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Résumé de l'article

Cet article a vu le jour suite à l'expérience vécue au sein d'un stage par trois collègues « colonisateurs » oeuvrant dans un programme de formation des enseignants. Ceux-ci ont constaté que leur relation personnelle et professionnelle avec les Premières Nations, les Métis et les Inuits avaient eu une incidence positive et utile sur leur manière de répondre aux mandats provinciaux et aux appels à l'action formulés dans le cadre de la Commission de vérité et réconciliation.

A COLLABORATIVE SHARING OF STORIES ON A JOURNEY TOWARD RECONCILIATION: “BELONGING TO THIS PLACE AND TIME”

KAU’I KELIPIO, KIM PERRY & COLLEEN ELDERTON *Simon Fraser University*

ABSTRACT. This paper emerges from the particular field experiences of three “settler” colleagues working in a teacher education program, each of whom found that their personal and professional relationships with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people had a positive and constructive bearing on how they responded to provincial mandates and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action.

PARTAGE COLLABORATIF DE RECITS DANS LE CADRE D’UN CHEMINEMENT VERS LA RECONCILIATION : « APPARTENIR A CE TERRITOIRE ET CETTE EPOQUE »

RÉSUMÉ. Cet article a vu le jour suite à l’expérience vécue au sein d’un stage par trois collègues « colonisateurs » œuvrant dans un programme de formation des enseignants. Ceux-ci ont constaté que leur relation personnelle et professionnelle avec les Premières Nations, les Métis et les Inuits avaient eu une incidence positive et utile sur leur manière de répondre aux mandats provinciaux et aux appels à l’action formulés dans le cadre de la Commission de vérité et réconciliation.

We are story. All of us. What comes to matter then is the creation of the best possible story we can while we’re here; you, me, us together. When we can do that and we take the time to share those stories with each other, we get bigger inside, we see each other, we recognize our kinship — we change the world, one story at a time. Richard Wagamese (as cited in Janssens, 2017)

We three come from diverse backgrounds and places. Our voices and perspectives are influenced by the places that we called home. We are all settlers to this land; one is Indigenous Hawaiian and two are of Anglo-European ancestry. Our Notes from the Field is our way of reporting how we, as teacher educators, have and are preparing ourselves for the task of addressing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada’s (TRC, 2015) Calls to Action.

As we came together over the past few months to talk about how our individual stories could be told as a collective experience, it became clear that the process of examining and sharing our own pathways, significant events, experiences, and learning from and with Indigenous people and place possesses an inherent richness of its own. It is a story to be shared in the right time and place.

Although diverse in background and experience, we wished to walk a similar path with our student teachers. We started together with a new awareness, knowledge, understandings, and perspectives gained from our reading of King's (2012) *The Inconvenient Indian* and Dion's (2009) *Braiding Histories*. We talked about how to frame our work and how to utilize entry points and central ideas that we would circle back to throughout our program. Into our conversation came *Engaging Minds: Changing Teaching in Complex Times* (Davis, Sumara, & Luce-Kapler, 2008) as a way to think about what we are doing with student teachers. The rich text not only caused us to think more deeply about teaching and learning, but we also saw within it the significant threads of both Indigenous and Western ways of seeing the world.

Our conversations were built around a combination of personal narratives and the asking of questions to help us get to the core of what we felt would be sufficient for our student teachers and their own journeys to an understanding of Indigenous worldviews and perspectives; yet space was also intentionally left for explorations as we went along.

What follows are our three perspectives on our journey into Indigenous perspectives in teacher education and how teacher education can address the TRC's Calls to Action (2015). We do this in two ways. We recall that which took place for each of us as we went about our work, and we note that which has been learned since, all in reflection.

KIM'S STORY

In a speech to the Surrey Teachers Association, Wagamese (2016) said the cyclical nature of storytelling "has been happening since we first harvested language." He said during the telling of a story first we listen and then we hear. The difference? When we hear, a reaction happens that involves a mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual response. His articulation of storytelling struck me as it also reflects what happens when learning occurs. My learning lies within stories. Each time I pause within a story to ponder or reflect, I learn — especially with a story that lingers, or one that nudges, pokes, and prods my consciousness. When I give time and space and I have the patience to hear the story, I find the lesson — and I learn. The development of my hearing took time, but it has been essential in my learning story in relation to Indigenous Peoples. What I recall is that in the beginning of my work as an educator, I did all the talking and not enough listening. Over time, I learned to not only listen, but I also learned to hear.

It was while I was living and teaching in a northern Inuit community on the edge of the Arctic Ocean in the early 90s that I first confronted my cultural identity. Darren taught me. Darren was one of my third-graders — an Inuvialuit boy who one day proclaimed, “the White Man gets all the good stuff.” This brief yet powerful statement put me off kilter — it was the first time I *ever* had to confront my identity. As a multi-generational Canadian and non-Indigenous educator, my powerful and privileged position personified the dominant narrative of colonial ways of knowing. Although, as a teacher from the south, I was part of a minority in the community, I contributed to upholding the governing colonial narrative. Darren and others within the community provided me ample opportunities to examine my position as I lived and worked in the North. However, I was ill-equipped and lacked the self-awareness to fully understand my role and to be culturally responsive in this unfamiliar context. Musqueam Elder, Larry Grant (2015) has said, “It is quite a thing to ground yourself with who you are” (personal communication, September 2, 2015). It is quite a thing and it feels like a foundational layer to the complex nature of this work toward reconciliation. Undeniably, those stories stayed with me as they had caused a severe fracture in my sense of identity. Those pivotal moments and memories from my experiences in the North sparked an awakening for me, which inspired me to return to school.

Sharilyn taught me. She was my mentor and advisor while I completed my MEd at the University of British Columbia (UBC). Sharilyn was the witness to my stories of the North. It was the first time I engaged in professional and intentional conversations with an Indigenous person about education. My work at UBC is where I began to confront and understand my cultural identity and my role as educator. While in the North, I had disregarded the community’s visions for their future. I did not recognize their established voices in the creation of meaning concerning curriculum and education. As a non-Indigenous educator, I was blinded and unaware of my status and cultural position, and did not know I needed to respond to my students in a more culturally thoughtful way. As long as I was the eager “tourist” acting as missionary to the people, I would remain on the outside separated from the story, unable to hear or learn. While at UBC, Sharilyn taught me to ask questions. She helped me develop a reflective practice, which lead me to community-based research, ultimately deepening my understanding of what it means to be a culturally responsive / responsible educator. She first taught me to listen, and then hear.

After teaching in Vancouver for several years, I became a Faculty Associate at Simon Fraser University (SFU). At the time, the University was in its second year of implementing a mandate set out by the Teacher Regulation Branch (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2012), which required all pre-service teachers to learn about Aboriginal Education. This timing coincided with the events acknowledging the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s (2015) final report and the calls to action. Although an uncertain path for many of us

non-Indigenous educators, it was also a necessary time for engagement and learning — it was essential that our community of educators take up our responsibilities to address the mandate and the Calls to Action. Kau’i taught me. Kau’i, my mentor, my colleague, and my friend, is still teaching me. Kau’i reminded me to do what Sharilyn taught me — read the theory or policy and learn the protocols. She reminded me to be curious and to inquire. Kau’i taught me the importance of acknowledging the land; she taught me how to sit in the circle and listen so I could hear; she taught me to learn alongside the multiple diverse perspectives of First Nation Elders, scholars, leaders, and educators. I learned to seek out opportunities, I found the courage and humility to listen, and then hear. Through the teaching of educators like Kau’i, my practice was forever transformed — I was the teacher but I was a learner too.

As a teacher educator at Simon Fraser University (SFU), I worked with a module of pre-service teachers who specifically wanted to work through their teacher education program while also exploring Indigenous perspectives, pedagogies and principles. As developing educators, I wanted my students to examine their relationship with Indigenous Peoples through an exploration of assumptions, stereotypes, and misunderstandings. My mentors had taught me to be responsive and to develop a sense of reciprocity within our community of learning. Collectively, my students and I developed our conceptualizations of Aboriginal Education and saw how those frames could be reflected in our practice. Again, as a non-Indigenous educator, I committed to stepping aside to allow the voices of Indigenous Elders, teachers, and scholars to mentor and teach my students to provide an authentic, diverse perspective. In consciously acknowledging my privilege and my position, I remembered to step aside to allow those with the wisdom and knowledge to guide us.

My learning comes from my (re)remembering of my stories. The story is long and complex, and the story is also unfinished as learning is life-long. Through my reflective practice, I’ve been able to acknowledge the significant relationships, which have taught, mentored, and guided me. It is truly through my experiences in relation to others, with others, and alongside others where the growth occurs. My story continues to unfold — I commit to listening deeply and actively in order to hear so that I may continue to learn.

COLLEEN’S STORY

In order to move forward or stay in place, the hummingbird’s wings move in a back and forth motion, creating what might be called an infinity symbol. The movement of wings back and forth resonates with me as I have endeavoured to put into words the story of my learning journey in Aboriginal Education. I have played with a number of metaphors because it is not easy to articulate something that is a dynamic and multi-layered process. Every experience, every conversation propels me forward and, at the same time, more deeply into the work.

I began my journey into Aboriginal Education with student teachers in the Fall of 2013, at the time when the Truth and Reconciliation events were taking place in Vancouver. I remember being cautious and a little worried, as student teachers took their first steps to bring forward Aboriginal perspectives, histories and ways of knowing. I asked: *What resources are you using? Who recommended these resources? Is this a topic that Grade 5 and 6 students can handle?*

I learned of the “Paddle for Reconciliation” event at False Creek, sponsored by Reconciliation Canada (2013a), because my Dragon Boat Team accepted the invitation to participate. I started out that day to capture the event in photographs. The first Indigenous person I encountered was a parent from my former school. He was there to paddle with his family. It was a brief and heartfelt encounter, a connection, and then I was off to see more. Sitting on a rock by the water’s edge, the words “*Namwáyut* – We Are All One” passed by me on shirts worn by many...grace, beauty, hope, sorrow...the heartbeat of the drum... This was a day of intense and mixed emotion demonstrated in the expression in individual faces, and the silences in between the greetings and celebration. I am grateful that I realized it was a moment in time where I needed to simply slow down and be fully present in this place, realizing that the events of that day were not an end point to celebrate something accomplished but rather a beginning step on a long journey forward.

On a rainy day later that Fall, I came to Georgia Street to participate in the “Walk for Reconciliation.” We were a sea of colourful umbrellas, all vying for a clear view of the speakers that would soon grace the stage. It was an interesting contrast of images – the city backdrop, the traditional regalia, a speech by Bernice King, daughter of Martin Luther King, and the Elders that led us forward and back across the Georgia viaduct. We walked. We were led. I remember how the Aboriginal leaders of our walk started to come back toward us as we walked within the crowd. This time I was not a thoughtful observer from the side. I was joining in. The pathway did not wind...it reflected two opposite directions...a coming and going that allowed us to see one another...

A student teacher recently asked me how I have come to be where I am in my understandings and commitment to infusing Aboriginal Perspectives into my work as a teacher educator. It was a thoughtful and important challenge. If I only had 10 minutes or 1000 words to answer that question, what would I say?

I am still grappling with which pathways have actually led me to this place in time and which pathway I will take next. However, when I think about my learning over time, this is what I am most sure of:

My own sense of place, and my belief in place-based education, are important entry points for me in doing this work. I grew up on the unceded / unconquered territories of the Syilx / Okanagan people, specifically the Upper Similkameen. I had many opportunities to be connected to the natural world,

and time to discover the natural rhythms of the land on which I played and lived. My grandparents were highly influential in helping me to see and listen to the world around me. In this place, I have a deeply rooted sense of home. How does that impact and influence how I walk?

My appreciation for the more-than-human¹ world has always influenced my practice as an educator, and the importance of our connection to the land seems to filter through every learning opportunity. When I became a teacher educator in 2013, a required reading was *The Inconvenient Indian: The Curious Account of Native People in North America* by Thomas King (2012). I remember the impact of his words, and the sense of being “rattled” because it challenged my deeply rooted sense of home, never having thought of who might have lived on the land before my great-grandparents settled there. It started deeper conversations. It made me sad. I could only imagine the impact of loss of place because my sense of place has shaped my growth, my values, and my respect for the more-than-human world. How might we work together to discover a fabric that consistently honours Aboriginal worldviews and perspectives, helping to teach us about ourselves, about our relationship with one another, and about our relationship with the land?

Prior to coming to SFU, I had the opportunity to engage and be guided in community learning with and from Indigenous elders and parents in my schools. Through dialogue, and shared experiences I continued to learn.

Dion and Dion, through *Braiding Histories* (2009), have brought forward the importance of the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. Dion suggests an examination of one’s biases and assumptions through an assignment she names the File of (Un)certainities (Dion & Dion 2009). The importance of learning with and from Indigenous voices through authentic, honest and meaningful dialogue is one pathway we, as educators, can follow. I reflect on the people who have directly or indirectly shared their stories with me and have helped to deepen my understandings and move me forward.

Kau’i is a consistently wise mentor for me. She has the ability to plant ideas, and models patience and the giving of space to allow them to grow. She reminds us that it is “drop by drop” that we deepen our ability to notice, our awareness of what is important, our knowledge, and our commitment to facilitate change.

Wagamese has offered powerful insights through his writing. In particular, *One Story, One Song* (Wagamese, 2011) has become something that I share as a way of making connections. For me, he reminds us of the important interplay of humility, trust, introspection, and wisdom in all learning, in all healing, and in all journeys forward.

Brad Baker, Squamish Nation, District Principal for Aboriginal Education North Vancouver School District, is a steadfast presence and mentor. His presentations to my student teachers, over the course of three years, have

helped me know his own history and story. His guidance encourages me in the same way he inspires others to “go forward with courage.” (SD44 Aboriginal Education, 2018)

I explore my own pathway to understanding and advocacy, while at the same time try to help others discover their own. It seems that the more I come to know and understand, the more I discover I have yet to learn and do. My own learning journey is a perpetual back and forth motion, like the movement of the hummingbird’s wings, as I pull from past experiences, and discover new understandings, believing that there are infinite possibilities in the journey forward. I have learned that it is a journey that needs both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people working in relationship, moving together, and exploring the many layers of responsibility and possibility... “belonging to this place and time”(Chief Joseph as cited in Reconciliation Canada, 2013b).

KAU’I’S STORY

“Let us find a way to belong to this time and place together. Our future, and the well being of all our children rests with the kind of relationships we build today.”

Chief Dr. Robert Joseph, O.B.C. (Reconciliation Canada, 2013b)

Kim’s and Colleen’s stories serve as two examples of learning journeys that brought to light their understanding of their own relationships to Indigenous peoples. My learning journey is one of awakening to the significance of ceremony and its role in education. In his book, *Look to the Mountain: An Ecology of Indigenous Education*, Pueblo scholar Gregory Cajete (1994) tells us the “learning journey begins and ends with spirit. It begins with appropriate orientation, acknowledging relationships, setting intentions” (p. 69).

On a warm day in late August, a Burning Ceremony had been arranged prior to the opening of Simon Fraser University’s Fall 2016 President’s Dream Colloquium: *Returning to the Teachings: Justice, Identity and Belonging in the 21st Century* (Simon Fraser University [SFU], 2016). I was enrolled in this as a course and when asked to lend a helping hand for this ceremonial event, I was honoured to do so.

Assigned to the parking lot with a grad student colleague, we waited on the side of the road in quiet anticipation of the arrival of the Coast Salish knowledge keepers and ceremonial practitioners. Soon a red compact car approached, slowly gliding to a stop next to us, and the woman in the front lowered her window. A quiet smile and the scent of cedar wafted through the opening. The woman’s name was Thelma and the driver was her brother Smitty. I got into the car to guide them to the drop-off place for the cedar they brought. As we drove, I discovered that Thelma and Smitty were the children of the late Elder Dr. Vincent Stogan, Tsimalano. I had met their father when he shared his teachings of “Hands Forward, Hands Back” at UBC. Prior to the

hiring of Indigenous faculty at SFU, there were many times when I'd drive from SFU to UBC to seek the guidance of Indigenous educators Verna Kirkness and Joanne Archibald. They were integral in nurturing my efforts to be a respectful, responsible, and responsive teacher educator as I attended to the Indigenous issues within the context of teacher education.

Thelma and her brother guided the collective work of Indigenous traditional knowledge holders and cultural practitioners from Katize, Musqueam, and Squamish Nations. The Burning Ceremony included the SFU President and Deans, and the course professors, one from the Faculty of Education and the other from the School of Criminology; each of them was given a task, a responsibility in this ceremony. We stood around a steady fire centered in a clearing of stones, surrounded by our few Cedar relations left standing on the south side of the Science Complex. Thelma and Smitty oriented us, acknowledged the presence of Spirit, Indigenous Ancestors, and ourselves with our histories, and then explained the intentions of the Ceremony. Through the prayers and the burning of prepared foods and blankets, the Coast Salish Ancestors were respectfully acknowledged. Guided by Indigenous knowledge holders, representatives of the University actively participated in the ceremonial process of seeking spiritual support and knowledge in the launching of this President's Dream Colloquium. At that moment when the smell of cedar wafted on the smoke surrounding us, I was dwelling in the past, present, and future. Turning to us encircling the quiet fire, Thelma announced the Ancestor's blessings for this President's Dream Colloquium.

When our course, *Returning to the Teachings: Justice, Identity and Belonging in the 21st Century*, began in September, those in attendance were also brought into the realm of Ceremony. On this occasion, Chief Joseph, Ambassador for Reconciliation Canada and Special Advisor to Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, was scheduled as our first speaker. Drumming and singing announced his entry into the theatre. The hosting First Nations present conducted the ceremonial practice of blanketing. Chief Joseph had traveled from his home to the colloquium at a time when his family and community were mourning the loss of one of his relatives. He let us know that coming to speak to us was his responsibility as the Ambassador for Reconciliation Canada, but he would need to return home and therefore was unable to join us in our seminar discussions. He spoke to us about the truths of residential schooling as he described the harm he personally experienced. He spoke of the impact of that trauma upon him and his responses to that trauma. He spoke with humility and strength of his commitment to make things right and his responsibility to lead by example. At the conclusion of Chief Joseph's talk, the host First Nation gave him a brushing, *Xwip'an* (in the Coast Salish language of Halkomelem), to cleanse him in mind, body, and spirit and to rid him of anything negative in preparation for his journey home.

The President's Dream Colloquium was integrated with Indigenous ceremonies of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tseil-Waututh as well as dialogue, what the faculty organizers say, "creates a rich mobilization, diverse community engagement and capacity building for a new vision" (SFU, 2016). Cultural practitioners and knowledge-keepers from one of the four Coast Salish Nations hosted the seminars led by artists, community activists, lawyers, and academics. Students were organized into work groups with responsibilities that included helping each First Nations host group, preparing the meal that followed each colloquium, assisting the Elders, arranging the blankets, and gathering cedar boughs. Over the course of the term, relationships were forged between each host First Nation group and the students in the course. As testimony to this relationship building process was an invitation from a cultural practitioner of *Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw*, Squamish Nation, to our entire class to attend as guests to a special Longhouse gathering in his community to honour those residential survivors who were sent away from family and community to residential schools.

Each session's discussion of the concepts of justice, identity and belonging, brought into focus the disparities experienced by Indigenous peoples as described on the SFU website, (SFU, 2016, "President's Dream Colloquium, Returning to the Teachings"). The TRC's Calls to Action (2015) underscored the importance for all Canadians to be knowledgeable of the unconscionable challenges encountered regularly by First Nations, Metis, and Inuit peoples within Canada's education, economic, environmental, health, and justice systems. The introductory words of Chief Joseph had opened a door for me to join in the collective action of reconciliation and to "find a way to belong to this time and place together" with Indigenous peoples of these lands and with other settlers. This course gave us opportunities to form valuable relationships with one another as we undertook our assigned chores, prepared for presentations, and participated in class discussions. We gradually coalesced into a collective of learners who listened with care and who sought to understand perspectives different from our own. An interdisciplinary approach was extended to us through the array of guest presentations in the locations and spaces that allowed us to share feelings and reflections and discuss ideas.

The inclusion of ceremony to honour the invited guests and scholars set a respectful tone for each gathering. I was (re)introduced to the sacredness of being together, which prompted me to seek what Cajete (1994) had described as "the place of thought, the place of the deepest respect and sacredness, the place of good life, the place of Highest Thought" (p. 70). The President's Dream Colloquium was indeed unique, modeling Indigenous ways of being and knowing and demonstrating what is possible in a place of higher education as we go about our work addressing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action.

Kim, Colleen, and I formed a writing group soon after completing our work together in SFU's teacher education program. The MJE Call for Proposals prompted us to write about our experiences as "settlers" attending to the TRC Calls to Action. Since that time, our learning journeys have continued to move our everyday lives towards enacting our commitment to the wellbeing of Indigenous peoples. We have taken the time to share our stories, and in doing so, as our opening quote from the late Richard Wagamese expressed, we did get bigger inside, we saw and see each other, we acknowledge our kinship — and we will contribute to changing the world, one story at a time.

NOTES

1. Indicates kinship to entities that are not human persons. It's an English translation of an idea in a number of Indigenous ways of understanding that doesn't translate well into English except in the terms provided.

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KIM PERRY is an educator in Surrey, BC. Her practice has developed over the last 30 years through the diversity of her experiences. After completing her BEd at the University of New Brunswick (1988), Kim's early career began in a small rural community in New Brunswick. Her interest in continued growth and learning propelled her to the edge of the Arctic Ocean in the Northwest Territories where she taught for 2 years in a hamlet in the western Arctic. Her experiences and learning in an Inuvialuit community inspired her move to British Columbia where she completed her MEd at the University of British Columbia (1996). Her home is now in BC and over the last 24 years she has taught in various elementary schools in Vancouver, was a Faculty Associate at Simon Fraser University, and is presently teaching in an elementary school in Surrey, BC. perry_k@surreyschools.ca

COLLEEN ELDERTON has more than 35 years of experience in the field of education. She has worked in various capacities as a teacher and teacher educator in the North Vancouver School District, including: elementary school Principal and Vice Principal, teacher librarian (K-7), and a teacher at both the late primary and intermediate level. She has worked on collaborative teams for the development of curriculum documents at the district level (Arts focused) and provincial level (Environmental Learning). She has been a Faculty Associate with Simon Fraser University's teacher education program since 2013. She holds a Master of Education degree in Curriculum Instruction, a Professional Diploma, and a Bachelor of Education. celderto@sfu.ca

KAU'I KELIPIO est originaire de la communauté autochtone hawaïenne Kanaka Maoli et étudiante au doctorat à la faculté en éducation de la Simon Fraser University. Elle reconnaît sa kuleana (responsabilité) envers les peuples autochtones et leurs terres traditionnelles non cédées grâce auxquelles elle est en mesure de vivre, travailler et étudier. Elle a commencé à enseigner en 1978, au moment où la volonté d'auto-détermination des communautés autochtones a mené à la prise de contrôle de leur système éducatif. Dans ses recherches, Kau'i est guidée par les principes autochtones d'être et du savoir. keliipio@sfu.ca

KIM PERRY est enseignante à Surrey, en Colombie-Britannique. Elle a développé sa pratique enseignante au cours des trente dernières années grâce à des expériences variées. Après avoir obtenu son baccalauréat en éducation à l'Université du Nouveau-Brunswick en 1988, Kim a débuté sa carrière au sein d'une petite communauté rurale néo-brunswickoise. Son désir continu d'apprentissage et de développement l'a mené au bord de l'océan Arctique dans un petit village des Territoires du Nord-Ouest où elle a enseigné pendant deux ans. Cette expérience et les apprentissages réalisés dans la communauté Inuvialuit l'ont incité à déménager en Colombie-Britannique. Elle y a complété sa maîtrise en éducation à l'University of British Columbia en 1996. Elle réside désormais en Colombie-Britannique. Au cours des 24 dernières années, elle a enseigné dans plusieurs écoles primaires de Vancouver et a été professeure agrégée à la Simon Fraser University. Elle enseigne actuellement dans une école primaire de Surrey, en Colombie-Britannique. perry_k@surreyschools.ca

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