canopy of an old growth forest (floor to ceiling, 3 metres on either side of the doorway) created out of recycled materials -- paper, tubes, foam, pieces of fabric, fibres, hemp and paint. (In order to “walk our talk,” one of the programme objectives was to use only recycled materials for craft projects. Most materials were purchased from a local business that recycles industrial cast-offs.) The forest was populated with birds and animals painted or crafted by the children - speckled foam frogs, cloth squirrels, painted birds. As you emerged from the forest, you entered the cubby area which was papered, walls and ceiling, with 55 book covers. The children and parents used this area to debrief about the day’s activities and it was helpful to be able to point
out favourite stories. Inside the classroom, the eaves were covered with “inspirational links” painted in two-toned calligraphy on long banners of paper. Large, colourful “peace” globes (80 cm diameter) with the children interpretations of the term “peace” written and illustrated on them decorated the walls.

A large “U” shaped area in one corner was called the “Meeting Area” and was banked by bookshelves on three sides. The fourth side was a backdrop and small table used as a stimulus nook for story discussions. Large pictures depicting elephant poaching in Kenya, ivory carvings from the Metropolitan Museum, and a flock of cranes flying over rice paddies in Vietnam were pinned up over the books Sato and the Elephants by Juanita Havill and Grandfather’s Dream by Holly Keller. On a swath of African batik fabric, a small bowl of rice, pieces of ivory bangles, a soapstone carving and tools, rice paper bookmarks with Sarus Cranes painted on them and a pamphlet appealing for an Endangered Species Act in Canada were placed as support materials for the story discussion group. As I worked with the children long enough to

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9 Sato and the Elephants is a haunting tale about a Japanese youth whose life’s dream is to become a master ivory carver. While he knows precisely how the ivory will respond to a particular tool, he is not aware of the origins of his carving material. It is only when he finds a bullet deeply embedded in an ivory piece he hoped would be his masterpiece, that he connects elephant poaching with his trade. This book is particularly good for building tension as the reader readily identifies with both the plight of the elephant and the young boy’s dreams.

10 Grandfather’s Dream is a compelling story that inspires hope in younger generations regarding our fragile planet. A young boy’s grandfather is concerned about the disappearance of the Sarus cranes after the war in Vietnam. He senses that their disappearance is directly related to abuse of the environment. The village council is anxious to turn flooded fields into rice paddies and sees the old man as a thorn in their side when he staunchly refuses to yield his flooded fields. Even his daughter calls him foolish. Again the tension in this book is gripping -- on the one hand the reader wants to believe in the wisdom of the grandfather, but the village councillors make very convincing arguments for progress.

11 My engagement jewelry from my then fiance’s father in Kenya was several exquisitely fashioned pieces of ivory. Canadian custom officials took most of it on my return to Canada (some was returned a year later) and sawed the bangles off my wrist that were too tight to remove otherwise. My coming to terms with the origins of the beautiful creamy jewelry is a story very close to Sato’s and one I use to build context. It is particularly powerful because I model how I was able to embrace conflicting feelings and beliefs and find balance.

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be able to predict the kinds of discussions, interests, and issues that would move them, I was able to provide books and other materials in advance that related to the story or its subthemes.

Bookcases lined three sides of the discussion group area: one bookcase had the stories and resource materials for that week, another had related stories that might interest the children, but were not going to be covered in the programme and the third one was filled with unrelated literature. At any point during the day, children were free to choose books for free reading or as resources for a project or activity. Several learning activity centres (writing and editing, challenge, science 1 & 2, puzzling problems, Internet research, crafts, imaginative/drama, cooking, art, gardening, and construction 1 & 2) were set up around the room with three large tables for project work (sorting items for the Salvation Army, preparing soup mix bottles with recipes for the food bank, sewing a quilt, building bird houses for the conservation fair, designing and setting up an organic garden, making a composter, etc.). Centre activities generally had some connection to the stories or inspirational link being discussed. Projects focused more on extensions into the community and evolved from discussions aimed at building hope in an informed manner.

Attention was given to making each centre self-sufficient so adult time would not be eroded in "management type" tasks. Materials were stored where they were easily accessible to children and space was made so that projects could be put away or taken out at various stages of completion. Centre activities generally had some connection to the stories or inspirational link being discussed. Projects focused more on extensions into the community and evolved from discussions aimed at building hope in an informed manner. 

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Children

12 I use a system of coloured sticky tags that are attached to unfinished pieces of work and a corresponding tag goes to the child’s cubby. I find this helps children maintain enough continuity to complete their works. Otherwise the forced breaks because of "home time" or the breaks caused by other exciting activities happening on the other side of the room, leave the class littered with unfinished work.
were not required to complete all the available projects -- they could select what they wanted to do. For example, when they made travel pillows to remember *The Feather Journey* by Paula Feder, a story depicting the journey of a quilt from the ghetto in Frankfurt to America, some children made two, others made none. At the same time, other children were making a "Welcome Quilt" for a refugee family, based on the story *The Whispering Blanket* by Pegi Deitz Shea. We put little instruction sheets in an envelope at each activity: if a child was working on the quilt, but also wanted to do a travel pillow and didn't have time, he could take the instructions and materials home and do it there. This meant that projects undertaken were completed to a high degree of quality. The children came to understand that even if they didn't do something during the programme, they could still do it on their own -- this took pressure off in class and left children free to pursue their interests without worrying that they were missing something.

I describe four centres below to give the reader a clearer idea of what sort of activities the children were involved in:

- **Writing Centre** - two computers with the Amazing Writing Machine software for word processing, creative writing, and art work. Next to these, sat a table for three and a sectioned shelf with all the materials needed for writing and illustration. Here the children would write letters to corporations about recycling, position statements to government organisations, thank-you letters to community supporters, presentation reports, letters to authors and illustrators, memos to parents, calendar captions, stories, poems, signs, memory booklets, etc.

- **Challenge Centre** - here, there were problem-solving situations that by and large were gleaned from community resource material. Three examples are: 1) If the Wilderness Wildlife Committee was sent a donation of $150, what are some possible ways it could be spent - explain the good and bad of each suggestion. 2) How do you feel when street people ask you or your parents for money? What are some ways that you might help those less fortunate than yourself - try to think of ways that keep everyone feeling respected. 3) The Wildlife Rescue Association sent us biographies on animals in need. Read
them and then choose which one you want to support and write a sentence or
two explaining why. Copies of each problem were kept in brown envelopes
with instructions on where to get resource information.

• Puzzling Problems - many of the activities in this centre require the children to
use their math skills. For example, one problem asks the children to work out
three different ways their household could conserve two litres of water a day.
All information needed (with plenty of visuals) was pinned to the centre
backdrop. Two other problems were based on information from the SPCA.
They sent graphs showing how many animals were put down in the past three
years, and the children were asked to make projections about future statistics.
The SPCA also supplied a formula that would indicate the size of enclosure
necessary for an animal based on typical activities and range. The children had
to draft blueprints using the measurements necessary for sensitive housing of a
classroom pet rabbit.

• Art - this centre was distinct from the craft centre in that the projects were much
more free form. One activity that integrated natural science and art was the
endangered species canvasses (1 m by 70 cm). The children were to adopt an
endangered species and study everything they could about it. Then they were
to paint a mock canvas with a meaningful image related to their animal. Finally,
they were given acrylic paints and real canvases to create their memory banner.
Each child wrote a short message about his/her canvas and the works were
mounted. At the end of the programme, the children did an Awareness March
across campus to the Education Building, where they displayed their canvasses
for future teachers. (They chose their audience by vote after much discussion -
other options were the library, and a community centre.)

Discussion Meetings

The hub of the two pilot programmes was the daily discussion meeting. An initial time
investment to work through the interpersonal dynamics of a respectful group
discussion was required in both programmes. While it was fairly easy to establish that
all class members had a right to equal opportunity, it was more difficult for the children
to accept their classmates might act upon that right in very different ways. Whether the
format of discussion was a speaking circle or open forum, participants were first taught
and later expected to demonstrate an understanding of how respect, reciprocity,
relevance, and restraint contribute to healthy discussion. As an outcome, this group
was able to sustain an animated and purposeful discussion for 60 to 70 minutes. When one thinks of the age group (6-9 year olds), it seems hard to believe; yet many days I had to stop focused discussion, so that children would get project time. A change between the first and second pilot programmes was that I relaxed on my desire to achieve some sort of consensus amongst the children before ending the meeting. They learned that they could agree to disagree, and pursue more than one solution to a problem. I learned to listen!

The sessions always started with a recapitulation of the previous day’s activities, and an opportunity to add new interpretations to an issue being discussed. Then, I would begin the slow building, through “contextualised” story, of a problematised situation. Much time would be spent developing empathy for characters on opposing sides of the fence and finding opportunities to weave students’ stories into the discussion fabric. It was in these discussion meetings that the seeds for global perspectives were sown. Project work inside and outside the classroom provided the sunshine and water to help the seeds grow.

**Field Trips**

Field trips during and outside class time were an important part of this programme. Efforts were made to prepare children well so that they would know what questions to ask and make meaningful connections to their own experience. Many field trips stimulated learning down different paths than would have occurred through classroom activities alone.

One of the outcomes of reading books about the relationship between humans and their environment was that the children set up a recycling system for the school,
complete with information sheets, pick-up rosters, and colour-coded bins. A trip to the Vancouver Recycling Depot was a way to drop off our collection and take in a tour at the same time. An intermediate station for landfill waste stands next to the recycling depot. Every child was suitably shocked at the volume of waste and the statistics thrown at them by the interpreter. But, it was when they asked the recycling interpreter about the different numbers on recyclable plastic containers that their “feel good about recycling” bubble burst. They were informed that #s 1, 2, 4, and 5 could be melted down to make other products like park benches, fence posts, and signs, but that # 3 plastics were not recycled in Canada because of our laws regarding emissions. Instead, they were shipped to other countries with lower standards for emissions. I was pleased that the children were troubled by this.

After a heated discussion meeting the next day, a group of children took it upon themselves to compile a list of products most commonly packaged in #3 plastic and went on to create a “Rethink” handout for their families at the writing centre. In this way, they were helping others make informed choices. They also made up home survey sheets to determine the challenges that prevent “easy” domestic recycling. This field trip introduced the inspirational link, “Think globally, act locally.”

**Extensions into the Community**

At any one point during the programme, the children were reaching out to the community in at least 2 or 3 ways. On the day I describe above (when *Sato and the Elephants* and *Grandfather’s Dream* were read), a group of children faxed the Wilderness Wildlife Committee for information regarding the effect of lost old growth forest habitat on the Spotted Murrelet and Grizzly bears. Another group phoned Anthony Wong, an international endangered species activist, for information on bear
poaching and gallbladder use in Chinese medicines. Three girls and the classroom assistant were making lists to help plan for a Conservation Fair and discussing publicity tactics. A classroom volunteer had taken two children to the Greater Vancouver Regional District office to negotiate sensitive tree planting in the endowment lands. Still another young boy was trying to tease out the issues around declining salmon stocks from articles on the Internet.

Differences between the First and Second Programmes

The two pilot studies differed in how I organized the curriculum and in my responsiveness to child input. In the first programme, I set the themes before I met the children. I was keen to communicate to parents what we were doing and the learning objectives behind the programme (motivated, in part, to offset concerns about age appropriateness). At the end of each week, we would make a "global slogan" banner that pulled together aspects of different issues discussed in our meetings. As I neared the end of the third week, the themes were blurring and the children were generating several slogans instead of one. The second study was more participant driven and I was much more comfortable with generative curriculum and assured of parent support. I had put twenty, what I now call, "inspirational links" around the room with a space left for new ones. These were developed prior to beginning the programme from material gathered in the first pilot study. Instead of using a global slogan to encapsulate what we had learned, we used the slogans to "link" discussions, books and community projects. No distinct themes existed, but we flowed from one link into the next and then back to an earlier one. It felt like waves lapping the shore -- each link built on a previous link to create one unified, yet diversified, force. We had a curriculum organic to our group.
Another difference between the two programmes was that we spent more time on issues in our own backyard the second time around. In the first session, I rationalised that by putting distance between the children and the issues we were discussing, I would make it easier for them to deal with injustice. For example, when we tangled with human conflict, we used books like *Rebel* by Allan Baille (civilian rebellions in Burma), *Sadako* by Eleanor Coerr (the effects of Hiroshima), *Pink and Say* by Patricia Polacco (racism in the American civil war), and *A Time for Toys* by Margaret Wild (life as a Jew in a German concentration camp). In the second programme, we took on human conflict issues closer to home, using books like *A Smoky Night* by Eve Bunting (the phenomenon of riots), *Stories of the Road Allowance People* by Maria Campbell (historical effects of residential schooling on contemporary lives of Metis people), *Way Home* by Libby Hathorn (living on the streets), *A Coyote Columbus Story* by Thomas King (colonialism issues from First Nations perspective), and *The Bracelet* by Yoshiko Uchida (Japanese internment along the West Coast). While the children handled both approaches well, the immediacy of issues in the second programme afforded children many opportunities to explore avenues for efficacy. This seemed to empower them to deal with topics typically side-stepped by their parents and educators.

**Adaptability to a “Typical Classroom”**

What would I change if this program were part of the yearly curriculum? I would still use the discussion meeting as the focal part of each day, but relegate the rest of the morning to develop math and literacy skills necessary to support participation in this kind of program. The afternoon would be used for project studies with the last half hour reserved for reflection and personal programme planning. Like in any good early childhood programme (K- Grade 3), careful attention would need to be given to planning activities that reinforce skill development cumulatively. Teachers
have to be careful, when using generative curriculum models, not to abandon organisation, sequence, and accountability in an attempt to make projects "match themes." I have found a healthy dose of creativity and motivation, fuelled by student excitement, allows the teacher to connect student interests with both the development of necessary skills and the understanding of basic concepts. Developing curriculum that nurtures global perspectives forced me to use stories, books, and inspirational links that were relevant to the children's experience. Relevance goes a long way in motivating children to challenge themselves in areas of learning they perceive to be less enjoyable.

A typical classroom format would allow for fuller development of each inspirational link for reasons of time alone. It would also be easier to demonstrate how one revisits an issue over and over again as new information arises. I'm sure the reader can appreciate that these programmes were very intense and could easily be spread out over several months. This would also compensate for the fact that most early childhood educators would not have the assistance of an aide, and would need more time to prepare support materials. Teachers I have consulted with, through my private business, teachers I have made presentations to at Early Childhood Conferences, and those I have taught as a Teaching Assistant at the University of British Columbia have, without exception, been excited about using the perceptual domain as a route to addressing diversity issues. Two areas that have caused some concern are: 1) difficulty in getting the books, and 2) lack of time to contact resource people during working hours.

Some of the books are difficult to get. As I mentioned earlier, they aren't usually on

*These books often are not promoted as aggressively as "less controversial" books and tend to require a greater degree of "storyworking."*
“Scholastic” or “Troll” lists which provide teachers with easy and cheap book shopping; they often don't get selected by overstretched school librarians, and they typically have short publication runs. I pick up most of my books from children’s bookstores, cultural centres, and small publishing houses. I look for mission statements that accommodate diversity and editors that take risks with powerful yet controversial material. For example, Milkweed Editions has a mission statement that closely jibes with my world view:

Milkweed Editions publishes with the intention of making a humane impact on society, in the belief that literature is a transformative art uniquely able to convey the essential experiences of the human heart and spirit.

To that end, Milkweed Editions publishes distinctive voices of literary merit in handsomely designed, visually dynamic books, exploring the ethical, cultural, and esthetic issues that free societies need continually to address.

(Milkweed Editions, 1996)

I make it a habit to get on the mailing lists of non-mainstream publishing houses like Theytus (First Nations Writing Centre), so that I may access books that don’t make it past managers in bookstores or librarians in libraries. I also get to know bookstore owners, cultural centre curators and publishing house editors. I make clear the sort of books or storylines I am interested in, so that when something new comes in, I am called. This way, I catch books with short publishing runs before they go out of print.

Large public libraries are another option, but not ideal because of the unavailability of books at the time you need them. I recommend that teachers demonstrate “demand” for these books by talking to their school librarians, placing orders at bookstores in case extra stock exists somewhere on a back shelf, searching large “on line” bookstores such as Chapters.ca or Amazon.com, and loading the public library “on
line" system with requests.

Regarding time limitations, the constant refrain of teachers today seems to be they have too little to do too much. An initial time investment often goes a long way in building a community resource group, and as I mentioned earlier, one contact almost always yields two or three more. Also, a relatively short time could be spent training a volunteer to gather the information you need.

The two pilot studies at the UBC Child Study Centre helped me to "live" curriculum in a way I had always aspired to, but didn't know how. The lessons I learned about children's potential for understanding and acknowledging differing perspectives underscores all my subsequent teaching. I no longer feel overwhelmed by diversity education, I have found a pathway that lets me address the perceptual domain in a way that supports inclusive thinking without "watering everything down." I also know that no matter how confident I feel, the fact that I work with young children raises alarm bells in the early childhood community regarding Developmentally Appropriate Practice. Accordingly, I will explore this subject in the following chapter.
Re-Visioning Socially Relevant Curriculum

Weeding and Composting

The perceived dark side of the world calls for information rather than silence.

... the real political task in a society such as ours is to criticize the working of institutions which appear to be both neutral and independent; violence which has always exercised itself obscurely through them will be unmasked, so that we can fight fear.

Michel Foucault

Introduction

It has been my experience that teachers of young children tend not to invite political or socially controversial subjects into the classroom. Other researchers have made similar observations (Silin, 1995; Egan, 1988; Bruner, 1986). The purpose of this chapter is to question the validity of this position and explore an alternative view. I begin with an analysis of the role of ignorance in education, and demonstrate how it infiltrates the ways in which educators practise. Next, I examine the evolution of Developmentally Appropriate Guidelines in Early Childhood practice and go on to question the overly literal application of these guidelines in the classroom. I finish by outlining the strategies I use to help children avoid feeling overwhelmed when they are exposed to alternative modes of knowing and controversial subjects.

The Social Power of Ignorance

Silin (1995) describes two kinds of ignorance: one with negative, and one with positive ramifications. The first kind is that which fuels hegemony and acculturation. It
is akin to the ignorance maintained in Cowslip’s warren, where rabbits were able to maintain privileged lifestyles if they ignored the regular disappearance of some of their clan into the farmer’s soup kettle (Watership Down). Individuals in effect use this ignorance as a coping mechanism to deal with the insecurity and fear that accompany complexity and ambiguity. Seeing and managing issues in black and white brings a short-term security. Life seems more manageable if there are simple answers to questions that refuse to go away: “people living in poverty die because they don’t take care of themselves”; “street people could get jobs like mine if they weren’t lazy.” A narrowly framed understanding feeds this kind of ignorance by allowing individuals to distance themselves from complexity and responsibility.

The second kind of ignorance is more an acknowledgement that one cannot appreciate all perspectives at any one time, that there will always be more information to seek, more listening to attend to -- in short, it describes a recognition of one’s limitations. Embracing this form of ignorance should not be interpreted to mean that one rushes out and attempts to learn everything there is to know. Rather it is an admission that learning is infinite. By opening up to this realisation, one is able to appreciate the broad spectrum of diversity.

It is fear that fuels the first kind of ignorance, and facing this same fear that empowers one to embrace the second kind of ignorance. Instead of letting fear immobilise us and keep us in the sphere of the first type of ignorance, we can reframe fear as a stimulant that spurs us to ask relevant questions.

Despite its benefits as a learning tool, the second type of ignorance has an inherent danger which, while subtle, is debilitating. When children are overwhelmed by the
broad spectrum of possible perspectives, they can slip into a state of inertia where they are reluctant to take action on anything because there may be a question left unasked, or unanswered. I am reminded of a particularly strong example that emerged from a Grade 1 classroom at Southlands Elementary School in Vancouver. The children in this class were not accustomed to discussing problems to which there were no definitive answers. The unit of study was dinosaurs and the children were divided into groups of four. Each group was required to choose a dinosaur and use resource books to list all its behaviours and physical characteristics. Two groups chose stegosaurus. The teacher tried to collate the various groups’ observations on chart paper, but when she got to stegosaurus there was a considerable uproar. One group reported that the plates along the animal’s back were to collect heat from the sun and radiate it through its body. They said there was one row of plates and they were immobile: three nice observations for the chart. The other group waved their hands saying, “No, no, you’re wrong! The picture in our book shows there are two sets of plates, they can move, and they were used as a defense against meat-eaters.” The teacher looked at me with a definite hint of panic, and said, “Christianne, you have a lot of books on dinosaurs. What do you think we should do?” I said, “Well, I would start by checking out the references and compare the dates of publication.” The children immediately opened their books and found that both were published in 1991. Then we tried to compare the research that supported them, but both were written by renowned paleontologists. When we determined the books were of equal credibility, I tried to resolve the dilemma by telling them a story based on the picture book Big Old Bones by David Carrick.

A professor, who was obsessed with bones, unearths a very exciting find in the eastern part of the country. He ships them out by train to the west where he has lab space to examine them (a big old barn). A little apprentice helps him put the bones together, and identifies the assemblage (on a small sign directed to the reader) as a Tyrannosaurus Rex. But the professor says,
“Impossible! The head would have been too heavy, and there are not enough bones for the arms.” He dismantles the bones and puts them together another way. This time they look like a brachiosaurus, which the little apprentice writes on the sign. The professor says, “Impossible! The animal couldn’t hold up his neck. The cavity for the brain is too small to let it even find food.” So he tries several other incarnations, each of which is ruled out for other reasons. In the end, the professor thinks he has finally figured out the bone structure of this ancient creature, and invites numerous dignitaries to a dramatic presentation. But first he must come up with a skin for the creature, a task he accomplishes by presenting his wife, a seamstress, with a dozen roses. The next day the dinosaur is unveiled. The reader is treated to a comical combination of five dinosaurs with a patchwork floral skin covering.

I explained to the children the reason I used this story was to dramatise the fact that there were no instructions for putting together the puzzle of real dinosaur bones. I underscored the fact that all the knowledge we have today about dinosaurs is based on theories: we gather as much information as we can and then try to puzzle through for conclusions that seem logical based on that information. I said to the teacher, “It would seem that both of these student groups could be right. We need to get more information. Until we do, we could write that stegosaurus has either one set of plates used to conserve heat, or two sets of plates used to defend itself against predators.” Heavy discussion ensued among the children and, with the exception of one child, each group was adamant that theirs was the only information the teacher should use. Because of their desire to discern right from wrong, the children felt the chart had to reflect one set of findings or the other. By the end of the discussion, one girl said we shouldn’t put up anything until we knew more. The majority of the class said we should choose one or the other by vote. And one child felt that both answers should go on the chart. This child was unusual in his seeming ability to make a decision that tolerated ambiguity, knowing that more information might change his choice.

This story illustrates how children can be paralysed by what they perceive as
inconclusive information. The resulting sense of ambiguity leaves them unable to act. Because there is always another question that needs answering, they can’t go forward. Children need guidance in learning how to make decisions that leave room for change. With effective modelling, they develop an understanding that any decision is based only on information available at the time, and is consequently limited. This does not mean decisions are meaningless: merely that they are context- and time-specific. However, in my experience, most individuals find it unsettling to tolerate the periods of ambiguity required to break down the insecurity and fear that are part of ignorance. It seems important to me that we show children through stories, lived experiences, and observations of societies around the world that the basis of terrorism, subjugation, and atrocity is the controlling power of fear and ignorance. I believe that you can present this to children in a way that does not, as has been traditionally claimed, cause emotional turmoil. Of course you have to work hard to help children discover hope and strength in reframing fear, and accepting that the world cannot be “learned” as a series of facts like a mathematical equation.

The importance of developing multiple perspectives is to create an understanding that decisions are contingent on conditions, and that if conditions change, a decision could -- and probably should -- as well. Children learn to justify decisions and actions on the basis of conditions, and this understanding empowers them to make informed decisions and actions.

Encouraging children to question becomes an empowering process when they internalise the fact that questions help them address their fears. It is when we try to squelch fear that we make mistakes. We need to embrace fear as a tool to help us ask informed questions that get to the heart of what we need to know. Oppressive
movements like Hitler's grow in a climate of fear. To protect ourselves against this oppression, we need to recognise and curtail the hold that fear can gain on our ability to question and understand. Fear feeds on hopelessness, and without hope we find no direction, no purpose, no principles, and have nothing to anchor us. It is important to help children negotiate a path through ambiguity that can facilitate purpose and passion, while acknowledging what is unknowable. I have found this best summed up in the inspirational link from the global diversity programme described in Chapter 4, "Learning is a temporary loss of security."

It takes a skilled educator to create a comfort zone around that temporary loss of security. It requires patience to recognise that children need time to develop, hone and focus a global/diversity lens that welcomes the second kind of ignorance, while checking the first. Both teachers and children need flexibility within the temporal aspect of curriculum: it affords them the opportunity to make decisions based on reflections and visioning. There should be a sense of freedom that permits the incorporation of additional time without jeopardising the curriculum -- time that can be allocated for discussion, reflection on past events, and visioning of future ones. Children need temporal "space" where they can come together and share individual perspectives, each granted equal worth, and continue to vision a common world fed by those perspectives (Green, 1984). Many educators of young children treat time as an objective entity, as moments to be filled with activity. Huebner (1975) suggests that the educational environment should reflect an understanding of lived time, rather than the fragmented and often disjointed routines that reduce learning to a mechanical process.

On a larger temporal scale, it takes time for children to start exhibiting changes in how...
they approach difficult issues. A group of children I have worked with over the past six years (since they were four) are only now demonstrating that they have internalised characteristics of the global/diversity perspective. I planted seeds that would develop into these characteristics, early, through the global programmes at the Child Study Centre (UBC) where they were participants. I have repeatedly watered these seeds through Story Response groups, Book Club, and involvement in school projects by presenting them with challenges that help them develop the skills and characteristics of the lens themselves. At age 10, the children are now able to apply these skills in other “tough and tender” situations. Book Club visitors have been impressed by the children’s ability to have frank discussions about personal subjects, to acknowledge alternative perspectives, and to appreciate different kinds of intelligence. These children have come to find a comfort zone in the second kind of ignorance. By embracing this, they are engaging in a life-long learning process, so they will still encounter periods where they hide behind the first kind of ignorance.

Some educators feel the process of opening children’s minds to a wide realm of possibilities is a primary responsibility of teachers. However, one of the perennial problems in Early Childhood education has been to determine what subject areas are appropriate to raise with young children. As I mentioned earlier, teachers on the whole have exhibited a broad tendency to avoid difficult social and philosophical issues in the Early Childhood classroom. Their justification for doing so is often couched in the language of Developmentally Appropriate Guidelines. The impact of

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14 *Story Response groups* are weekly sessions where I read to a group of children and have them engage in stories through directed questions, prepared review sheets, and a “free response” journal where they can draw, write, or otherwise respond to the stories without conforming to directives from me. Stories are selected that challenge narrow patterns of thinking. *Book Club* is a group of pre-teens and parents that I lead once a month at a local community centre. Part of its mission statement is that we read books that challenge participants to confront controversial issues in a trusting and supportive environment.

15 Book Club visitors include authors, illustrators, and book reviewers.
these guidelines on teaching practice bears investigation in relation to the development of socially relevant curriculum.

Examining Developmentally Appropriate Practice

To examine a concept one must lay it out so that influences that come to bear on its evolution can be seen. Perhaps it would be helpful to begin by putting Developmentally Appropriate Practice in a historical context to examine and analyze the pull it has exerted on early childhood education. The roots of early childhood education and, by association, Developmentally Appropriate Practice extend back over four centuries. For the purposes of this argument, it is only necessary to give an overview of the movement.

During the Protestant Reformation and Catholic Counter Reformation, society began to place greater importance on early childhood as an impressionable period when the influence of education was seen to be strong. Because of the values of the time, this meant a clear emphasis on religious lessons and moral imperatives in the education of young children. Pedagogical treatises put forth by Rousseau (1712-1778) and Pestalozzi (1747-1827) challenged religious commitment as all important in the education of young children and expressed the need for children to have greater freedoms.

Froebel (1782-1852), a key catalyst for the early education movement in eighteenth-century America, was less concerned with specific content than with reiterating the value of morality and encouraging children to recognise universal values. His contribution to curriculum studies was the call to individualise according to the needs of the child. In the nineteenth century, Froebel's ideas were challenged by the
Progressives who held the scientific method as all-important. The Progressive movement marked a major shift from a philosophical and religious curricular base to a secular and psychological one. Professionals tended to minimise the importance of morals and values in the classroom, using instead material based on the developmentally-determined interests of the child. The teacher's role was that of democratic guide rather than authoritarian director, yet curriculum material was rigidly set on the authority of psychological research.

Stanley Hall's child study movement used intensive research with children to provide a scientific base for Early Childhood curriculum and classroom structure. At the same time, however, his work created a dichotomy that effectively segregated those who studied young children from those who used this knowledge in teaching them. This distinction was further reinforced by academics who were determined to keep education based in science: observable, measurable and predictable.

Piaget emerged as a dominant force early in the twentieth century, with the publications of his work on the development of rational thought, based on observation and interviews with child subjects. His theories, still pervasive in contemporary Early Childhood education, have nonetheless been subject to extensive criticism. Donaldson (1978) found Piaget's conclusions to be ill-founded in that they are not necessarily about a child's ability to reason, as much as they may be about her failure to grasp the nature of the problem she is presented with, her lack of motivation to answer or her assessment that the question is irrelevant. Isaacs (1930) felt that the clinical interview did not make optimal use of the child's intelligence. The questioning techniques revealed more about the child's possession of certain information than about his ability to reason. Children were required to answer questions asked by
others rather than seek the answers to questions they themselves raised.

Brofenbrenner (1989, 1993) claims that the child's development is best understood within socially and culturally meaningful contexts. He found that controlled, isolated testing environments told little of how the child makes meaning in his family, educational setting, community, and broader society.

Piaget's work also raised questions about the role of the teacher. His research contributed to popular ideas about developmental appropriateness and, in turn, this led to a paradox that enmeshed Early Childhood teachers. Children could only learn something new when they were ready to, and when the time was right, they would do it naturally -- negating the need for adult intervention or assistance. In contrast to Piaget, Vygotsky encouraged the teacher to take an active role in assisting development through scaffolding. One of Vygotsky's (1978) most significant contributions to educational study was his description of "zones of proximal development,"

the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers (p. 86).

Rather that measuring a child's ability by independent performance alone, educators could begin to look at the child's potential ability given the supportive scaffolding of those at higher levels. Vygotsky envisioned the child's intellectual potential as developing out of the process of enculturation to a particular society, rather than embedded in set biological inheritance.

Ironically, Piaget's sequential developmentalism contributed to an underestimation of children's cognitive abilities. Short (1991) drew a connection between this underestimation and the reluctance of teachers to test their students' intellectual,
social, and emotional competencies through the introduction of controversial issues. Piaget’s assumptions that preadolescent children cannot cope with conflicting evidence in discussions around issues gave teachers a rationalisation for their reluctance to initiate discussion on difficult subjects such as death, homelessness, poverty, victim cycles, and human conflict. Avoiding the introduction of controversial subjects in the primary years seems short-sighted as it is through controversy that we learn about ourselves and can position our identities within larger contexts.

Throughout the twentieth century, the field of early childhood drew on a range of psychological theories including behaviourists, Freudians, and constructivists. This affinity started to shift in the 1960s as educators moved to more cognitively-oriented curricula. Although this shift led to a reduced emphasis on the socio-emotional adjustment of children, early childhood educators continued to use psychological rationales in curriculum design. A significant flaw in this approach lay in the fact that the whole field of psychology is based in European heritage and values. A secondary problem arose with the issue of subjectivity: post-modern views cast a shadow on much of Early Childhood research, including that of Piaget.\(^{16}\) Despite challenges to Piaget’s study by other researchers in the field (Isaacs, 1930; Donaldson, 1978; Matthews, 1980; Short, 1991), his constructs continue to permeate the underlying structure of Early Childhood practice. Piaget’s framework for children’s learning was extended to other areas of research with young children such as moral development (Kohlberg, 1981) and political literacy (Leahy, 1983).

\(^{16}\) I am not proposing that psychological theory should be ignored. It is a large part of educational theory, but need not be a dominating force. As educators, we have to decide to what extent we incorporate psychological theory in our pursuit of balanced curriculum. Silin quotes Egan as saying, “The role of education is to shape the forces that produce psychological regularities, not to be bound by them” (1995, p. 87).
Twentieth century psychological theorists, in particular Piaget, provided the material that would later be used to formulate Developmentally Appropriate Practice Guidelines. These guidelines determine appropriate group discussion topics, equipment, learning activities, and overall programme decisions. Tests of "readiness" started to appear and were administered pre- and post-kindergarten to determine whether a child should advance or not. Specific skills were to be introduced at specific ages, or when prerequisite skills had been mastered.

Developmentally Appropriate Practice was welcomed by those anxious to elevate the status of Early Childhood practitioners to that of professionals. Developmentally Appropriate Guidelines were translated into tangible standards that facilitated programme evaluation, and provided a base for accountability. This in turn meant that training courses were required so that practitioners gained familiarity with the standards and were able to put them into practice. Training requirements resulted in a clear separation from the "babysitting" stigma that had long been attached to those working with young children. This development allowed Early Childhood teachers to truly enter the field of education.

Even as new understandings of the complexity of learning have emerged (Gardner, 1991; Malaguzzi, 1993; Forman et.al., 1993; Hale-Benson, 1986), "the discourse of early childhood continues to give precedence to psychological considerations and to suffer from the conservatism of the 1980s" (Silin, 1995, p.84). Time constraints in the classroom leave teachers little time for reflecting on the context that curriculum

Developmentally Appropriate Practice also generated norms that benefitted children by contributing to early identification of problems such as hearing difficulties and chromosomal syndromes. Improved diagnosis allowed educators to provide service and adapt teaching at an earlier stage, thereby increasing children's potential for success over the long term. The norms also had a negative impact -- it became too easy to "label" children, and too difficult for children to shed those labels. Norms also led to misdiagnosis because they did not account for the diversity present in our more "global" society.
guidelines are developed under. This can lead to a tendency where teachers rely on the guidelines to help them wade through the sea of materials and content vying for their attention and to expediently eliminate choices. In this sense, the guidelines become an accepted code -- almost viewed as objective, apolitical, and without agenda. Yet, as Arnowitz and Giroux (1991), Grumet (1995) and Silin (1995) argue, teaching is unavoidably a political practice. Use of Developmentally Appropriate Guidelines in this way, can lead to what I perceive to be a misplaced sense of protective control: protecting children from being exposed to cognitive tasks before they are "ready," or to fine motor activities too early, or to societal issues that might cause emotional distress. In focusing on age appropriate guidelines, they run the risk of missing the idiosyncrasies of context, personality and intercultural classroom dynamics. Even though, in its latest position statement on Developmentally Appropriate Practice (1996), NAEYC encourages teachers to integrate the many dimensions of their knowledge base to account for context, the reality of daily classroom struggles and time constraints leave teachers little opportunity to reflect, critically analyse, and make reasoned adaptations.

While Developmentally Appropriate Guidelines have contributed to the credibility of Early Childhood education, I would contend they have been applied too generally and used too literally. This has resulted in a narrow perspective of appropriate curriculum subjects. The guidelines for Developmentally Appropriate Practice have been opened to significant challenge by those concerned with differences in cultural norms, by postmodern researchers concerned with subjectivity, by educational practitioners familiar with the impact of context on a child's "meaning-making," and critical pedagogists who believe that failing to give a child the tools to negotiate diversity within plurality is an abdication of their responsibility. Taken literally, Developmentally Appropriate
Guidelines jibe better with pre-given and standardised curriculum than that which is emergent and negotiated (Dyson and Genishi, 1994). However, if one interprets Developmentally Appropriate Practice Guidelines as merely "guidelines," affected by context and diversity of perspective, compatibility with generative curriculum can be achieved.

In interpreting Developmentally Appropriate Guidelines, early childhood educators must go beyond correlating skills and abilities with chronological age. By acknowledging the many dimensions of a child's knowledge base, we can be sensitive their responses and learn to understand the messages they send. By cultivating a sensitivity to children's responses, you can learn to be guided by their messages. Their responses can indicate the depth of discussion they can handle, and the extent of contextualisation they require for understanding specific issues related to the discussion. They also indicate when there is an individual or collective need to gather more information, or to get some distance and deal with issues on a less personal basis.

For educators, the challenge of matching curriculum themes appropriately to children's development means doing your homework to ensure that children are given opportunities to vision, seek more information, and explore avenues of efficacy. In this sense, Developmentally Appropriate Practice is individualised. When I discuss an issue with the class, I watch the children and note their reactions. I might cut discussion short and redirect children who want a higher level of engagement. In the same vein, I might scale back and reframe or recontextualise for those having difficulty.

Some of my Early Childhood colleagues would reject the idea that children benefit
from exposure to controversy. In my experience, it is widely felt that children's need for
security and clarity are somehow separate from the realities of the contemporary social
world. As well, I often hear the argument that children are not cognitively ready to
handle difficult subjects, and it is dangerous to expose them to disturbing phenomena.
Silin (1995) describes similar experiences with his colleagues, and laments the
ignorance that comes about from their actions. Shielding children from global
problems cannot be a long term solution to preserving their sense of hope. Purging
the curriculum of topics that raise concern for young people, or focusing discussion
only on "safe" areas, are not options except for making classrooms more sterile places
(Werner, 1999). There is a body of research that indicates children in primary grades
are more politically sophisticated than is generally assumed (Stevens, 1982; Short
better or worse, are savvy and cynical. Old before their time, they know a dodge when
they see one" (as cited in Werner 1999, p. 251). There is room within the classroom
context to give children the opportunity to stretch and define their own limits rather than
to assume what they are.

Some may ask if I am abandoning the construct of childhood: forcing children to
confront issues before they have had a chance to run wild in the forest and smell the
daisies. In some ways this is a mute point, because as Postman (1999), Elkind
(1987b), and Polakow (1992) have argued before me the largely unmediated
technological explosion has already robbed children of Rousseau's "innocence." Our
children are running through cyberhighways in virtual realities that can only increase
needs for "instant gratification" (via the click of a mouse) and decrease social
responsibility (it is easy to shirk responsibility when you don't have to look into the
eyes of the other). They have knowledge at their fingertips, but don't know how to use
it responsibly. I am arguing for giving children tools with which to mediate the world while showing concern, compassion, and caring. Helping children understand injustices cannot be equated with losing childhood innocence. Instead I see myself as preserving the world of the child through story dialogues that scaffold opportunities to move from narrow ways of thinking. Shielding children from life, underestimates the child’s ability to think critically, hope optimistically, and generate paths for living as respectful human beings.

Revisioning Relevance from the Child’s Perspective

The process of exploring emotionally volatile, socially controversial, or value-laden issues can be threatening to teachers whose comfort zone lies in the area of finite questions and answers. In avoiding issues that engender emotional turmoil, teachers hope to protect young children from the harsh realities of the world. I often find myself wondering who we are really protecting. Is it the children, or is it ultimately ourselves? Are we hiding behind our own reluctance to forego a measure of control in order to nurture independence? Are we afraid of engaging with subjects about which we are unresolved ourselves? Does this uncertainty challenge our position of authority?

I have found truth in the expression, “If it’s mentionable, it’s manageable.” If you can talk about specific issues in an informed way, you can confront the “perceived dark side of the world” in a way children can handle. It is not enough to simply present bare facts to children. Ingredients of hope and empowerment must also be added, and then the whole mixture worked and massaged until understanding is reached. In my experience, children will learn about difficult issues at the level they are able to incorporate. However, if they are "protected" from discussing anything that falls outside socialised boundaries, they either rebel against those protective limits or
incorporate forms of ignorance unquestioningly and mirror the narrow ways of thinking that have been modelled to them.

Perhaps because of our own insecurities, we err on the side of caution. We are immobilised by lack of creativity in how we can introduce inequities and contradictions in life. We need ways that metaphorically leave a tattoo rather than a scar -- a springboard for further learning rather than a retreat into the attic where fear fuels ignorance.

Children need guidance in approaching difficult issues, and in formulating their own opinions. It is vital to model the process we engage in when developing our personal stances on particular issues. By engaging children in the process, we equip them with the underlying rationale that supports and informs our positions and decisions. By rationalising a philosophical stance, the child is given an opportunity to internalise the process of wrangling through with a controversial subject. What is important is not which perspective the child takes on a particular issue, but the process she goes through in coming to that decision, and the ways in which she can support or validate her position. It does not help children in the long run to closet them away from opposing or different perspectives. It is critical to provide them with the tools they need to reflect on ethical issues, incorporate values and in the long term create their own personal philosophies. This is not a step-by-step procedure that a child can learn from a book. It is best learned in the social context in which it is meaningful.

I find it is also important to buttress children against the incredible force of peer pressure through open and balanced discussion, visioning, simulation, and project work around controversial issues. Through such involvement, we can “inoculate” them
(Gammage, 1984) in some small degree from the virtually inexorable force that peers exert. If you blinker children, you create room for ill-founded fascination. Children need cool comebacks that allow them to respond with dignity should they decline to go along with the group. In discussion, they are exposed to a variety of perspectives and information; through visioning, they can imagine strong responses to tough arguments; through simulation they can practice those responses; and through project work, they can internalise their choices and communicate them to others. In this way, children can make informed and lasting choices about their own actions. They can decide not to go down a certain path, based on personally meaningful criteria, rather than a seemingly arbitrary dictate from someone in authority. Having no knowledge is not an option -- having a little knowledge is dangerous -- presenting a balanced perspective leads to the kind of knowledge that helps children develop understanding.

As a teacher, I feel my role is to help children:

- fill up a toolbox with equipment and skills they will need to address life’s challenges;
- develop a lens that permits them to view multiple perspectives; and
- discover the passions that will inspire them to open the toolbox, and see through the lens.

The framework I use to support this role is an elaborate web of stories, both lived and authored. I use these stories to open up discussions that engage and empower children with the processes needed to make their own decisions.

**Counter-hegemonic Approach Through Books**

Classroom traditions and stereotypes tend to demarcate power relationships between teacher and learner. Literature and storytelling provide an effective means of reversing this. "The act of storytelling assumes an equality of intelligence in its
interlocutor rather than a superiority of knowledge. In moving from the hierarchy of explication to the more democratic participation of interpretation, we also move from ignorance as a vacuum to be filled by knowledge to ignorance as the light that illumines knowledge” (Silin 1995, p. 134).

Curriculum that nurtures global/diversity perspectives can be tailored to young children if it is approached through the use of carefully selected literature, a storyworking format, and opportunities for children to vision and find avenues for efficacy. Taxel (1989) underscores “literature’s perhaps unique power to facilitate dialogue on a number of critical issues” in his paper entitled Children’s literature as an ideological text (p. 220). By using pieces of literature that are child-oriented and universal enough that they engage the interest of a diverse audience, I am able to introduce what some might consider to be fairly sophisticated topics. I use material that many would find socially, emotionally, and intellectually challenging for the age group I work with. By nesting these in lived experience contexts (storyworking), I can respond to different levels of maturity, varying background experiences, and a wide range of inherent interests.

My choice in books reflects a preference for strong storylines that give children characters and problems to identify with. I tend to select books that either:

• deal strongly with a given issue such as racism where an act of bias is central to the storyline; or

• deal with a universal problem, and the issue of diversity is dealt with in the natural context of the character or plot development.

What I have tried to avoid is the more didactic writing style characteristic of books used in the early 1980s in a movement called “Bibliotherapy.” In these books, children are
told how they should approach an issue of some sensitivity. For example, *Jeannie Has Two Mothers* illustrates the life of a girl raised by a lesbian couple. Because the intent of the book is to emphasise the ordinariness of this arrangement, the actual storyline of the book is about Jeannie and what she does because she has two mothers. As a result, children are left with nothing to identify with but her activities and perhaps to see how her daily routine compares with theirs.

I prefer books whose strength derives from literary merit, where children can identify with characters and exercise their problem-solving skills. A non-didactic approach leaves the child to discover feelings of outrage over an act of inhumanity. Or, if they fail to discover it in themselves, they see it in their classmates' reactions and may pick it up in another book along the same theme. This approach relies on the profound impact of a child identifying with the story's characters and virtually experiencing an issue for him/herself. This is far more powerful than listening to a more prescriptive tale where the agenda of the author, in effect, becomes the storyline.

As I explained in Chapter 4, I find the flexibility afforded by stories connected through 'inspirational links' is essential to generative curriculum. Fluid connections allow me to react quickly to the children's responses, and adapt the teaching/learning process accordingly. Based on individual responses, I can follow specific links, and select stories that when "worked" will meet the needs of individuals and at the same time contribute to a growing sense of community among group. Because the pool of literature from which I draw meets the criterion of touching controversial issues, while at the same time relying on good storylines, the actual subject of the book does not matter so much as the learning process it facilitates.
The storyline is what makes a book developmentally appropriate. The appeal of characters and setting engages the child and captures his interest. But what I capitalise on from the story is its theme, which consistently relates to an issue of societal concern. Any one book can be interpreted from a number of different angles, and the issues I pull out from the same story will vary depending on the other stories and lived experiences it is nested in for the children. The central point is that the most important ingredient in using a story is to snag the children’s interest, arouse their curiosity, awaken their compassion -- in short, to connect with their emotions/passions so that the learning process can begin. An engaging storyline gives children something they can identify with. They may not relate to the whole story, but they can begin to situate themselves within the tale and in so doing, place themselves in relation to the central issue of societal concern that fuels the story. Individualisation centres on connecting children to their passions through literature, by letting their imaginations take hold of ideas and experiences that push their personal boundaries and expose them to new perspectives.

Educators need to nurture imagination even as they attend to rational, cognitive structures. It is our ability to reframe and redirect our thinking through the imaginative process that allows us to make room for perspectives that don’t fit traditional patterns. You can respond to a child’s insecurities by feeding an imagination that in turn enables him to vision alternative perspectives and opportunities for decision-making. Our ability to reframe and redirect our thinking is cultivated through the exercise of our imaginations. This ability is what allows us to make room for perspectives that don’t fit traditional patterns. An active imagination is an essential foundation for building a global/diversity perspective.
As I mentioned in Chapter 3, educators are challenged to find a way to help students find hope within critical-mindedness. Werner (1999) has given significant thought to this dilemma, and has identified four criteria for building hope into curriculum. Students can be guided to use these steps on their own when they are feeling symptoms of being overwhelmed, such as apathy, anxiety, or inability to make a decision. First, the child is asked to seek more information with a mind to checking the credibility of each resource consulted. Next, the child is encouraged to tap her inner imagination and curiosity centres, and work to apply them to the process of wrangling with a particular issue. Next, it is important to vision and revision possible futures. Finally, children and educators are challenged to explore avenues for personal efficacy. This is perhaps the most important step because through it, children feel empowered to effect change and acknowledge the importance of taking responsibility for "self."

Social Consciousness -- Individuals Embracing Contradiction

As much as my teacher training was aimed at developing programmes to meet individual needs, I can no longer see the development of individuals without acknowledging the significant impact of the social organisations that shape them. In other words, the individual is constituted in and through society. Identity is therefore not defined in opposition to the social context, but within it. Typically, individuals shape identity through relationships with like-minded people, and define themselves in opposition to others. However, it is important to acknowledge that all elements of society are resident in each of us. As Rushdie said in Midnight's Children, "To understand one life, you have to swallow the whole world" (p. 126). We all are characters within stories within sagas. It is important to individualise, but we cannot think of ourselves as separate from the myriad contexts in which we live our lives.
Right from the earliest age we are schooled to make meaning by identifying patterns. Whether we unlock the colour code of unit blocks or find trends in social behaviour, we are looking for pattern. It is always challenging to tolerate contradiction within pattern, but seems particularly so for children. As I mentioned earlier in the thesis, the most difficult set to find in the "Set" game is the one bounded by contradiction. This does not mean we avoid exposing children to contradiction, for that would be exercising what Silin refers to as the negative form of ignorance (1995). Giroux and McLaren raise the concern that contradiction may lead to cynicism and despair (1989). I have found that children can see past black-and-white constructs, and learn to anticipate and appreciate complexity as part of the learning process. With experience, they develop the ability to step back and see pattern in the "break" from pattern, and then step back further and see diversity itself as a pattern.

By learning to appreciate contradiction, we gain insight into diversity. Each of us has contradictory subject positions that, when tapped, permit us multiple perspectives. Each point of contradiction is a hyperlink that allows us to connect to an alternative perspective. With this in mind, we need to reframe contradiction and conflict from sites of negativity into opportunities for growth in unanticipated directions. Viewed from the perspective of the strength of diversity in evolution, the ability to incorporate contradiction is a characteristic that allows us to survive. When you move out of the biological paradigm into the sociopolitical realm, this ability inoculates us against hegemony, because through it, we are able to embrace discrepancies as an avenue for raising questions.

The power of contradiction became clear to me in an exercise I developed for my Story Response group participants. I asked the children to find ways to connect what
seemed at face value to be incompatible characters. To do this, children were forced to step back and find some larger framework in which links would emerge. For example, in discussing *Wreckers* by Ian Lawrence, the children had to find a common phrase that could link two of the principal characters, Simon and Caleb. Both lived in the small Cornish community of Pendennis, where the principal occupation was salvaging shipwrecks that foundered on the rocky coastline. Some of the "wreckers" went so far as to inveigle ships onto the rocks using false lights, and then killed any who managed to survive the harsh waters so they would have no claim to the ship's cargo. Simon fought the atrocities committed by the wrecking community while Caleb, on the other hand, was a ruthless pirate who pursued the ships without conscience. However, what the children were forced to extract from analysing the two characters was that both were respected community leaders, albeit each in different ways, and both shared their gains with those in need -- Caleb from fear, and Simon from compassion.

This exercise began as a way to involve children in the story, but it evolved into an effective technique for immersing them in alternative perspectives. They were compelled to stand back and look at the larger picture long enough to understand what drove the people of Pendennis into the wrecking business. While none of them liked Caleb, they could at least withhold judgment on the wreckers as a whole and see how wrecking had emerged as a viable livelihood amidst the poverty and degradation of the surrounding coal-mining towns. This, in turn, forced them to think about why Caleb was respected. By dwelling in this alternative perspective, the children, without exception, were able to understand why the practice of wrecking had taken hold in the Cornish communities, and yet at the same time were able to state with conviction that they would not undertake such actions themselves.
As the typical school year progresses, I move from encouraging children to find contradictions within a community, to helping them embrace contrasts within an individual. I find the most powerful way of doing this is through engaging with stories of heroes. Heroes are empowering because they embody the potential of one person to challenge a seemingly impenetrable system. Their ability inspires children to persevere in pursuits they find challenging. In order to make heroes approachable, it is important to move beyond their source of power and illuminate contradictions in their characters. These contradictions may surface as socially unaccepted behaviours or transgressions that don’t fit the morality of heroic actions. With work, children can accept this as part of the complexity of human nature and, on a larger scale, the diversity of life.

**Conclusion**

In laying out Developmentally Appropriate Practice and examining its impact on the field of Early Childhood, I am forced to demonstrate the “appropriateness” of my position: that socially relevant curriculum is vital in helping children function in today’s global society. I say this with a mindful eye to the delicate balance that must be maintained between developing a child’s critical-mindedness and encouraging a sense of personal efficacy infused with hope. I say this also with an awareness that critical thinking must not degenerate into cynicism, nor hope into delusion. Children need to feel a balance in the way they approach learning and living, and can arguably achieve this most readily if it is effectively modelled for them by adults. In the next chapter, I will examine the challenges and rewards of *living curriculum* -- that is, of modelling the process for approaching and resolving social issues from within the global/diversity perspective.
Sitting in the Tangled Garden

I learned my most lasting lessons about difference by closely attending to the ways in which the differences inside me lie down together.

Audre Lorde, 1988

Living Curriculum

This thesis chronicles the journey I took in understanding the process that ignites a lifelong passion for learning. This understanding necessitated the reframing of the way I viewed curriculum. My journey to understand curriculum did not end at some profound revelation, but rather led me to a space where I could explore freely, truly embracing the spectre of change: like the waves of the ocean tide, I edged forward, exploring new ground, and then flowed back to reflect. The pebbles beneath me were never the same, allowing me to create infinite new patterns. The movement was inexorable: was I pushing the waves or were they pushing me? Together we moved forward and backward with the tide, sustained by the same energy.

Reframing Curriculum

Curriculum: the building blocks of learning defined in separate, concrete units stacked one above the other a sturdy structure erected in every classroom (ignoring what is hidden underneath the stairs)

But what if...

curriculum was not a separate entity into which we infuse the various topics children need to know
what if...

curriculum is a fluid entity
a living, breathing search for meaning-making
a creature hungry for life stories that give relevance
a river that dries up without the streams that feed it
and the ocean that welcomes it

a space where teachers-learners linger
a shifting range of nooks and openings
inhabited by entities of its own that create
their own spaces
and in turn support space within

a bridge that is not a permanent structure
but a link that you sense
a flexible material that allows connections to move and re-form
to illuminate understanding and support meaning-making

what if...

curriculum is part of me
part of my dance with currere, my thirst for understanding
taking ownership / responsibility
for my learning / visioning / action

what if...

curriculum is defined by give and take
a marriage of perceptual and substantive
a continual process to which all have access
and all contribute

what if curriculum is lived...
or living?

I use the words "living curriculum" to describe the fluid process that integrates personal and professional, teacher and student, individual and social, ideal and real, in building a community of learners. In the end, my understanding has come full circle, taking me
to a place where I could appreciate the doctoral work I had done in relation to the
lifework I have undertaken as a teacher and a socially conscious member of society.

Living Thesis

It is this that permits one to reach higher ground, this process of
objectifying in language or image what one has thought and then turning
around on it and reconsidering it (Bruner 1986, p. 129).

The act of living curriculum is not unlike the exercise of writing this thesis. When I first
undertook the job of writing a thesis, it was more as a project which, once evaluated,
would serve to direct my professional life along a new career path. I was counselled
repeatedly on the importance of having a tight focus for my research. I was reminded
that the thesis would not be my life’s work but rather would earn me the ticket to get on
with doing my life’s work. This practical advice always had the effect of sending
shivers down my back because, as a generalist, I feared that no matter how diligently I
tried to focus, my research would of necessity erupt as a global work, breaking the
constraints forced upon it. Nevertheless, I made several attempts to restrict my focus
into projects that my professors would see as “doable.” Over time, I came to see my
thesis as an entirely different undertaking. While this shift was not one I could clearly
articulate, I had the sense that the act of writing would help me understand how I make
meaning, enabling me, in turn, to communicate it to others, and model and share it
with my students.

Despite acknowledging that the thesis was a priority in my life, I found I was not
prepared to shut the door on my children, take a leave from my work, or abstain from
the activities that stimulate my creativity. Instead, I chose to stay in my metaphorical
garden, surrounding myself with the riches of teaching, learning, reading, and
engaging with children and adult learners. It was these riches that provided the energy and insight that fed the thesis, and in turn, the thesis has breathed a fiery passion into all that I do, whether that be parenting, counselling other parents, tutoring a child, spreading my contagious love of literature with children, igniting a class of graduate students, or inspiring other educators. I discovered that acts like writing to the Ministry of Education about casino fund raising, or talking to loggers in the Carmanah Valley, did not rob time from my thesis: instead, these activities kept me true to the premise of my philosophy and served to anchor my research and writing.

Another challenge arose as I tried to force what I understood as a fluid process into the rigid conventions of text. I feared that the act of committing something changeable to the static form of a concrete, sequential document was an impossible task. I seemed to be having a similar problem with other writing, as is illustrated in the following journal notation.

*Personal Journal Entry - October 9, 1998*

*Again today, I was asked to write down my stories. As with the many times before, I defended my choice not to do this because of the fear that in pinning my words down on paper I would lose the responsive nature of my tales. None of my stories evolve the same way twice: how can I know which version to write down? Without responding to an audience, they will lose their magic. I don't want to be like Munsch who can bring an audience to its knees as he tells stories, but produces books that are lifeless and lack literary merit.*

It was in grappling with the idea of “storyworking” and trying to explain it in my thesis, that I found myself confronting my own insecurities about changing oral literature into written text. The process of “storyworking” is the contextualising of written story through various techniques such as lived experience, artifacts, other stories, ‘inspirational links,’ and audio-visual resources, jointly contributed by storyteller and
listeners. If I could "work" others' writing to connect with particular audiences, it was possible that others could "work" my two-dimensional words to spark meaning within themselves and those they tell stories to. I could release the creative process into others' hands, knowing they would contextualise the written words, freeing them to take on a new life of their own. My writing would tell stories I would never hear.

As I grappled through these ideas and started to see them emerge in print form, I was able to appreciate the effect that writing the thesis was having on me. Was I working for the thesis or was the thesis working on me? Through the actual writing, I was able to free a process that informs and connects my personal and professional worlds. At the same time, I realised this process was teachable to those around me and had immediate application to the broad sphere of education. The full implications of the global diversity perspective became clear only as I described and analysed the process that allowed me to develop it. My run with currere transcended personal learning and introspection by permitting me to understand my experience of learning institutions. It was through this understanding of my own learning that I began to deconstruct personal prejudices and take responsibility for my teaching/learning.

Along the same vein, Pinar (1988) said:

To the extent one becomes conscious of the dialectics of one's intellectual development, one can participate in them. Further, through one's self-understanding one comprehends -- from a participant's rather than observer's point of view -- the functions of ideas and texts in one's intellectual life, and the function of one's intellect in one's life (p. 150).

He goes on to say that such understanding of self is not narcissism, but rather a precondition and concomitant condition to the understanding of others.
The thesis was no longer something to get done, so much as a place from which to begin.

Questions Raised Upon Reflection

As the meaning of my work became clearer to me, I was able to move from self-doubt and questioning to a more reflective stance. In this mode, I began thinking more clearly about the relevance of this work to other learners and educators.

I realise that the tenor of my work really falls into two camps: the ideas and teaching principles I describe as "global/diversity perspectives" -- the stars, and the format of autobiography through which these ideas came together-- the firmament. In the main body of this text, I have considered the stars and the firmament together as constellations, but I think the questions regarding limitations for early childhood practitioners and the questions regarding limitations for qualitative researchers are sufficiently distinct that they warrant separate discussion. In the remainder of this chapter, I will address questions relating to the nurturing of global/diversity perspectives in young children. In the next chapter, I will address questions that relate to the overall methodology of autobiography.

As I reflected on the preceding chapters of this thesis, I compiled a series of questions that begged asking. One source of inspiration during this process was a paper discussing critical pedagogy by Giroux and Simon (1989). In it, the authors raised several questions that are relevant to my work as well. They do not attempt to answer their questions, instead leaving the reader to wrestle with them herself. Acknowledging that the following questions could be answered otherwise, I have written responses from my perspective below.
1. What incentive is there to move from what is accepted and easily accountable practice to dimensions of educational activity that are conceptually more difficult and harder to quantify?

Tye & Tye (1992) warn that we can no longer ignore or deny the connectedness of our lives to events taking place all around the world and "global education offers a way to turn that around -- or at least to better understand what is happening and why" (p.230). I have found that when one engages children in educational activities that have ethical, aesthetic and political dimensions, their intrinsic motivation is high. Because material is more relevant, children find opportunities for immediate application, thereby increasing personal motivation.

It is a matter of consensus that learning in ethical, aesthetic and political dimensions is difficult to measure from an evaluative standpoint. As a result, these aspects of learning are often undervalued and seen as "extras" on the fringe of core curriculum. Ironically, it is these same dimensions that adults must wrestle with in day-to-day living, both personally and professionally. Most dilemmas or points of indecision that adults face can be factored down to fear. In confronting fear, we all need to take risks and endure the uncertainty that accompanies periods of experimentation. When educators become over-concerned with what is measurable, and when the guidelines to success are standardised, children have little opportunity to experiment or learn how to take calculated risks. To the extent that curriculum and instruction are measurable and quantifiable, they lead children to take fewer and fewer risks in order to measure up to controlled standards. By exposing children early on to controversial subjects, they are able to develop the tools and attitudes necessary to negotiate contradiction and conflict.
It is only by addressing the difficulties inherent in evaluating less quantifiable learning that we will generate ways to document change in children's problem-solving orientation. Documentation done over time allows trends and movements to crystallise. We do have a qualitative paradigm of research to draw from as far as documentation of that which is subtle and resistant to measurement. Ethical, aesthetic and political dimensions can still be goal-directed, but this requires creative interplay between student and teacher in setting goals and evaluation criteria. By involving the students in the whole process of wrestling with these unstandardised areas of learning, they come to own the evaluation process and results.

2a. How can we acknowledge previous experience as legitimate content and at the same time challenge it?

The global/diversity perspective helps me filter those lived experiences that illuminate and connect with issues raised in the classroom. Because the characteristics of the perspective are defined communally, not personally, they help me focus on both communal relevance and personal significance.

The immediacy of lived experience facilitates the connection between ideas and promotes the use of analogy and metaphor in the meaning-making process. Yet many teachers struggle over the appropriateness of using lived experience as curriculum content because of its inherent subjectivity. I believe it is in the process of challenging content that we give it a legitimate place in the curriculum. Consequently, I place a high priority on establishing a classroom environment where material is shared with the expectation that group members will respond, whether through challenge or support. An atmosphere must exist in the classroom where conflict, disagreement, and irrationality are accepted temporary occurrences.
It is the teacher's struggle to be moral that excites his pupils; it is honesty, not rightness, that moves children (Kohl, 1988, p. 26).

It is a powerful learning experience for children to see a teacher admit making a mistake. It develops a kind of intimacy in the classroom that leads to respectful and reflective relationships amongst the children, and between children and adults.

I feel it is important to model for children how a particular orientation can colour the information I take in and unwittingly affect my decisions, plans, and directions. Sometimes this orientation goes unrecognised, and I am unaware of it until it is made evident by other people through questions or comments; sometimes it takes a new perspective to shake me from an established, if unacknowledged viewpoint. Typically, the more structured my preconception or plan, the more it takes to awaken me.

2b. How do we affirm student "voices" while simultaneously encouraging interrogation of such voices?

When students first begin expressing their experiences, they easily become defensive regarding any challenge to their story. It is important to model that teachers are open to this same vulnerability, and require a certain trust and confidence within themselves and with the group to share openly.

In part, this modelling is facilitated by setting an environment where everyone's opinions are validated and given respect. Children's confidence is then further bolstered if the teacher, through modelling self-interrogation, encourages each child to critique his own ideas first before looking for constructive criticism from the group. For example, I spend considerable time with students establishing a respectful format for our discussion gatherings where everyone is given respect, and equal opportunity. A
technique I find particularly helpful is to let everyone voice their opinion (leaving space for those who wish to abstain), and then give children an opportunity to adapt, revise, or otherwise modify their initial contribution based on the group discussion before opening the floor for all group members to question or critique one another. This compels children to listen to others’ views in relation to their own and consequently, base their opinions on informed discussion. This leaves them room to modify their views if they want to change them, or provides a context for justifying their views, should they remain unchanged.

This approach reinforces for me the value of lived experience, as I can model issues, dilemmas, and resolutions from my personal life, and show myself as someone who can adapt my position and -- just as importantly -- make mistakes. To give children space to discuss personal experiences that did not work out to their satisfaction, I have adopted the phrase “miss the mark” as it is a less judgmental position, avoiding the dichotomy of ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ suggested by “mistake.”

3. How does a teacher negotiate within an institution if living curriculum differs from the prevalent institutional philosophy (e.g., school, school board)?

In many programmes, generative curriculum is judged to be without academic standard or rigour. The spontaneous and fluid nature of such curriculum defies the standards for long-term planning routinely required by educational institutions. Similarly, it does not mesh easily with traditional methods for evaluation and accountability. For those unsympathetic to the methodology of generative curriculum, it is difficult to see the benefits of different types of learning activities organic to its philosophy.
When I was teaching the Global Programmes at the UBC Child Study Centre, the director asked me for long-term and short-term goals, as well as a day-by-day schedule of what I was going to do. I knew the bank of books I would draw from, the nature of math and literacy opportunities I would provide, and had prepared for a broad range of possibilities topics and related activities. Still, I found it hard to say what I would cover on a daily basis, let alone during the month. It was difficult for the director\textsuperscript{18} to suspend judgment long enough that he could see the more elusive benefits children obtained from the programme. The second programme was much easier because he had observed both the commitment and the documentation I put into my teaching the first year, and could see the passion and industry that flowed through the classroom every time he visited. He remained disconcerted by the amount of time I spent after school, as he thought it would damage my rapport with the other staff. I was never fully successful in helping him see that time invested in reflection and research was a cornerstone of generative curriculum.

In approaching administrators in the future, I would be more vocal from the beginning in explaining that specific directions and outcomes would become clear as time progressed. It is easier to put the principal or administrator in a receptive frame of mind at the outset, than to defend a particular course of action once it is already underway. Diligent recording of professional reflections, anecdotal observations, and visual examples of students' work (for example projects, advocacy letters, photo essays, and art work) from previous years can play an instrumental role. Of course, this is difficult for the first time teacher, but even materials gathered from teacher training practicums can be helpful in gaining support from administrators who have

\textsuperscript{18} As I mentioned in chapter four, the parents too, were uncertain about the direction the programme would take. I found that parent meetings around controversial subjects, one-to-one daily communication, and opportunities for the children to share, extend and expand their learning at home went a long way to establishing a "community of learners."
different philosophies. The more informal the classroom routine is, the more essential "behind-the-scenes" structure becomes. It is important to present the benefits clearly, and perhaps even more important to anticipate the potential alarm bells for those with a more traditional approach to curriculum. By involving administrators in explorations of efficacy, they have the opportunity to observe more tangible applications.

4. **What cost does living curriculum bear in relation to a teacher's personal life?**

Giroux and Simon (1989) question the feasibility of critical pedagogy as it requires a substantial personal investment, leaving little room for a life separate from the classroom. I acknowledge that creating a classroom that supports global/diversity perspectives, in itself a form of critical pedagogy, is not a goal shared by all teachers: it requires a motivating passion. However, I find that employing interconnected ways of knowing energises both my personal and professional life. The investment of time is substantial, but teachers have a unique profession where they can conceivably meld personal and professional spheres. Almost by definition, teachers accept the role of nurturing in their students an understanding that learning is a life-long process - we have a wonderful opportunity to model this in how we juxtapose our private and school lives.

Integration creates a synergy that allows me to live curriculum in an efficient way, with reduced cost to my personal and family life. This process is not a requirement but a privilege: it creates opportunities to enrich my life, as well as those of my children and students, through creating a feeling of connectedness. Living curriculum invites me to convert all aspects of my life into learning experiences and teachable moments. "Living curriculum" in essence removes the boundary between personal and
professional life. It invites personal lived experiences into the classroom and connects them in meaningful ways to the subjects under discussion. It provides important modelling for children by encouraging them to make connections themselves. The curriculum becomes more fluid, providing guidelines for what children need rather than preconceived plans and generalised prescriptions. It uses lived experiences to expose children to a wide range of problematised situations that challenge accepted ways of thinking.

When priorities between personal and professional lives are shared, research work that feeds personal interests can also surface in the classroom, where it is sustained by contributions from others. As Herbert Kohl points out, teachers are continually involved in creating resource materials. The work required to situate concepts and issues in relevant contexts is a continual demand on teachers' time.

One must create [a] unit out of one's knowledge and understanding, and must acquire this knowledge and understanding through hard intellectual work. It is no less true, though perhaps less obvious, that the same work must be done even when one has a textbook. Keeping one lesson ahead of the children is worthless. One must be more than one lesson ahead of the book to explain things to young children and help them understand that their doubts and questions, the things that take them beyond the textbook, are the very essence of learning (Kohl, 1988, p. 57).

This work can be sustaining rather than draining if it can be framed as personal enrichment.

The need to separate curriculum preparation from personal interests becomes irrelevant over time as less and less effort is required to integrate them: patterns of "crossing over" between the personal and professional become so familiar that the transition gradually disappears. The children are also involved in the process: with a generative curriculum model, they become more participatory in the process of
learning, and connections continue to develop and diversify as they mature. I have found in working with children over a period of time that a shared perspective emerges (shared between teacher and learners), based on a mutual interest in societal issues.

5. How do we cope with the depression and stress that come from helping children understand the extent of injustice and violence in the world?

As I have written in Chapter 5, it is important to guard against feelings of hopelessness. It is commonly thought that emotional disruption is something inflicted on us, rather than an occurrence to which we react. We all choose how we respond to emotional disruption, and have a responsibility to find ways to avoid being overwhelmed. Accepting that you cannot change others, nor have the right to, frees you from the stress that comes from attaching self-worth to the willingness of others to change. This acceptance does not exonerate one from working to understand various viewpoints. One still must unearth hope and find personal avenues of efficacy, reinforcing self responsibility while defining accountability. Modelling self responsibility will have ripple effects into the classroom community, inspiring children to take responsibility for their own learning, feelings and actions.

It is when we accept that the world is unjust, when we accept that life's journey will be difficult, when we stop hoping for an escape route, that we are able to get on with the hard work of negotiating life and find it is not as daunting as we envisioned. In my experience, tolerating ambiguity is not an instinctual behaviour, but can be learned with intellectual and emotional reframing. In anticipating that teaching around difficult issues is going to bring a measure of uncertainty to the classroom, we diffuse some of the teacher's stress. Teaching about controversial issues requires a context of
ambiguity, not one of certainty. It is through questioning positions that seem unequivocal that we can begin to flush out hidden agendas and personal bias. Students, in turn, need to internalise that learning to interact with controversial issues is connected to a period of ambiguity. Instead of finding ourselves overwhelmed, together we accept these constraints as a necessary part of the learning process. I find I am able to release stress by fighting against the ignorance that feeds injustice. It is even more gratifying to see children develop characteristics of the global/diversity perspective that allow them to face issues from an informed stance. For example, the recent events in Kosovo told a bleak and shattering story. The ingredients were so complex, between trying to understand the position of the various factions, and being forced to rely on information that was mediated through biased sources. I found this a very troubling experience. But in helping my children raise questions and try to make meaning of the conflict, I found renewed energy in seeing the balance with which they sought information. Their unqualified acceptance that the war would have complexities far deeper than they would be able to appreciate did not prevent them from trying to understand. It is just this ability to ask questions that guards against repetition of similar conflicts.

Sometimes, personal fears of inadequacy or loss of control inhibit teachers from involving their students with controversial issues. Personal confidence is closely tied to a teacher's willingness to change gears as the situation requires, whether because of new information received or altered context. As discussed earlier, a teacher can actually strengthen his relationship with students through a willingness to acknowledge he has "missed the mark," and needs to adjust his sights.

In my experience, it is easier for teachers to avoid feelings of incompetence if they take
on controversial subjects with which they have some connection, or one that students have experienced in some degree. For example, discussing the circumstances which have pitted brother against brother in Ireland may represent too great a research investment for a teacher making a start in this area. However, choosing an issue such as First Nations lease agreements with non-aboriginal peoples could be easily followed through the local newspaper and internet by both teacher and students. Resource personnel from different sides of the issue would be easier to access, and avenues for efficacy would be both more apparent and more opportune.

6. How would an administrator evaluate teacher performance in the absence of traditional markers?

Teacher evaluation in a generative curriculum programme is difficult because performance criteria are less tangible than in more measurable curriculum formats. A formative evaluation process rather than a summative one would match more closely with the criteria that are important to observe in a teacher committed to generative curriculum and critical pedagogy. A formative evaluation model usually involves three or more visits a year to engage in professional development-like exercises between the teacher and an outside evaluator. The teacher would be closely involved in the ongoing process of identifying and adjusting evaluation criteria. Because of the time commitment, teachers tend not to be threatened by the process, which they see more as an opportunity for improvement than a one-off judgment of their teaching ability.

When thinking of the kinds of assessment criteria that teacher and evaluator could establish, the following come to mind, based on experience both from my own teaching and that of evaluating other teachers. Through reflective records (journal entries, poetic ruminations, photograph studies, theatre projects, websites,
newsletters, video presentations), anecdotal observations, documents produced by the classroom and verbal interview, the teacher would be able to demonstrate:

- balance in presentation of issues in the classroom;
- responsiveness to student input;
- skill in facilitating respectful group discussion and open critique;
- links between subjects of inquiry that illustrate relevance;
- successful scheduling of time for both children and teacher to reflect, vision, and plan for changes;
- strategies for guarding against student hopelessness and for helping children discover joy in their learning;
- evidence of application of learning in real world contexts;
- efficient use of parent and community resources; and
- a sense of community amongst the children and classroom adults.

Teachers need to own some responsibility in developing evaluation methods in order to facilitate the accountability of teaching methods inspired through generative curriculum philosophy. We have to find creative ways to acknowledge subtle changes in a teacher's critical thinking skills, and her ability to inspire those changes in her students.

Programme evaluation should also rely on the use of a formative evaluation model. Central to this model is the importance of obtaining feedback from the community. For example, evaluation could include parents' comments and suggestions regarding programme effectiveness, as well as input from community resource people who participated in aspects of the programme's presentation (speakers, field trips, etc.). Those involved could be asked to make particular reference to the programme's
relevance and application to real-world contexts.

7. How does one nurture global perspectives within the time constraints of the school year?

[T]he tightness of time that exists in the elementary school has little to do with the quantity that must be learned or the students needs. It represents the teacher's fear of loss of control and is nothing but a weapon used to weaken the solidarity and opposition of the children that too many teachers unconsciously dread (Kohl, 1988, p. 21).

Nurturing a global/diversity perspective is about planting a seed under one set of circumstances, that is re-visited in other contexts until it becomes internalised. It is unreasonable to expect that a teacher, during the confined period of a school year, can effect fundamental social change, or present all sides of an issue, given other learning needs and curriculum requirements which must be accounted for. What is possible is to invest in a community of learners within the classroom to build patterns of peer support, accountability, and shared behaviours.

If the initial issues that the method is applied to are described richly and in as much detail as possible, their staying power is increased. In addition, the complexity creates a broader range of possible analogies and connecting points for future learning opportunities.

Concluding Thoughts

The process of asking the preceding questions caused me to reflect more carefully on the practical implications others might encounter in following my journey. The questions identified here are by no means exhaustive, but can serve as a starting point for discussing living curriculum and its place in contemporary education. Beyond
these immediate applications, the approach of critical pedagogy leads the reader to question the research work as a whole. These concerns are addressed in the final chapter.
Collecting Seeds for Next Year - The Organic Cycle

The language of education, if it is to be an invitation to reflection and culture creating, cannot be the so-called uncontaminated language of fact and ‘objectivity.’ It must express stance and must invite counter-stance and in the process leave place for reflection, for metacognition.

Jerome Bruner, 1986

Autobiography

Navel gazing?
Intellectual rigour!

Culture of Narcissism?
Liberator from oppression,
imaginative linking that opens
new doors of inquiry
lays bare the uses
and abuses of power in our lives.

Genre for literary scholars?
Genre of importance to educators
Language arts - “write the self”
Teacher education - methodology
Curriculum studies - reconceptualisation...

Subjective - Proceeding from personal idiosyncrasy or individualisation;
not impartial or literal?
Conscientisation of how subjectivity is constructed along differing relations of power.

Merely an exercise of individual consciousness?
An intertextual intersubjective study of humanity “a plurality of egos”

18 Britton, 1983
21 Foucault, 1977, p.23
collective and trans-individual expression.

Autobiography -- fuzzy romantic concept
with limited claim to academic attention?

Legitimate field of knowledge
-- its inclusion in academia
emphasises the dialectical nature of the
relationship of individuals to their contexts.

Connects a person's dialogue with the world of experience...

Limitations - Implications

Typically, when one comes to the end of a piece of research she takes time to reflect
on the limitations posed by her methodology choice and attempts to identify
implications for both future study and the practitioner. In chapter one, I discussed the
limitations typically associated with autobiographical work. Below, I will note my
responses to such critiques.

Subjectivity and Identity Politics

Owing to the subjective nature of all human understanding, it would seem impossible
to eradicate subjectivity from research. Even if a set of facts could be agreed upon, the
arrangement of such facts would always be dependent on the ideological worldview of
the researcher. Perhaps it is no worse to be up front about the part subjectivity plays in
one's research than it is to delude oneself into believing it can be isolated from one's
findings and analysis.

Currere forces the writer to confront subjectivity in the interrogation of one's deeply
held assumptions about education. Even with the difficulty posed by the reluctance of
some authors to disclose personal information, due to power relations with certain
readers, autobiography brings about a certain "conscientisation" (Freire, 1970) to
marginalised groups. It does so by exposing how subjectivity is constructed along differing relations of power. Graham (1991) sees autobiography as a dialectical interplay between the construction of subjectivity collectively and socially, and the probing of individual consciousness that may be detached or silenced by a culture's dominant discourses. In this way, Graham claims autobiographical study is a necessary first step to bring about meaningful change.

I have made several attempts to lay bare my biases and the contradictions within my philosophy. As Foucault (1977) suggested is the case in autobiographical accounts, my interaction with the numerous egos encompassed in "I" was not fixed and went through significant changes through the course of writing this text. I have also endeavored to "place" (Kincheloe & Pinar, 1991) my work so as to expose the embedded social forces that shape my subjectivities of self. By using what qualitative researchers refer to as "rich, thick description," I hope to have nested my comments in contexts clear to the reader.

**Fictionalised Accounts**

Truth? Fiction? Are these distinct entities? Those who critique autobiography as a method flawed by the possibility of fictionalised accounts, seem to infer the possibility of truthfulness in other forms of research. I am suspicious of such claims, for truth evades us all in the false consciousness we own as a result of hegemonic structures. We resist succumbing to its powers only by pooling our partial truths, ever changing as our perspectives shift, and by being ever-vigilant with our questions. *Currere* is a form of accountability, if only partial, for why we teach what we do -- accounting for one's past and the role it has played in constructing, deconstructing, and rebuilding personal knowledge.
This work is my story: my way of making sense of the journey that grips me as an educator. At the same time, I have written the stories of others within mine. I have done my best to give the reader markers of place, time and identity in order to situate my stories in verifiable contexts. I have chosen to use real names as opposed to pseudonyms, making me more accountable for what I write about others. Some might argue that only triangulation in the form of collaborative autobiography ultimately addresses this. While I may agree with this, it is not always practical and, in the interim, real names at least allow the potential for triangulation to take place. Ideally, in doing this, one invites critical review, contradictions, and possible re-writes from other people named in the text. Those will be stories of their journeys.

In scanning my “education” journal, I came upon the following entry which seems relevant to the comments above (footnotes were added subsequently to assist the present reader):


Ah, the old shadowy spectre of truth came up again today. It always appears when the story is hot - too hot to touch; the children have got to know -is it true or not? I’ve poured my life into this reading of Tulip’s Touch and they hang on my every word now. Perhaps the characters are too vivid or I’ve contextualised it too well, but the children in the group have to know - is it true or not? I used my stand-by statement borrowed from Patricia Polacco’s grandmother in her Russian accent, “Of course it turue ---- but (and I raised my finger, smiling) it may not ‘av ‘appened.” This time the children would have none of it - they pressed and pressed for a definitive answer. It was as if elements of the story were so twisted (incest, cruelty to animals, vandalism of a frightening nature) that they couldn’t chance that good would champion over evil in good time. If the characters were going to drown in a quagmire of deceit, they’d like to at least know the tale was “just made up.” I was caught - I did not want them to dismiss the intense learning they had done, which they would surely do, if I said the book was not true. Yet I did not want to tell them it was a documentary when it was not.

22 Tulip’s Touch by Anne Fine was read to my older “story response” group at Dunbar Community Centre (8 - 12 years)

23 Patricia Polacco is a prolific writer for children. All her stories are seeded in her lived experience. Her compelling style makes you feel like you know the members of her family personally.
In the end, the way I dealt with it was to say first and foremost that incest did happen. Some children face this, and the author would have pulled different lived stories together to create hers. I continued by saying, "the fact that the author could conjure up the characters so convincingly suggests she must have drawn on images and events that affected her profoundly, and then used her imagination to connect the pieces she needed for her story to take a life of its own." I added that I use similar techniques as a storyteller: when I start to tell a story there is always a kernel of lived experience or observation, and from there I build a fuller story, drawing on a wide range of life experiences, gluing here and there with imagination. This seemed to be enough. The balance between ambiguity and hope is so tenuous!

Somewhere, I remember reading that sometimes fiction is more powerful than truth in its ability to effect change. Is there such purity as truth and fiction, or is every position a partial truth?

**Difficulty in Duplicating the Study**

If duplication is an essential quality of research, what elements must subsequent researchers be able to replicate? *Currere* as a methodology causes one to linger between the academic and the practical on a bridge between personal and professional lives. *Currere* requires one to understand and own a holistic process rather than produce an anticipated result, and that process can be re-applied perpetually in a broad range of contexts. Others interested in pursuing this method need not duplicate research conditions. The method depends on the unique experience of each individual. What is transferable is not the research findings, but the research process. This process, repeated by a growing number of researchers, contributes to a collective body of Reconceptualist discourse.

**Lack of Generalisability and Predictability**

In the case of autobiographical research, the ability to generalise and make predictions relates more to the research process than its results. Through the method of autobiography, I was able to unearth an orientation to education that informs and
drives my practice in all teachable moments. I don’t know if other researchers employing the same methodology would experience the same change, but I would venture to say they would change in ways meaningful to their context.

Research presented in this thesis is not intended to be generalisable or to make predictions about student or teacher behaviours. It is intended to describe a process well enough that the reader is drawn to make connections with his own life that cause reflection about educational practices. At the same time, it is intended to inspire the reader to engage in the reflective process of currere.

Implications for Future Research
Autobiography, as research methodology and teaching tool, is experiencing a greater acceptance in both the academy and field of practice. While by nature, autobiography is a highly individualised process, trends in presentation and dimly recognisable standards are beginning to emerge as narrative theses find room on library shelves. However, when it comes to evaluating these works, even those who write autobiographically get nervous. “It’s so personal, how can you critique the work without criticising the person?” “What are the criteria by which we grade these works -- each one is so different?” “What if I make a judgment, which from a lack of insight or experience leads to unwarranted and unfair criticisms?” “How can I be familiar with an individual’s personal readings and lived experience contexts?”

These questions became increasingly relevant as I progressed in my own autobiographical research. Their fundamental importance became glaringly clear when I attended a seminar given by Meira Cook, a visiting scholar in the Department of English, University of British Columbia. Unexpectedly, her comments around
evaluation were to escalate my concerns about the academic reception of autobiographical research.

**LANE Brown Bag - Education Journal - March 24th, 1999**

A fabulous and at the same time frustrating brown bag! Meira Cooks gave an outstanding presentation on the power of metaphor in narrative. I, like the rest of her audience, was spellbound by both her academic arguments and the organic style of her poetic writings and oral stories. I was beginning to feel comfortable about my own writing and the possibility of a collegial connection, when someone from the audience asked her about evaluation. She gave some good (safe) comments about the connection with reader and the importance of grounding one’s work in a scholarly field. BUT, then she added that she wouldn’t let her students hand in autobiographical narratives or poetic ruminations, because they (university students) were not sufficiently mature to handle what might seem an attack on their person or the validity of their knowledge. I couldn’t help wondering if she was genuinely trying to protect her students, or if she was uncertain as to evaluative measures herself. I must talk to Carl about this. Evaluation is not something we can shy away from and if we, who do the work, are not prepared to get muddy with accreditation issues, we don’t value what we do enough!

When I began researching autobiography as a methodology, I was asked several times how I would characterise “good” autobiographical research. I responded that with a good autobiography, my cognitive capabilities are aroused, and my own stories come to the fore to be juxtaposed with the original work in the process of making meaning. The original text no longer stands alone as someone else’s work. As Freund (1987) would say, “we ‘write’ the texts we read” (p.153). While I may not connect on all levels with the work, I am inspired to reflect on the application of at least one idea or principle to my area of study or practice. A “less-than-good” autobiography leaves the reader outside without links that cause further reflection.

Reflecting on how to evaluate qualitative research Macdonald (1988) writes:

If evaluation were truly an adjunct to the goals of human liberation, its
value would reside in the provision of data from the consequences of our actions which could serve as a basis in our consciousness for our further reflection and praxis (p.172).

This approach to evaluation emphasises the import stirring praxis within the reader.

When reflecting on possible criteria that could be used to evaluate autobiographical research the following seem fundamental to me:

1. the work incorporates and integrates the work of other scholars, positioning the researcher in relation to the field. The reader should be convinced that creative expressions are grounded in scholarly discourse.

2. the researcher must give clear, articulate expression and defense of ideas.

3. the autobiographical process is described well enough that transferability is perceived by the reader.

4. the narrative contains enough detail relating to context to galvanise in the reader a sense of being there, or to evoke a metaphor for an equivalent experience.

5. the researcher demonstrates plausible evidence of dealing with the inevitability and the impact of personal bias.

6. arguments and supporting examples "ring true" with a broad range of educators and illuminate connections to practice that spawn reflection.

7. the work inspires new ways of viewing curriculum or pedagogy in the reader.

**Conclusion**

As I mentioned in the beginning, I have purposely refrained from attaching a section titled "Implications for Practitioners" on two accounts. First, I have always been uncomfortable with prescriptive "how to" guides for teaching. Somehow, they engender in the reader a misleading sense that you can skip the hard work of constructing, deconstructing, and rebuilding knowledge in a personally practical way.
I don’t think there is a fast track to internalising one’s learning. It is a process that can be described, but the hard work is left for the individual to do himself. Secondly, throughout the text I have identified and described many personal implications for practice. In chapter two and three I have demonstrated how the reflective time and space of currere spurred a self-examination which would illuminate an interrelated whole in my approach to education. In chapter four I describe the lens, “global/diversity perspective,” that would make my teaching whole while not overwhelming. In describing these experiences and methodologies, I hope to inspire others to venture forth on their own journeys with the assurance that the investment of time will have long term and lasting effects.

Perhaps one further reflection I would like to share with the practitioner-reader is to reiterate that storyworking, responding to generative curriculum, currere, and living curriculum around “sensitive themes” are ways of being that become easier with practice. Familiarity with method allows an easier flow between lived experience and teachable moments. As I explained in a recent interview, the task of developing complicated themes with young children is facilitated through an investment of time that starts first with the simple “planting of a seed.”

I find that the best storytelling, of course, is when you’re prepared for the eventualities, and it’s always better the second or third time you’ve told it, because you’re figuring out where [the children] might ask questions, and you know what you might do to elicit more involvement... Always within my own class, I developed trickier, sensitive topic areas, because I had on a gradual basis exposed them to tolerating complexity, ambiguity, different ways of thinking and approaching things... It’s a matter of planting a seed and letting it grow and develop, and you have to re-visit it over and over again. I don’t think any kind of learning is ever done, but I think we can certainly plant a different kind of seed than maybe those before us have, or society at large has (Rosenberg 1996, p. 107).
In a thesis that chronicles a journey for which there is no end, it is difficult to know where to end the writing. Perhaps it is appropriate to finish as I started -- with a story. This time I am the teacher rather than the student, at a point where I have embraced and internalised the global/diversity perspective I have characterised in this work.

Re-visiting Watership Down

While I have read *Watership Down* to many groups of children, in many age brackets, I found my recent programming around this book to be the most satisfying.\(^2^4\) This was despite the fact that the broad age span of the group presented a significant challenge. With a number of the children in the group, I had been nurturing the development of a global/diversity perspective for some years through other programmes, while with the others I was planting the seeds for the first time. Perhaps because I had better internalised the characteristics of global/diversity myself, it was easier for me to evoke them in others. Perhaps also my teaching method has evolved as a result of this internalisation. I no longer require group consensus. I am able to teach through conflict, and aim for shared understanding of different perspectives rather than agreement around one perspective. So it was from a new vantage point that I turned the pages of *Watership Down*.

As Hazel and his band of *hessli* were approaching Cowslip's warren,\(^2^5\) I found myself wondering how I would introduce what has been a powerful metaphor for critical thinking throughout my life. I told the children that the "next part" would present them with one of life's great lessons. I added that I had referred to it time and time again in trying to understand complicated situations in my life.

Early on in the chapter I found myself able to build intrigue around Cowslip's avoidance of questions, without being didactic. I was able to accentuate Fiver's choice to question curious aspects of the warren's organisation, rather than blindly accept them, and reveal how this characteristic was to expose the sinister, underlying structure of the warren itself. Unlike in previous readings, where I would simply summarise its general message, I was able to build sufficient context to allow the direct reading of Silverweed's poem.

\[\text{The wind is blowing, blowing over the grass.} \]
\[\text{It shakes the willow catkins; the leaves shine silver.} \]

\(^{2^4}\) Presented in a five-day literature camp, four hours a day, at Dunbar Community Centre with 15 children aged 5 to 11 (Vancouver, August 1999).

\(^{2^5}\) Cowslip and his rabbits lived in burrows situated on a farmer's property. The farmer dropped food by the warren, but also laid snares to trap them when they came above ground. This meant the farmer avoided the cost of maintaining hutch, while the rabbits were spared the effort of searching for food, an incentive which lead them to overlook the cost of their aristocratic lifestyle.
Where are you going, wind? Far, far away
Over the hills, over the edge of the world.
Take me with you, wind, high over the sky.
I will go with you, I will be rabbit-of-the-wind,
Into the sky, the feathery sky and the rabbit... (Adams, 1993, p. 100).

I was surprised at how readily the children were able to perceive that this was a poem cajoling the rabbits to accept death passively and unquestioningly. One child drew the comparison between Cowslip’s warren and a cult, where people are drawn in “when they are feeling really bad” and are made to feel loved, without being given any information about what they are actually getting involved in. By inviting Hazel’s rabbits into his warren, Cowslip was actually decreasing the odds of his own death -- a fact he carefully shielded from Hazel.

Not only did the children come to appreciate the farmer’s perspective of low-maintenance rabbit farming: perhaps more importantly they saw that Cowslip’s rabbits made a choice. This varied from past readings where children tended to see Cowslip’s rabbits as victims of the crafty farmer. Through their choice, the rabbits were relieved of the rigours of food gathering and the need to defend themselves against enemies. This luxury allowed them to achieve cultural landmarks and social improvements: they ate underground, out of the rain; they created poetry; they made sculptural shapes; they perfected architectural designs that supported their lifestyle. These benefits were a direct result of their choice and while children appreciated this point, at the same time they developed a clear awareness of the high cost Cowslip’s rabbits paid for their privileged lifestyle. As we left Cowslip’s warren this time, the group was able to understand how one group of rabbits accepted fate while the other group of rabbits believed they were masters of their own destiny.

In previous readings of Watership Down, I worked hard to build complexity into General Woundwort, fierce dictator of a warren run like a police state, in an effort to avoid the tendency to present him as a Disney-like, evil caricature. However for some reason, I overlooked the author’s attempt to incorporate contradiction in the heroic Hazel. The balance I had achieved through honing a global/diversity perspective encouraged me to develop less honourable sides of Hazel’s character -- his initial lapses of panic as a new leader, his later desire to show bravado. It was gratifying to see the children tolerate these contradictions: they were able to acknowledge the immaturity of some of his actions, while feeling they could still support his leadership.

In the past I explained the behaviour of General Woundwort, even with older groups, in terms of greed. “Greed feeds greed,” I told them, and I remember children telling one another that if they ate too many peanuts at snack time they would end up like General Woundwort. In retrospect, my explanation fostered a very literal interpretation of Woundwort’s obsessive character. This time I was able to discuss the extreme insecurity that Woundwort endured as a child after seeing his parents killed before his
eyes, one by a human and the other by a weasel. This catastrophic event led to his need for ultimate security, attainable in his eyes only through absolute control. I explained that Woundwort’s need to remove the smallest of risk factors led to such obsessive behaviour that the most basic freedoms within the warren were compromised. Even eating was strictly regulated, and rabbits were permitted no deviation from the schedule enforced by Woundwort’s ewsler or police. The children were able to see that this attempt to eradicate fear by total removal of risk or experimentation was ineffective, and recognised how this led Woundwort to paranoia.

We discussed that in confronting fear, one must take risks and endure some level of experimentation. As a group the children came to respect Woundwort’s dream of perfect safety, but understood his method was inherently flawed because it failed to account for the complexity and diversity present in his society.

This was the first time I have read Watership Down where the children were not thirsting for Woundwort’s death, but hoped for a last-minute awakening that would lead him to negotiate some form of compromise. In the end they were satisfied with the book’s conclusion which lent a measure of integrity to his death: after his battle with a bloodthirsty dog, Woundwort’s bones were never found,

... so it may perhaps be that after all, that extraordinary rabbit really did wander away to live his fierce life somewhere else and to defy the eil as resourcefully as ever...there endured the legend that somewhere, out over the Down, there lived a great and solitary rabbit, a giant who drove the eil like mice and sometimes went to silflay in the sky. If ever great danger arose, he would come back to fight for those who honoured his name. And mother rabbits would tell their kittens that if they did not do as they were told, the General would get them - The General who was first cousin to the Black Rabbit himself. Such was Woundwort’s monument: and perhaps it would not have displeased him (p. 471).

Watership Down became a vehicle to expose children to differing social organisations, from Saddleford’s conservative government through Cowslip’s decaying aristocracy, Woundwort’s totalitarian approach, and Hazel’s democracy. Children experienced different approaches to social organisation with strong parallels to human political life and relationships (for example, children were able to compare Woundwort to Slobodan Milosovic and Adolf Hitler, and Cowslip’s tactics were compared to those employed by cults). Adams’ rich character description and the momentum of the journey itself immersed the children in experiencing what the rabbits confronted, almost as if they did so themselves. So it was a natural progression to discuss and analyse the methods of social control used in the various warrens.

Woundwort was preoccupied with systems for organising and controlling the rabbits in his warren, and children were able to feel his tight hold on structuring security, and his obsession with control through fear. Runaways were brought before Council and torn
to shreds, but never killed: their purpose was to serve as an example to warn others.
In contrast to this, the children were able to see that the Saddleford warren was
controlled by exclusion, Cowslip controlled by privilege, and Hazel controlled through
negotiated consensus. In contrast to this, the children were able to see that the Saddleford warren was
controlled by exclusion, Cowslip controlled by privilege, and Hazel controlled through
negotiated consensus.26

Through the discussion and working of the story, the children were able to draw
analogies to outside lived experience and engage in positioning their own political
ideals. I seemed to have finally reached a point where I could encourage critical
analysis openly in the context of this story.

The exercise of running with currere and embracing a global/diversity perspective
allowed me to make this piece of literature much more than story. It became a vessel
in which we explored social curriculum that promoted critical thinking.

**Coming Full Circle**

Ah, Margaret Meek,
I was hoping to run into you again.
Once you questioned whether or not *Watership Down*
was a political text --
inappropriate for young children.
I was misguided when I said it was not,
but rather was an adventure story of great hope
danger, adversity and camaraderie --
a story Adams wrote for his children
Now 18 years later,
I'd like to modify my response --
Hazel, Fiver, Bigwig, Dandelion, Blackberry and Pipkin
teach children to
embrace equality of opportunity,
seek more information,
examine critically information sources,
suspend judgment,
entertain contrary positions,
anticipate complexity,
tolerate ambiguity,
empathise with others, and
overcome chauvinism
as they journey from conservative inequality
through a decaying aristocracy,
into a totalitarian police state,

26 I was careful to warn children that "negotiated consensus" comes at a cost -- it can be very time
consuming in the short term.
and emerge as rabbits who find balance within complexity.

_We shall not cease from exploration_  
_And the end of all our exploring_  
_Will be to arrive where we started_  
_And know the place for the first time._

--T.S. Eliot
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Appendix A
(handout for 1997 ECEBC session in Vancouver, UBC)

Children’s Picture Books that “Challenge”
Christianne Hayward - ECEBC Conference, May, 1997
(What Does “Global Curriculum” Look Like in the ECE Classroom?)

The following is an abbreviated list of books that support the ideas presented in this session. I apologise that it is not annotated, for some of the books may be unfamiliar to you. At least, it is a starting point from which to venture at a bookstore or your local library.

Rationale
I came to develop this particular list in response to some thinking I've been doing around the term "global perspective." In the past four years, I, like many of my colleagues in Education, have followed discussions and studies relating to the nurturing of a "global perspective" in Elementary curriculums. Recently, I have observed the "sift down" of the basic underpinnings of such teachings into Early Childhood Education. Rather than simply transmitting more information about the world, the emphasis, in the early years, seems to be more on developing a lens through which to view both local and global interactions. Such a lens would involve: suspending judgment, entertaining contrary positions, seeking more information, anticipating complexity, empathising with others, and overcoming chauvinism.

No matter how much we try to shield children from the difficult aspects of society, they meet up with such realities outside the “cocoon” and often without the benefit of our guidance. Sharing of select children’s literature can provide vicarious experience with sensitive issues and set the stage for exploration and discussion of specific orientations, values, beliefs and attitudes. I believe developing a global perspective through interaction with such literature is developmentally appropriate for ECE, provided care is taken to understand the roles emotion, information, vision, and efficacy play in strengthening young people’s belief in their future.

Cultural Diversity
Please allow me to relate a personal story to illustrate how I have come to deal with cultural diversity in my own children’s picture book collection, which is extensive by any description. In the early 1980’s I began building a multicultural picture book section. By 1989, I had two and a half densely packed book shelves. At this point, I decided to create a separate category for the books with Native themes, as I was beginning to appreciate native issues as quite distinct from multicultural issues. As my total collection approached the 5,000 mark, my multicultural and native sections
expanded to 6 shelves, and in the early nineties I began to further sub-categorise using 58 headings such as Chinese, American-Chinese, Korean, Korean American, Jewish, European immigrants, Cree, Lakota, Blackfoot, Haida, etc. At the same time, my book talks took a shift from "Culturally Appropriate Literature" to such topics as "Family Tales and Fairy Tales," "Books with Special Needs Children," "Dinosaurs and Dragons," and "Finding Hope in Books Dealing with Sensitive Issues."

In the fall of 1992, I was asked to do an address highlighting books appropriate for multicultural ECE programmes. I went to my shelves and was shocked to see that my collection had dwindled significantly (3 shelves most of which were First Nations), and yet my bookcases remained full. Slowly, I began to unearth the books I was looking for from other sections. What had happened was that I had unconsciously begun to view books according to their tale, rather than the culture they represented. To illustrate, I give a few examples below:

• Grandfather Tang’s Story (uses tangrams) moved from Chinese to Math Concepts
• The Always Prayer Shawl moved from Jewish to Books that deal with Death
• The Tale of the Mandarin Ducks moved from Japanese to Treatment of Animals by Humans
• Where are you Going Mayoni? moved from African to Going to School
• Sato and the Elephants and Grandfather’s Dream moved from Japanese and Vietnamese respectively to Preservation and Conservation
• Tar Beach moved from Afro-American to Social Change
• Lon Po-Po, Snow Wife, The Flying Tortoise, and many more, all ended up in the Fairytale and Folktale section.
• Just Plain Fancy moved from Amish to Two cultures, One Heart (a subcategory of Family)
• Fire on the Mountain moved from African to Personal Challenge/Growth

I decided to finish the job I had unconsciously started, and in the end was left with books like Bread, Bread, Bread, All the Colors of the Earth, Gifts, and Everyone Cooks Rice, which truly fit the category Intercultural. The three hundred other books originally categorised as Multicultural had been shelved according to story theme.

My First Nations children’s literature collection was to stay “distinct” for a longer period of time. Only recently, have I observed the same trend occurring with my First Nations collection which seems to parallel a change in my study focus. I have moved from studying “First Nations resistance to post-colonial influences in First Nations children’s stories” to investigating “global perspectives in ECE and how these are illuminated through children’s literature.” Again, to illustrate:

• Fox Song moved from Abenaki to Books that deal with Death
• Storm Boy moved from Haida to Friendship
• The First Strawberries moved Cherokee from to Family Difficulties
• My Kokum Called Today and The Crying Christmas Tree moved from Cree to Two cultures, One Heart (a subcategory of Family)
• The Ghost Dance moved from First Nations - General to Human Conflict
• Coyote's Steals the Blanket, Little Badger and the Fire Spirit, and many more moved to Legends and Traditional Tales

and so on......

I tell this story because I believe it mirrors inclusion, with respect to cultural diversity, in ECE curriculum. I have come to visualise my library as a set of animated books that jump from shelve to shelve visiting with their friends while I sleep. The thematic categories I choose are ever-changing and books frequently float between sections. In giving up the search for the perfect system of categorisation and organisational completion, I have learned to tolerate ambiguity interspersed with brief flashes of creative ingenuity.

Selecting the Books
I have always used narrative and select books as the core around which I teach. Over the years, I have found myself collecting first by accident, and then by design, children's literature that deals with anti-hegemonic and resistance themes. These books are not didactic books that replace the biblio/psycho/therapy texts of the 1980s, nor are they the stilted texts of “political correctness.” Like the stories told around a First Nations circle, the reader is left to discover the lesson, and personalize it. These books easily engage youthful readers or listeners by telling the story through a child’s eyes.

Drawing from my collection of what I call counter-hegemonic books -- i.e., books that challenge structures reinforced by those in a dominant position in society, I found an easy way to set up conflicting points of view that engage the children with issues of universal concern. For example, Sadako describes the horror of Hiroshima through the eyes of a child. Reading that story with a class, and then situating it in the broader context of World War II creates a powerful experience. By grounding the story in additional learning resources such as accounts of Pearl Harbour, news clippings, soldiers' stories, descriptions of Japanese internment in Canadian camps, audio-visual materials and other children's books about WW II, it is possible to explore multiple facets of a complex situation with children on board as engaged participants. Books of this nature provide perfect material for creating problematised situations that the class as a whole, both teachers and students, can work through. These stories can go a long way to help balance patriot and sectarian accounts of history over with the universal epic which includes all of our perspectives.

In selecting books, I prefer those with compelling story lines that spark empathy and query in the reader, over those that didactically hammer out a "message." I find open-
ended books that require children to make their own meaning are most easily adapted to meet the needs of diverse audiences. Some of the books listed may not be the ones you would instinctively choose for young children, however when shared in the open discussion format of storytelling (rather than read “word for word”), these tales inspire a perspective supportive of diversity. Care needs to be taken to illuminate messages of hope and to explore routes to enhance personal efficacy. Before read/telling a story, it is most important to establish context. I frequently adopt an accepted storytelling format used in oral cultures, where a new story is embedded within a familiar tale.

In order to make meaning of their world, children seek pattern. After they establish a pattern, they can begin to integrate exceptions into their learning. In today’s world where people need to access information through intricate webbing systems, I feel it is critical to guide children in webbing the knowledge gained from different pieces of literature (both oral and written) together with that gained from their personal life experiences (lived curriculum). I encourage “webbing” in my classroom by connecting story selections, group discussions and integrated learning activities using abstract axioms, which I refer to as “inspirational links.”

The “inspirational links” I have chosen are merely suggestions, and several titles could be organised under different headings. For example, El Chino by Allen Say could fit under There’s No Place Like Home - Moving Can Be Difficult; Personal Challenge Has Rewards; Know Yourself First; Some Rules or Habits Need To Be Changed; or Two Cultures, One Heart. Stories like this, with several subthemes, are particularly useful as “transition books” to bridge themes. You may find other ways to connect books that more accurately match your classroom philosophy - be creative. Some additional “globally sensitive” themes I’ve used are:

- If You Win, Someone Else Loses; Can Everyone Win?
- Little People Can Make Big Changes
- Know Yourself First
- Kindness is Always Rewarded in the Fullness of Time
- What Goes Around, Comes Around
- Games, Toys, and Play Around the World

Animals Have Rights Too
A Snake in the House - Faith McNulty
At the Edge of the Forest - Jonathan London
The Catfish Palace - Hazel Hutchins
Coyote Winter - Jacqueline White
The Fox Hunt - Svend Nordquist
Faithful Elephants - Yukio Tsuchiya
How Smudge Came - Nan Gregory
Kashtanka - Anton Chekhov
Lassie Come Home (picture book) - Rosemary Wells
A Man Called Raven - Richard Van Camp
The Minstrel and the Dragon Pup - Rosemary Sutcliff
Mister Got To Go - Lois Simmie
Mr. Bear and the Bear - Frances Thomas
Suleiman the Elephant - Margaret Rettich
The Tale of the Mandarin Ducks - Katherine Paterson
Two Travellers - Mason
The Wolfhound - Kristine Franklin

Conservation/Preservation is Everyone's Business
(for every action, there is a reaction)
A River Ran Wild - Lynne Cherry
Alejandro's Gift - Richard Albert
The Angel Tree - Robin Muller
Anni and the Tree Huggers - Jeannine Atkins
Chattanooga Sludge - Molly Bang
The Dragon and the Unicorn - Lynne Cherry
Dragonfly's Tale - Kristina Rodanas
Eagle Dreams - Sheryl McFarlane
Grandfather's Dream - Holly Keller
The Great Kapok Tree - Lynne Cherry
Ibis - A True Whale Story - John Himmelman
The Illustrated Father Goose - Shelley Tanaka
Journey of the Red-Eyed Tree Frog - Martin and Tanis Jordan
Just a Dream - Chris Van Allsburg
The Ladybug Garden - Celia Godkin
Maxine's Tree - Diane Leger
Miss Rumphius - Barbara Cooney
My Grandpa and the Sea
Nature's Course - a bimonthly publication of the Centre for Children's Environmental Literature (an excellent resource for inspiration)
No Dear, Not Here - Jean Davies Okimoto
One World - Michael Foreman
Pearl Moscowitz's Last Stand - Authur Levine
The People Who Hugged the Trees (Pakistan) - Deborah Lee Rose
Prince William - Gloria Rand
The Queen with the Bees in Her Hair - Cheryl Harness
Salmon Moon - Mark Karlin
Sato and the Elephants - Juanita Havill
She's Wearing a Dead Bird on Her Head! - Kathryn Lasky
The Sign of the Seahorse - Graeme Base
Siwiti - A Whale's Story - Alexandra Morton
The Story of Rosy Dock - Jeannie Baker
The Story of Three Whales - Giles Whittell

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Welcome to the Greenhouse - Jane Yolen
Where the Forest Meets the Sea - Jeannie Baker
Window - Jeannie Baker
Wolf Island - Celia Godkin
The World That Jack Built - Ruth Brown

Caring for Others is Caring for Ourselves - We are all Connected
A Chair For My Mother - Vera Williams
A Green Horn Blowing - David Birchman
All the Magic in the World - Wendy Hartman
Bit by Bit - Steve Sanfield
The Black Snowman - Phil Mendez
Bone Button Borsch - Aubrey Davis
The Donkey and the Rock - Demi
Eleanor - Barbara Cooney
Elizabeti's Doll - Stephanie Stuve Bodeen
Fly Away Home - Eve Bunting
Galimoto - Karen Lynn Williams
Gift of the Magi - O'Henry
The Happy Prince - Oscar Wilde
Just Enough is Plenty - Barbara Diamond Goldin
Little Kit - Emily Arnold McCully
The Magic Paintbrush - Robin Muller
The Miracle of the Potato Latkes - Malka Penn
The Monkey Bridge - Rafe Martin
The Month of Kislev - Nina Jaffe
Mr. Kneebone's New Digs - Ian Wallace
The Red Heels - Robert San Souci
The Rag Coat - Lauren Mills
Sam and The Lucky Money - Karen Chinn
Something from Nothing - Phoebe Gilman
Space Traveller's - Margaret Wild
The Table Where Rich People Sit - Byrd Bayler
The Thanksgiving Visitor - Truman Capote
The Tie Man's Miracle - Steven Schnur
Tight Times - Barbara Shook Hazen
The Trees of the Dancing Goats - Patricia Polacco
Turandot - Marianna Mayer
Trupp - Janell Cannon
Way Home - Libby Hathorn
We're All in the Dumps with Jack and Guy - Maurice Sendak
Worker in Sandalwood - Marjorie Pickthall

Different Things Matter at Different Times of Our Lives
Welcome to the Greenhouse - Jane Yolen
Where the Forest Meets the Sea - Jeannie Baker
Window - Jeannie Baker
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Trupp - Janell Cannon
Way Home - Libby Hathorn
We're All in the Dumps with Jack and Guy - Maurice Sendak
Worker in Sandalwood - Marjorie Pickthall

Different Things Matter at Different Times of Our Lives
Bimmi Finds a Cat - Elisabeth Stewart
Carrie Hepple's Garden - Irene Haas
Emma - Wendy Kesselman
Five Minutes Peace - Jill Murphy
Good As New - Barbara Douglass
Grandma's Secret - Paulette Bourgeois
How Does it Feel to be Old - Norma Farber/Trina Schart Hyman
I Know a Lady - Charlotte Zolotow
Jeremiah Learns to Read - Jo Ellen Bogart
Little White Cabin - Ferguson Plain
Luka's Quilt - Guback
Me and Mr. Mah - Adrea Spalding
The Memory Box (deals with Alzheimer's in a non-didactic way) - Mary Bahr
The Patchwork Quilt - Valerie Flournoy
The Piano Man - Debbi Chocolate
Railway Passage - Charles Keeping
Remember Me - Margaret Wild
Roses for Gita - Rachna Gilmore
Shoes From Grandpa - Mem Fox
Sure as Strawberries - Sue Alderson
The Thanksgiving Visitor - Truman Capote
Verdi - Janell Cannon
Waiting for May - Thyrza Davey
The Wednesday Surprise - Eve Bunting
This Home We Have Made - Anna Hammond
Wilfred Gordon McDonald Partridge - Mem Fox
Willy's Silly Grandma - Cynthia DeFelice
The Worry Stone - Marianna Dengler

Don't Judge A Book by It's Cover - It's What Is Inside That Counts
Baba Yaqa Babushka - Patricia Polacco
Chicken Sunday - Patricia Polacco
The Christmas Miracle of Jonathan Toomey - Susan Wojciechowski
The Christmas of the Reddle Moon - Patrick Lewis
The Clay Ladies - Michael Bedard
Eleanor - Barbara Cooney
The Goodman of Ballengeich - Margaret Crawford Maloney
Glasses Who Needs Em? - Lane Smith
The Hunter and the Sasquatch - Dolly Hunter (Stolo series)
Iron Hans - Grimm/Heyer
The Miami Giants - Maurice Sendak
The Moccasin Goalie - William Roy Brownridge
Mrs. Mack - Patricia Polacco
The Potato Man - Megan McDonald
The Stone Dancers - Nora Martin
Valentine and Orson - Nancy Ekholm Burkert

Every Family Has Challenging Times
Allison - Allen Say
A Chair for my Mother by Vera Williams
A Cool Kid Like Me - Hans Wilhelm
Good As New - Barbara Douglass
Babushka's Doll - Patricia Polacco
Brother Iguanas - Tony Johnston
Charlie Anderson - Barbara Abercrombie
Harvey's Hideout - Russel Hoban (some adaptation may be necessary re: parental roles in consequence setting)
The First Strawberries - Joseph Bruchac
Grace and Family - Mary Hoffman
Koala Lou - Mem Fox
Let's Be Friends Again - Hans Wilhelm
The Lion's Whiskers - Nancy Raines Day
The Lost Lake - Allen Say
Luka's Quilt - Georgia Guback
Moon Tiger - Phyllis Root
The Mud Family - Betsy James
My Mama Sings - Jeanne Whitehouse Peterson
My Mom is So Unusual - Iris Loewen
My Ol' Man - Patricia Polacco
My Rotten Redheaded Older Brother - Patricia Polacco
Nobody - Meguido Zola
On Mother's Lap - Ann Herbert Scott
Papa's Stories - Dolores Johnson
Peter's Chair - Ezra Keats
Piggybook - Anthony Browne
Pulling the Lion's Tale - Jane Kurtz
Robert Lives with His Grandparents - Martha Whitmore Hickman
Some Birthday - Patricia Polacco
Thunder Cake - Patricia Polacco
Train To Somewhere - Eve Bunting
Weird Parents - Audrey Wood
William's Doll - Charlotte Zolotow

Peace is Hard Work We Must Do Together
Note: The philosophy behind this category is that by remembering, and in part owning, past pain we can learn to build a better future. It is especially important with contemporary conflicts to explore an avenue for efficacy.
A Little Tiger in the Chinese Night - Song Nan Zhang
A Time for Toys - Margaret Wild
Aida - Leontyne Price
Amazing Grace - Linda Granfield
Anastasia's Album - Hugh Brewster
Charlotte - Janet Lunn
The Christmas Menorahs - Janice Cohn
A Coyote Columbus Story - Thomas King
Don't Forget - Patricia Lakin
Encounter - Jane Yolen
Faithful Elephants - Yukio Tsuchiya
The Feather-Bed Journey - Paula Kurzband Feder
Ghost Dance - Alice McLerran
Golem - David Wisniewski
Hiroshima No Pika - Toshi Maruki
In Flanders Fields - The Story of the Poem - Linda Granfield
In My Pocket - Dorrith Sim
Jon-Jon and Annette - Elzbieta
The Lily Cupboard - Shulamith Levey Oppenheim
The Little Ships - The Heroic Rescue at Dunkirk in World War II - Louise Borden (this book gives context to the Snow Goosern
The Lotus Seed - Tatsuro Kiuchi
My Freedom Trip - Frances and Ginger Park
The Middle Passage - Tom Feelings
One More Border - William Kaplan
Onkwehonwe-Neha - Skonaganleh:ra (Sylvia Maracle)
Peace Begins with You - Katherine Scholes
Peace Crane - Sheila Hamanaka
Pink and Say - Patricia Polacco
Rebel - Allan Baillie
Sami and the Time of the Troubles - Florence Parry Heide and Judith Heide Gilliland
Shin's Tricycle - Tatsuharu Kodama
The Sleeping Boy - Sonia Craddock
Smoky Night - Eve Bunting
Star of Fear, Star of Hope - Jo Hoestlandt
Stories of the Road Allowance People - Marie Campbell (these need a little extra prep)
This Land Is My Land - George Littlechild
Varenka - Bernadette Watts
Women Warriors - Marianna Mayer
Which Way to the Revolution - Bob Barner
Why? - Nikolai Popov

Personal Challenge Has Rewards
The White Stone in the Castle Wall - Sheldon Oberman
Wilma Unlimited - Kathleen Krull
Wolf - Becky Bloom
**Some Rules or Habits Need To Be Changed**
A School for Pompey Walker - Michael Rosen
Amazing Grace - Linda Granfield
All Night, All Day - Ashley Bryan
Alvin Ailey - Andrea Davis Pinkney
Chicken Man - Michelle Edwards
Faithful Friend - Robert San Souci
Freedom Child of the Sea - Richardo Keens-Douglas
Freedom's Fruit - William Hooks
The Gentleman and the Kitchenmaid - Diane Stanley
The Goodman of Ballengeigh - Margaret Crawford Maloney
I Have a Dream - Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
In the Time of the Drums - Kim Siegelson
Irene Jennie and the Christmas Masquerade: The Johnkankus - Irene Smalls
Mandela - Floyd Cooper
Molly Bannaky - Alice McGill
More Than Anything Else - Marie Bradby
Nettie's Trip South - Ann Turner
Now Let Me Fly - Dolores Johnson
On Board the Titanic - Shelley Tanaka
The Rajah's Rice - David Barry
Roses Sing on New Snow - Paul Yee
The Singing Man - Angela Shelf Medearis
Sky Sash So Blue - Libby Hathorn
The Song of Mu Lan - Jeanne Lee
The Story of Ruby Bridges - Robert Coles
Tar Beach - Faith Ringgold
The Worst Band in the Universe - Graeme Base

**Sometimes Difficult Friendships Turn Out to Be the Strongest Friendships**
The 329th Friend - Marjorie Weinman Sharmat
The Very Best of Friends - Margaret Wild
Bang Bang You're Dead - Louise Fitzhugh
Be Good To Eddie Lee - Virginia Flemming
Camille and the Sunflowers - Laurence Anholt
The Canterville Ghost - Oscar Wilde
Chloe and Maude - Sandra Boynton
Christmas Trolls - Jan Brett
Come On, Patsy - Zilpha Keatley Snyder
Cook-A-Doodle-Doo - Janet Stevens
Emily - Michael Bedard
Fast Friends - Lisa Horstman
John Brown, Rose and the Midnight Cat - Jenny Wagner
Lester's Dog - Hesse
Making Friends - Margaret Mahy
Mole and Troll Trim the Tree - Tony Johnson
My Big Dog - Janet Stevens
Officer Buckle and Gloria - Peggy Rathman
Pumpkin Soup - Helen Cooper
Weslandia - Paul Fleishman
Willy and Hugh - Anthony Browne
Yoko - Rosemary Wells

There's No Place Like Home - Moving Can Be Difficult
The Always Prayer Shawl - Sheldon Oberman
Amelia's Road - Linda Jacobs Altman
An Ellis Island Christmas - Maxine Rhea Leighton
The Bracelet - Yoshiko Uchida
The Butterfly Seeds - Mary Watson
The Gardener - Sarah Stewart
Gregory Cool - Caroline Binch
Hoang Breaks the Lucky Pot - Rosemary Breckler
In My Pocket - Dorrith Sim
Letting Swift River Go - Jane Yolen
The Lotus Seed - Tatsuro Kiuchi
Marisol and the Yellow Messenger - Emilie Smith-Ayala
The Quilt Story - Tony Johnston
Roses for Gita - Rachna Gilmore
Sarah and the People of the Sand River - W. D. Valgardson
Selina and the Bear Paw Quilt - Barbara Smucker
The Stone Dancers - Nora Martin
Train To Somewhere - Eve Bunting
When Jessie Came Across the Sea - Amy Hest
The Whispering Cloth - Pegi Deitz Shea
You Can Go Home Again - Jirina Marton

Two Cultures/One Heart
Billy's World - Cora Weber-Pillwax
Children of the Muskeg - Sean Ferris
Cleversticks - Bernard Ashley
The Crying Christmas Tree - Allan Crow
El Chino - Allen Say
Elijah's Angel - Michael Rosen
Grandfather's Journey - Allen Say
Halmoni and the Picnic - Sook Nyul Choi
I Hate English - Ellen Levine
Just Plain Fancy - Patricia Polacco
Marisol and the Yellow Messenger - Emilie Smith-Ayala
My Kokum Called Today - Iris Loewen
Painted Words/Spoken Memories - Aliki
Peter's Moccasins - Jan Truss
Sim7a - Lorna Williams (selected pieces)
Tree of Cranes - Allen Say
This Land Is My Land - George Littlechild
Two Pairs of Shoes - Esther Sanderson
Where did you get your Moccasins? - Bernelda Wheeler
Who Belongs Here? - Margy Burns Knight
White Tails Don't Live in the City - David Bouchard
The Yesterday Stone - Peter Eyvindson

When You Lose Something or Someone ...
(there's a silver lining in every cloud)
A Time for Remembering - Chuck Thurman/Elizabeth Sayles
About Dying - An Open Family Book For Parents and Children Together - Sara Bonnett Stein
Allison's Grandfather - Linda Peavy
The Always Prayer Shawl - Sheldon Oberman
Badger's Parting Gifts - Susan Varley
The Bead Pot - Thelma Poirier
Bubby, Me, and Memories - Barbara Pomerantz
Daddy's Chair - Sandy Lanton
The Day Before Christmas - Eve Bunting
Eagle Feather - Ferguson Plain
The Fish Princess - Irene W.O. Watts
Fox Song - Joseph Bruchac
Granddad's Prayers of the Earth - Douglas Wood
Hi, Mrs. Mallory - Ianthe Thomas
Hoang Breaks the Lucky Teapot - Rosemary Breckler
I Never Knew Your Name (suicide - non didactic) - Sherry Garland
I'll Always Love You - Hans Wilhelm
I'll See You in My Dreams - Mavis Jukes
Little White Cabin - Ferguson Plain
The Long Silk Strand - A Grandmother's Legacy to Her Granddaughter - Laura Williams
Losing Uncle Tim - Mary Kate Jordan
Maggie and the Pirate - Ezra Keats
Meggie's Magic - Anna Dean
The Miracle Christmas of Jonathan Toomey - Susan Wojciechowski
The Money Tree - Will Reese
The Mountains of Tibet - Mordicai Gerstein
Mrs. Katz and Tush - Patricia Polacco
My Grandad - Sheila Islerwood
Nadia the Willful - Sue Alexander
The Painted Fan - Marilyn Singer
Pink and Say - Patricia Polacco
Polar the Titanic Bear - Speddon
The Rag Coat - Lauren Mills
Saying Good - bye to Grandma - Jane Resh Thomas
Shin's Tricycle - Tatsuharu Kodama
The Snow Goose - Paul Gallico
Some of the Pieces - Melissa Madenski
The Tenth Good Thing About Barney - Judith Viorst
Through the Window, and Joseph's Yard - by Charles Keeping
Tough Boris - Mem Fox
Uncle Vova's Tree - Patricia Polacco
The Very Best of Friends - Margaret Wild
Waiting for the Whales - McFarlane/Lightburn

NOTE: The burgeoning number of novels for young children offer many expanded opportunities for building problematised contexts for learning. I have created a bibliography of such texts in other writing (Hayward, 99).
Moving Towards More Global Curricula in ECE
- Christianne Hayward and Michelle Caven
May 1996

How We Visualise Global Curriculum at the ECE Level

Today's educators struggle to integrate the edicts of multiculturalists, aboriginal advocates, anti-bias groups, separatists, feminists, and so on, as they sit at the curriculum planning table. In trying to find a common denominator around which to build curriculum, the presenters have been influenced by Roland Case's (1995) discourse regarding the need to nurture "global perspectives" in young children. Rather than emphasizing more information about cultures and issues in other lands, Case speaks of developing a lens through which to view both local and global interactions. Such a lens would involve: suspending judgment, entertaining contrary positions, seeking more information, anticipating complexity (tolerating ambiguity), empathising with others, overcoming chauvinism, and commitment to peaceful conflict resolution. The development of these characteristics forms a strong foundation upon which to build the understanding and tolerance necessary for peaceful living in a diverse society.

We found the sharing of select children's literature an excellent way to provide vicarious experience with sensitive issues. The discussions and activities that flow from these literature sessions allow young leaners to experiment with the characteristics of the global lens mentioned above. Once the "seeds" of alternative perspectives are planted they can be revisited over and over again through other pieces of literature, stories, and live(d) experience.
From stimulus pieces of literature, we generated a number of “globally sensitive” themes around which to integrate ECE curriculum. We were careful to include vision and efficacy in our curriculum planning to avoid overwhelming students or crippling them with feelings of insecurity and/or cynicism at the Child Study Centre.

Pilot Study at the UBC Child Study Centre Summer Programme, 1995
This programme was designed for 6-9 year old children in attendance three hours per day, five days a week. The majority of the children were 6 and 7 years old with only one 9 year old attending two weeks. Below is an overview of what was covered each week, and an annotated list of stimulus books used.

Week One - “Peace” is Hard Work
The week started with questions about what the word “peace” meant to the children; it ended with an uplifting realisation that “peace begins with you” and is something that requires frequent monitoring. The books chosen to stimulate discussion all shared a message of hope using personal stories that the children easily related to. Group time discussions focused on conflicts raised in the books (i.e. Burmese Revolution, the Holocaust, the US Civil War/Slavery, and Hiroshima), and were framed in such a way that the children understood the need to remember our past mistakes, and the horror of war in order to feel the motivation necessary to persevere in finding alternate ways to resolve conflict. All classroom activities stemmed from sub-themes in the books (favourites were: making their own thongs -- Rebel and a thousand paper cranes -- Sadako). Were the summer programme longer, this theme focus could easily have been extended and more time spent on conflicts closer to home (eg. First Nations treaty negotiations, relocation of the homeless, local petitions to government, etc.).
it was, the children made meaningful connections between the conflicts discussed and those experienced in their own worlds. In future programmes it is felt that an avenue for efficacy in the local community should be explored.27

Books Used:

**Pink and Say** - Patricia Polacco
This picture book chronicles an unlikely friendship between an Afro-American youth and a rather naive white deserter during the Civil War years in Georgia, USA. The author asks the audience to give purpose to the senseless death of the black character, Pinkus Ainley, by remembering this true story and sharing it with others.

**Rebel** - Allan Baillie
This story takes place in a village near Rangoon in Burma, although such is not stated in the story text making this book applicable to situations of political revolt around the world. It is based on response to Ne Win’s military dictatorship. The rebellious act of a very young child inspires a village to stand up to a cruel and domineering General. The children in our class particularly enjoyed this story and we became embroiled in much discussion about political uprisings.

**Don’t Forget** - Patricia Lakin
Why do some older Jewish people have numbers on their arms? This charming story takes the mystery out of this truth and non-didactically teaches the good in remembering bad events. Such memories help us guard against committing similar horrors today.

**A Time For Toys** - Margaret Wild
The setting for this story is a German concentration camp during the Holocaust. It’s message of hope is achieved by portraying the prisoners as *individuals* with dreams both big and small. Miriam’s dream of making forbidden toys for the children comes true and is the storyline for this book (based on historical journal entries).

**Peace Begins With You** - Katherine Scholes
This poem reinforces for us all the importance of daily actions in the struggle for world peace. Children are encouraged to start working on relationships within their own homes to help them understand the basic components of conflict.

**Sadako** - Eleanor Corr
"Sadako" is the true story of a young girl who dies of the “H-Bomb sickness” in 27 The following summer the children and I explored stories depicting First Nations experience of colonialism, the trauma refugees face in relocating, homelessness and poverty in Vancouver, and the Japanese internment. Opportunities for extension into the community were many (eg. Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre, Refugee Acclimitisation Organisation, Food Bank and Soup Kitchen on East Hastings).
Hiroshima. It explains why thousands of school children hang chains of one hundred folded cranes from a sculpture on Peace Day each year. Although admittedly sad, it is a story of hope -- by keeping Sadako's story alive we can remember to fight against atomic warfare and missile testing programmes.

**Week Two - Looking After Mother Earth**

We began the week by examining conflicts between humans and their environment and progressed to ways in which more harmonious relationships could be established. We took an in-depth look at recycling (paying more attention to the "reduce" side of recycling theory than is traditionally done), composting, reforestation, low impact relationships with nature and chemical use. Our "inspirational link" for the week became the thread that tied the four weeks together; *for every action there is a reaction*. The children were encouraged to take active stances to improve their world rather than sink in the understanding that things are so hopeless that one small child can make no significant difference. They wrote compelling letters to large companies asking them to use recyclable packaging (GM Foods and Yoplait). They planted trees in the endowments lands (after extensive consultation with GVRD), created from start to finish the school's first composter, and learned how to effect marketing changes from the grassroots level of influencing their own parents on shopping expeditions. In preparation for our trip to the recycling depot, the children set up their own recycling bins within the classroom. We learned that mistakes are frequently made until new habits are formed. This was a week that seemed to impact on parents as much as it did on the children.

**Books Used:**

**The Ladybug Garden - Celia Godkin**

This book encourages close examination of the inter-relatedness of all living things. The simple act of spraying insecticide to rid the garden of aphids sets off a chain reaction of events which actually worsens the overall state of the garden. In the end,
the gardener is given advice to import a more natural solution to his aphid problem; ladybugs! The book stops here, but the children were challenged to think further as to how even this action would incur a reaction in the ecology of the garden.

Maxine's Tree - Diane Leger-Haskell
Maxine loved the ancient rainforest of the Carmanah Valley and often accompanied her father while he cleared trails for visitors. One day she discovers a clear-cut while straying from the camp, and is deeply upset. Her father tries to comfort her by saying the area will be replanted, but Maxine quickly learns that old growth forest cannot be replaced. In the end, she finds her own way of protecting her favourite trees in the valley. This book was read in the endowment forest before we planted our six trees in nursing stumps and nursing logs.

The World That Jack Built - Ruth Brown
This poem is modelled after "The House That Jack Built." It varies from the traditional rhyme in that it carries a poignant message about the effects of pollution. It was exciting to see the children draw quite different messages from the very simple text.

Pearl Moscowitz's Last Strand - Author Levine
Pearl had seen a lot of change on her street and for the most part accepted it with grace and an open heart. But when it came to cutting down the last ginkgo tree on the boulevard, she had to take a stand. She does so peacefully and with humour. This book engages children in the "progress - conservation" debate very successfully.

Week Three - Showing kindness to Our Animal Friends
the books used in the third week dealt with issues surrounding cruelty to animals and appropriate environments for pets. Healthy debates emerged out of these readings setting the stage for free and open discussion of controversial subjects. An excellent film issued by the Humane Society (life taken from the perspective of a classroom hamster) paved the way for Cinnamon's debut as a much loved and respected dwarf rabbit. Cinnamon's coroplast home was built by the children according to a model provided by the Humane Society (this enclosure went home with Graham and Cinnamon at the end of the programme). In the spirit of being proactive, the children and staff decided to raise money for various agencies, dedicated to the protection of animal rights, by holding a "school fair." Bird feeders were built, "conservation" buttons
and magnets made, animal rights bookmarks created, squares and cookies baked, soap sculptures carved, recycled jewellery made, and old toys and books donated. The children priced all articles and were responsible for selling their wares. The fair was a tremendous success by all accounts and when the monies were counted at the end of the day, everyone was elated to find we had raised $138.77. The goals of the school fair provided a smooth transition between the Animal Rights and Conservation/Preservation is Everyone's Business.

Books Used:

Somewhere Today - Bert Kitchen
"Somewhere today two bald eagles, talons locked, are plummeting through the sky." This beautifully illustrated book captures the unique rituals of twelve members of the animal kingdom. It is informative and yet not packed with difficult text. Many children were fascinated with this and the other two books in this series.

Coyote Winter - Jacqueline White
this picture book offers a rare view of Hutterite culture in Southern Alberta. When the school teacher takes the children out for a walk in the sun and snow, they come upon a coyote caught in a spring trap. A small boy hangs back as he comes face to face with the consequence of having set the trap earlier. This book sparked a rousing discussion around issues such as: respectful hunting, "killing for sport," and cultural traditions.

Faithful Elephants - Yokio Tsuchiya
What happens to the animals in zoos when a city is torn apart by war? This heart-rendering tale chronicles the poisoning of the wild animals and the slow death (by starvation) of three elephants during wartime in Japan. For the children it added another dimension to the cost of war.

The Catfish Palace - Hazel Hutchins
This is a wonderful story for motivating children to take action on their feelings. A young girl takes issue with a pet shop, The Catfish Palace, for keeping an oversized catfish in an extremely small tank as an advertising gimmick. It is rewarding to see how the shop owner uses his imagination to satisfy both his advertising needs and the very appropriate criticisms of a concerned customer.
**Prince William** - Gloria Rand

"Prince William" is a true story about the efforts of Vancouver Island school children to help sea animals during one of the worst oil spills in history. It's message that small children can help with big problems served as a motivating force for our school fair.

**Mr. Bear & the Bear** - Frances Thomas

There is nothing that captures a child's interest like the freeing of an animal from human cruelty. This beautiful picture book subtly links the cruelty humans inflict on animals and the cruelty humans inflict on each other. It challenged the children to discuss issues of captivity and animal acts in circuses.

**Week Four - Conservation/Preservation is Everyone's Business**

We started the week with a meeting to decide how we would allocate the monies earned at the school fair. It was decided that the largest sum of money should go to protecting animals in their natural environments; a hundred dollar cheque was donated to the Wildlife Rescue Society. Fifteen dollars went to sponsor a turtle at the Rainforest Reptile Refuge in Surrey, and twenty five dollars was donated to the SPCA. Books were chosen to stimulate discussion about endangered animals and each child was encouraged to choose a "focus" animal to learn more about. The idea was that the children would continue to feed their knowledge about their chosen animal in future years and communicate to others about their findings (or even take an advocacy role). During the next 2 - 3 days each child depicted their animal with an appropriate slogan on a 2' by 3' canvass using fabric dye, and/or oil paint. The children paraded their canvases across campus to the Scarfe building so that they might gain the audience of future teachers (their works were displayed from Aug - Sept, 1995. Mr. Winston Hunter, administrative head for the Faculty of Education, graciously accepted each work and spoke individually with the artists. A field-trip to the Rainforest Reptile Refuge brought many of the issues discussed earlier in the week to the fore and was particularly helpful in underlining the importance of leaving "exotic" animals in their
natural environments. An interesting debate raged over whether to buy or not to buy exotic animals that were already in pet stores. Many children were able to connect to the "supply and demand" lesson they had learned through our recycling unit.

Books Used:

**Grandfather’s Dream** - Holly Keller
This book tells of conservation efforts in Vietnam. An endearing relationship between a grandfather and grandson unfolds as a village struggles between using fields for rice or wetland that might attract disappearing flocks of cranes. At the end, the elder leaves the future of these birds in the hands of his grandson.

**Salmon Moon** - Mark Karlins
This story stirs the magic of freedom in young and old hearts alike. It reinforces the importance of acting on your beliefs as a way of safeguarding inner integrity.

**Sato and the Elephants** - Juanita Havill
Sato wants to follow his father’s footsteps on the path to becoming a “master” ivory carver. When ivory becomes more difficult to get from the local dealer, Sato comes face to face with ethical issues surrounding the use of ivory. He had naively thought the ivory he carved was a type of stone. The resolution of difficult issues is done such that the children are encouraged, in a non-judgmental manner, to learn from their mistakes.

**Eagle Dreams** - McFarlane
Children often fantasise about rescuing wild animals and nursing them back to health. This tale clearly lays out the complexities involved in helping a wild creature. This was an exciting book to read to the children -- as the eagle burst through the barn doors to freedom, the children fairly flew off the carpet with it.

**Wolf Island** - Celia Godkin
What happens if you remove the top predator from the food chain? An exceptionally cold winter causes the water to freeze between an island and the mainland. The wolves from the island move off and in so doing set off a series of reactions that leave the flora and fauna on the island diseased and dying. The children easily drew analogies to other systems and concluded the group discussion with the adage -- every action has a reaction.