

IMAGE AND VOICE IN ADULT LITERACY

by

NAOME SOLEIL

B.A., The University of Victoria, 1985

B. Ed., The University of Ottawa, 1989

M.A., Carleton University, 1994

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Department of Language & Literacy  
The University of British Columbia  
Vancouver, Canada

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## ABSTRACT

This qualitative research study explores the use of television as text in adult literacy as a means of bridging orality and literacy. The reason for selecting television as an educational tool was to provide equal access to stories for both non-readers and readers of print, and the 22 research participants were required to complete a survey and participate in four 2-hour workshops, and a taped interview. During the workshops, participants learned to actively engage with the texts that were edited stories from the Canadian television series North of 60. The researcher included reading strategies to encourage the participants' interaction with the texts as active "readers" (see Fiske, 1987; Buckingham, 1993; Bianculli, 1992) and brainstorming to increase their vocabulary prior to writing reflective responses.

First, how television as text influences an adult literacy student's ability to transfer information from oral texts into print texts is analyzed. The findings indicate that television allows non-readers, reluctant readers, and delayed readers of English to learn literary terms and conventions that apply to print stories and practise four domains of language acquisition—listening, speaking, reading, and writing. A selection of each participant's written responses to the stories and interview fragments have been analyzed. Whenever possible, the selection is based on a participant's favorite story or personal connection to a character.

Second, the effect of brainstorming on written responses has been examined. This technique is a pre-writing strategy the researcher used not only to assist the participants in recording vocabulary relevant to the story, but also to provide opportunities for sharing ideas in the construction of meaning. Based on data collected during the interviews, individuals with short-term memory problems indicate that repetition of vocabulary through brainstorming, note-taking, and discussion reinforces memory retention, and second language learners gain knowledge of pronunciation by hearing and rehearsing vocabulary from the stories.

Third, factors contributing to the participants' reflective oral and written responses to the television stories have been analyzed. The main factors contributing to reflective thinking and writing involve the research pedagogy and the development of reflective skills through practice. The researcher's reflective methodology combines phenomenology, critical ethnography, and emancipatory practice from the diverse perspectives of van Manen (1990), Haig-Brown and Archibald (1996), and Freire (1974, 1994, 1997, 1998) who have informed this study together with other researchers in the respective fields. This method situates the research participants and the researcher in a partnership in which everyone contributes through dialogue to the learning process.

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"We cannot all do great things,  
but we can all do little things  
with greater love."

St. Therese

## Preface

The story of school begins with blame, banner-high across the furrowed brow of an expert talking to the parent talking to the child, formed by taut lips, spelled as signs of disapproval, punishment.

Can't do it. Try harder. Words shift learning from fun to frustration, belonging to alienation, limiting possibility, forming inadequacy.

Next, shame consumes body, mind, spirit as a feeling before language can name it, the struggle to write right dismembers learning in Grade One where tiny fingers wrap around a monstrous red stick, shackled to dirty lead smudges on white pages with blue wavy lines, tangled scrawl shifting, never static to the small one's eyes so the teacher must be lying, the one who says, "stay on the straight line." Can't do it. There is no straight line, liar. Try harder. Those signs, images, voices collect on-line in the mind, but the lead refuses to obey.

The story tellings in the body write endless hurtful paragraphs of impossibility constricting ideas into knots in head, throat, belly filling with fear that shrieks instantly at the sight of print.

'Illiterate' imprisons, imposes a label as less than in a literate society where public places— school, library, museum, art gallery, bank, office— deform, immobilize, intimidate, dishearten.

Unlearning opens spaces, breathes in/out fresh possibilities, hears voices of the unheard, wipes away tears. Listen, speak, read, write with mind, emotions, spirit, whole body language learning in adult literacy.

## CHAPTER 1: LANDSCAPES OF LEARNING

### Introduction

#### New Beginnings

I have never met an adult literacy student who did not recall images and voices of childhood horrors in school – emotional/mental/physical/spiritual torment that went along with negative labels – stupid/dumb/loser/failure – racial insults, disrespect. How to re-imagine a future of hope and possibility requires risk-taking as literacy learners work through past barriers in order to re-envision themselves as readers/writers. Freire (1994) writes, “Hope is an ontological need. Hopelessness is but hope that has lost its bearings, and become a distortion of that ontological need” (p. 8). Generally, adult literacy students who are determined to read and write recall Grade One as a significant turning point when learning seemed harder for them than their classmates. Literacy skills emerged at a slower pace causing increasing delay and frustration. To gain confidence in an adult educational environment, the teacher and student(s) need to develop a safe and respectful partnership so that school becomes a place of enjoyment and possibility.

Adult literacy learners return to school prepared to take a chance on a different way of being. The progression from illiteracy to literacy changes an individual’s self-concept and life-style. Giroux (1988) identifies the educational terrain “where meaning, desire, language, and values engage and respond to the deeper beliefs about the very nature of what it means to be human, to dream, to

name and struggle for a particular future and way of life" (p. 4). What it means to be human is a recurring theme in this research study as diverse voices respond to television stories from North of 60 that depict social issues of everyday life.

### Why TV in Adult Literacy?

As the title of this research study suggests, image and voice are explored by the researcher to reveal the multi-dimensional processes involved in language learning. Interacting with oral/visual stories that depict representations of relevant social issues creates tensions between real and storied lives. During the study, the research participants voice their opinions, question images from the texts that challenge their assumptions, recall memories of past experience, envision actions for growth and change, describe personal understanding of the stories, and discover moments of self-awareness in the process of constructing meaning. By featuring television as text in adult literacy, the researcher utilizes different elements of image and voice in every aspect of the research study.

Television programming, though scripted for the most part, transmits information by oral and visual means. The average non-reader of print texts can access, store, and retrieve vast quantities of information through technology; however, it could be assumed that a viewer of television, videos, and film without a background in print literacy might lack the analytical skills to produce knowledge. According to Freire and Giroux in Giroux and Simon et al. (1989), "to be literate is not simply to know something; it also means knowing how to participate reflectively in the very act of producing knowledge" (p. xi). While

both Freire and Giroux inspire me as an educator and inform my research and practice, I disagree with the implication that people have to be literate to participate reflectively in the production of knowledge. This is because information can be acquired through non-print media and transferred into knowledge through past knowledge and lived experience.

In order to demonstrate reflective processing in the transfer of information into knowledge, I introduce reflective methods. Reflection as a process of constructing meaning requires a learner to explore different perspectives, challenge assumptions, examine inconsistencies, and delve into mystery. Such a process encourages people to re-read existing social situations as sites of change in which they can participate as citizens in a democratic society. To become agents of change requires continual questioning of facts and opinions and remaining open to alternative ways of interacting in classrooms and in the world. Reflection processes information through a synthesis of mind, body, emotions, and spirit.

Fleckenstein (1996) argues that our privileging of print texts and writing “marginalizes efforts to synthesize image and language” while “those who lack language facility, those who “read” the iconography of our culture and conceptualize in imagistic terms are not literate, despite the belief that these icons dictate the future structure of a culture” (p. 916). She suggests that imagery plays a significant role in the construction of meaning and that imagery is not only “the center of being” (p. 918) but also the “primary means of ordering [our]

reality . . . and ecological/historical situatedness" (p. 919). Of particular interest to me is Fleckenstein's assertion that images create a fusion between information and emotional involvement which links imagistic thought with the causes and effects of our actions (p. 921). Becoming active readers or "teleliterate" creates awareness of this fusion of images, emotions, reflections, and actions that inform the participants' oral and written responses to the stories.

The television stories selected for the research study portray characters dealing with fear, betrayal, abuse of power, neglect, rejection, racism, sexual orientation, grief, sympathy, tolerance, affection, strength, and courage. Such a range of human experiences inevitably generates reader response. Freire and Giroux in Gixoux and Simon, et al. (1989) advocate that "literacy be constructed and experienced within social relations that legitimate popular culture, cultural diversity, and dialogue as crucial elements in the debate about citizenship and cultural-social justice" (p. xi). Certainly, the stories selected for the study from the Canadian television series North of 60 inspire debate on issues of cultural diversity, social responsibility, and justice.

Simon (1992), in referring to Freire's work, says that what is crucial "is the constant reminder that the dialogue in which students and teacher are to participate together is always grounded in the realities of the lived relations within which the participants find themselves" (p. 96). Representations of social reality revealed in the stories from North of 60 provide opportunities for adult

literacy students to debate relevant issues of everyday life while exploring the tensions between textual realism and personal reality.

In the gap between realities, the research participants examine situational conflicts as sites for (re)action, reflection, and transformation. (Friere, 1974)

Insights into the attitudes and behaviours of television's fictional characters challenge readers to insert themselves alongside the storied lives and to consider ways of rewriting their own and "other people's images" (Willinsky, 1991, p. 63). Negotiating self-identity and shifting perspectives are ongoing processes in adult literacy where students often resist change, initially, despite their goal to belong to the literate community.

For adult literacy learners, resistance to structural conditions which control their lives is a necessary process to empowerment and change according to Smyth (1989) who notes that "people embark on a process of becoming different by thinking critically and creatively, so as to pursue meanings that enable them to make increasing sense of the world in which they live" (p.214).

During interviews, a few of the research participants revealed resistances to language learning. I refer to resistance that impedes learning as an unlearning process in which teacher(s) and student(s) work together, becoming aware of each other's points of resistance through dialogue. Learning needs to be reciprocal and dynamic, not a one-way, teacher-centred transmission of information and knowledge.

Unlearning is always in flux as is learning which allows individual, subjective knowing to have a say. Willinsky (1991) writes, "We live by texts. We are written by them, and some we write" (p. 58). Television texts are imaged messages that involve mind, body, emotions, and spirit, yet while the majority of North Americans see/hear these visual/oral texts on a daily basis, adult literacy students are rarely given an opportunity to analyze the information they gather, reflect on what the information means to them, or express their views in oral or written responses to the texts.

As a researcher, I feel a sense of responsibility for accessing materials that are relevant to students' lives. Encouraging their participation in popular culture as an educational resource is one way to enhance their curiosity about the power and production of language presented as a non-print medium. When I ask students what their main purpose is for being in school, they usually express a desire for knowledge. School is about acquiring knowledge, so then I probe further to find out if it is possible to acquire knowledge outside of school.

The misconception that teachers are the keepers of knowledge puts adult literacy students at a disadvantage until they gain confidence in sharing what they know with others. To "let the students in on the contest of meanings, . . . not just in forms of pluralism, but to understanding how the differences are encoded forms of power and that what needs cutting and repasting are the high and the low, the centre and the margin, the dominant and the silent" (Willinsky, p. 63) is salient, especially when equality, respect, and social transformation are

pivotal to emancipatory theory and practice. By exposing learners to real social issues, reflecting on problems as they are represented, and considering how the problems could be resolved to create better situations, they begin to reformulate their position in relation to other people who dominate the texts that constitute reality. The participants' oral and written responses create the core chapters of the dissertation because voice is vital for empowerment.

Stern (1985) explores the organization of 'a core self' interacting with 'a core other'. "In fact, the subjective experiences with another can occur only after a sense of a core self and a core other exists" (p.10). In my research, I encourage the participants, through their analysis and discussion of television stories, to explore their own stories at a deeper level where origins of learning begin to form patterns of knowing and seeing oneself as a subject in relations of power to other subjects. The participants in the study already know how it feels to learn in a climate of disrespect and inequality. Pivotal to recovering a sense of enjoyment in an educational context is to experience a felt sense of respect and belonging.

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### *Dreamscape: Tender Learning*

*A sign of the feminine stands, facing a forest clearing, and from my omniscient view, I imagine her palms clasped together, see the back of her Liberty cotton sundress tied at the waist with a simple bow, the hemline softly brushing against slender brown legs. Stark white ankle socks and sensible navy shoes that cushion the ruts of uncertainty.*

*Alone, she watches bear mates peacefully soak in the sun, the neck of one nuzzled against the other's firm back;*

*a knowing pose that asks nothing, only gives their vision  
a place to discover the scent of her like wind chimes tinkling  
their nostrils. The healers join together, earthly protectors  
of the people, harbingers among a community of conifers.*

\*\*\*\*\*

Chapter 2 outlines my background as a learner and teacher. Experiences in education have influenced my emphasis on emancipatory pedagogy. Freire (1974, 1994, 1997, 1998) has been a significant mentor. Other emancipatory educators cited in the dissertation—hooks, Giroux, Simon—have also been influential in my research and practice. Their commitments to the advancement of social justice and human dignity challenge educators to resist gender, race, and class oppressions that dehumanize and immobilize an individual's right to access information and skills to improve his/her life. In theory and practice, my understanding of emancipatory pedagogy is a belief in the possibility for social transformation.

Throughout this dissertation, there will be field notes, poetry, dreams, and recollections (e.g. pp. 7-8) inspired by a participant or a memory fragment of lived experience that enter the text as an invitation for the reader to pause for a moment of inner inquiry. These textual connections to memories step away from theory and discourse to enter into a reflective landscape, set apart from the main text by italicized print and/or asterisks.

Chapter 3, that explains my reflective methods and emphasis on the importance of lived experience, has been inspired in large part by Freire's

commitment to emancipatory pedagogy and social transformation. Educators who engage with their adult literacy students as partners in learning know that becoming part of a literate community is life-altering for the students. Freire (1997) says the acquisition of literacy skills is a form of liberation but compares the process of growth and change to "a childbirth, and a painful one" (p.31). The life stories that literacy students carry within them need an audience, a vehicle for expression of who they are, what they know, and what they hope to gain by learning to read and write. Brady (1990) asks, "Is this not our destiny as human beings: to learn, to grow, to come to know ourselves and the meanings of our life in the deepest, richest, most textured way possible? If we do not know the self, what can we know? If we cannot learn from reflection upon our own lived experiences, from what can we learn?" (Kenyon & Randall, 1997, p. 51). To be alive is a work in progress, a collection of life stories already formed, yet paradoxically, in a continual state of re-formation.

Throughout my research study, I have gathered inspiration from diverse theorists, methodologists, and practitioners that provide form and texture. The patterns do not conform to any set structure although they meld together, many pieces in the process that inform layers of meaning. The voices of Foucault, Derrida, Weedon and Cherryholmes are heard as ripples along the edges. Native educators who influenced my spiritual path and cultural re-remembering include Armstrong, Archibald, Anderson, Brown, Hampton, Ing, MacIvor, McKay, Sterling, Wilhelmson, and Young. Haig-Brown and Ross have also been

inspirational in their research and writing about Native communities and social issues.

The pattern of voices and images in the study remind me of an album quilt with appliques of "thoughtfulness" that Heidegger (1962) "described as a minding, a heeding, a caring attunement" (van Manen, 1990, p. 12). van Manen describes phenomenological research as a "poetizing activity" (p.13). "What we must do is discover what lies at the ontological core of our being. So that *in* the words, or perhaps better, *in spite of* the words, we find 'memories' that paradoxically we never thought or felt before" (p.13). While listening to and reading the words of the different participant voices in this study, I encourage readers to also reflect on their own search for meaning in a more primal sense that invokes self-discovery through mind, body, emotions, and spirit.

\*\*\*\*\*

### *Remembering Voices*

*a child, then, age six  
learning to read pressed butterfly wings  
on a quilted field of favorite friends  
spread across my parents' well-made bed,  
i crept up, time and again, to cross the breadth of years  
to hear stories of women my mother knew  
in dorms at college,  
where hearts grew fond, minds lingered.*

*and we'd pause, our spirits entwined  
within a spring green border,  
my finger tracing each indelible stitch  
memorizing sounds, letter by letter  
sent as a name embroidered in fine black thread  
breathing on wings of floral print.*

*"where is she now?" i wanted to know.  
 "does she have children, cattle, kittens in the hay?"*

*then, we'd read together  
 Eunice, Ivy, Rita, Jean, Anne, Pauline,  
 and others, too.*

*butterflies mirroring real lives  
 migrating in four directions,  
 unforgettable women  
 joined together on identical quilts  
 across a dreamy bed somewhere  
 floating in my imagination.*

*i remember, too, watching  
 their narratives smile in my mother's eyes  
 butterflies dancing on air.*

\*\*\*\*\*

The process of bringing diverse theoretical strands together, including critical ethnography (Thomas 1993) in a very peripheral sense, has been done deliberately to harmonize with the quality of self-reflective oral and written narratives. If strands of theory and practice can be imagined as small, yet significant, visible threads that bind the reflective methods of the research study together, then their necessary part(s) of the project enhance the larger patterns of image and voice that create material wholeness for the dissertation. Such a research method "must include an experiential analysis of the researcher's own process and have integrated personal narrative throughout the paper" (Hampton, p. 273). The organic nature of coming to voice is primarily a process of becoming visible, memorable, and contributing to the larger community.

## Exploring Representations of Reality

In Chapter 4, summaries provide plot outlines of the television stories used in my research study. There are four stories from North of 60 and each one was edited to approximately 20 minutes in length. These fictional stories, situated in a northern Native community of Lynx River, create the focus for analysis and reflection. Because sites of conflict arise from personal, cultural, social, and political differences, it was important that both native and non-native students be involved in the study to hear each other's perspectives on issues of every day life. I am grateful to Atlantis and Alliance Atlantis Productions for their support of this project.

To understand how this research study progressed, it is necessary to appreciate the value of "sharing personal narratives yet linking that knowledge with academic information [that] really enhances our capacity to know" (hooks, 1994, p.148). Participants who were not accustomed to working in groups were exposed to shared learning through discussion and analysis of the television stories. Chapters 5, 6, and 7 highlight the oral and written responses of the research participants. The 22 adult literacy learners who shared their stories in discussions, reflective writing, and taped interviews were also learning skills in teleliteracy. Typically, human interaction with television texts is described as viewing, watching, looking at, or surfing; however, I prefer "reading" as an appropriate term to express an activity distinguished by exercising analytical skills for the purpose of studying elements of story. Language has power and

focussed viewing or critical watching does not denote my intended purpose for selecting television stories as texts in adult literacy. Fiske (1987) uses the terms viewers and readers interchangeably but claims that “`reading’ is common to all texts” (p. 17). Although Fiske refers to “viewing” and “reading” from a theoretical perspective relating to “popular cultural capital” (p. 19), semiotics, and competing ideologies, I extend the terms “viewing” and “reading” to include human interpretation of body language. “Viewing” describes an objective, detached recognition of a gesture, for example, that may remain at a surface level whereas “reading” occurs when a subjective response induces a deep reflection on the possible meaning and intent of the gesture. In other words, I am suggesting that a greater degree of analysis and comprehension is required to read a text, including a living text in progress, than view a text.

de Kerckhove (1995) writes, “When we read, we scan the books, we are in control. But when we watch TV, it is the TV scanner that `reads’ us. Our retinas are the direct object of the electron beam. When scanning meets glancing, and makes eye contact between man and machine, the machine’s glance is the more powerful” (p. 14). de Kerckhove shifts from humans reading texts to machines reading humans. His provocative opinion caused me to monitor my relationship as an object to another, allegedly more powerful object. In order to make eye contact as discerning subjects, it is necessary to acquire skills in teleliteracy.

### Locating Meaning in Three Voices

The overlays and interweaving of three voices—theorists, researcher, and participants—include memories of specific situations, epiphanies, and dialogues that draw from past knowledge and lived experiences. To assist readers of the dissertation, I have used different fonts to signal a change of voice. While I have used the computer font “Book Antiqua 12” for the main body of text as well as the transcribed fragments from my interviews with the participants, the same font in italics signals my poetry, dream fragments, and researcher reflections. The participants’ writing is in “Lucinda Handwriting 11”.

Documenting the voices of adult literacy learners, both oral and written, has been a process of connecting their stories and mine together to illuminate images of partners in learning. Words quilted together “make artful statements about the [literacy learners’] ache for colourful coherence” (Nadelstern & Hancock, 1988, p. 2) as they struggle with the incoherencies of oral and written expression. For the study participants’ writing sample, I chose the topic, “What colour was your weekend?” not realizing at the time how fitting the topic would become as I pieced individual stories together into a thesis album. Each scrap of memory adds texture, colour, and shape to a work in progress as single letters form words that string into sentences to produce stories.

The effort for students acquiring literacy skills involves life-style changes that not only expand intellectual achievement but also emotional development. Added responsibilities require major adjustments in self-concept and personal

relationships. Decision-making and daily effort over an extended period of time feel monumental, and the higher the learner climbs, the more difficult the struggle, yet, with vision and strength, the quest for completion and fulfillment can be realized (Bopp et al, 1985, p. 65).

Meeting the needs of diverse learners continues to challenge educators at every level. Western education has traditionally valued literacy and print texts as the standard measurement of academic competency. Discovering meaning through oral storytelling has gained prominence, again, through communication technologies. "With the technological advances of video, television and film our world has become a combined oral/literate/visual one" (Archibald, 1991, p.79). Although oral-based learners have been excluded from knowledge acquired by reading print texts, it is now possible for these individuals to select alternative pathways for information and knowledge acquisition. The use of television, video and film opens exciting possibilities for adult literacy learners by creating new access routes to the oral-literate world.

### Rationale for the Study

#### Watching Versus Reading TV

The act of viewing television as a source of relaxation or entertainment can be very passive. We sometimes speak of being mesmerized for hours by voices and images, yet feel little or no attachment to the information being processed despite close physical proximity to the television set. One key difference between oral texts spoken by an oral storyteller and oral texts spoken

inside a television set is that the former can elicit immediate feedback from the audience, whereas the latter has no direct contact to know how the audience has received the message. Thus, I believe that education has a responsibility to teach teleliteracy skills in order to “read” new information acquired from TV programs critically. The integration of past knowledge with new information must be active to initiate understanding of the messages that the majority of North Americans tune into daily.

According to Lenox and Walker (1993), “information [by itself] is the manipulator of a passive mind; knowledge, on the other hand, is the liberator of an active intellect” (p. 315). The writers advocate *‘information literacy’* that is an acquired skill. “If we are to teach information literacy, we must teach students to question, sort, discriminate, select, and analyze the array of messages that are presented in traditional or electronic formats, and then to reassemble the parts into new and personally meaningful wholes” (p. 316). Whether information is packaged as media literacy, visual literacy, teleliteracy, or information literacy, an emphasis on multiple literacies expands the instructional focus to include not only print literacy but also a range of other literacies requiring particular skills and strategies. “It will require the analytic and reflective skills necessary to distill a broad range of discrete information products” (p. 314). Lenox and Walker make a distinction between the storage of information and the refinement of information. In the context of my research, the participants not

only learn to read television stories but also reflect on what they have read in order to integrate information with past knowledge and lived experience.

Adult literacy learners often learn in isolation from classmates, so the materials were selected to maximize accessibility for everyone who wanted to participate in the study. Although writing reflective responses to the stories was the main reason for the study, a participant's unwillingness or inability to write did not exclude him/her from being in the study. I believe that adult literacy communities grow in strength when everyone feels safe, welcome, and involved in group activities.

Before elaborating further on the reasons for the study, I want to acknowledge the voices who inspired me--a cacophony of young, female voices wanting to have a say, to inject meaning, to debate conflict, to predict the next catastrophic event in tomorrow's episode of "The Young and the Restless". That is how my mornings began as a high school teacher in a contained classroom of group home girls who read more TV than books. We never actually read a soap opera together, but the morning ritual at the start of class included critiques based on who did what, when, where, why, and how, eventually leading to active engagement with curriculum-based programming.

It is fair to say that "the girls" demanded that I find inclusive methods to teach language learning so "that learning is not merely about the acquisition of knowledge but also about the production of social practices which provide students with a sense of place, identity, worth, and value" (Giroux and Simon et

al. 1989, p. ix). Though I did not fully appreciate the value of non-curricular soap operas at the time, the words of Freire and Giroux resonate with meaning now. Critical pedagogy which is relevant and emancipatory “must incorporate aspects of popular culture as a serious educational discourse into the school curriculum” (p. ix). The soap opera phenomenon provided relevant material for discussing literary conventions and threaded us through a maze of North American social values.

When the secondary level readers studied Shakespeare, all the students insisted on inclusion because “doing” Shakespeare gave students a certain status, an arrival point, to be ranked among the counted in education. The only way to accommodate everyone’s desire to study A Midsummer Night’s Dream was with the aid of a BBC production. Thus, my odyssey with TV in the classroom began.

What surprised me about this initial experiment with TV readers whose competency in reading ranged from Grades 2 to 4 was that their reliance on oral language allowed a freedom to observe and analyze certain nuances of non-verbal messages between characters that seemed strangely overlooked by the competent, secondary level readers, as though print interfered somehow in the construction of meaning and complicated the interpretive process. Dependency on the written word to convey meaning may, I suspect, cause readers to focus on the complexities embedded in poetic language rather than images, moods, and tone of voice that provide another layer of information. Travelling as a navigator reading a map to arrive at the desired destination rather than a driver observing

the countryside is one analogy to describe the experience. The real benefit of using a visual text, however, was fostering inclusivity in a language classroom of diverse learners.

### Providing Equal Access to Literacy

In adult literacy classrooms, too, the need for inclusivity and relevant materials from popular culture is crucial, in my view. Skill development in teleliteracy can be introduced in much the same way as print literacy. Readers are concerned with plot, setting, characters, and theme. Through guided reading and discussion, they improve their skills in active listening, prediction, foreshadowing, inferencing, thinking/reflecting aloud, problem solving. They also learn to interpret, analyze, and synthesize information. In addition, readers increase their ability to recognize codes of representation, camera angles, lighting, music, and sound effects as conventions of television texts.

A major objective in working with adult literacy learners is to facilitate the process of critical thinking and self-advocacy so that the learners become their own agents of change. In the opinion of Evans and Nation (1989), "*Critical reflection* is the process through which human beings use their analytical powers to assess elements in their lives against their explanatory frameworks (theories) . . . [and] is a precursor to change because, through the recognition of human agency, it encourages people to seek to improve their lives" (p. 10). Therefore, I believe a role of the teacher must be to provide opportunities for students to develop a sense of agency in becoming part of the literate community. For skill

development to occur, the learning tools must be relevant and accessible to the students' abilities. Television as an educational tool provides easy access to language learning for most adult literacy students.

Television has not typically been mandated in adult literacy curricula as a method for easing the transition from illiteracy to print texts and writing. Hadas (1962) recommends that "all who take education seriously in its larger sense – and not the professed critics alone – should talk and write about television as they do about books" (cited in Bianculli, 1992, p.142). The possible benefits of building connections between storied lives on television and in print readers have not been widely recognized in adult literacy programs.

Len Masterman (1993) suggests that teachers feel de-centred by media, since they are no longer perceived as experts. The likelihood of an individual teacher being perceived as an expert is lessened when he or she is situated among a student group of popular culture fans. Masterman says that "information which was around in the media studies classroom were being provided by the media themselves. They were communicating it laterally rather than hierarchically, speaking across rather than down to their audiences" (p. 10). This lateral sharing between a teacher and the students is made possible by the accessibility of information delivered orally and visually. The content selected for the research study offered an opportunity for adult literacy students to dialogue with me about elements of story – characters, plot, setting, theme--that apply to both print and non-print texts.

Another reason for focussing my research on television stories is to respond to increasing concern about the impact of television subject matter on our societal values and beliefs. Fleckenstein (1996) writes, "an image reconstructs a culture and a self" (p. 921). As a global audience, it is important to be cognizant of the process by which that reconstruction takes place and what implications the changes have on body, mind, and spirit.

In a news article on violence in young people's lives, Johnson (2001) reports that,

According to the Washington, D.C.-based Center for Media and Public Affairs, the average 12-year-old has seen 8,000 murders and 100,000 acts of violence on network television. . . . The effects of media violence on young people are measurable and long-lasting, according to a joint statement issued last year by the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Psychological Association, and the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. (p. 17)

Educators, in my opinion, share responsibility with the general public in questioning the quality of television programming, and at the same time, sensitizing ourselves and adults we teach about the potential, negative impact that some television programs have on our understanding of self and others in the world. Increasingly, emotional desensitization, callous attitudes, and normalization of aggression in home, school, and community contexts should be addressed through curricula at every level, including adult literacy.

In my experience, teleliteracy does not devalue print literacy or diminish the importance of learning to read print. Skills acquired for decoding the texts of

our times on television simply provide additional tools for language skill development.

### Research Questions

- 1) How does the use of television as text affect an adult literacy student's ability to transfer oral texts into print texts?

The idea of using television stories in adult literacy originated while I was teaching special needs students at the secondary level. While observing the group's response, I realized that there may be several advantages for bringing an oral/visual text to their language learning experience: accessibility, inclusivity, exposure to literary terms and conventions, critical thinking, active listening and "reading" rather than "watching" oral/visual texts.

With a high attrition rate in adult literacy, I wondered if participants would attend the workshops, and if so would they come in holiday mode as a source of entertainment to escape from the real work of reading print texts? Depending on attitude, the research participants might complete their worksheets and participate in the discussions but not submit a written response. I speculated on reasons for not writing: poor comprehension, lack of time, no incentive without a mark, disinterest in the story, lethargy, resistance, inability to write, boredom, illness. (The interview session following the workshops was added, in part, to give the participants who submitted little or no writing an opportunity to discuss their reasons.)

Also, I wanted to see if the quality of writing changed over time. If a participant's writing increased in quantity or improved in quality, what factors influenced his/her ability to improve? This would require probing. Would oral-based learners learn skills in oral analysis and interpretation without transferring these skills into written responses? I wondered if writing decreased or varied in length and substance what causes might be determined. For example, personal interest in a story or identification with a character might inspire a participant to write more.

The range of language competency varies in adult literacy programs, yet all participants received the same worksheets. Choice of language might be easy for some to read but difficult to impossible for others. Although the texts were accessible, even for the second language learners, the worksheets could provide an indication of variations in participants' reading levels. Therefore, the ability of a participant to comprehend a story and articulate his/her interpretations orally might not result in any transfer to print texts if print was inaccessible.

## 2) How does brainstorming influence written responses?

It was decided after the pilot project to include brainstorming as an intervention to examine how/if participants use written language recorded on an overhead projector by the researcher in their reflective written responses to the stories. Applied as a pre-writing strategy, brainstorming is a "learning technique involving open group discussion intended to expand the range of available ideas" (Harris and Hodges, 1995, p. 22) and, for the purpose of this study, to

build vocabulary. First, I wanted to evaluate whether or not this strategy would actually stimulate writing. Second, I predicted that writing would increase as a result of brainstorming and new vocabulary would be included in the responses as well. I hoped to see evidence of reflective thinking as a result of sharing ideas and diverse perspectives, depending on the lived experiences of the participants.

3) What factors contributed to reflective writing through the use of television as text in an adult literacy context?

This question stems from my observations as an adult literacy instructor that variables exist between the instructor and student(s) as well as within group dynamics. Possible factors include individual personality and inherent nature, degree of security and openness, emotional climate in the classroom, familiarity with classmates, level of confidence in the development of voice, cultural background. I wondered about gender difference in terms of intuitive and spiritual aspects of reflective learning. Is class a positive or negative influence or totally irrelevant? After four workshops, I hoped to show my stance as a reflective practitioner had motivated at least some participants to include reflective responses in their writing?

### Overview of the Study

The decision to use texts from the Canadian television series North of 60 was based, in part, on personal interest. I had been studying aboriginal literature for my Master's Degree and wanted to continue using texts dealing with native stories. The Canadian setting in a northern native community provides contrasts

of human settlement in close relation to the natural world. Native and non-native characters wrestle with contemporary social issues and reveal cultural differences in systems of community leadership, justice, family relations, housing, transportation, health and rehabilitation, business, economic survival, entertainment, and spirituality. Education is based on the teachings of Elders, and the absence of schools, teachers and books is notable.

In preparation for the research, I completed an application for the Ethical Review Committee that was approved as submitted. For the first phase, I conducted a pilot project that has been included in the dissertation as Chapter 5: Site One. Prior to the larger study at Sites Two and Three, I submitted a second application to the Ethical Review Committee that was approved as submitted. Copies of the letters of permission for the pilot project and the main research study (Appendix A.1, A.2) had to be signed for a student to participate in the research study.

Although the pilot project had a slightly different format, the basic methodology remained the same for it and the main research study. Prior to the workshops, I visited the sites to inform potential participants of the purpose of the study, answer questions, provide permission letters for those who wanted to participate, and distribute a survey of 12 questions (Appendix B.1) relating to television, such as individual interest, favorite programs, estimated time spent per week, and reasons for watching television. The responses were anonymous. All potential participants filled out a survey, but not everyone signed a consent

form or became involved in the study. The results of the survey (Appendix B.2) and analysis of the responses (Appendix B.3) follow the survey questions.

I visited six education sites prior to conducting research at three institutions. At one institution, two potential sites existed; however, only one site was selected (see pp. 35-6). Site One was a university college adult upgrading program in which six of the research participants were immigrant second language learners and five were non-native English-speaking Canadians. Site Two was a community college career preparation program. The participants included four native Canadians, one non-native English-speaking Canadian, and three second language learners. Site Three was a Native community and the three participants on site were local to the community and all native Canadians.

With written permission from Alliance Television that later amalgamated to become Alliance Atlantis Productions, I edited four texts to provide a linear story-line for each session that focussed on a specific theme. The edited segments were approximately 20 minutes in length. Since many participants were unfamiliar with the Canadian television series, North of 60, it was necessary to provide background information relevant to the story, such as a recent marriage or a death. The four segments from different episodes were shown twice: first, for a general overview of the issues, and second, for a group discussion; however, on one occasion at Site Three, there was only time to read the story once, followed by brainstorming and group discussion.

Presentation of the workshops for the pilot project and the main study were similar. As a pre-reading strategy, the participants responded in writing to a question provided by the researcher that related to the theme or plot.

Responses were shared and then set aside for later comparison to see if their assumptions and ideas before reading the story changed after reviewing facts and details of the situation. I provided the characters' names and any relevant background information that might have been revealed in a previous episode.

Participants read the story twice. The first time, I showed the entire story segment without a pause, whereas the second time, I paused the tape several times to clarify a point, note special effects, discuss symbolic meaning, ask questions, and highlight literary terms, such as foreshadow, climax, or point of view. After the first showing, the participants discussed the main idea, important facts, the plot development, and relationship between characters. Although most participants in the pilot project recorded information on a worksheet as their classmates commented on the story, I did not record any vocabulary. The procedure differed slightly for the main study since the researcher recorded vocabulary from the brainstorming session on an overhead for the participants to copy. When the participants had read the story a second time, they added details that had been missed the first time and discussed social issues raised in the plot.

At Site One, a worksheet (Appendix D.1) was provided to record ideas during the large group discussion. If someone asked for a definition or spelling

of a word, I wrote the information on a blackboard, but otherwise any writing on the worksheet was recorded independently. I facilitated discussions, but the participants assumed responsibility for constructing meaning and reflecting on the story's message. In Chapter 5, the reflective written responses by nine of the 11 participants at Site One and 11 interview fragments are included together with my interpretations and reflections.

The pilot project had neither a writing sample (Appendix C) nor formal brainstorming strategies to encourage the use of new vocabulary in the written responses. At Sites Two and Three, I requested a writing sample during my first meeting with potential participants. After discussing the timeframe and requirements of the study, each person was given 30 minutes to write on the topic, "What colour was your weekend?" Each person wrote a spontaneous, stream of consciousness response to the topic. I have included the writing sample of each participant from Site Two in Chapter 6 and Site Three in Chapter 7 along with a selection of each participant's written response to a television story. None of the research participants at Sites Two and Three had been exposed to brainstorming in a group prior to the study. Following the second showing of the story at Sites Two and Three, the participants formed small groups to share their views and complete a worksheet (Appendix D.2,3,4,5). Both the worksheet and written reflections were submitted to the researcher as data for analysis of the progress achieved over the 4-week period.

Each of the four workshops was approximately 2 hours in length with a short break at half time at Sites One and Three whereas workshops at Site Two were continuous for the full 2 hours. Taking a break was optional as some of the participants experienced difficulty focussing for an extended period of time. Because of time constraints, one session at Site Three was approximately one and one-half hours, in which case a break was unnecessary.

Participants in both the pilot project and the main research study had some experience with reader response journals or comprehension question and answer exercises of print texts, so similar strategies for active listening, prediction, guided reading and discussion, thinking/reflecting aloud, and written responses were applied to reading and analyzing television stories in much the same way as print stories. As well, participants at Sites Two and Three discussed literary conventions of setting, plot development, theme, and characterization.

Individual interviews were held after the final workshop at which time participants had an opportunity to express their thoughts and reflect on personal responses to specific situations raised in the texts. As well, there were six interview questions for participants in the pilot project (Appendix E.1) which were reduced to five questions (Appendix E.2) for the second phase of research. Often, participants responded with personal stories that were either directly connected to one of the television stories or held special meaning for the reader. Mishler (1986) identifies a dilemma I experienced while interviewing.

We are more likely to find stories reported in studies using relatively unstructured interviews where respondents are invited to speak in their own voices, allowed to control the introduction and flow of topics, and encouraged to extend their responses. Nonetheless respondents may also tell stories in response to direct, specific questions if they are not interrupted by interviewers trying to keep them to the "point." (p. 69)

Participants were invited to select their favorite story to discuss their response and this portion of the interview process gleaned the most reflective, personally meaningful responses. My reflections on the interview process are discussed in Chapter 8.

Interviews were approximately 20 minutes in length. They were held in a separate room from the classroom. For the pilot project, all interviews were audiotaped. Participants for the interviews of the main research study were given the option of being videotaped or audiotaped. At Site Two, two participants requested an audiotape while the others were videotaped. I videotaped all interviews at Site Three. When videotaping, I also activated an audiotape at Site Two, but forgot my tape recorder for the interviews at Site Three. Thus, I transcribed directly from the videotape for the last site but used a dictaphone to transcribe interviews from the other two sites. I transcribed all interviews in full.

### Selection of Participants

Variables affecting the selection of participants consisted of a) the student population in terms of class size, regular attendance, estimated attrition rate,

interest in the project, b) cooperation of the instructor, c) time considerations to complete the study at each site d) permission from the institution, e) adherence to the university's Ethical Review Committee requirements, and f) transportation feasibility for the researcher. Elaboration follows:

a) Since the television stories chosen for the research study were located in a Native community, my objective was to have a balanced representation of voices between native and non-native participants. About half of the participants were either status or non-status native people. Other students have been identified in subsequent chapters as non-native second language learners or non-native Canadian English speakers.

Depending on the program, class size really varied from place to place. A preferred location would have approximately 10 potential participants to begin the research. I succeeded in obtaining 11 participants for the pilot project, but the other sites were smaller: Site Two - 8 participants; Site Three - 3 participants. In two prospective classrooms in which the number of participants would have been 15+ in each situation, I was unable to proceed with my research for several reasons which will be explained under the subheading, Ethical Concerns. (see pp. 33-37).

b) At the sites where the research study were held, the instructors were enthusiastic and cooperated fully in the project by providing space, time, and arrangements for technical equipment. Instructors took part in individual ways according to their schedules. One worked with students in another part of the

classroom with those not involved in the study; she would occasionally look up or make a comment and once assisted as a scribe. Another participated in some workshops and used the spare time for preparation and marking on other days. A third instructor left for the majority of the workshops and went to another building, so I had no close involvement with her and limited observation of her contact with the participants except during arrival and departure times.

c) As the research study occupied a minimum of 10 hours of class time, this became a consideration for students who were attempting to meet a completion date for acceptance in another work preparation program. Some advanced upgrading students who needed to accumulate credits expressed interest in the study but did not want to commit time to an unmarked project. At one site, insufficient time due to unforeseen scheduling changes resulted in cancellation of the study after the second workshop. Another site could only provide a room for 1 hour on the day and time available for interested students, but I needed two hours for each workshop; hence, the prospective site had to be cancelled due to lack of physical space within the institution.

In one instance, I agreed at the request of the institution to give 10 hours of volunteer time after the completion of my research study. This requirement has not been fulfilled yet, although I did contact the institution.

d) Two out of three institutions gave immediate formal permission to host a research project. For the third one, I submitted a proposal to the Board that was approved. A group of instructors at a fourth institution requested a pre-study

presentation, but their schedules could not accommodate a 10-hour study so whether or not the institution would have given permission is unknown.

- e) In all cases, I adhered to the requirements of the Ethical Review Committee. This strict compliance meant that I was unable to conduct research at one potential site due to the instructor's insistence that a mark be assigned for student participation in the study.
- f) During the main research project, I depended on public transportation. Travel time averaged two hours per visit at Sites One and Two. For Site Three, I required three buses with various wait times, up to an hour, so the actual travel time averaged three hours per visit. Although I expressed interest and inquired about travelling to a rural setting or smaller community, no offers to host a study were received.

### Ethical Concerns

A primary concern has been to honour the voices of the participants by neither silencing nor denying them the right to be heard while ensuring their confidentiality. I acknowledge their experiences with empathy and respect. It should be no surprise to readers of this dissertation that forms of abuse exist at every level of education. To hear a few of the unheard voices, representing multitudes of children and adults who have survived inexcusable wrongs, calls educators to reflect on the meaning of professional ethics. The participants' stories create the core of our partnership in research for it is their images and

voices that I hope educators will remember. van Manen (1990) writes about restoration to a state of wholeness in the following passage.

And so any text that may teach us something about the depthful character of our pedagogic nature is bound to aim for a certain hermeneutic: reaching for something beyond, restoring a forgotten or broken wholeness by recollecting something lost, past, or eroded, and by reconciling it in our experience of the present with a vision of what should be. This kind of text cannot be summarized. To present research by way of reflective text is not to present findings, but to do a reading (as a poet would) of a text that shows what it teaches. One must meet with it, go through it, encounter it, suffer it, consume it and, as well, be consumed by it. (p. 153)

A concern of mine is that readers may not take the time to internalize what we need to be ethically concerned about. Are we reaching for or resigned to something beyond? Do we reflect on the texts our students tell with care or indifference? How ethical is indifference, anyway? van Manen states that "indifference is the failure to recognize the other human being in a genuine encounter or personal relation. Indifference is a failure or crises of the 'we' " (p. 108). Throughout the study, the different voices raise awareness of the sacred space we occupy in classrooms as partners in learning.

One of my goals was to create sufficient distance for the participants to critique stereotypes and images of disadvantage yet engage them in discussion to envision their own realistic possibilities for social change. Therefore, I chose television stories that reveal "the experience of lived difference as an agenda for discussion and a central resource for a pedagogy of possibility" (Giroux and

Simon, et al. 1989, p. 23). Such a pedagogy encourages the learner's empowerment. However, the opposite can occur. Giroux and Simon write:

Sometimes when students and teachers engage in a critique of existing social practices or forms of knowledge, a feeling of powerlessness comes over the group. Doing critical pedagogy can turn an educational setting into a council of despair. How can we guard against the production of hopelessness when taking up an agenda of critique and social analysis? Given all the limitations of teaching and schooling, how can we effectively empower people (Aronowitz and Giroux 1985, Simon 1987; McLaren 1986)? (p. 232)

The possibility that images of oppression, poverty, and violence could reinforce the participants' feelings of resignation to what exists in terms of real social conditions of everyday life, rather than enhance their resilience to strive for change and, thereby, transform their lives was/is a concern of mine.

Although my research positioned me within relations of power that contribute to systemic disadvantage, I regard my commitment as an educator to be directed not only toward empowerment of the disadvantaged but also empowerment of the advantaged to reflect on the voices in positions of authority who are actively committed to social change. From my perspective, silence on the part of the majority of advantaged on issues of oppression, injustice, and violence within our schools and institutions of higher learning creates a vacuum, and this has far-reaching ethical concerns.

Also, maintaining professional boundaries between institutions, the researcher, and individual instructors can create ethical challenges. In order not to jeopardize my autonomy as a researcher, I realized that becoming a "team

member" with instructors could be problematic. In one situation, the planned study collapsed when I was unable to satisfy both the team's agenda to attach a participation mark and meet the ethical requirements set by my university.

Finally, when I agreed to give 10 hours of equal time as a volunteer at an institution following the completion of my research but was unable to establish contact with the person who handled volunteer services, it felt uncomfortable breaking a promise I had made as a condition of receiving permission to conduct research at the institution.

In summary, the television stories raise public awareness of moral and ethical concerns, and the research participants express opinions and think reflectively about problems that occur in real life. The plurality of voices invite educators to enter into the dialogue, not as experts but as learners gaining new insights. Quigley (1997) writes, "In my experience, many teachers (and administrators) become uncomfortable when the more 'sordid' details of the learner's past or present life are revealed [and subscribe] to the popular perspective to keep a certain distance from the learners' reality" (p. 108). From personal experience both as a student and faculty member, I concur that Quigley's experience resonates with truth. After a student dies, unable to cope with escalating harassment and bullying, issues surrounding the suicide reveal that individuals in authority knew of the situation but ignored the student's sense of isolation and fear. Not that I discount the pressures of teaching that are daunting, but experiencing contempt and indifference from the advantaged who

are in close contact with a student can be devastating for that student if he/she is dealing with a real or perceived life-threatening situation.

I know there is reticence to bring images that represent reality into the classroom, and some will argue that silencing and/or denial protects social disorder. Yet, voices who break through the silence “(for example, Aronowitz and Giroux, 1991; Welch, 1990), . . . maintain that we now face exciting opportunities to envision and build more multicultural, diverse systems in society and in education that will reflect the complexity of the world we have entered. Rather than embracing singular solutions or grand narratives (Harvey, 1989), we must now foster pluralism and new forms of empowerment” (Quigley, p. 22). The instabilities in the world that are presented as oral/visual stories on a daily basis demand our ability to read and discuss a range of social issues that have a harmful impact on individuals and societies. Throughout my dissertation, readers will have an opportunity to probe their own position on ethical issues raised in both fictional and real situations.

## CHAPTER 2: BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCHER

We are a story we like to tell.

- Roger Schank

Belonging. One motivator of literacy education stems from a longing to participate fully as a literate person in a literate community. Personal, family, work, and social status are reasons for wanting to acquire or improve literacy skills. I first became active in literacy through tutoring refugees and volunteering time in a low-income housing project. Since language learning included speaking, I encouraged storytelling and felt profoundly enriched by the cultural stories as trust developed during tutoring sessions. To belong, a human needs a welcoming environment. Even if a person migrates to unfamiliar territory, a sense of home and belonging is basic to well-being in body, mind, and spirit.

It has taken many years of building partnerships in learning to realize that the need to belong has deep, deep roots, and when I examine the highs and lows of my education, the lows have blessed me with empathy as I connect in mind and heart with students of any age who override exceptionalities to achieve their goals, and the highs have given me vision, hope, and perseverance when others more capable than I might have given up. I am grateful for the opportunities to teach and learn.

Why teachers gravitate to the profession and what influences form their pedagogical stance would be a fascinating study. During a conversation, a colleague remarked that everyone knows teachers become teachers to be boss.

Being boss had never occurred to me, anymore than a dahlia would want to be boss in a rose garden. I reflected on how different motivations for becoming a teacher has an impact on classroom dynamics and how perception of others changes depending on how a teacher positions him/her self in relation to the students. In literacy, I often feel that the teacher/learner relationship goes back and forth and each person speaks from their centre of being. No one sits in the margin. We are valued as different equals worthy of respect and reverence. Student-centred learning, empowerment, partnership, equality, and fairness are important concepts that guide my teaching principles and practices.

### Background Influences

My preschool years were spent on a dairy farm in southern Ontario. To return to early lived experiences is significant as a researcher of adult literacy because it is through past knowledge and lived experiences that we make meaning in the present. The past acts as a template for replicating and renewing our patterns of interaction in a learning situation. For me, the first day of school became synonymous with loss. I have written about transforming loss in adult literacy learners because failure and loss, not success and gain, in school is a common denominator in literacy classrooms. During graduate studies, I have explored power relations in my own school experiences that began on the first day of Grade One with feelings of disconnection, alienation, and loss.

A photo taken on that first day of school shows a girl wearing a white blouse, a plaid pleated skirt, white socks, and black shoes. She is clutching a

lunch pail. Using third person singular objectifies the self captured in a photo who just the day before was a carefree child, the me I love to remember, flying through fields of clover in overalls and bare feet and hair with burrs like spaniels ears. The girl-in-a-skirt day proved to be an abrupt beginning-and-end day that has been obliterated from my memory. Evidently, the school trustees held a meeting and decided that the one-room school just down the road from our family farm could not accommodate one more desk, so my first day consisted of being turned away not only from school, but also from a way of life.

Rather than forcing a five-year-old to walk alone several miles along a sparsely populated main highway, up a treacherously steep hill, past a gravel pit, and farther still to the other one-room rural school, my parents packed me away to live with an aunt and uncle in a town with multi-room schools until other arrangements could be made. I have surreal memories of that year: big boys leapfrogging over me, their hands pressing on my head, getting lost on strange streets, vomiting in the cloakroom, creating an awkward situation for my sweet, gentle teacher who meant no harm. The year ended badly, in failure, and a permanent branding as 'one year older than normal' for my grade. Clearly, my emphasis on belonging and building community in adult literacy classrooms originates at a primal level from those early introductions to school.

Gradually, school became tolerable though I wanted my braids cut so no one could see my ears turn scarlet when the teacher asked me a question. However, introversion in childhood became an advantage as a reflective teacher

and researcher. Social justice grew from my awareness of struggle. In grade school, we had spelling bees. One day, I asked a friendless girl in smelly, ragged clothes to be on my team because she usually waited until all the other students had been selected by the team leaders. Though she attended class irregularly and moved after a few months, she was my first teacher of compassion and equality. Her name was Constance.

In junior high, friends launched me into political activism on the students' council. These were the best years: grades six, seven, and eight. I participated in sports, fund raising, art, music, school dances. If peer pressure existed, I wasn't aware of it. A tin box holds a stack of awards, and on top, a note from an art teacher with the words "an asset in class". At home, I fed my soul with music, practising piano three hours a day. Evelyn Lau articulates in *Runaway*, a kind of authoritarian, emotionless parenting I can relate to. My body stayed home, caressing the piano keys with passion and sensitivity, but my heart was a runaway in search of acceptance. The teachers loomed large as surrogate guardians of my pubescent world and in their care, I thrived.

Then, in high school, loss broke my stride. Although my marks soared to the honour roll, a low IQ score prompted a guidance counselor to recommend that I transfer from academic to commercial courses. "You're not smart enough for university," the counsellor said. My family trusted his authority. With hopes dashed forever of being a high school music teacher, I stayed one more year,

giving a solo performance of the Warsaw Piano Concerto before quitting school and enrolling in secretarial college.

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*In tundra*

*spirit grows resilience*

*lichen*

*welded on stone.*

\*\*\*\*\*

As an adult, I found it hard to believe that no one from the school phoned my parents to discuss with them why I dropped out of school; however, while teaching high school, a Grade 10 student wrote in a note that I had been the first teacher who had ever helped him deal with problems that had slowed his learning since early childhood. Then I understood why no one bothered to inquire about my withdrawal.

*Subjects in texts receive more respect than objects in desks.*

As a school counsellor/music teacher, who had a choice to empower or disempower, he chose the latter position rather than act as a mentor. I later learned from a former teacher at the same school, that his prejudicial attitudes that I interpret as insecurities and ignorance prevented him from thinking clearly. What happened to me, apparently, had nothing to do with a low IQ score. For the average educator who experiences few, if any, academic failures, I emphasize the tenet "never assume". Never assume your influence stops at the

classroom door, never assume that disability or exceptionality is an insurmountable barrier to academic success, never assume that knowledge is true, never assume that an expert is right. When an educator chooses to impede rather than enhance learning, for whatever reasons, a student's loss is a society's loss.

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*Where does the illiterate child  
in the adult body go  
when the adult  
learns to read?  
Why  
in the silence  
does no one speak out  
if hurt freezes the child's mind?*

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### Renewing a Journey in Education

As I spread out this album quilt of research participants and myself, the similar patterns of life experience that stitch us together include, on the one hand, marital breakdown, welfare, single parenthood, poverty, absence of extended family, low-income jobs, unemployment, insecurity, isolation, health problems, transience, stress, loss of self-worth. On the other hand, we share the warmth of survival instincts, resilience, sensitivity, insight, healing, strength, truthfulness, determination, resistance, endurance, openness to change. It takes more strength of character to survive oppression than to inflict it.

When my two children were in school, I returned to a regular high school as an adult student to complete Grade 12. I felt so scared the first day with one other adult student in one of the three classes. For three months, she and I never spoke. Teacher-centred instruction allowed students to remain isolated. We eventually became friends, but this experience probably instilled in me the need to approach adult literacy classrooms as a place for building community rather than leaving individuals to remain as islands unto themselves.

After graduation, I worked as a secretary for another five years. On a bleak day, our family physician urged me to try one course at university since failure was no longer an unknown to fear. He, too, had received dire predictions for his future prospects by a school counsellor and considered returning to his alma mater after interning as an M.D. with a "so you thought I would amount to nothing, eh?". For the next five years, working and studying part-time while raising teenagers kept me intensely busy, earning a four-year degree in five years.

In 1985, I graduated with a Bachelor of Arts Degree from the University of Victoria and moved to Ottawa where I enrolled in a graduate diploma course in International Relations which created unanticipated challenges: French and Math. I left after the first year and returned to work as a secretary during the day and an adult literacy instructor in the evening. With both children in university, I was able in 1988 to enroll in a Teacher Education Program at the

University of Ottawa and graduated as a secondary school teacher with first-class honours.

From 1988 to 1991, I taught secondary level Special Needs and English during the day and continued to teach adult literacy students in the evenings. The resistances and rebellions of my day students were balanced by the highly motivated and appreciative evening students. A large percentage of both day and evening students were second language learners, so I specialized in Special Needs and English as a Second Language for three summers and winters in my spare time. It was during this time that the advantages of television as a resource for multi-level language classes came to my attention. In 1991, I decided to devote my teaching energies exclusively to my secondary students, but it was a difficult decision to leave literacy work. The frenetic pace of 12-14 hour days, intensive individualized programming for special needs students, and the death of a respected colleague prompted me to take a leave of absence and return to university for a Master's Degree.

From 1992 to 1994, I studied Canadian and Aboriginal Literature for a Master's in English from Carleton University. My thesis on Aboriginal Literature focussed on spirituality as a site of resistance and renewal in works by N. Scott Momaday, Leslie Marmon Silko, and Jeannette Armstrong. While writing my thesis, a cousin informed me that our maternal grandmother was mixed blood, and our great grandmother a full-blood native woman. The revelation explained a lot about my mother whom I loved and admired but never really knew. Her

repression went fathoms deep through her adult life, living in a religious void with chronic depression, fear of alcoholism, drug dependency, and silence about her family. On one occasion, she expressed shame about her ancestry without elaborating and felt that her life had been wasted. Denial of ethnicity resulted in a denial of self and an inability to feel safe or speak her own truth from the heart. When I graduated from high school as an adult, I realized the depth of her alienation for she neither recalled that I had dropped out of school as a teenager nor offered congratulations.

Reflecting on my mother's life, so gifted with intelligence and talent, I have a better understanding of why she denied her self in order to survive, yet no one can escape from history. Anderson (2000) writes:

Many Native cultures teach that we carry the memories of our ancestors in our physical being. As such, we are immediately connected to those who have gone before us. We live with the trauma that has plagued the previous generations. We know their laughter, but also their sorrows. (p. 24-5)

When people feel forced to hide their identity, a schizoid dismembering of self is created. One rainy morning, a bird flew across my dreamtime, and I learned that my mother had gone to the spirit world. A rainbow spanned the highway as the family drove to the lake to set her spirit free by the shores she loved to visit near the land of her ancestors. In *The Sacred Tree* (Bopp et al, 1985), the authors explain the traditional teachings of the Medicine Wheel. The North is the sacred direction of death and rebirth which has special resonance when I reflect on my maternal connection to Native Spirituality.

The final lesson of the North is the lesson of balance, for wisdom teaches how all things fit together. And balance, when applied to the interconnectedness of all human beings, becomes justice. Justice is the greatest gift of the North. With its aid, the traveler can see all things as they really are. Without it, there can be no peace or security in the affairs of the world. (Bopp et al, p. 71)

As I find my own voice and reach out to students who search for their power within in order to overcome power over them, my capacity to share our stories as "the people" grows.

What has happened to me in school could happen to anyone, and that is a sobering reality. Our humanity has not evolved, yet, to walk the talk of equality, inclusivity, and respect for the people, regardless of gender, race, or class.

#### *Researcher's Reflection*

*Sometimes we turn a corner and come face to face with mystery. Such a moment came to me early in 1998. While leaving our departmental office, I looked into the steady gaze of a bird of prey not more than six feet from the doorway. Other than a few leaves rustling on the pavement between us, the courtyard had a hushed quality. The visitor stood her ground. It was I who felt startled, not knowing how to respond. We stared at each other for several seconds before she calmly bent to pick up a red berry in her beak; then, she glanced toward me again as she gently lifted her wings and flew to a nearby tree. She settled on a lower branch facing away from me. Slowly, not wanting to scare her away, I moved along the path to get another look at this exquisite being.*

*Just as I neared the tree, two professors rushed headlong down a flight of stairs, their clatter causing Merlin to exit in haste. All I could do was call to the men, "Look at the bird," as she flew over their heads. "Are you talking to crows, again?" one said. "No," I answered with exasperation. "Look! Over there!" My hands waved frantically as both heads glanced back, but they were deep in conversation and brushed past.*

*I searched and compared size, colour, and markings in several bird books, before identifying the "visitor" as a female Merlin falcon. Merlin stayed with me, her tame demeanor and piercing stare, compelling me to look inward. Her physical presence confirmed she was real, yet I could not dismiss the coincidence of her appearance with other events. Although the reasons were unclear, I knew Merlin to be a spiritual being and that she had appeared for a reason. Her visit alerted me to a whole dimension of reality that did and did not make sense at the time, but my heart soared that day with fear and wonder as I watched her wing tips scroll messages across the Western sky until they became no more than a dot on the horizon.*

## CHAPTER 3: REFLECTIVE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

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*Partners in Learning*

*In the Messengers' landscape  
 wing tips communicate with air  
 grace soars on bounded space  
 partners join in natural equality.  
 Look to the east  
 where Grandfather Sun opens each dawn  
 reflecting on lessons delivered in dreamtime  
 breath of life awakening.*

*In the Messengers' landscape  
 visions transform possibility,  
 rites scroll through finitude  
 trusting the knowledge of Father Sky.  
 Look to the south  
 where eagles spiral to the sea  
 a dyad of talons lashed freefall through space  
 hearts drumming with Mother Earth.*

*In the Messengers' landscape  
 harmony spins a mystical web  
 quixotic connections to passion and fear  
 responding to sacred power within.  
 Look to the west  
 where songs sigh in cedar and breeze  
 cradle nests of hopeful harmonies  
 sing oh sing for creation.*

*In the Messengers' landscape  
 ancestral warriors offer protection  
 whispering wisdom in feather and stone  
 stories and ceremonies interlocking  
 Look to the north  
 where traditional teachings endure  
 honouring oneness, all my relations  
 gratitude to Grandmother Moon.*

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## Pathways to Reflective Research

The poem Partners in Learning situates the learners in a relationship of trust with each other and connects them to the natural world while mutuality rather than inequality define the relations of power. Metaphorically, the eagle messengers both teach and learn as sacred intermediaries within the cosmos. As signifiers of high aspirations, they exhibit qualities of mind, body, and spirit that enhance survival by creating harmony and balance, independence and interdependence. The phenomenon of eagles scrolling through space, time, and transformation invites readers to reflect on their majesty and power. Their presence challenges human perspective, entering our consciousness to consider other ways of knowing.

Drawing from values, beliefs, and experiences in native and non-native educational communities, my research methodology focusses on reflective learning. To ground myself as a researcher, I have participated in traditional Native ceremonies and spiritual practices. References to the earth, sky, sun, and moon acknowledge my dependence on them for survival. Positioned at the centre of the Medicine Wheel, the journey to the East is where beginnings emerge in harmony with natural phenomena. To study the teachings of this ancient symbol known to most native people in North America is a life-long process. Moving around the circle to the South, next to the West, and then to the North creates a continual cycle of being. Each direction signifies aspects of spiritual growth that are necessary for personal and social change.

Kirkness and Barnhart (1994) articulate principles of respectful research practices based on respect, relevance, reciprocity, and responsibility as “humanistic, culturally sensitive, inclusive terms” (p. 1). These Four R’s were adapted by native educators and leaders at the First Nations House of Learning, University of British Columbia. Respect, relationship, responsibility, and reverence—the R’s that Archibald, MacIvor, Wilhelmson, and Young (2001) developed into seminars and brought to my learning through the Longhouse Leadership Training Program—have been guiding principles of my reflective learning while conducting reflective research and recording the journey.

#### Practitioners of Reflective Methods

To apply reflective methods while researching the use of television in adult literacy, I reviewed available literature on reflective practice that provided a partial frame of reference. While other academic journeys in reflective learning created meaningful and valuable inspiration, the one individual whose words and work I most admire is Paulo Freire. His words leave imprints on my life as they articulate my understanding of personal responsibility and social justice. In Pedagogy of Freedom: Ethics, Democracy, and Civic Courage (1998), published after his death on May 2, 1997, Freire writes:

My voice is in tune with a different language, another kind of music. It speaks of resistance, indignation, and just anger of those who are deceived and betrayed. It speaks, too, of their right to rebel against the ethical transgressions of which they are the long-suffering victims. (p. 93)

The voices of my research participants speak from the centre as survivors in a language Freire understood. In reflective and emancipatory learning situations, the traditional role of the teacher as expert changes, so that “two learners who occupy somewhat different spaces in an ongoing dialogue” (Aronowitz in Freire, 1998, p. 8) bring knowledge to the relationship and teach each other. The following model (Figure 1) illustrates the interconnections that activated in the process of analyzing problem situations, gaining understanding of them, and working toward transformation.

#### MODEL OF REFLECTIVE LEARNING

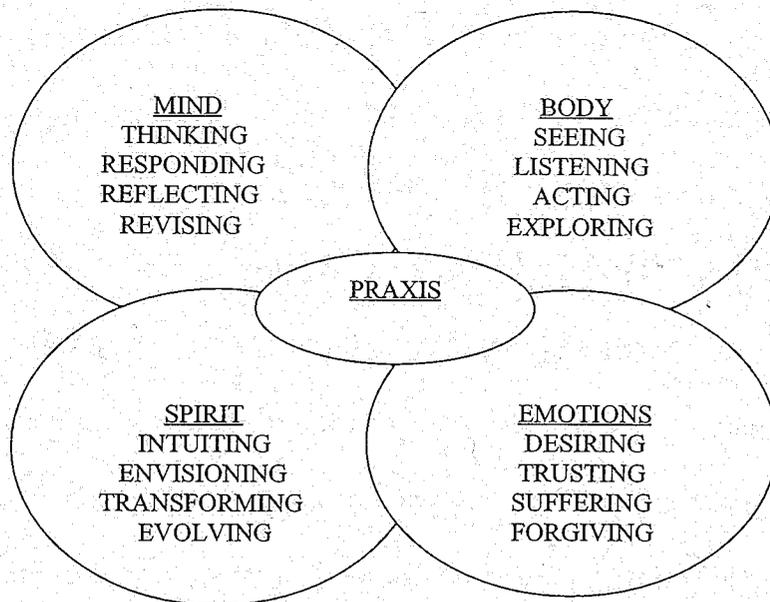


Figure 1. Reflective learning involves the mind, body, emotions, and spirit and acknowledges that a person's lived experience has a pivotal role in the transfer of information into knowledge. Naome Soleil © 2002

Emancipatory pedagogy requires a reflective analysis of how things are and how things could be otherwise, not only to gain an understanding of situations, but also to transform them. "In Freirean terms an essential prerequisite for dialogue is the educator's understanding of the 'situatedness' of the learners' discourse and of the capacity of teacher and learner to analyze and critique their daily reality in order to discover and exercise their capacity to transform it" (Modra, 1989, p. 128). Not only in educational contexts, but also in homes, communities, and around the globe, images of conflict and destruction confront us daily in the media. Yet, voices of respect and responsibility empower us to transform those painful images through our acknowledgement of the sacred connections we share with each other and all of creation.

Dewey (1933) defines a reflective teacher as one who "emancipates us from merely impulsive and routine activity . . . enables us to direct our actions with foresight and to plan according to ends in view of purposes of which we are aware. It enables us to know what we are about when we act" (p. 17). I agree that educators risk self-imprisonment in daily routines of teacher tasks that leave inadequate time for reflecting on the relevance of the activities being presented as tools for learning specific skills. Selecting materials and planning strategies that bring a love of learning into a classroom establishes a base for meaningful interactions in a classroom.

Whereas Dewey (1933) and Freire (1974) focus on the classroom as a site in which students experience personal growth and change through a process of

activity, questioning, and reflection on knowledge gained, Schön emphasizes reflection in teaching during lesson planning that he defines as *reflection-on-action*; or, when encountering an in-class situation that requires thinking on the spot as *reflection-in-action*; or, the knowledge that guides a teacher's practices in schools that refers to *knowledge-in-action*. These three categories of reflective practice emphasize mental processes but seem to exclude physical, emotional, and spiritual aspects. I appreciated one quote that locates professional practice on "high, hard ground" or swampy "messes."

In the varied topography of professional practice, there is a high, hard ground where practitioners can make effective use of research-based theory and technique, and there is a swampy lowland where situations are confusing "messes" incapable of technical solution. (Schön, 1983, p. 42)

Since 1985, my teaching experiences in confusing, swampy messes have proved to be a major source of inspiration for graduate research. The lowlands grow a variety of resilient learners who defy theories and challenge leaders in education to reflect deeply on the profound knowledge to be gained through listening and observing in a literate society.

From Mezirow (1990), who makes the distinction between reflection and critical reflection, I learned the importance of including assumptions in my presentation of materials for the study participants. Before their first exposure to a story, the participants reflected on their assumptions about a central aspect of the story. These assumptions were further examined when problem-solving an issue since "challenging our established and habitual patterns of expectation, the

meaning perspectives with which we have made sense of our encounters with the world . . . can be blocked by external or internal constraints (or both), by situational and psychic factors, or simply by inadequate information or lack of skill to proceed" (p. 12). Mezirow explores critical reflection from multiple perspectives and distortions that influence an individual's capacity or openness to transform.

Distortions are placed in three categories: epistemic, sociocultural, and psychic. Under sociocultural distortion, Mezirow notes that "ideology is a form of prereflective consciousness, which does not question the validity of existing social norms and resists critique of presuppositions" (p. 16). Critical reflection contests the status quo and raises consciousness from a state of "social amnesia" to social action. Another interesting comment that "television has become a major force in perpetuating and extending the hegemony of mainstream ideology" (p. 16) heightened my observation of stereotypes, biases, and distortions in the television stories that became a natural extension of the reflective problem-solving activities taking place during the workshops.

### Changing Patterns in Reflective Learning

An aspect of phenomenology integral to my research method is a focus on lived experience; however, I do not attempt in this study to reduce the experiences of 22 adult literacy participants to a central meaning or single "essence" (Creswell, 1998, p. 236). My emphasis adheres to the notion that "in phenomenological research description carries a moral force . . . [and] has, as its

ultimate aim, the fulfillment of our human nature: to become more fully who we are" (van Manen, p. 12).

Since there is a clear distinction made between phenomenology and other research methods, I cannot claim to strictly conform to one particular research method. In so far as my research study is an inquiry process for understanding based on a reflective methodology exploring a social or human problem in the context of culture(s), there are elements of ethnography. The distinction made by Thomas (1993) between 'critical' ethnography and 'conventional' ethnography situates my research in the former ethnographic framework. According to Creswell (1998), conventional ethnographers emphasize "a political purpose to challenge research, policy, and other forms of human activity" . . . [whereas critical ethnographers] "speak 'on behalf' of their subjects as a means of empowering them, giving them 'voice' " (p. 211).

Briefly, there are three cultural fronts in my study: 1) the culture of adult literacy within education; 2) the multi-ethnic and diverse backgrounds of the research participants that have an impact on their values, beliefs, interpretations, and resistances; and 3) the culture of aboriginal Canadians depicted in the stories, and the interconnectedness of each one to all the rest in the construction of meaning. I think the elements of culture, empowerment, and voice create an interweaving of the participants' voices and mine that gives reason to pay attention to the shifting landscape we call education and the inevitable erosions

that accompany change, whether individual, institutional, national, or international.

Further, critical ethnography for this particular research study is informed by First Nations researchers. With reference to Haig-Brown and Archibald (1996), critical ethnography in a First Nations context “provides opportunity for study participants to engage in dialectical interactions of action and reflection—praxis—in relation to both the research and their situations . . . [and] resists hierarchical power relations” (p. 246) between the researcher and the study participants. These researchers write:

Hammersley (1992) points out that critical ethnography is concerned with the overt expression of values (p. 103). In our work, such considerations were central. Respect concerned with values (such as reciprocity and harmony) and ethics (such as responsibility, representation, and authenticity); power, ultimately an issue of equity and ethics, focuses on relations. (p. 248)

Bringing strands of theory and practice together—phenomenology, ethnography, emancipatory pedagogy—has been a deliberate attempt to harmonize and validate diverse voices representing both native and non-native cultures. The echoes of lived experience reverberate through the self-reflective oral and written narratives of the participants. Richardson (1995) writes:

Narrative gives room for the expression of our individual and shared fates, our personal and communal worlds. Narrative permits the individual, the society, or the group to explain its experiences of temporality because narrative attends to and grows out of temporality. It is the best way to understand the human experience because it is the way humans understand their own lives. (p. 218)

Like van Manen (1992), Richardson recognizes that lived experience is not peripheral to learning; it is fundamental. Through "a union between poetics and science" (Richardson, p. 218), the narrative encourages voices to speak/write their own stories.

Through poems and dreams, I attempt to make sense of experiences and identities that can empower or disempower voices in education.

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*Lecture at Night School*

*topic: death*

*goals and objectives: destruction*

*strategies: bullying*

*i heard my words, poetry and prose, paragraphs of peace  
spliced into a hyper erratic text.*

*no quotes cited. of course. no limits*

*more petty thief than plagiarist, carving up  
cutting edge stuff.*

*one poem i'd invented*

*out of boredom.*

*imagine*

*seeing my words spitting out the black hole  
of a mouth so full of self, so empty of other*

*at the centre*

*of the room, like a normal being choosing me, alone, to taunt  
at the centre*

*of the marginal crescent moon of desks  
grouped by human occupation*

*i ached for wasted trees silenced that night  
no, that's not true, i ached for me my body rounding  
a full shell, neckpulledinturtleturningin animal-caught eyes*



ideological variables of gender, race, and class influence individual and cultural differences, yet I adhere to a personal philosophy that difference does not signify inequality. My role, therefore, as a researcher in adult literacy reflects a fundamental belief in equality and the right of every learner to be treated with dignity, respect and fairness.

This position as a reflective practitioner contrasts with teacher-centred instruction described by Quigley (1997) in which the location of an authority figure clearly defines a hierarchical relationship between teacher and student. He provides an illustration of a woman's experience with a younger teacher who shows a "motherly attitude" that incites feelings in the adult student of "regressing to being a schoolgirl again" (p. 106). By this example, Quigley writes:

Although all in the room were adults, the fact is that the teacher had succeeded in school and the learners had not. The two radically different sets of experiences, together with a host of social, cultural, and learning issues, create two perceptions of reality connected by the unspoken awareness that teachers have an "authoritative" role and students have a passive, ignorant role. (p. 107)

Quigley asks "Why?" in referring to "traditional literacy programs" (p. 107) as though unequal relationships are scripted roles that must be followed. The woman gives school a try but drops out. If the majority of teachers were treated like ignorant children, I suspect they would not last long in a class, either, yet I have witnessed this condescending attitude too often in adult literacy.

I think each individual has needs that change over time, and everyone grows and strengthens in a friendly and supportive environment; however, an

image of tragic victim and the disempowering messages, such as “little lost sheep” (p. 108) that maintain a state of helplessness, when contrasted with an image of a resilient survivor and empowering messages that position him/her on a threshold of change, reveals how images and voices have the power to create de-formation versus re-formation.

On an intellectual level, the research participants and I negotiated different points of view and drew our own conclusions about what the stories meant. The participants read the edited television stories from North of 60, participated in brainstorming to increase vocabulary, developed reflective thinking skills, and engaged in group discussion to problem solve real situations. Freire (1974, 1997) advocates “dialogue about issues of everyday life that leads to praxis: reflection plus action that move students [and researcher] toward personal transformation” (Soleil, 2000, p. 78). To advance reflective inquiry for analyzing situations of everyday life, challenging assumptions, and exploring possible solutions, I suggest respectful discussion that invites a variety of perspectives.

Social interaction based on a cognitive apprenticeship model articulated by Brown, Collins, and Duguid (1989) is an active, collaborative learning process to encourage ideas that are “exchanged and modified and belief systems developed and appropriated through conversation and narratives” (p. 40). Speakers and listeners go back and forth, sifting through a plethora of opinions until the learner finds clarity in the construction of meaning. This process of

using language as tools to accept some ideas while discarding others constitutes both individual and collective learning within a social context.

A reflective methodology encompasses more than critical thinking that focusses on intellectual activity. While reading de Kerckhove (1995), I reassessed the reflective process on a physical level, particularly in connection to "reading" television stories. de Kerckhove writes about a test designed by Steven Kline and his brother, "to analyze people's physiological responses to anything they are being shown" (p. 7). de Kerckhove volunteered to be tested for his response as a "knee-jerk critic" to rapidly changing visual stimuli.

I drew two important conclusions from that experience. The first is that television talks primarily to the body, not to the mind. This is something I'd suspected for several years. The second conclusion was that, if the video screen has such a direct impact on my nervous system and my emotions, and so little effect on my mind, then most of the information-processing was actually being performed by the screen. (p. 8)

Although the writer acknowledges his conclusions are hypothetical, he refers to the "'sub-muscularization effect' [that is] the interpretation of motion and action by a sort of sensorimotor mimicry involving the whole body" (p. 11). Citing Slopek (n.d.), a communications researcher at McGill University who has coined the expression 'collapsing the interval' to explain how television eliminates the stimulus/response interval so that there is little or no time "to reflect on what we are watching" (p. 10) on television, de Kerckhove speculates that human response to visual texts involves the body and emotions as well as the mind.

In addition, Fleckenstein (1996) claims that images are tied "closely to inner feeling and bodily reactions" (p. 920). She writes, "images are not direct copies of experience, but have been 'projected' into new dimensions by the process of experiencing the stimuli and experiencing the image (Langer, Philosophy 127)" (p. 921). In Chapters 5, 6, and 7 of the dissertation, oral and written responses of the research participants illustrate the significant involvement of mind, body, and emotions in their interpretation of behaviours and situations revealed through image and voice in the television stories.

Personally and culturally, students transfer information into knowledge in different ways. From a Native epistemological perspective, spirituality is embedded in their nature and acquisition of knowledge. Hanohano (1999) writes:

Thus epistemology is the study of the nature and attainment of knowledge, and which much of the literature describes as holistic, encompassing the intellectual, emotional, physical and spiritual realms. (Barman, Hebert, & McCaskill, 1987). Calls for reforming our educational systems to better meet the needs of Native students always include Native culture and language. And the most distinguishing feature of Native culture and language is its spirituality. However, this is the one aspect of Native culture that is often missing, neglected, or dismissed in western educational models. (p. 211)

Despite Hanohano's contention that spirituality is often absent in education, I would argue that creativity is an expression of the human spirit made manifest. Since my reflective practice includes a spiritual dimension, it is important for the reader's awareness in order to walk with me in the same learning landscape.

Western dualism situates self and other in a hierarchy of domination and subordination, superiority and inferiority. In terms of status, situating people with greater power at the centre and people with less power in the margin is a socially constructed concept that is contrary to traditional aboriginal notions of equality and balance in a circle within cycles of being. Although I cannot claim to be aboriginal in terms of education and lived experience, I feel more attuned to traditional aboriginal beliefs, values, and sensibility embedded in non-gendered language that does not differentiate the male as superior to the female. Learning in both native and non-native contexts requires participation, listening, and reflection as different voices make meaning from differing worldviews.

Research as a reflective process situates the researcher as a learner both in the classroom and in the world. Smith (1976) quoted in Modra (1989) writes:

There is no 'expert' who knows the answers and whose job it is to transmit those answers. Individuals come together with equally valid, but different, perspectives, sharing problems which have yet to be defined, seeking answers which have yet to be formulated. (p. 127)

Adult literacy learners have met a lot of experts in education who have exposed real limitations of expertise in terms of their ability to help students with various disabilities. Modra's opinion invites reflection. To be humble in sharing knowledge with others requires an admission of ignorance, too, because we are all evolving throughout our lives. Students want to feel confident that the teacher has special expertise, yet experts who abuse their power in a classroom

may cause irreparable harm. In the teaching of information in a specific subject, the teacher acts as an assistant who helps students construct meaning.

As learners, we enter texts with past knowledge already formed by our culture, values, and beliefs. Gender, race, and class sensitivities influence our ways of knowing and seeing reality. van Manen (1990) explains:

The phenomenological method consists of the ability, or rather the art of being sensitive—sensitive to the subtle undertones of language, to the way language speaks when it allows the things themselves to speak. This means that an authentic speaker must be a true listener, able to attune to the deep tonalities of language that normally fall out of our accustomed range of hearing, able to listen to the way things of the world speak to us. (p. 111)

Taking a phenomenological approach by studying reality in socially relevant television stories has been my process for conducting research in adult literacy and developing a reflective learning methodology.

In my opening poem (p. 49), inspired by Native spiritual teachings and the Medicine Wheel, I began in the East where beginnings emerge in harmony with natural phenomena. When eagles lock talons and tumble through space, they create a bond of trust. A fearsome responsibility moves them to act on intuitive knowing and physical being in harmony with creation. The practicalities of working together to locate a secure home site in which to raise their young require skills and strategies, planning and practice, patience and trust. There is a sacred path, one requiring commitment and effort. In order to fulfill their purpose as partners, eagles must embrace, in human terms, relationship, trust, responsibility, and commitment. The eagle messenger

reminds humans that learning these qualities is a team effort, not only to expand our horizons through knowledge and action in the external world but also to illuminate our internal world through creativity, reflection, and transformation.

## CHAPTER 4: STORY SUMMARIES

Workshop One: "Competition"

The story for the first workshop focussed on a theme of job competition that results in betrayal of trust between two male characters. The betrayal encompasses both personal and cultural experiences. In this edited segment, the non-native Band Manager, Harris, and his native stepson, TeeVee, both appear to be working cooperatively toward job training for TeeVee. The opening scene shows Harris gladly heaping files of job postings on TeeVee for his perusal, and from this batch of opportunities, TeeVee decides to apply for a Band Manager Trainee position. With his stepfather's recommendation plus references from Chief Peter, and R.C.M.P. Constable, Michelle, TeeVee naturally feels hopeful that his application will be successful.

In the beginning, a mood of celebration and goodwill carries over from the recent marriage between Harris and TeeVee's mother, Lois. Whatever conflicts have existed prior to the wedding, all appear to be forgiven because seeing his mother's happiness has caused TeeVee to let down his guard and trust Harris. In a prior episode, TeeVee even jokes about Harris being "the white guy that always says no" but now, when TeeVee wants his support, Harris seems to be enjoying his new responsibility as a mentor and advocate.

Delays in processing the application begin to bother TeeVee; he feels impatient to assume responsibilities of his own by helping to support his girlfriend, Bertha, and their baby daughter. Time lags, and TeeVee asks Harris

and the Chief for phone numbers to make follow-up inquiries. He receives mixed messages from Harris and becomes suspicious when his calls are not connecting with the appropriate people. The Chief says, "Good old Harris" in a tone that foreshadows the outcome. Then, he instructs TeeVee to try a different number and tell them he's calling to pay off a loan just so he can speak directly to someone rather than voice mail. Following his instincts, and disguising his identity in a phone call to a government agent involved in the hiring process, TeeVee learns that Harris has betrayed him by directing the authorities to withdraw his recommendation; hence, the application that could have created solidarity and respect in the family becomes the catalyst for dissension.

The local shopkeeper who has overheard the telephone conversation alerts Harris to the fact that TeeVee "is onto him". A profoundly moving scene occurs when Harris is working late, and Lois sends TeeVee with a bowl of soup for his stepfather. Her loyalty and blind trust contrasts her husband's disloyalty and deceitfulness. In his office, the camera catches Harris trying to bully the agent into reversing the decision to reject TeeVee's application, but he does not succeed. Framed on the far side of a window, behind venetian blinds, and under direct light, Harris appears imprisoned in physical space and conscience. A double entendre created by the external bar-like image of the blinds and the stepfather's internal blindness has a powerful visual impact when the participants begin to discuss the symbolism in this scene. By unethical and devious means, Harris cannot escape his actions, and his agitation contrasts with

TeeVee's forced restraint. As TeeVee comes slowly toward his office, the camera casts half his face in light, half in shadow, thus, creating a mirror image of love and hate that both men, in that moment, face. It is the fate of human reason that our capacity for good and evil operates on the choices we make and the inevitable consequences of those choices.

Even when Harris follows the Chief's advice to borrow money and set up a job sharing position to salvage the wrong he has committed, TeeVee refuses any compromises. Furiously, he challenges Harris to tell him why he sabotaged his chances, and Harris replies that because he is white, he fears TeeVee will take his job once he is trained as a Band Manager. Of course, his stepson expresses shock that he would jeopardize family relations in such an underhanded way.

The final scene shows Bertha comforting the father of her child, knowing his rage and realizing there is nothing he will do to change the situation. When she suggests that he go to the Chief with the truth in order to punish Harris and make him responsible for his actions, TeeVee says that would be impossible. "It would kill my mother. I mean really kill her."

What became clear in responses to the story was a cultural interpretation based on individualist and collectivist positions. I noted that participants who were either native or from cultures where social conditioning encourages a strong sense of family honour or decision-making by group consensus or considering responsibility for the good of all rather than individual rights understood and generally agreed with TeeVee's decision to maintain silence,

whereas participants who were socially conditioned to put individual rights first felt that TeeVee should have spoken out despite the pain it would cause his family and the community. The participants could all relate to competition versus collaboration and agree on the principles of fairness, honesty, and respect, but how to respond when these principles are broken remained open for debate and reflection.

### Workshop Two: "Corrections"

The second episode shown during the pilot project portrays a violent confrontation between a native female police officer and a native male teenager. The story exposes gender, race, and class stereotypes as well as issues of police authority over prisoners. Like the other stories selected for the study, this one provides an opening "for educating students to be critical rather than merely good citizens" (Giroux, Simon et al., 1989, p. ix), and to expand their understanding of how knowledge and power "both enable and silence the voices of different [people]" (p. ix). The text reveals the fragility of social order when the intention of police to provide protection for a society degenerates into violence and chaos.

Although William uses verbal abuse, taunts, and sexual innuendoes to inflame Michelle, she puts herself at risk of legal action and loss of her job. The community, though witnesses to her actions, indicate their unconditional support and want her to remove William from the community immediately.

However, planes to his home in Yellowknife cannot fly in for two days, and in

the meantime, Michelle has to mediate the rising opinions of her brother, the community members, and her prisoner.

On a personal level, the police officer, Michelle, reflects on the irony of a native authority figure striking an unarmed native youth with a billy club in a jail cell. She confesses that first she lost her reason; next, she lost her instincts; then, she wondered what she was doing in a cell beating a prisoner unconscious. When Michelle is able to feel William's suffering, she understands her own pain and discovers that "the heart often provides surer insight than reason; heartless knowledge is dead knowledge" (van Manen, 1990, p. 139).

A significant detail in the story that is glossed over but worth contesting in a classroom setting is demystification of child abuse in professional, middle class homes. Although absent in the production, Michelle learns through his local detachment that William's mother is a nurse and his father a teacher. The parents never appear in the story nor are they notified that their son has been incarcerated, so some participants objected strenuously to the ad hoc decisions made by the officer while William was being held in police custody.

William's legal rights seemed to be the most contentious issue, while acts of self-mutilation and a threat to kill himself while in jail appeared to be of less concern—behaviours often manifested by individuals who have experienced some form of abuse, then, turn the pain inward as self-loathing and despair. Michelle's accusation of him going bad "because that's what Indians are supposed to do" silences William and denies him any compassion based on the

officer's assumption that educated parents provide their children with a privileged home environment which, therefore, inoculates them from abusive acts either at home or in the community. Since education is only one factor for improving the emotional and economic well-being of children in a family, the officer's assumption that William comes from a "good home" may be flawed. William's self-destructive actions provide visible clues that he experienced some form of abuse in his life. In my view, running away from home and getting in trouble with the law signal deep, inner unhappiness although the causes remain undisclosed to the readers.

Despite the sensitive nature of identifying signs of child abuse and discussing ways that victims may be silenced by fear or shame, a fictional story creates an opening to discuss the tragic consequences of abuse when society imposes a code of silence. In the final scene of the edited segment, William is released from jail and walks alone into a community that does not want him, leaving him vulnerable to becoming a repeat offender. This victim/offender cycle opens another layer for discussion about social responsibility and community support services available to individuals who need such support in order to grow into healthy citizens.

### Workshop Three: "The Outsider"

The story for the third session deals with insider/outsider issues when a young native man, Nevada, arrives as an unknown to the close-knit community. Universal themes of light and dark, good/evil, love/hate, acceptance/rejection,

hope/fear, truth/lie create the plot's dynamics between human belonging and isolation. The first scene opens at the home of Elsie, an Elder whose knowledge of traditional plant medicines contrast the differences between Native and Western medicine. As Elsie prescribes pond scum to clean the outsider's wound, Sarah, a non-native nurse in the community gently provides her alternative interpretation that pond scum is dirty. While Sarah administers the natural medicine under the guidance of Elsie, a teachable moment occurs for the readers who observe the different cultural practices in health remedies. Who holds the knowledge, who administers the remedy, and whose authority gains respect as a healer is clearly depicted as a shared power relation that contests an assumption that Western medicine is superior to Native medicine. In a classroom of second language learners, the diversity of health care practices, alone, could be easily expanded as a separate topic for small group discussion.

Another contrast presented in the opening scene is the kindness of the two women toward Nevada, whereas later in the story, antagonism and rejection are shown by other people in the community as he begins to fabricate a life story that soon falls apart at the seams. His wound not only foreshadows a serious health condition, but also forms a symbolic pattern of woundedness beginning in Nevada's childhood and continuing through adulthood. His declared reason for coming to Lynx River as a graduate student and doing research in preparation to write a thesis is a sham. His repeated deceptions limit authentic contact to a few people who give unconditional acceptance.

Kenyon & Randall (1997) suggest that "The way we tell and show ourselves to others generates a picture of what we are like – our abilities and limits. Based on this picture, their treatment of us either opens up certain opportunities or closes them off" (p. 37). While the majority in the community had doubts about Nevada's motivation for being there, the story shows reflective and unreflective personalities. This story turns an insightful lens on human nature, and the oppositions that arise when exclusionary biases dominate an individual's perspective.

In another scene, while sitting around a campfire with men and boys from the community, Nevada shares a story about a sea lion hunt with his father. The intent to build camaraderie fails when details raise suspicion. One strand of the story proves to be true, but several details are embroidered lies. A child in the group challenges Nevada's version of the adventure based on the fact that harpoons are no longer used, thus, bringing humiliation to the telling of a memory fragment.

Later, when the true version of his story is revealed as a tragic turning point in his life, Nevada gains understanding from, Joey, another outsider whose mother is dead; his father in rehab. What provides Joey with greater security than Nevada is an extended family in Lynx River; Nevada, on the other hand, has been living on the streets, mostly in Vancouver as a male prostitute, since running away from a violent home at age 14.

Following the campfire episode, Nevada awakens in panic. "Why did everyone seem so pissed off at me last night?" he asks an Elder whose response comes from a caring heart and thoughtful knowing rather than a lecture. "My wife always said I talk too much. 'Talk less and listen more,' she said. 'Then when you have something to say, people will listen.'" Insight reflects wisdom.

On a hunting expedition with Joey and TeeVee, tension builds between Nevada and TeeVee, who is also on the run from a conflict with a local youth. "Trust me Snowman," Nevada says. "You start running, it's hard to stop." TeeVee is in no mood for counsel, and the two men goad each other for the duration of the hunt. As the conflict reaches a climax, Nevada reveals the truth about his life to Joey, who responds with a compassionate mind as Nevada adds, "I'm still alive, man. That's all it's been about since I was 14." No action has earned this trust except the recognition that suffering souls simply accept each other's experience without judgement.

Soon after breaking camp, the young men find moose tracks in the snow and the three take separate trails to maximize their chances; a moose appears at close range, and Nevada, an inexperienced hunter, has a clear shot but misses; as the moose runs free, Nevada collapses in the snow, breathless, and too weak to continue the hunt. For the pilot project, the research participants saw the final scene where Nevada admits to Sarah he is HIV positive. However, at the other sites, I stopped the segment with Nevada collapsing in the forest. This change was made for two reasons. First, while discussing the stories with a senior

administrator at a potential site, he expressed concern that one brief incident near the end of the segment might trigger some of the students, a risk I was not prepared to take. Second, the theme I wanted the participants to address was insider/outsider relationships, and what conditions create a hospitable environment for outsiders coming in to a new situation. Hence, the other three sites did not see the complete edited story, although seeing Nevada collapse provided a clue for them to predict the reason and implications for his future at Lynx River.

Of the four stories, the "Outsider" was least discussed as a memorable story during the wrap-up interviews. I thought, perhaps, the second language learners might identify with some aspects of being an outsider. Surprisingly, the native speakers of English had more to say on this topic, since a few participants elaborated in their reflective written responses about being teased, taunted, and marginalized by their literate peers in their earlier school experience.

#### Workshop Four: "Safe Home"

For the last workshop, the screenwriters provided a title, "Safe Home" to explore a child's vulnerability in an unstable, adult world. The story features a little boy, Charlie Muskrat, taken from his home by Social Services because his mother is in a drug rehabilitation program. Choice of language as well as facial and body images in the opening scene create power dynamics between adults whose control over a child creates unstable conditions, thereby, arousing fear,

anger, and alienation in the child. An interim caregiver, Betty Moses, explains to Michelle that "Social Services dumped him with a cousin" when his mother could no longer care for him. According to Betty, the situation at the cousin's is "a real mess", so Charlie is "on the road" travelling with Betty in her role as supervisor of drug and alcohol treatment centres. The instability in Charlie's life is compounded when Betty assumes he can stay with her good friend, Michelle, in Lynx River for a short time. Without forewarning, Michelle arrives home to find a child in her living room watching television and, initially, thinks the child is an apparition of her deceased daughter, Hanna. Unhealed grief becomes the central barrier to communication that results in Charlie feeling abandoned again while he waits for his mother to be released from treatment.

Vivid images of human connection and disconnection in the rising action show the heart-wrenching dilemmas that happen when people, irrespective of age difference, cannot comfort each other as long as their experiences of loss and grief are on parallel paths, simultaneously. The clash of human emotions that surface between Michelle and Charlie reveal the sensitivity needed to assist individuals in coming to terms with loss of someone they love. Their strong, stoical feelings, so close to the surface, prevent what they need most, to find comfort in each other.

Rising action in the story reveals how basic needs of a child are not being met by the adults around him whose own sets of complex circumstances

override his need for shelter, food, and care. Adults hold power; adults exert their power over children, often without consultation or respectful consideration that a child has feelings, too. In fact, Charlie shows remarkable resilience, empathy, and self-reliance as often happens when a child faces his/her own survival at an early age. He also wears the scars of wounding and distrust and accurately reads and interprets verbal and non-verbal messages given to him by adults. When Michelle rejects Charlie's need for acceptance or comfort, there is an immediacy to his responses. For example, their first encounter indicates to Charlie that he is unwelcome, disliked, and alone. He runs outside, and when Betty catches him, he says, quite understandably, "I don't like her." Here, he reacts without really understanding his feelings and needs being generated as anger rather than fear and sadness. Betty discounts his inner knowing. "You don't like anybody," she responds, without empathy.

Over time, a child learns to distrust his intuitive responses, leaving him less able to respond authentically later on as an adult with compassion for self and others. Rather, the internalized messages of rejection turn into self-blame or blaming the other in a negative cycle.

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*In the recesses of a child's memory, the loss of truth scars her reason, now, an adult encased in a specially-baked cake and white lies. How the body clings to unwanted food, swelling with each distasteful bite of seeming politeness, telling me that granny believed this specially baked cake was the little one's favorite treat, baked with care over and over in a desire to please the beloved child.*

*"I hated that cake," the adult says, passing a piece for me to ingest her dislike of it, of me. "And I could never tell my grandmother the truth," she says, as i taste toxicity, swallow the bittersweet memory. She hates kindness still, the daffodils i bring, signs of hope that shrivel. In metaphor, her laughter caws and caws carelessly.*

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Another reason for Charlie's mistrust of adults is revealed during a card game. Andrew, a friend of Michelle's, comes to visit. Charlie quickly seizes the moment to take charge by disallowing Andrew from joining the game. Michelle tries to reassure Charlie that "[Andrew's] a nice guy, y' know" but from lived experience, Charlie's internal voice says aloud, "Till he starts beating up on y' ". Without making eye contact, Michelle responds, "Andrew doesn't do that" and the moment of tension passes. It will take many messages, both overtly and covertly through positive relationships between men and women, to convince Charlie and children like him that some adults can be trusted while others cannot.

"Safe Home" exposes a child's vulnerability when designated guardians fail to provide responsible care. In Charlie's case, the "dumping pattern" results in a crisis when his anticipated return home is postponed due to his mother's condition. This delay conflicts with Betty's planned trip to the United States, and as his temporary caregiver, she cannot legally take him across the border. One option would be to change her travel plans, but Betty has her own agenda and tends to be an inflexible, opinionated personality, anyway. After a struggle, Michelle agrees to let Charlie stay with her until Betty returns. Though less than

ideal, Charlie makes a supreme effort to please Michelle without his desired results. Charlie has a nightmare and crawls into bed with Michelle, triggering memories in Michelle of her daughter. In a dazed fog, she forcefully orders him back to a strange bedroom. To make amends for upsetting her in the night, Charlie prepares breakfast like he used to for his mother. He tries so hard to be accepted.

Later at Hanna's gravesite, Michelle seeks a few solitary minutes but is followed by Charlie who offers tobacco and says, "For Hanna." Michelle abruptly shoves his hand away, and he runs from the cemetery. I briefly explained the scene to Lee Brown, a native educator and author, for his interpretation of the incident. He explained to me that "tobacco is a request for communication" . . . [but Michelle] "is rejecting the boy's tobacco because [she perceives it to be] an improper gesture" (email message, Sunday, January 20, 2002 8:09 PM). There can be different reasons for offering tobacco, but Charlie's need for communication makes the most sense, and though his intentions were kind and thoughtful, Charlie, no doubt, felt that not only his gesture was being rejected, but also himself. During the workshops, the general feeling of the native participants was that Charlie probably wanted to show his respect and sympathy for Michelle. Again, this scene involving proper protocol when offering tobacco involves cultural layers of meaning, the significance of which would not be understood by the majority of non-native readers. That Michelle responded in an impatient and disrespectful manner is a reminder that anyone,

child or adult, learning the sacred ways of a different culture needs to ask what the proper protocols are for a particular situation. Even then, "the answer you seek may not be the one you want to hear" (Alannah Young at a Traditional Teachings seminar, First Nations House of Learning, University of British Columbia, January 16, 2002). We are sometimes too impatient to listen and blunder into ignorance, offending people we most wish to respect, and these cultural misunderstandings can become critical judgements that divide rather than unite if reflection on the intent of the outsider is not taken into consideration by the insider.

In that poignant moment at the cemetery, where roles are reversed, the readers see how the hurt child re-appears within a suffering adult and reacts in anger while the wisdom of a little boy, still too young to fully comprehend the situation, reaches out with open warmth and receives a chilling rebuke. When Charlie doesn't come home that night and is found sitting at the airstrip in freezing temperatures, Michelle reflects aloud to Sarah. "He's just a little kid; he's scared; he just wanted me to be nice to him. Why can't I be nice to him? Am I going to be like this forever?" For me, the questions move out from the speaker like rippling currents, pushing the edges of possibility across borders, across cultural boundaries, across the hurts that separate us as people, one from the other. Voices of the ancestors inhabit our memories, have gone before us to other ways of knowing. Why can't we learn other ways of being now or are we going to be like this, in conflict, forever?

## CHAPTER 5: SITE ONE

### Introduction

The pilot project took place at a university college campus during the Spring Semester. An outline of questions (Appendix D.1) to assist participants in their reflective processing was provided as an informal guide, and the researcher offered open-ended questions to stimulate discussions. A writing sample was not requested of the Site One participants nor did they receive brainstorming worksheets. Unlike the main research project (Chapters 6 and 7) that introduced brainstorming techniques for vocabulary building, the skill development in the pilot project emphasized group discussion and problem-solving as the basis from which to write reflective journal responses. As with the other sites, this group of research participants wrote their responses to three stories after the workshops ended, but for the fourth story, they were asked to write during the last half hour of the workshop. The reason for the format change in the last workshop was twofold: first, I wanted to assess the writing skills and reflective thinking when students had unlimited time to consider their response compared with a limited time of half an hour that required an immediate response; and second, I needed to read the responses to the last story before interviewing the participants the following week, so I chose the most expeditious way to compact the participants' time commitment to the project.

Pedagogically, the research procedures for the pilot project were designed as a situated learning model (Brown et al, 1989, Collins, et al, 1991, Lave &

Wenger, 1991, Wilson, 1993), because I wanted to facilitate the workshops in a manner that would allow the research participants to not only interact with the texts, but also communicate with each other as a means of acquiring language—both oral and written. “In the situated view, experience becomes activity and takes on a much more dynamic relation to learning” (Wilson, 1993, p. 75). Of significance, I believe, is the recursive processing of language and the reciprocal exchange of ideas that enrich personal learning when adults analyze stories as a group rather than as individuals who read and respond to stories independently.

Lave and Wenger (1991) studied forms of apprenticeship in the process of developing a theory of situated learning. Of relevance to my research study that links language learning with social interaction, Lave and Wenger explore ways that “learning involves the whole person . . . becoming a full participant, a member . . . able to be involved in new activities, to perform new tasks and functions, to master new understandings” (p. 53) within a community rather than in isolation. Each adult literacy student engages in language learning activities that ultimately change his/her self-concept and involve the construction of identity. (p. 53) In my teaching experience with adult literacy students in an adult learning centre as well as my observations in a variety of educational settings, including libraries and storefront classrooms in Ontario and college upgrading programs in British Columbia, it has been my impression that many adult literacy programs provide limited opportunities to participate in social interactions.

As adult members in an academic community, I believe literacy learners are entitled to a program that includes both independent and interdependent activities. Becoming print literate is more than a cerebral process. According to Lave and Wenger, situated learning requires participation in situated activity.

Participation is always based on situated negotiation and renegotiation of meaning in the world. This implies that understanding and experience are in constant interaction—indeed, are mutually constitutive. The notion of participation thus dissolves dichotomies between cerebral and embodied activity, between contemplation and involvement, between abstraction and experience: persons, actions, and the world are implicated in all thought, speech, knowing, and learning. (p. 52).

Rather than dissolving dichotomies identified above, I prefer the notion that participation integrates the stated dichotomies.

I selected television texts from the Canadian series North of 60 because the stories depicted current social issues of every day life, yet located the situations in a specific cultural context outside an urban centre: a northern aboriginal community known as Lynx River. Although the research participants could have responded to the stories without group discussion, I view oral language and dialogue as necessary to the formation of meaning and understanding. Discussion on social issues represented in the stories, such as sexism, racism, classism, human rights, health education, employment, child care, nutrition, housing, equality, and justice generates a flow of ideas and hopefully expands an individual's confidence to transfer oral language into print form.

Although my research methodology for the project did not conform to an ethnographic study, there were aspects of ethnography both from the research participants' activities and mine, in the sense that information gathering, analysis, reflection, and reporting as observers on situations within a particular cultural context unrelated to their own was being undertaken. Creswell (1998) writes, "The ethnographer's task is the recording of human behavior in cultural terms" (p. 324), although the research participants were neither interviewing nor collecting data to be categorized in a formal, scientific manner. For the research participants in the pilot project, none of whom were aboriginal, their task was to study television stories portrayed as representations of reality in an aboriginal community, report on their findings, and reflect on their learning from the stories, whereas my task was to study a culture of adult literacy learners using television stories as a tool for developing literacy skills, and interviewing them to gain insight into their learning with some consideration of their responses through different cultural lenses. Within a narrow interpretation of ethnography, the participants were observing and reporting on "(a) a description of the context, (b) an analysis of the major themes, and (c) the interpretation of cultural behavior (Wolcott, 1994b)" in (Creswell, 1998, p. 104).

To connect reflective thinking and writing directly to the situated experiences of the readers (and writers) in relation to the characters in the stories, there were four questions to guide the discussions: (1) What is the (conflict) situation in the story? (2) Who/what is responsible for this situation? (3) Why

are things this way? and (4) What needs to happen to improve the situation? Within this framework for analysis of theme, plot, characters, and setting, the participants observed a “‘culture at work’ (H.F. Wolcott, personal communication, October 10, 1996)” (Creswell, p. 245) and grappled with their emotional responses, cultural biases, values, and beliefs that create tensions between real life and visual representations of real life situations.

### Overview of Site One Participants

Participants at Site One represented a multicultural, heterogeneous group. The three men and eight women came from economically diverse backgrounds and spanned over 40 years in range of age. As a literacy volunteer in the classroom the previous semester, I had tutored one of the participants an hour per week and led a small group of second language learners in a reading circle one afternoon per week for approximately ten weeks, so some of the participants had met me prior to the project.

Of the 11 active participants, only one Canadian English speaker attended all four workshops and submitted four reflective journals, whereas three out of five second language learners attended every workshop and submitted four journals. One second language learner attended three workshops and submitted two journals while another attended three workshops and submitted three journals. Two Canadian English speakers attended two workshops but submitted no writing. Finally, a student who spoke Creole and had extremely limited literacy skills wrote a simple sentence in response to the second story and

submitted a two-page journal in response to the final workshop with the assistance of two scribes.

The second language learners had limited background knowledge of Canadian television or Native culture. Only one Canadian English speaker said he had lived near a native reserve and described people he met as “wealthy” native people. He expressed interest in the portrayal of a Native community that differed from his earlier exposure.

In a U.S. literacy study, Merrifield, Bingman, Hemphill, and deMarrais (1997) found that a common theme among the immigrants they profiled “rely on television for an inordinate amount of information about the dominant culture of the United States, almost as a surrogate for interactions with native speakers of English. Most desire such interactions with actual humans but must settle for them in a passive, electronic incarnation” (p. 179). However, the participants in my pilot project did not fit the above profile in terms of dependency on television.

Although most of the participants in my research study indicated in the survey that they watched some television as a means of information gathering or entertainment, the group of second language learners said during a break in the first workshop that they only spent a modest amount of time watching television at home because they were too busy with family responsibilities and other interests. Four participants at Site One could meet their daily needs by using their first language either through family or community contacts. Therefore, it

seemed that the second language learners eagerly took advantage of any chance to converse in English while in the classroom, but in their private lives, they spoke mostly in their first language.

During regular class time, students worked independently, most of the time, and did not necessarily know the names of classmates nor did they share ideas in group activities to develop skills in reading comprehension. Limited social interaction took place since the primary course materials were taped recordings that students listened to individually. In my experience, adult literacy instructors usually work in relative isolation as no consistent, mandated adult literacy curriculum exists at either a provincial or community level, and even within a college system, program materials may differ from one campus to another, depending on the literacy levels and needs of the students on site.

As a reflective practitioner in adult literacy, one priority of mine has always been to encourage a sense of community by incorporating activities in which students with diverse literacy skills can participate equally on a regular basis. Television as an educational resource stimulates language acquisition through active listening and discussion.

Merrifield et al. (1997) points out that "one of the most basic distinctions that needs to be drawn between the literacy needs of native speakers and non-native speakers of English [ESL] has to do with the added burden of developing oral/aural proficiency as well as cultural understanding" (p. 8). To support this position, the second language learners at Site One, as well as the other sites,

responded eagerly to any opportunity to synchronize the four language domains: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Not only is it important for the majority of literacy learners to practise oral/aural skill development as part of their mastery in academic discussion/interpretation on a specific topic, but also as a way of expanding conversational turn-taking, colloquial expressions, debate, problem-sharing as well as non-verbal gestures that relate to cultural norms.

For the regular class time, students worked independently, for the most part, and did not necessarily know the names of classmates nor did they share ideas in group activities to develop skills in reading comprehension. Limited social interaction took place in class since the primary course materials were audiotaped stories and exercises that students listened to individually at their own rate. With a few of the participants, the regular instructor had introduced reader response strategies, such as predicting, thinking aloud, and connecting new information to past knowledge that has been stored in memory. However, the class of multi-level learners required individualized programs and often worked in relative isolation. After the first workshop, I simplified plans of introducing a different small group activity for each session to facilitating one large group discussion because the participants' daily routine of working on independent assignments had not prepared them for this sudden shift to group analysis and discussion.

A significant feature of the research site was the enthusiasm of the instructor. She encouraged literacy enrichment opportunities for her students and expressed a positive attitude toward research in the classroom. While I was searching for suitable sites for the main research project, I became more aware of the supportive role that an instructor takes in ensuring a respectful relationship with everyone involved in the project. The instructor at Site One arranged optional assignments and alternative study areas for a few students who did not wish to participate in the research project. Planning options is an important aspect of classroom research since participation is voluntary and withdrawal at any time during the study is a condition of the letter of consent. Students must be prepared in advance for changes so that the individuals not involved in the research study still come to class and work productively on separate projects. In my view, the encouraging, cooperative attitude of the instructor at Site One set a positive tone for my first meeting with the students, thereby enhancing their receptivity to discuss the purpose and format of the research project and to commit time and effort to an unfamiliar learning situation.

### Physical Layout

In retrospect, the layout of the classroom that had two large circular tables set on a diagonal in the centre of a long, narrow room and work stations around the perimeter, was not conducive to group interaction and created an imbalance in terms of physical proximity to the television. Participants formed two camps around the tables – the second language learners sitting close to the television

and all but one Canadian English speaker sitting at a distance, divided by the expanse of furniture and cultural difference.

I wanted the sessions to be informal and non-threatening which meant that participants found their own comfort zone rather than conforming to a prescribed seating plan. Interestingly, the second language learners sitting closest to the television were more actively engaged than the Canadian English speakers who chose to sit farther away from the screen. While the six second language learners debated through coffee breaks and enthusiastically wrote reflective responses, the others missed at least one session, took breaks, and did not complete their journals. This is not to imply that coffee breaks cause a decrease in writing, but the proximity to the television seemed to maximize focussed reading and reflective response. As a researcher, I can only speculate that a different room and seating arrangement might have resulted in a more cohesive whole and encouraged everyone's active participation.

### Workshop Highlights

In the first session, the participants received a brief overview of the main characters and setting. However, no background information, discussion of theme, or prediction of plot action was discussed. They were accustomed to either hearing or reading a story twice, depending on whether the story was an audiotaped version or a hard copy. The first "reading" of the visual text ran uninterrupted. General confusion followed when I asked them to discuss the text with a partner. The students normally read print texts in isolation, so they

balked at my request to work with someone. During the second reading, I stopped the video twice to elicit their responses to camera techniques, lighting, mood, and symbolism, but otherwise I refrained from entering the group discussion until it was time to wrap up the session.

In discussion, oral opinions, and written responses, the participants at this site were divided along cultural lines. It should be noted that none of the participants at this site was a native student. Those who came from Asian countries and understood a collectivist stance as their cultural norm, expressed deep sympathy and approval for TeeVee's decision to remain silent about the incident; others who upheld an individualist stance from a Western perspective demanded that Harris be held accountable for his interference with due process. TeeVee felt that silence was his only choice because speaking out, he believed, would kill his mother. His position was less valued by the individualist voices at Site One who strongly condemned Harris's actions. One student with collectivist sympathies said that whether or not she cared about a person would influence her actions.

It was a hotly contested decision among participants at all sites. Native participants who retained connection to native cultural traditions understood TeeVee's refusal to seek revenge or involve anyone from his community in the private conflict between Harris and himself. However, I recall Laura, a native woman from the family literacy group who had spent most of her childhood with non-native foster parents, objecting to TeeVee's reasoning that his mother

needed to be protected because this would insulate her from knowing the truth and, thereby, keep her in a state of false consciousness.

During this first session, I attempted to remain neutral throughout the group discussion and asked open-ended questions. Students who were not accustomed to giving opinions on social or family issues showed preference for sticking to the facts but included reflective comments in their journal. Some looked to me to confirm a right or wrong answer rather than synthesizing information and drawing their own conclusions. Building a meaningful partnership within the group did not happen immediately, even though they had spent considerable time together in the same classroom, and the dynamics remained essentially divided between Canadian English speakers and second language speakers with one in the former group joining the latter group for the next three workshops.

The students raised in English as their first language demonstrated less commitment to participate fully in the study by irregular attendance, little or no written responses, and physical distance from the active participants. I ended the first session by asking participants to consider what their response would be if they knew a relative had broken a law that threatened the security of other family members and/or the community. The question remained open for their reflection.

The second episode shown during the pilot project portrayed a violent confrontation between a native female police officer and a native male teenager.

Before showing the video, I asked the group to discuss with a partner: (a) their assumptions surrounding the role of police in society, and (b) if they were involved in hiring new recruits, what character traits did they consider desirable for police work. Later, in the main research study, I used this strategy to begin each session by asking a question relating to the story's theme. Participants recorded their spontaneous ideas, briefly shared information with someone nearby, and referred to their notes later as a comparison with the representation of police in the actual plot.

For this story, I provided background information from previous shows so that allusions to past events would be understood by the readers. Innuendoes made by William in reference to the recent death of Michelle's daughter, Hanna, complicated her ability to respond to his taunts. Without this information to explain her emotional fragility, the layers of meaning would not only escape the readers' notice, but also skew their analysis of the situation. Under normal circumstances, for example, the community might not be so ready to forgive her actions. Even so, there were participants who felt no mercy and judged Michelle on the basis of her actions.

During the second and subsequent sessions, I paused the episode several times for questions and comments. One poignant moment during this workshop, that is explored more in depth in the final interview with Ellen (pseudonym), focussed on her close identification with William's situation. Coincidentally, she was celebrating a milestone of being drug-free on the same

day of the workshop. Because of Ellen's support network and progress in her healing process, bringing such a relevant story into her learning environment at that precise time enabled her to respond objectively and to take pride in her recovery; however, the serendipitous situation alerted me to discuss specific topics with the instructors at other sites in advance of the study, since identification with characters can stimulate powerful responses, both positively and negatively. In the letter of consent, participants were also informed that they could voluntarily withdraw from the study at any time.

Fortunately, Ellen's identity with William created inspiration later on when we discussed how her lived experiences were still impeding her learning. From this experience, I learned two lessons; a) course materials need to be sensitively selected since, in any given classroom, a percentage of students will have experienced some form of abuse in their lived experience, and b) support services should be available for students in case stories with traumatic events, relevant to the student's experience, are introduced in course materials and, unexpectedly come to the surface.

During the second workshop, I observed a comfort level of knowing what to expect, thus creating greater focus. In this session, I stopped the video frequently to ask questions about visual effects and their symbolic meaning. Literary and visual devices were discussed to optimize the construction and retention of meaning and assist second language learners who have a tendency to lose the thread of a story if slang or slurred phrases create a tangle of words.

Sometimes when the characters were facing away from the camera, or words were poorly articulated, a second language learner might depend on body language, tone, and background visuals to interpret the rising action.

Because the story contests a stereotype in showing a native female police officer instead of a white male police officer brutally attacking a male prisoner, I presumed, erroneously, that this representation of reality might be challenged; however, the female majority vociferously argued that women can be just as brutal as men. Yet, lack of accountability of a police officer and the absence of William's parents in the story generated moral outrage.

The third workshop introduced issues of belonging. Though native and non-native approaches to medicine and healing could be the focus of discussion for this particular story, I chose to explore insider/outsider issues, in part, because adult literacy learners often experience alienation from the literate community. I thought Nevada's sense of alienation and struggle for acceptance had relevance in an adult literacy context. Like the scene in which Elsie prescribes pond scum to heal an open wound, the participants reflected on insider/outsider dynamics in families, classrooms, and communities. Who holds the knowledge, who administers the power, and whose authority dominates the social order is clearly depicted in "The Outsider".

This story turns an insightful lens on human nature, and the binary oppositions that arise when exclusionary biases dominate an individual's perspective. I would argue, as many of the research participants did, that

humans have a choice to judge others on the basis of appearances whether to be open or closed to outsiders; by looking inward through reflective practice, the community members in the story who remained open were enriched with warmth and fellow feeling; the unreflective people seemed insensitive and emotionally impoverished by reacting with contempt, rejection, and fear.

Toward the end of this segment, Nevada collapses in the snow while hunting moose. The final scene shows the nurse, Sarah, and an Elder discussing the need for confidentiality in regards to Nevada's temporary care after he confesses to being HIV positive. A glimpse of community members appearing as shadowy figures in the background is a foreshadow of their emotional distancing from the situation that results in Nevada's removal from Lynx River in a later episode. Because Joey's teachings about survival in the wilderness depend on acquired knowledge in relation to the natural world, he is unable to help Nevada whose lived experience has taken him to the streets of Vancouver. Although Joey and Nevada share a common understanding of parental negligence, the former has access to extended family support whereas the latter has had no one to offer shelter and advice during adolescence.

Of the four stories, the "Outsider" was least discussed as a memorable story during the wrap-up interviews. I thought, perhaps, the second language learners might identify with some aspects of being an outsider. Interestingly, the native speakers of English had more to say on this topic, since a few participants elaborated in their reflective written responses about being teased, taunted, and

marginalized by their literate peers in their earlier school experience. The scars of feeling like an outsider generated empathy for Nevada and admiration for Joey's forgiving nature.

Finally, "Safe Home" brought out the hurt child that yearns to feel safe and secure both at home and in a community. The participants wrote their responses during the workshop, so they had less time to reflect on their own experiences or empathy for a child's suffering when the adult world he inhabits cannot provide the emotional nourishment he needs to grow as a healthy multi-dimensional human being. Charlie is portrayed as a strong survivor, but his situation provides an opportunity for adults to discuss and reflect on a child's needs and desires beyond the basic shelter, food, and clothing.

On the second reading of the text, I paused in several places to give the research participants opportunities to discuss the symbolic meaning, verbal and non-verbal messages, and the emotions being conveyed in particular situations. The Four R's—relationship, responsibility, respect, and reverence—articulate the key elements of mind, body, and spirit development. The participants identified qualities that create a safe home environment. They considered social services in their own community to provide support for both children and adults.

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*Children of earth and sky and sea/grow as one large family/  
listen to the songs of trees/let our light awaken dreams/  
dance our sorrows in the rain/in our hearts the sun remains/*

*when the rocks tell mysteries/they will share our histories  
show us ways to think and see/what to do and how to be  
song of growing differently/treat each one respectfully.*

\*\*\*\*\*

I reflect back on my time spent with participants in the pilot project in order to consider the reasons why written responses from this group mainly focussed on factual details about the story, and no one mentioned this story during the interviews. Like Charlie and Michelle, I was in survivor mode during the pilot project, fighting to regain strength after physical and emotional trauma. In retrospect, I was unable at that time to flesh out depthful knowing (van Manen, 1990, p. 153) in the participants, and needed time to heal and essentially rebirth myself in order to be fully capable of entering into Charlie's experience, ready to inspire the participants in later groups to empathize with a child's way of being, seeing, knowing.

#### Reflections on Oral and Written Responses

##### Participant: Jane

Since Jane referred to my suggested guidelines for her written responses that I provided at the first workshop, her oral and written responses have been selected to introduce the research study participants at Site One. Jane was the only Canadian English speaker who chose to sit close to the front and joined the group of second language learners. She attended four workshops and submitted written responses for each story. While always respectful of other's points of view, she unhesitatingly expressed strong opinions both during the group

discussions and in her reflective written responses. In print, her voice speaks as it does in person with honest candor. I have selected her untitled response to the story, "Crime and Punishment." Note that for the main research project, the same story is referred to as "Corrections."

*Who: Police: Michael*

*She Just visited her husband in Calgary and their daughter had just drown.*

*Afender: William MacNeil age 18 was cought with drugs in his pocket.*

1. *Describe what happened in the T.V. segment from "North of 60".*

*Michaell the police officer had just come from Calgary and loosing her daughter to drawing. Not in very condition had caught William mcNeil a young afender with drugs in his pocket.*

2. *What previous knowledge did you have about the topic?*

*Only things I've seen on t.v. read in the paper and herd on the radio. It cn be a two way street when it comes to people. Power and conflect was a beg problem. Different people look at different situations.*

3. What new information did you learn about this topic?

I had learned a lot because I don't what a whole of t.v. But watching this show you are expose to every day living

When watching this on t.v. it realy make you open your eyes and you soon see that we have a lot too learn. We are all people reguadless of color, race or backgroud. Whe still cannot except people for who they are and not what they are.

4. Do you agree or disagree with the writers point of view?

Yes, I agree with the writer. Everything is not as it should be in the real world. To look at this show whe see people react when under difficut condition such as Michaelle who had just lost her child and William the youg afend who knew Just what to say to get Michaell going.

Unless people change the way they think, the problem won't go away.

We the people have to change with in ourself. we have to stat with that.

Then we might look at people from other coutues differently. Humas Beings. with one heat. mind soul.

5. Evaluate the text from your point of view.

From my point of view mihaeel policer office should not have come back to work so fast and especilly with out her partner. Not making up excuses for how she treated William the youg afender. but she was under very dificult conditions Just loosing her daughter to drawing.

William on the other hand knew what words to say to get Michael going

Don't agree with the hitting and showing William to the groud. By doing that that Just gave William more reason to say and do more things towards the polce officer which caused more beating with stick the spitting and sly remarks by William.

Half through the show you could tell by both paties that things were changing

*People have this habit putting labels on people.*

*William who was Indian was made to believe all he could  
was drink, smoke, do drugs and he couldn't do any  
better what.*

*We all can do what we set out to do if we got the  
encouragement from other people.*

*Michelle who also is Indian realize what she did was  
not right. Treating this the same as here people was treated.  
That's why she let him go. Everyone needs a change to some degree.*

In particular, Jane captures the essence of Michelle's reflection in her own words when she notes that changing our perceptions and reactions begins within the individual. Then, the possibility of seeing others as human beings with heart, mind, and soul is mirrored by how we see the self in relation to the other. In her reflective writing, she is taking a balanced view. Her recognition of encouragement, I feel, comes from inner knowing, the prying loose of institutional routines and rigidity that freed her to experience greater options, decision-making, and risks. Then, during the interview, the dialogue seems to revert back to past information, to a version of an unchanging world.

Jane indicates her belief that the violence between Michelle and William is real. Her blurring of fiction and reality illuminates the difficulty that some individuals have in critically separating violence in a story from violence in society. The need to educate both adults and children about ways that television

can lull audiences into normalizing violence became clear while interviewing many of the research participants.

N: Did the episodes seem real or phony to you?

J: Oh, no, they're as real as you can get em.

N: Mm hm. What was it about them that made them real for you?

J: I don't know. I guess, I mean hitting in the first one. Michelle was hitting, ah, what's his name?

N: William.

J: William, when he was in jail.

N: Mm hm.

J: I mean, I don't think you can fake that.

N: Do you think that really happens though?

J: In this country?

N: Mm hm.

J: Sure. I mean just because . . . it's probably just as real now. And, I'm sure it was real years ago. Just, you know, it was never heard about but I'm sure it's just as real today.

I switch abruptly to try and determine if the community of Lynx River is a real native community to Jane. Has she constructed a version about the world to fit what she believes to be true? Bruner (1986) writes about philosopher, Nelson Goodman, in *Of Mind and Other Matters* who defends constructivism as a mind-centred process in making sense of *the world* (my emphasis) out of other worlds.

"Such worlds ([Goodman] insists) have been constructed, but always out of other worlds, created by others, which we have taken as given. We do not operate on some sort of aboriginal reality independent of our own minds or the minds of those who precede or accompany us" (Bruner, p. 96). When I first read this passage with the reference to aboriginal reality, I felt offended; however, I acknowledge different perspectives, and my emphasis would be placed on our genetic and spiritual interdependence with direct ancestry and all of creation.

My understanding in regards to stories of creation and re-creation is that the stories speak, globally, of origins, causal events, beginnings within cultural contexts. These versions of creation come from the ancestors' connection with the present generation. To re-connect to language and literacy, the teacher or storyteller needs to provide scaffolding in order to link new information to past knowledge, a recursive process of meaning making; however, when the perceiver assumes reality as a given and unchanging or has no prior information on which to connect new information, it would appear that a collapse occurs, preventing a recursive process to activate until more material can be gathered. Listen to the following exchange.

N: What did you learn about Native people and their culture?

J: Mm. Sometimes I feel they got it harder than we do. Y' know, because where they come from and I guess how the white people look at em, y' know, probably history gone by and everything. That's how they are and that's how they are always gonna be and they'll never change, so people just treat em that way, but, I

mean, if you're not going to give somebody a chance, to find out that you can be different, I mean, some choose to stay the same.

In a "them" and "us" world, Jane has forgotten that from the story, a "them" beat up another "them" and then reflected on other ways of being in a them/us world. Her comment on giving people a chance opens a space for flexibility and reflective thinking. I missed an opportunity to begin the process of freeing the learner to reflect in the moment, mainly because I was relying on "external goals and objectives [to gather responses to a set of questions] that may or may not have anything to do with the learning situation at hand" (Tremmel, p. 440).

Bruner (1986) writes that when thoughts build on thoughts, "each transforming a previously created world version into a new one, the whole providing a basis for understanding not only single acts of cognition but also complex ones that have the look and smell of real world-making" (p. 98), then an individual begins to distinguish between some world versions being right, and others not. When Jane says "that's how they [native people] are always gonna be and they'll never change", she attempts to find coherency in her world version, "but the answer cannot lie in coherence alone; for a false or otherwise wrong version can hold together as well as a right one" (p. 37) (cited in Bruner, p. 98). That there are "conflicting truths" (p. 99) is evident in the thought fragments uttered by Jane in a brief interval and interrupted by a researcher seemingly more intent on collecting answers, at that time, than finding a clearing in the clutter of

ideas to enable the laying of a foundation for future construction. I felt so frustrated after listening to this portion of the interview because that one utterance could have filled the entire interview as an exploration of other world versions.

Lack of exposure to native people in different contexts prevents Jane from either contesting stereotypes that give an appearance of reality or fully appreciating how Michelle's introspection alters the course of the action. Another false assumption is that all "white people" fit into her construction of reality.

Jeannette Armstrong (1995) reflects on a childhood memory as an entry point to them/us relations from a native perspective. She begins by comparing the natural world on the reservation to settlement in the town below. For the former, the language is warm, free, humming with energy created by nature, whereas for the latter, words such as "dirty", "searing glitter", "angry sounds of cars honking" and the "grind of large machinery" provide a sharp contrast (p. 317). Her grandmother speaks Okanagan which Armstrong translates as, "The people down there are dangerous, they are all insane." Her father responds, "It's because they are wild and scatter anywhere" (p. 317). I can feel her words form a knot in my stomach, my gut response to blood memories tied to the land that often arise in that hybrid straddling of differing world versions.

Having some insight into the struggles Jane has overcome to gain self-determination, I think that she and Armstrong would find common ground on a human level when the latter writes as a witness of horrific events in aboriginal

history. "As a Native American, I have felt that crisis as a personal struggle against an utterly pervasive phenomenon. My conflict has been to unremittably resist its entrapment, while knowing that it affects every breath I draw" (p. 317). For Jane and Jeannette, a mutuality exists in their personal struggles and their resilience to survive the external powers exerted over them by the dominant authority. On a personal level, them and us, us and them reconstruct different versions, suggesting "that versions exist independent of a world they are versions of" (Bruner, 1986, p. 99).

After transcribing the interviews from the pilot project, I decided to change my approach in the main research project to a more conversational style of interviewing. This decision stemmed from my reflections on Ellen's free flowing interview compared with the other research participants at Site One. How Ellen and I proceeded with the interview led to moments of self-discovery and deeply felt understanding that will be explained more fully toward the end of this chapter.

The fact that Jane touched on the possibility of change and alluded ever so briefly to ways of changing "how the white people look at em" is a space that deserved critical attention rather than the superficial responses that a 20-minute interview allows when the interviewer's objective is to elicit responses for every question rather than stay open to the possibility of purposeful reflection on a single aspect.

\* \* \* \* \*

*Versions Evolving*

*Halfway down the precipice,  
geologic edges move over,  
shudder their ancient boulders to shift  
broad shards into newborn ledges  
and gaping crevasses fill with roots  
of hardy alpine greens, miracles  
yielding, learning to accommodate  
unrelenting, inhospitable blizzards.*

*Yet, nearer to the valley floor,  
I wander among a tapestry of blooms,  
here a touch of Monet's palette,  
wild canvasses romping in the breeze  
where mountain lions meet for lunch  
then, turn their satiated bellies to the sun.  
and far below, a still-life miner's town  
surrenders empty to the land.*

\* \* \* \* \*

J: See, I've never seen anything on native people. I mean that was totally brand new to me.

N: Oh, interesting.

J: Mm hm.

N: O.K.

J: 'Cause I've never knew . . . only something that I read in a book. Actually see how they actually live; I haven't seen it.

N: Did you question at all when you were watching [the stories] that maybe it was a producer's fantasy about how they live rather than...?

J: No. It never entered my mind.

N: No?

J: No. Well, I guess . . . but why would you want to pretend that someone's living like that?

N: Well, because some white people like to think of native people as inferior.

J: Well, I never thought of it that way. Like I said, I just see it as it is. I'm not into fantasy and the next generation and all that. (laughter) That just don't do it for me. It's gotta be real. Like I can't sit down and watch a movie that's non-fiction because it's gotta be real, y' know, it's gotta be happening, y' know. I can sit down and watch a true story. No problem.

Much debate continues in regards to the impact of television on our daily lives. If media experts are correct in saying that the average five-year-old is able to distinguish between fiction and reality, how would the same experts explain Jane's impression that the "stories" were non-fiction accounts of real people's experiences? Despite the fact that the majority of my research study participants said that *Lynx River* gave the "real" representation of a native life-style, perhaps unaware of another version of the native people who live with "a drum in one hand and a computer and pen in the other" (Jan Hare in a presentation at the University of British Columbia, January 15, 2002). For television readers to contest stereotype images maintained by the dominant society, they must first acknowledge themselves as agents of change in a dynamic social network.

Participant: David

At the time of the study, David had been in the program several months. His decoding skills had progressed so that he was reading with a tutor at the fundamental level. Both the instructor and I recorded David's response to "Safe Home". In the first three workshops, David had only tried once to express his ideas in writing. The second story about the confrontation between Michelle and William prompted this response. "I tink the ploice Laby is upset." When I read this simple sentence, again and again, my heart sings, yet tears shed a river of remembering.

David attended each workshop but said very little until the final session, when Charlie brought up a childhood memory he'd abandoned in his homeland. A flood of sadness opened his voice and filled our hearts with his memories. Then, with the help of the instructor and myself, he dictated these words.

*From what I seen, the lady took the boy to the home—Police officer an ain't expecting boy to be there. The little boy ran away because both are stranger.*

*The lady who took boy there wondered where he went. She went outside and found him under the tree. She took him back inside. Then she explained situation to the police officer. They she went away (to next job). She asked police woman*

to give him lunch. The little boy asked the police officer, "Do you have any children?" She was quiet for about 2 minutes. Little boy asked her why she had those toys (in the room). Then boy asked if he could watch t.v. Police officer said no so little boy ran away again.

I don't know where it is go to go now. The little boy's Mum was sick—didn't say if illness.

Police officer seemed upset—Memories are coming back. Doesn't know how to deal with them. Little boy feeling pain - and gets mad soon.

(the instructor stopped recording David's reflections at this point to attend to the needs of a student who was not involved in the study, causing a slight break in the flow of ideas; the researcher took over as scribe.)

The little boy learnt what made police lady so sad—she told him what happened to her kid. The young boy got a little present for the Police lady because she was sad—wanted to make her feel better.

The little boy was supposed to leave the town. He went to police lady's office. Before, the police lady apologized, explained she was sad. Social Service lady couldn't take boy to States—not allowed any luggage doing her job.

The Social Service lady tried to grab little boy because doesn't want to leave him there. The little boy was screaming. "She wants to stay. She doesn't want to go. She hates her." The little outside fell on his knees, then ran back to police lady. Police lady said she would keep him.

They went to Sara's place to play cards. A man walked into card playing and he sat beside Michelle. Charlie thinks he cheats. Man not interested in playing so he left. Michelle went back to playing and Charlie said men are okay until they start beating up on you. Charlie got into with Michelle and she yelled at him to go back to his own bed. He made breakfast but Michelle wasn't happy. At the grave, Charlie come there and give tobacco as present but Michelle was sad. Charlie

*went to the airstrip and Michelle found him there. Charlie accused Michelle of losing her daughter because she was a boozier like his Mother. Michelle feels a lot of pain and they both feel bad.*

David's recall of facts and details from a story allowed him to participate fully in the discussion. I had worked with him as a tutor, one-on-one, in a private space away from the classroom and noted his keen observations and insights as we discussed his assigned readings, goals, and dreams for a better future. Schank (1990) argues that "story" involves knowledge, intelligence, and memory.

"Knowledge is experiences and stories, and intelligence is the apt use of experience and the creation and telling of stories. Memory is memory for stories, and the major processes of memory are the creation, storage, and retrieval of stories" (p. 16). In my view, David's general knowledge, intelligence, and memory allowed him equal access to stories through oral and/or visual media, but he felt frustrated by his limited ability to decode print. The modest gains he made in decoding language at the fundamental level were not enough, however, to keep him attending class. Significantly, David identified "writing" with a scribe as the most meaningful part of the study for him. Seeing his oral dictation in print form gave permanence to his knowledge and reflections. I sensed that his ability to read much of his dictated text also touched him deeply since he spoke with pride about his ability to retain factual information and articulate his thoughts clearly.

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*Embodiment*

*a man's voice shakes, little boy speaks  
full moon eyes against a midnight sky  
memories startle from silent space  
responding again to charlie's cry  
never go back, never warp the mind  
to hate the teacher, but hate her whip  
that bloodied mud-soft little boy hands,  
then dragged himself home, an hour's trip,  
fear quit little boy going to school  
hot, dusty classroom and tortured screams  
learning held hostage by words so cruel.  
until the salve of years healed clean.*

\*\*\*\*\*

Early abandonment—emotional, physical, spiritual abandonment—leaves the tender child in an adult body bent, broken, left to wither away, yet still alive to grieve. David came to mind when I received an email message with a description of a watercolour collection inspired by a woman on a silent, early morning walk during a retreat. On the walk, Hazel became aware of the voices of birds that seemed to be asking her to be more observant, to pay attention to the sacredness of nature in order to better understand the spirituality of the Cree people in her region. Looking inward for a sign, a direction to move toward, an answer came in the form of a flower. She had been admiring a purple Monkshood flowerstock “reaching for the sky, beautiful and strong. After several days, I noticed that the stock had been broken and the flowers hung down to the ground. I remember saying, ‘Oh, what a waste. That was so beautiful. Why would someone do that?’ . . . because it had not just fallen over; it had been broken

and then begun to turn and reach for the sun again." Amazingly, the new flowers had "the same green that was in the leaves that grew from the stock before the break." I thought of David, the rejection he'd suffered in school as a child, and his return that was short-lived but ever hopeful, life greening anew.

N: What did you learn about native people and their culture?

D: Well, what I know is like when you get into different places where you don't, um, really, us, like used to or like belong there or whatever, you know, it's like it's different to cooperate with other people. Learn from them, like you know, more like they get, like, put down sometime, you know. They don't really like, you know, communicate that great. Some of them.

N: They seem to communicate a little bit differently, don't they.

D: Ya. Ya, so it's a little bit different.

N: Do you remember which episode had the biggest impact on you to make you think about your own life?

D: Well, from the experience from the police lady and the little boy . . .

N: Mmmm.

D: You know it's like she was dealin' with her own problem and she couldn't cope with that little boy, you know. Little boy don't got a big problem like police lady do because little boy can like understand, you know, but when it reach certain aspect is, you know, police lady cannot cooperate with it, so needs some more time to get over with her angry to move on.

N: And what was that calling up in you, in your own life?

D: Well, lots of people have been hurt before but a lot of people move on. Right? But some people seem like they just can't get about it. It's kinda hard, you know, for some people to break that ice, you know, to move on.

N: What do you think helps people move on?

D: Well, you got a choice other people and be strong again.

N: What was the most meaningful experience for you? Watching the media texts or discussing the main ideas or writing your responses?

D: Like writin' my responses 'cause from like different culture what I see up on the screen is like, you know, exactly what certain people go through and stuff like that so it come to sounds like those things really exist in real life.

As David had the most difficulty writing of all the participants, I think this reference to writing has special significance: 1) his desire to write and think of himself as a writer, and 2) his ability to recall memories and connect his lived experiences to the story appeared to be more satisfying when, with the help of a scribe, he was able to see his ideas in print. In the next comment, it is obvious that David's active listening and reflective thinking operated simultaneously as he "read" the stories.

N: Did the episodes seem real or phony to you?

D: They seemed real because you can see what happened; meanwhile the flim is rollin' and you're just thinkin' of something of what coulda be happenin', you know, and it doesn't work out the way you think it happen so, you know, it's like, you know, go the other way aroun' so . . .

N: Is that like life?

D: Ya. That things change sometime.

N: Do you have any interest in a media literacy course?

D: Well, not much but I wouldn't mind, um, you know do a little.

N: You have a good memory, don't you?

D: Ya.

Participant: Rena

Rena's responses to the television stories from North of 60 focussed on marginalized youth and her experiences in an urban setting rather than on the situational conflicts in the stories. I found Rena to be searching for meaning through external forms, such as style and appearance, in an attempt to disrupt and break free from social constraints. Her dress code, bold make-up, zany nail polish, and feisty personality created spectacle reminiscent of Bakhtin's notion of carnivalesque.

From my perspective, however, Rena tested her boundaries and resisted dominant values as a means of discovering her personal identity rather than being motivated by subversive attitudes and/or behaviours. In fact, Rena expressed conservative views and took a strong, individualist position among the participants when discussing Harris's betrayal of TeeVee, believing that Harris should be punished for his actions. Yet, her flair for tragic comedy and the melodramatic set her apart from the group.

Fiske (1987) writes about children's cartoons and comedies that test the boundaries and "frequently invert 'normal' relationships and show the adult as incompetent, unable to understand, and the children as superior in insight and ability" (p. 242). I thought of Rena while reading this passage. She spoke with authority and used style, not as a form of degradation, but to sensationalize, to draw attention to the body as a political statement. According to Fiske, style that performs as a function of carnival "is essentially liberating, acting as an empowering language for the subordinate" (p. 249) in response to being a member of the dispossessed in society. "The carnival is both a product and a celebration of the yawning gap between the interests and experiences of the dominant and the subordinated in white patriarchal capitalism" (p. 249). In both oral and written expression, Rena appeared to experience more discontinuity than connection to the representation of social issues in the stories.

### *Outsider*

*Well from my knowledge as a youth or young adult and helping street kids for 6 years voleentarily I have seen plenty. When a teenager that comes from a different town or provence he or she frist hit the common area—the mall for example to cheackout the seen, what peopl wear how they act and who's the in croud. Then usually a week or so later they return the mall dressed as a certain croud e.g.:*

Skater look - baggy pants, colored nails in blue or black, tack shirt, dyed hair and if her or she doesn't smoke, they start. He or she pick the spot most common to crowd they want. Stories are made up if he or she get noticed. If not they sit in a corner or back area watching peol wish for company.

Every day he or she if a lonner will sit alone and venture off on own and may devlop depression and become suicidal. If he or she is in the in crowd then, parties start, drugs, stealing mail. Lie after lie will devlope. He or she puts away the immagine the once knew and become some other face. But usully problems devlop in the family and they probally drop out of school or skip a lot. Always in trubble, if he or she screws up (makes a Big Mistake) they are sent out of the group and become once again a lonner. Unill he or she picks a new group to hand out with. If not major depression kicks in and if he or she is searous enough will kill themselves. And questions will go on for ever about the death. But he or she usually finds a new crowd

*to hang out with and once again changes into  
another person, other than their selves.*

Rena's witnessing of dispossessed young people reveals internally divergent selves. She views despair as an inevitable response if these young people she observes in the mall are unable to reproduce the materiality, gestures, and language that allows the outsiders to be initiated into a desired group. Although Fiske (1987) regards postmodernism as a refusal of categories in which "style asserts its ownership of all images . . . and produces the pleasures of the surface, of the body, of the liberation from the social, the contextual, and [common] sense" (pp. 254-5), I would argue that in the context of style, postmodernism may deregulate the dominant culture's values and thinking; however, a subversive process of regulation assumes power within the resistant groups that represent "the powerless masses" (p. 254). I recognized in my brief time with Rena that in order to work as a partner in learning with her, an instructor would need a better understanding than I had of the student's lived experiences in the world.

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*Postmodern Me*

*there is no true me.*

*absolutely my difference*

*swings*

*like a*

*pendulum.*

*home school life*

*shif ting*

*change the constant*

*arrival.*

*i am not*

*the same as you but equal*

*identities*

*beginning*

*ending in flux*

*always.*

\*\*\*\*\*

Since Rena's reflection on belonging made no references to the story about Nevada and his street life, I missed an opportunity during the interview to bring her back to that particular plot to determine what connections, if any, she identified with. When I asked her what she enjoyed most about the workshops, she couldn't decide between discussions and writing.

N: I noticed that in your writing you referred to some of the people you were working with.

R: Ya.

N: So, you were taking something from your own experience, weren't you?

R: Mm hm. Um. One of my things was belonging to the . . . being the outsider.

Um. An outsider doesn't necessarily have to be a race, a different colour. It could be a different religion, it could be a different dress code, it could be different attitude, or it could be a different way of looking, acting, walking, talking.

(cough) Excuse me. Anything. People pick up on these things very quickly, you know, in certain groups, you know, the kids like manipulate each other and get what they want. Be on the in crowd, you know. They're very smart and, you know, um.

N: Would you say you're comfortable with difference?

R: Ya. I am different, myself, you know. I don't dress like a skater or "homie" or a Christian, or, you know, a Jehovah's Witness, or whatever. Or, a biker. Um. One thing I've been taught is you dress the way you feel and today, right now, I'm wearing Kermit and a pair of dress pants because I feel comfortable, you know, wearing different clothes. Um, still they attract attention to other people but that's not my intention. My intention is to make me feel good, you know, and I think that if kids out there wore things to make them feel good and not to impress BOYS or GIRLS, or you know, to impress friends and groups and stuff like that, there would be a lot less violence, a lot less drug problems, attitudes, family problems, problems within themselves.

N: And, you belong to yourself.

R: Ya.

As an observer, critic, detached woman-child, poet, Rena seemed to wear opposition on her sleeve "not as an obstacle to be overcome or as [an uninitiated alien] to be ignored but as [a provocation] to articulate [her] own views" (Bialostosky, p. 223) in contrast to the views of others. I sensed a deep questioning of self in that outsider role she bravely projected as she shifted from emphasizing her awareness of external images to death, drugs and self-destruction, failure and rejection, and the superficial transformations of clothes and trappings that either allowed a person to fit in a crowd or be sidelined as a loner. Despite limitations in vocabulary and a liberal use of invented spellings, Rena organized divergent voices in her version of the world—creatively, inconsistently, and uniquely her own image(s)/voice(s).

R: The discussions were good, you know, getting a lot of different ideas, but I think writing the reflections because you spent more time thinking, so I'd probably have to say c. [writing a reflective response].

N: How much time do you think you took?

R: Um. Well, for the ones that I did, I really put myself in that position and I really thought about how I would feel, you know, as a native person because I am part native, you know. Um. You know. And then the community that they were living in and everything like that, like the situations. I really thought about how would I feel if I were stuck in that position. You know. Would I think the same way or would I think a different way? Or, you know, I would go with the

character in the show. Did he make the right move, you know? did he say the right things?

Then I asked her what influenced her writing the most because the two writings she submitted showed very different writing style and focus.

R: The problems that the characters were experiencing. A lot of them, a lot of the problems that they were experiencing I have dealt with before, you know, and, ah, not so much with the native culture.

I wondered if Rena experienced short-term memory problems coupled with passive watching rather than active reading because she had difficulty retrieving information. At one point, I asked her what she'd learned about native people and their culture.

R: Only what I knew before, really, that you know, except that when a white man or a white woman enters a whole Native community, you know, there's a lot of racial tension, and I didn't know that. Well, I had an idea because I honestly believe that the first people that were here on this land were (dropped thought). And there is proof that they were here first and we basically took over what they have. Right now we are sitting on their property that was taken away from them by alcohol and drugs. Not money. Not exchange. You know. They lived a perfectly normal life. You know, they were happy, they were content, they had the most regular, perfect, peaceful lifestyle—most of them, you know. We come in and we destroy it, you know, and we create our own.

Rena lost her train of thought several times, and it seemed that short-term memory or attention deficit issues might be interfering with her lack of coherency. At one point, she referred to the experience of an East Indian person entering a room of all “white” people, but ended her oral stream of consciousness by saying, “I don’t know what I’m talking about.”

In another clip from the interview which I’m paraphrasing for brevity, Rena expressed an opinion that Sarah, a non-native nurse, shouldn’t be in Lynx River. She felt that Western medical practices competed with Native healing practices to the detriment of the latter. As we discussed her ideas, she came back to the notion that Sarah was, in fact, being respectful and contributing in a positive way to community health services, so it would be all right for her to remain there.

Since Rena attended only two of the four workshops and spent longer during the break, I wondered how she felt about the introduction of visual stories.

N: Do you have any interest in media literacy?

R: Of course I do. I enjoyed doing this very, very, very much. I thought it was fascinating, you know. Um. I wish it could go on for longer.

Unlike her response to Nevada’s outsider issues that were directed on her experiences with the street scene, Rena did focus on the characters in the first story on job competition. She voiced strong individualist ideas during the group, and in her written reflection regarding the way Harris treated TeeVee she wrote,

"Harris to Me is a jerk and he is trying to get away with Murder." I noted fewer spelling errors and more coherency and wondered if detachment from the issues helped her to retain information and reflect on elements in the story, whereas Nevada seemed to trigger her knowledge of young people involved in the street scene in Vancouver, illuminating the tensions between representations of reality and real life situations.

Participant: Sylvia

Sylvia is a second language learner who had studied as a visual artist. During the interview, she expressed her appreciation of "all kinds of art, movies too, this kind of medium is art and literature is a kind of art". I found her written responses more reflective than the average writer in the study. She attributed her lived experience and personal philosophy as the greatest influence on her responses, whereas she viewed her skills in analyzing and interpreting as weak during the group discussions.

N: First, what influenced your writing?

S: Okay. In here, the problems that the characters from the movies. Mmmm. I think that the problems that the characters experience, ya, and perhaps my own knowledge. You know, I think I'm very weak on the critical thinking.

N: Do you?

S: You discussed with our group, you know. You have a different kind of thought. And I realize, oh, I am very weak in this part here. It's to me it is very literature. Ya.

N: Now, if you were working from your own language, would it be different?

S: I think same just because I don't have this kind of training. Or, I believe, like a poet or writer, they are brilliant, just like you discuss in the class. This is very sharp thought, you know. The vision is .... ah.

N: Clear?

S: Ya.

I asked Sylvia if she questions what people say in conversations. As many second language learners feel uncomfortable expressing their opinions when they disagree with another point of view, I wondered how Sylvia would respond.

S: I hardly challenge to someone if I disagree with this subject. Ya. If I can, if I really want to challenge this subject, which I disagree, that means this person I really care. Then I will. Ya, tell my true feelings; otherwise, I just keep silent and even I disagree with.

N: But would you think about it on your own time?

S: Ya. And it's confide of conflict inside. Ya, And, I carry this kind of conflict for a while or maybe for a few days. Depends on what kind of conflict. Ya. Only in my heart or I write in my journal, you know, diary.

In her written responses, Sylvia had the ability to move from specific details in the story to generalizations and reflections on the meaning the story had for her. Her visual acuity reminds me of the four "eye" categories

articulated by John Bell. In an article exploring visual communication, Moriarity (1997) writes:

John Bell (1995), who approaches visual communication from an English/creative writing perspective, structured his analysis of basic theories into four categories in his response to the previously mentioned theory survey: 1) the mechanical-biological eye, or "the eye that sees," 2) the cultural and pictorial eye, or "the eye that frames," 3) the inner eye, or "the eye that creates and imagines," and 4) the cinema/TV eye, or "the moving eye." (p. 12)

What I found so thoroughly self-reflective about Sylvia was her ability to grasp from her cultural perspective that reflective thinking about literary works had not been encouraged in her previous education; however, once she attuned her visual sensibility to other forms of communication, and processed the oral and visual information from reflective perspectives, she transferred her observations as an artist into her writing. She is not, in my view, a literacy student but was probably placed in a class of Canadian English literacy students because of test scores and her low level of oral competency in English. As readers will see by her reflective response to "Competition", Sylvia is well-educated in her first language and quick to apply new skills to her second language.

*The main character, Teevee in the North of 60 is eager to get the grant for the bank manager training from government. Through his applying for this grant. He found out that his stepfather, Harris cheated him givening him a incorrect*

phone number to contact. Also, later on he realized that Harris is afraid of losing his position, being a bank manager and not willing to help him. Teevee was so angry with Harris and felt hurt. Especially after he started to love and trust this man who married with his mother. He used to dislike this man when he was a child. The deceivingly event made him resenting the privilege that all white people have.

According to history white people didn't treat native Indian right. I can understand how painful could be under such a situation. Think about the black people in U.S. in early 40s. They were treated as animals. Being slaves had no any right or freedom. The fact can't not be denied. From watching this short episode of North of 60. I rather like to think this is a one of a sad, unhappy side of life which happens quite often in our society though I know this could be caused by white people's' privilege.

Human being is sort of complicated; in here I saw Harris' weak part of human being. Definitely

he is not a man with a good character. This kind of character person we see in everywhere in this world. I don't want myself to easily jump into a conclusion and say it is a privilege. Let us look around ourselves lives. we see a mother probably treat differently to her children. A teacher or a boss has he or her favorite person whom been treated with privilege.

The controversy of the head tax for the earlier Chinese immigrants appears often. Now, some young Chinese fight with Canada government for compensation. Why let us forgive the government that they did wrong to Chinese. They were privilege discrimination and very wrong in the past. We know it, but don't drag this history's burden all the time. Let's look forward future. Today, we still have a long way to go on this field and to get equally treatment between all the races. But I really sorry for some victims that they always too emphasize on this issue. Whenever they caught a chance to deal on this issue, they go

*straight forward to sue by law. And this issue became into a main point of matter.*

*The privelege between in different races has happening since the dawn of man. How to educate us not to be privelege is a big issue to discuse. But to make it easy and simple way is let us to be humble, modest and thoughtful for everythings around us.*

*That not only include human but also animals, plants and even no lives of inviroment.*

*“to be silenced by the stillness of reflection—”  
van Manen, 1990, p. 99*

Participant: Don

I mentioned Don in the introduction as one of the Canadian English speakers who participated in three stories but chose not to submit written responses to any. He and another student who was not involved in the research study were creating dialogue for an in-class project which took priority over the written component of the research study. I encouraged him to submit brief responses if that was all he had time for; however, he chose not to.

While conducting interviews, however, Don asked me to read the first draft of their script which showed creativity and acute awareness of cadence and nuance in spoken language that had been transferred quite authentically into

written dialogue. I wondered if his listening skills were gaining stimulation while he read the television stories and then left before the discussion to work on his script, but I never thought to probe this possibility at the time. Since Don requested an interview, I have included his views on Native reserves that stems, in part, from his lived experiences in the fishing industry.

N: You mentioned in class that it was a culture that you were familiar with, so you found some things that ....

D: No, it's not a culture that I'm not familiar with. It's just that it didn't reflect on the cultures I've been to. I have been on Indian reserves and we have gotten boats, but the same problems they're having in "North of 60" aren't, I can't draw a line between some of the reserves that I've been on.

N: Okay. That's important. How are they different?

D: Financial problems. A lot of the financial problems that they were having with the funding the reserves on most or a couple of reserves I've been on— one in Ontario and one in Manitoba— they didn't have the financial problems that they did on "North of 60". So, they had enough money to do their repairs, keep their, ah, maintaining of the reserves, ah, not like "North of 60".

N: Where they had the housing problem and shortage of houses.

D: Right, right.

N: Ya.

D: And, also, education-wise for Native Canadians— there was all sorts of programs available for Native Canadians when I was in Manitoba.

N: Mm hm.

D: Ah, that if you had Native status, that you really had priority in the school system as to upgrade and go into other courses which was paid for by the Indian Bands, so that wasn't the same as "North of 60" either where they were fighting for the finances just to keep the reserve going. And lookin' for money.

I asked Don which of the three stories struck a chord with him, and he first spoke about issues raised in "Competition" and further along in the interview, he directed his thoughts to the conflict between Michelle and William. Excerpts that reflect on prejudice and resentment follow.

D: I think the thing that really upset me about [Competition] was the prejudisms, the prejudism between white and native, ah, right through the whole show almost everyone was "we're not gettin' no money from the whites, or we're gettin', um, (pause) they sort of drew a line where it's almost like whites are responsible, and as I say, not being on any reserve or seein' it that way, it's hard for me to draw the line, but the prejudisms towards the whites, and I think there were mentioning about somethin' (pause) that's what happens when you have one race, like natives living separate from white communities, of being segregated, um.

N: Well, it's the majority/minority thing isn't it.

D: Right.

In Don's opinion, the percentage of non-native people on the reserve at Lynx River gave a realistic portrayal, but he disagreed with what he perceived to

be an imbalance in ethnic representation. We could have discussed the historical roots of reservations, and why there are few non-native people living there.

However, that would be an entire course far beyond the scope of this research study. He expressed strong views that laws governing one ethnic group should apply to all Canadians, or alternatively, non-native people living on reserves should have the same rights as native people [in the context of fishing rights]. Don felt the situations in the stories did not accurately portray his experiences with native people.

D: It's just not that way from what I've seen. Ah, it may be different in British Columbia. Natives may be different than Manitoba Natives or Ontario Natives. Ah, I can't see because I've never been to a reserve out here, but I have been in Ontario and Manitoba and it's not the way it's portrayed on "North of 60".

I valued the fact that Don actively questioned the visual representations, contested their validity, and reflected on the intersections of his lived experience in relation to the situations in the stories. He struggled, however, to put his thoughts in writing. When I first asked him why he had not submitted any written responses, he changed the subject. Later, I asked again because I wanted to determine the reason for his lack of participation in this aspect of the study. In part, his other story took "almost two and a half weeks" full time while other assignments remained in limbo, but he did, apparently, write notes.

N: So, it was mainly an issue of time, not a difficulty in writing.

D: No. No. And, ya, I did in some parts, ah, when I was writin' down some key notes on what was happening in the stories, that putting it together, separating what I thought in my writing from what's happening on the show and I found myself getting caught in the same paragraph all the time, just trying to put my reflections into a paragraph or trying to describe what I saw.

The need to get it right . . . a recurrent theme at other sites, too. To clear space for reflecting on the tensions of one's own reality in response to situational realities in the stories takes time and energy to process the incoming information. An important observation that Don made in reference to the story about Michelle and William was the cyclic nature of abuse "so they were feeding each other", yet he also remembered the rapport that developed between them after both reflected on the situation, how their behaviour not only inflamed the violence by reacting from instinct, but also how change occurred by responding to reason. Reclaiming the human power to reason and make choices opened mutual lines of communication. In the final analysis, hopeful images create space for re-imagining other ways of being--respectful in relationship with self and other.

Participant: Dawn

Dawn is a second language learner whose experience in elementary school had left memories of exclusion and difference. As soon as she felt equal and valued by a group, she flourished. Having spent some time with her in a reading circle, I noted an increase in her group participation over time.

### Competition

*In the story of "the north of 60's" Teevee looked like a victim because he could not get Harris's recommendation in the training programme. However, I noticed the true victim is Harris himself. In the story he kept on lying to Teevee, and the image he gave in the whole event was obvious a bag guy. Actually he was not that bad. He was just threaten by Teevee's youth, enthusiasm and ambition. He lied because he could not directly tell the true and that will ruin their relationship, especially it will hurt Lois' feeling.*

*In my opinion, Harris was accidentally arranged in an awkward position. He was neither rich nor yhoung. He also did not have self-confident and did not much understand Teevee's personality. He just needed survival. I hope Teevee will forgive him.*

Dawn balanced factual and descriptive responses in each story, making reflective connections between the characters' lives and her own lived

experience. In terms of quantity, Dawn's submissions varied, depending on her interest in the main idea. Amazingly, she produced three hand-written, double-spaced pages in a half hour during the final workshop, demonstrating her ability to comprehend the message and make meaningful connections despite her limited exposure to English grammar and sentence structure. I would not characterize Dawn as a leader, but diligence and a keen desire to express her ideas in her group seemed to motivate her to speak on topics that held special meaning for her and write creatively and reflectively.

For the interview, I want to focus mainly on what she learned about native people and their culture from the four stories and discussions.

D: Mmm. The kind of people, they are, they are what...they have, how can I say, close together. They have their own feeling. Mmm. Native people not same as us. Every culture they want to protect it and their culture, you know.

N: Their traditions.

D: Ya, ya. Don't want to lose it. Same. Every culture same. I think so, ya. The protections and just what position you are and where you are. How come I don't understand why people want to separate, but they separated themselves, only. I don't understand.

N: On reservations?

D: Ya, ya.

N: Why do you think people live there?

D: I don't know. When you, how can I say. When I come to Canada and Chinese people go to a circle group, and when sometime and I came to certain place, I try to greet the people but the people don't, don't, don't what, don't want to [welcome] me . . . even they don't know I can't speak English, I can feel something. They don't speak. I can feel something. I not belong there. That's the truth. And, it's real strange that if you the same culture, the same culture people refer to very naturally. I don't know why, but I don't know that way.

N: If somebody put you up north with just a few other Chinese people, what do you think the purpose would be in doing that?

D: I don't understand your question.

N: Well, you mentioned how native people live on reservations, um, and I'm just trying to get you to reflect on why white people would have done that to native people.

D: They have a threaten. Just like. It's real strange, um, to me my experience, in my own country any foreigner who go to visit our country they don't say anything. We don't feel they will do what. They will own our land. They will get to be the boss in our country. We don't fear that kind of thing, but when I come to Canada, I think the people were very threaten. Is it fretten?

N: Afraid? Frightened?

D: Yes, frightened. We were being affected. It seems to give me the feeling you not belong here. You are coming to here and just own our land. Ah, how can I say? Get our benefit, but they don't understand.

In the above dialogue, Dawn was referring to the dominant culture who seemed threatened. She generalized all immigrants as employed taxpayers with homes and possessions. "Everybody come here the same. I think so." However, when I mentioned that the non-native colonialists in Canada also gave native people a feeling they did not belong on the land their ancestors had inhabited for centuries, she began to see a pattern. "They're afraid to be cultural," she said. The interview revealed an immigrant's experience of racism despite Canada's multicultural policies and diverse population. We touched on the dynamics of power over another culture which maintains control through isolation. The reservation experience imposed human isolation and limitation in a controlled space by other humans who gained power and control but lost a feeling of genuine welcome given to them by the native people. As I reflected on Dawn's experience of not belonging, I became acutely aware of Paulo Freire's cycle of oppressor/oppressed. Becoming the oppressors cost non-native settlers of this land to reject a feeling of welcome in their relation to the first peoples. To this day, the dominant, non-native majority uses power and control to provide an external sense of ownership; however, from my experience with people who express racist views in relations of power, there is also a loss of welcome that becomes negatively reciprocated.

\*\*\*\*\*

*Ownership*

*you are feeling sad, my landlady says  
because i have isolated you,  
forbidden your human rights on our land.  
my indifferent brother, seller of spirits  
barks at your powerless heels  
certain of his place.*

*your pagan ceremonies offend our place  
opt to be like us, displaced  
she/he/they talk mindlessly in unison  
my spirit hides in the garden, waiting  
to regrow the texture of my heart  
mortgaged unwelcome*

\*\*\*\*\*

Participant: Joan

Her voice demands to know. "Why do you put a comma here?" I shrug and try to explain that in some grammar texts a comma is used while others no longer add commas to separate. Phrases flow into independent clauses into dependent clauses so it is best to check with the instructor because gray hairs like me grew up with commas. "English is so hard. You can never be sure." I agree. Invented spellings frequently make more sense than rules that break at the turn of a letter. I remember how earnestly Joan wanted to know the rules.

*Eye due knot cair four rewels she sez*

Her writing for the first three stories was neatly typed in Bold on a computer with interesting fonts and a strict format. The sentences, mostly simple structure, were numbered and categorized. She established a pattern to present her written

reflections. For example, "The Outsider" had 3 headings with 5 sentences referring to the heading, 'Nevada'; 8 for 'Native', and 3 for 'Summary'. I have selected "Safe Home" because it shows her writing without the help of grammar and spell checks which she meticulously used for her other submissions.

### *Safe Home*

- 1) *The girl was given up by mother.*
- 2) *She stayed with social worker, but she came to Michelle's house without asking her permission.*
- 3) *Michelle thought her daughter was watching the T.V. It wasn't. There was a small boy called Charles.*
- 4) *The small boy wanted to find out Michelle why she didn't happy when they saw each other.*
- 5) *Later the small boy wanted to stay with Michelle, because he thought he could solve Michelle's problems.*
- 6) *Michelle wanted Charles because he was the reminder of her daughter.*
- 7) *The first time Charles wanted to tell Michelle she would be back to his mother and soon get better instead of staying here.*

1) *Michelle respected the small boy, that's why they could get along later.*

2) *Michelle really missed her daughter, that was the reason why she wished to help the boy.*

3) *The small boy imagined he could replace Michelle's daughter.*

1) *The small boy made breakfast for Michelle, boy loved his mother. Michelle loved her daughter.*

*They were thinking how to bring down the wall which was just in front of them.*

In this version, Joan indicated her usual format of segmentation without headings. On the day of the interviews, she submitted another version of "Safe Home", saying her handwriting had been a mess and she wanted me to read her typewritten response. With this fourth story, more variety appears in her sentence structure. She is using semicolons and understands the placement of a comma after a dependent clause that begins a sentence. These are clearly technical improvements from her first submission. Interestingly, certain details of the story shift in importance, showing slight inconsistency between the half-hour, spontaneous response and her later response. For example, the image of Charlie and Michelle "thinking how to bring down the wall which was just in front of them" crystallizes in my mind their emotional barriers that prevented

mutual understanding; however, this profound insight was not included in Joan's revision. The second version follows for the reader's comparison.

### *Michelle*

- 1) *Michelle entered the house; she thought her daughter was at home.*
- 2) *The social worker hasn't informed her that Charles was in her home.*
- 3) *When Charles slept with her in the middle of the night, she felt so startled, imagining her daughter was beside her.*
4. *After Michelle and Charles's relation become better, Michelle wished to keep Charles living with her.*
5. *She desired to see her daughter's tombstone; it reminded her how much she loved her daughter.*

### *Charles*

1. *Charles wanted to say he would be home later. It wouldn't have bothered Michelle.*
2. *Charles helped michelle to prepare breakfast to gain her favour and make Michelle wish him to stay with her.*

3. *He tried to struggle with the social worker against going elsewhere.*
4. *He displayed anger when Michelle refused to accept his offering of tobacco at the grave.*
5. *He expressed his sympathy and empathy to Michelle when they were in the cemetery.*

#### *Summary*

1. *Both needed company; they should have lived together.*
2. *The small boy hoped to have somebody to love him.*
3. *Charles stimulated Michelle's thoughts about her daughter.*
4. *If there hadn't been background problems, Michelle could have appealed for the care of Charles.*

In this version, I highlighted sentence five in the section heading, "Charles." The words "sympathy" and "empathy" must have been introduced in the discussion. Joan took notes and asked for correct spellings of unfamiliar words that alerted me to use brainstorming strategies and vocabulary building in the main research study.

For the interview, Joan emphasized thinking as the most important aspect of the study. She spoke about being raised in a large family and having to think in a tactful way to prevent aggression or keep out of danger. I was curious to gain insight into her analytical skills.

J: Ah. The first action is the looking at the thing first and then later is the people, how they respond with the theme and then I mark down the points and I go back to add my idea inside. This is the way how I love it. The last step which I love so much because I can add my feeling and I have no pressure over it because you don't give me the pressure, you don't force me to do anything. It is free-writing and brainwash. What you think and then you write it down. This is what I like.

I delighted in the juxtaposition of free-writing and brainwash. The image of letting the ideas flow as a river flooding the banks in her brain without teacher talk or expectations would be my hopeful interpretation of her intended meaning. I asked her which culture she felt most understanding for as she saw representations of different attitudes and cultural perspectives.

J: Both are totally different. You don't understand the other's culture but if you live together you can solve the culture. Totally, I don't have idea about the other's culture because the first time I came to Canada and live here and learn something. Before I don't but no matter what culture they have a different background. It is hard to understand.

Because she understood a collectivist viewpoint, I wondered if she saw similarities between native culture and her own in terms of problem-solving. We

have an exchange of miscommunication that illuminates cross-cultural struggles between what the sender of the message anticipates and the receiver's effort to provide the appropriate information.

J: Ya. Ya.

N: In what way?

J: For example, living style. For them living in the north is very cold. For us we always have warm weather and or one or two months or three months really warm. They have a different situation to handle the weather.

N: What about attitudes?

J: I think native usually as a styrofoam – say styrofoam?

Here my guess is lifestyle when she probably means stereotype.

J: Ya, lifestyle. They are cool because they need to kill the animal, they need to protect themselves to get more food and then to use the food for their own family and they are uneducated. It is very different to contact with the outside world because the weather and the living style.

N: Is that the impression you have of native people or just that community?

J: I don't have any kind of this people. Um. Because we know that the Canada is owned by the native. That's why we should respect them but the lifestyle is really awful. They drink and take drugs and everything but nowadays, the young generation, they come out of the society and they learn and study. Looks like we are not supposed to look down of them now and we know that the original people is native and you cannot omit this point. This is not Canadian

land. That is why we supposed to respect them. But the people they don't but as long as they educate them and book is written and it was belong to the native and we need to accept it and then sooner or later they'd have their own position in Canada. But you need to take, for example, a hundred years as their kid grown up and they get their position in Canada and then those people they respect. Now they don't, right, just like Chinatown. They just line up here and waiting for the money and then take the pills and the drugs, they do it— nothing for the society. Later on the kid grow up, they can get out of this second rated area and then they can get their own position later.

Joan carries visual impressions of the Chinatown district in Vancouver, British Columbia though her family who are the first generation in Canada do not live in "this second rated area." The stereotype of urban poverty, illiteracy, and addiction is painfully real for many people. However, it is important to remember that approximately 500 native students attending my university are just a fraction of the total native population who proudly retain their cultural traditions and identity while competing for economic security and social status in the dominant society. Joan implies that the young generation will gain respect through education and integration, as though education is a prerequisite for respect. I believe that respect has to be reciprocal, one human being to another. Retaining native cultural and spiritual autonomy is integral to respect for self and others. Since attempts by the dominant culture to force assimilation have failed for hundreds of years, it would be naïve to claim that the transitions made

by educated native people to adapt their values and beliefs are ever easy or in total harmony with non-native societal structures.

Participant: Kris

Kris is another second language learner who attended three of the four workshops but only submitted writing for the first and last stories.

Unfortunately, in the pilot project, I made copies of the original texts for the participants to keep and in Kris's case, I must have returned the original to her as the copy I have is, in part, too faint to read. Comparing the two submissions, there is evidence of improvement in her paragraph construction in the latter text, as the beginning of each paragraph is visible though the third paragraph fades after the first few words. She begins the first paragraph with "On the first of the segment", starts the second paragraph with "On the second segment" and forgets "the" article as she opens the third paragraph with "On third segment". She shows a facility with language that the other participants haven't yet achieved, using words such as "rehabilitation centre" and "pleading" embedded in a complex variety of sentence structure, including several fragments and run-ons.

*Competition*

*Many people like to fool other people. It is not worth it especially if your doing it with your own family. In this case, I believe that Harry should*

suffer and should be blame for all the things he's done.

If I was Harry I shouldn't done that to Teevee which was his stepson and besides Teevee accepted Harry as his stepfather. I think Harry needs to change his behavior because his wife might kill herself for trusting the wrong person that she married with. If she new that Harry was lying to them and somehow may come to an end. Harry loves his wife but he loves the money more. It was important to him that he didn't care to the family that was hurting most. He, in the end, wanted to get out at all to all the trouble he had made. On the other hand, Teevee was eager to get in to that job which the Chief promised him, so he's doing every way he could. Besides, Harry was the manager of that company. The second problem is the racial discrimination which Teevee hated most. Harry was white and Teevee was black and perhaps the reason why they hated each other. The trust for each other brokedown. Harry was capable

*of it. In addition, If I was Harry, I will do my best to help my stepson for all his desires. And, I will not cause any problems because my stepson has become a part of my life.*

While Kris shows some understanding of racial tension between Harris and TeeVee, she mistakes TeeVee's ethnicity for reasons one can only speculate: she hasn't made the distinction between Native Canadian and Black Canadian, she misinterpreted the situatedness of the story, she was not listening during the introduction when an explanation of the setting for the story was given, or she did not understand the significance of racial and historical differences between Native and Black communities.

In the interview, Kris reflects on native culture, and with the help of prompts, she responds to issues, such as treatment of the elderly and respect to which she draws comparisons with her country of origin.

N: What did you learn about native people and their culture?

K: They have each other. They work together. They fight. They have to fight to the other outsiders. They are very helpful for their community. Um, and, they have to work it out . . . the problems, then they will solve it smoothly together.

N: How do you think they feel about old people?

K: Old people? Like opposite of young? Respect to them.

N: Mm hm.

K: They did, and . . . (pause)

I cringe on reading this transcript, wishing her thoughts had continued without my interjection; however, my guess is that she needed further prompting and I moved her from reflecting further on native cultural norms regarding respect for the Elders.

N: Is it the same in the white community from your experience?

K: Ah, I don't think . . . some. It depends on the individuals. Right? `Cause some maybe on the other side of the . . . other parts of Native Indians that doesn't respect older people and the white side, the others respect the older people and then there's another side that is bad. They don't respect older people. Right? It depends on the individual. Um, um . . .(pause)

N: Do you think they'd be having home invasions?

K: I think so. Um, because like in the Philippines the old people, no, no Philippines they have, we have to care for the old people, you know. Like we should say we respect for the older people and, um, oh, what else, um . . .

It is clear in the above response that, initially, there was confusion in responding positively to my question, and then reversing to a negative that insisted home invasions against the elderly would be unlikely. This question made indirect reference to a worrisome trend developing in Vancouver at the time interviews took place. As societies, I believe, mirror their values and quality of life through the care and respect, or lack of, toward children, disabled, elderly, and otherwise vulnerable citizens, I encourage readers to reflect on the health of Canadian society at the present time.

N: Do you feel that what you saw in the Native community was similar to what you knew in the Philippines?

K: I think in the Philippines . . . 'cause it's different, like they respectable . . . respected old people. Right? Then, in the Philippines, they, we have like more respect, I guess, 'cause I'm from the Philippines so I'm saying this positively, but it depends on the individual, really, 'cause, you know, they bug us and good sides.

N: But, society as a whole? In the Philippines, do you think there is more respect?

K: Ya.

Though my association with Filipino people has been largely restricted to health care, child care, and education, I happened to be in a laundromat with two Filipino women who hummed and laughed as they folded a mass of family laundry. I mentioned how their songs lightened the space and process, and as we talked, I learned that they'd grown up in a large family. With six children in a small, confined space, they learned at an early age to live and sing in harmony together in order to survive their cramped conditions. Similarly, a former neighbour from Hong Kong recalled his family of nine people growing up in a smaller space than his 550 square foot apartment. In North America, greater space does not equal greater harmony, and increasingly, I feel the causes of disharmony within families and communities require careful reflection.

### *Researcher's Reflection*

*A year after the pilot project, Kris met me in a washroom at the college where she still attended upgrading classes. She asked with eyes sparkling so enthusiastically if I still visited classes to give workshops, and I longed to say "yes, of course" but, in fact, it is extremely challenging to interest adult literacy programmers to view television as an educational tool and a resource for the enrichment of language acquisition. Other than this research project, I have had little opportunity to share my knowledge with adult literacy students since resigning from permanent employment as a classroom teacher. However, media interested Kris because of her sister's training in film studies.*

N: Do you have any interest in a media literacy course?

K: Um, at first I like the visual medium because sister, she is, um, she took this, um, um, course before. They're doing mass communication which I'm learning from her. Like she did this film before in her college, learning college in the Philippines and I guess so.

N: You found that interesting?

K: Ya. There in the media. That included like you're interviewing something, someone. Right?

N: Right.

K: That's one of it. And, you'll be, your opinions, your ideas, your knowledges from yourself, you can give it to someone, you can relate to someone if you're in the media, too, if they a help, um, a help for you. Ya.

I cannot claim to be neutral in regards to issues of abuse. Kris's candor and insights about respect for the elderly in her homeland reminded me that classrooms are occupied, "not merely as instructional sites, but also as cultural sites" (Giroux and Simon, et al. 1989, p. ix) and as such, they serve as forums for sharing stories that invite critical discussion on moral values in a pluralistic society.

Participant: Amelia

Amelia has lived in Canada for many years but rarely speaks English in her home. In her responses, both orally and written, she showed difficulty recalling details in sequential order. She used some vocabulary recorded during the group discussion, but her writing contains a jumble of ideas, and some dissonance between the story's message and her interpretation of it. Initially, Amelia felt overwhelmed by the pace of the dialogue and wanted to withdraw from the study, but was encouraged to stay in order to increase her listening skills. In fact, she was one of the more prolific writers despite her initial discomfort.

A reticence to ask for clarification, to voice her ideas in the group discussion or to question the relevance of a story's message are factors that seemed to inhibit the development of reflective thinking. Sands (2000) wrote, "At times the audience is a detached, inactive observer conscious of difference, yet at times the audience identifies with the protagonist enough to see and feel as [she/]he does" (p. 258). The detachment which Amelia maintained throughout

the study differed from the majority of participants who identified with one or more characters in a personal way. Part of that detachment can be attributed to her focus on the action and dialogue of the characters rather than her response to them. Also, the strain of listening to a language not yet familiar to the listener creates barriers that interrupt the fluidity needed to internalize the layers of meaning that each character brings to a story.

Although fluent in several languages other than English, Amelia's access to English was deferred for many years while she raised her family and during those years, she socialized in groups not requiring her to speak English. In my observations, I noted an aptitude for identifying concrete details; similarly, she interpreted actions and relationships in concrete terms that were separate and outside. Ricoeur (1995) says that action is the "outside" of the text whereas language is the "inside" of the text (p.240). If language is, therefore, a barrier to understanding, then the involvement with the "inside" of the text necessarily remains illusory.

A selection of her writing about Michelle and William follows.

#### *Power in Conflict*

*In the new T.V. segment from "North of 60", power in conflict was happened about a police woman, Michelle who has a daughter was just died before she sent resentment to William.*

When she was arresting him, she was very rude and cruel with William. Michell treated Williams as criminal and she needed the retraining course. In the beginning she was nice to him, because she was offering cigarette, coffee and William reaction was extremely violence in action and verbally. After she hitting William, Michelle felt shocking power conflict. Some officers take care of William but she took before all the responsibility about him.

In the beginning William was a good person and for this reason Michelle tried to help him. He was an young offender and he was arrested.

William was abusive by somebody and he burnt himself with cigarette.

William fought and he was verbally abusive with Michelle and the same time he asked for the other clean pants.

The records study offender's background were very critical and need to assist with social workers, councillors, psychiatrist.

*Take time to change to another habite but  
educated the younger offenders to prevent crime  
it's a retraining program.*

*Volunter job for years were the part of the charge  
and punishment communitie.*

In the segment about conflict between Michelle and William, she makes recommendations but doesn't reflect on them, leaving the reader to wonder about the juxtaposition of William as a "criminal" and Michelle in need of a retraining course reveals incomplete thoughts, as though the urgency to record key points supercedes a deeper understanding of the points she views are important to remember. When the next sentence, in the middle of the text, opens with "In the begining...", it suggests a stream of consciousness without revision. Later in the text, she repeats some details while changing others. In spoken English, Amelia experienced similar problems with linear explanations, needing to tell and re-tell ideas in disjointed chunks, seemingly, with the anticipation that repetition would clarify her intended meaning, when it frequently caused confusion for the listener(s) and resulted in the opposite effect. In retrospect, she probably misunderstood my explanation of reflective thinking leading to reflective writing, English being a barrier to all aspects of her language learning.

Amelia elaborated on difficulty with sequencing and comprehension during our interview. I began by asking what was the most meaningful experience for her as a participant in the pilot project.

A: For me was what I like more or what I feel better for me? I feel everythin' is interestin', no, because I learn philosophy, especially because when I listen at home, for example, sometime I can't understand what happen. If my husband not with me, you know, so many little things, you know, linking, you know, one thing to the other sometime escape to me.

N: Ah ha. So, it doesn't make a lot of sense.

A: Ya. Ah, but I worry every time, especially when we start with this episode, I feel so embarrassed for the simple, for the first day, you know I understand nothing about. Right? Little by little, I talk with the girls and is coming, little by little in my mind, but what I saw. "Oh, yes. Okay. Ya, ha. Oh, oh. I understand something. Oh, oh, okay. (laughter) people from this or no? Ah...."

N: What brought that understanding? Was it your own [reading] or was it the discussion?

A: Well, I need discussion because if you know it is very hard for me. You understand, I have this problem. No, the same in conversation, no, so I feel so embarrass, no. I don't know what happen to me because sometime my husband say, "What you study, English? Yes or no. (laughter) Yes, but I don't know.

Maybe it something psychologic, I don't know. Or, maybe it because I was so many years at home with my children. I give all my love to my children. Right? My husband told me so many times, you improve very much, you know, from the beginning to now. It's so different. But, still, still isn't for me, no, is not enough. I don't know what I do. My writing. You know my writing, almost, no,

is not perfect, but you can understand'. Right? It depends, I don't know. It depends because I was a different teacher in this class [four teachers]. In so many years I come here, you know, and this is the first opportunity for something different.

*Researcher's Reflection*

*I am stunned by this comment, imagining myself in the same class for four years listening to the same dull tapes. Amelia was in the reading circle I led one afternoon a week in the previous term. So many transitions she has made in adjusting to teaching styles, yet I suspect that the program's emphasis on taped materials has not given her enough time to share meaningful conversations with classmates. Sometimes students get stuck in a program that just isn't meeting their unique needs. As it happened, she entirely changed her focus the following year and came back to see me, beaming with success and a first class grade in her course. This interview was the first inkling of positive changes on the horizon.*

N: Was it [the study] useful?

A: I think so. I think so, because I feel, you remember when I told you. Oh, my gosh.

N: I know. I was so proud of you for coming back because I know that it was hard for you to do that.

A: Ya, ah, thank you to the girls and all they tell me. Lots more to discuss. It was very, very, very nice how they discuss, no. I think I learn lots.

N: Good!

A: Ya. I'm happy. The first one I was really embarrass. I feel worried, you know, what I do, what I say, what (pause) I thought about everything. And, honestly, talking to them. Oh, yes, and that's something more because it was coming in my mind what I saw before. Right?

N: That may be what has blocked your progress more than anything is fear, because I think when students start to talk and you realize you're not alone in not understanding, that almost everybody in the class feels the same way . . .

A: Mm hm.

N: That you begin to relax.

A: Ya.

The interview mainly consisted of Amelia's challenges with language, but she commented briefly on her perception of Native Canadians, based on the four edited stories. It appeared she had no previous knowledge of Native History. She expressed a keen interest "because I never saw this kind of, you know, history. Right? With reference to representations of life on a northern reserve, she noted that life "is no easy. Of course, I think they need more help. Social worker." She noted their poverty and said, "They don't have any defence."

As I came to the end of Amelia's interview and reflected on her emotional angst in the beginning compared with her increasing confidence over four 2-hour sessions, I could not imagine any greater validation for oral/aural stimulation in adult literacy programs.

N: We had a lot of discussion in the classes. Did you find the discussion useful?

A: I think so. You explain if we ask sometime or you ask to us. Right? It works properly. I think it was wonderful. Right? (laughter) Wow! Excellent! More than when I think of from the beginning. (laughter) Thank you very much.

N: You're welcome. I enjoyed it, too.

A: Oh, me too. Especially with you.

### *Researcher's Reflection*

*Amelia brought her light to me that day. In the story entitled, "Raven Brings the Light" told by Louise Profeit-LeBlanc, a member of the Nacho N'y'uk Dun First Nation of the Northern Tutchone people of Mayo in the Yukon, the grandmother reminds her young granddaughter, "You got three ears you know. Two on the side of your head and one in your heart. Make sure you always use that one too!" (Archibald, Ed., et al, 1993, p. xxv) Another form of the three ears teaching is represented on a house post in Sty-Wet-Tan, the name given to the Great Hall by the Musqueam Nation and it means the 'Spiritual Power of the West Wind'. The house post carved by Walter and Rod Harris, shows three human figures depicting one figure speaking and two listening. "The Elders teach us to listen with our three ears: two on the sides of our head and the one in our heart. We learn to bring the heart and mind, the three ears together" (Young, 2000, p. 6). To open oneself to the experiences of another and to find our common humanity enables us to listen with the heart as well as the mind and to explore the inner voice(s) in order to gain in-sight. I interpret Amelia's progress during the study from the perspective of tapping into the internal readings*

*stored in body and spirit memory; then the reflective process becomes actively engaged in a dialogic communion of intellect and emotion, reason and intuition, questioning and reflecting.* "We all incorporate within ourselves many voices, loud and soft. Each one of us becomes a unique assemblage in a constant dynamic state, the meeting place, the intersection point of innumerable forces" (Rosen, p. 132).

Participant: John

John is a Canadian English speaker who wrote three out of four reflective journals. For the most part, his responses were in point form about "What happened?" and "How do I feel?" but in his reflective reader response to the "Outsider" with Nevada, he identified with the outsider experience and writes in complete sentences.

*My feeling is that belonging in a society is very important. One example of my feeling is in the North of 60 segment where Nevada who came from the big city (Vancouver) and he was trying to fit in with all the residents of the village. The way Nevada did this was that he made up a story about him and his father firing a harpoon at sea lions. The problem with this was that the Native Americans now use guns instead of harpoons for hunting. As a result of this simple mistake the*

*villagers did not accept him as a member of this society.*

*For an example of this in my own life is that from grades two until eight I attended a Christian School and then I went to public school for grades nine until twelve. This transition into grade nine was one that was very difficult. You see, at the Christian school, there was no one there telling me that I looked bad or that my cloths were not as fashionable as their cloths are. The difficulty came when I went to the public school. What happened was there were quite a few of the popular people who saw the way I looked when I walked in the school and they branded as a "nerd". It took me until grade eleven to finally gain the respect of my peers. I am now much a part of the society.*

By listening in the gap where painful school experiences resurface, John re-visits feelings of alienation and difference during adolescence when the suffering of separation from peers through mockery and intimidation can inflict such a deep sense of wounding that learning becomes impossible. When an individual becomes isolated from the group, aggression spills forth in a variety

of abusive ways. In the short time I spent with John, I overheard an occasional snide remark or putdown directed towards him, and he responded outwardly with patience and humour. His demeanour showed "humility, living with grace in the midst of oppression, finding justice with joy, and learning strength through gentleness" (Carlson, 1994, p. 19). The incidents alerted me to conditions of subtle disrespect that mar a learning environment because everyone in the same space absorbs the negative energy whether consciously or unconsciously.

Rather than refer to a specific story, John wanted to discuss his method of getting ideas down on paper. He mentioned that writing lets out feelings, and he learned from a classmate to just write with an openness and receptivity to whatever thoughts begin to flow onto the page. From there, he talked about power struggles and what he learned from the characters' actions.

J: Well, let's see, um, there was the one about the power struggle. It was real interesting to see how people act and then they think about what they did. It's like, um, I'm workin' on that too. For me, it's not the fact that I act before I think. I say before I think and now I'm trying to think before I say it.

John related that a powerful course he'd taken sometime in the past had been helpful to observe and then reflect on "what I'm doing in my life and stuff like that."

N: Did watching "North of 60" do that for you?

J: Ya. Like the things that they said triggered something in my mind and then as you've noticed, it sparked something and I just go, like I just run with it.

N: So, it stimulated your writing.

J: Ya, ya.

N: Good. What influenced your writing the most? The visual impressions created by the camera, the problems that the characters were experiencing, or your own knowledge and questioning about what you knew?

J: It was a collaboration of what the characters were feeling and then what I already had and it brought it. Like what the characters went through brought out in my own self.

N: So, your past knowledge and the new information were put together.

J: Ya.

N: And was that, ah, useful in your own understanding?

J: Ya, 'cause it, I mean, as I say I don't get much chance to tell people about my problems because, I don't know, other people's problems seem to be bigger than mine, but it's a big enough one that I should be talking about it to get it off my chest.

The above information signals to me, again, the importance of discussion and social interaction. In the idiomatic language of getting something off one's chest, a counsellor might work with this embodied space where emotions seem to be contained. John knows the emotional costs of not belonging, so the significant story for him was "The Outsider".

J: It took me from Grade 9 till Grade 11 I had a problem with [belonging]. Like, the first day, something stuck, right, and it stuck for two years till I went to

Grade 11 in High School and I started working with Special Needs kids and then, because like all the principals and stuff like that, they liked me working with Special Needs kids. I kinda got to know the principals and vice-principals and teachers a lot, so they told me to like block it out of mind and just worry about myself because they said that those people who were putting me down, or like insecure about Special Needs kids themselves, and that's why they put me down for working with them, so I shot past that and look at me now. I have no problem now with what other people say because along with, in that course there was a feedback section and, so what it is you take it with your head and you give it with your heart. If you take it with your heart, like if you take what people say with your heart, it's going to tear you down.

N: It plays tricks in your head.

J: Oh, does it ever. So, now that I've learned to take it with my head, it does nothing to me. Like it's just words. Right? I mean the odd thing does slip past and go down to my heart, but who doesn't. It's just human to do that. Right?

At this point, a background in counselling psychology would be an asset. John said that when hurtful messages involve body reactions "it stops you from living and it cripples you". Based on his lived experience, he could identify with Michelle's dis-ease toward Charlie in "Safe Home" and noticed that his long hair triggered an illusion of Hanna, her deceased daughter, that clouded Michelle's judgement when responding to Charlie. On a human level, John spoke with insight and empathy about the characters' problems, yet on a cultural level, he

admitted that his knowledge of Native culture "was like teepees and stuff like that. Like from T.V. Right?

N: Mm hm.

J: But, ah, well . . .

N: Elaborate on that. Teepees. What else did you know?

J: Well, horses and, ah, like cowboy and Indian times, but there's obvious, but it was more realistic than what you see on movies and stuff, 'cause (pause)

N: Did it seem like a real community to you?

J: Ya. Ya. Um, there's one movie, it's called 'Maverick' with Mel Gibson and they have these Indians and, ah, it was really interesting, 'cause like they were, ah, just trying to impress this, um, Russian Archduke, or whatever, so they had the teepees, but they live, obviously they live normal lives, and so they were just dressed up in the Indian stuff, like the old, traditional stuff just to impress the guys, but they were talking English and stuff. It's funny to see how people portray it, like how they see them and how they really are.

N: Right. There's a difference, isn't there?

J: Mm hm.

N: Ya.

J: The stereotypes.

N: Ya.

J: That we all have in our head and then when you meet a real native person...

N: Ya.

J: They're just like you and I are.

Coming to see the other, not as an object but as another subject requires both reflection and action. To acknowledge stereotypical images, challenge the validity of such images, internalize the reflective process that leads to a realization that stereotypes are distortions of reality, and then take action to actually experience a body, mind, spirit shift in consciousness moves the learner to a transformative space so that assimilation of new knowledge with past knowledge and new information occurs. Freire (1998) writes, "To teach is not to transfer knowledge but to create the possibilities for the production or construction of knowledge" (p. 30). Such breakthrough knowledge ruptures perceived boundaries, opening space for conscious personal and social change.

Participant: Ellen

Ellen refused to write a reflective response journal during the workshops, but in the interview, she returned to the conflict between William and Michelle, and spoke insightfully about her self-imposed marginalization and her reluctance to participate in oral or written responses to the stories. The office where the interviews took place had two chairs, side by side, in front of a table on which the tape recorder, participants' writings, and notepad were placed. Another chair resembling a barstool was off to the side. In my notes, I've recorded that Ellen was the 10<sup>th</sup> of 11 to be interviewed although I remember her hesitating till the last – one of those slippages that romanticize reality. This

interview differed from the others since Ellen chose the barstool to perch on, giving her an elevated position. Highlights of our dialogue follow.

E: I see William acting the same way that I felt. I was there. I was that person not doing anything anybody told me and I'd get very, very angry. I've been there. My past. I've been in a detention centre for something I did and I thought I'd never get caught, and I got in trouble for it. That's what it brought up for me, because it reminded me of myself at William's age. How old was he?

N: He'd be about 18.

E: Ya, and that's how I was at 18, so it reminded me.

I asked her if she could relate to the brutal treatment that William experienced, and she confirmed a similar pattern. "There was a lot of physical abuse in detention and then I ended up being the abuser." I didn't ask for specific incidents nor did she offer to elaborate; however, it seemed that she had lived with physical violence most of her life until she made a conscious decision to break the cycle. By the time she signed up for the research study, Ellen had made incredible gains. Still, resistance to writing seemed to be an important obstacle to overcome. During the interview, we discussed issues of resistance and control in the classroom that she needed to consciously unlearn in order to progress in her writing.

E: I can think and say what I feel, but when I put it down on paper, it's different. It's easier for me to talk about it than write it down. I struggle with that every day.

N: I know you can do it.

E: It takes a lot for my teacher to get me to write anything.

N: Are you aware of any power struggle going on?

E: I think it's my own power saying, 'no, don't write.' And that's why I figure it's my control, and I don't want to do it, so I don't do it. It's really something that's hard for me to let go of the control.

N: That's a really good insight.

E: It has something to do with the abuse. I can see what I'm doing.

N: You can see what you're doing, and then you have to make the decision to change or not. What was your experience as a child? Did you resent the teachers asking you to write? You felt controlled?

E: Ya, the control was there. I quit school for that reason, because I didn't like being told what to do.

N: Can you see how that has gone full circle? You know, like the abused and the abuser. You felt controlled and now you want to control.

E: Ah ha.

\*\*\*\*\*

### *Defiance Re-Visited*

*I want my voice to narrate my own story,  
to disrupt erasure, to punctuate the silence  
so herstory re-writes power within, feeling  
equal too. You stare at me, teacher, right  
through them breakable lens, straight  
past the story I am, could be, if only . . .  
like some inert object, not moving Subject*

*seeing your unseen, hearing your unheard.  
Voices collide against flat sound. You seek  
mute, fake images to pass your scrutiny.  
re-place my centre in your margin.  
How to touch the world together is my ?*

\*\*\*\*\*

N: And what's it doing to your learning?

E: Nothing. (laughter) It's stubbornness — how I've been all my life.

N: But this behaviour must be useful to you for now, or you would say, 'Enough.

I want to do my writing. I'm not going to let the teacher tell me. It's because I want to.'

E: Ya, you got it. Um, I know there is a reason why I am where I am today, because I am doing the same thing as when I was a kid. If I had homework, I wouldn't do it.

N: But, it's good to look at the little kid in you and say, 'This didn't get me where I wanted to go. How do I change that now as an adult?'

E: That's what I have to do.

N: However, moving from 'I don't want to be controlled,' how do you take control in a positive way rather than a resistant way?

E: I never thought of that. (pause) I need to write. It has been shown in this class that I can write. When I put it down on paper and have someone else look at it, I can do it.

N: There's no logic to it. Not writing, I mean.

E: No.

N: Are you going to think about this?

E: Ya. (laughter)

### *Researcher's Reflection*

*The interview with Ellen raised issues of abuse, control, loss as well as reclaiming voice through storytelling and self-discovery narrative. She profoundly influenced my thinking about a praxis of unlearning in order to re-configure barriers from the past. As Ellen spoke about her resistances to writing, she unknowingly opened a space for me to reflect on my own resistances to writing. This dialogue between researcher and participant finds expression in "Teaching Against the GRAIN" in which Simon (1992) writes:*

What is to be recognized in a dialogic pedagogy is that both students and teachers are doubly ignorant, not only of their structured resistances but as well of the knowledge of what it is that resists in the other. Given this double structure of ignorance in a pedagogical encounter, each then must listen for the silence in the other, helping each other to knowledge that is inaccessible. This knowledge is not *in* the teacher; it cannot be given. It is only to be acquired in the conversation between the teacher and students as coinvestigators of each other's resistances. (p. 97)

Stories continually reshape themselves as shifting, imperfect images. The voices of self-discovery re-tell of past knowledge and lived experience. As educators, we need to listen with three ears for the inner awakenings that open new pathways to learning. Teachers and students working together as partners become dynamic agents of change. It is important for learners to "look for

connections between their personal experience and the theoretical and historical concerns addressed in class" (Berry & Black, p. 88).

The acquisition of knowledge requires an active process of social communication with others. Many of the research participants voiced their appreciation for the opportunity to share ideas and learn from their classmates. Learners draw from personal experience to "explore how power works in discourse and practices of daily life and the felt oppressions" (p. 88) which impact on individual interpretations, creating distortions in meaning perspectives. Opening a space for respectful dialogue necessitates balance since voicing and silencing co-exist in both personal and political spheres. Language and the ability to communicate in socially interactive activities are key elements in emancipatory learning.

## CHAPTER 6: SITE TWO

### Introduction

The main research project began at Site Two in an urban college system during the Fall Semester. As already mentioned, the difference between the pilot project and the other two sites that were part of the main research project consisted of a writing sample and a brainstorming intervention for the purpose of vocabulary building. Site Two conformed to a six-week plan with one visit per week. I spent a total of 11 hours on site that included the initial contact, four 2-hour workshops, and approximately two hours of interviews. Participants worked without a break for the full two hours at which time they proceeded to their next class. This allowed more time for extended brainstorming, small group discussion, and shared learning after the groups had completed the worksheet.

During the first session, 12 prospective participants produced a writing sample, filled in a questionnaire, and either signed the letter of consent or took it away for further consideration. At the first meeting, I outlined the timeline and structure of the research study and gave the participants an option of being videotaped or audiotaped during the interview.

Initially, the participants expressed a preference for being videotaped. As each group at the four sites had unique situations requiring slight modifications to the research process, I kept the technical aspects of interviewing flexible until closer to the end of the study, but the participants needed an overview of what to expect from day one in the process before making a commitment to participate.

As we approached the final workshop at this site, two participants expressed a preference for audiotaping, so on the day of the interviews, I brought a camera, tripod, and tape recorder to the interview sessions that were held in a tiny office next to the Administration offices. Fortunately, I audio-taped the entire session because the process of transcribing audiotaped cassettes on a dictaphone proved to be far easier than manually rewinding dialogues from the videotape in order to catch each word. Yet, the videotaped version provided enriched nuances of meaning through visual communication that one forgets or fails to notice during the interview while focussed on verbal cues and aural messages. In addition, videotaping added a bonus of being able to lip read if my ear, alone, could not discern a second language learner's pronunciation. This latter point is significant since I am profoundly deaf in my left ear and depend a lot on lip reading in my daily communications.

For each workshop, I distributed a brainstorming sheet and a worksheet with specific questions to discuss in small groups. The first workshop gave me an opportunity to introduce literary terminology--theme, setting, characters, plot, rising action, conflict, climax, falling action, conclusion--and draw a plot diagram which was familiar to some, but new information for others. I explained the main purpose of brainstorming was not only to take notes to assist them in their written responses, but also to share the flow of ideas that extend as each individual participates.

Stories generate ideas, some of which may cause an individual to reflect on an alternate perspective not considered previously. I observed from the brainstorming sessions that culture and lived experience, for example, shaped the initial interpretations of the images and language in a story, but hearing a diversity of views helped to move the learners from static ideas to ideas in flux. This shaping and re-shaping of ideas through the process of brainstorming stimulated group interaction, but more on brainstorming will be discussed in the interviews with individual participants.

The worksheet posed questions for analyzing and problem-solving. A question relating to the story's theme was in a separate box at the top of the sheet. Participants filled in their ideas, opinions, predictions, or assumptions in answer to the thematic question. As participants discussed their responses, I recorded key words on a worksheet transparency. Similarly, I used a brainstorming transparency during the half-time discussion to assist the participants in their vocabulary building.

After the first reading of a story, I paused the tape to let participants generate words and phrases relating to the text. I gave occasional prompts as open-ended reminders to elicit responses. During this phase, random words and ideas could be read on an overhead projector and copied by the participants. In some cases, root words were expanded on, synonyms, antonyms, or homonyms added, or pronunciation practiced as requested.

## Overview of the Research Participants

Of the original twelve, seven active participants formed a core group. Four participants completed four written responses; one was a non-native Canadian English speaker, two were second language learners, and one was a mixed blood Canadian English speaker. In addition to the four who completed all the workshops, one native Canadian English speaker attended three workshops and submitted three written responses while one second language speaker also attended three workshops and wrote three written responses. One native Canadian speaker who grew up in a Native community and knew some of his first language attended all four workshops but did not submit a responsive journal until the final one for "Safe Home" that everyone completed during the workshop. An eighth person who intended to participate was ill for the first two workshops, came for the third one, then was absent again for the final workshop. Other than a writing sample, she did not submit any writing, but agreed to be interviewed. Two participants at Site Two declined to be interviewed.

Despite the fact that some participants came from the "big room" and met for the first time in a smaller classroom for the research study, the group quickly developed a comfort level. People formed new groups as they arrived for each session rather than collecting in the same location. This spontaneous mixing contributed to greater appreciation for cultural perspectives when the groupings changed from week to week.

One unfortunate incident occurred when a native participant laughed in what seemed to be a nervous reaction to another native participant's answer, triggering a hurtful flashback in the latter. I have included part of the transcript that elaborates on the incident later in the chapter as a reminder for adult literacy instructors working with residential school survivors and adults with a history of school-related or other trauma that temporary setbacks occur, and some form of mediation/intervention may facilitate a return to balance and harmony.

Although the participant who is a residential school survivor attended only one workshop, she stayed with her group for the entire workshop and felt empowered by the fact that she resisted her first instinct to leave. The instructor gave her immediate support after the workshop and communicated with me by email afterwards. In the interview, the participant deconstructed feelings from the past that were still very much present and alive in body, mind, and spirit, illuminating how internalized messages and experiences can remain dormant a long time; then, return like a boomerang without warning.

Site Two participants enjoyed verbalizing, thinking aloud, actively engaging in animated dialogues, so they initiated most of the brainstorming on their own. Of the three main sites, the group at this site transferred vocabulary they recorded on their brainstorming sheets into their written reflections more often than participants at the other sites. In general, there was a greater output of writing per story, notwithstanding the one who submitted only one response and another who did not write at all. The participants in the research study came

from different classes, so they had little or no prior knowledge of each other. Although I only worked with one instructor who provided classroom space for the study, there were several literacy instructors working in nearby classrooms and the participants rotated to different instructors, depending on their individualized program. The set-up seemed more like a high school or college atmosphere with opportunities to gain experience from a variety of teaching styles and materials.

The instructor with whom I worked did not know all who participated in the study, but she opened her classroom to anyone in the department. She also participated in some of the workshops, wrote a writing sample, listened and asked questions in the first workshop's discussion period, and by her modelling, she helped set a positive tone for the subsequent workshops. I began noting different routines and characteristics of individual instructors and the ways that people in authority convey messages about purpose and place that impact on students and their attitudes toward institutionalized education.

### Physical Layout

The classroom was situated at the end of a long hall and set apart from the "big room" that had large dividers used as book shelves and cupboards. I spent so little time in the larger room that I have only retained vague impressions of open space, computers, tables, and several instructors teaching within close proximity to each other. The research study was held in a spartan room with windows along two sides that offered good natural light although with television,

we had to close the blinds. The square room had two blackboards on the enclosed two walls, long tables and chairs, and an instructor's desk. Other than the portable television and VCR equipment that I brought from a technical support wing, the classroom appeared to be a print reading and cursive writing work space. There was no evidence of computers or assistive technology being used.

Remembering how furniture seemed to impose division in the Site One classroom layout in terms of proximity to the television and group interaction, I decided to involve participants in small group discussion from day one at this site, and work around furniture rather than become separated by it. Prior to my research, I had not been conscious of how intrusive institutional furnishings can be, however necessary in establishing a certain visual statement for the purpose of the space. The language of furniture situates us in education, but I have learned through experience that human energy, sometimes referred to as "chemistry" has an influence on the group dynamics and can override whatever physical obstacles separate people.

Like Site One, the workshops were set a week apart, but rather than being in the afternoon, these sessions were held in the morning from 9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. At Site Two, attendance was fairly consistent, partly because each participant was called by the instructor or her assistant the day before my visit. The instructor mentioned in her interview that encouraging participants to attend each week was a major worry for her, personally since "getting the students there, making sure that they would show up which is always a problem

with ABE" meant that extra call. I had not asked Lois to call them, but her conscientious effort gave a clear message to the participants that attendance and commitment are important to their education.

### Researcher/Instructor Relationship

A gratifying professional relationship grew between the college's host instructor and myself. After each workshop, Lois emailed me regarding feedback she received from the participants. The check-in proved invaluable if I had concerns about an individual's response; Lois was able to confer with him/her and get back to me. Lois volunteered to share her thoughts after the participants had completed their interviews. Here is a portion of her comments.

N: What was the study like for you as a learning experience?

L: I was impressed how often the students told me they liked the format where you showed it once, discussed it, did the brainstorming with vocabulary, and then you showed the whole thing again, and I had never thought of that before. I never realized the necessity of that. It just showed me how this group of students, I guess, in particular, needs more time to process information, so I think that's what impressed me the most.

Two of the participants at Site Two struggle with short-term memory deficits. Reading a television story twice provided both these individuals the extra reinforcement needed to retain information. However, when asked if they would apply the same strategy to reading a print text twice, the response was negative because just getting from one paragraph to the next caused stress. I

would be inclined to negotiate a trial of the strategy with a short article of interest to the student before dismissing the intervention with print text. What seems daunting in the beginning sometimes turns into a helpful tool that neither the instructor nor the student had considered previously, and then you say to yourself, "Why didn't I think of that before?"

Another common focus in adult literacy is a print-based orientation. Lois expressed interest in my idea of building bridges for students whose dominant means of acquiring information is either visual observation or active listening, and their enthusiasm for learning seizes up at the sight of a print text.

L: And so I think it very difficult for many of the students who are, say, auditory learners or experiential learners, um, and this is something we've talked about in our department from time to time, but historically we've operated in this way, in a print-based way.

I mentioned reading circles and conversation circles, and Lois articulated a myth that reading aloud in adult literacy creates embarrassment. Because my style of teaching emphasizes participatory and experiential activities, my approach has been to initiate small group reading activities for those who want to participate and not pre-judge for others what situation best supports their comfort level. Educators are privileged to see small miracles occur daily if they are willing to let go and allow student-centred learning to happen.

L: Yes. This is something that I have been in favour of for some time but in ABE there is a feeling that there must not be oral reading because it embarrasses some

students. Um, but I agree with you. I would like to see a reading circle or something of that nature because I think it is important for the instructor to actually see how the students are actually reading and also for the students to hear one another read and, perhaps learn some pronunciation and meanings from listening to others talk.

N: Emily mentioned that. [She] said that listening to other people's brainstorming helped her not just with her spelling but also the pronunciation of words that perhaps she knew but didn't know how to pronounce.

L: Yes. Ya, she mentioned that to me as well. She found the brainstorming extremely useful.

My approach to the use of brainstorming techniques was to keep it simple. I introduced brainstorming as a basic concept for sharing ideas and recording vocabulary relating to a particular story. Believing that individuals gradually develop a personal style of brainstorming, I was delighted to find a quote that closely articulates my sentiment in regards to individuality and the Four R's: respect, relationship, responsibility, and reverence. Thornburg (1993) cites Hyerle (1996) as follows:

Brainstorming webs should be honored as "sacred" in the sense that the free associations and links among ideas are more like an evolving piece of art than a document to be evaluated using comparative methods. Within this framework of respect for individual thinking, there is no "wrong" use of webbing, only more productive techniques that students can learn for improving their abilities to tap the flow of their creative juices. (p. 90)

For me, the key words are “honored,” “sacred,” “respect,” “productive,” and “creative.” To apply these key words almost guarantees learning. Whether the learning resembles a finished product that satisfies a teacher/researcher is secondary to developing the shape of one’s own learning process. One useful skill that the majority of the research participants in adult literacy noted as a missing component of their learning process had been brainstorming.

### Reflections on Oral and Written Responses

#### Participant: Lauren

Lauren is a second language learner who kept to herself more than the others. While she attended three of the four workshops, she arrived late for two workshops, sitting to the side and observing at a distance from the others. Lauren appeared to need space when first entering the classroom. Recently, an educator shared her own reticence to enter some classrooms as a student, describing an almost phobic apprehension that echoed descriptions given by students. Lauren completed the three worksheets and wrote a reflective response for each of the three stories. Since she tended to miss the brainstorming session and just participate in the second half with the second reading and group discussion, I saw no evidence of the vocabulary sheets that other participants included in their notes, but she did include the worksheets.

In Lauren’s case, she wrote meticulously. Despite the relatively small space for responses to questions on the worksheet, her writing seemed to shrink into corners, leaving ample space for additional information. Typically, her

reflective responses started with a position statement and then she would give supporting reasons. Her succinct, expressive writing matched her personal, understated composure. Like art teachers who see the spirit and character in a student's art work, I think writing, too, becomes a whole body process that moves from internal envisioning to external revisioning and reveals much of the writer in the writing.

### *Writing Sample*

*The color of my weekend would probably be the color red. The reason why I pick red is because it means love to me. The weekend that I remember the most is my 1 year anniversary with my boyfriend. That night meant so special to me because he had surprize me with dinner in Stanley Park and a present that was unforgettable. He had surprize me with a four day cruise to L.A. That night had red color everywhere not only for me and my boyfriend, but to everybody around us. So that's my story of my red week-end.*

As a quiet, sensitive observer, she and I developed an unspoken understanding that her limited participation in the discussions did not reflect a passivity; rather, her active response flowed through her writing. For example, on her worksheet for "Corrections", she acknowledged conflicting assumptions

about the role of police in society, jotting down "racist, crooks, friend, helpful, safety, protection, keep the peace, arrest, brutal". In the section where Lauren considered what it would be like to be William and to imagine how she could change the situation, she writes, "I could change the situation by changing my attitude towards the authority and everyone around. - behave". Her response to the story stands apart from the others because of her identification with William.

*North of 60*

*"Corrections"*

*In my opinion, I think Michelle did the right thing by letting William go. The reason why I think she did the right thing because everyone deserved a second chance in life. For example, I was lucky enough to deserve a second chance because of my lawyer. If it weren't for my lawyer to arrange something with the judge and the prosecutor, I would have spent two months of my life in YDC (youth detention center) at the age of fourteen. But I was lucky enough to deserve a second chance. I guess by giving someone sympathy and scaring someone enough can really make a difference. It once did for me. So by letting*

*William go, he might change his life around and go back home to his family, so he can start a new life as a new person.*

*That's why I am really relate with the situations because I was there once myself. So what I'm really trying today is by giving someone a second chance can be really good for a person. But some people can take the second chance for granted and never change at all. I once learn my lesson, I hope William learn his lesson too. (Even though I know William is only a character on a television show.)*

In "Competition" and "The Outsider", Lauren showed compassion for the characters who struggled with real human dilemma's. She empathized with Tee Vee and felt he'd made the right decision to remain silent and not hurt his mother if she learned the truth. In Nevada's situation, she focussed on loneliness and his need "for someone to love him and nurture him for who he is and not for someone he is not". While William's story brings out predictable tensions between textual realism and personal reality, there is a clear message that receiving mercy and support has influenced her relationships with others, yet she is mindful that change requires choice. van Manen (1990) writes:

Lived experience is the starting point and end point of phenomenological research. The aim of phenomenology is to transform lived experience into a textual expression of

its essence – in such a way that the effect of the text is at once a reflexive re-living and a reflective appropriation of something meaningful: a notion by which a reader is powerfully animated in his or her own lived experience.  
(p. 36)

Choosing which of Lauren's three stories to include as a sample of her writing was difficult because her response to "Corrections" showed a deeper sensitivity to the situation, yet I vacillated on privacy issues. Ultimately, her message for an audience of educators on the impact of merciful actions and positive change is important to hear, in my view. Second chances, as she acknowledged, do not always lead to change, but she has remained open and receptive in her relationships with others.

Along a continuum of shifting tensions, students begin to reconstruct their own identities; however, altering one's identity often feels threatening and involves resistance. Lauren's experience reminded me of the importance of time and the inner rhythms as each person attunes to constant change at conscious and unconscious levels. This attuning to the messages of mind works toward an organic wholeness if body and spirit messages coalesce. I imagine a quilt of many sections emerging into wholeness, yet allowing disharmonious elements to create textual uniqueness; life's imperfections similarly allow human error to be a source of re-creation of the self as a work in progress.

Reflection and resistance to structural conditions which control our lives are necessary processes to empowerment and change according to Smyth (1989) who notes that "people embark on a process of becoming different by thinking

critically and creatively, so as to pursue meanings that enable them to make increasing sense of the world in which they live" (p. 214). Resistance to change, which I regard as a given in adult literacy classes, generally precipitates actual change.

"To be educated is not to be arrived;  
it is to travel with a different view."

R.S. Peters

Streibel (1993) writes that learners "uncover the assumptions or pre-understandings in [our] knowledges and practices . . . [in which] the tyranny of lived relationships – power relationships between teacher and learner, [parent and child]" (p. 24) can be challenged in order to reconstruct knowledges and practices that release us from the constraints of biography and history. To assume the ordinariness of voice, equality, and responsible freedom of inquiry takes extraordinary struggle. "Freedom is the ability to take ownership of one's individual and collective biography and history . . . [and to have] a say in one's own biography and history" (p. 24). Similarly, Freire (1997) says that the struggle to humanize all people alters the power relationship between oppressor and oppressed; despite fear of change that Freire compares to painful childbirth, "the process of achieving freedom" (p. 31) results in social transformation.

Lauren chose not to be interviewed, so only her writing is available as an expression of her inner/outer self.

Participant: Maureen

Maureen projects a strong survivor stance; she is sensitive to the natural world and her indisputable place in it. Although she introduced herself in a traditional way of mixed blood heritage, I decided for reasons of confidentiality to not identify the nation, band, and territory of status and non-status participants.

*Writing Sample*

*I rode my bike to Deep Cove a few weeks ago. On my way there, I traveled on gray pavement. Once at the water of Deep Cove the water looked a greenish blue. After, we sat by the water for awhile we decided to explore some of the bike trails. There we saw the color of the leafs changing. Some were still green, but some were red, yellow, and brown. I could also smell the brown cedar trees, and really fresh air.*

During brainstorming sessions and discussions of the stories, Maureen frequently initiated dialogue; the other participants gained confidence from her willingness to speak from the heart. She usually sat in the front row with another native student, taking notes as the action unfolded. Her intense, dark eyes absorbed details of the characters' lives, especially visual images that portrayed cultural markers. When Charlie offered tobacco to Michelle at her daughter's gravesite, Maureen understood the unspoken gestures of the two

characters and shared her cultural interpretation with the non-native participants.

Seeing the world through a cultural lens creates a kaleidoscope of inner viewpoints. According to Phillips (1992), "visual learning is the most rapid method of learning" (p. 195) and, as one of the senses, it is important for survival. Maureen revealed in her writing that from an early age she used her vision and hearing to respond to dangerous situations. de Kerckhove (1995) claims that "eyes take up a great deal of mental energy" and vision "requires eighteen times more energy than hearing" (p. 101). This suggests to me that people who live with trauma for extended periods of time are chronically alert, on the lookout, and expending immense energy seeing distrust rather than hearing trust at school.

To compare sight versus sound, the author suggests a simple sensory test of closing your eyes in a crowded room and following different conversations simultaneously. "Then open your eyes and try to keep it up. You will find it very difficult, if not impossible" (p. 101). Although de Kerckhove does not provide in-depth neurobiological data, he states that "we grow into our environment not only anatomically, following genetic programming, but also neurologically, following cultural programming" (p. 102). Native educator, Alannah Young, speaks of the environment as "a living curriculum" (First Nations House of Learning, June 26, 2002) that has sensitized me to interior structures as well as exterior spaces. By acknowledging these sensory gifts,

educators can select materials, activities, and practices to support cultural meaning making in the process of acquiring literacy skills.

In the story the "Outsider," Maureen writes, "The elders hear Nevada with their heart, and decide that maybe it's time for him to learn to go out and hunt, so they suggest Joey take him hunting." Though expressed in print, the words remind the reader that listening to the heart does not require literacy. Maureen explained to the non-native participants the role of Elders in Native communities; her knowledge of the heart has been internalized by ancestral history, experience, and the Elders' traditional teachings that would be difficult for non-native participants to comprehend. de Kerckhove writes, "A mind trained by literacy is led to process information in thought rather than in action" (p. 110). I would argue, however, that technology insists on a human mind trained to include print literacy as one form of literacy within an evolving reality of multi-literacies. To process information through multi-literate learning paths requires skillful vision, thought, reflection, and action if we are to develop our humanity to the fullest potential.

In the story, "Competition," Maureen incorporated several of the words from her brainstorming sheet--betrayed, sneaky, greedy, conniving, dishonest, selfishness, anive [naïve]-- in her written response. By transferring words she used in spoken language to written form, she was actively storing information and reinforcing her literacy skills. However, her selection of words to describe Harris invites the reader to consider how far these characters' representations of

power between oppressor and oppressed could be extended beyond two people. During the study, the participants focussed on the personal power relations between Harris and TeeVee, yet competition and responsible practices in the workplace might be discussed if time permitted.

For Maureen, the story of Michelle and William triggered an angry response, not during the workshop but in her written reflection. Her flowing prose in the previous responses changed to scrawled, point-form notes. In addition to factual notes and expression of anger about police brutality, Maureen wrote a four-page personal narrative. Prior to the final workshop, I sought the advice of her regular instructor since Maureen had suggested reading her story to the other participants. Sharing responses had not been required of the participants, and the instructor and I agreed that I should spend time with Maureen privately, following the final workshop entitled "Safe Home."

As a researcher, I had no opportunity to meet with her again because a crises unrelated to school required her to be away for an extended absence. I felt frustrated, as many literacy teachers do, in seeing a talented student withdraw from a program in which she was achieving her academic goals. Horsman (1999) writes:

Unless education at all levels acknowledges violence in the lives of women and children, along with its impact on learning, many students will not only fail to learn but may also experience the educational setting as a silencing place, or another site of violence where they are controlled and diminished by institutional structures or classroom interactions, and shamed by their failure to learn. (p. 20)

When a student is not only grieving violent relationships from the past, but also re-living violence in the present, "we cannot fall into the trap of suggesting that learners can go away and 'heal' from trauma and come back to class when they are ready to learn" . . . [nor is it appropriate to] diminish learners by maintaining a silence about the extent of violence in society" (Horsman, p. 78). On the one hand, scenes of violence in print and television stories can be a catalyst for discussing the necessary conditions for personal and social change. On the other hand, literacy instructors need to be prepared to "design literacy programming that will support learners whatever violence they have experienced to value themselves and develop their literacy skills" (p. 78). As a teacher/researcher, I question whether exposure to violence in print or television stories validates learners' experiences and provides opportunities for safe examination of ways to initiate change or do these stories simply compound past or present realities and undermine their learning.

### *Safe Home*

*I was four years old when my mother and dad broke-up. I could hardly wait until I grew up, so I could go see my dad in Vancouver, B.C. Because my mom was heavy into drinking and never available for me when I needed her. There was hardly ever any food to eat and there were a lot of us with ten brothers and I only had my*

*oldest sister [Jean]. I grew up in the city, and I can remember being made to stay upstairs, while my older brothers and their friends sniffed glue mostly everyday. But I was always made to stay in the upstairs bedroom while they sniffed. In addition, I would look at the [office] building thinking about when I was gonna be an adult and finally be out of there. When I was 18 1/2 years old sure enough, I left [the city] with my son to go to Vancouver, B.C. to look for my dad and leave my family in [my hometown].*

Her brief response to "Safe Home" is a telling parallel to Charlie's young life. Like Charlie, she has worked hard to create an environment of stability and order, but sometimes circumstances maintain a person in chronic survival mode.

Weeden (1989) writes:

What an event means to an individual depends on the ways of interpreting the world, on the discourses available to her at any particular moment. For example, the way in which a woman experiences and responds to domestic violence will depend on the ways of understanding it to which she has access. . . . If she sees men as naturally violent or herself as responsible for provoking violence then she is unlikely to see it as an unacceptable exercise of illegitimate power which cannot be tolerated. (p. 79)

If an individual's only access to understanding her situation has been learned through the experience of violent oppression, then the instructor's role, in my view, is to seek language and experiences in the classroom that reveal and rupture the language of domination in order to create a learning space where non-violent communication is experienced. To understand the meaning of experience is a pivotal site of resistance and renewal, and our choice of language to unlearn debilitating relations of power becomes "an important role in [facilitating] the individual's role as social agent" (p. 79). Social change begins with experience and transforms through language, action, and reflection.

Participant: Mercedes

Mercedes is a second language learner who compared her experiences between her home culture and Canadian culture as she reflected in oral and written responses. For example, her interpretation of the role of police in society depended on cultural references to how situations would be handled at home versus here, in Canada. Learning cultural expectations in this country has changed her attitudes in resolving conflict. By reflecting on her self-image as a "tough" person who identified with rebellious characters in the television stories, she encountered a façade in contradiction to her true self. As an agent of change in power relations that no longer fulfilled her needs, Mercedes began to envision hopeful images of change in her personal dynamics.

### Writing Sample

*I think the past weekend was grey! A lot of things happened to me, some were happy, some were frustrating, some were scary. To begin with, my 18 month old got caught between a garage door and a concrete wall. He was a little bit bruised but no broken bones. That was the scary part of my weekend. However, all the scary feelings went away when I heard him say, "mama" for the first time. It was the happiest part of my weekend; I will never forget it! Unfortunately, my life became very frustrating when the love of my life decided that he can't make up his mind about me. He loves me; he loves me not. So if I was to classify my life in colors, a little bit of white feelings, a little bit of black feelings, it would be a neutral color, grey.*

The blending of colours seems in some ways to reflect Mercedes' state of being as she learns to blend into cultural and private spaces that are not always comfortable for her. The colours of fear, relief, delight, and frustration show the significance of emotion as the source of retaining and recalling information.

Kenyon and Randall (1997) make an interesting distinction between "*talking*

ourselves inside-out [that] is different from *writing* ourselves inside-out" . . . . Not only is the storyteller not quite the same as the storywriter but neither is the self that is spoken the same as the self that is written" (p. 126). A writer's struggle to transfer orality into literacy authentically has a long history of tension between these interconnected media.

### *Safe Home*

*This is story reminds me of how fragile children are to adults ways of being. If we don't watch out the way we are we can mess them up for life. It had a little meaning for me because I have a baby and sometimes I can be quite strict with him but this tells me to watch it! Children need a safe place, people who make them feel love, that show them confidence through life, so they can grow up and be strong sensible people.*

*About Michelle, I feel for her loss. I know it's hard to snap out of a situation like that, but if she would have been just a little bit warmer to Charlie, they would have complemented each other. Both would have had a safe home or situation.*

We people should be just a little more sensible to situations around us, or maybe just I because I tend to go through life just for myself without caring for others, but it's not just that. Is that I forget I have all I have in life. The people that get to know me, I mean really know me (is not many) say I can be quite sinical and I can be like a sponge, just take, take take and never give anything in return. Well that scares me because if I'm really like that then what will be of my child later on. Is he going to become like me? Also, some people say I'm too strick. That I should ease off a little. They say that "things" are always going to be there, but my baby boy is not always going to be a baby so I should enjoy it while I can. So this story reminds me of that because my baby is really good too, like Charlie, but I have to be more undestanding.

To read between the lines of Mercedes' written response to "Safe Home" requires surrender. Her emotional energy shifts from objective observer to subjective learner in her real world as woman, mother, and friend. Her response

to “how fragile children are to adults ways of being” illuminates an “aha” moment when the textual images of Charlie remind Mercedes of her baby’s innocence and goodness. As words trace form onto the page, I eavesdrop on the voices of friends as Mercedes absorbs their advice in a good way. Drawing on the textual images of Charlie, she acknowledges a deepening awareness that to care for others, in particular, her baby implies “practical action” (van Manen, p. 129). “[T]hat I forget I have all I have in life” is a (re)membering to change through reflection and action (Freire, 1997). Her insight into the lifeworld of Charlie creates a mirror for re-imagining her relatedness to others.

The narrative power of story is that sometimes it can be more compelling, more moving, more physically and emotionally stirring than lived-life itself. Textual emotion, textual understanding can bring an otherwise sober-minded person (the reader but also the author) to tears and to a more deeply understood worldly engagement. (van Manen, p. 129)

Mercedes stays open to the information she has gained from the story in order to transfer information into knowledge. van Manen (1990) says that “writing exercises the ability to see” (p. 129) in such a way that:

Although I may try to close my eyes, to ignore what I have seen, in some way my existence is now mediated by my knowledge. And because we are what we can ‘see’ (know, feel, understand), seeing is already a form of praxis – seeing the significance in a situation places us in the event, makes us part of the event. Writing, true writing, is authoring, the exercise of authority: the power that authors and gives shape to our personal being. Writing exercises us in the sense that it empowers us with embodied knowledge which now can be brought to play or realized into action in the performance of the drama of everyday life. (p. 130)

In a sense, the imposition of information enables choice by forcing us to see or ignore; the choice of transferring information into “embodied knowledge” demands a constant re-shaping of our personal being: body, mind, and spirit.

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*Agency*  
*we (under)stand in a place*  
*of poststructural consent that unfixes meaning*  
*empowers us to perform possibilities*  
*that might have seemed impossible*  
*yesterday or five minutes ago*  
*yet now act, reflect, transform the skin of an idea*  
*right before our skeptical eyes*  
*red, black, yellow, white*  
*fixed, inorganic signifiers*  
*until experience always elsewhere*  
*breaks through absence*

*Presence*

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We had an animated discussion about the role of police in society as Mercedes reflected on her lived experiences. I asked her to elaborate on her point of view regarding police brutality.

N: You mentioned in your cultural context that [police brutality's] not unusual.

M: No, no, that's not unusual at all. It happens a lot. Right? But I guess I don't think it's that big a deal because I'm used to it? Right? As long as they don't kill nobody, it's okay.

N: You think it's behaviour that's acceptable in society.

M: Maybe not in this society, but since it has been going on for years and years in [my homeland], it is acceptable there.

Similar to Maureen's experience of domestic violence, the violence of public authority figures becomes normalized and legitimized in situations where lack of resistance creates a high tolerance for dehumanization of self and other. Such tolerance for terror disconnects body and spirit. Horsman (1999) cites Agger's (Trans. Bille, 1994, p. 56) interpretation of Foucault, his analysis of discourse and power and policing of the body. Agger writes:

Power can use different languages, different techniques, but all are aimed at making the body docile. According to Foucault, in modern industrialized societies, the techniques are aimed at the soul rather than the body, but the goal both of the deliberate and conscious use of violence that occurs under some dictatorships, and the hidden and unconscious use of violence that occurs under more 'refined' dictatorships, is the same: a psychological process in which the power relationship is internalized. One weapon in the resistance to these strategies is to expose them. By publicly denouncing the techniques of those in power, the psychological internalization of the power relationship is counteracted. The inner psychic mechanism that allows power to function automatically, so that the oppressed 'becomes the principal of his own subjugation,' as Foucault expresses it, is challenged. (pp. 171-2)

When Agger says that all forms of power aim toward docility, I interpret these forms to be power over the other that causes dehumanization, whereas power within the self referred to by Freire is, I believe, a form of power that aims to strengthen the body, mind, emotions, and spirit. Resistance to power that violates human dignity in school would be a significant beginning toward changing current attitudes regarding violence in society.

N: So, what do police represent in society?

M: In society? Ya, I think it's right that they're supposed to be there to keep the order and make people feel safe. Right? But sometimes they're there, and they make you feel unsafe, especially where I'm from. I mean, here it's different in Canada because I think police are really nice here. They're really polite. They do their job. They don't take . . . what's it called when you give them money?

N: Bribes.

M: Bribes. Actually, it's illegal to that here. Right?

N: Yes, it is.

Mercedes said she would avoid contact with police at home because she considered it safer to "fix our own problems." Even though the character of Michelle represented a reality that police brutality occurs in Canada, the brutal beating of William into unconsciousness did not phase Mercedes. "I didn't think it was that violent, though." After this comment, she wanted to discuss her response to other stories because the use of video in the classroom had been an enjoyable experience for her. Then, we talked about brainstorming and group discussion as strategies to stimulate written responses to stories.

N: I wanted to ask you about the brainstorming technique because what I was using was brainstorming and group discussion to stimulate writing.

M: Ya.

N: Was that effective for you?

M: I think so, I think it was effective because you did it in class. I find it really hard when I have to do it by myself. Brainstorming. But from doing it in class, I

got a lot of feedback from other people. Right? And, I did incorporate other people's comments in my paper. Right?

N: Oh, that was the point.

M: Oh really? Okay, I didn't want to be like a copycat or something.

N: No, no. That's interesting that you bring that up.

M: Okay. Because some questions were like "What do you think the writer wanted you to think about this story?" and stuff like that. If somebody asked me a question like that, I'm like, "Ah, I don't know." You know it's just really hard to think about.

N: And, then, when you heard somebody else's idea, did that stimulate your own?

M: Ya, a little bit.

N: You get different perspectives. Right?

M: Exactly. Different perspectives. More vocabulary.

Mercedes expressed a preference for writing during the workshop, as in the final session, rather than afterwards. However, she conceded that spending time reflecting on a story did generate more writing and taught her to be more self-motivated "but I kinda like to forced into something?" By the end of the interview, I realized the stories had stimulated self-discovery narratives that could be life-changing for Mercedes. The time to move on is when the completion of one phase creates a seamless beginning for renewal.

Participant: Emily

Emily emigrated to Canada approximately 17 years ago. However, she still felt quite hesitant to express herself when I met her. While a new immigrant, she stayed in school for three years, then worked for 12 years before returning to school when employment opportunities disappeared in a changing society. Confined to minimum wage jobs, she enrolled in her college program to upgrade her skills. As a quiet, highly motivated learner, Emily hesitated revealing her knowledge during the brainstorming sessions, but I noticed that she participated fully in small group discussions.

*Writing Sample*

*Last week, I had a blue weekend. I had an invitation to go to a wedding party at 5 p.m. on Saturday; but at the last minute, I had a call from my neighbour saying that she needed a babysitter for her 2 year old son because she had to go to the hospital to visit her mother. Her husband had to go to work. I couldn't refuse the offer because we have been neighbours and best friends for about 10 years. I will never forget that blue, miserable weekend.*

Emily had not had an opportunity prior to the workshops to talk with Native students in her classes or learn about their culture. Therefore, she was

“kind of shocked” that the Native participants in the research study identified with the characters and situations in the stories. The discussions helped her understand the impact of residential school and cultural genocide that has caused prolonged fear in the majority of native literacy learners when they return to the public education system.

### *Conflict*

*I assume a police is a person that I can trust for informations, for protection, and for peace keeping. I see a police officer as being a friend to someone who is depressed. I feel protected to contact the police if I am in trouble with the law, and I will be honest with him about my situation. In William's case I would not hurt myself if I was in jail. I would respect the police policy and cooperate with her. Then, when I got free from mail, I would stay away from drugs and on treatment, and I would try to go back to school. Society and parents shouldn't pressure teenagers to overcome the society or parents dreams. They should be glad for what the kids can achieve and support them all the way. I think in Vancouver, a police officer will*

*not assault a person for no reason unless there was a good reason to do so. At the end, I think Michelle did the right thing to free William because he seemed to feel ashamed for what he did. One thing that Michelle did not do right was that she didn't care about William's future. She could asked him what was he going to do after he was free. Michelle could give him free advice on going back to school, go back to his parents or try to help William find a job so he could support his daily finances.*

There seems to be some ambivalence around the issue of assault, though she recognizes the need for accountability in relations of power. During the interview, Emily indicated a self-contained though sheltered life regarding her exposure to domestic or societal violence. This sets her apart from the majority of participants in the study who were certainly aware of violence if not, in fact, survivors of traumatic events in their own lived experience. To be unaware of others' situations creates a sense of detachment that Emily acknowledged.

Through exposure to the experiences of others in the research study, Emily developed empathy for native students who had remained aloof from her in class. She re-considered her previous assumptions about the reasons that native students stayed aloof from her, deciding that their behaviour stemmed

from fear, particularly in the context of education and the post-residential school impact on generations of native people.

Prior to the study, I learned that she had considered the use of television as a means of entertainment and selected comedies for a few laughs. After reading her transcript, I reflected on the similar ways my limited exposure to violence on television or film caused me to retreat from disturbing scenes. My heightened sensitivity had ill-prepared me for the real world as an adult. It seems that gentle personalities find power within and see/feel no need to terrorize the spirit/ heart of other beings.

Anderson (2000) writes about the horrific disruption of family life when native children were forced to attend residential schools, yet the focus of her text is on reclamation and renewal of the sacredness of all creation embedded in traditional teachings. In an interview March 18, 1998 with Diane Hill, a Mohawk educator and writer at Six Nations of the Grand River Territory, Ontario, Anderson includes the following quote:

When we were born, we knew the reason for why we came. But, for many of us, remembering is difficult because our true selves are covered over by the memories and feelings associated with the painful experiences in our lives. The spiritual task before us requires us to work our way back through all of those experiences to uncover our true selves by remembering who we are and what our gifts are. (p. 202)

Although Emily indicated that she had not experienced violence in her life, I felt that the discussions increased her awareness about difficult experiences of those

in her classroom who need understanding in order to remember who they are and the gifts given to them by the Creator before they were born.

N: I noticed in your writing, as you went along your writing increased. You started with quite a short piece of writing, and then each one got longer and longer.

E: Yes, that was when I start realizing what you really wanted, um, from me.

N: Did you find the brainstorming techniques and the discussions helpful?

E: Yes, I didn't know how to brainstorm, so in a group it helps to make a brainstorm, and also helps the vocabulary. It helps a lot. It's like the outside world comes inside the classroom.

N: Oh, how interesting.

E: Ya.

N: Can you describe that a little bit more?

E: Um, yes, it's like in the classroom you just read and write and then you don't learn vocabulary, like that. Clear vocabulary. You learn by your pronunciation.

N: So the speaking was helpful.

E: Ya. 'Cause if you don't know the word, another person will know and you will ask, "Well, what does that mean?" and you don't have to go to a dictionary and all that, and sometimes that keep our minds better than reading and memorizing. It's a different way of memorizing, by talking.

N: Oh, interesting. A different way of memorizing by talking.

E: Ya. Some people like me, sometimes I got words by listening better than by reading 'cause then reading and talking are different ways of pronunciation.

N: You're using different skills.

E: Yes.

With reference to Emily's need to combine oral and print texts, Herman and Dole (1988) identify three approaches to vocabulary building: definition, context, and concept. (p. 44) First, learning the definition of an unfamiliar word without knowing the "underlying concept or closely related words or concepts . . . is unlikely to result in anything more than partial knowledge" (p. 46). The authors suggest that "learning definitions does not foster integration of new knowledge with existing knowledge" (p. 46), and Emily touches on the limitations of using a dictionary, for example, when reading print texts. Second, using the contextual approach makes an "assumption . . . that students already possess some knowledge relevant to the topic of the text in which an unknown word is embedded" (p. 47); however, "not all contexts lead readers to full meanings of words" (p. 49), yet researcher/teacher modelling can provide valuable awareness for increasing comprehension as well as vocabulary. Third, the conceptual approach is more time-consuming than the definitional and contextual approaches but "having students understand a concept at a personal level [and] how the word is used in a variety of situations" (p. 50) is key, I think, to grasping and retaining the meaning(s). Emily's observation that talking—a form of language learning often missing in adult literacy programs—assists her

learning, also reinforces my view that multiple ways of learning can better be met through the inclusion of non-print texts.

N: What did you learn about yourself from the study?

E: About myself? Hmm. Interesting. I learned that now when I watch TV I concentrate what it's telling me, what it's about all the time.

N: Good.

E: Like before I would watch TV just for entertainment, you know. Make a few laughs and that's it, but now I see that there's more to it than just entertainment. Like, um, will this be ... oh, ya, this is good, this happens in daily life, and, ya, it's more kind of concentrate more as I'm watching now.

N: So, you're reading it rather than just letting it wash over you.

E: Mm hm.

N: Oh, that's wonderful.

E: Ya, it was bit of surprises that, gee, you know I never look at TV the way I'm watching now, you know.

I enjoyed hearing Emily's impressions on the difference between reading print texts and visual texts. She began sharing her views from the perspective of an insider in the story and said that getting inside a print story seemed to require more effort than a television story that allowed the reader to get inside the story "like the lazy way" through visual cues. Sometimes in print texts she would lose the flow of the story from one paragraph to the next and feel mixed up whereas change in the visual texts she found to be less problematic.

E: When in the story, you can be, you're seeing, and you can go, "Okay, this way." and then you can change. You have the vision of what happened. But, when you're reading, your mind, I don't know, it doesn't . . . it's not like the vision.

N: Well, it sounds like when you're reading, you have to go in and imagine more actively, and when you're watching television, you termed it as lazy.

E: Yes, because you don't work with your mind, like listening as you're reading.

N: Did you find in the study that that changed?

E: Yes, because I have . . . maybe I'm different, but if I see something, I concentrate more than when I'm reading because maybe through seeing, maybe I believe more than through studying.

N: So, then, you are using your mind.

E: Yes, in a way, but different than when I read, 'cause when you're reading [print], it's just the mind and when you're watching you're seeing and with your mind, too.

N: So, your body and your mind are working.

E: Yes, that's right.

N: A different process.

E: Ya. So, I think seeing and thinking is better than just thinking.

N: Good. That's really interesting. That's the kind of feedback that I'm very interested in hearing because we don't use television a lot in literacy, and yet I think it's one way of really starting the dialogue of what a story is about, and

what conflict is about, and what makes a good story, and the relationships between characters. Seeing them, did you find you became more reflective?

E: Yes, because I'm more into the situation and then trying to improve and it's very hard for me to read and concentrate on what I'm reading. And, when I'm watching TV, I get this both ways, you know, I can see and concentrate on what I'm doing. It's better than just reading.

Although most adult literacy learners find print reading and writing an ordeal, I have noticed that their sensory awareness and observational skills provide effective tools for analyzing visual texts. These same skills seem to enhance reflective inquiry, yet without statistical proof, I can only support such a claim based on time spent with elderly people in rural settings. With little or no formal education, they taught the younger generations to read the world through observation and cumulative knowledge. From observing the sky for weather changes to analyzing the communal lessons of an anthill required time and reflection. Weedon (1987) writes that "experience is prior to language but requires language in order to be communicated to other people" (p. 85). Similarly, images are prior to language but require language in order to be communicated to other people. When Emily says she can see a television story and concentrate on what she is doing but has trouble concentrating while reading print, I suggest that dependence on reading print texts in silence and isolation may inhibit the development of other skills involving listening and visualizing images embedded in the text.

Participant: Matt

Matt is a native student who lived in a Native community until about seven years ago. In our interview, he referred to unhappy memories of school on the reserve that continue to influence his ability to learn. Matt understands what he sees and under his reflective gaze, he finds the loss of soul and self-respect among his own people too painful to endure. As a result, he has never returned to his community since leaving home.

*Writing Sample*

*I met an old friend, which I haven't seen in over one year. My friend [Sharon] had moved over to [a city] to go and get a better job and life. It was a move where everything and anything went wrong. [Sharon] had written to me once, and I figured she was all right. Being a good procrastinator I thought I would answer her letter tomorrow, next thing I realized it was two months later. I picked up the letter again, and thought in my mind, I will answer it tomorrow next thing I know it's another two months down the road. To my surprise I got home one evening and found a note on the table that said Please call [Sharon] at so and so*

*number, I immediately called, but the answering machine came on. I left a message for her to return my call. When she returned my call we made arrangements to meet and spend the day together, catching up on what we had been doing. So my weekend was rainbow colored of all the excitement I had over the weekend.*

Matt characterized himself as an “outsider” whose will to survive meant that he had to leave home to find health and balance. When I spoke to the host instructor for the research study, she had no idea that Matt, whose voice speaks for many native and non-native adult literacy learners, experienced intense anxiety as a student and sometimes left the classroom when he felt overwhelmed by generalized distress. Lois expressed concern because she was unaware of the recurring panic Matt was experiencing. I believe Lois is not alone among middle-class instructors who gained confidence and approval as successful students in school. Though the effects of abuse may be intellectually understood, the physical and emotional reactions remain unknown, outside the experience of the majority of instructors. Horsman (1999) writes, “it can help [literacy] workers and other learners realize that loud and aggressive talk in the classroom might evoke extreme terror in some learners. Also, put-downs or humour that might seem trivial to the person speaking may be experienced by the recipient as traumatic”

(p. 43). As Matt indicated, early school experience has left imprints on his self-perception as powerless and voiceless in unequal relations of power.

While adult literacy students in Canada come from diverse backgrounds, the experience of feeling like exiles in a literate world comes up frequently in our conversations. One of my former students shared an incident about her arrival in Canada that came back to me while talking with Matt and illustrates a moment of acute isolation, loss, and powerlessness. To be aware that people in our classrooms carry ghosts from past experiences that still haunt them is a pressing reality that educators need to know.

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*Impressions*

*(For Farida)*

*It was my first week in Canada  
the storyteller says,  
and then she waits for nods  
of recognition in the circle,  
and we laugh as she begins to weave words  
for that is her way to make sense  
of a spirit in exile.  
And our hearts quicken,  
running breathless beside her,  
pursuing him,  
that bloody mosquito darting invisible  
along the grubby platform,  
up the escalator,  
glancing sideways  
through the spinning turnstile,  
all the time  
clutching his cowardice  
and her cloth bag with maps and coins,  
and little else*

*but a few illusions and fewer dreams,  
 lost in a land  
 where plenty want more and more,  
 and the poor have less and less,  
 where the shriek of metal  
 races through tunnels underground  
 near-missing meaning(less)ness,  
 where reserve recoils enmasse  
 from an untidy derangement,  
 where she threatens to unburden  
 their collective silence.  
 The storyteller shivers,  
 not for lack of warmth  
 on this humid, summer day,  
 her six feet of tribal instinct  
 waving hands like thunderclouds  
 ready to burst torrential,  
 her mouth an oval gasp,  
 hand drumming primal rhythms,  
 ah wah wah wah  
 ah wah wah wah  
 help me, help me  
 in a language no one knows,  
 and the mystified mutations  
 (she says)  
 brush by without a whisper,  
 and every which colour  
 stare through her darkly,  
 shift like portable, earless walls  
 toward the exit.  
 No one says a word  
 she tells the circle.  
 No one.*

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The image and voice of the storyteller and the faces of everyone in the room that night are vividly etched in memory. When one voice cries out and voices of the many remain unmoved to respond, our collective humanity suffers.

van Manen (1990) writes, "Indifference is a failure or crisis of the 'we' " (p. 108).

It is a crisis that occurred in some residential schools, too – the language of heartless silence in the midst of children's terror.

Recovery of voice sets in motion the language of hope, resilience, and transformation. However, the idea that learning takes place in the mind, only, while ignoring the body, emotions, and spirit results in inadequate teaching and partial learning.

Exploring how possible it is to include all aspects of the person in all types of literacy programming enhances learning possibilities. Literacy cannot be seen only as a set of 'skills' to be learned while the whole person is ignored. Balance between a narrow focus on literacy learning, and a broader inclusion of the whole person, is essential for many to learn successfully. Opening up to include the whole person must not, however, become a focus solely on pathology and 'damage' to each aspect of the person, instead balance is needed between recognizing possible damage and drawing on strengths and every aspect of the person to enhance all learning. (Horsman, p. 170)

Reading this passage reminds me of a consistent characteristic I noticed among the native research participants, and certainly applied to Matt. No matter how appalling the situation, the native participants found balance in their analysis of crises being experienced by characters in the television stories. They considered the circumstances of the individuals in crisis and found reasons for compassion. For example, Matt acknowledged that violent confrontations between the police and native people "happens a lot in these small communities and needs to be addressed, too"; nevertheless, he "used to work with a woman R.C.M.P. in the

northern communities, and they were pretty nice and I know they had a stressful job, and I had compassion for them, for being so strong, like to work in that kind of field." His criticism focussed on the fact that the parents had not been contacted. "Any police organization should, ah, contact the parents first, like when they get arrested and see what, you know, the parents might have a solution to it, like what they could do with the young offender."

Matt submitted one piece of writing in response to the story, "Safe Home." At the interview, he checked his knapsack for other writing, believing it might be there, though he was pretty sure it had been left at home. His writing sample gives a clear indication of procrastination in his personal life that I would guess is an issue at school as well. When a trust relationship develops between an instructor and student, this teacher/learner partnership creates an opening to gather insights gleaned in journal writing and brainstorm strategies to encourage change. With Matt, overcoming procrastination is essential in order to progress in his studies.

### *Safe Home*

*This story has special meaning to me because Charlie reminds me of [Tim] a young boy that is in a similar situation. [Tim] comes from an alcoholic and abusive home. [Tim's] Grandmother had to intervene, because he was being neglected and abused. I recall one sunny afternoon walking*

*down the road with my sister and all of a sudden we heard screams coming from [Tim's] house. My sister and I approached the house where the screaming and holering was coming from. When we got to the house, and peeked through the broken window, we saw that [Tim] was being paddled with a broom stick. It was a well known fact that [Tim] is being abused.*

The interview provided time for Matt to elaborate on his memories of a little boy who reminded him of Charlie, and the resistance he encountered when he tried to enlist support for the child. At such times, voices of resistance meet a tidal wave of language aimed to crush the resistor and drown his/her words. For example, the term "whistle blower" denotes both strength and weakness, generates respect and disrespect, forms alliances of resisters and counter-resisters, and necessitates acts of heroism and villainy. People are inevitably influenced in situations by the choice of language. Matt spoke in the interview of a situation in which he was labelled a "troublemaker."

M: Seeing, seeing [Tim] being abused, you know, you sort of didn't know where to turn or who to tell, but you know, you would tell people, but they wouldn't believe you. Like it was, "Oh quit lying. Don't talk like that, you know." That's one thing I find is a lot of my people are very deep, deep in denial, even if they see something right in their face, they say, "Oh, oh, no, that's not happening. No,

that's not happening." And like if you try to say something, they say, "Oh, you troublemaker, you're such a troublemaker." Like you know, stuff like that. They don't want to face, um, reality. It's almost like they don't want to face reality.

N: There was an article in the paper that I took out just last weekend. An anthropologist who's worked a lot with native people was talking about land claims, but he made the comment that it is unbearable to not be believed.

M: Mm hm.

N: And that until the stories come out, that, um, healing really can't begin in a state of denial, so what you've said certainly it holds people back from making changes. Don't you think?

M: Oh, ya, ya. But that's changing now. They're starting to open up more and starting to say, "Maybe this is happening." We're starting to wake up.

At this point in the interview, Matt mentioned that he'd left home because "I just couldn't stand what was happening there," but he acknowledged that running away, like Nevada, meant taking the problems with you. "I could say I guess I was running from it. At least, I was running from it, but you can only run so far. You can't seem to run away from what you're running. It just follows you. Like it's right there." For those who understand what they see, hear, feel, know in their hearts to be violations to human dignity and rights, the act of having their voices silenced is unbearable.

The representations of native lived experience brought up painful memories as Matt recalled the bullying behaviours of teachers in his early years

at school that left him feeling fearful and powerless right up to the present. Now he feels comfortable most of the time in school, although he still has panic attacks and has learned strategies, such as going for a walk, to relieve moments of tension when a classroom becomes too imprisoning. "Freedom to get up and go out of the room, or fetch a cup of coffee may be a valuable physical movement to lessen stress and discomfort. Literacy learning might become more possible if time for learners to talk about fear and how they might cope with literacy learning in the face of terror is included in class" (Horsman, p. 170). In fact, Matt used these strategies when short episodic anxiety felt overwhelming, but he had not discussed his fear or reasons for leaving class with his instructor. He talked about long-term fear responses to school in the following dialogue.

M: There are so many things to learn, like there are so many things for me yet to tackle.

N: Lifelong learning. Are you excited to be in school?

M: I am very, very much excited to be in school.

While Matt did not disclose the exact location of his early school years, other than a reference to "back on the reserve," he remembered not wanting to be there because he felt mistreated and referred to some of his teachers as "bullies."

N: So you saw the bullying from teachers more than children?

M: More than children.

N: Yes.

M: They were mean. There was some there, at least one or two [teachers] who were very nice, but they sort of kept quiet.

In the absence of a safe and respectful learning environment, the complicity of silence among his teachers was neither hidden from him nor forgotten, and after many years of unresolved inner conflict, he was still coming to terms with his unhappy childhood memories of school.

N: The pain is really there.

M: Ya.

N: Was it scary to come back to school?

M: It was, even here. Even here.

N: Here feels pretty nice.

M: Here now, here I feel at home here now. Not like before like all those old feelings came back. All these emotions brought me back right to when I was in grade school. I just froze. I just sat there for the longest time and I didn't do anything. I sat there for about two hours doing nothing. I was just petrified. And, you know, I didn't tell anybody, but I just got up and I left. But I came back the next day, like y' know. Same thing the next day, y' know, but I said I gotta get over being scared somehow.

N: Get past it.

M: Get past it.

I heard echoes of this interview with Matt while reading a passage from "Love Medicine" by Louise Erdrich in which she portrays images of a tyrannical

teacher told from a young, female student's perspective. "She did what broke my mind to her. She grabbed me by the collar and dragged me, feet flying, through the room and threw me in the closet . . . . The only light was a crack beneath the door" (p. 47).

N: I think that's hard for some teachers to understand, um, if they haven't had the experience of being abused in school, they don't quickly identify a student's fear from the past until you're able to talk about it.

M: Mm hm.

N: And by then, of course, you're pretty comfortable. It's when you're really uncomfortable it's so hard to express the fear that you're trying to overcome.

M: Ya. And I still get that fear. Like I still get the um (pause) it's not very often now when I get these little attacks, anxiety attacks. I just try to control them.

The long-term effects of trauma that students continue to re-experience throughout their lives requires sensitive listening on the part of the teacher and an openness to trust a new situation on the part of the student. Referring to Simon (1992), Soleil (2000) writes, "By valuing past knowledge and acknowledging that the experience of being silenced is connected to feelings of fear and anger, there is an opportunity for developing a compassionate partnership between teacher and students through a reflective process of revisiting sources of resistance . . ." (p. 79). Also, an admission that a complicity of silence among educators does occur in schools validates a learner's experience. There are at least two messages I feel important for an instructor to convey to a learner: 1) I understand that you need

time for healing the feelings you experience in school, and 2) I want to support you so what can I do to help you in the classroom? When I ask the Creator to protect students who are suffering flashbacks from their early school experience, I acknowledge their vulnerability in a system of unequal power relations and walk beside them on my reflective journey toward change in education and society.

Participant: Shauna

Shauna is a non-native Canadian English speaker. She attended the four workshops, wrote a reflective response to all the stories, and gave a video-taped interview. According to Shauna, her main challenges in language learning are concentration and short-term memory retention. I did not discuss the participants' educational histories with the instructors, so whatever background information included in the dissertation came from the participants and/or my observations. Shauna consistently paused for several seconds before answering a question or offering an opinion, and she spoke slowly as though considering each word. Occasionally, she asked to have a question repeated or rephrased for clarification, causing me to wonder if auditory impairment might be another interference to communication.

As Shauna formulated her thoughts, the other research participants waited patiently for her response. No one tried to speak for her or interrupt the silence. She contributed equally to the discussions and made astute, succinct comments in both oral and written responses. While other participants discussed their ideas,

she appeared to follow their train of thought and sometimes disagreed. I noted her ability to respond spontaneously.

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### *Researcher's Reflection*

*I remember a witty, dyslexic student ponderously sounding out a word and then not recognizing the same word on the next line or in a chain throughout a story. Sometimes, like Shauna, I'd become so fixed on single words that I'd lose the story line, but my student had a wholistic grasp of what he'd read and often added a comical aside or shared a humorous anecdote relevant to the plot. I had to pay attention and learn early in my work with adult literacy students that a slow reader with a quick mind poses challenges on many levels, including the selection of appropriate materials.*

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### *Writing Sample*

*Last weekend was a blue weekend. Blue (meaning) is a warm color. I went to the Sunshine Coast as I usually do. My boyfriend and I spent the weekend with friends. We usually cook a gourmet dinner with these particular friends. However, this weekend we ordered six different kinds of pizza's and chowed down. Then we played on the internet, looking up [a friend's] family name and came up with Gentry's from the 15<sup>th</sup> century. We downloaded a letter from [the friend's] fourth cousin.*

*After that we played a card game. Then we watched the television and went home. Finally, [John] and I played crib and went to bed at 1:00 a.m. on Saturday night. On Sunday we came in to Vancouver early, and went to the water plant and loaded the Van with product. After that, we did some deliveries and quick shopping. Then, we went to the legion and had a beer with friends. [John] went back to the Sunshine Coast and I went home in Vancouver.*

Shauna's weekend trip to the Sunshine Coast aptly contests popular stereotypes of adult literacy learners. "Despite the power of popular imagery, adult literacy students are not 'large children' " (Quigley, 1997, p. 124) nor is it fair to portray them as heroic victims who need overprotective nurturing.

Referring to his experience, Quigley writes:

What is indisputable is that in many literacy classrooms, the teacher is cast as the authority and the student as the child, repeating the pattern laid down in elementary school. This is a set of roles that is known and safe for all involved. But does it provide the best basis for approaching adult education? (p. 125)

Many classrooms should not be misinterpreted as all classrooms because situations vary from one educational setting to another, and individual instructors within the same setting have different teaching styles and personalities. Quigley

raises a critical question, however, on what approach is best in adult education because teaching involves relationship. First, are the students perceived by the instructor as equals or inferiors? The attitude of an instructor may not be overtly revealed but will be felt by every student in the class on a subliminal level at the very least. Such is the nature of adults teaching other adults. Second, is the instructional model based on control or empowerment? If control over others steers the modus operandi in a classroom, it is likely that students will either submit to being controlled, rebel, or leave. In contrast, empowerment as the modus operandi in a classroom invites students to discover ways to self-transform. Students who expect direct instruction or who have experienced disrespect and inequality in a classroom may resist this instructional model, initially. As one student (not a research participant) informed me, "Good teachers yell a lot." That was the instructional model she had known, and she took a while to trust a respectful relationship in which her voice was valued.

### *Corrections*

*In today's society, we are always wondering if what we are doing is legal. These may seem corny, but it is not always obvious. In the story, "Corrections" does Michelle do the right thing by releasing William? Yes, because William was provoked during his arrest, which lead to an additional charge. If Michelle had not provoked*

*William there would have been less charges pressed. Michells decision to release William gave him another change at an honest life and he won his freedom. Michelle did not have just cause to physically attack William. I believe William should press charges against Michelle for police brutality. If William takes this opportunity at a new life he could do a number of constructive things. He could: return to school, have a good attitude, do some volunteer work, and show cooperation. William has grown from his experience.*

Although an ability to paragraph was not evident in any of Shauna's written submissions, her sentence structure showed good variation in the use of phrases and clauses. She expressed strong opinions and knew how to support her views with evidence from the story and/or lived experience. There were relatively few errors in her neatly handwritten reflections, and her instructor noted improvement in her regular work over the four weeks she participated in the study.

As an example of how the participants' interpretations often reflected cultural frames of reference, Shauna clearly sympathized with William and felt he should take further action. On the one hand, I agree that "Michelle did not have just cause to physically attack William" and her realization and reflective process

that led to the release of William was a transformative moment in the story. On the other hand, I admire how the native participants expressed a balanced view and considered surrounding circumstances to a situation when analyzing acts of injustice on the part of both William and Michelle, whereas the non-native Canadian English speakers tended to form inflexible arguments. The complex plot left much to be debated, but I particularly liked Shauna's hopeful suggestions in redirecting William to walk in a good way.

N: You liked Corrections. What was it that you liked?

S: Um, it was realistic, and um, and it had an ending of, a happy ending where someone could actually go out and achieve something, given a break.

N: Was there anything about William that attracted you to that story?

S: Um, maybe Michelle did. But I felt sorry for William.

N: Ya.

S: Michelle was really brutal.

N: Yes. Did that surprise you?

S: Ya, I was surprised by it.

N: What surprised you?

S: Um, when she went in the cell and beat him up.

N: Were you surprised about the brutality or about the fact that a woman would act that way, or that police act that way? What surprised you?

S: That someone would arm themselves, go into a cell, and hit someone repeatedly.

N: Ya. And we hear that in the news and yet it's hard to believe, isn't it, until you see something like that.

S: Ya.

N: Was the visual a stronger message for you than if it was in print?

S: Oh, yes, 'cause you can see her. Print is you read about it, but you don't get the full story line. You just say in print; it would just be basic.

Shauna expressed the view that the television stories provided more detail. Briefly, she talked about poor concentration and memory problems, but I wasn't able to determine if she found any difference in visual stories versus print stories in regards to concentration. We then discussed brainstorming.

N: I was using brainstorming techniques and group discussion. I wondered if it helped you in your writing.

S: Mm hm. Although, I didn't really go to the sheet. I just sorta just wrote.

N: So, you didn't actually

S: Use the brainstorming. No.

N: So, how did it help you then, or was it any help at all?

S: Well, it did show me other views, other people's ideas.

N: And, how did that help you?

S: Well, it just, since the views were closely related, it just gave me more of, um, overview of the program. But definitely watching the tape twice made a difference for me.

N: How so?

S: Because then I could remember it. The first time, I just went through. Then, when you explained it and stopped the tape and did that, then that's when I got the whole story.

N: So a first run for someone who has difficulty with memory makes it difficult.

S: Right.

N: And when you reinforce the story a second time, and go more slowly and more detail, then you were able to retain the information better.

S: Right.

N: Great. So how could you use that strategy in your regular reading?

S: Um, I guess I could read it out loud.

N: Mm hm. You could. And what about reading it twice?

S: Ya. I hate reading, though.

N: Why do you hate reading?

S: Because I do. It's dry and boring. It takes time.

N: Were you aware that you were reading television?

S: Um, sure.

N: Was that easier or harder?

S: (long pause) Um, I guess it was easier.

N: Any idea why?

S: Um, well, the repetition of going over it again is where I got the best from it. The most from it.

N: And did that stimulate your writing? Was it easier to write after than?

S: For me it was.

N: Great!

As Shauna said she watched television “as an occupy thing, not as a habit” nor as a main source of entertainment, I probed the subject of reading a little further to see if she might be receptive to group reading.

N: Have you ever worked in a reading circle where different people read and you listen and then you read, and listen, and talk?

S: No, not really.

N: Do you think that would be useful?

S: Um. (long pause)

N: You said reading was hard for you and that you didn’t like to read twice.

S: No, I don’t like reading. I don’t read very much.

N: I was just thinking of ways to help you get through reading as a more enjoyable skill than you’re experiencing right now. Are there ways that we, as teachers, could help you enjoy reading?

S: I guess by just providing material that’s interesting.

N: Ya. Big one. (laughter) Were any of these stories interesting?

S: Oh, ya. They were all interesting.

N: That’s good.

S: Ya. They all had a different theme. They all had meaning. There was a story in all of it.

N: Something you could take away and think about.

S: For a short period, ya.

I asked Shauna about her knowledge of Native culture prior to reading the television stories. In fact, she said, "I've watched a lot of it on TV" despite her earlier position that she did not spend much time watching television. She thought the representations of Native culture depicted reality and touched on spirituality as an unknown aspect of the culture. "I don't know their spirits and what they believe in. I don't know that."

During the interview, Shauna generally gave brief responses, elaborating only when prompted, yet her writing reveals a strong, independent voice.

Participant: Darlene

Self-identified as a native participant, Darlene was born and raised in an urban centre. In childhood, she experienced severe treatment by teachers that made learning as a learning disabled student extremely difficult. She attributed her improvement in writing, an activity she really likes now, to her talkative personality. Refining the quality of her draft writing by moving text into an orderly sequence, paragraphing, and editing will be the next phase in the writing process. Revision reverberates with "not good enough" voices that students who struggle with print text dread hearing and understandably resist.

During the workshops and in the interview, I noticed minimal inflection in her voice. Darlene mentioned the "silent scream" and silencing by authority figures of dehumanizing acts in prisons. Her sympathy comes from a deeper

sense of knowing, from messages she owns in body, mind, emotions, and spirit, since the image of school as a punitive, prison-like space is a reality for Darlene; on the other side of sorrow, her current enthusiasm for school as “a real wide-eyed experience for me” revealed a sense of joy because she had found a program where she could succeed with kind instructors who provided the necessary tools to achieve.

### *Writing Sample*

*Red was the colour of my weekend, and black.*

*My colourful weekend was red and black. To me it means dancing at my favorite bar the [name] and listening to Brian Pickering Band. Brian is legally blind and plays wonderful country music. He plays a violin really fast and the people dance really fast to his music. He's really a great artist. He's plays music from his heart and soul, country music tells sad stories, happy stories, love songs for people to think about in their own lives. And a chance to see my friends there and some of the people are happy and glad to see me.*

The acceptance Darlene is experiencing radiates into the public realm. As an aware adult, she freely acknowledges special gifts in others. I observed less sensitivity to classmates with invisible challenges, a phenomenon that extends into the general population. The competitive edge promoted by education, I think, reduces empathy. Carlson (1994) cites Stan McKay, a Cree theologian and former Moderator of the United Church of Canada, in her biography of his life and work as follows:

Individualism and aggressiveness continue to be the hardest things for me to deal with in any kind of educational setting where people strive to be first. One is forced to deny friends. Aboriginal society has a lot of trouble with that. . . . Everyone has a place, everyone can learn, maybe in different ways, maybe in different things, but everyone is learning. The most important thing that we can learn about ourselves and about others is that we can get along and that we can be community. (p. 33)

In classrooms where invisible barriers to language learning can cause people to compete in ways that hurt one or more in the group, we deny opportunities to reflect on finding balance between competition and compassion.

### *Competition*

*The writer wants you think about the fact that Tee Vee is a young native man born at Lynx River. He feels helpless powerless no justice, fairness he thinks about human relationships, respect. Mostly for his mother Lois who loves Harris her husband and her son, Tee Vee. Also the fact that*

*Tee Vee loses his chance at the job of band manager, and making money for himself and his girlfriend Bertha Tee Vee's girlfriend. And also the way Harris is on a power controll, dishonest selfish self centered ego trip. And Lois his wife is loyal trusting person who is blinded by Harris love for her. If I were Tee Vee I'd react the same in this situation. I feel the special meaning of the story is to reflect on your own feelings. And learn how to treat people in your life with love, respect and try to treat your love ones that way you'd want yourself treated.*

Darlene attended three of the four workshops and submitted written responses for three stories. She wrote well-structured sentences in stream of consciousness style without paragraphing. I noted some confusion in the details and names of characters, particularly in the "Outsider" story. An example was mistaking Bullwinkle to be the name of an Elder rather than Nevada's cartoon reference to a moose the young men were tracking. After logging details in random order, Darlene concluded her analysis of each story with meaningful reflections. Unfortunately, she missed the final story, "Safe Home," which might have created an opportunity to self-reflect not only on conditions necessary for a

child to feel safe, but also on conditions that adults need to feel safe with other adults in classrooms, homes, and communities.

The final interview was audiotaped by request.

N: In the brainstorming, when we did brainstorming and group discussion, did you find that helpful for your writing later on?

D: Yes, I did. It helped me to retain memory on what I was going to write on the subject I saw in the video and helped me know what to write and not to forget.

And gave me ideas on what to write.

N: When you're reading print books now, do you think you'll do the same? Will you use that strategy to help you?

D: I hope I can. I hope it will help me to do well to write topics by writing notes. I feel that I'm going to need a lot of practice. I felt visually watching things helped me to retain memory better 'cause of my learning disability, and I felt that really helped me greatly. I don't know about book reading. It may help, and then again, it might not, depending on when I read it, what kind of key words I can pick out to write down. I don't think it would be as effective for me, but I could try.

N: You mentioned about the visual reading. Can you talk a little bit more, tell me a little bit more about how you learn more through visual reading of the texts?

D: I feel that I can see what's going on in the text by maybe seeing it on the screen, or maybe if it's acted out for me, I can grasp it better, and in that way, I

can write on it, where if I just read about it, sometimes it just doesn't stay with me, and I have short-term memory so I can't remember things after I read it.

Where I saw it on the video, it helped me more to be able to see it and visualize it so that it helped me to write more on it.

N: Ah, that's really good news. That's the kind of information I'm searching for in helping students learn because we don't use television much in adult education.

D: I think it should be used more for people with learning disabilities. It would help them more greatly because I have a friend that when she writes notes, she can't read her own notes, so in that sense it would in a fair and just world, it would be nicer if someone wrote the notes for her and then maybe have it videotaped so she could see visually. It would probably help her more to retain things concerning Math as an example.

N: Yes, Math and also in writing. With learning disabilities, we're finding that if we have peer tutors who will write down notes for the student who is learning disabled, then they can focus all their attention on the listening and, in this case, on the visual as well as the listening, and the other person who doesn't have a learning disability can do both, whereas a learning disabled person can only do one thing at a time.

D: Ya. It's harder for us, I feel. It's like overwhelming.

Darlene expressed a keen sense of justice in her discussions of the stories.

Of elementary school, she said, "I used to always get hit all the time by my

teachers. I used to get physically slapped all the time and hit and told I was dumb and stupid. Coming to school as an adult has been a wonderful learning experience for her because "people are nicer to me and I want to learn now."

In education, the time has come to acknowledge the day-to-day insults and cruelties in regular schools that assault the mind, body, and spirit of vulnerable students. As a result, the climate in a classroom is reactionary rather than receptive. Willinsky (1991) quotes a reluctant writer, Linda, who elaborates on reciprocal negativity as follows:

... if teachers wouldn't assume that we are guilty until proven innocent and realize that treating us with respect will get them a lot further than bullying us, then perhaps some peace could come to the education system, and both parties could enjoy school a lot more than they do now. (p. 64)

The onus for building trusting and respectful relationships is on the teacher whose guiding principles set the tone and expectations within a classroom. Like Linda in Willinsky's article, Darlene has remained open to possibility and found a peaceful place in which to learn.

The topic Darlene chose to discuss related to "Corrections". She wanted to focus, however, on information gathered from TV news and newspaper reportage about conditions in real prisons, not storied versions. Based on her reading and discussions with a native friend who is studying to be a lawyer, Darlene expressed a deep empathy for inmates who reportedly suffer abuse. "I feel sorry for those people," as she summed up traumatic details of prison life. With reference to the television story, "Corrections," she had this to say.

D: It was very depressing to watch the woman police officer beat up on the young man in jail because she's supposed to represent authority and follow all the rules of her job, and she just went over the line, and then probably realized afterward what she had done, but by then the damage was already done, emotionally and physically.

N: I think in our hearts we want to believe that it doesn't really happen.

D: Ya.

N: Did you see Michelle change in that show?

D: Ya. I saw her change her attitude about herself and that she finally looked at herself from her good points and her bad and realized that she's just a human being as well as a police woman, and that she has to try to make her life different and not have so much anger towards her own race and her own culture and towards her own people.

Again, by observing Michelle's self-reflective process, Darlene analyzed the vicious attack on William with a balanced view, typical of the way native participants approached situational conflict. I learned from their diplomacy and compassion to question my first reaction of horror and condemnation and reflect on the mirrored faces of hate, a cycle that returns oppression to the oppressor.

In her closing remarks, Darlene focussed on discrimination and prejudice against people with learning disabilities. "It would be better to educate just not teachers who have prejudice but to also for employers so that you can at least have a fighting chance to make your goal come true." The role of educators,

then, might be to work with "Corrections" and Michelle's learning model of identifying the unhealed wounds we carry within and self-reflect on ways to minimize their power over us and learn other ways of being in community.

Participant: Janine

Janine is a native participant in my research study who attended residential school and continues to suffer from the indignities of that experience. I am including her writing sample and interview although she attended only one workshop. She missed the first two workshops due to illness. In the third workshop, another native student unintentionally triggered a flashback of residential school experience, and unknown to me, Janine's first reaction was to flee from the classroom. She resisted this impulse and stayed for the remainder of the workshop.

Although no one likes to be laughed at by others when responding to a teacher's question, Haig-Brown (1993) addresses the impact of laughter in the context of residential school survivors. She writes:

Public humiliation was one of the worst forms of punishment for the children. Traditionally other people laughing at a person served as a strong social control. James Teit, in his extensive anthropological study of the Shuswap, recounts lists of taboo behaviours almost all of which include the warnings that those who do such things will be laughed at or gossiped about. (p. 82)

For Janine, a classmate's nervous laughter brought back a surge of memories denoting punishment and humiliation. Janine was visibly stricken, alerting me

to respond to the incident as a teachable moment rather than ignoring the exchange between two individuals in separate small group discussions.

Retaining her composure and responding to my question, after a brief reminder to everyone about being respectful, was a major step that Janine elaborated on in our interview. Despite my intervention and her group's support, fear prevented her from attending the fourth workshop.

### *Writing Sample*

*Autumn is very colourful season. I went up Merritt, B.C. two weeks ago. I saw beautiful colourful leaves all over the place, and a big lake. The lake so still, It look like a big glass. The weather was quiet nice. I went to church that week-end, and when I came out of the church, you could see the most beautiful colourful of red, orange, yellow, and brown of leaves on the trees, and on the ground. I enjoy fall for it's beauty, so I hope you enjoy it too.*

Of course, I enjoyed the beautiful images that evoked memories of Ontario in the autumn. A spiritual connection with the natural world transcends ugly memories that came back to haunt Janine in the classroom. Horsman (1999) quotes Liz White, a therapist who has worked with survivors and encourages

literacy instructors to set boundaries between therapy and the learning space so that a literacy program is clearly designated as an education.

. . . watching your boundaries – boundaries clear and stuck to, developing an ability to tolerate people who continue in self-destructive behaviors. I think the most painful aspect of working with people who are traumatized is that they continue to do things . . . here and now that are really self-destructive and to be able to not get caught in it, and not get crisis-oriented, to know that and to just stay on what is your task. (Horsman, p. 243)

I agree that crises in the classroom disengage everyone from learning, and learners feel stronger and safer when expectations of acceptable social behaviour are clearly stated as guiding principles. Nevertheless, situations occur when instructors need to be informed and act in a responsible manner to avert tragedy. Adult literacy educators understand that some, not all, learners experience traumatic events in the past, present, and future of their lives. A painful reality is that some educators cause or exacerbate trauma and these incidents are less visible.

Janine's flashback illuminated responses that may occur when a) an incident in the classroom triggers a strong, negative response between a student/student or student/instructor relationship, or b) an authority figure acts in an unprofessional way. In the interview, she recalled her emotions and responses to a hurtful experience and explored strategies to maintain her right to learn in a respectful environment.

J: I felt very uncomfortable 'cause I didn't like anybody laughing at me and because it happened to me when I was a young age when I was at residential school.

N: Was there something I could have done?

J: Well, you did already. You corrected her of doing that. She shouldn't have done what she did, but it really hurted my feelings when she did that and that was why I couldn't come back to any more classes. I said it might have happened again. I don't know.

N: But that's a learning experience for [the other person], too.

J: Ah ha.

N: To not do that, and what I was feeling for you was that you were being disempowered, and do you know what I mean by disempowered?

J: No.

N: Okay. It was stopping you from learning and you had the right to be there as much as anybody else.

J: Ah ha.

N: I wanted us to look at that for another time so that you don't allow someone else to take your power away, but you make sure you take care of your learning needs in the classroom.

J: I just about walked out that time. I just about grabbed my books and walked out at the time that she did that, but I hung in there until the end, and then I talked to Lois about what she did.

N: Did that give you a bit of strength to start changing that pattern?

J: When I thought about it, if I walked out, you know, and I was thinking about walking out. I could've walked out there, but I just held my strength and stood there right through the scene until the end. So that was where my power was. I didn't let her show me that the hurt, for her to get to me for walking out. Then, if I did walk out, I figured she would have the power over me for doing that, so I just hung right there until everything was over.

N: Good.

J: I thought about it, that Northern of 60's, you know. The constable took over. You know, she had the control over this young boy in jail. That made me feel like I was in there, 'cause when this happened.

N: So you identified with William.

J: Yes, I felt like him when [she] laughed at me. I felt like there was a bar in between her and I, but I couldn't do anything.

N: And loss of power for you.

J: Ah ha. So when I thought about it when William was in jail, and the constable was trying to control him because he was in there. He couldn't do anything.

N: Helpless.

J: Ya.

N: What was your reaction to that constable?

J: I didn't think she would do anything like that. But, then, when I thought about it, you know, when I saw her and she was beatin' on him, that really shocked me.

I didn't think she would do that. I never did see her do that before. I guess she took out her anger and took it out on William on account of her daughter, because she died, and she was really having problems inside her, and she could take it out on William because he was in there and she had control of him. Ya.

N: Right.

J: She should have did it the other way, you know, and talked it over with him instead of beatin' him.

N: So does it help you reflect on your own position?

J: Yes, it would because the way the constable attacked William in an unprofessional way, it taught me how to, if I was in her position, I thought I wouldn't do that, what she did because I seen on the (pause) I seen what she did and she shouldn't have did what she did.

Janine felt she had grown from the one workshop by remaining in class and then reflecting on how she would take control another time. The fact that she spoke to the instructor instead of communicating with her peer left the issues between the classmate and herself still unresolved.

N: Would you expect an apology?

J: Yes, exactly, I would.

N: Would you come back?

J: Yes, I would have came back.

N: I would hope so because, ah, I felt quite sad that it had hurt you to a point where you wouldn't come back.

J: Ya. I was really hurt.

We discussed a few strategies she could try, to minimize fears that seem perfectly rational to the person feeling overwhelmed but may be dismissed by others who have no conceptual framework from which to give a “felt” response. Through an experiential process, Janine practised the strategies with me and said she would try them when an uncomfortable situation recurred. She had been absent for most of the workshops though she spoke positively about the group discussion and brainstorming techniques.

N: Just from that one session where you saw how we did brainstorming and seeing the tape twice— you didn’t do any writing for me, so I don’t know how it would have stimulated your writing, but did you find it helpful to hear other people’s points of view when you were in the small group and could talk about your feelings and hear about theirs?

J: Yes, there was a real good thing in group because of the Emily and I can’t remember the other name.

N: Mercedes and Lillian.

J: Yes, and then we discussed that the Northern of 60’s, how they talk and each one how we thought about that constable and then it was a good learning experience because each one of us had a different opinion about the constable.

Hearing different opinions and being exposed to a diversity of cultural perspectives is an important aspect of learning that is often omitted in an adult literacy context. In my closing dialogue with Lois, she reiterated how the

participants responded positively to the brainstorming intervention because it helped in a variety of ways: pronunciation, vocabulary building, focussed reading of the texts, memory retention, listening to and building on the ideas of others, making meaning from the context rather than a dictionary, and note-taking for reference when writing reflective responses. Despite moments of tension and angst during the workshops, the individual responses went beyond my expectations in reinforcing my emancipatory emphasis on student/teacher partnerships and collaborative, student-centred projects that enhance social interaction in adult literacy learning environments.

## CHAPTER 7: SITE THREE

### Introduction

To understand the process of initiating research at Site Three, located on a Reserve, I need to give a brief explanation of the process for permission that began at the headquarters of an educational centre for aboriginal students. I met the Academic Dean at the centre and was, initially, overwhelmed by the open enthusiasm for the study. After being introduced to an instructor, discussing the purpose of my research, and agreeing to cooperate with the instructor's strict timeline, I prepared to proceed as quickly as my schedule would permit. Then, a follow-up email from the Dean gave the first indication of unanticipated complications, including several delays and abrupt cancellations.

The approval process required a letter of request needed by the President for the Board of Directors. The Board met once a month; the next meeting was in two days; to get on the agenda, I needed to get a letter to the President to ask for time on the agenda; however, it would not be necessary for me to attend the Board meeting. I delivered a letter that summarized my research proposal and explained the limited time frame set by the instructor. The Board approved my request but after making several attempts by email, telephone, and on-site visits, I found the learning environment to be more fragile than my first impressions. After four months, participants at another site but within the same institution were found. In Chapter 8, I'll comment further on issues to consider when locating sites for research in adult literacy.

Luckily, an instructor from a satellite campus invited me to work with her students on a Reserve. After getting permission from the Academic Dean, research at Site Three began with three students who attended every workshop and not only contributed to the research study, but also provided information about lived experiences on and off the Reserve.

To get to the Reserve, I took three buses each way for a total of four hours roundtrip if I made all the connections. One bus went every hour so missing it meant a long wait along a highway with a bush on one side and open fields on the other and no shelter for inclement weather. I'd been instructed to introduce myself at the Band Office before coming to the education centre located in a trailer across the road. When the bus dropped me off beside the highway on that first visit, I looked for signs of life to ask someone where to find the Band Office. A truck driver steered me toward a distant brown building that turned out to be the Longhouse.

Despite a raw wind, the sun warmed my trek along a side road of open grassland on one side and large lots with houses set well back from the road on the other. I was glad of my red felt hat, lined trench coat, and sensible shoes and vowed to carry a lighter load next time. Anyone with an eye for difference could tell at a glance I came from another place, yet the receptionist at the Band Office greeted me warmly and offered coffee while I waited for the instructor to return from lunch. This welcoming environment continued throughout the two months of weekly visits.

## Overview of the Research Participants

The three native participants lived and attended classes in the Reserve community where the research took place, although only Allen had lived in the same community since birth. Steve had lived off the Reserve most of his life and returned to recover his identity and re-connect to family, whereas Fiona left for several years during her marriage and returned to her home community as a single parent.

Never having lived on a reserve, I can only give general impressions of the participants' experiences in this overview. For example, the situations that required the participants to cancel pre-arranged workshops were a result of their commitment to the community. Of relevance to my encounters on the reserve, Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991) cite Hampton (1988) who identifies "some of the qualities that he considers important in the move to construct an 'Indian theory of education' [and heading the list of qualities are] Spirituality – an appreciation for spiritual relationships [and] Service – the purpose of education [being] to contribute to the people" (p. 9). This latter quality means that service is integral to learning, yet institutional learning in a public education context has difficulty accommodating absences during school hours for the purpose of community service except for course-related activities.

When the participants' sense of obligation to the community required that they attend a demonstration protesting a government policy, my initial response was annoyance for disrupting our schedule, wasting time, and creating obstacles

to the completion of the study, yet my attitude changed as I reflected on the importance of the demonstration to the sustainability of the community, my resistance to learn about the impact of oppressive situations on the real lives of these participants, and my own impatience to accept the temporary interruption of a schedule that was so incidental compared to the derailment of an entire community and threat to a way of life.

Despite delays and a greater need for me to be flexible, the participants attended every workshop and contributed significantly to my research study. I learned through this small group about prioritizing and reading the world in different ways. While Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991) refer to the requirements of native university students, stating that empowering students can be achieved through respect, relevance, and “reciprocity in their relationships with others . . . that helps them exercise responsibility over their own lives” (p. 14), these same interrelationships are equally applicable to adult literacy students. In my short time spent with Allen, Steve, and Fiona, we learned to adapt to each other’s situations on a continual basis, thus, developing reciprocity in the process.

With the assistance of a native instructor, we were able to work together to meet the participants’ needs and mine in order to complete the research study. My perception of time and what constitutes a classroom space are based on past experience and a non-native worldview. Dunn (2001) writes, “In the case of culturally different readers, the readers’ constructions of reality in terms of such things as time, values, work, and future orientation are likely to vary considerably

because of differing cultural norms (Luke et al., 1989)" (on-line p. 10). The three participants, in their oral and written responses, have shown the interweaving of lived experiences and comprehension (p. 10) since the former, in part, informs the latter in the process of reading the television stories and making meaning.

### Physical Layout

The education centre doubled as a community centre for the elementary school children after school. Thus, classes ended before 3:00 p.m. which meant a tight schedule for the 2-hour workshops. In the large end of an L-shaped room, there was a comfortable sofa, two matching chairs, coffeetable, television, one table with stacking chairs, flipchart, and portable whiteboard. Behind the study and lounge area, and approximately equal in floor space, was a pool table. A second table divided the kitchen and washroom from the learning space. In a nearby building, the community held Elder's lunches on the same day as the workshops, so the invitational atmosphere included sharing a meal with mostly young women, grandmothers, and great-grandmothers.

On one occasion, a young man attended and mentioned that his grandmother sold pies and would I like to order one. We arranged for him to drop off a lemon pie the next week as we usually had coffee, tea and goodies during our break. When the workshop had to be cancelled because of a student field trip, my most urgent concern was getting in touch with the man whom I could only describe to the receptionist in the Band Office, for I had not taken the time or courtesy to learn his name. She contacted the grandmother, and sure

enough, a delicious apple pie was delivered the following Tuesday. Think how the world would transform if kindness and dependability were the norm. Warm hearts enlivened my trips to that community, and I cherish the time spent there

Given other incidents of unexpected changes, delays, cancellations and rescheduling, it shouldn't have surprised me when I arrived one day to find an empty classroom. An email to my advisor reads:

*All the signs seemed perfect. I caught all the buses, made great connections, the sun was shining, and as I walked along the road into the school, a bald eagle sat high in a tree over [April's] house. Arrived at the school on time with a pot of sprouting crocuses as a gift and a metaphor. No students. The instructor was in the building next door overseeing a book and bake sale. The students were involved in a protest so classes had been cancelled.*

Back at the bus stop, I sat beside a teenage boy and asked if he'd seen the bald eagle. "Ya, over April's house." We waited in silence, then, until the bus came. That time of silence invited my inner reflection on the eagle's presence; in retrospect, I realize the teachings of community service could not have been communicated to me in a deeper way than seeing the eagle patiently observing me walk up and down the road. My feelings of frustration and disappointment changed to understanding, but I needed time and reflection to learn the lesson.

Again, on the day of the final workshop, there were no students. Another email to my advisor explains, "They've been having attendance problems, in general, but the instructor is hopeful that we can complete the study. There hasn't been much writing from this small group." Because of the precarious

attendance, the instructor and I decided to combine the final workshop and the interviews on the same day. At the other sites, the participants had a week to reflect on the four texts. This may account for the fact that during the interview, each participant at Site Three selected "Safe Home," the final text in the four-part series, as the story they wanted to discuss, whereas at the other sites, participants chose stories at random. Yet, the three participants from Site Three all expressed close familial connections to Charlie, and may have chosen that story even if a week had elapsed to reduce the emotional immediacy to the situation.

### Reflections on Oral and Written Responses

#### Participant: Allen

Allen is a native student who dropped out of high school in his mid-teens, feeling alienated by the education system for most of his school years. He enrolled in an adult learning program in his home community with the hope of completing high school and qualifying for training in a trade. During our interview, Allen expressed a preference for oral-based rather than print-based learning.

#### *Writing Sample*

*Green*

*A few weekends ago I worked on my sisters house, putting siding on and drywall on the ceiling for 2 days straight, I made a lot of money and I got a good bonus. I found out that my uncle fell off the*

*top of my sisters house he fell 2 ½ almost 3 stories to the ground and landed half way into a trench that was dug for gas lines. He landed about a foot from a huge piece of concrete, he is O.K. now just a little stiff, that part of my weekend was Black But everything turned out real good so that moved me to the color blue, because blue relaxes me, its not mean and violent it is kind of cold, it makes you think.*

Allen shows an ability to imagine connections between colour and concrete situations while leaving space for the reader to reflect on the meaning brought into being by the printed word. Through an emotional spectrum of high and low experiences felt in a short period of time – a weekend – his responses to specific incidents project different hues: green for achievement and successful action, black for pain, fear, and sadness in reaction to retrospective “what if” allusions to near tragedy, and blue for calm, relaxation, and reflection.

I remember sitting with Allen and encouraging him to write more after he stopped in the green phase with the word ‘bonus’. We spoke for a few minutes about what happened during the weekend before he continued his reflections.

The significance of this oral exchange became clearer while we spoke in the interview about a possible resistance to writing.

I had expected from the writing sample, that Allen would submit written reflections after each workshop, but despite faithful attendance at all four workshops, no written responses were completed. He responded to questions on the outline sheets, participated fully in group discussion and recorded vocabulary from the brainstorming sessions. He wrote a response to the final text, "Safe Home" because he felt a strong identification with Charlie and was able to give immediate feedback in the time allotted for writing during the last workshop.

The following is an excerpt from the interview:

N: You didn't write very much and I really appreciated what you wrote today, and the tone and what you wrote, and style was great, and I wondered what keeps you from writing more?

A: Um.

N: Anything back in your history of school that makes you want to resist writing?

A: No, it's not that I don't want to resist writing. I've always practised writing. You know I'd write all the time. Just practise my handwriting, printing all the time, right, just to make sure it looked neat most of the time. Right? And, other than that, it just never really came to me to start writing. Guess I'm not really that interested.

N: So, the lack of interest. You don't feel that you have to tell your story or that you have to respond.

A: That's right. Usually if I see something, I'll tell it verbally instead of writing it down.

N: O.K. so you're a strong oral person rather than, ah, print.

A: Ya.

In retrospect, I realized the significance of our first meeting when we conversed in order to spur him on to expand his ideas for the writing sample. Allen's insight into his reason for not writing dispelled my assumption that resistance or disinterest could be immobilizing him to write. It brought to my attention the need for some students to orally ruminate prior to voicing their ideas in print.

We continued the interview, and words of empathy for Charlie flowed easily as Allen reflected on his close relationship with a nephew. He understood "that a child needs lots of love and caring . . . a lot of that and that somebody always needs to be there for them." Although one of the youngest participants in the study, Allen demonstrated maturity well beyond his years as he sympathized with Michelle's ambivalence and insensitivity toward Charlie.

N: How did you feel about Michelle and her reaction to [Charlie]?

A: Well, I can't really blame her because what happened with her child, right, and she missed her child so much that Charlie reminds her of her daughter and it's kinda hard for her to deal with it. Right? Because it wasn't that long after when he came.

N: So you understand her point of view as well as his.

A: Yes.

*Researcher's Reflection*

*This ability to appreciate complex issues from differing perspectives and retain a balanced view without criticism or judgement was significantly present in any discussions involving Native and/or Asian participants whereas non-Native English speakers and other ESL participants generally viewed storied conflict in oppositional terms denoting right or wrong behaviour. I observed a remarkable capacity for tolerance, compassion, and forgiveness. While it is not my intention to imply that these individuals' responses can be generalized as representative of whole cultures on issues of human conflict, their responses raise awareness of how cultural experiences influence perception and response.*

On the worksheet for "Safe Home", Allen responded to the question, 'What special meaning does this story have for you?' by writing,

*I can see where the kid is coming from, at that age with no mom or dad you are going to get all crazy and not listen to nobody I was a little bit like that to my babysitter. but then michelle is having a really hard time because Charlie reminds her of her own daughter by the way he does things i.e. Crawls in her bed in the middle of the night and michelle misses her daughter so much and Charlie is trying to help her open up by giving her the fur*

*that he bought with his own money and giving tobacco at her daughters grave out of respect but michelle turned him down and Charlie got mad, so they need to work on that friendship, They are both missing someone very special in there lives.*

Not only does Allen walk a mile in Michelle's moccasins but also in Charlie's. His understanding of the emotional fragility of both characters comes from self-knowledge and trust in his own humanity. He looks within and finds upon reflection himself as a small boy acting out his frustrations with a babysitter. In a crisis of the 'we' that van Manen (1990) refers to, Allen is not indifferent to the other, and this gives me great hope that no matter how severely formal education has contributed to his feelings and experiences of alienation, he has learned through resistance and rebellion against oppression to secure a strong sense of what Heidigger refers to as being-in-the-world, of Care (*Sorge*) that shifts the process of meaning making from "intellectual-consciousness" to "emotional-consciousness" (Magliola in Atkins & Morrow, 1989, p. 104). As the interview continues, Allen enters into an active relationship between textual meaning and personal reality.

N: Did your assumptions change about any topic after taking part in group discussions?

A: Well, not really. I got to see other people's point of views and I understand it more, but what I thought still stuck with me. Right? Like when I first saw that

show with Charlie, um, you know I totally was with the kid. Right? I seen his point of view. Right? Y' gotta work on a kid, the children more than yourself some of the time, so you grow up to be a strong person. Right? And when [Michelle] lost her kid before that and then I could see where she was comin' from too, and with the wrong person for takin' care of Charlie. Right?

N: Are you the role model, the strong, male role model for [your nephew]?

A: Ya, quite a bit, actually. He wants to do most of the things I do, right, so I'll take him along and give him all the advice I can, right, strong advice. He looks up to me a lot, so I gotta be there for him. Right?

Being a teen-age, high school dropout and an outsider at school gives Allen an edge in understanding Nevada, the runaway rent boy in search of a caring community. Allen's account is a chilling reminder of how children can feel abandoned by an unthinking system that de-centres personal power by dehumanizing the individual learner's needs. van Manen (1977) articulates Heidegger's distinction between feelings and knowledge as "two forms of knowing" (p. 215) that underscores my thoughts on the inseparable nature of mind and body, knowledge and emotions. From brief glimpses as an outsider learning about Allen's personal world and cultural experience, I empathize with his experience of school that undervalues emotional knowing and overvalues intellectual knowing. What van Manen acknowledges as the task for researchers of hermeneutics or phenomenology is "to make visible the meaning structures [feelings and knowledge] embedded in the lifeworlds which belong to the

human expressions [of the participants] under study" (p. 215). As Allen expresses his truth, I recognize the wisdom of a youth who has reached within his aloneness to know and nourish the emotional needs of his nephew.

In his response to my question, 'What did you learn about yourself during the study?' Allen says,

A: Well, um, that one about being the outsider. I've dealt with that one a lot when I was young. I was kinda the outsider in the group, so I kinda seen where [Nevada] was comin' from. Right?

N: How did you deal with that?

A: Um, well, I learned how to do my own thing, studied my own stuff. Right? Just ignored everybody else. Hanged out with, y' know, people from here where I'm from, who I grew up with.

N: So you had friends on the home base but not in the school.

A: Some in the school but there I didn't really see too much of them. They were off doing their own thing and I was always by myself.

N: How did that feel?

A: Not too good.

N: No. And that was through most of your childhood, was it?

A: Ya, mostly through my childhood and then now it's no big deal. Not really. I'm not too much of an outsider. Usually, I just, y' know, do my own thing now. I've just got used to it.

N: So, thinking about Joey and how he reacted to Nevada, did that behaviour teach you anything about how you would want to be with an outsider?

A: Ya. Y' know, it doesn't really matter what a person has done in the past. It's how they are when you meet them, y' know, not being' an ass all the time and hiddin' stuff from y'. It just makes y' feel kinda weird bein' around people like that. Right?

N: Ya. So you prefer honesty.

A: Ya, honesty and trust and all that stuff.

N: Ya. Do you feel stronger inside having been independent or having to stand alone as a child?

A: Ya. A lot more independent now. I see people around my own age that are always goin' to their parents for every single thing, and me, I just hardly ask Mom for anything. Right? She comes to me and gives me advice and that's perfect. Right? It works out really good.

### *Researcher's Reflection*

*In the Band Office, eyes search for meaning on computer screens. Hands reach for coffee. Grumbling headlines leap off unread local news. Allen sips his slurpie. Has anyone noticed the eagle at the top of April's cedar tree, watching a youth, at risk, growing into manhood?*

### Participant: Steve

As I watched through a window at the Band Office where the interviews took place, Steve crossed the road appearing somber and self-contained. Steve

has lived both on and off a reserve. In an early chapter of his life, he experienced separation from his biological mother and was unable to re-unite with her before she died. A deep sense of abandonment still haunts a part of the little person within him, yet , the adult self has come to terms with the past and accepts on an intellectual level, at least, what happened beyond his control. As his writings indicate, his longing for close family relationships is now being satisfied. Status as an insider in his community has come slowly, and while being an outsider for much of his life provided certain anonymity and self-protection from the risk of being rejected, being an insider with roots, connections and entitlement gives Steve a sense of belonging that eluded him throughout childhood. Known as 'Brother' by community members who seek his counsel and companionship, he appreciates such respect with both pride and humility.

#### *Writing Sample*

*It is finally Christmas eve, and all the kids are excited. We are going to [place] for Christmas dinner. [place] is were Great Grandma lives, and the kids love to go to Grandma's place. So I would say that this weekend was like the colour of the rainbow.*

Steve's writing shows a spartan quality reflective of his spoken language. He is a man of few words and writes neatly, the letters placed boldly and precisely on the lines. Problems with spelling are relatively minor, and he

includes vocabulary from the brainstorming sheets. Small errors, such as “competete” and “complacations” do not detract from his overall facility with English. He likes to use conjunctions to create sentence variety but still needs to refine basic skills in sentence construction, including punctuation. Of all the participants, Steve has refined his cursory writing skills with letters that flow evenly, the tall strokes leaning at a consistent angle while letters that dangle below the line have graceful loops and fluid swirls. Paradoxically, his casual image belies a hidden perfectionism. His delayed literacy development does not appear to be the result of a learning disability; rather, social conditioning and the precariousness of dependency on government support require a conscious unlearning of certain habits and beliefs that have been obstructing his progress toward economic independence.

In the pre-reading section of the first brainstorming sheet concerning job competition, he has written, “Trying to be the best that you can be at everything that you do.” During the interview, he states that in the workplace “I’ve always been very compet, compet, how do you say that?” and I respond with “Competitive?” Steve repeats competitive and adds, “I have always, I don’t know, a month down the road I’ve always been foreman, or ah, or I just didn’t have the education to continue on.” Embedded in a single sentence are layers of impediments to moving ahead in a trade. Steve is a proud man burdened with frustration because he has the practical knowledge, skills and ambition but not the formal education. By his own admission, he is a hard worker who respects

trustworthiness in others and has sometimes been hurt by its absence in the workplace. A brief excerpt from his writing on the story, "Competition" reveals his observations in this regard.

*I think that when you have to compete in life.*

*You can run into all kinds, of complications that, you did not think of like people that are untrustworthy. People that are insecure, and they would do anything to win.*

His thoughts turned to Charlie's story that triggered memories from his own childhood and also reminded him of present issues with the children in his blended family.

S: Ah, I guess the last one that we saw because it just brought up what I went through when I was younger and it just stirred up some things 'cause, I don't know, ah, lately I've been a little bit harder than usual on the kids, too, so I guess it opened up my eyes a bit.

N: What did you get in touch with when you saw Charlie's situation?

S: I guess just the, ah, I think it just reminded me of how I felt when I was younger and ah...

N: You realize how sensitive kids are.

S: Ya. Ya.

N: What do you think you'd do differently after seeing that?

S: Um. (pause) I think, ah, just to be more patient with them and not, I don't know, it's hard to describe, but...

N: What did you need?

S: When I

N: Ya.

S: I guess the biggest thing was that when I was a kid I don't remember my Mom and I needed her big time.

N: Mm hm.

S: I was very resentful and I never got to meet her at all. She died before I got to meet her.

N: So It wasn't about being removed at five years of age but it was not knowing her at all.

S: Ya.

N: Do you have any pictures of her?

S: Yup. I do now since I've moved home.

N: Ya, that would be really hard.

S: Ya. I was 21 when she passed away and I was still very resentful, but after I moved home, I started to understand her.

N: You can see from that film with Charlie how difficult sometimes it is for adults to tell children difficult information because you don't want to upset them, but at the same time, they do appreciate some honesty, don't they?

S: Oh, ya.

*This story brings back some feelings that I have not felt in along time. When I was a little boy I was taking away from my parents. I can remember the hostility and hate, I had against my parents and social workers for taking me away. So I can feel what Charlie is going through that he does not trust people that he is starved for love. I think that it took me a long time to get over it and this experience has probably scared me inside for life, It took me along time to try and understand about Alcoholism and the problems that go along with it.*

For Steve and many others, getting over it requires a journey into the body, feeling the rhythm of breath and blood, the touch of hands that bless or curse our arrival in the world. Skin against skin co-author messages sent and received, thus, awakening the spirit as interpreter on a subconscious level.

*i n the waters of my mother's womb  
i swim in darkness  
fearless form, floating free  
centre of creation*

*i am flowering dna  
warm wet solitude  
at a masterpiece in motion  
peace with all my relations*

Sharing our storied lives is a gift that may help others on their healing journey. Atkinson (1995) writes, "When it comes to finding a new mythology, a new guiding truth, that can fill the void around us . . . the first place to turn is our own story, our own truth, our own spirituality, our own search for meaning" (Kenyon & Randall, 1997, p. 15). Re-membering through oral and written reflections requires a willingness to be open to the ebb and flow of mystery.

Participant: Fiona

Fiona identifies herself as the middle child who had to be strong. As the responsible mediator in the family, she often felt burdened, trying to maintain equilibrium in the midst of unstable conditions. Now as an adult and mother of five children, she continues to seek the middle ground in conflict situations. She voices strong, independent opinions, yet values other points of view. Fiona: humble and proud, gentle and fierce, tame and wild, flexible and stubborn, entrapped by family history and a lack of time to set herself free through writing. "I love writing," she says in our interview, but meeting the needs of her family and the practical demands of everyday life leave her little "free" time to write though she attended every workshop.

*Writing Sample*

*I chose purple because it is a happy color. I*

*enjoyed my weekend.*

*I got a sitter on Friday. I worked in the*

*afternoon. Then I visited my parents. On*

*Saturday I worked all day and in the evening I took it easy. On Sunday I hang at home. Relaxed and did nothing.*

*It was a purple weekend, due to the fact that I enjoyed the weekend. I was happy that's why I chose purple.*

I recall Fiona wearing purple. She has a wonderful capacity to bring positive energy into a room. Her voice is usually the first to speak in a group, setting a tone for the others. Purple denotes wisdom, and for Fiona, her insights come, in part, from learning to maintain balance despite disequilibrium in her home environment, to take care of herself as best she could while recognizing her vulnerability in rocky situations.

Throughout our interview, Fiona tugs at the ragged sleeves of her sweater just like the invisible strings of family responsibilities that pull her away from focussed attention on her studies. This second chance to regain independence through education hangs by a thread, and in the few weeks of our contact, I can see her commitment beginning to unravel. So often in adult literacy, multiple forces, both past and present, intervene to disrupt any significant shift in the cycle of poverty.

The story, "Safe Home", resonates for her because all Charlie wanted was "a Mom that he could love and that he could rely on and depend upon. But, no one was, everyone was rejecting him right and left and then the one he really did

like the most was rejecting him the hardest." Fiona understands a child's need to feel secure; she empathizes with Charlie's thoughtfulness toward Michelle and explains that a child will do "anything and everything possible to try and make things better 'cause they go through life thinking while maybe it's like this because I didn't do this. Maybe it's like this because I didn't listen." Fiona, as the middle child, has learned to listen. In the interview, she spoke candidly about growing up surrounded by alcohol addiction that erodes a child's right to feel dependent in a safe environment.

F: I come from a family of four so I'm the third wheel and I was the one forgotten.

N: You're the middle one.

F: Ya. See, ah, the oldest [one] is Mom's favorite, and then [there's] the youngest, and then me, I was labelled the strong one.

At the time, I did not probe details of Fiona's family. I can only speculate that she came from a single-parent home — a mother and three children — or one of the siblings may have died in early childhood.

N: Do you see yourself as the strong one?

F: Mm. I guess so, but not really by choice. It was forced upon me, right? I was never given a choice if I can be weak or not.

N: That's hard.

F: Ya, it's not fun. It's not fun.

N: Is that happening at all? Can you see that pattern in your family now? or, are you measuring out your emotional care to each child?

F: Well, with my family since I've experienced them being gone and since what I've experienced in my own childhood, I do everything and anything possible to keep things even at all times, and ah, I do everything possible just to make sure that they all feel the same love and there's not one special one in my family. They're all the same. I love them all the same no matter what.

In the segment about Charlie, the subject of self-blame is explored because at one point after the dissolution of her marriage, Fiona's children were taken into care for a short time. Not only did she experience self-blame, but relatives on both sides tended to go on the attack rather than support her. Blaming the victim is painfully predictable in family relationships where physical and psychic numbing perpetuate trauma from one generation to the next. The inability to care or respond to the suffering of one's own kin signals a deep neglect, an absence of connectedness with one's own humanity. For those who survive family neglect, the impact is "that you don't have . . . the day-to-day tools to live your life in such a way that you are supported to have what you want, because the nature of trauma is that you have to take your day-to-day needs, set them aside to survive some traumatic event at the moment" (Horsman, p. 87). How this translates in a learning environment is that students "have little experience of seeing regular effort lead to results, and are unlikely to have been given support or space to work at learning something regularly; to do regular homework and see results" (p. 87).

I noticed that the quantity of Fiona's writing dwindled over the period of the study and wondered if she had lost interest in the stories, but it seemed that political distractions on the reserve and personal pressures at home had more to do with her lack of writing. In terms of brainstorming, she believed it was helpful in understanding the story better.

F: Ya, 'cause when you're brainstorming, you're writing down the important facts, right? And when you want to write down about something, it's always nice to look at those facts, and you know even one word can help you remember.

N: So did [brainstorming] help you write?

F: Ya, I believe it did.

For literacy educators working with students in the midst of emotional crisis, it is important to expect periods of regression or the need for timeout sessions when the edges of empathetic teacher and counsellor blur together. To listen with the heart as well as the mind is necessary when teaching the whole person. Horsman (1999) writes, "learning to explore feelings and having support to recognize their place in blocking or enabling learning may be crucial. Being heard and acknowledged, free of shame and blame, can be enormous support for a learner beginning to tentatively explore her own feelings" (p.186).

During the interview process, Fiona explores the strong person she truly is. While reflecting on the outsider phenomenon through Nevada's eyes, she sees the wrong "to make him feel so unwelcome or make him feel so subhuman". The conversation shifts, then, to how she responds differently to males and

females she doesn't know. Females, she says, are more manipulative, more conniving than males, and she acknowledges her own nature that can be both authentic and devious.

N: Which feels better?

F: Which feels — to act like me. Um. I went with my ex, I went 13 years acting like how he wanted me to be in every perspective, in every way, in every manner.

Right? So, now have since we're separated and going through the divorce, I've vowed not to be like that anymore. Right? And if people don't accept me for me then I just accept that.

N: It's really important to be true to yourself.

F: Ya, it's hard. It's hard to actually look at a mirror-image of yourself and accept you for you. In fact, I honestly really haven't done that. I just accepted my personality for who I am, but I haven't really accepted me, as per se.

N: Through any of these stories, did you see a shift in your acceptance — your ability to accept who you are?

F: Um. Gosh, that's a hard question because they all sort of, like I'm a deep person, and I take everything quite, you know, they all hit me in a certain way. I try to see things from a larger perspective. In between lines.

The role of the instructor also requires the ability to read between the lines and ask for clarification in order to prevent misunderstanding. While I think of Fiona as a survivor, her portrayal as the strong one comes at a cost. She feels

admiration for Michelle and does not question the acts of violence in her role as a policewoman.

N: Did it surprise you that she, being a woman, would be so violent?

F: No, because I come from a, I'm a tomboy, right, and I was raised as a tomboy, so in my mind a girl can take on any guy. So, you know, that part doesn't really, didn't really surprise me at all. I guess if you count, or if you're raised in a house of violence, violence doesn't ever, ya know.

N: It's not gender specific.

F: Ya. Exactly.

N: Violence is violence whether you're a man or a woman.

F: Ah ha. And you can inflict, whether you're a man or a woman, you can inflict as much violence on the other person as the other person can on you. Right?

N: Ya. Interesting. Okay.

To acknowledge memories of violence in a safe, educational environment can be liberating. Yet, I am not prepared for how quickly I change the subject when confronted with my own capacity as a female for violence. Fiona, like Mercedes at Site Two, takes an equal stance in articulating a position of self-defense. Other female participants acknowledged the incidence of violence by police but have not identified so closely with Michelle's behaviour as a woman.

After reading the transcript and noting my abrupt shift in topics from violence to brainstorming, I reflected on my own disease, on the silencing of violence in my own family context and how that coping mechanism manifested

in historical and situational depression. hooks (1984) says, "if women active in feminist movement had a different value system from that of men, they would not endorse domination and control over others under any circumstances; they would not accept the belief that 'might makes right' " (p. 86). Silencing is a violence of the spirit that is heart breaking. Whether violence occurs in overt or covert destructiveness, the results are similar: severe wounding of the human spirit. Like Fiona, I know that "[w]hen a woman leaves [an abusive home and/or] an abusive marriage she must learn to love and celebrate herself" (Anderson, p. 231).

### *Competitions*

*I feel that TeeVee is right to want to give him a chance. I thought it was wrong of Haris not to pull through his part of the deal.*

*I thought that it was great that Tee Vee wants to change and be responsible. I was impressed with the way he just wanted to better his life and his girlfriends. He see's a chance for change so he tried his hardest to go for it. He thought ok I will give Haris a chance that maybe he dose want to help.*

*But Haris did not want to lose his job so he lied. He was greedy and descetfull. He was horrible*

*and untrustworthy. He was remorseful about what he did latter. But it was to late.*

*It was upsetting that TeeVee could not do a thing about it. He was right that if he said anything that would crush his mother. It is the way of life sometimes, it is more proper not to say or do anything at all for everyone's sake.*

Fiona's quantity of writing decreased over time. In her response to this first story, she referred to the vocabulary listed in our brainstorming session; however, in later writing there was less evidence of reference being made to the wordlist. During the interview, Fiona said that she loved writing, yet her oral fluency and ability to reflect on complex issues with insight and candor far exceeded her written responses.

After completing my research study at Site Three, an email note to my advisor reads,

*Just to update you on what I'm doing. I've run into another road block with [the educational centre's Head Office]. The Academic Dean gave me the name and phone number of the person to contact re volunteering equal time for the time I spent doing research. After 3 phone messages, she left a message [demanding what organization I represented and who I was]. I called back [to explain who I am] a 4<sup>th</sup> time and haven't heard from her since.*

I have a high regard for the students who participated in my study and feel immense appreciation for the cooperation received from the instructor and the community who welcomed me as a visitor on their land.

## CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Reflections on the Learners' Landscape

In the end, what is understood as "lived experience" is always in flux. The essence of experience can be retold but never relived. Denzin (1997) writes, "Experiences are constantly out of reach of language and discourse and on the borderlines of consciousness and awareness. . . . Spoken, performed, told, and retold in the narrative form, this is the realm of lived experience that is recoverable" (p. 61). What is recoverable is key for adult literacy educators to acknowledge because building on past knowledge and lived experience creates the bridgework for integrating new information with what is already known.

As the researcher, it is humbling to reflect on the images and voices of the 22 adult literacy participants whose multiple tellings have now become historical versions of their points of view and reflective responses to television stories from North of 60. There can never be a fixed or constant version of lived experience, so my interpretation of what was meant or said offers a wordscape in a "gap" for further interpretation and meaning. In addressing the gap, Bruner (1986) makes three distinctions: reality, experience, and expressions. "The critical distinction here is between reality (what is really out there) . . . experience (how that reality presents itself to consciousness), and expressions (how individual experience is framed and articulated)" (p. 6). What is really out there are voices of real people who are so much more than fixed, flat imprints forever on the pages of a gap in a research study. The participants have revealed in the workshops, interviews, and

writing how home, school, community, and cultural experiences have an impact on their ways of interpreting and responding to reality as well as representations of reality. How individual experience is framed and articulated depends on many variables, not the least of which is the ability to create and re-create the tellings of their own lives in relation to the world.

As my versions re-present the participants' experiences of reading television stories and brainstorming ideas, I am once again reminded of stories embedded in butterfly wings on an album quilt. The stories of the research participants allowed me to explore their understandings of human situations represented in the television stories and to linger with them in oral and written communications. Their stories will be retold, hopefully, in the context of emancipatory theory and practice as educators consider the documentation of my research study.

Freire (1997) believes that "without communication there can be no true education" (p. 74). Unless adult literacy students have opportunities to hear each other's viewpoints and debate different interpretations of a text, I concur that their learning will be limited to acquiring the mechanics of literacy. These basic tools provide access to the literate community and must remain, in my opinion, a crucial part of adult literacy education. However, this study shows that literacy skills involve more than an ability to read and write print texts. It is through dialogue that students initiate critical questioning about self and others in the world. In this exploration of human situations, students do not "patiently receive,

memorize, and repeat" (p. 53) information given to them by the teacher. Though I neither agree with Freire's perception that people who are illiterate and socially oppressed are "divided, unauthentic beings" (p. 30), nor conversely that literate people are necessarily whole, authentic beings, I value his liberatory vision and insistence that dialogue is central in education. "The *raison d'être* of libertarian education . . . lies in its drive towards reconciliation. Education must begin with the solution of the teacher-student contradiction, by reconciling the poles of the contradiction so that both are simultaneously teachers and students" (p. 53).

In terms of authority, Freire sees teachers and students as Subjects who are mutually involved in questioning reality and acquiring knowledge. "As they attain this knowledge of reality through common reflection and action, they discover themselves as its permanent re-creators" (p. 51). Self-discovery came to the surface on many occasions during the research study when the participants examined their assumptions, reflected on their responses to real and fictional situations, and interacted with each other. Mercedes, for example, realized she wanted to enjoy her child's precious infancy and show more patience after discussing issues raised in the story, "Safe Home." Janine decided to speak up next time a classmate offended her rather than simply leaving. From my own experiences, I have learned to enable my students to overcome situations that disempower them in the classroom. Matt recognized his courage to speak out against child abuse in his community, knowing that silence would be morally wrong. Ellen saw how William changed his attitude when he no longer felt

controlled, thus, releasing herself from the need to control her teacher by not writing. Throughout the study, these reflective moments that altered an individual's perception or led to a transformative decision have been tremendously gratifying for me as the researcher. The rewards derived from witnessing these candid, hopeful images and voices in adult literacy will continue to enrich my work as researcher/teacher/learner.

There are many theories relevant to the use of television in classrooms that have not been included in my dissertation. A significant focus of media studies missing from this study is a semiotic analysis of the television stories. Lefkowitz (1989) writes:

We can see stories as seductive insofar as realist literature lulls us into a receptive posture: Everyone loves a good story; and many people go to the movies for passive escape into the fiction displayed before them. Indeed, semiotic theory has been especially important to the fast-developing field of film studies, as film yields to a theory that can distinguish among it several systems (script, sound track, moving images, edits). Especially exciting are developing theories of the psychology of spectatorship [or voyeurism].  
(p. 67)

Although I encouraged the participants to be more than passive spectators, I did not dwell on their interpretation of lighting, music, and the different effects created by camera angles and proximity during pauses in the second reading of a story. There were a few scenes that created a powerful mood through technical effects or symbolic meaning that were discussed. I think it should be relatively clear to the reader that a discourse on the semiotics of images and language

would quickly derail the readers' focus on elements of story and their reflective analysis of social issues.

Bianculli (1992) argues that when people "quote from the movies, radio, or television, and quote with both accuracy and enthusiasm, they are demonstrating a fluency—a literacy—in that medium. This fluency doesn't demand or suggest a relative illiteracy in the print medium, nor does it mean the dramatized works performed on film, radio, and TV cannot themselves be considered literature" (p. 149). To reinforce Bianculli's position, I taught Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to functionally illiterate high school students who would have been excluded, otherwise, from studying Shakespeare with their peers. Of course, the onus is on the teacher to prepare appropriate exercises and homework assignments, yet the rewards of inclusivity is, I believe, worth the extra lesson planning and preparation time.

Comprehension becomes an important element when evaluating student response to literature presented on television. Meyrowitz (1984) acknowledges the popularity of TV among all age groups but the fact that children are exposed to adult programs, such as soap operas, talk shows, and news reports, does not mean that they understand the content. Bianculli challenges Meyrowitz's assumption that exposure equates with comprehension. "Young children might well *enjoy* watching *Dallas*, but it's highly unlikely they'd understand the character motivations and subtexts—and while *The Muppet Show* . . . is a great way for young viewers to *increase* their visual literacy levels" (p. 153), Bianculli

points out that adults "read" the same satirical jokes and skits at a level of comprehension that reflects their greater knowledge of the world and the word.

The use of television stories as an educational tool supports language learning. Therefore, it is my view that offering multi-literacies in adult literacy programs, including the acquisition of telilitracy skills, is as crucial to language learning as decoding print. In our mass information age, an exclusive focus on print literacy restricts the students' access to language by reducing their exposure to a variety of media that are available in elementary and secondary schools.

#### Research Limitations

To scholars who assess qualitative research and academic writing at the doctoral level on the basis of rigorous syllogistic reasoning, my thesis may raise questions about the expectations of the academy in terms of scholarship. I have neither presented various arguments against the use of television as an educational tool in adult literacy nor confined the presentation of my findings to factual, logical examination of the research questions. As I considered the data, reflecting on the participants' written responses and listening to their taped voices, I experienced a felt sense that language learning involves far more than intellectual skill development in a classroom setting. Therefore, my emphasis on teaching the whole person required a textual balance to integrate mind, body, emotions, and spirit. In my opinion, the nature of research is to question and advance our understanding of a particular problem or situation. One of my priorities has been to respect the ethical requirements of academic research, yet I

appreciate the vision set by my Department of Language and Literacy Education that encourages innovation and variation in the presentation of scholarly research. Rather than focus on the limitations of argument in regards to the use of television stories presented in the dissertation, I hope that my writing will open debate on ways to improve the quality of education for adult literacy students.

Although I share a keen interest in alternative points of view with regards to the use of television in classrooms, in particular, the neurobiological effects of television on the brain, and the impact of violence on television viewers of all ages, I feel that these areas of study are well beyond the scope of my research focus. Educators, in my view, have not pursued the benefits of television as an educational tool, sufficiently. There is no indication that television is on the wane; thus, students who lack teleliteracy skills need to learn to read messages on the glass page with discernment. Krugman (1977) cited in de Kerckhove (1995) suggests that television teaches us to learn "by quick looks" (p. 15), whereas reading print is slower and more difficult, even intolerable for some students. For many educators, the terms 'literacy' and 'reading' are synonymous with print, yet excluding these terms from other forms of knowledge acquisition, such as video, television, and film, undermines the human capacity to develop skills for reading non-print texts we are exposed to on a daily basis.

My study does not examine the influence that television has on the development of print reading, nor do I examine, in depth, the influence that television has on quality of life in North American society. If, for example,

violence desensitizes audiences or erodes the human ability to distinguish right from wrong, or interferes with the development of conscience and moral judgement, then education has a responsibility to teach students how to critically reflect on the ethical, moral, and legal issues raised in television programming and to debate what the messages mean in terms of personal response. As a pacifist, I acknowledge a strong bias against violence, especially as a form of entertainment. However, I do not impose my views on students but provide them with materials to problem probe and reach their own decisions based on a variety of perspectives. When preparing for the research study, the first text I read was Mander's Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television. Television is a powerful conveyor of information that has changed the interior design of homes, influenced the schedules of families, and connected audiences to global issues, and it is not likely to be eliminated in the near future. If we are, indeed, Amusing Ourselves to Death as Postman suggests in his book about television, I think it is appropriate to explore the psychological and sociological reasons why entertainment rather than education has been the focus of programming for television audiences. In the educational role of preparing students to be good citizens in a democratic society, what developmental needs are not being addressed in school? Ten years ago, Bianculli (1992) wrote:

Teleliteracy is a concept that envelops the past, present, and future of television. In the present, it means using and treating TV properly – taking advantage of the best it has to offer, and giving it due credit for its triumphs and accomplishments. In the future, teleliteracy will involve accepting and absorbing newly developed

and improved media as TV, computers, and communication systems collide and connect in the upcoming technological Rushin' Revolution. (p. 159)

In my view, the key role for educators is to explore real issues raised in television stories and other programming and facilitate skills in active listening, decision-making, critical reflection, and reader response.

With only 22 research participants, this study cannot be generalized to represent the larger adult literacy population. A challenge for any researcher in adult literacy is that adult literacy is not a homogenous category even within a single institution. Programs are built around local and community needs that provide flexibility for the students. Determining who attends an adult literacy program depends on assessment, placement, and ministry funding for special initiatives, such as back-to-work incentives for single parents on social assistance.

As a researcher, I did not have access to the educational or medical histories of the research participants. In some cases, it can be helpful to have some background information because a participant's struggle with short-term memory, for example, may be the result of a difficult birth, brain tumor, recent accident, or an undetermined cause. On the other hand, the unknowns allow the researcher to be open to conditions as they exist during the period of the study without the burden of preconceived ideas or expectations based on past experiences and knowledge.

The participants' individualized course materials were also unknown to me, so I had no real sense of what the participants were learning from the

resources in their regular program. Amelia at Site One, for instance, indicated that she had been in her class for four years and the main variation seemed to be her adjustment to four different instructors in the same number of years rather than changes in resource materials. At the same site, Don wanted to participate in the study but was working on another writing project with a classmate that he said had taken him away from his regular assignments. He felt unable to devote any more time to reflective writing about the television stories. At the time of the interview, Don said personal priorities rather than an inability to write was his reason for not fully participating in the research study; however, I did not know his schedule in advance.

Other research limitations included fluctuating attendance and inconsistencies in the institutional environments that I believe have an impact on student learning. Establishing a control group would be a challenge in adult literacy since each situation operates with different variables from day to day. One of the three sites was not a well-equipped facility, and this created a lack of consistency requiring some flexibility in duration of the workshop, method of recording vocabulary during brainstorming, and following through with discussions; I also wonder if basic educational equipment found in a standard public school classroom, but missing in makeshift accommodation set up for an adult literacy program, sends a subliminal message to the students that they are less deserving than students attending a large institution with new equipment to

support their advancement, such as computers, an overhead projector, a blackboard, and a classroom space to call their own.

The researcher's personal biases need to be considered when assessing the rationale for my emancipatory stance in academia and the validity of my data when interpreting a participant's oral and written reflections. My preference for emancipatory pedagogy is a result of experiences in education and life. Freire (1974, 1994, 1997, 1998), hooks (1984, 1994), Giroux (1988), Gixoux and Simon, et al (1989), and Simon (1992) have been significant influences as a result of their commitments to the advancement of social justice and human dignity. Their voices challenge educators to resist gender, race, and class oppressions that dehumanize and immobilize an individual's right to access information and skills to improve his/her life. In theory and practice, my understanding of emancipatory pedagogy is a belief in the possibility for social transformation.

On instances of abuse of power occurring in education, my voice is not neutral. Horsman focuses on students dealing with abuse outside of school; on July 10th, she reminded the audience during her presentation at the Portraits of Literacy Conference 2002, University of British Columbia, that "silence is not neutral" and sometimes students have no one to turn to except a teacher for advice or support. I thought it was timely that the week prior to the literacy conference, another conference on the same campus was held for residential school survivors. Where do students turn when an educator uses power in an abusive manner that causes emotional and/or physical harm to a student? Matt,

Darlene, and Janine at Site Two spoke openly about the long-term effects of experiencing trauma inflicted by teachers in school. Other participants, including David, Ellen, Allen, and Dawn spoke about negative school experiences that impeded their learning. Personally, I know how unbearable it feels to not be believed. My advocacy for partners in learning is a proactive way to build respectful relationships between teachers and students.

## Research Findings

### Survey Summary

From the 67 reported surveys, approximately 60% of respondents came from the two largest sites that were not included in the research study. Because names of potential participants were not required on the surveys, and the statistics reflect the results of all sites rather than individual sites, the percentage of non-participants compared with participants is based on the number of returned surveys. Therefore, I have estimated that 40 respondents represented the two aborted sites, 37 respondents represented participant sites, and of those 37, there were 10 potential participants who decided not to participate, leaving 27 participants in the pilot project and main research study. Out of the final 27 participants, five from the family literacy participants have not been included in my dissertation. This left a total of 22 participants out of a possible 67 participants.

When I examined the dropout rate of possible participants and actual participants, the percentages appear to represent a phenomenon common to

adult literacy programs. Quigley (1997) includes similar findings from three sources that support my experiences in terms of attendance, participation, and completion rates.

According to some figures, funded programs in adult literacy attract only 8 percent of those eligible for them (Pugsley, 1990). Meanwhile, some 20 percent of those who say they will attend do not show up (Bean et al., 1989). Of those who do, the overall attrition rate during the 1993-94 program year was 74 percent (U.S. Department of Education, 1995). According to another study (Development Associates, 1993), the dropout rate was 18 percent before twelve hours of instruction had been completed, 20 percent at sixteen weeks, and 50 percent after sixteen weeks. What other area of education could live with such numbers? Also consider what "normal student contact" means for this field. On average, "adult literacy education students receive only 4.9 hours of instruction per week (Beder, 1994, p. 16)". (Quigley, p. 8)

Quigley acknowledges that the statistics given to a "neutral researcher" tend to be inflated compared with official attrition numbers as a means of maintaining appearances "that often stretch professional ethics to the limit" (p. 8). This high attrition rate poses challenges for a researcher in a study that requires repeat visits using a variety of strategies to stimulate language learning; of the 22 participants, 10 of them submitted 4 written responses to the television stories. Reasons for not writing included absence from the workshop, admissions of "laziness", resistance to writing, or inability to write.

The survey for my research study primarily provided a base of information to review the participants' use of television. In response to the first question on the number of hours per week they watched television, the statistics

indicate that two-thirds of the respondents watched between 1-10 hours per week compared to an estimate of up to 7 hours per day among children and youth. I attribute fewer hours per week of exposure to television to two main reasons:

- 1) adults attending day-time literacy programs, some of whom have families, have responsibilities that would not leave a lot of time for "entertainment", and
- 2) many of the respondents were second language learners who expressed frustration with the rapid pace of oral language in television programs, the prevalence of slang, the slurring of discreet sounds and "dialect" in colloquial speech used by characters, and their inability to understand North American humor.

A secondary reason for including a survey was to have a useful but non-stressful ice-breaker for the initial meeting with potential participants. For the potential participants who might perceive the required "reading" of TV stories as "too hard" and writing for the study as "homework," I wanted to create an entry point that was relevant to the study and required literacy skills (reading), yet prompted an element of curiosity.

### Comments on the Survey Results

Although everyone stated prior to completing the survey that they had easy access to television, three respondents indicated they watched no television at all. It surprised me that only four respondents included TV as a social activity with family and/or friends. There appears to be a fairly even distribution of

respondents watching television for entertainment reasons versus gathering new information. The separation of entertainment and information was not intended to infer that information cannot be learned when an individual used TV for entertainment.

Responses to Question 2 b) and Question 7 a) both related to information acquisition and showed consistency with a total of 24 respondents for each question. Since 100% of respondents avoided religious programs, I concluded that this form of programming had neither entertainment nor information value for the 67 individuals surveyed.

For Question 10 c), nearly half the respondents indicated that commercials do not influence what they buy. I learned from a 20-30 hour viewer that "channel surfing" absorbed some of that time, and this may apply to other respondents. As a listener in informal discussions about television habits, I learned that surfing to find a more stimulating program between commercials, getting up to perform a task or make a snack during commercials, or waiting passively until the main event returns to the screen are common responses to TV advertising.

Finally, several participants stated during the workshops and interviews that their prior emphasis on television as "watching" for entertainment had shifted to active "reading" for information. The survey started the participants reflecting on the purpose and impact of television in their daily lives. From the

survey results, I conclude that the majority of participants gained some information from television every week while watching a variety of programs.

Understanding the influence of television in their children's lives is another topic that participants wanted to discuss. As they became more vocal about the educational benefits of television, some participants realized that sharing family time, monitoring appropriate choice of programs, and discussing the information were important considerations in the use of television in the home. During the study, Mercedes, Matt, Allen, Steve, Fiona, Ellen, and Emilia articulated their changing perception of television as an educational resource and expressed intense moments of personal awareness as they reflected on different perspectives revealed in the group discussions. Personally, I felt gratified that individuals wanted to share their growth and transformative moments with me.

#### Response to Research Question #1

The use of television as text in adult literacy has been the focus of this research study, not as a replacement of print literacy but an enhancement to language learning, in general. The first question explored ways that television texts affected the research participants' ability to transfer oral texts into print texts. Buckingham (1991) expands on the word 'text' "to include written, visual and audio-visual forms. Similarly, the term 'reader' applies to readers of all kinds of texts" (p. 20). When participants perceived the television stories as 'texts' to be read, then I noticed that the interest in the content increased. They

were receptive to valuing the stories not only as a source of entertainment but also as a resource for education.

For non-native second language learners, listening and speaking in a group had unexpected benefits. They heard new vocabulary pronounced and repeated, and this enabled them to increase their "reading" and comprehension of the stories. Amelia, for example, almost withdrew after the first workshop until the group of women with whom she was sitting offered their support, thus, augmenting her confidence in groups as well as getting the pertinent details needed to make sense of the action and dialogue. Her writing showed more factual details than reflective inquiry since following the plot took her full concentration.

Another participant who mentioned conversation as a motivator that helped in the transfer from oral to print texts was Emily. Both Amelia and Emily have lived in Canada for many years and their reading/writing skills were more advanced than their speaking/listening skills. Learning to pronounce words and hearing the opinions of others inspired Emily to increase her writing over time. Although these participants do not represent all the second language learners, I believe their need for social interaction in the classroom was common to all.

The groups varied significantly, to the point that making a generalization in regard to native and non-native Canadian participants is problematic. I found that native participants tended to prefer oral-based learning. Yet, Maureen and Darlene liked to talk, voiced strong opinions, and wrote prolifically. At different

sites, the quieter native individuals submitted less writing or none at all.

Although there is no evidence that the television texts had a negative affect on their ability to transfer oral texts into print texts, I can only offer a supposition based on a comment made by Allen, that natural preference and cultural learning give more emphasis to oral texts than print texts. Since these same individuals conveyed meaningful insights during the taped interview, I realized that visual impressions stimulated their mental and emotional connection to specific characters. They felt no need to express their knowledge in print.

It could be that visual thinkers create meaning in non-verbal ways as Grow (1994) proposes. Citing Ong (1982) who attaches attributes, such as division, alienation, isolation, and imperialistic activity to writing, Grow sees an "imbalanced form of literacy emphasized in schools" (p. 141) and compares the "writing of a visual thinker [like] a map of all the possibilities [whereas] a verbal thinker writes like a guided tour" (p. 150). From my experience with visual learners, I empathize with writing that seems incoherent to a verbal thinker, without considering the amount of description that went into processing storied images and voices brought to the learner's consciousness prior to writing. Matt, for example, said that the "jumble of ideas" in his mind prevented him from writing because he didn't know where to start. Three other participants left their programs to pursue their careers in art and music. Subsequently, two of the three individuals contacted me to share their "success stories."

The native participants enriched discussions by providing insightful explanations of symbolic and subliminal messages in the stories. I noted their effort to find balance in formulating opinions rather than judgement. In Carlson's celebration of the life of Stan McKay (1994), the author quotes Reverend McKay, Cree scholar and former Moderator of the United Church of Canada, as saying that aboriginal people find school learning and abstract ideas difficult since, "our history has been one of learning by observation" (p. 33). This comment supports Grow's contention that non-verbal thought is a form of learning dependent on vision and envisioning. However, to suggest that native people lack the ability to conceptualize abstract ideas would be erroneous, in my view, since native art, music, dance, and stories require abstract thinking. The educational system places greater value on abstract thinking in core academic subjects than in electives that may explain Rev. McKay's comment.

Of the non-native Canadian participants, reasons for writing or not writing varied also. Interestingly, Ellen's lack of writing became the catalyst for discussion in the interview. During the interview (p. 171-2), Ellen realized that her non-compliance to my request for written responses to the stories had stemmed from an unconscious response to being controlled by her teachers in childhood. She rebelled by not writing but had not connected her refusal in the past to her present resistance to writing as an adult literacy student until we discussed her reasons for not writing at the time of the interview. Ellen's lack of writing was not caused by an inability to write. Our dialogue became an

awakening for both of us because after I returned to the university and debriefed with a colleague, I explored the reasons surrounding my avoidance of writing and found risk, punishment, and grief – an unexpected illumination that came through dialogue, reflection, and action.

Refusals and resistances often confound instructors in adult literacy because multiple barriers probably mean trying a variety of ways to free whatever is preventing progress. Talking with Ellen reinforced the benefit of developing partnerships in learning; she had reached a plateau but after our conversation, she was able to advance her literacy skills. Maybe giving learners more opportunities to “tell” what he/she has come to know about a story by interacting with other readers, the more likely a learner will want to write. van Manen (1990) states:

Certainly, writing is a producing activity. The writer produces text, and he or she produces more than text. The writer produces himself or herself. As Sartre might say: the writer is the product of his own product. Writing is a kind of self-making or forming. To write is to measure the depth of things, as well to come to a sense of one's own depth. (pp. 126-7)

After reflecting on the research participants' oral and written responses, however, I have to admit that story telling is another kind of self-making, especially when the teller identifies with a particular character or situation in a story and arrives at an understanding that is potentially transformative.

van Manen says that “writing exercises the ability to see” (p. 129), but I would suggest that from an adult literacy learner's perspective, seeing images

and voicing responses exercises the desire to construct meaning, not necessarily in written form. Desire appears to be a key motivator for choosing a particular medium for self-expression. Speaking and writing reflectively in response to stories are both active processes; the oral text is the product of the speaker's practical action, whereas the [written] "text is the writer's practical action" (p. 129). Therefore, the television texts induce responses, yet the research suggests that a student's ability to transfer oral texts into print texts depends not only on technical skills but also on the teacher's pedagogy together with a strong desire to practice and improve print literacy.

#### Response to Research Question #2

My second question concerning the impact of reflective brainstorming on written responses was intended to expand vocabulary and create a relaxed environment for shared learning. With reference to the cognitive apprenticeship model articulated by Brown, Collins, and Duguid (1989), brainstorming is a tool that supports the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains of language learning through active engagement with the text as well as the community of speakers who build on each other's information and ideas. The recorded words become the tools with which to build written responses.

None of the research participants had been exposed to brainstorming as a group activity prior to the study, and the majority had no knowledge of brainstorming techniques at all. Many were hearing their classmates' reflections on social and cultural issues for the first time. Collins, Brown, and Holum (1991)

reinforce my view that "in cognitive apprenticeship, one needs to deliberately bring the thinking to the surface, to make it visible, whether it's in reading, writing, problem solving" (p. 9). This is a reciprocal process between teacher and learner to make thinking visible. "By bringing these tacit processes into the open, students can observe, enact, and practice them with help from the teacher and from other students" (p. 9). However, I had not anticipated the excitement this intervention generated among the participants in the main study.

Introducing self-reflection during brainstorming added a dimension that pulled individuals beyond surface recall to thoughtful analysis and synthesis. The words "respect" and "disrespect" appeared repeatedly on the brainstorming sheets as important vocabulary to know. I noted that words transferred from notes into written responses were sometimes misspelled, and during the interviews, participants revealed that brainstorming supports memory retention of key facts; however, the individuals who identified themselves as having short-term memory problems apparently did not refer to their notes while writing about the stories. This was not because they forgot the notes existed; they just decided to write from memory and were pleased to discover an improvement in their ability to recall details and reflect on their meaning.

With learning disabled students, specifically dyslexic, the possibility of copying words and phrases incorrectly from the overhead increases. I was neither privy to assessment profiles nor personal histories, but noted instances of vocabulary from the brainstorming sessions appearing misspelled in print texts.

Some participants applied new vocabulary while others did not. Less advanced writers tended to refer to their notes to expand their ideas but did not necessarily include words copied during the workshop in their writing whereas more advanced writers who already had gained confidence in manipulating language to convey a particular meaning were more likely to experiment with new vocabulary.

In response to the interview question regarding the use of brainstorming, participants responded as follows:

- Ya, very much so. I felt [brainstorming] really helped me to take notes and be able to recall things.
- I think so. I think it was effective because you did it in class. I find it really hard when I have to do it by myself. Brainstorming.
- Yes, I didn't know how to brainstorm, so in a group it helps to make a brainstorm, and also helps the vocabulary. It helps a lot.
- Yes, like you know, like I've never done brainstorming. That's the first time I've really done it . . . like you get so much out of it when you brainstorm.
- Yes, there was a real good thing in group.
- Um, ya. It brought up some other ideas, clearer ideas. Right? Made things a little more in perspective.
- Ah, I did [find brainstorming useful]. I used some of the words that we came up with.

- Ya, 'cause when you're brainstorming, you're writing down the important facts. Right? And when you want to write down about something, it's always nice to look at those facts . . . and even one word can help you remember.
- Well, it did show me other views, other people's ideas.
- Oh, to add [key words] to my writing. Ya, actually, it did because they were good in putting down stuff, and . . . easier to put them in writing.

Two participants from Site Two of the main research study were not interviewed for different reasons; otherwise, all of the interviewees responded positively to brainstorming.

### Response to Question #3

The third question asks what factors contributed to reflective writing. First, the participants learned the difference between critical thinking as a mind-centred activity and reflective thinking as a mind, body, spirit activity. Because television involves physical and emotional responses, self-monitoring active listening and responding is key to a person's ability to analyze and synthesize information effectively. For the teacher, asking open-ended questions, such as "What would you do to change the situation?" or "How did you feel when . . . ?" invites readers to expand their thinking beyond the bare facts and details of the text.

Second, some participants said they experienced difficulty responding in depth to a print story. By developing reflective thinking skills while reading television stories and hearing different points of view from classmates prior to

writing, I found that the majority of writers included reflective responses to the stories. This reflective method of inquiry appeared to evoke empathy in the participants for characters who experienced problems and promoted questioning about ways to improve their situation(s). During interviews, it became clear that identification with a character generated stronger emotional responses and by engaging as active readers, they felt connected to the situation. Evidence from the written and oral responses suggests that this active engagement with a text plus dialoguing with others to deconstruct meaning induced reflective thinking in the participants.

Third, in my experience as a reflective practitioner, students are more inclined to include reflective responses in their writing when the instructor incorporates activities that stimulate a state of retrospective inquiry. (van Manen, 1990, p. 10) My interpretation of such inquiry explores meaning through dialogue, intuition, emotions, and conscious probing of both the said and the unsaid, the latter being communicated in television texts through gestures, mood, timing, lighting, music, camera angles, costumes, and other techniques.

In terms of gender differences, I found no evidence to suggest that women are more intuitive or spiritual than men. In particular, the native male and female participants showed an equal ability to reflect on the stories. Their effort to find balance, if not harmony, I attribute to internalization of a cultural way of being in relationship. The stories, themselves, show a balance in relations of power, and both genders reveal a spectrum of human feelings and reactions to situations.

Among the non-native English speakers and second language learners, I noted that one man and one woman did not personally identify with the stories. Their detachment from the characters' experiences may have inhibited inner reflection.

With regard to the interviews, I learned that transcribing from an audiotape using a dictaphone is much easier and quicker than transcribing from a videotaped recording. At Site Three, I forgot my tape recorder. In retrospect, it would have been faster to audiotape the videotaped recording and then transcribe the interviews. Fortunately, the sound for all the taped interviews was clear; however, the videotapes provided backup for lip reading small chunks of the interview when sounds blurred together, and I was not absolutely sure of a word or phrase. Although the conversational interviews had a set of questions to move the flow of ideas, the personal thoughts of the participants created a site of inter-relatedness between the fictional characters and the readers/interpreters. The shared responses of interviewer and interviewee shifted from an object viewing another object passively to a subject sharing knowledge and insights with another subject actively. This method differs from more traditional research interviews in which the researcher listens, observes, and says as little as possible.

By choosing conversation rather than formal interview style, I thought narratives would spring naturally, yet in retrospect, I discovered several instances in which this not-so-reflective researcher abruptly changed the course of the conversation and intruded at times on a fragile idea on the brink of outflow. This silencing of voice situated the unsaid at the centre, thus decentring the "points" I

thought to be more important than the river of words held back. A couple of participants said they wished there had been more time and expressed regret that a story had not been shared. Matt (Site Two) said, "After the interview, I thought of all the things I really wanted to say. There was so much more that my head felt like it would burst." I recall another participant saying the workshops rekindled a desire to write an autobiographical narrative that has been simmering for a long time in the vat of consciousness.

The short duration of the interview, on average 15-20 minutes, meant that stories weren't given enough time to follow a natural course. I learned through this experience that "we are more likely to find stories . . . [by] using relatively unstructured interviews where respondents are invited to speak in their own voices, allowed to control the introduction and flow of topics, and encouraged to extend their responses" (Mishler, p. 69). My requests for responses to specific questions interrupted the reflective process that allows the speaker to explore tributaries perhaps not previously considered. For this I apologize to the participants. At times, listening to myself was a humbling experience since the participants had far more interesting insights, in particular, cultural views that enriched my learning.

Getting to the point, therefore, proved counterproductive to the reflective process. Getting to the point induces mechanistic thinking as the mind retrieves factual information without the richness of elaboration. When the eddies whirled into past experiences, the interviewee shifted into deeper layers of interpretation.

Identification with certain characters created a variety of responses: resistances, comparisons, dis-ease, relief in not being alone in an experience, empowered. I was cognizant that "dominant forces in our society guide our memories into certain interpretations of the past but other groups struggle to assert their own collective memories . . ." (Rosen, p. 111). Ethnic minorities represented the majority in my research study, and their personal memories shared in group discussions were processed and stored "into collective memory" (p. 111). Several non-native participants expressed a deeper respect and understanding toward their native classmates after participating in the workshops. Thus, recovery of voice becomes reciprocal in the dialogic re-imagining of mind and memory.

In concluding the research findings, I spoke with Rosalyn Ing (n.d.) who wrote her doctoral dissertation on the impact of residential school on three generations. During our informal conversation on reflective research practices, Dr. Ing commented that "Ethnographers use reflective thinking to justify what's done in the interview and just because they've reflected doesn't change the impact of what happened to the individual." It is true that my rationale for this study in adult literacy feels wholly inadequate in the face of real oppressions maintained by formal education that insists on print literacy as the primary source of knowledge. A researcher's reflections do not change the fear of repeat failure in school, the fear of welfare cuts if they fail to attend classes, or the fear of continued abuse. I can only hope that the images and voices in this study will

will invite further discussion and encourage change in adult literacy programs to better support the needs and potential of each learner.

### Implications of the Research Study

As van Manen (1990) mentions, "reaching for something beyond . . . by reconciling it in our experience of the present with a vision of what should be" (p. 153) is an ongoing process. I observed moments of illumination among the research participants both during the workshops and in interviews that had a felt sense of enjoyment in learning rather than suffering through a task. One of my hopes for adult literacy learners is to recover from a place of loss and discover desire and pleasure in learning.

Meaning making is a path of re-discovery for both teachers and learners. It is essential to plan and implement a curriculum for adult literacy learners that incorporates communication activities since literacy is more than a course to study in isolation. To facilitate print literacy, adult literacy learners need creative methods and materials for practicing expressive language. Scriptwriting, for example, in small groups could include performance as well. The research shows that learning is a whole body experience, not just a mental activity, so activating a synthesis of intellectual, physical, and emotional being in the world is a method for engaging in reflective struggles "in order to intervene in reality" (Olson, 1992, p. 6, Soleil, 1999, p. 7). Thus, the learning environment needs to provide tools to assemble facts, challenge assumptions, examine inconsistencies, and problem solve to find other ways of being, knowing, seeing, doing.

To reiterate, I believe that learning in adult literacy necessitates a process of unlearning as well as understanding that knowledge is dynamic and uncertain. Restricting the transmission of information to a teacher-centred model has the potential of reinforcing the notion that knowledge sent by the teacher and received by the student is fixed and certain. Such a model discourages critical reflection. I encourage further research to explore co-dependent relationships in adult literacy versus partnerships that are free to express different ideas.

Reflective practice requires the development of respectful relationships between the instructor and learners in order to feel safe to take risks. Therefore, the instructor needs to provide opportunities for learners to become the authority, so that a partnership develops in which the primary focus between teacher and learner is to negotiate meaning (Streibel, 1993, p. 22) as equals who respect each other's knowing. What Quigley (1997) suggests in regards to adult literacy students returning to an elementary school model in which the teacher is the authority is of interest to me. Some aspects of mothering and nurturing bring emotional warmth into a classroom, yet too much control or over-protection of adults can stifle their independence, risk-taking, and growth. In theory and practice, my study shows how partners in learning gain self-understanding by considering different points of view and coming to know through independent reflection. This process requires struggle of mind, body, emotions, and spirit because in some activities, the students construct meaning from the text rather than expecting the teacher to provide the "right" answer. For the majority of

adult literacy students, these changing power relations require modelling by the teacher.

Denzin (1997) writes about "lived textuality [transforming] lived experience" (p. 33). At least in reading social texts that are relevant to the students' lives, an opportunity is created to reflect on actions that could lead to transformation. As Matt (Site Two) noted, being in deep denial doesn't change an unbearable situation. The research study highlighted benefits of dialogue and understanding about personal and social change. According to Denzin:

These understandings, in turn, are reinscribed in the transcribed voice and dialogue of the other. They are created in the social text. These texts are dialogical, the site at which multiple voices come together. In them, the voices of the other, and the voices of the researcher, come alive and interact with one another. These accomplishments have a prior life in the context in which they were produced—a life and a form that can never be fully recovered.  
(p. 33)

Enrolling in an adult literacy program requires a willingness to re-visit painful memories. While experiences from the past frequently delay progress and realistically cannot be fully recovered, building self-esteem and personal growth through participation can expand a learner's range of possibilities from reading a birthday card for the first time to preparing for work in the literate community.

For university programs that offer degrees in adult education, the results of this study suggest that greater emphasis needs to be placed on development of curricula and course design that incorporates critical reflection. Also, the presence of second language learners in adult literacy programs means that

instructors require knowledge, skills and strategies for teaching English as a Second Language. Increasingly, the challenges facing adult literacy instructors involve more than one-on-one teaching of print literacy. To be functionally literate now means having the capability to access information and knowledge through multi-literacies.

From what I have learned in this qualitative research, I believe further projects to examine methods and materials could lead to more effective curriculum development. I suggest that adult literacy students gain confidence by sharing knowledge and opinions, and by using materials, such as a variety of television texts—stories, documentaries, news reports—to encourage social interaction and group activities, yet a larger study is needed in order to generalize such a claim that increasing the use of oral texts in adult literacy creates a bridge to print texts and writing.

Shauna (Site Two) reported that her instructor noted an improvement in her regular writing assignments while she was participating in the research study. I think an examination of possible reasons why Shauna and others did show improvement would have provided valuable data. In retrospect, I would like to have included interviews with the instructors to add their observations to the information provided by participants like Shauna. At Site Two where Lois was the only instructor with whom I had contact, there was no way of knowing if other instructors noticed an improvement in regular writing assignments.

Based on my research, I realize that the use of television benefits second language learners, since they have an opportunity to practice active listening, questioning, responding, and pronouncing new words. Over the past 20 years, the population of adult literacy students has changed significantly due to an increase in the number of immigrants who have settled in Canada. This demographic change has implications on qualifications of instructors in adult literacy. A few of the research participants were able to read and write basic English but were lacking opportunities to develop their oral communication skills. Since adult literacy instructors are not currently required to have certification for teaching English as a Second Language (ESL), I see a need for upgrading the training of literacy instructors to include a TESL certificate or the equivalent in institutions where second language learners are attending adult literacy and upgrading programs. Students like Amelia would have benefited from ESL strategies, in my opinion.

### Researcher's Reflections

When asked how the study affected me, I have to say the word 'suffering' is high on the list because formal education has been a source of trauma for both the participants and myself. I can attest that knowing the Ancient Greek adage, 'through suffering comes wisdom' does not bring comfort during long periods of angst. Yet, as a reflective practitioner and partner in learning with adult literacy students, finding balance in education through a process of hope, self-discovery, and renewal energizes and sustains me when the inevitable perils arise. I use the

word "perils" deliberately because actions of individuals sometimes defy reason in education, actions akin to hazing that shatters a student's desire and trust to be a part of an educational community. Then, suffering and forgiving outside the classroom become the focus of learning.

During the early stage of my research study, the visitation of Merlin coincided with a series of events that tested my assumptions about home, school, and community as places of safety and belonging. I recognize Merlin, now, as a spiritual messenger, communicating a warning not only to me, but also to my surrounding community. What proved to be life-threatening experiences motivated me to withdraw for a time, observe situations in which negative power over others operate as an accepted method for testing intelligence, and reflect on the real and fictional stories that revealed themselves in my research study. According to Krishnamurti, "real learning comes about when the competitive spirit has ceased" (Cameron, 1992, p. 172).

As stories of the research participants' experiences in education unfolded, I found their ability to forgive remarkable. David, for example, told me he walked for over an hour to reach his elementary school and was beaten one morning and sent home because he arrived at school with dirty fingernails. His whole being withdrew from school in fear, yet those same wounded fingers have been able to play music by ear and compose harmony in the world.

Stories of residential school haunt my reflections on a profession that has the capacity to destroy people rather than prepare them for life, in some

instances. Language of respect, responsibility, relationship, and reverence create an environment for social change. In one of my journals, a quote by Peter Abrahams in his novel, The View from Coyaba summarizes a way of being.

To live with the conscious knowledge of the shadow of uncertainty, with the knowledge that disaster or tragedy could strike at any time; to be afraid and to know and acknowledge your fear, and still to live creatively and with unstinting love: that is to live with grace.

In the shadow of uncertainty, I chose to transcend feelings of outrage, discouragement, betrayal, and loss with the realization that the possibility for both personal and social transformation can only occur through positive action and reflection. To work authentically as a reflective, emancipatory educator requires commitment and sacrifice; otherwise, there is a real danger of being seduced into false consciousness and teaching platitudes that signify nothing. I began to see that resistance and resilience to overcome adversity was integral to my development as a reflective researcher/teacher/learner.

With humility, I recognize the courage that many adult literacy students need to overcome the fear in their hearts and minds in order to achieve their academic goals. As van Manen (1990) writes, "In doing research we question the world's very secrets and intimacies which are constitutive of the world, and which bring the world as world into being for us and in us. Then research is a caring act: we want to know that which is most essential to being" (p. 5). I want to believe that caring and respectful action in education is not only desirable but possible.

One of the profound teachings from each of the television stories selected from North of 60 is the human ability to make choices. In The Outsider, many of the research participants noted how choices influence human response to situations. The few who remained open to Nevada were enriched with trust and understanding, whereas the majority of the community shrank by comparison into contempt, ignorance, and fear. Through personal experience and reflection, the research participants and I examined unlearning how not to be as a precursor to learning how to live in a good way. I have been blessed with a few teachers who encouraged and supported my education and taught me to share their gift of mentoring others.

Finally, I am grateful to Dr. Rita Irwin for asking the question "How did the research study affect you?" The nature of writing a dissertation requires long periods of isolation. This isolation has reinforced my view that adult literacy students, many of whom work in a classroom alone, need each other in order to thrive. The fact that the majority of participants did not know each other's names prior to the research study indicates a lack of community that I feel is essential for learning language, in particular, and knowledge, in general. To envision a creative, safe community in which respect for cultural diversity, a range of abilities, and sensitivity to gender, race, and class identities, van Manen (1990) reminds educators of the "need to learn that pedagogic competence involves a kind of thoughtfulness, a form of praxis (thoughtful action: action full of thought and thought full of action) . . . experientially understood and

actualized in real and concrete situations” (p. 159). I believe this research study has provided materials, methodology, and real situations to enhance language skill development and critical reflection in adult literacy. Although writing did not show improvement in the majority of participants over the period of four workshops, their positive responses in regards to the stories, brainstorming, and group discussions support my belief that the use of television as an educational tool in adult literacy does enhance language learning. The research also indicates that social interaction and group activities facilitate the students’ acquisition of information and knowledge.

## Epilogue

The dialogic voices of dream and reality re-emerge. Remembering Merlin holding a berry firmly in her beak, who stood her ground, alone, in a courtyard and then flew with wisdom in her wings over the heads of learned men is a reality that invites contemplation. Her message lingers to acknowledge the presence of risk, to treat each one respectfully, to pause often rather than rushing on and to behold the awe and mystery of creation in our selves, our students, and the world.

All My Relations.

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## Appendix A.1

## Sample Letter

Dear Student:

You have expressed interest in a graduate research study being undertaken by \_\_\_\_\_ ( phone no. ) and UBC Faculty Advisors, \_\_\_\_\_ ( phone no. ) and \_\_\_\_\_ ( phone no. ). It is necessary for you to sign a consent form in order to participate in the study. Therefore, please read the following information carefully and feel free to call me if you have any questions before signing the form.

The study will take one hour and 30 minutes, on Thursday afternoon for four weeks. In addition, you will be asked to keep a written journal of your responses to the media text and group interactions. There is no time limit for writing. None of the activities will affect student grades. You will be asked to discuss your writing and reflect on what you have learned in the study during a 15-minute audiotaped interview.

Your participation is entirely voluntary and withdrawal from the study at any time is permitted. If you do not wish to be part of the study, you may continue regular classroom activities with instructor, \_\_\_\_\_.

Researcher

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CONSENT FORM

I, \_\_\_\_\_, wish to participate in a four-session workshop on visual media to develop oral and written responses to media texts. There will be group discussion of segments from "North of 60," written responses to media texts, and a 15-minute interview to complete the study.

Taped or written information collected from the sessions may be published. A pseudonym will be used to keep my identity confidential. I will receive a copy of my consent.

---

STUDENT SIGNATURE

## Appendix A.2

## Sample Letter

Dear Student:

You have expressed interest in a graduate research study being undertaken by \_\_\_\_\_ ( phone no. ) and UBC Faculty Advisor, \_\_\_\_\_ ( phone no. ). It is necessary for you to sign a consent form in order to participate in the study. Therefore, please read the following information carefully and feel free to call me if you have any questions before signing the form.

The study will include a brief survey of your television viewing, a writing sample, four 2-hour workshops on segments from the Canadian television series, "North of 60," a reflective journal about each t.v. segment, and an individual taped interview to talk about what you learned from the study. Group discussions and brainstorming will assist you in your writing. None of the activities will affect your grades.

Your participation is entirely voluntary and withdrawal from the study at any time is permitted. Any concerns about your rights or treatment as a research participant may be directed to \_\_\_\_\_ at ( phone no. ). Thank you for your interest in the study.

Researcher

## CONSENT FORM

I, \_\_\_\_\_, wish to participate in a research study which includes four workshops to develop oral and written responses to television texts. There will be group discussions about segments from "North of 60," four written responses to the texts, and a taped interview. My participation is voluntary and withdrawal from the study for any reason will not affect my class standing.

Taped or written information collected for the study may be published. A pseudonym will be used to keep my identity confidential. I will receive a copy of my consent letter.

Student Signature

## Appendix B.1

## SURVEY QUESTIONS

Circle ONE answer for each question.

1. How many hours per week do you watch/listen to T.V.?

- a. none at all
- b. 1 - 10 hours
- c. 10 - 20 hours
- d. 20 - 30 hours
- e. more than 30 hours

2. What is the main reason for including T.V. in your life?

- a. to be entertained
- b. to learn new information
- c. to share an activity with family/friends
- d. to improve language skills
- e. other (explain) \_\_\_\_\_

3. What type of program do you select most often?

- a. news reports
- b. sports events
- c. soap operas
- d. weekly sitcoms
- e. documentaries
- f. movies
- g. religious programs
- h. other (explain) \_\_\_\_\_

4. Do you discuss a program with someone else?

- a. often
- b. sometimes
- c. never

5. What helps you remember details of a T.V. program?

- a. watching the body language
- b. listening to the verbal language
- c. other (explain) \_\_\_\_\_

6. Do you select programs that encourage you to learn more about a particular topic?

- a. often
- b. sometimes
- c. never

7. How does T.V. influence your daily life?

- a. exposes me to new information
- b. expands my understanding of people and cultures
- c. lets me escape from the real world
- d. other (explain) \_\_\_\_\_

8. Does what you see and hear on T.V. reflect the real world as you know it?

- a. a lot
- b. sometimes
- c. never

9. Do you question information that you learn from T.V.?

- a. a lot
- b. sometimes
- c. never

10. Are you influenced to buy products that are advertised on T.V.?

- a. a lot
- b. sometimes
- c. never

11. Do you watch programs depicting violence on T.V.?

- a. often
- b. sometimes
- c. never

12. What is your favourite T.V. show? Give 3 reasons why you enjoy it.

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## Appendix B.2

## Survey Responses Based on a Total of 67 Participants

1. How many hours per week do you watch/listen to T.V.?

a. none at all	3
b. 1-10 hours	40
c. 10-20 hours	15
d. 20-30 hours	8
e. more than 30 hours	1

2. What is the main reason for including T.V. in your life?

a. to be entertained	27
b. to learn new information	24
c. to share an activity with family/friends	4
d. to improve language skills	7
e. other	5

3. What type of program do you select most often?

a. news reports	15
b. sports events	4
c. soap operas	3
d. weekly sitcoms	10
e. documentaries	8
f. movies	11
g. religious programs	0
h. other	16

4. Do you discuss a program with someone else?

a. often	16
b. sometimes	46
c. never	5

5. What helps you remember details of a T.V. program?

a. watching the body language	18
b. listening to the verbal language	32
c. other	17

6. Do you select programs that encourage you to learn more about a particular topic?

- |              |    |
|--------------|----|
| a. often     | 31 |
| b. sometimes | 32 |
| c. never     | 4  |
| no response  | 1  |

7. How does T.V. influence your daily life?

- |  |    |
|--|----|
| a. exposes me to new information                   | 24 |
| b. expands my understanding of people and cultures | 16 |
| c. lets me escape from the real world              | 17 |
| d. other   | 8  |
| no response  | 2  |

8. Does what you see and hear on T.V. reflect the real world as you know it?

- |              |    |
|--------------|----|
| a. a lot     | 17 |
| b. sometimes | 45 |
| c. never     | 5  |

9. Do you question information that you learn from T.V.?

- |              |    |
|--------------|----|
| a. a lot     | 21 |
| b. sometimes | 40 |
| c. never     | 5  |
| no response  | 1  |

10. Are you influenced to buy products that are advertised on T.V.?

- |              |    |
|--------------|----|
| a. a lot     | 3  |
| b. sometimes | 31 |
| c. never     | 32 |
| no response  | 1  |

11. Do you watch programs depicting violence on T.V.?

- |              |    |
|--------------|----|
| a. often     | 14 |
| b. sometimes | 45 |
| c. never     | 8  |

## Appendix B.3

Commentary on Survey Results

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## Question 2

- 2 combined a. and b. as equally applicable
- a little of all of the above
- I watch T.V. for something to do at night.
- to watch nature shows or the learning channel

## Question 3

## 1 - 10 hours

- police dramas
- science and science fiction
- talk shows, soap operas, and news
- news, sports and sitcoms
- cartoons, music, videos
- music, art, movies, X-files
- sitcoms, documentaries, movies

## 10 - 20 hours

- crime drama
- everything but religious programs
- everything but soap operas and religious programs
- science fiction, Star Trek

## 20 - 30 hours

- all but religious programs
- cartoon, channel surfing
- all but sports and religion

## 30+ hours

- sports, sitcoms, movies
-

2 of the 3 respondents who indicated they didn't watch T.V. at all in Question 1 added the following information:

- MTV music videos
- news and documentaries

#### Question 5

- 8 circled both a. and b.
- 1 no response
- not sure
- I rarely remember a T.V. program
- n/a nothing - it just sticks
- the message and the emotion felt by the movie
- all the pretty people
- things that move me or shock me
- well researched presentation and content

#### Question 7

- 2 said "entertainment"
  - relaxation
  - a. b. and c.
  - I do whatever I think is right
  - doesn't, really
  - expands the imagination
  - builds up understanding of life
  - 2 no responses
-





Appendix D.2  
**“Competition” Worksheet**  
Analyzing and Problem-solving

What do you think of when you read the word “competition”?

<p>Who are the main characters?</p>  <p>List words to describe the characters.</p>  <p>What does the writer want you to think about?</p>  <p>Where is the story located? Is the location important to the plot?</p>	<p>Something happened. Explain the causes of the situation.</p>  <p>Imagine yourself as TeeVee. How would you react in this situation?</p>  <p>What special meaning does the story have for you?</p>
<p>How is everyday life affected by competition?</p>	

Appendix D.3  
**“The Outsider” Worksheet**  
**Analyzing and Problem-solving**

How would you describe the experience of being an outsider?

<p>Who is the main character?</p>  <p>How does the community respond to the outsider? List the different reactions of individual characters.</p>   <p>What is the writer saying about insider/outsider relations?</p>	<p>What facts complicate the situation?</p>     <p>Imagine yourself as an outsider. How are you feeling about the insiders? about yourself?</p>
<p>Why is a sense of belonging an important human need?</p>	

Appendix D.4  
**“Corrections” Worksheet**  
**Analyzing and Problem-solving**

What are your assumptions about the role of police in society?

<p>Who are the main characters?</p>  <p>List words to describe the characters.</p>   <p>What does the writer want you to think about?</p>    <p>Where is the story located? Is the location important to the plot?</p>   <hr/> <p>Did Michelle do the right thing by releasing William? Explain.</p>	<p>Something happened. Explain the causes of the situation.</p>     <p>Imagine yourself as William. How could you change the situation?</p>    <p>What special meaning does the story have for you?</p>   <hr/>
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Appendix D.5  
**“Safe Home” Worksheet**  
Analyzing and Problem-solving

What conditions create a “safe home”?

<p>Who are the main characters?</p>  <p>Describe Charlie’s character.</p>   <p>What circumstances cause Charlie to feel alone at Michelle’s?</p>    <hr/> <p>What special meaning does this story have for you?</p>	<p>Who do you think should provide a safe home for Charlie?</p>          <p>What does the writer want you to think about in this story?</p>          <hr/>
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## Appendix E.1

### Pilot Project Interview Questions

1. What was most meaningful for you in these sessions?
  - a. Watching the media texts?
  - b. Discussing the problems of the characters?
  - c. Writing your reflective response?
2. What influenced your writing the most?
  - a. The visual impressions created by the camera?
  - b. The problems that the characters were experiencing?
  - c. Your own knowledge and critical thinking skills?
3. Do you remember which episode got you thinking and writing the most?
4. Did the episodes seem real or phony to you?
5. What did you learn about Native people and their culture?
6. Do you have any interest in a media literacy course in the future?

## Appendix E.2

### Research Interview Questions

1. Which episode was particularly meaningful to you? Why?
2. What did you learn about yourself (attitudes, values, and beliefs) during the study which has given you a deeper understanding of a social issue?
3. Did your assumptions change about a topic after participating in the group discussions?
4. In your opinion, did the brainstorming and group discussion assist you in your spoken and written language skills? How?
5. Do visual media texts influence how you think about society and culture? How?