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Editors' Page

The articles in this issue of *Teaching Today for Tomorrow* describe teaching practices that invite students into purposefully constructed learning situations.

“An Artist Comes to Call: *ArtsSmarts* at École Constable Edward Finney School” and “Searching for New Experiences in Our Music Curriculum” show ways of constructing meaningful curricular experiences together with young people. These narratives highlight the role of conversation with students as partners in a curriculum practice that values imaginative play, purposeful activity and educative relationships built on trust.

“A Day at Kildonan Park: Art, Photography and Andy Goldsworthy” describes a professional development workshop which in its design and practice exemplified constructivist approaches to teaching and learning in the classroom. The first three articles are authored by educators at École Constable Edward Finney School.

“The Teacher as Ally: Community Solidarity Pedagogy” explores how critical social consciousness and the conceptual tools of critical theory can enable teachers to see their own and their students' situation in society more clearly and to position themselves as educators and agents of change acting in solidarity with people who confront oppressive personal and social relationships. The author, Louise Champagne, is a distinguished community activist and the President of *Neechi Foods Co-Op* which operates the *Neechi Foods Community Store* in Winnipeg's inner-city North-End amidst Canada's largest urban Aboriginal population. Louise has earned a B.A. in Economics and History and a M.Sc. in Physical Education.

This issue concludes with “Listening for the Whispers.” The author narrates how she began to listen intently to the individual and collective experiences of her students. Jolene McFadyen is an early-years educator at Governor Semple School who is interested in the educational philosophy of *Reggio Emilia*.

Matthias Meiers
on behalf of the Editorial Committee

An Artist Comes To Call: *ArtsSmarts* at École Constable Edward Finney School

Cathy Horbas, Parminder Obhi, Eda Korczynski, and Lora Shroeder

At our school we believe that art is for all children and that it is integral to a meaningful childhood education. *ArtsSmarts* is an educational foundation which shares our purpose of



integrating arts activities across the curriculum. To this end, *ArtsSmarts* invited and funded the artist, Parminder Obhi, to work with us. The following is a collage of pictures and text which retraces some of the moments in this collaboration and highlights the perspectives of students, teachers, and our artist in residence.

Let's begin with *M. Smarty*, the art installation that Jolene Friesen-Stoesz and her class assembled in collaboration with Parminder. They had already created pottery tea cups, as they learned about teas from around the world. They had also made their own ceramic chess board and game pieces. The students thought that they would like to use these pieces in "an installation" for the school division's *Arts in the Park* exhibition. *M. Smarty* came to life after Parminder joined this conversation.

*We made a dummy and Parminder helped us make the dummy. Everyone in our class picked a part of the dummy. My part was the eye. Justine and Parminder helped me. It was fun and I worked on it at home. **Kayla***

M. Smarty was a true, class collaboration. Jolene and her class had the amazing idea to create an installation. I thought the best way each student could take part in developing our installation was to construct each part individually.

After all these years of creating art, it is still like magic for me to see all of the pieces of the puzzle come together. The students, Jolene and I started to see M. Smarty come alive! First the body was solidified with cardboard, newspaper and wire. Then the oversized hands and feet were attached and became large expressive life forces that defined the mood of M. Smarty.

*M. Smarty's character was fully developed when we added the table with all of its wood textural drawings, the flowers, grass, ceramic teacups, and chess set to our background. We slowly and carefully put all of the facial features together and placed M. Smarty's head onto its body. **Parminder***

Parminder entered classroom conversations first as an observer and a listener. She spoke with the students and their teachers to explore what the children were trying to accomplish. In the course of these conversations, she offered ideas and suggestions to support emerging projects.



This class quilt is another example of such classroom collaboration. The class had done all the research; they had worked with community members, resource staff, and their teacher. They had researched, developed their ideas, sewed everything and were wondering about the

finishing touches. At this point, they invited Parminder into their project.

*When Parminder came into our class she taught us about Alexander Calder. He makes really cool creations. He makes mobiles with odd things. Parminder also taught us how to look for contrast colors and blending colors that helped us finish our quilt. She came into our class about five times. She showed us her work and inspired a lot of people.
Mark*

Parminder danced with the Kindergarten class. The classroom teacher, the artist and the children worked together using hoops and ribbons to develop the choreography for *La Créature Mystérieuse*.



La Créature Mystérieuse: an exploration in choreography of symmetry in designs.

Our choreography was inspired by a great story that Sonja, the music teacher, shared with us from a book entitled Musicians of the Sun. Each class had a special part in the story. The afternoon Kindergarten classes created movement for a night scene.

I had the opportunity to observe Linda's Kindergarten classes. We were all so excited to dance and move to different sounds. I had never created choreography with Kindergarten-aged students before. The students were very free and expressive. I was amazed at their level of retention. It was a challenge for me to provide the students with the tools to allow them to freely express themselves and challenge their skill level at the same time.

We chose music to help us describe what creatures of the night would look and feel like. After a little organizing, everything started to come together. The class came alive with movement! We imagined ourselves as floating, flying and slithering creatures of the night. The students slowly flew around each other. They were swooping up, down and around.

*The creatures joined to form one large creature. Large orbital hoops transformed into the eyes of the creature. Then the long wing spanned beings constructed the bones of the body. The fast swirling ribbons completed the tail of the mysterious creature. **Parminder***

Parminder worked with a group of students as they were creating masks for use in a live performance. This photograph shows Parminder in conversation with the artists.



The students in another class were working on a mural entitled *The Frog Plains*. Parminder helped the class envision their mural as a three-dimensional art piece.



The classroom teacher described Parminder's contribution to the creative process as follows:

The image I have of Parminder working in our classroom is of her sitting on the floor surrounded by children, quietly exploring what could be done with hockey tape to fashion fabulous people for our mural, or experimenting with wire to wind wonderful flowers. The mural was in progress when Parminder joined us and her input was so exciting. The mural had many different elements to it and working with Parminder extended our artistic conception of it. She made herself available to the children as they wondered about, planned and constructed habitats for their animals.

Her ideas were always presented as something to explore, giving the children a real sense of ownership over their work. We learned so much from her about perspective and how to put the whole mural together, creating focal points, and balance. The children created a stunning piece, one that conveys their understanding of what an ideal frog plains would be, safe for animals and people, a place that shows their love of nature and a desire to live harmoniously.

Another project that Parminder actively supported was the construction of a castle.



*Why did we make this castle? Well, we started talking about Leonardo DaVinci and the Mona Lisa. We were also talking about structures and that's how we got interested in castles. One day, Parminder came in and showed us some shapes like domes and cubes and lots of other cool shapes. So we did lots of research and then we got stuck on the idea. We had a group talk and somehow we brought up the idea of making a castle. When we were making our castle we worked as a team and Parminder helped us a lot. Parminder and Dwain helped us with the lookout tower and our drawbridge. **Evan & Jade***

Parminder introduced another class to *Capoeira*. The group choreographed a dance which they titled *The Wind Battles the Sun*. The classroom teacher writes,

Capoeira is the traditional Brazilian art form of dance, music and martial arts developed by African slaves. Parminder began studying Capoeira here in Winnipeg with a Brazilian teacher and then continued to learn about the culture in her visits to Brazil. She decided to learn the discipline through its “own language” and culture so she learned Portuguese. She spoke very highly of her teacher, Paulo, his life story and his dedication to his community.

Our class was interested in exploring connections with the school’s Africa Committee. Parminder did an introduction to the history of Capoeira. She demonstrated choreography, drumming, and clapping rhythms. The kids were amazed to see her acrobatics and martial art moves. They tried some moves too while I drummed. They needed to control their movements and perform a “dialogue” with their partner / adversary.

Parminder emphasized the importance of physical communication, and also the underpinnings of respect, community and humility.



In her response Parminder writes:

Well! Let me tell you, this class had taken the essence of what I had shown them and explored it to the fullest and possibly beyond. Their teacher was instrumental in providing a safe and supportive space to allow the students to create and discover their own interpretation of what Paulo and I had shared with the class.

I could see Capoeira in their dance, in their playing and in their creativity. The students really understood and developed the details of fluidity, expression in movement, and dialogue between each other.

On a recent visit to the class, I noticed the students had continued to develop those elements. I was so excited to see some of the students break out of their shells. Every student in this class wanted to dance and sing.

The artist reflects on her time with us as follows:

I had the opportunity to move freely within a wide range of artistic forms of expression: dance, music, sculpture, masks, drawing and puppetry. Every process and detail married curriculum with art. The integration of arts and curriculum is so strong at Finney school that it flows in a holistic continuum. This is the best way to describe my time at Finney school.

The amazing part of this experience is students who are enabled to guide their learning and have an invested part in their future. Teachers skilfully guided and wove respectful paths for students to discover their own tools of communication. Every person in this school is recognized as a passionate and unique learner. I feel I have learned much in my time here and there are many things we have yet to share.

For more information about the educational foundation ArtsSmarts please visit:

<http://www.artssmarts.ca/>

<http://www.artssmarts.ca/eng/about/>

<http://www.manitobacommunityfoundations.ca/portage/dyncat.cfm?catid=1660>

Searching for New Experiences in Our Music Curriculum

Sonja Wiens

École Constable Edward Finney School

In the winter of 2007, I initiated a project at our school to explore how curricular experiences with music could help children pursue their own inquiries in the classroom. Traditional ways of scheduling, structuring and teaching music classes have tended to isolate music into small blocks of time outside of the regular life of the classroom. I believe, however, that music as a way of knowing can extend beyond the music room and become an integrated experience in which students express themselves and their learning. Therefore, my inquiry was guided by the following questions:

- How can music be brought into classrooms as a medium for exploration, self-expression and inquiry?
- How can we provide students with classroom-based invitations to develop musical ideas and create musical compositions in the context of their personal and classroom inquiries?
- How can musical instruments, sounds, and concepts be used in the classroom as media through which other areas of the curriculum are explored?
- How can we invite teachers to integrate unconventional media in the classroom curriculum?

I decided to explore these questions taking the following approaches:

- inviting students to explore areas of classroom inquiry independently through musical means during exploration time and to apply musical concepts from the music room to classroom themes;
-

- collaborating with classroom teachers to develop cross-curricular projects which use music as a learning or expressive tool in classroom inquiries;
- giving students resources, opportunities and guidance to use music as a medium for their own expression in the classroom (e.g. responding to a piece of writing by composing a piece of music, setting a piece of art to music, creating a dance to express understanding of a concept).

The twenty-day educational leave that I received from the division enabled me to pilot these ideas with two classrooms, and also to spend some time in other classes and with other teachers with a view to integrating their themes and areas of study more effectively into music class and our spring concert. *My purpose was to position music in classrooms in such a way that it would become a natural way for children to create and express themselves, just like creative writing, drawing or painting.*

The two classes in which I spent most of my leave time were a grade-one class taught by Andrea Stuart, and a grade-two class taught by Jenni Magnus. I chose these classes as the focus of my inquiry not only because these teachers expressed an interest in integrating more music into their practice, but also because each had noticed a musical direction in their students' play. Although I had no doubt from the beginning that bringing music into these classrooms as an exploration tool and means of expression was going to be a positive thing and an interesting process, I was amazed by the different directions that this journey took us. The projects we initiated in these two classrooms evolved very differently. Just as you would never expect a Writer's Workshop in two different classrooms to yield the same stories or two classes to produce the same paintings simply because they had the same kind of paints in their classroom or

had learned a similar art technique, the journey that these particular students took via the medium of music was entirely their own.

In the grade-one classroom, our project evolved out of children's play during exploration time. Andrea, the teacher, had noticed many students creating sound patterns in their exploration and also showing interest in creating and writing songs. This awareness of sound and pattern and of the fact that music can be written down and shared tied in with the conversations and activities which had been taking place in our regular music classes, and it was exciting for both of us to see it naturally coming up in the students' play. We decided to give students more opportunities to create patterns and realize them musically (through singing, clapping, body percussion, use of classroom instruments and "found" instruments). The students also found ways of notating the patterns they had created and of interpreting the patterns of others. At the same time, students began to make bells and wind chimes during their explorations with clay. This took us in a new direction. We constructed a percussion sculpture in the classroom – a wood frame structure from which made and found objects could be hung and then played. In time, it became both a visual and aural delight. It was not long before students were creating or performing previously written patterns on the percussion sculpture. Meanwhile, students had also constructed, in their daily exploratory play, a huge wooden structure out of pieces of wood and other materials which had become a town that the children named *Blob City*. Conversations and play about this city soon turned to sound, and they began to talk about the sounds that the inhabitants of *Blob City* might experience. On a classroom field trip to the art gallery, we stopped to listen to sounds of our urban landscape. On the way back, we stopped at a hardware store and searched for objects there that might make interesting sound effects for our city. Some were hung on the percussion sculpture which came to represent the sky over *Blob City* and others were used to create

soundscapes for day and night in *Blob City*. We recorded these soundscapes on a four-track recorder which allowed the students to listen to one track (the wind, for example) while adding a new layer of sound.

In Jenni's grade-two class, our explorations developed in response to a story that the students had read in class. They began acting out the story using animal puppets in the classroom, and soon wanted to create sounds for the various puppet characters. To make some of these sounds, a student fabricated a musical instrument using objects from the classroom junk cart, and this spawned a huge production of all sorts of musical instruments by all the students in the class. In the context of this experience students began to see similarities between the instruments they had made (mostly in the percussion family) and the percussion instruments in the music room. This recognition led to a new flurry of instrument making and a new exploration of how all these instruments actually made their sounds. Soon we were drawing *Venn* diagrams and sorting our instruments according to various criteria, investigating the science of sound and sound waves, mapping how far different sounds can travel, making lists of what various instruments sound like, creating recordings of our instruments, and making a menu of the sound effects we could create with our classroom instruments. This led us back to our animal puppets and the idea that different instruments don't only create different sounds, but can also be used to elicit different moods and ideas in the mind of the listener. We began listening to music by various composers and talking about what it made us feel like and what it sounded like, and then began to move and paint to music, trying to capture the speed, texture, volume, density and mood of the music in our movements and our painting. At this time, children in the classroom showed interest in creating shadow puppets and a shadow puppet theatre. We decided to mount a show for our up-coming spring concert. We would depict three characters from the story "Alligator

Woman, Fish Woman, and Turtle Woman,” create shadow puppets for them, and produce music to accompany their movement.

After exploring the personalities of the three characters and using our instruments to create sound effects to describe them, we began talking in music class about melody and how we could create a song (not just sounds) that could represent each of the characters. After various experiences improvising and creating melodies in the music room, students were invited to explore the barred instruments and to construct melodic ideas for the characters. We used these compositions in our spring concert to accompany our shadow puppet theatre performance.

Based on this experience, Jenni and I had a clearer idea of what kinds of musical resources would work well for independent use in the classroom setting. I had received a \$500 *Teacher Initiated Project Grant* from the Seven Oaks Teachers Association. Using this money we created a cart, fitted with **four pentatonic glockenspiels** (these are more limited than the ones we have in the regular classroom: their note span is only one octave, they don’t have removable bars, and their mallets are permanently tied to them with long strings), **two sets of bass boom whackers** (long plastic tuned tubes of varying lengths) also arranged in pentatonic formation, **paper** and **whiteboards** for notation, and a **child-friendly tape recorder** for recording.

We chose the instruments for the cart with five criteria in mind:

1. The instruments would allow students to experiment easily with the melodic and rhythmic ideas we were exploring in music class and not overwhelm the students with too wide a range of creative possibilities.
2. The instruments would be similar enough to our classroom instruments so that ideas could easily be transferred back and forth.

3. The instruments were designed so that extensive teacher monitoring would not be necessary (without removable bars that could be put back in the wrong order or mallets that could be lost).
4. The instruments would be aurally-pleasing so that children would want to play them, but also quiet enough so that they could be used in a classroom exploration setting without being distracting to others.
5. The instruments would lend themselves to students playing both together and independently.

The cart, subsequently named Ned, was an immediate hit during exploration time, and children were soon busy creating melodies, sharing them with others, putting two different melodies together, rehearsing them in groups, and recording them.

It happened that at the same time an Animal Alphabet Book, which had been a year-long writing/research/art project in the classroom, was being assembled and one of the children wondered out loud if they could include some of the music, they had composed, in the book. The response of the group was, “Why not? We can do that!” and soon there was a growing group of children each composing a melody to depict the animal they had researched and experimenting with different ways they could write the melody down so that people reading the book would know what it sounded like. This led to discussions about music notation conventions and mini-workshops on writing notes on the musical staff, and culminated in publishing the class Alphabet Book not only with notated melodies, but also a recording of all the animal melodies so that one could listen to them while reading.

The opportunity to work collaboratively in other teachers’ classrooms was a wonderful experience for me, and I learned from being able to work alongside my colleagues in their own

classrooms. The role of the classroom teacher in such a project is vital, as the music teacher's ability to work in classrooms depends on the classroom teacher's belief in the value of such collaboration and integration. It was amazing to see how projects and ideas evolved and grew in the time between my visits, and how well the structures of exploration, sharing and peer-teaching served to ignite the children's interest and to deepen their inquiries and understandings.

I feel certain that the children had a much more personal experience with music than they would have had otherwise, because they had the opportunity to explore and create music independently, instead of being limited to making music in the context of the larger group in music class. It was this personal connection (for both student and teacher) that I wanted to try to make happen. Furthermore, this experience has also confirmed in my mind the importance of supplementing and supporting what happens in our "regular" music classes by continuing to work collaboratively with teachers in their classrooms. For me, the opportunity to work with children on a more individual basis than is usually possible in the music room was extremely valuable, and enabled me to learn a great deal about these children's musical understanding and the musical learning process. Having the time to watch children at play and observe their learning and understanding was an invaluable and (for someone whose teaching life usually takes place in somewhat manic half-hour blocks) rare experience for me. Likewise, having opportunities to work individually with children on their own compositions gave us an opportunity to relate to each other as collaborating musicians and this experience allowed me new insights into their musical perceptions.

I think that there are many meaningful ways that music can be brought into all classrooms, both to support the learning that is going on in the classroom, and to give students a chance to put their musical understanding into practice in a different context. The challenge for

the music specialist is to be a musical resource for students and teachers in the classroom, while still teaching music in the music room. I continue to look for creative ways to do this. This school year, for instance, I have experimented with doubling up certain classes once a cycle to free up time to work collaboratively in classrooms. My long-term hope is that, as I develop my abilities and understandings in these areas, our music classes will become increasingly focused on the skills and concepts students need to pursue their in-class inquiries and that classroom teachers will be increasingly confident to provide support for students in their multidisciplinary inquiries.

A Day at Kildonan Park: Art, Photography and Andy Goldsworthy

Andrea Stuart and Melanie Janzen

In May 2006 the multi-age teachers of Seven Oaks School Division were invited to spend two days to learn about digital photography, the art of Andy Goldsworthy and, ultimately about teaching and learning through constructivism. This session, originally designed by Winnipeg School Division's art consultant, Joe Halas, was adapted and facilitated by Cathy Woods, a Winnipeg School Division art teacher, over two days at Kildonan Park Pavilion. About forty teachers participated in the workshop.

To put it simply, children construct their own knowledge. This is the basic tenet of the theory of learning called constructivism. In fact, not just children, but all people, all of the time construct or give meaning to things they perceive or think about. As you read these words, you are giving meaning to them. You are constructing ideas. (John Arthur Van de Walle)

Using a constructivist approach, Cathy's role was to share her art expertise, to teach us about photography as art, the elements and principles of art, the Feldman approach to viewing art, digital photography techniques and to help us understand the artwork of the environmental sculptor, Andy Goldsworthy. Cathy used a variety of teaching strategies including teacher presentation, small group exploration, hands-on practice, large group discussions, individual reflections and whole group sharing. Our role as participants was to think about ourselves as learners and to deepen our understanding of teaching and learning in relationship to our classroom practice. Our main purpose was to experience and reflect upon our own learning through constructivist experience.

In this article we want to outline the activities and explore the teaching techniques, purposes and theory behind them. The text is organized as follows: The description of each main activity begins with its own **subheading** and a participant quote. Each description is followed by an explanation in italics in which we deconstruct these activities to convey their intent, as well as the underlying philosophical base and explore how this approach to learning could emerge in the classroom.

Creating an Inquiry Log

“The conditions for learning were optimal. There was no stress...We were free to move around. How could we go about organizing our days like this for children?”

Our first task of the day was to create an inquiry log. Using 11 x 17” paper, we folded eight-page books and then using cardstock, beautiful paper, scissors and glue sticks, decorated these logs to personalize them. These inquiry logs were used to collect our sketches, reflections and notes over the two-day workshop.

Creating the inquiry logs was a non-threatening way to start the day. People were very excited to work on creating their own beautiful books. The activity allowed for table conversations with colleagues, and was purposefully planned to build community. The importance of community building within our classrooms cannot be overstated. Although we are familiar with the term, we must be constantly planning – throughout the entire year – to build and nurture the community in our classrooms. This activity encouraged conversation, socialization and valued what learners had to offer. The logs also got our creative juices flowing. There were no wrong answers and individual creativity was honoured.

Elements and Principles of Art

“This is a shared experience. We are creating a history.”

Cathy explained the elements (line, colour, shape, value, space, texture) and principles (balance, emphasis, movement, contrast, unity and pattern) of art. In our groups, stickies in hand, we began a gallery walk exploring the works of photographic art on the walls. These were carefully chosen pieces that helped to facilitate conversations about elements and principles. Our task was to view the photographs and to note our responses on the stickies. We could respond in any way we wanted, but because we had been presented with this new information, many of us were incorporating the language of elements and principles into our critiques.

Cathy then assigned a task: we were to create a poster. Each group was to represent one element or principle using National Geographic magazine photos. Once completed, we hung the posters on the walls and were invited to take a gallery walk. Once again, we responded to the products in conversation with our group members and recorded our responses on sticky notes. Our responses seemed deeper and reflected our new understandings of the elements and principles of art.

We needed some direct teaching to understand the concepts of elements and principles that Cathy wanted us to know and that we needed to understand before moving on to the next step. Working in small groups allowed us to have a conversation about our observations which deepened the experience and our understandings of elements and principles. For example, when one person looked at a photograph and articulated her emotional reaction to the colour, the others in the group began to view the picture in a way different from their own initial reactions. Therefore, the purpose of working in groups is to expand our own thinking and observations by hearing what others have to say. The conversations that ensued produced multiple experiences to the viewing and deeper understandings of the concepts.

Practicing using the elements and principles of art in different ways allowed us to solidify our understandings of these concepts and gave us the language to talk about art more clearly. The opportunity to work in small groups, to talk and to practice what Cathy had taught, allowed us to apply the information presented with the support of many minds. It is interesting to note that at this point, the group had been involved in a variety of learning situations and had experienced many new concepts, yet had done very little writing. The evidence of our learning was being displayed on the walls in collaboratively created group posters which depicted our new understandings.

In the classroom, these thoughtful displays are what families see when they visit. We must not underestimate the value of what we put on our walls – our walls should document all that we are learning. What we display should be samples of and provide evidence of what our students are engaged in. These displays are not just for visitors to the classroom but also underscore the idea that the classroom is the students' space. A student-centred space leaves little room for purchased teacher-store posters.

The Rules of Photography

“You (facilitators) were always watching, looking, gently guiding, checking in with us and posing questions. I watched you document what we were doing: writing, questioning. This is what teachers should do. This is exciting to see. It looked so effortless but it's very effective.”

Cathy introduced photography techniques through a slide presentation that illustrated the basic do's and don't's of photography. Using a toy duck as the subject of her photographs, her photos illustrated how to take the artistic shot that was intended. This included how to take a portrait shot without the face in shadow, how to centre the focal point, etc. This information was necessary for the next task.

Working in groups of three with one digital camera, we were sent off on a scavenger hunt with a list of shots to attempt (see Appendix A). Cathy explained the scavenger list thoroughly to the whole group and we brainstormed for examples of possible shots. Before setting off, groups were reminded to share the camera, to take turns using the camera and to include everyone in the activity. Cathy stated that it was everyone's responsibility to be inclusive. The expectation was that at the end of the scavenger hunt each group would submit nine favourite photos, three taken by each member of the group. These were downloaded onto our computer. Upon completion of the scavenger hunt, we reflected individually in our inquiry logs and met as a whole group to share and reflect on the process in which we had been engaged. People were very enthusiastic about this portion of the workshop. Participants noticed how the experience had changed the way they were viewing their surroundings. The following morning, the photos were displayed as a slide show for the whole group to view.

To prepare us for the task, Cathy used direct teaching to give us the information we needed to be successful. Working in groups gave us time to practice what Cathy had taught. One camera per group was an intentional restriction to necessitate cooperation and collaboration among group members. As teachers, we need to carefully consider how we organize groups. We want all students to be involved and so we need to plan for that involvement. Because as teachers, we can't be with each group all of the time, we need to build in structures that ensure that students take turns, share and include everyone. Teachers can support this is by limiting supplies (e.g. one camera per group), by giving direct instructions regarding inclusivity and by indicating that each group member be responsible for three of the final shots. The scavenger hunt was fun, engaging and yet made us focus on all of the things that Cathy wanted us to practice. Cathy ensured group success by making sure we understood our task, by giving examples, and by sending us off with a list that was also our agenda. Individual reflection is critical. In fact, people were beginning to recognize how they constructed their own knowledge and were beginning to question

how to support this approach in their own classrooms. As teachers, we need to engage students in thinking and talking about the process of their own learning after each and every learning experience. In a classroom this is also the place for conversations about sharing and inclusion.

The whole group slide show was important to celebrate our success, to evaluate our work (and to be evaluated) and to see how others approached the task. During whole group sharing it is critical that the element of competition is eliminated. We did not want the sharing to become a guessing game with right and wrong answers. Therefore, careful facilitation and clear directions allow for non-threatening, non-comparative and non-competitive sharing situations. Based on the groups' responses, we noticed that this sharing could have led to endless possibilities for further teaching opportunities. This is a good example of how observation constantly informs teaching practice.

The Feldman Approach

“Assessing what? Are we assessing a product or a process?”

Cathy showed us slides of artwork by internationally renowned artist, Andy Goldsworthy. Andy Goldsworthy refers to himself as an environmental sculptor. He cleverly manipulates found objects in nature which are then photographed, sometimes over a period of time. He only uses natural materials which break down over time and this process becomes part of his art. His work is documented in numerous books. (Seven Oaks School Division now has a collection of hundreds of Goldsworthy's images. They are housed at the Ben Zaidman Educational Resource Center and are available for loan.)

Cathy explained the Feldman Approach to viewing and evaluating artwork. The Feldman Approach is a four-step process which invites the viewer of art to slow down and to look carefully before rendering an evaluative judgment about the piece. (See Appendix A). Cathy had

us walk through the process as a whole group while viewing a Goldsworthy photo on a slide then had us use the Feldman Approach in small groups, using a Goldsworthy print of our choice. Cathy then asked each group to sort through a collection of Goldsworthy prints on our tables and create a visually appealing display of some of these works on the wall.

Cathy began with whole group introduction. She demonstrated the approach in a whole group, allowing us to offer input and in the process demonstrated the next task. She then had us practice in small groups. In the sorting tasks we had to work together cooperatively, articulate our ideas, negotiate our understandings, listen to others' perspectives and look more closely and carefully at the art. We were now using our understandings of elements and principles of art that we learned yesterday to inform today's activities. The purpose of the activity wasn't necessarily to complete the task, but to practice group skills, to use our new understandings to view art and, through exploration, to begin to understand the art of Andy Goldsworthy. The sorting task allowed for practice in all of these areas while exposing us to large number of Goldsworthy's photos. Again, Cathy was thoughtfully preparing us for the next task.

Creating an Andy Goldsworthy Inspired Photograph

“It was cool to see the artist in your partner's eyes.”

Cathy explained our next task: each group was to create an Andy Goldsworthy-inspired sculpture using natural materials found in the park. The group was to come back with three photos of their environmental sculpture. The same group expectations of sharing and inclusivity applied and were reiterated. Groups set out into the park looking for possibilities in nature to manipulate and to photograph. This time there was much less structure to the task and more room for creativity. We again ended the day with viewing a slide show of our new works of art and reflecting on the process.

This activity was the culmination of two days of learning, and the final slide show, a celebration of our successes. At this point we were applying everything we had learned about art, photography and Andy Goldsworthy. We were more comfortable in our groups and worked cooperatively to achieve the task. Although this was the end of our workshop, in a classroom this could be only the beginning of many rich, art-inspired inquiries. For example, teachers may encourage individual projects or whole class visitations to natural settings, cameras in hand.

Over the two days we learned about the elements and principles of art, digital photography, and photography as art. We also learned about the art of Andy Goldsworthy and in doing so found a new way in which to view the world. It was the way through which we learned that was so powerful: instead of regurgitating teacher information, we were allowed to play with, practise, and solidify the concepts which allowed us to create in a new and purposeful way. The walls of our “classroom” displayed an abundance of evidence of our learning. Although the walls could be self-explanatory, a student of this workshop could have walked a visitor through the room describing in detail the processes used, the experiences lived and explain new understandings.

This workshop was not just about learning how to use a digital camera, or even learning about this inspirational artist. It was not meant to be a nifty project that teachers would simply replicate in their classrooms. The purposes of these two days were deeper and richer. Our aim was to have teachers work as inquirers, as constructors of knowledge. We urged participants to consider how learning occurs, how they felt in various circumstances, and to think about how inquiry might transfer into the structure of teaching and learning in their own classrooms.

Appendix A: The Feldman Approach to Viewing Art

Description

Look at the image and describe it.

Ask:

What do you see in this painting?

What colors and shapes can you identify?

Do you see a figure?

Analysis

These steps encourage thorough examination, slow the tendency to jump to conclusion, and build skills in observation.

Analyze the way the parts of the painting work together.

Find the elements of art: line, shape, color, composition, and texture.

Ask:

What colors do you notice first?

How does the artist draw your attention to the figure on the right?

Interpretation

Identifying what you see and feel. Describe how objects and art elements convey meaning and ideas.

Interpret what the painting is about and the mood achieved by the artist.

Ask:

What is this person doing?

Does this scene look like a photograph?

Why do you think an artist would change the form of an object by breaking it apart into shapes and colours?

What do you think the most important part of this painting is, the subject of the figure, or the shapes, lines and colors?

Judgment

Decide if the work of art has the power to satisfy or please many viewers over time. Young children may only be able to share why they personally like or dislike a particular work.

Ask:

Do you enjoy looking at this painting?

Why or why not?

Does a painting have to be realistic to be a good or interesting work of art?

Reference: http://www.cummer.org/pdf/nwsltr_v1_i5.pdf

Appendix B: Kildonan Park Photo Hunt

Each member of the group takes a turn completing one of the tasks below. Check off each task as it is completed. Continue taking turns until all of the tasks are complete. Complete them in any order. Every member of the group should help the photographer find the best solution!

- Take a photo from the perspective of a bug.
- Take a photo from a different, but equally unusual vantage point.
- Take an extreme close up of an object (or portion thereof) so that it is hard to guess what it is.(Try to stay in focus).
- Take a photo containing a large variety of lines.
- Take a photo that contrasts two different textures.
- Take a photo that features two strongly contrasting colours.
- Photograph an interesting line or shape created by a shadow.
- Photograph a negative shape.
- Create a photo with three distinct objects; one in the foreground, one in the middle ground and one in the background. (Have them relate to each other in some way).
- Compose a perfectly symmetrical photograph that is
 - a close-up
 - a long- shot
- Create a photo that features two unlike objects with similar shapes.
- Create a photo that has a lot of movement (but no real motion).
- Compose a photo that imparts a feeling of impending doom.
- Photograph an aspect of nature to evoke a peaceful feeling.
- Take turns composing portraits of each person in the group until everyone is represented.
- Find lines/shapes in Kildonan Park environment corresponding to the letters :__, __, __
- BONUS: Create your own photo hunt assignment. Consider the principals and elements of design, and create more photos that exemplify combinations of these (i.e. patterns of shape, balance of space, etc.) or create more photos that evoke different feelings.

Many thanks to Joe Halas! Adapted for Kildonan Park and for the Seven Oaks School Division Multi Age teachers by Cathy Woods (with permission).

The Teacher as Ally: Community Solidarity Pedagogy

Louise Champagne

How do you teach someone to cycle from Winnipeg to The Pas carrying 500 pounds on their back? Better posture? Focused, muscle-enhancing exercises? Effective use of gears? Better bicycle? Lightweight clothing? Better diet? Think positively?

Sounds ridiculous, doesn't it? Well, teaching in this way would be analogous to teaching physical education, or any other subject, to students encumbered with a very heavy social burden while ignoring this burden. In practice, most teachers of students from impoverished Aboriginal communities do not actually ignore the social burden. However, because they lack critical social consciousness, they see only surface manifestations of problems. Accordingly, they do not integrate social-change consciousness and practice into their school curriculum. Instead, they generally attempt the impossible task of teaching individual students in isolation from community context. Ignore the 500-pound pack and learn to pedal better!

Often teachers seem to respond to problems associated with poverty by trying to encourage and train students to escape from their backgrounds or community. Here is where the analogy stops. Where are you going to run to? You can leave a 500-lb sack behind. You cannot leave who you are behind. You cannot leave your community sensibilities behind.

I believe that there is no separating a student's self-confidence and capabilities from community context. For most Aboriginal students in Canada today this means that school programs need to directly and thoughtfully address the social and historical context of students, schools, and teachers. Teachers are likely to agree that building lasting, positive self-esteem is essential for the well-being of their students. However, this cannot happen by ignoring the roots

of social problems or by ignoring the need for students to identify with their own families and communities. In short, educators need to shift to a community solidarity perspective if they are to be better allies to Aboriginal students.

I believe that critical social consciousness is a requirement for teachers to effectively incorporate community solidarity into their school programs. Critical social consciousness involves awareness of the historical development of social relationships and values. It includes an awareness of how these relationships and values play out in particular situations. Critical social consciousness refers to social consciousness that entails penetrating, analytical insight. At the opposite end of the spectrum, many people have very limited social consciousness.

The central purpose of this article is to identify key components of critical social consciousness that are needed to develop a strong *community solidarity* pedagogy. In so doing, I build the case for the proposition that social consciousness is a strategic determinant of the ability of teachers to be effective allies to Aboriginal young people. The key components of *Critical Social Consciousness* that I identify are: Critical Pedagogy, Cultural Relevancy, Anti-Racist Education, an awareness of Internalized Oppression and familiarity with the notion of Unpacking the Inner Landscape.

Critical Pedagogy

The application of critical social consciousness to educational theory is generally identified under the umbrella of “critical pedagogy,” pedagogy informed by critical social consciousness. The emergence of critical pedagogy is associated with two streams of thought. One is “critical theory” originating from a group of writers known as the Frankfurt School (post -

World War I, Germany), and the other is in the pedagogy of Paulo Freire, whose thinking matured through his involvement with liberation struggles in Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s. The roots of Freire's social consciousness were planted in the dramatic economic underdevelopment and impoverishment of northeast Brazil, a process of economic exploitation and resource exhaustion with striking parallels to the commercial fur trade in northern North America.¹

As an evolution from the structural "determinism" of Marxist thought, critical theory developed as a reinterpretation of the way society works with attention focussed on the way lives are shaped by injustice and subjugation. The Frankfurt School theorists looked at the changing forms of domination within capitalism, analyzed how consciousness is produced, and explored the capacity of individuals to act as agents of social change. Human "agency" is exercised when people deliberately alter their social environments. The Frankfurt School focused on personal agency and on class struggle within everyday life experiences, in contrast to the "structuralist paradigm" which was pre-occupied with how oppressive economic structures were produced by the macro economic forces ("laws") of capitalism (McLaren and Kincheloe, 1997; Giroux, 1989). Giroux describes the difference as follows:

The Frankfurt School...connected a Marxist analysis of class structure with psychological theories of the unconscious to understand how oppressive class relations are produced and reproduced. The culturalist paradigm of the Frankfurt School emphasized human agency, focussing on the lived experiences of people and how consciousness is formed within class struggles. The structuralist paradigm analyzed how oppressive political and economic structures are reproduced, but it tended to ignore or deny personal agency. (Giroux, 1983 quoted in Sleeter & Delgado Bernal, 2004, pp. 241)

¹ In the case of Northeast Brazil, coffee plantations for colonial profit exhausted the earth's fertility, while in northern North America the commercial fur trade generated external profits and led to severe depletions of all manner of wildlife.

Freire promoted popular literacy among the poor in Brazil and was exiled to Chile in the mid-1960s after the imposition of a US-backed military dictatorship in Brazil. He connected the act of reading with the development of critical social consciousness and argued that “oppressed people need to develop a critical consciousness that will enable them to denounce dehumanizing social structures and announce social transformation” (p. 242). The concept of “voice” in critical pedagogy is based in Freire’s notion of “dialogical” communication, which rejects an authoritarian imposition of knowledge as well as the idea that everyone’s beliefs contend equally. Both voice and dialogue are tools to uncover “whose ideas are represented and whose ideas have been submerged, marginalized, or left out entirely” (ibid).

In the 1980s, Henry Giroux and Peter McLaren picked up on critical pedagogy, by drawing on both the Frankfurt School and Freire, and applied it to the context of contemporary schools. They viewed schools as contradictory social sites where hierarchical relationships are reproduced, contested, and reconstructed. Giroux thought of critical pedagogy as “an entry point in the contradictory nature of schooling, a chance to force it toward creating conditions for a new public sphere” (p. 241). The motivation for applying critical theory to the study of education is the hope that schools can become instruments for the cultivation of democratic citizenship. Critical pedagogues believe that schools can be transformed to become places that nurture young people’s humanity and are hopeful that this will contribute to building an educated democratic citizenry and a more egalitarian culture.

The recognition and acceptance of the notion that schools have functioned in a way that reproduces a social hierarchy that undermines human relationships is one of the key components of my community solidarity model. If teachers are allies to young people, schools can become sites of social transformation. The potential that schools offer for building a democratic citizenry

has motivated critical theorists. Conversely, schools can continue to reproduce social subjugation through patterns of ritualized relations of domination and subordination that has been experienced for generations. For some, these unequal power relationships feel normal. Recognizing the potential of schools as sites for social transformation requires critical social consciousness.

Cultural Relevancy

Another key component of community solidarity pedagogy is the concept of “cultural relevancy.” This notion is based on the recognition that everybody has culture and that culture is an evolving phenomenon. I define culture to mean the way people live, not something that belongs in a museum. Accordingly, how Aboriginal young people think, and what they do today, is their culture. Aboriginal young people need to be recognized as being culturally competent in their own sphere and to be supported in connecting with academic culture. Teachers need to act as cultural coaches by reinforcing positives and bridging skill development. They need to plug into who their students are.

The concept of culturally relevant teaching has been articulated in Gloria Ladson-Billings’ (1994) study of the teaching practices of successful teachers of African American young people. Ladson-Billings maintains that a teacher’s negative perception of students interferes with her/his ability to be an effective teacher for those students. She argues that teachers who are restricted in this way are not ‘bad’ teachers but that they do fail to see the connection between their perceptions and their effectiveness. Ladson-Billings discovered that poor teacher preparation programs led “them to an intellectual death” and that successful

teachers choose different pathways to achieve success. Basically, Ladson-Billings characterized teachers as being on their own to figure out strategies for success.

Like other critical pedagogues, Ladson-Billings projects a vision of schools as nurturing communities. She envisions schools as both intellectually and emotionally nurturing for everyone involved. Ladson-Billings identified this as an attribute of culturally relevant practice.

She says of teachers in such schools:

They encourage a community of learners; they encourage their students to learn collaboratively. Finally, such teachers are identified by their notions of knowledge: They believe that knowledge is continuously re-created, recycled, and shared by teachers and students alike. They view the content of the curriculum critically and are passionate about it. Rather than expecting students to demonstrate prior knowledge and skills they help students develop that knowledge by building bridges and scaffolding for learning. (p. 25)

Critical social consciousness applied to pedagogy involves understanding that systemic social problems exist and that these problems have an effect on how we think about people.

Although teachers and schools are not to be blamed for the conditions of inequality, if teachers are lacking critical consciousness, schools are institutions that can unwittingly help to maintain social injustice. For schools to become sites of social transformation, Weissglass (1998) states that educators need to question their own roles within inequality and how schools condition young people to accept social injustice. He argues that these two aspects of schooling, “often take precedence (often without educators being aware of it), [and that] schools do not reach their full potential for stimulating young peoples’ learning and thinking” (p. 4).

Ladson-Billings found that the teachers who were raised in the same context as their students, in poor or working-class neighbourhoods, were able to adapt the curriculum in ways that made it more useful to student learning. Regardless of the “colour” of the teacher, she found that the most conspicuous characteristic of culturally relevant teaching practices was that the teachers knew the culture of the neighbourhood because they had grown up in the neighbourhood

or in a similar neighbourhood before they became teachers. Upon becoming teachers, they chose to teach in the neighbourhood school and saw themselves as part of the community. They frequented the same church, stores, and community facilities. They knew the students' families outside the school setting. This included the successful white teachers of African American students in the study who were described as culturally "Black."

Although it cannot be assumed that Aboriginal teachers make better teachers for Aboriginal students, they are more likely to have a form of 'cultural capital' similar to the teachers in Ladson-Billings' study. Familiarity with the everyday culture of students can make it easier to practice culturally relevant teaching. More significantly, Aboriginal teachers are more likely to see themselves as part of the community or perhaps, more willing to become part of one. What are the odds of the large non-Aboriginal teaching force currently working in Aboriginal and Inuit communities across the country delivering culturally relevant practice? Aboriginal teachers are more likely to have the social motivation for culturally relevant practice in a way that is fundamentally different. Many non-Aboriginal teachers see their teaching posts in Aboriginal communities as a short term transition to a "better" position somewhere else Taylor (1998).

Ladson-Billings (1995) maintains that the most significant issue is the teachers' belief that students can and will succeed academically and that the successful teachers in her study took that as their fundamental responsibility: "The students who seemed furthest behind received plenty of individual attention and encouragement" (p. 163). Teachers perceived their relationships with their students as a partnership with families. Students' success was the teacher's contribution and a form of accountability to community. The teachers themselves considered this a significant community contribution which is a relationship that is

fundamentally different from an individual advocacy approach. Furthermore, the teachers valued their work with students and received personal job satisfaction in the role. This perception of their relationship to community allowed them to identify with teaching as a true vocation, as opposed to 'just a job'. Ladson-Billings (1995) describes the teachers in her study as identifying strongly with teaching:

They were not ashamed or embarrassed about their professions. Each had chosen to teach and, more importantly, had chosen to teach in this low-income, largely African American school district. The teachers saw themselves as a part of the community and teaching as a way to give back to the community. They encouraged their students to do the same. (p.163)

According to Ladson-Billings, culturally relevant teaching stands out in its commitment to collective empowerment, "not merely individual empowerment." It is an indispensable component of community solidarity pedagogy. Every student's success is everyone's success because they are building community pride. Ladson-Billings identified culturally relevant pedagogy by three criteria. First, students must experience academic success. Teachers need to hold out high expectations and believe that students are capable of developing strong academic skills. Secondly, students must develop and maintain cultural competence. This involves using students' culture as a vehicle for learning. And third, "students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order" (p. 162). This involves cultivating critical thinking skills and teachers providing "counter knowledge" to help develop multiple perspectives and historical consciousness.

Anti-Racist ² Education

Christine E. Sleeter (1993) studied white teachers of African American and Latino/a students, and argues for training that encourages and equips teachers well enough to interrogate their own racial identities. Sleeter identifies two perspectives about racism that help in understanding the challenges for white teachers. One perspective locates racism in individual actions and the other perspective locates racism in group dynamics, or in a “structural arrangement among racial groups.”

Sleeter explains that the individual perspective is “a psychological view of racism that assumes that if we change and develop what is in the heads of white people, they in turn will create significant changes in institutions” (p. 158). In her study, Sleeter offered white teachers professional development workshops over a two-year period on multicultural teaching practices and opportunities to explore racism. Sleeter found that, in the United States, white teachers held on to their assumptions that students of colour had “dysfunctional families and communities, and lack of ability and motivation” to succeed (p.162). Sleeter discovered that many teachers participated in the workshops in the hope of learning something they did not know about people of colour and took for granted that mainstream social structures were fairly open for everyone to succeed.

One of the critical observations in Sleeter’s study is that most of the teachers thought that the application of racial stereotypes to individuals was unfair even though they believed that the

² The terms ‘racist’ and ‘racism’ point to very real and pervasive processes of human subjugation related to perceptions of biological differences among groups of people. In reality, there is no physiological feature, let alone groups of features, that are unique to any segment of the human race. In regard to different population segments, the expression, ‘race’ is itself a divisive term that has no scientific basis. Accordingly, throughout this article I always place the word, ‘race’, in single quotation marks.

generalizations about the group as a whole were probably accurate. Sleeter describes this incoherent logic as follows:

Individuals should be able to succeed or fail on their own merit and should not be held back by 'deficiencies' of their race as a whole. As long as a teacher does not know for certain which students will be held back by 'cultural deficiencies', it is best to treat them as if one did not see their skin color. Therefore, in an effort to not be racist themselves and to treat all children equally, many white teachers try to suppress what they understand about people of colour, which leads them to try not to 'see' color. (p. 162)

Effectively, this is a pretence pattern, or a form of self-deception, which Sleeter says requires immense (unconscious) psychological energy to maintain and which generates multidimensional stress for many teachers. This focus on individuals outside of community context can cause students to sense that their community is not respected and to disconnect from teachers.

The second, contrary perspective presented by Sleeter on 'racism' centres on group interest in maintaining the status quo. Sleeter explains that this structural analysis of racism focuses on the distribution of power and wealth across groups and on how those of European ancestry attempt to retain supremacy while groups of colour try to challenge it. Sleeter offers Wellman's explanation of group interest:

A structural analysis assumes that how white people view race rests on their vested interest in justifying their power and privileges. White people's common-sense understandings of race "are ideological defenses of the interests and privileges that stem from white people's position in a structure based in part on racial inequality." (Wellman 1977, as quoted in Sleeter 1993, p.158)

'Ethnicity theory' maintains that the prevailing social system is open to all individuals and that mobility can be attained by anyone who works hard enough (Sleeter, 1993). This assumption is based on the belief that white affluence is the outcome of European ancestors having worked very hard. Ethnicity theory denies the history of colonization, economic exploitation, and the subjugation of people of colour and by doing so "denies white social

institutions any complicity in the subordination status of people of colour” (p.161). These assumptions make it very difficult for well-meaning white teachers to understand why their students of colour do not do well. Sleeter asks how a teacher socialized with this mythology can explain social inequality without “demeaning their own students.” The counter history that I will sketch in a sequel to this article directly challenges the ‘liberal pluralist’³ assumption of ethnicity theory that Sleeter critiques. In essence, ethnicity theory tells us to ignore the “500-pound pack” and “pedal” harder.

According to Sleeter, the ‘race’ of the teacher does matter and “a predominately white teaching force in a racist and multicultural society is not good for anyone, if we wish to have schools reverse rather than reproduce racism” (p. 157). Sleeter understands that those “teachers [of European descent] bring to the profession perspectives about what ‘race’ means, which they construct mainly on the basis of their life experiences and vested interests” (p.157). Basically she is making a call for teachers to reflect on who they are, currently and historically. Like Ladson-Billings, Sleeter also argues for the cultivation of critical social consciousness. I believe very strongly that young people need thinking adults who will hang in there with them and who understand that everyday social dynamics are the ‘front line’ of the struggle for social change. The ‘social change’ challenge that I refer to here involves understanding the intertwined effects of oppression on the lives of individuals and communities.

Oppression has many dimensions. Harvey Jackins⁴ (1997), founder of an organization committed to human liberation, maintains that ‘oppression’ can be understood as the “systematic

³ The term ‘liberal pluralist’ is my terminology, not Sleeter’s.

⁴ Of the various theories of oppression and internalized oppression that I am aware, it is Re-evaluation Counselling, pioneered by Harvey Jackins (1997), that most explicitly addresses the process by which hurts and distress patterns cripple people. It also focuses on techniques for helping to reclaim humanity.

mistreatment of a group of people by the society and /or by another group of people who serve as agents of the society, with the mistreatment encouraged or enforced by the society and its culture” (p.151). Drawing on this definition of oppression and the concerns that critical pedagogues hold about the reproduction of social hierarchy in the school system, we get a complex picture of social relationships within schools. A key component of my community solidarity pedagogy involves recognition that oppression exists on many levels and awareness of how it plays out in social relationships is needed. It is especially important to pay attention to the way oppression blocks people from being in solidarity with each other. With this recognition and awareness, teachers as allies can thoughtfully intervene to help end oppression. They can help find interventions that contribute to building community strength.

Internalized Oppression

Frantz Fanon (1963), a psychiatrist of African heritage who worked within the Algerian independence struggle against French colonial rule, identified “internalized oppression” as a psychological process where both the colonized and the colonizer are damaged by hatred. He understood the painful existence of the colonized, whom he perceived as “the wretched of the earth.” Fanon articulated how the minds and souls of the colonized were occupied by the culture of the colonizer. Colonized people hate and reject their powerless selves and generally want to take the place and the power of the colonizer.

Fanon was articulating what many oppressed people know even if they do not have much understanding of it. This is the basis for vernacular terms (and there are many) such as “apple” to

describe Aboriginal people who are perceived as wanting to be ‘white’. They are ‘red’ on the outside and ‘white’ on the inside. In general, people of colour torment themselves or each other for acting ‘white’ or wanting to be. The destruction of self and community gets played out in social crisis.

Colonialism and oppression are interconnected, complex processes that still wreak havoc in communities around the globe. It is in this context that I refer to particular groups of people as being “targeted for destruction.”⁵ Within the existing social hierarchy, people are targeted. In the bigger picture, they are disposable people. They are systemically targeted in relation to ‘race’, class, gender, age, ability, religion, etc. These dynamics of social crisis have an impact on young people’s notions of self and community. To be an ally, a teacher needs critical understanding of these social relationships.

Ann Bishop (1994) defines internalized oppression as the negative beliefs that people have about themselves. Through their socialization, oppressed people come to accept (and often act on) the negative beliefs they hold about themselves. Liberation is the process of freeing yourself from these negative beliefs. Bishop (2005) believes that stories of oppression need to be told by those targeted but she states that it is difficult for some of us to hear the stories. Being in a position of power and privilege can obscure peoples’ perception of oppression and their recognition that those with less power need to be heard. Speaking as a ‘white’ privileged person,

⁵ In regard to our actual society, who would argue that ‘Native kids’ are not targeted for destruction? Shocking numbers are either taking their own lives or killing each other. The ‘news’ media informs us almost daily of yet another tragic story. Suicides generally do not even get reported. While writing a thesis chapter version of this text (April 2006) I was informed that two thirteen year old Ojibwa-Cree girls hanged themselves only days apart, one in Winnipeg and one in Garden Hill, Island Lake. Both were closely connected to families of workers at Neechi Foods Co-op. If I were not a member of this worker cooperative, I would not be aware of these two awful tragedies.

Bishop claims that:

Part of the oppression is that we are cut off from our own ability to empathize with the oppressed. If we are aware of it at all, we tend to get defensive or write it off as not very serious – ‘they are just whining’...the privilege that we obtain from oppressing others is invisible to us....oppression is structural. We derive benefits from being male or white or straight or able-bodied *without taking any personal action* against a woman, a person of colour, a gay/lesbian/bisexual person, or person with a disability. (Bishop 2005, p. 5; emphasis added)

Unpacking the Inner Landscape

Stuart Hall (as quoted in Razack, 1998) depicts Franz Fanon as working to “unpack the inner landscape” of racism in a particular colonial context.⁶ It is a psychological process that can be emotionally complex. Patterns of class and age oppression, gender inequalities, colonialism, and racism are internalized in our families of origin and re-enforced among the social relations within schools and the broader community. These oppressive patterns are played out in our social lives unless we consciously make decisions to change our thinking and related behaviour. Developing critical social consciousness is a necessary step in the process of liberating ourselves (our thoughts and emotions) from the mis-information we received about others (and ourselves) and in becoming allies who are committed to ending oppression in all its manifestations. It is a decision and an orientation which places power in the hands of individuals to take responsibility for social relationships in everyday life and to help (re-)build social structures that nurture individual and collective humanity.

Unpacking the inner landscape is a process for building alliances that fosters social-change relationships. Our early memories of inequality or mistreatment are part of the foundation

⁶ “The subject to which Fanon addresses himself is historically specific. It is not racism as a general phenomenon but racism in the colonial relation which he dissects. His task was to unpack its inner landscapes – to consider the conditions for the production of a new kind of subject.” (p. 4)

that distances people and contributes to the reproduction of social divisions. Young people are painfully socialized into accepting inequalities around them and, as adults, tend to reproduce these inequalities in their own social relationships because it feels natural and is perceived as normal. Early memory work is an important emancipatory process and people need to set up their lives in a way that creates the safety in relationships to do this kind of work. Similarly, teachers need to support each other. Sharing stories of early schooling experiences can help transform schools.

Freire (1970) tapped into this process in teaching literacy. It is a different kind of learning process based on people giving each other respect and good attention. Early feminists who organized support groups for consciousness-raising understood this process as well. Teachers committed to becoming allies can use a similar form of supported learning and create safe environments to unpack their inner landscapes.

Understanding class oppression involves exploring one's own class background. It is important to claim the identities of our social location, even if the process is uncomfortable. Becoming an ally involves an exploration of class patterns, behaviours and attitudes towards others that we learned in the context of growing up in various gradations of working class, middle class or owning class. Some of us have parents with very different class origins. This claiming process is similar to the memory-work described by Henry Giroux (1998), a leading critical pedagogue who argues that our social relationships and experiences are "social texts" to be explored as a way to gain consciousness and insight into how we learn to be who we are and how we "perform ourselves" in our socially stratified society.

Giroux argues for the importance of “memory-work” as an element of pedagogy where biography is turned into a “social text” useful for “challenging our understanding of the present, our relationships to others and what it might mean to use such texts as part of a broader struggle” for social change (p. 148). Giroux offers his reflections on some everyday practices that shaped his life as a white working-class boy living in a working-class neighbourhood in the United States:

When college students walked through my Smith Hill neighbourhood from Providence College to reach the downtown section of the city, we taunted them, mugged them on occasion, and made it clear to them that their presence violated our territorial and class boundaries. We viewed these kids as rich, spoiled, and privileged. We hated their arrogance, and despised their music. Generally, we had no contact with middle-class and ruling-class kids until we went to high school. Hope High School (ironically named) in the 1960s was a mix of mostly poor black and white kids, on the one hand, and a small group of white wealthy kids, on the other. The school did everything to make sure that the only space we shared was the cafeteria during lunch hour. Black and working-class white kids were generally warehoused and segregated in that school. Tracked into dead-end courses, school became a form of dead-time for most of us – a place in which our bodies, thoughts and emotions were regulated and subject to either ridicule or swift disciplinary action if we broke any of the rules. We moved within these spaces of hierarchy and segregation deeply resentful of how we were treated, but with little understanding, and no vocabulary to connect our rage to viable forms of political resistance. We were trapped in a legacy of commonsensical understandings that made us complicitous with our own oppression. In the face of injustice, we learned little about what it might mean to unlearn our prejudices and join in alliances with those diverse others who were oppressed. (p. 148)

People do not generally reflect on social and economic inequality unless effectively challenged and supported to do so. Giroux explains that his sense of who he was as a white male “emerged performatively through my [his] interactions with peers, the media, and the broader culture” and that he inherited a language and a particular vocabulary that rarely challenged, but rather, reinforced social divisions. His introduction to the “languages of dissent” came from his involvement with the anti-war movement and the civil rights struggles of the 1960s which supported his rethinking about his own memories of class and ‘race’ divisions. Giroux surmises:

In looking back on my experience, moving through the contested terrains of race, gender, and class, it is clear to me that power is never exerted only through economic control, but also

through what might be called a form of ‘cultural pedagogy’. Racism and class hatred are a learned activity, and as a kid I found myself in a society that was all too ready to teach it. (p.151)

Giroux critiques the everyday practices that shape life in schools, which he sees as being organized “around rituals of regulation and humiliation.” He remembers his early schooling experience of segregation and how social class difference was registered in rituals such as the door used to enter the school building. In the following passage, he describes how working-class young people responded to these rituals of class oppression:

...the working-class Black and White kids from my section of town entered Hope [High School] from the back door of the building while the rich White kids entered through the main door in the front of the school. We didn’t miss the point, and we did everything we could to let the teachers know how we felt about it. We were loud and unruly in classes, we shook the rich kids down and took their money after school, we cheated whenever possible, but more than anything, we stayed away from school until we were threatened with being expelled. (p. 149)

These patterns are similar to those exhibited by Aboriginal students today. Rituals of segregation such as the type that Giroux describes would effectively remind young people everyday that some of them are neither good enough nor smart enough to matter too much in the social hierarchy. In a recent study on Aboriginal students’ lives within school landscapes, van Ingen and Halas (in press) discuss how groups of students in one school congregated at different doors and how one of the doors was known as the ‘smokers’ door. Smoking has its own stigma of bad and unhealthy behaviour and with the concentration of Aboriginal students in this area it became known as the ‘neechi’⁷ door. van Ingen and Halas maintain that this “reinforced and essentialized notions of a collective, marginalized Aboriginal youth identity; if you want to find an Aboriginal student, check out the neechi door” (p. 17).

⁷ “neechi” means friend/sister/brother in Ojibwa, Cree & Metchif dialects.

'Race' differences can be even more complex than class difference. Giroux describes how 'race' difference intersected with class difference in his school experience. He maintains that bodies rather than minds defined difference:

Along with the Black kids in the school, our bodies rather than our minds were taken up as a privileged form of cultural capital. Both working-class Whites and Blacks resented those students who studied, talked in the elaborated code, and appeared to live outside of their bodies to extremes, especially in those public spheres open to us, that is, the football field, basketball court, and the baseball diamond.

As a working class White kid, I found myself in classes with Black kids, played basketball with them, and listened mostly to Black music. But we rarely socialized outside of school. Whiteness in my neighborhood was a signifier of pride, a marker of racial identity experienced through a dislike of Blacks. Unlike the current generation of many working class kids, we defined ourselves in opposition to Blacks, and while listening to their music did not appropriate their styles. Racism ran deep in that neighborhood, and no one was left untouched by it. (p.149)

In the absence of critical consciousness, many teachers are ill equipped to address poverty and racism with young people, especially if the students are themselves poor. For some educators, there appears to be no sense of obligation or consciousness to do so. Young people are often not given a framework to understand the context of their life. In the absence of a framework for understanding, they are left to conclude inferiority, either their own, or their community's, or both. This type of schooling experience, in general, constitutes mistreatment. Systemic mistreatment of young people is a form of oppression that can be internalized and reinforce chronic patterns of low self-esteem. It can undermine young people's confidence in their own abilities and intelligence. In the absence of critical social consciousness, well-intentioned educational practice can generate social-psychological setback for students.

In the case of Aboriginal communities, residential schooling was especially damaging because young people were left completely vulnerable by the separation from their parents and by the colonization of their birthright lands. Racist social relationships target young people, and

educators need to think about how they are complicit in this process. Lee Maracle (1988), an Aboriginal writer, poet, and parent laments on this process:

The society we live in is racist. Naturally, the education we receive is racist. Our students are the victims of this racism. It takes a tremendous amount of effort on the part of Native parents and our children to prevent racism from becoming internalized. (p. 64)

Children can be expected to unconsciously rationalize exploitation by adults. ‘Children of the colonizer’ can be as damaged as ‘children of the colonized’. While some young people come to believe themselves to be inferior, others learn to assume a position of superiority, depending on their families’ social location. It can be argued that notions of inferiority are fundamental to developing a sense of superiority. According to Jackins (1997), people accumulate distress by getting emotionally hurt or humiliated. They are made to feel inferior by the distress and seeing the world through the hurt experiences, they claim a position of superiority (or inferiority), whenever or wherever they can. By the time we reach adulthood we have accumulated a significant amount of distress from our interactions in the social world, whether we are aware of the distress or not. Exercising power over others in a way that is destructive is often a symptom of hurt experience. People often act out or dramatize their hurt. Emotional healing⁸ involves understanding these lived experiences and claiming them. Critical social consciousness helps us deconstruct power relationships.

⁸ Healing methods involve experiencing early memories or emotion and allowing the expression of the emotion through talking, crying, trembling (fear), shaking (terror), perspiring, yawning (stress) or laughing. It is based on the theory that unexpressed painful emotions cause distress and distress (defined as unexpressed painful emotion) interferes with clear thinking. Distress, unless it is expressed through a human healing process, stays with the person and clouds their perceptions. Distress means that we have been hurt and that these hurts cloud our vision. The hurt gets played out in the person’s social relationships or in the physical body (disease). This contemporary approach to healing has a lot in common with traditional Aboriginal healing techniques, such as sweat lodge or peyote ceremonies.

Children of the colonizer tend to claim notions of superiority to rationalize their identity and power privilege. Being mistreated or witnessing mistreatment of others is emotionally painful and needs to be rationalized in some way. The rationalization process is how we internalize the social hierarchy. People respond differently depending on how damaged they are by the process. It is our humanity that is damaged. Recovering from our distress and reclaiming our humanity is a life-long struggle and important liberation work.

In my mind, 'oppression' refers to the intentional or unintentional exercise of power by one group of people at the expense of the other. In this context, an ally is someone who acts in solidarity with a person or group in dealing with oppressive personal and social relationships. Teachers can be allies to Aboriginal students by working to end 'colonial relationships', 'adulthood,'⁹ and other forms of oppression. This implies helping to facilitate 'self-actualization'. By this I mean a process whereby people come to terms with who they are and position themselves in a way that leads to positive engagement with the world around them. It involves sense of purpose, self-respect, curiosity, creativity and peace of mind, all of which contribute to emotional and physical health. In the end, this whole package defines the critically important, end-goal of helping Aboriginal young people to develop positive self-esteem.

⁹ Adulthood is the conscious or unconscious pre-emption of leadership and self-actualization from young people.

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Listening for the Whispers

Jolene McFadyen

Have you ever just stopped, really stopped to listen to the sounds and voices around you in your classroom? As a new teacher, I found that I rarely did this. The action of stopping was certainly not apart of my usual practice. Rather, as a first-year teacher, it was more about a habitual go, go, go mentality. The sounds and voices around me were heard as nothing more than whirled murmurs, and perhaps I would catch a few flashes of hands and blurred movement as we went about our activities. Rush, rush, rush, I would think. As I would sit and ponder my own teaching experiences, I soon came to realize that I was missing a crucial part of my job. I was missing the voices of my students and as I peered over across the room, I believed that I may have filed them amongst the perceived illusions of what I thought teaching was going to be, and they lay scattered in quite the array on top of my already cluttered desk.

As I went about completing my teaching practicum, I often wondered how my philosophies were going to mesh with that of my collaborating teacher's. I struggled as I attempted to locate myself in the divided binders that were handed to me to serve as my compass for the next seven weeks and I struggled to find ways to really connect with my students. The binders did not help me navigate through the challenges of 32 different students, with 32 different voices, with many different visions. The two years of practicum allowed me to grow into my professional skin. I learned some very valuable lessons and developed a great deal of character, and grew as an aspiring educator; however I felt that I had grown into a skin that perhaps wasn't quite the right fit. I found it to be very restricting, and as an educator I felt confined to a vision that I did not necessarily share.

After I completed my practicum, I stepped out into the world believing that teaching was the sound of me talking at students while they sat isolated at desks with their pen and paper. I do not remember the sounds of their voices or the expressions on their faces, or even what their visions were for their own learning. I felt disorientated and disillusioned and I questioned how I was going to make my classroom different. How would I make my classroom a community that echoed the voice of each student, and welcomed each and every one of their aspirations? After all, teaching is just as much about listening, as it is about talking...

The students were writing in their *writer's notebooks* and were thinking about what made someone a hero and who their hero was. For most of my students writing came very naturally. With pencils in hand and their ideas buzzing, they all got down to the task, with the exception of one small boy, Cameron. From the beginning of the year, Cameron had been struggling with reading and writing and this task was no exception. I found him on the floor with his pencil and his notebook in true form: doodling dragons in the margins of his page. The morning had been a trying one. I took a deep breath and sat down beside him and we began brainstorming about the idea of heroes. We talked back and forth for a few moments, and then out of nowhere, in a much louder voice than he had ever spoke in Cameron said, "My grandpa was a hero because he was a very intelligent man who used to build many machines." My heart leaped with excitement. I had never heard him talk with so much confidence, and with so many beautiful words. I was awestruck because I felt as though Cameron had made a giant stride towards feeling like a competent and successful student. This day was a pivotal one because it was a stepping stone for Cameron. He continued to be reluctant to participate in conversation, but offered small comments regarding the topic of our discussion. As more time passed, Cameron began showing a greater interest in reading and writing and even began making text to self and text to text

connections with books that we were reading in class and even books that he had read on his own time. As a first-year teacher, these interactions were my gold stars. Cameron was a child who, at the beginning of the year, seemed to fade into the background of our busy classroom, and really made me question my philosophy of teaching. I began to wonder if our room echoed his voice and his vision. For once I stopped and began listening very closely to what Cameron had to say. It was this experience that will stick with me for my entire career.

Teaching isn't about talking at students; it is more about talking with them and listening very closely to their words. They speak about their experiences and their aspirations. As adults, we may misinterpret their words as just that....words and not feelings, not excitement, not success, merely phonetic utterances. And then, we do our students a grave injustice.

As the year progressed, Cameron continued to develop his ability to build on his strategies as a reader, and a writer, and began to see himself as a learner. He continued to participate in our conversations about reading and books, and then one day he confidently raised his hand and wanted to talk about the novel that we had read. Before Cameron spoke, one of his classmates had mentioned that "at the beginning of the book, it wasn't that interesting, but as you reached the end it was more fun to read because more stuff was happening." Following this comment, Cameron noted that "reading a novel was like climbing a set of stairs." I was elated that he was using a comparison and was intrigued to know how he was going to follow through. He added, "At the bottom of stairs there is not too much excitement, but as you get to the top, that is where all the excitement is." I was stunned. Cameron had gone from not engaging in any conversation, to articulating insightful, abstract thoughts. This was so rewarding for me because I got the opportunity to witness the development of this child, and it was all because I had stopped to listen and given him the chance to talk and to be heard.

I attribute much of my professional growth to redirecting my focus as an educator. Don't get me wrong, I know that I have an awful lot to learn; in fact I will never cease to be a learner. I will leave my first year as a teacher knowing that teaching is a sharpened sense of sight that looks for the possible in the classroom. It is an acute sense of hearing that listens for the dialogue among the students as they communicate with one another and their environments. Lynn White notes that "I believe that a child is not an empty vessel to be filled with knowledge delivered from teachers; a child comes to us as a full vessel. It is our job to uncover who the child is as a learner and to support the learning of each individual child, as we work together as a community of learners in the classroom..."