University of Alberta

Developing a Sense of Place in Rural Alberta:
Experiences of Newcomers

by

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Education
in
Adult Education

Educational Policy Studies

Fall, 2009
Edmonton, Alberta

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Abstract

This narrative inquiry uses the talking circle, a discourse process indigenous to the North American prairies, to explore the experiences of recent international migrants to rural Alberta. The immediate intention is to address questions of rural revitalization and the creation of welcoming communities. At a deeper level, it explores the role of history, cultural negotiation, and power relations in community development. It examines *place* as a critical element of human experience, which has been severed under modern economic regimes.

Recommendations for how we might best respond to rural migration challenges include processes for listening and responding to needs, for building trustworthy relationships, and a call to recognize Aboriginal history. Findings also point to the importance of facilitating options for migrants with temporary status in a transient global context. The study advises that learning through attentive intercultural discourse could be integral to recreating democratic communities and establishing sense of place.

Chapter 1: A Story of Place

Rural settings in Alberta have complex social histories. These include the displacement of original inhabitants, the impacts of immigration policies during the twentieth century, important industrial shifts, and depopulation of agricultural areas in recent decades. This research document tells a story of the rural Alberta landscape. It asks how we can create welcoming communities for current day international migrants.

Underlying the question of how to integrate newcomers is an examination of the importance of *place* in human experience, and whether or how we have a need to establish *sense of place* in our lives. The notion of what it means to have a sense of place evolves through the telling of this story.

As the author, I am a child of early twentieth century western European immigrants, the most common cohort of early immigrants to Alberta. My concept of place was very much shaped by a farm upbringing, and then by disruptions to that experience when our family had to move to town. Losing connection to the land has been a common experience of early rural Alberta immigrant families.

It has also been the experience of indigenous families, but for a different set of reasons in a concurrent story of colonial power relations.

As I begin this thesis, sense of place is associated with settling; with the expectation that rural immigrants will develop connections to the land. As the research continues, I need to examine the experience of place from a broader perspective. Can we have a sense of place in the midst of transience? How does sense of place intersect with having a feeling of community? Do people concern

themselves with these questions in an economic climate of seeking survival or well-being just for oneself or one's family? Perspectives on the human need for connection to the land and community are shared in the literature review and discussion sections of the paper.

This thesis evolves over several parts:

Literature review: First, I tell the story of what we know from literature about the migration experiences of immigrants to rural Alberta. Then I tell a short history of the human population of this province. This leads to an overview of literature considering the tensions of migration, power relations, and cross-cultural exchanges. I examine responses we can have to those challenges. This cycles back to the concern expressed in current literature that we re-establish the importance of *place* and *community* in a global context where these connections have been severed.

Methodology: In this section I consider how to proceed. I want to learn from recent migrants from around the globe about their experiences in coming to rural Alberta. I want to balance immigration studies that have focused on quantitative measures with a study that goes into some depth of newcomer stories. I choose narrative inquiry as a guiding methodology, and share background considerations of that approach.

Intuitively as an educator, I want to conduct the study using a group format, where all the participants share and learn from each other's experiences. I turn to the talking circle tradition of Aboriginal people of the prairies. I explore the meaning and wisdom of the talking circle as a discourse process, and consider how

it might be used appropriately and respectfully to learn from and with study participants.

Empirical Data: The document then shares how I move forward with the process. I introduce seven study participants who are recent migrants to a rural area of Alberta from different parts of the globe. Excerpts of the main substance of what they share are related in their own words, in a lengthy and multi-faceted chapter.

Discussion and Recommendations: Finally, the thesis moves into a discussion of what I have learned about sense of place, as well as recommendations for how we might best respond to rural migration challenges in the current global context.

As the teller of this story, I see now how closely my own story, as a child of this place, is embedded within the larger narrative. True to the tenets of narrative inquiry, my position within the story has impacted the telling. As a second generation white immigrant seeking place, I have learned through this process how history and relationships inform and impact my sense of place. I hope that you, as reader, will also find the story instructive.

Setting the Intention

At its simplest level, this study is about the needs and experiences of immigrants to rural Alberta. Its intention is to improve our ability as a "host" society to be more intrinsically welcoming and inclusive of newcomers.

At a deeper level, it is about our much deliberated human condition of disconnection from the land, arguably at the heart of the current ecological, economic, and social distress of the planet. The study seeks to stimulate inquiry into

ways and means that we as humans might create connections and establish a sense of place.

The study uses the talking circle as a relational discourse process to explore the narratives of rural newcomers and issues of migration in a rural Alberta setting. With roots in the indigenous societies of the Canadian prairies, the talking circle is particularly well suited to study experiences of connection to place.

Study Objectives

With this research, I seek to complement quantitative immigration studies by providing a qualitative look at current migrant experiences in a rural setting. On very practical levels, I hope this study will contribute to greater understanding of the shifts that occur when newcomers immigrate to a new community, and of processes that facilitate hospitable community environments. This knowledge could assist rural communities, including educational institutions, employers, and civil society, to increase their understanding of how to be welcoming of newcomers, and to assist in integration and settlement processes over the long term. It will help communities develop a greater appreciation for the new diverse threads in their midst, and contribute to a stronger fabric of community. Findings of the study could assist municipal, provincial, and federal jurisdictions concerned with successful immigration, particularly as it pertains to rural revitalization. Improved social fabric and civic connectedness can lead not only to better local government, but to community economic well being (Putnam, 1996). A better understanding of immigrant experiences in rural areas has implications for adult learning, democracy, civil society, and human ecology.

Authors studied in the literature review reflect on the loss of an organic relationship between places, people, and spirit during the industrial and modern eras. With this study, I hope to invoke greater attention to the human experience of place, and to our sense of connection to the land and communities we inhabit.

This study calls on some of the perspectives, understandings, and processes of Aboriginal people in addressing its objectives. At the same time, I acknowledge the extremely imbalanced and unfinished nature of the integration processes between Aboriginal people and the first waves of historical immigrants to the prairies. This study honors the insights that the Aboriginal perspective brings to negotiation processes, and to sense of place, but moves forward with the current reality of ongoing immigration without fully addressing the injustices of our immigrant past.

I hope this study will contribute to a process whereby we listen to each others' stories in some depth, so that our narratives may inform our understanding, and provide a fresh perspective on the places that we share. In turn this may assist us to evolve as a society that respects and learns from each of our members, while supporting a connection to the land. I see the work of this thesis, comprised of narrative research in a series of talking circles, followed by reflection, as one step in a discursive cycle that may inform a richer range of possibilities for cultural negotiation.

Research Questions

My questions about immigrant experiences in rural Alberta led me to three main areas of inquiry. In the literature review I explore previous research and existent knowledge in the areas of: 1) current and historical immigration on the rural prairies; 2) intercultural learning and negotiation; and 3) the importance of place in human experience.

The empirical portion of the research is guided by similar questions about: actual experiences of a small group of fairly recent migrants; their intercultural learning; and their sense of place. I sought study participants who were making a durable or permanent move to a rural Alberta community. Some of the questions included: What brings newcomers to rural Alberta, and do they find meaningful connection with their new environments? What have rural immigrants learned, gained, lost, created, or compromised in adapting to a new community? Does the greater potential for connection with nature in a rural setting impact people's experience of place? How do rural immigrants respond to the talking circle as a discourse process? Does the disconnecting phenomenon of migration offer any evidence or insight into a human need for connection to the land? Actual questions used are outlined in the methodology section and in Appendix A.

Situating Myself and My Narrative Understandings

In current society, capitalist globalization is a significant driver of human migration. This predominant economic model has been propelling a trend toward monocultures in agricultural production, corporate control of industry and service, and toward the mainstreaming and westernizing of human activity. Though

advocates of "free" market systems and corporate interests may disagree, our human creation of global capitalism carries a burden of responsibility for the disconnected ways in which we are relating to, or not relating to, our planet. As a species, we have brought about a harmful ecological mess, led often by short sighted, misaligned self and business interests. I see a daunting co-operative task set before us: to unravel the unhealthy knots of the current power systems in order to make way for more sustaining and relational means of living on this planet.

The above synopsis reveals the perspective on global affairs that has evolved for me over years as the child of immigrant farmers, as a student of economics, of language and culture, and as an educator. To seek evidence and means of human connection to the land at the heart of the disconnecting phenomenon of migration, as proposed by this study, could be seen as paradoxical. It is a case of searching for a key to the solution at the heart of a dilemma.

Having grown up with Dutch immigrant parents near a small rural town in northern Alberta, I have a personal interest in exploring the shifts and adaptations that shape the lives of newcomers and the small communities into which they settle. My life has been profoundly affected by my parents' dislocation from the land of their birth and family connections. As I consider more closely my own life narrative, I see running through it a search for a sense of place, originating perhaps with my parents' migrations, and then compounded by my own rural experiences, including the loss of the family farm. Perhaps more than the average adult western human, I have a personal need for connection with the land and with natural spaces. In looking to the experiences of recent immigrants who have been drawn for some

reason to rural landscapes, I am wondering if I might not find a resonance in our experiences, and a deeper understanding of this search for a sense of place. My challenge is to listen openly to the stories the research participants tell, without superimposing my own expectations onto the content of what they express.

From "surface" issues of language and weather, to new ways of relating at work, to deeper perceptions of how to approach life, immigrants face day to day realities and societal expectations that may vastly differ from the society or societies where they have previously lived. My professional work over the last nineteen years, with groups and individuals going through steps of this adaptation process, in an urban setting, has given me the opportunity to develop a framework for understanding intercultural differences, and an awareness of the unconscious ways that we in the dominant culture perpetuate our own assumptions, expectations, and ways of relating. I want to contribute to better processes for the cross-cultural contact and relationship negotiations that are inherent to immigration.

I have a bias toward valuing holistic perceptions of well-being, which recognize the importance of rapport with the environment and with community. I have a bias toward honoring the knowledge and ways of the peoples indigenous to the land where we now dwell.

Chapter 2: Overview of Current Literature

Contributions from multiple academic fields provide insights into rural immigration in the Alberta context. The three main areas covered in this thesis are: 1) current and historical immigration on the rural prairies; 2) intercultural learning and negotiation; and 3) the importance of place in human experience. In the interests of space, discussion of each area remains relatively brief.

The review begins with a short overview of relevant studies on immigration in the Canadian context, highlighting the gaps in our current understandings of rural migration. It offers a definition of *rural*, and some considerations of the elusive characteristics of rural communities. It continues with a description of indigenous peoples' original relationships to the land, their experiences and history of displacement as a result of European immigration, and a history of immigration in Alberta. It continues with some interethnic and intercultural tensions of that history, and a lingering social and economic legacy in the province. Previous studies of western Canadian rural immigration are included here. This leads to updated statistics that attempt to capture the characteristics of current rural immigrants.

The review then turns to migration as a global phenomenon, and writings from the fields of Migration Theory, Intercultural Studies, Education, and Community Development, which discuss the challenges and tensions of migration. Following is a review of writers from these same fields who propose appropriate responses to intercultural tensions, with a focus on discourse processes. The last major section of the literature review discusses the concept and importance of place in human experience.

Finally, I review literature that overlaps with the section on methodology. This section presents narrative inquiry as an approach to research, and the talking circle specifically as a process by which to gather narratives. The methodology section provides background consideration and rationale for why and how I approach the research in the way that I do.

National Context/ Gaps in Literature

Metropolis (an international research organization dedicated to informing public policy on issues of migration and integration) put out a recent Canadian publication focusing on rural communities (Reimer, 2007b). The content of this issue of "Our Diverse Cities", as discussed in more depth in the following paragraphs, generally points to the need for greater understanding of the specific needs of rural communities and the experiences of rural immigrants. The studies highlighted in this document build on earlier discussions and studies of Metropolis in a Canadian context, following a research agenda presented by Abu-Laban and Derwing (1997), and including studies of the prairie context, such as that tabulated by Lamba, Mulder, & Wilkinson (2000).

With the vast majority of immigrants going to the major metropolitan areas of Canada (Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal) (Akbari & Harrington, 2007; Radford, 2007), the research we do have concentrates on urban centres. Some studies have looked at immigrant and refugee experiences in second tier cities, such as Ottawa, Calgary, and Edmonton, and third tier cities, such as Grande Prairie and Red Deer (Abu-Laban, Derwing, Krahn, Mulder, & Wilkinson, 1999; Lamba, Mulder, & Wilkinson (2000). However very little research explores in depth

migrant experiences in smaller cities, towns, villages, or the countryside (Lai, 2006; Radford, 2007; Rossiter, 2007).

Governments at all three levels in Canada have indicated awareness of depopulation trends in rural Canada, and have identified the need to revitalize the rural and resource regions of Canada, with attention to population attraction and retention (Sorensen, 2007; Akbari & Harrington, 2007). In 2006 only 21% of Alberta residents lived in rural areas according to census figures of that year, down from 43% in 1971.

In response, "Tool Boxes" have been created for rural communities to build capacity for welcoming newcomers (National Working Group on Small Centre Strategies, 2007; Research Resource Division, 2007). The toolboxes provide background and practical suggestions for smaller communities to understand immigration and build appropriate foundations to be welcoming of newcomers, if they so choose. My hope with this thesis is to deepen and expand the understanding and approaches that we can use to sustain truly inclusive communities.

Research on Canadian immigration tends to rely on census and quantitative indicators, such as income after various lengths of settlement time, to "measure" immigrant adaptation and success (Keung, 2008; Kunz, Milan, & Schetagne, 2000; Lamba, Mulder, & Wilkinson, 2000). Very little research attention is paid to the internal or qualitative processes that take place for immigrants in their new communities and work environments, especially in rural settings (Sorensen, 2007; Srinivas & Kaul, 1987). Of this, little explores the processes of intercultural learning or integration that take place in the new community environments at later

stages of the immigration experience. As summarized by Reimer (2007a), "We do not know a great deal about the conditions under which the social inclusion of immigrants thrives in rural communities" (p.7). As asked by Sorensen (2007), "[W]hat are the needs and interests of immigrants who might be attracted to rural and small town Canada that might stem from their unique cultural, linguistic, and religious backgrounds [? …What are the] motivations that underlie location settlement choices [?]" and "[Are] immigrants settling in rural Canada more likely than urban immigrants to have lived in a rural environment in their source country?" (p.124). While not identical to my research questions, these questions reflect the gaps in our current understanding of rural immigration experiences.

Rural Considerations

Definition and Characteristics

Rural communities are essentially defined in terms of distance and density (Reimer, 2007a). For the purposes of this study, I define *rural* simply as a geographic area of low density human population compared to major Alberta urban centres such as Calgary, Edmonton, Red Deer, and Grande Prairie. This would include centres with a population of fewer than 20,000, and not metro-adjacent (an hour or more drive to a larger centre, so as not to be considered a suburb or "bedroom" community). The extent and range of social and institutional services are comparatively lower in rural areas than in urban areas. Economic structures, natural resources and amenities, as well as heritage and identity factors are unique to every rural place (Reimer, 2007a).

Diaz, Widdis, and Gauthier (2003) write of the absence of a strong consensus as to what constitutes 'rural'. They describe rural communities as open systems with historical shifts and local dynamics. Rural communities have unique histories, and may have a more clear sense of identity than urban neighborhoods, due to size or relative geographic isolation (Prezza, Amici, Roberti, & Tedeschi, 2001).

Reflections on Rural Community

> *"For every folktale that celebrates the virtues of small-town American life, there is another story reminding us of its small-mindedness and pressures to conform…The place that bestows the closeness of nurturing life can also smother and confine"* (Lane, 2001, p. 223).

Epp and Whitson (2001) state that to do justice to rural communities, "it is necessary, at the outset, to dispel the inevitable and patronizing description of them... as 'tight-knit', as if social relations in them were relatively uncomplicated" (p. XXVII). Having been raised in rural Alberta, I have subtle hunches about the social fabric of rural communities, corroborated by Lai (2006) and Harder (2001), including ideas about the heightened visibility of individuals, the greater relative importance of reputation, and the ease with which reputations can become entrenched. Harder states that "[in] a small community one cannot escape the opinions of one's neighbours. Although transportation and communication improvements have given rural folks greater opportunity to choose with whom they will associate than in the past, the local community still provides the essential context for their lives" (p. 233).

Lindemann Nelson (1995) implies in her writing, that it would be difficult to create a *chosen* community (defined later in the section on "Challenges to Western Human Communities in Transition") in a rural setting. I presume she meant, without stating it directly, that the numbers and variety of people in rural settings are limited, and contacts with others are constrained by distance. My own experiences living in rural communities affirm this statement. With fewer people on the landscape, there is less likelihood of finding others with whom I feel a meaningful affiliation. This fuels my interest in how immigrants from very different settings can enter into a rural area with all these characteristic limitations and still find meaningful community? How can we find an acceptable *sense of place* in a setting where we are not likely to find many people with values comfortably similar to our own? Can the inhabitants of "limited" rural settings, both original and migrant, learn to be open enough and trustworthy enough to allow for meaningful bonds of relationship and community that transcend culture, and ways of thinking and being and relating in the world? Can they/ we transcend the stigma of stereotypes and entrenched reputations, allowing all community members to be fully ourselves?

Conversely, residents of rural areas, depending on the industrial make-up of their setting, tend to have greater access to natural spaces than residents of more densely populated urban centres. Does this greater potential for connection with nature impact people's experience of place?

Foreground: Alberta

A discussion of the history and experiences of newcomers to this province must begin by acknowledging the experiences of those who populated this territory long before the immigration trends of the modern era.

Displacement of Aboriginal Livelihoods and Values

Oral indigenous traditions claim the plains of North America as ancestral territory from the beginning of time (McMillan & Yellowhorn, 2004). According to McMillan & Yellowhorn (2004), Peck & Vickers (2006), and Ward (1995), indigenous history on the plains irrefutably dates to at least the last Ice Age, or about thirteen thousand years. Aboriginal peoples of the prairie region of Canada had and have an intimate, ancient, and evolving knowledge of the terrain, plants, and animals that make up the biosphere on which their livelihood depended. Belief systems of different First Nations peoples seem to point historically, and in the present day, to recognition of the kinship of all things, animate and inanimate, in a complex web of relationships (Stiffarm, 1998; Ward, 2004).

European traders and settlers physically and culturally dislocated indigenous populations when they began migrating to North America in the 1600s. These new trade activities created cultural exchange and a mutual economic dependency. The success of early European settlements, especially in the harsh winter climates, depended on collaboration with Aboriginal groups and their willingness to share survival knowledge (Friesen, 1984; Saul, 2008; Ward, 1995). Many First Nations communities on the prairies, especially some venturesome groups known to the colonizers as “Cree” (“Nehiyawak” in the native Algonquian

tongue [Ward, 1995]), became dependent on trade with the Hudson's Bay Company, and later, as their hunting role lost its viability, found themselves without economic options in the face of encroaching European habitation and loss of wildlife. Sixty million buffalo that had been critical to earlier plains livelihood dwindled to almost non-existence. The incursion of alcohol, smallpox and other "old world" diseases added to the devastation of First Nations communities, and undermined the faith of indigenous people in their own societal knowledge and means of coping with brutal new realities (Dempsey, 2006; Friesen, 1984; McMillan & Yellowhorn, 2004; Palmer & Palmer, 1985; Ward, 1995).

First Nations leaders on the prairies attempted to secure a livelihood base for their peoples in the negotiation of treaties with the Canadian federal government. It seems that First Nations signatories entered into the treaties in good faith and honour, expecting the same in return (Carter & Hildebrandt, 2006; Palmer & Palmer, 1985; Waiser, 2006). Instead, treaties created land "reserved for Indians", but in an imbalanced power arrangement where this land was essentially owned by the Crown, or federal government. Indigenous peoples were made wards of the federal government, and for decades needed passes in order to leave the reserves (McMillan & Yellowhorn, 2004). The reserves created enclaves of federal jurisdiction in the middle of what became provincial territories.

The territory now known as Alberta was covered mostly by Treaties 6, 7, and 8, negotiated between 1876 and 1898. Leaders of Treaty 6, which covers the central territory of the current province of Alberta and lands extending east (through Saskatchewan), were intent on negotiating contiguous reserves so that their peoples

could at least maintain corridors of connection with each other and with remaining wildlife. They were unsuccessful in this attempt, and accepted restrictive treaty conditions reluctantly, seeing them as "a guarantee of perpetual poverty and the loss of the Cree way of life" (Ward, 1995, p. 67). Leaders of Treaty 6 found that other provisions of the treaty were violated, unfulfilled, or unjust. They sought to create a common front between their geographically dispersed groups, and renegotiate the treaty. They even had cause to hope for the support of European settlers who were disgruntled by the arrogant dismissal of western Canadian concerns by politicians and bureaucrats in Ottawa. However, discontent among members of two of the prairie bands led to violence against white settlers at Frog Lake (Alberta) and Battleford (Saskatchewan) in 1885. These events led to trials in which the Aboriginal leaders were held responsible, imprisoned, and further disempowered in the pursuit of their goals.

For the better part of the twentieth century, the Canadian federal government systematically prevented First Nations people from maintaining traditional livelihoods, and vigorously enacted assimilation policies intended to instil European values, such as private ownership and money management (Burton & Point, 2006; Friesen, 1984; Ward, 1995). Aboriginal ways were systemically discounted (Stiffarm, 1998). Settler accounts of contact with Aboriginal communities demonstrate cultural misinterpretations and value judgments regarding concepts such as "responsibility", "industriousness", or "payment" (Jackson, 2006; Palmer & Palmer, 1985; Shedden, 2002; Ward, 1995).

The reserves were created by the federal government with the intention that First Nations peoples turn from hunting to farming. However,

> [c]ommunal farming and the pooling of resources by Indian bands smacked of tribalism, and was officially discouraged. Successful Indian farmers, on the other hand, were encouraged, and sometimes forced, to 'enfranchise' themselves- i.e., take private ownership of their property and surrender their status as Indians in exchange for obtaining the status of citizens. (Ward, 1995, p. 71)

As in other parts of the world (McMillen, 1995), indigenous peoples in Canada were pushed increasingly "out of place". Aboriginal members of Canadian society tend to find themselves "unenthusiastic citizens of a nation that was created at their expense" (McMillan & Yellowhorn, 2004, p. 318). The political creation of Canada very much follows the template of "white settler society" as described by Razack (2002), wherein Europeans dispossess original inhabitants and create legal and social structures to their own benefit.

Reserves on Alberta's rural landscape remain distinctly separated from other rural communities.

<u>European Migrant Experiences in the Twentieth Century</u>

A variety of research texts and community narratives have explored the social history of the white race in this province since the beginning of European immigration (Friesen, 1984; Jackson, 2006; Jacques, 2001; Langford, 1994; MacEwan, 2004; McMillan & Yellowhorn, 2004; Palmer and Palmer, 1985; Potrebenko, 1977; Ranghild Merriken, 1999; Rennie, 2000; Shedden, 2002; Turner,

1984). The landscape of what we now call Alberta held enormous promise and potential for those Europeans who sought to create a new life on what they perceived as virgin soil. Ethno-cultural centrism inclined the rapidly expanding white society to largely discount the relevance and experiences of Aboriginal groups, whom they perceived as inferior (McMillan & Yellowhorn, 2004; Stiffarm, 1998; Ward, 1995). Yet many held ideals of co-operation in conjunction with an entrepreneurial work ethic, and sought a fresh start filled with dreams of independence, land ownership, freedom from old conventions, and bourgeoning beliefs in science and reason (Friesen, 1984; Rennie, 2000). Historical accounts narrate how realities beyond the imaginings of these newcomers challenged their hopes and dreams.

Lured by immigration propaganda and free homesteads, settlers on the Canadian prairies faced unexpectedly harsh climate, soil, and economic conditions. Lack of transportation infrastructure and long distances contributed to loneliness, endless work, and bleak prospects (Jackson, 2006; Langford, 1994; Potrebenko, 1977; Ranghild Merriken, 1999). The majority of settlers in the first half of the twentieth century farmed. They shouldered the brunt of transportation costs for their products in a national context that viewed the west as an agricultural hinterland (Epp & Whitson, 2001; Jacques, 2001; Rennie, 2000; Shedden, 2002; Turner, 1984). An increasingly global system of agricultural supply and demand led to vastly fluctuating commodity prices. Conditions such as these profoundly impacted the livelihoods of farmers and inspired the formation of the United Farmers of Alberta (UFA), which governed Alberta from 1921-1935. Like other similar farm

organizations of its time, its members attempted to build strength through co-operation, and to exert some influence over the powerful forces that held control over their lives and well-being.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, economic prospects in Alberta improved considerably. This coincided with the growth of the oil industry and a trend toward urbanization (Jacques, 2001; Rennie, 2000). Over the last sixty years, urban centres have come to dominate the landscape. The social fabric of non-Aboriginal rural Alberta communities remains rooted in predominantly mixed European white agricultural settler history, where out-migration has generally overtaken in-migration in recent decades. Current literature refers to the lingering tensions between rural and urban needs in a province where a declining percentage of the population relies on agriculture directly for livelihood (Epp & Whitson, 2001; Stenson, 2008).

According to Epp and Whitson (2001), with the decline of the number of Alberta families directly involved in agriculture, two new purposes have evolved for rural areas, depending on their natural amenities. Some rural areas have become "playgrounds" for vacationers or retirees, and other have become "dumping grounds", destined for massive resource development, low wage industry, or intensive livestock production (p. XV). The town of Brooks is an example of a low-wage boom town where an American packing plant employs large numbers of new immigrants and refugees. An underlying argument of Epp and Whitson's book is that the people and places of the rural Canadian west are being exploited and used by a "nomad capitalism", whereby absentee corporate owners extract wealth for

absentee shareholders, as if communities don't matter, and then move on (p. XXXIII). They write of economic globalization creating an abstract economy not connected to the place, the community, nor the people who want to live there. This economy places profits ahead of the public good, and is evidenced by the oil and gas and tar sands extraction industries as well. Even within the agricultural sector, Stirling (2001) writes of how chemical and bio-engineered inputs, and loan and contract management with large corporate firms comprise the new logic of farming. He discusses how current day skilled farmers rely more on non-farm inputs than on knowledge of the land and its particular characteristics.

The demographic and economic landscape of rural Alberta has shifted drastically over the course of the twentieth century. Twenty first century immigrants to rural Alberta are moving into a dynamic and unsettled context of complex social, environmental, and economic factors. According to Wiebe (2001), "…rural people are on the front lines of the radically changing relationship between humans and their natural environment" (p. 325).

Responses to Increasingly Diverse Immigration in the Rural West

In the early twentieth century, immigration to the Canadian west was dominated by British and French colonists, followed by migrants from other western European, and later eastern European countries. In 1961, Canada abandoned its long tradition of recruiting immigrants exclusively from "preferred" European source countries, and statistics immediately began to show the rise in numbers of immigrants from Asia, the Indian sub-continent, Central and South America, Africa, and the Middle East (Mulder & Korenic, 2005).

Accounts by MacEwan (MacEwan, 2004; Shedden, 2002), among others, attest to the begrudging, at best, attitudes of increasingly established Alberta settlers toward homesteaders, immigrants, and foreign workers of non-Anglo Saxon origins over the course of the twentieth century. However, it is interesting to note that MacEwan's (1960) biography of John Ware indicates greater racial tolerance among Alberta farm dwellers during the early part of the century, than among the urban residents of Calgary.

Palmer (1982) states that the social acceptance of non-Anglo Saxons in Alberta was greater in rural areas and agricultural small towns than it was in cities and mining camps. He attributes this to multiple factors: informal relationships; a code of neighborliness; less status differentiation; no fixed social arrangements; minimal job competition; economic difficulties that prompted co-operation; and occupational solidarity within farm organizations. He notes that hostilities remained greater towards block settlements of perceived inassimilable groups such as the Doukhobors, Hutterites, Mennonites, and Ukrainians.

Friesen (2005) contends that boundaries between established residents and new arrivals have softened on the Canadian prairies over the decades. He makes the point that the perceived gulf of difference between British settlers and the immigrants from southern and eastern Europe a century ago are comparable to the differences that current long-settled prairie residents feel toward newcomers from further away continents today. Palmer (1982) and Friesen (2005) suggest that the intervening decades, particularly the 1940s through the 1960s, saw a radical "surge of egalitarian idealism" (Friesen, 2005, p.5), largely as a result of the public's

response to the Holocaust. Friesen states that other phenomena, such as revolutions in communications and transportation, coincided to improve the level of tolerance of prairie dwellers. In addition, he suggests that the mixing of people in businesses, schools, and social activities has led to local institutions that have become pre-disposed to integrating diversity. Whether or not this optimistic appraisal of current prairie society translates into rural communities that are effectively integrating their newly arrived members is open to debate.

Gibbins (2003) states that "…rural residents in the West are the most wary of immigration" (p.144). Interestingly, the 2001 Canada West survey on which Gibbins bases this statement, shows a difference of less than 10% in the responses of rural and major urban centre respondents to the question of whether Canada should accept fewer immigrants (38.2% and 29.5%, respectively) - a small but statistically significant difference. A more recent survey published in the Globe and Mail (Laghi, 2008) stated that 65 percent of Canadians living in cities of over a million agree that accepting immigrants of diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds enriches the Canadian identity, compared to only 53 percent of Canadians living in cities of under 30,000.

In a study of non-white immigrant residents of rural Alberta, Lai (2006) asks the question, "What are the lived experiences of racial minorities in small towns and rural settings?" He is finding that these immigrants are facing glass ceilings in their rural Alberta work environments. The participants in his study speak of their greater visibility in the rural communities, the sense that everybody knows them, that many make assumptions about them, and that they therefore experience a sense

of vulnerability. They speak of their lack of connection to a cultural community and to community in general. The respondents are, however, very diplomatic in their discussion of the racism that they experience, excusing other community members for not being "used to" differences.

Based on a Statistics Canada study, Keung (2008) reports that it is easier for immigrants to settle in small towns, saying "[It's] easier to build connections in a smaller city, and the cost of living is lower" (Toronto Star article). Sherrell, Hyndman, and Preniqi (2005), however, question the level of openness in smaller centres to newcomers from other countries, and find no support for the idea that in small communities, immigrants are able to integrate more rapidly. Their study found that Kosovar refugees to smaller B.C. communities formed friendships almost exclusively with other Kosovars or other immigrants. Only the community members directly involved in the refugee sponsorship endeavor were also counted as friends by the immigrants at the time of the study.

By recording and reflecting on the shared narratives of a diverse group of recent immigrants to an Alberta town, this research should shed further light on the question of what kind of response to diversity exists in rural settings.

Characteristics of Immigrants to Alberta in the Early Twenty First Century

Statistical knowledge of current rural immigrants in Alberta needs largely to be extracted from studies that look at the whole country. As stated by Sorensen (2007), "Our current knowledge of the characteristics of rural immigrants….is very thin, both with respect to the Prairies and the nation" (p.121). According to 2006 Census results, populations in rural and small towns in Canada grew by only 1%

between 2001 and 2006 (well below the national average of 5.4%). Rural and small town populations accounted for 20.5% of the total population in 2001, down from 29.7% in 1971 (Sorenson, 2007). Current immigrants, like other Canadian residents, gravitate toward urban centres rather than rural areas, and even those who locate initially in rural areas tend to drift to urban areas within a few years (Reimer, 2007a).

Studies by Rossiter (2007) and Edna Sutherland and Associates (2007) point specifically to the challenges of social integration faced by immigrants to rural Alberta areas. They note the lack of language, upgrading, and further education opportunities, employment opportunities, and access to settlement information and services.

In 2001, only 6% of rural Canadian residents had been born outside of Canada, and most of these had arrived before 1981. In urban Canada in 2001, 28% of the population had been born outside of Canada, and most had arrived since 1981. Only 3% of visible minority immigrants who arrived in the 1996 to 2001 period chose to live in a rural region. A larger share of recent rural immigrants was still coming from traditional source countries – the United States and the United Kingdom. In 2001, only 1% of Canada's predominantly rural population was composed of people of a visible minority born outside of Canada (Bollman, Beshiri, & Clemenson, 2007).

A study entitled "Immigrants in the Hinterlands", based on a Statistics Canada review of income tax returns from 1982-2005, shows that newcomers who settle in towns earn more than immigrants to big cities (Keung, 2008). At closer

examination, 75% of those immigrants to smaller cities are fluent in an official language, compared with 61.5% of immigrants to large cities. In addition, 61% of the small-town immigrants were from Europe and the United States, while those source regions represented only 24% of big city newcomers. Recently arrived rural immigrants are more likely to work in farming, mining, gas and oil, or lumbering than those who arrived prior to 1981 (Bollman, Beshiri, & Clemenson, 2007). They are also more likely to work in the lower paying service and sales occupations (Sorensen, 2007).

Proportionately more immigrants in the mid-sized urban centres of the prairies reported levels of education below a high school diploma in 1996, compared to those in larger centres. Immigrants over the age of 65 years also make up a larger proportion of the population in the prairie region compared to the national average. In 1996, 43% of the European immigrants on the prairies were not working, because most of them had arrived shortly after World War II and had retired (Lambda, Mulder, & Wilkinson, 2000).

Of all Canadian provinces, Alberta receives the largest share of rural immigrants. In 2002, this province received 25.5% of all of Canada's rural immigrants, or 3,119 persons. This number made up almost 19% of the total number of immigrants to Alberta that year (16,568). These numbers are accounted for mainly by the beef slaughtering and processing industry of rural areas, and by oil sands development (Sorensen, 2007). In the town of Brooks alone, where a Lakeside Packers meat processing plant has attracted new immigrant workers largely from regions of Africa, such as Sudan and Somalia, 40% of the population

of about 12,000 is made up of recently arrived immigrants (Mulder & Korenic, 2005). Alberta also receives more than the average number of family class immigrants (31.5% compared to 26.4% nationally); however we do not know the percentage breakdown of the different immigration classes (economic, family, and refugee) for rural immigrants to Alberta (Sorensen, 2007). We do know that mid sized urban centres receive proportionately more refugees than major metropolitan centres, though often refugees do not stay in smaller communities due to lack of available services (Lambda, Mulder, & Wilkinson, 2000).

Lambda, Mulder, and Wilkinson's (2000) statistical compilation for 1996 shows that while immigrant men and women in Saskatchewan and Manitoba had annual total incomes similar to or higher than their Canadian born counterparts, immigrant men and women in Alberta earned less than the Canadian born. Reasons for this are speculative, and relate back to the nature of workforce activity in the different prairie provinces.

Immigrants to rural Alberta are coming from a broader range of ethnic backgrounds than they did during the last century, however, the range of backgrounds lags significantly behind that of urban centres. Current rural immigrants, especially in Alberta, are more likely to be drawn to lower paying jobs in the resource sector than to professional positions.

Shifting Landscapes

Global Realities of Migration

> *"By examining the way [people] have coped with discontinuities in their lives, we may discover important clues that will help us all… cope with our unfolding lives"* (Bateson, 2001, pp. 13-14).

Migration is an increasingly common phenomenon of our human experience in a globalizing era. The global rise in numbers of migrants proportionally exceeds global population growth (International Migration Policy Program, 2001). More migrants are moving further away from their home territories as they pursue economic opportunities in a world of multi-national corporate activity. Whole groups of people from one region sometimes agglomerate in another region of the world to seek livelihood, thus giving rise to more diasporic communities (Bonifacio, 2007; Mulder & Korenic, 2005; Sorensen, 2007). Remittances of earnings back to family members in the original region have reached unprecedented levels, and are being recognized as a significant factor in the global movement of financial resources (United Nations-INSTRAW, 2006). More than at any point in recorded history, human beings can maintain communities of practise, of interest, or of relationship that rely on recent communication or transportation technologies. While in the past, the concept of community was necessarily defined by geographic parameters, in today's world that definition has expanded in some contexts to include virtual, or technology reliant spaces.

In an attempt to facilitate quicker movement of workers to meet economic demand, jurisdictions such as Canadian provinces have promoted temporary foreign

worker programs, which sometimes offer a fast track to immigration. In Alberta, this newly named Alberta Immigrant Nominee Program is rapidly growing, and has been expanded to allow not only employers, but also family members to bring in new workers.

In addition, the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR, 2007) indicates that numbers of persons internally displaced within their original countries, and refugees living in short and long term "temporary" conditions outside of their home countries, as a result of civil war, armed conflict, or natural disasters, have reached unprecedented numbers. The efforts of UNHCR globally, with the partnership of multiple countries including Canada, constantly look to find durable resettlement solutions for refugees who cannot return to their country of origin.

Economic migrants, temporary foreign workers, and refugees may have very little direct opportunity to "choose" the geographic community to which they come (Sorensen, 2007). Those who find themselves in rural Alberta may or may not have wanted the increased isolation due to fewer transportation options in a rural area. They may or may not appreciate the lower population density and/or greater access to natural spaces relative to urban settings. In this study, we will hear from migrants impelled by a variety of factors, and how they are responding to the new circumstances of their lives.

Challenges to Community Brought on by Migration

Putnam (2002), a key author in Community Development literature, specifically refers to high rates of immigration and ethnic heterogeneity as a

significant challenge to both the quantity and distribution of social capital in all Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries, of which Canada is a member. "Social capital" defies brief definition; however, it is a concept that essentially acknowledges the tangible value of social networks. Diversity and immigration challenge social networks.

Ghosh and Abdi (2004) point to the inevitability of dealing with difference in a "perceptibly shrinking world" (p. 155). They argue that both the host communities and immigrants have a responsibility to deal with differences. They say that immigrants "must be given the space to express themselves", and they must "prepare themselves to do their part in constructively explaining their experiences and traditional worldviews to the new spaces where they intend to reside in *[sic]* and establish new lives" (p. 156). Ghosh and Abdi speak to the need to revitalize the language of civic education, in the face of increased diversity.

Tensions of Searching for a Better Place

The act of migrating signals a hope or expectation that life will somehow be better in a new place, away from the original home. The degree of pull and push between the attraction of a perceived new landscape, and the intensity of a need to leave the old, vary from story to story, but leaving the homeland constitutes a loss in the midst of hopes for the future. In readings where authors write of personal aspirations, I see evidence of tension between the desire for an improved condition, and a loyalty to a previous state of being (Greene, 1995). Brookfield (2006) relates the experience of many students from the working-class, or from non white racial

groups in America, who say they feel they are betraying the culture that sustained them as children, by "selling out" and aspiring to a "better" position in life.

Fantino's (1982) study elucidates the internal experiences of interviewed immigrants, and draws on early migration theory. Fantino looks at the adaptation experiences of twenty five Chilean and Argentinean immigrants (of very specific historical crises and contexts) in making the best of their new lives in urban Alberta. She looks at how these immigrants have had to address different roles, value systems, and opportunities in the host society. She looks at their experiences of confusion and alienation, and the process of learning and internalizing new patterns of behavior. Her study identifies conflicts between attitudes and beliefs of the host and newcomer societies, and how the newcomers needed to find a way to negotiate those differences.

Fantino (1982) proposes a four stage model of cultural adaptation to capture the peaks and valleys of the first five years of immigration experienced by her study participants: 1) arrival and culture shock; 2) honeymoon; 3) conflicts and identity crisis; 4) adaptive strategies. Within this model, she writes of the difficulties and conflicts that arise for people because of language and modes of non-verbal expression; because of the values regarding family, gender, education, work, social relationships, and leisure; and because of structural marginality and overt or covert discrimination in the new society. In discussion of the differences in experience between refugees and immigrants, Fantino notes that "the distinction between voluntary and involuntary migration is not easily and clearly defined, and it seems to be more a matter of degree than of radical distinctions" (p. 42). She refers to

some different patterns of response depending on gender or education level of the individuals; on whether they take on the family role of 'keeper of the past' or 'leader of change' (p.54); and on whether they operate more from their cognitive or affective traits. She notes the significant influence of the very common experience of downward social mobility, and that of family discord arising from the stresses of adaptation. She writes at length of the identity crises that come from the loss of a referential framework, new frameworks that seem meaningless, and the lack of social and institutional support for newcomer experiences. Fantino uses a study by Berry, from 1980, which indicates the various possible modes of adaptation used by immigrants in dealing with the challenges of their new surroundings; namely movements with or toward the new society (adjustment), against the new society (reaction), or away from the new society (withdrawal).

All of these concepts provide a helpful overview of the many factors that influence the experiences of immigrants, and can be seen to impact sense of place. One of Fantino's (1982) aims is to contribute to "the improvement of social coexistence in cultural diversity" (p. 6). In this regard there is overlap between the aims and qualitative content of her study and what I hope to achieve with mine. This current study builds on the understandings elucidated by Fantino, to look more specifically at the challenges in a contemporary rural community. This study also tentatively proposes the talking circle as one relevant discourse process in the search for better intercultural understanding, and development of sense of place.

Insights into Cultural Adaptation and Power Relations

> *"…the mind that has conceived a plan of living must never lose sight of the chaos against which that pattern was conceived"*
>
> (Ellison, as quoted by Greene, 1995, p. 82).

In adapting to a new culture, different authors refer to an experience of developing a new consciousness, and a value system that can deal with ambiguity and relativity (Bennett, 1998; Lugones, 1992, 1997; Orbe, 1998; Scollon & Wong Scollon, 2001). The newcomer to a culture, or the person from a background that is less dominant in the immediate context, needs to call on a broader base of understandings, resiliency, and skill to engage with members of the dominant group (Bhabha, 1994; Giroux & Giroux, 2000). As a result, they/ we may learn to respond to new situations from a borderland place of conscious hybrid identity (Lugones, 1997). As such, although members of the dominant group usually hold more inherent power in social relationships, newcomers or members of non-dominant groups can be perceived as acting from a position of greater internal strength and knowledge than those whose responses and reactions are more contained within the dominant norms.

Lugones' (1997) description of someone inhabiting different "worlds" simultaneously implies that one can find a "sense of place" even within the contradiction of feeling "out of place" (my terms). Lugones' conclusion that lack of "playfulness" in any "world" equates with lack of health in that world, is an intriguing point worth pondering. For members of a community who are well

entrenched and comfortable in a particular cultural world, it can be easy to judge those less at ease in that world as too serious or maladaptive.

We need to develop compassion in understanding the complex value adjustments that are required to make a shift to a new cultural landscape. As members of the established landscapes, we need to develop our consciousness of our own perspectives, our intercultural awareness, our willingness to modify our understandings or expectations, and our skills at suspending reactive judgments (Stella Ting Toomey, personal communication, offered at a seminar given at the University of Alberta in May 2004). This requires courage, and the ability to address perceived tensions with patience, care, and sensitivity, rather than ignore them, or try to argue or explain them away.

In considering the experiences of minority status groups in majority situations (Shipler, 1995 as one example), I propose that communities must learn to nurture mutually respectful and equitable social relations. Otherwise, members of marginalized groups will probably always have the need to find strength and safety in segregation.

Tentative Social Responses to Cross Cultural Challenges

Communicative Democracy and Cultural Negotiation

Young (2000) provides a convincing description of social structures as relationships and processes. She sees the "public" as a plurality rather than a unity, and advises against premature appeals to the "common good" that may try to smooth over divisive issues. She describes the value of paying attention to and learning from the situated knowledge of different groups in a society in order to

better understand the whole. She, like many others, advocates for the use of narrative, and open listening in learning from the experiences of particular social groups. Young signals the need to create a communicative democracy, where decision making is more complex and difficult than in a deliberative, or argumentative, democracy. This approach is more open to diverse cultural expectations of conduct (that vary from the 'rational' or 'linear' norm in the west), and is thereby more apt to address structural inequities.

Fettes (1999) proposes that community consists of "a dynamic cyclical relationship between the stories people tell about themselves and the ways they relate to one another and to their environment" (p. 32). He puts forth an "ecological theory of community" (p. 33), drawing on indigenous concepts of community and indigenous experiences of adaptation to imposed European cultures, from the work of Eber Hampton (1995) and Arlene Stairs (1980). These ideas of Young (2000) and Fettes (1999) inform the approach that I have chosen to take with this thesis.

Arlene Stairs, Canadian ethnographer, offers a model of "cultural negotiation" (described by Fettes, 1999, pp. 34-38). Fettes interprets this process as one in which we relate our setting, intentions, and actions through our narratives, and then, through a discursive cycle, use the narratives of others to reflect upon and modify our own goals and actions. In this way, Stairs, speaking from the context of indigenous cultural negotiation, is optimistic about "the potential for evolving cultural identities as a rich range of alternatives to assimilation and cultural loss…" (Stairs, as cited by Fettes, p. 35). From the perspective of newcomers into established communities, who face a similar potential for assimilation and cultural

loss, this rich range of alternatives can perhaps also be created if we take the time to participate in discursive cycles. There is opportunity for a negotiated experience wherein all participants learn and evolve.

Stairs further elaborates on three dimensions of cultural negotiation: context, process, and levels. She describes the levels of cultural negotiation as progressing in meaning, from language and content, through environmental and social relationships, to changes in values and worldview (Stairs, as described by Fettes, 1999). This progression of meaning may prove useful as a conceptual framework for understanding the narratives expressed by immigrants in rural communities. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to fully adapt and use Stairs' model with its intended application to a more complete learning process. Rather, this thesis attempts to implement one step in a discursive cycle: narrative research in a series of talking circles, followed by reflection, in the hopes that this may inform a richer range of possibilities for cultural negotiation.

Lave and Wenger (1993) use very academic language to describe similar concepts and developmental cycles by which newcomers negotiate meaning through initial peripheral participation in their new communities. Indeed, Lave and Wenger's theory of social practice seems to point to the inevitability that newcomers will have an effect on processes of reproduction, transformation, and/ or change. Factors such as the level of participation, and the motivation of newcomers to become full participants in the communities, affect the degree of social reproduction, and the corresponding degree of change or transformation that occurs.

Berry's (1994) quadrants of assimilation/ integration/ marginalization/ separation overlap with this theory. According to Berry, the importance that newcomers place on their original culture, relative to the importance they place on their new culture largely influences their intercultural experience. A favoring of the original culture tends toward separation, while a favoring of the new culture leads to assimilation. A low degree of importance placed on both tends toward marginalization, while high value placed on both is likely to lead to a more balanced experience of integration.

Lave and Wenger (1993) and Berry (1994) seem to largely disregard the role of established community members in the immigration experiences of newcomers. Following the models of Young (2000), Fettes (1999), and Stairs (1980), I propose that the level of motivation and participation of established community members in cycles of discourse with newer or "marginal" members, also has a profound effect on the degree to which communities reproduce themselves, or consciously change and transform themselves.

Impact of Language on Discourse

I will use the work of Cummins (1997), Orbe (1998), and Scollon and Wong Scollon (2001) to briefly look at issues inherent in language and culture.

In proposing a process of discourse with participants of differing language and cultural groups, the problems inherent in the use of language need to be addressed. Of primary importance is the need to recognize that language is not a neutral tool (Cummins, 1997). More specifically, the interlocutors of the majority language that is being used as the vehicle of communication, need to be aware that

the language reflects the cultural ideology, power relations, and assumptions of that language group. In using one language rather than another to communicate, a power differential is created. Not only do the native speakers of the language in use usually have a greater mastery of the language, but the power relationships and world view embedded within that language's structure are given a favored position during the discourse (Orbe, 1998). This power differential can be mitigated when the participants are aware of linguistic diversity and related societal power structures, honor this diversity, and do not see the power structures as "fixed" (Cummins, 1997, p.6).

A broader analysis of power relations can also demonstrate that interlocutors with conscious access to more than one language system of thought actually have a stronger power base in understanding the nuances of the discourse, and a broader perspective on the society of the majority language group. I believe this concept, when construed even unconsciously as a "threat" by those who understand only the majority language, can explain some of the unspoken fear that underlies a "host" community preference for the linguistic and cultural assimilation of newcomers. Schlesinger (as quoted by Cummins, 1997) for example, warns about dangers of bilingual education. This psychology of fear at least partially explains the resistance to change on the part of host communities.

In a very comprehensive introduction to intercultural communication, Scollon and Wong Scollon (2001) describe facets of mostly western individualist value systems. They explain the rise of the mainstream utilitarian discourse system in the west, which favors deductive reasoning and rhetoric over inductive

reasoning, and utilitarian purposes over purposes of maintaining relationships. This analysis provides insight into the prevailing worldview of the dominant western discourse system – one to which newcomers to this continent need to adapt in order to function in the new language, culture, and economy.

Scollon and Wong Scollon (2001) also elucidate the limits and ambiguous nature of language, its many contextual components, and elements such as register, face, differing concepts of identity, and problems of interpretation, inference, and coherence. In working with participants of various linguistic backgrounds, I am aware of the need to maintain at least a general awareness of all of these aspects of language use, power differentials, implied world views, and their potential influences on the research findings. Mawhinney (2004) provides a good summary of the fact that this awareness is increasingly necessary for competent participation in all levels of daily discourse in a diverse society. She proposes that aspiring educational leaders especially need to develop a greater understanding of discursive practices in order to create "new modes of effective communication with diverse communities and multiple publics that mediate ideas and interests…" (p. 215).

Discourse Processes in Community Development and Democracy

Examples of activities that work to build or revitalize community through authentic engagement include the longitudinal study by Banks & Mangan (1999) in the small Ontario community of Hespeler, where community members reformulated their own networks of mutual support. White (2002) gives many British examples of attempts to revitalize poorer neighborhoods (although at closer examination, some of these examples may describe externally imposed processes). Other authors

explore the possibilities and power of written discourse and exchange, in order to effect community change (Benson & Christian, 2002).

This theme overlaps with discussions in Educational literature regarding the need to develop greater levels of civic engagement, and skills for democracy (Apple, 2004; Ghosh & Abdi, 2004; Giroux, 2003; Mawhinney, 2004). Epp (2001) also puts out a call to reclaim the skills of participatory politics at a local community level. He quotes Chistopher Lasch to reiterate that self governing communities, not individuals, need to form the basic units of democratic society, and further, that the decline of meaningful local authority, more than anything else, puts the future of democracy in question.

The Importance of Place

Community and Place

> *If we speak of a… community, we cannot be speaking of a community that is merely human. We are talking about a neighborhood of humans in a place, plus the place itself: its soil, its water, its air, and all the families and tribes of the nonhuman creatures that belong to it. If… its entire membership, natural and human,… and if the human economy is in practical harmony with the nature of the place, then the community is healthy.* (Wendell Berry, quoted in Lane, 2001, p. 213)

Scholars of various indigenous and immigrant populations point to the centrality of place in human experience and culture (Asante & Abarry, 1996; Booth, 1999; Cajete, 1994; Chávez & Guido-DiBrito, 1999; Curwen Doige, 2003; Dei, 2002; Eyo, 1991; Durrell, Gasset, Keen, Marcel, Tournier, Tuan, Weil, and Wright,

as discussed by Lane, 2001; Martin, 2001; Somé, 1994; Wilson, 2004). Kerby (1991) evokes an earthy image of "sedimented values, beliefs, and attitudes… accounted for by similar environmental conditions and prevailing cultural traditions" (p. 20). Marmon Silko (1996) writes of how, for the Pueblo people, the land and the stories of the people are inseparable. The land provides the continuity in the history of their lives.

The lives of more recently arrived generations of humans in North America have been characterized by mobility and transience (Lane, 2001; Scollon & Wong Scollon, 2001). Having migrated from other parts of the world, familial, cultural, and economic roots with place were severed. The "frontier" mentality of immigrants to the continent is arguably at the heart of the culture of individualism for which North America is now known. First Nations' knowledge and relationship to this land have been drastically disrupted by the encroachment of colonizers.

Within the last century, rural North Americans have been losing our agricultural livelihoods in the face of encroaching urban areas and corporate production. In the relatively short history of rural settlement in western Canada, farm families have built generational ties with the land, which they are now losing. Harder (2001) quotes farmers who are facing foreclosure or bankruptcy: "We have the roots of the land in us. Whether you are forced off the land, or choose to leave, it's like something that is planted deep in you is just being ripped out" (p. 224). His interviews with farmers who were economically solvent also revealed a growing sense of disconnection from the land, and from their life purpose.

Among twentieth century philosophers, Martin Heidegger writes persuasively of the rampant estrangement from place that is prevalent in contemporary western culture (Lane, 2001). Richard Louv (2005) writes of the disconcerting lack of connection to the natural world experienced by children of recent generations in the west. He warns of the vital need to turn this trend around.

According to Wiebe (2001), "…rural people are on the front lines of the radically changing relationship between humans and their natural environment" (p. 325) and "[t]he wisdom garnered from the experiences of living appropriately (or minimally knowing how to survive) in a place…. may be key to the long term sustainability of human society" (p.328).

Challenges of Western Human Communities in Transition

Many authors link the rise of western individualism with a decline in community values (Kielburger & Kielburger, 2004; Mansbridge, 1990; Mawhinney, 2004; McKnight, 1995; Putnam, 1996, 2002; Tönnies, as described by Fettes, 1999 and Scollon and Wong Scollon, 2001). Scollon and Wong Scollon (2001) provide an overview of the roots and ideologies of four generations of American individualism. These are contrasted with other cultural systems that conceive of the individual in more collective terms.

Fettes (1999) describes the alienating aspects of western society that arose with the rapid transformation of the European countryside into an agro-industrial factory in the late nineteenth century. He explains Tönnies' analysis of the disproportionate rise of the "rational" will over the "natural" will (Fettes, 1999, p. 29). Scollon & Wong Scollon (2001) also use Tönnies descriptions of this

"Gemeinschaft" and "Gesellschaft" to show the loss of an organic relationship between place, people, and spirit.

As the child of a transient family, Pearce (2005) struggled to come to an understanding of community on a continually shifting landscape. In part, she concluded that "…community is a liminal space filled with relationships that shift and unfold over time and across place… the only way we can understand community is to understand it from the [person's] perspective, the [person's] story within that liminal space" (p.214).

Lindemann Nelson (1995) provides a helpful concept to frame our ideas of community. She describes *found* communities as those agglomerations of people that happen on the landscape with little conscious intention to create connection. This concept is perhaps most apt to describe places of human habitation in western society, where economics and personal aspirations led to arbitrary agglomerations, more than any conscious decision by the humans of that locality to live communally. On the other hand, she draws on Marilyn Friedman's ideas describing our need for communities of *choice*: groupings of people who seek to fashion a life in each other's company, based on shared values and approaches to life. She notes that a community of choice can create spaces where members can examine their involvement in the wider found community.

Given the largely "found" nature of western community agglomerations, I believe we need to increase our capacity to know and respect each other, regardless of how much choice we have had in determining the settings or types of communities in which we find ourselves. In my experience, as communities get to

know each other more closely, vulnerability increases with intimacy. Each member of the community has unique responses to each interaction within the community. The challenge is to have social and discourse processes that help us work through those responses.

Community Development as a Geographic Concern

Prezza et al. (2001) studied "sense of community on a territorial basis" (p. 30) as a subjective indicator of quality of life. According to Moles (as cited by Prezza et al., 2001), "quality of life is the quality of relations between the individual and the environment" (p. 30). Prezza et al. found that neighborhood relations emerged as the strongest predictor of sense of community.

Putnam (1996) describes his findings wherein civic connectedness and a dense fabric of social life lead not only to better local government, but to community economic well being. He discusses the need to build connectedness and trust with more "place-based" (p. 18) interactions in order to re-create genuine bonds of community. In spite of communication and transportation technologies that create possibilities for connections across spatial boundaries, he claims we still need a connection to our geographical place.

Synthesis

Current academic research literature on the topic of immigration is quite limited to statistical analyses and linear studies, with some notable exceptions quoted. There is a need for greater depth of research into qualitative experiences of immigrants generally, and rural immigrants specifically.

The preceding literature review yielded conceptual support for narrative/ discursive engagement with newcomer members of rural communities. The discussion considered the possibility of borrowing a model of cultural negotiation from an indigenous perspective, as a means to mitigate cultural loss and assimilation. It also saw in this model a possible framework for guiding research questions. The review looked at the effects of regional history, global economics, migration, language, and culture on the dynamics of community, especially rural community, and considered the challenges of power relations, dominant discourse systems, and the perceived decline of civic values in western society. It considered *place* as an important element of the human experience.

I now turn to the more specific literature addressing the methodology chosen for this study: the narrative approach, and the talking circle specifically. The discussion will demonstrate further why the narrative approach and a talking circle discourse process are appropriate for the topic of this thesis. The discussion also provides cautionary advice in using this approach and methodology.

Chapter 3: Methodology

For this study, I have chosen to do qualitative, empirical research in a single, small Alberta community. The study uses narrative methodology in order to learn from newcomer experiences. It uses the talking circle format as a discourse process.

Benefits and Challenges of the Narrative Approach

Narrative methodology has been explored and developed by numerous scholars and researchers as an alternative form of qualitative inquiry (see especially Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Clandinin, 2007). Zinsser (1987) states that writing people's unique stories can be a way of recording a more intimate history or insight into a societal place and time. Storytelling can evoke a depth of experience much more memorable than historic or academic points delineated in heady intellectual form (Torgovnick, 1994, as an example). Bateson (1994) suggests a metaphor of bringing attention to specific trees in a forest in order to better understand the forest as a whole. Without attending to what is happening for the individual trees, we will never really know what is going on in the forest. Given that regular Statistics Canada reports and multiple quantitative studies provide a view of the "forest" of immigration, this study seeks to complement that view with a look at current, individual, fairly in-depth rural experiences, shared through a discourse process.

Clandinin and Connelly (1988) emphasize the need for the narrative inquirer to "understand the persons being studied from the perspective of their own situation" (p. 272). The researcher needs to ask "What is the meaning of the event for the actor?" (p.272). Bruner (2004) writes of how a person's personal, familial,

and societal culture influences the way they/ we tell our stories. These considerations especially impact a study with participants who grew up in different parts of the globe. In this study, I listen for (and ask about) agency, intention, actions, and setting in participant stories. How the answers are framed may be unlike what I am expecting to hear, given that aspects of place, language, ways of knowing the world, expectations, and experiences influence how and what is communicated in the stories.

Neumann (1997) writes of "context" or "with text" (p. 108) as that far less visible, unarticulated story that exists "around" the telling of any other story. This untold story can be challenging to discern. It requires attending to what is unacknowledged. Neumann also writes of the possible harm of pursuing untold stories. As researcher, there are ethical considerations that counter-indicate delving too deeply into the unacknowledged. However we can try to remain open to those background threads that almost invisibly carry the mystery of the fabric on which a story is written.

Gergen (2004) discusses how the story is fashioned very much according to the relation between the teller and the audience. This is a reminder of how much different is my own storytelling if I am speaking with someone with whom I perceive I have similar backgrounds and interests, than when I am with someone I perceive to be from a different value background. I can see how very important it is to take time to build relationship with participants in doing narrative inquiry. This also points to the value of sharing my place and story in relation to rural

immigration with participants, as part of the process of asking them to share with me.

Narrative inquiry considers the scholar's autobiography to be a necessary component of the writing practice (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Sarris, 1993). There is growing consensus of the need for research projects, both qualitative and quantitative, to identify and name their research agendas, assumptions, preconceptions, and basis for their logic - the sources of their inherent subjectivity (Clandinin, 2007; Clandinin & Connelly, 1988; Mertens, 2005; Wellington, 2000). By including my background in narrative form as it relates to the research data, I situate myself more clearly in my relative responses and perceptions. The intention is for the reader to have a better sense of my perspective. Neither of us will be able to harbor an illusion of my objectivity. The process also allows me to be more aware of my preconceptions, which are manifestations of my personal history and experiences.

In narrative inquiry, the researcher works hard not to try and "impose" themes or "metathemes" on research data, nor to "extract" them prematurely. I have finally understood that this is because it is far too easy to extract thematic ideas out of context of the temporal, spatial, and relational landscapes of the stories in which they occur (Clandinin, personal communication, March 31, 2008). There may be patterns, resonances, inter-lappings, or over-lappings between stories, but to focus on thematic groupings, we risk de-contextualizing the content, thereby losing the depth and uniqueness of each individual story. Narrative inquiry also strives to

emphasize the elements of story that the participants tell us are important, rather than the aspects that the researcher may want to pull out.

Sarris (1993), among other narrative inquirers, points out the ongoing nature of communication. It is not a question of getting to any fixed place of understanding, or of understanding each other. Rather, through communication we continuously expand our awareness and get to new subtleties of meaning. Josselson (1996) suggests that putting thoughts or stories into written form often gives them an authority or permanence that is not warranted. Writing a research paper or thesis represents a collection of understandings at a fixed spot along an ongoing path of unfolding experiences. The author has a responsibility to affirm to herself and to her audience that this written rendition is but one snapshot in an evolving narrative or conversation.

Kerby (1991) points out the similarities in structure between imagination and memory, specifically as they relate to telling stories. In some respects, all memory now lives in the place of imagination only. When we speak of memories of another place, or a previous homeland that has continued to evolve without us since our absence, that recollected place exists mostly in the imagination. Kerby also brings attention to how the shifting perspectives of time and place affect our interpretations of our recollections and memories. In working with narratives of study participants, I need to remember that the narratives expressed reflect the current understandings and interpretations of the participants regarding their own stories, rather than fixed or objective "truths".

Ely (2007) illuminates the power of using first person voice – both in telling the researcher's story, and in helping the researcher to get her/him/my self "out of the way" in order to re-present the voice of the research participant. To do this authentically, Clandinin recommends using actual first person field data text to convey the voice of the research participant. Otherwise, our attempt to re-create the first person account tells us more about "who we are in the listening" (personal communication, March 6, 2008).

Rationale for Using the Narrative Approach

In many ways, the narrative approach to research (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Clandinin, 2007) resonates with my intention for the process and purpose of my thesis, in that it provides the opportunity to learn how people of varying backgrounds negotiate the landscape and context of their lives. The narrative approach focuses on continuums in the dimensions of time, place, the personal, and the social. As such, it helps me see more clearly that *sense of place* is shifting ground.

Narrative, as an open-ended qualitative research method, allows the flexibility and freedom for the researcher to really listen to the participants, with very little superimposed structure or agenda for the findings. It provides potential to get to the depth of the participant experiences. I find that narrative reflects a more circular, indirect, or inductive way of thinking, being, and relating than what is dominant in the western tradition I grew up with. As a westerner, I am very well trained in task orientation – I like the intellectual challenge of "getting to the point" and using my time effectively from the perspective of my western work culture.

Narrative inquiry challenges me to spend more time deepening connections and relationships with participants in the research. It encourages me to ask the broad questions of "What experiences are people having?" and to listen and learn from the responses without a predetermined agenda.

A relational, narrative approach to research carries potential for depth, and benefits of a different order from those of the linear, direct, deductive, and classifying tradition I am familiar with. There are advantages and drawbacks to each mode. By using a narrative approach with this study, I am seeking to counterbalance the predominantly linear and statistical studies that so far inform most of our knowledge about the realities of immigrant adaptation experiences.

My readings in narrative inquiry reminded me of the enormous significance of allowing for quiet, reflective times and moments in relationship – because often some of the greatest depth of sharing emerges out of these quiet times. The talking circle provides a format where those quiet spaces are integrated into the sharing time in a natural way.

Talking Circle: An Indigenous Process

The circle is a foundational concept of the Aboriginal worldview in North America (Graveline, 1998; Saul, 2008; Stiffarm, 1998). The circle manifests in natural forms, in cycles of the day, of seasons, and of life. It is reflected in Aboriginal teachings of the Medicine Wheel, which emphasize interconnectedness, the role of relationships, and a holistic way of being.

According to Graveline (1998), the circle is a symbol of cohesive community. The cyclical model of the talking circle demonstrates

interconnectedness. It reflects the value of a supportive community environment, and of living together respectfully. Storytelling within a circle promotes sharing and mutuality, and builds the rapport necessary to sustain community. Singular experiences are woven into the larger context of the community through storytelling. The circle builds both individual and community strength. Stories are seen as gifts, and community members feel a desire to hear and share these gifts. Sharing in the circle typically follows a pattern of nature by moving in the same direction as the perceived motion of the sun around the earth (Graveline, 1998).

The talking circle format has been described in academic publications by both Graveline (1998) and Running Wolf & Rickard (2003). While the process is not completely unique to North American Aboriginal cultures (Baldwin, 1998), it has a strong history in those communities. Graveline (1998) is a Métis born and raised in northern Manitoba. She sees the predominance of individualism and markets in western culture as threatening to community, and would like to revitalize an Aboriginal traditional worldview that has the potential to renew social relationships. She sees the talking circle as a gift of Aboriginal culture toward healing the earth and our relationships. Initiating it into the mainstream is a way of promoting listening, and of honouring the wisdom and ways of the ancestors of this land, which have been overrun by colonization.

A significant ethical consideration for my research activity is to establish the authenticity of my intention, as a non Aboriginal person, in using the talking circle. I seek to acknowledge and honor the value of this traditional process by giving it place in an appropriate setting. I see the talking circle as providing a

unique relational approach that is particularly well suited to the sharing of cross cultural realities, where each participant attends to each other's responses and experiences. It is in a spirit of acknowledging the wisdom and value of this approach (rather than of cultural appropriation) that I use it for this research.

Characteristics and Cautions of the Talking Circle

My experience with talking circles is that each person's reflections are deepened and enriched by sharing with others. I thank Claudine Louis, doctoral candidate in Adult Education at the University of Alberta, and Educator Consultant for this research work, for naming the deeper layers of meaning that evolve through a talking circle as a "hermeneutic process" (personal communication, May 1, 2007). The circle also provides a format for maintaining balance while embracing change, learning, or healing (Graveline, 1998). Movement within a circle is at once cyclical and evolutionary, as participants cycle through new levels of meaning and experience.

While this format sounds ideal in its potential for meaningful contact, connection, and community building, Graveline (1998), Martin (2001), and Claudine Louis (personal communication, December 9, 2008) invoke serious caution in using it outside of its traditional contexts. Traditionally, indigenous circle participants knew the expectations and behaviors inherent to the circle. Listening is paramount within the circle. Stories are shared from the heart, more than from the head, and must be accepted and honoured without interruption. The circle is known as a safe place. Cautions arise when the circle is used by participants who are not aware of these parameters, or who have dominant social power positions outside of

an Aboriginal context, which they are consciously or unconsciously willing to exert.

Among circle participants, there are likely to be individuals who are accustomed to having their voices heard, and those unwilling to speak, or used to feeling silenced. The feeling of freedom to voice experiences can be affected by power relations that develop or that become apparent in the group. Vulnerability of circle members must be protected by cautioning them to share only to the extent that they feel trust and comfort in the group. Graveline (1998) learned through experience that circle leaders with mixed cultural or ethnic groups of participants must be very direct in naming the "rules" of the circle to ensure confidentiality, and to build the trustworthiness of the setting as much as possible. The habit of interpreting all content from one's own stand point can lead group participants to minimize, misunderstand, criticize, or judge the stories told by others. It can lead to even greater attitudes of racism with regard to other participants. She found that participants of the dominant white culture were particularly prone to treat the circle like an intellectual activity, where criticism took the place of open, attentive listening. Clear cautionary ground rules for listening to and sharing personal stories must be established. Graveline cautions that the format of the talking circle appears disarmingly simple, however, like the Trickster of Aboriginal folklore, it holds potential for an unsettling range of responses, including resistance, anger, and shame.

Using the talking circle effectively involves moving into it gradually and with patience. Establishing the parameters of the activity with participants helps to

mitigate the potential for misunderstandings, judgment, and feelings of vulnerability.

Another of Graveline's (1998) cautions has to do with the adaptation of the talking circle for research purposes. While she pioneered this activity herself, she acknowledges that this use is a significant departure from the talking circle's traditional role; especially the act of recording or taking notes of what is said during a circle. Graveline is not forthright in defending her use of the talking circle for research, but her rationale is implied by the body of written experiential knowledge that has been generated for her work in promoting intercultural discourse. She has taken appropriate care to protect the confidentiality of all circle participants. I have undertaken to ensure this same level of confidentiality in doing the current research. Like Graveline (1998), I am prepared to learn from imbalances, contradictions, or incoherence that may arise from the process, especially in working with non-Aboriginal participants.

"Research as Ceremony"

Martin (2001) and Wilson (2004), both of the Canadian prairies, have also used talking circles, or variations on talking circles, for their research. Their research was conducted by themselves, as Aboriginal researchers, with Aboriginal participants, as part of a growing intention of Aboriginal groups to reclaim Aboriginal knowledge systems and ownership of research processes. Wilson's (2004) dissertation, entitled "Research as Ceremony: Articulating an Indigenous Research paradigm" speaks of ceremony as a way of bringing relationships between people, the environment, and ideas, closer together. From an Aboriginal

perspective, the essential purpose of research is the same as that of ceremony. And research, as ceremony, requires relational accountability.

Rituals such as smudging can be important to prepare for ceremony, so that participants are in a state of mind conducive to different forms and levels of listening (Graveline, 1998; Martin, 2001; Wilson, 2004). Graveline (1998) and Martin (2001) prepared the space for their research talking circles with a cleansing smudge ceremony, and with prayer. Wilson (2004) also used smudges with his research activities, but he cautions against the dogma that can get embedded in ceremony or ritual, where people become set in their ways, and "unwilling to use the metaphor that is inherent in ceremony" (p.132).

Martin (2001) and Claudine Louis (personal communication, December 9, 2008) emphasize the need for leaders of ritual or talking circles to have adequate experience and preparation for the role, including permission in some form from the Aboriginal community, or accountability to its Elders. It may be important to note that this discussion is juxtaposed somewhat with the expressed feeling that it is time for the Aboriginal community to be less protective of its knowledge and processes, and more willing to share of its wisdom (Graveline, 1998; Martin, 2001).

In using the talking circles for research largely "outside" of the Aboriginal community (though not entirely, as it turned out), I could not make any assumptions about how the process would be received, or whether it would be respected by participants. I also needed to examine my own inspiration and "right" to use this process with a group of research participants.

Rationale for Using the Talking Circle

The process of examining research options and examples gave me good reason to choose a group format for gathering data. To begin with, the researcher is not the only broker and interpreter for all the information shared (Martin, 2001; Wilson, 2004). For example, Joy Ruth Mickelson (1995), in interviewing the parents of boys labeled behavior disordered, discovered in retrospect that she would have introduced her study participants to each other much earlier in the process. Lieblich (1996) related the limitations and challenging consequences for community understanding that arose from using isolated individual interviews as the basis for a study of community. Merle Kennedy (2001) used multiple group sessions to explore the experiences of four white female teachers working as educators in First Nations communities. She found that the participants figured things out in response to each other over a period of time and developed shared understandings.

The talking circle as a group format specifically reflects an Aboriginal belief in interconnectedness, and that community thrives and prospers through a web of relationships, rather than through disconnected individual endeavors (Graveline, 1998). Aboriginal systems emphasize the importance of roots and relations. These underlying premises of the talking circle are particularly congruent with the intentions of my research: to facilitate our ability to create inclusive communities, and to develop sense of place.

The talking circle also reflects a traditional pedagogical practise that believes in the power of learning through stories and listening (Graveline, 1998;

Stiffarm, 1998). "…The Elders stressed listening and waiting and not asking why… You watch and listen and wait, and the answer will come to you. It is yours then" (Graveline, 1998, p. 60). The talking circle approach focuses on listening. In this way it belies our habitual western approaches that focus on explaining, deliberating, solving, or convincing.

On a very practical level, the talking circle calls for sequential sharing by each member of the group, with respectful silence as each member searches for the words to express her or his contributions. In a group whose members have varying levels of confidence in a group setting, and of competence with the English language, this approach allows for more likelihood of equitable participation by all group members. It is unlike the "popcorn" style of responses common to most western group discussions, or focus groups, where it is easy for the most confidently vocal to take up most of the air time. Also, in a setting where I need to be taping the responses of each individual, the sequential sharing makes it decidedly easier to track who has made which contribution on the tape.

My Inspiration and Accountability to the Talking Circle Process

I was drawn intuitively to the use of talking circles for this study, because of my experiences with the format in different settings over the last three decades. First as a participant in the Canadian Katimavik youth work program in the late seventies, and then as a leader in the early eighties, I was exposed to the process as a means of addressing group decisions and dynamics. Later I participated in multiple talking circles led by Lorraine Sinclair, as part of the Mother Earth Healing Society (as referenced by Martin, 2001), and with Sinclair and other Aboriginal

Elders in the Edmonton area and Vancouver. I have periodically incorporated talking circles with staff members or students in my work life as a means to enhance communication and increase levels of trust. Mostly, however, talking circles have been part of my personal life with small groups of friends, as we learn to attend to each other and to our spirits as we engage with life.

I did not think to ask permission to lead talking circles until I read the research suggesting I might. Claudine Louis and I had led a talking circle together as part of a professional conference in May, 2007, and perhaps I felt I had implicit acknowledgment of my ability to do so for this research. I trusted myself to lead the process, preferred joint leadership when possible because of my own spiritual tradition, and yet took Graveline's cautions very much to heart in preparing to lead the circles for this study. I also trusted the maxim's as outlined by Claudine (personal communication, December 9, 2008): things will unfold as they should; and there's a reason for everything.

Very importantly, I am not using talking circles in a corporate setting, where the intentions can be corrupted by a motivation of profit or personal gain (Graveline, 1998; Martin, 2001). As a master's student I am doing what I can to hold the intention of deepening understanding and relationships through research, and contributing to communal knowledge.

In the end, the inspiration to use talking circles for this research has provided much more than a relational approach to methodology. It has opened me up to a new universe of reflection on indigenous research and perceptions of the world, and to deeper appreciation of the relational and collectivist values that

continue to broaden and challenge my essentially individualist upbringing in this world.

Use of Narrative Inquiry and Talking Circles in this Study

I will endeavour to present an analysis of this data using the principles of narrative inquiry, which are to respect the integrity of participant stories and voices, and to find ways in which the threads and meanings of different stories overlap and connect. This approach attempts to avoid the de-contextualization of content that can occur too easily by attempting to extract themes. Also, the process of finding overlapping threads is facilitated by using a circular group approach to sharing. There is congruence between narrative inquiry and an indigenous approach such as the talking circle in many respects. As stated by Wilson (2004), "An idea cannot be taken out of [its narrative and environmental] relational context and still maintain its shape" (p. 5 & p. 180).

My discussion of the data obtained will try to focus on depth of personal and shared experiences over time and place. It is the depth of the content rather than the volume of perspectives that are of more importance in this study. I am anticipating that the benefits of this research may come from what is learned both in the depth and uniqueness of the stories, and from the process of people sharing.

I began the research with the intention that each talking circle session would consist of three rounds, the first for each participant to respond to the guiding questions for that session, the second round for deepening or reflecting on each other's responses, and a final round for closure before sharing refreshments. The first session would focus on stories of departure; driving factors for migration and

re-locating to a rural Alberta destination; expectations. (Where did you come from and how did you come to be here)? I intended to ask participants to bring artifacts from their lives – some thing that represents "where you come from"- as a starting point for story sharing. The use of photographs can also be helpful in unfreezing memories and generating narratives that change over time (Bach, 2001).

The second session would ask about points of tension and transition that they encountered in this new 'place', its social and/ or natural environment. (What experiences have challenged, supported, or surprised you as you have been learning to live in this place)? These questions overlap somewhat with a critical incident methodology (Brookfield, 2006), and allow the narrative to focus on turning points in each person's story.

The third session would look at their current sense of place and the connective threads with their pasts and futures; what decisions they have come to. (How do you feel about your life here and now? What have you learned, gained, lost, created, or compromised in adapting to this new place)?

The questions explored during these sessions reflect the three dimensions of narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), and the areas of intention, setting, and action that inform Arlene Stairs' model of cultural negotiation (Fettes, 1999). A final talking circle session would take place for participants to reflect on the process, and to provide closure or possibilities for continuity for the group (see Appendix A).

At completion of the talking circles, I would consider the research participants to be the first audience for my research writing (Clandinin, personal

communication, March 6, 2008; Clandinin and Connelly, 1988). I would ask for another gathering of the group, when I would provide them with my initial drafts and interpretations of what they had said, and request feedback. In this way I hoped to ensure that the research experience would be conducted "for and with" the participants, and that my interpretations would present an authentic, fair, and respectful account of the multiple layers of their exchanges with me.

I needed to remain open to the possibility that the process might also open challenging topics that could threaten to deepen feelings of isolation or dislocation. I held a responsibility as the initiator of this experience to remain very alert and responsive to all that ensued. I had the backing of contacts and resources in the host community to ensure relevant supports for study participants.

Aboriginal Educator Consultant

I sought guidance from a leader with lived experience as an Aboriginal educator, and with significant practice using talking circle processes. I sought this person among Aboriginal community teachers and leaders known to myself and to my supervisors. Claudine Louis, of the Bear Hills Cree People, and doctoral candidate in Educational Policy studies at the University of Alberta, generously agreed to support my research in this way. I was able to debrief the study talking circle experiences with Claudine, and gain a deeper appreciation of the sacred intent of the talking circle process.

I also asked Claudine to participate in an interview with me about her own Aboriginal perspective on sense of place, using the same guiding principles for the questions as those I used for the talking circle questions. As such, she would act

both as a critical guide for the talking circle process, and as an informant for one individual indigenous perspective on sense of place. This perspective would potentially provide valuable points of comparison or reflection on the data obtained from the newcomer participants. In interviewing Claudine, I learned more about cultural expectations behind traditional protocols for requesting the contributions of an Aboriginal participant. I will be able to transfer this greater awareness to future situations.

Inclusion of Longer Term Immigrant Perspective

Initially, I had envisioned conducting these talking circles with a mixed group, comprised mostly of recent newcomers, but including one or two more established members of the rural community. My hope was to facilitate more exchange within the community. In consultation with my supervisors, however, we decided that this mixed composition would create the potential for too many complex layers of response, as well as open up possibilities for misunderstandings based on power differentials, of exactly the type that Graveline (1998) warned. We decided instead that I would have a separate interview with at least one longer term immigrant to the same rural community. This content could provide another backdrop or point of comparison with the experiences of the more recent newcomers. I was able to interview a well established teacher in the community, for whom I will use the pseudonym "Hélène". Hélène had immigrated forty years previously from Switzerland.

Significance

In order to learn what newcomers are facing in our rural communities, we need to engage with them on a personal level. A narrative, relational approach, including an inclusive discourse process such as the talking circle, provides a way for us to begin to understand what newcomers are experiencing, how their lives are impacted by their move to our communities, how we can respond, and perhaps how we can build relationship with them.

Inspired by authors such as Iris Young (2000) and Mark Fettes (1999), I imagine my thesis process as one that may contribute in a small way to inclusive democracy and cultural negotiation in a rural Alberta setting. How do newcomers join into the narrative of a community? They need processes to do so. Sharing their stories may be interesting on a personal level, but unless those stories are also accepted and integrated into a "discursive cycle", as Fettes puts it, they remain isolated from the communal "memory box" (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000) that characterizes the community at a social level.

Site Selection

In order to reduce the number of variables affecting the type of rural experience participants in this study are encountering, I chose to do the research in a single rural Alberta community. In this way, the research findings "hover low over the research data" (Mertens, 2005, p. 183). I use the pseudonyms "this town" and "this village" (as some participants reside(d) outside of the more central "town") in order to protect the identity of the participants. The community is "typically Albertan", in that it has an essentially agricultural history, compounded

now with spin off activity from the oil industry. It is a community with a slower rate of immigration, and less diversity than that being experienced by some Alberta communities, such as Brooks, which have an industrial base attracting large groups of immigrants. The community has a population of less than 20,000, and is an hour or more driving distance from the nearest larger urban centre.

I based my site selection on exploratory phone calls to Adult Learning Councils and service providers in Alberta's immigrant sector. I sought a community that was apt to have some diversity of newcomers, and enough potential participants to form a small circle of four to eight individuals. I followed the most promising contacts to the town that I chose, and had one or two back up options of other towns in case I would not be able to find enough participants. In addition to the Adult Learning Council, I contacted the rural provider of the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program and its local teacher, and circulated an invitation for newcomer participants to the staff of one of the larger employers of professionals in the region. Because of very promising initial contacts with organizations that had already been recruiting newcomers for their services, I did not approach other employers in the town. In spite of very promising beginnings, it took two months before I was able to have an information meeting with a group from whom the circle would be formed.

Finding Participants

I sought talking circle participants who were immigrants (or temporary residents intending to immigrate) because I wanted to investigate the experiences of people who were making a durable/ permanent change in their home place. They

would preferably be able to express themselves and have reading comprehension at about a Canadian Language Benchmark 4 or higher (Pawlikowska-Smith, 2002). They would have been in the community for a period of six months to ten years. Because of the limitations of finding participants in a small population, I found I needed to compromise on all of these criteria.

Several potential participants (such as the LINC students) were too busy with work or family to commit, or struggled with English too much to contribute effectively. Several had just arrived and had limited length of experience. One person who had been in the community nineteen years was very eager to participate, but I declined her participation. Ten people signed the consent form at or following the information session, and seven finally formed the talking circles.

We held a total of six talking circles to cover the four sessions I had planned. Of the seven participants, there were four to six participants, not including myself, at every circle. One temporary foreign worker (TFW) had frequent work interference but attended three circles and responded in writing to the fourth set of questions. The seventh participant, also a TFW, attended only one circle before being sent back to his home country the following week by his employer, with no notice. After the second talking circle, I discontinued invitations for new people so that the circle members could build a sense of continuity and cohesiveness.

Finally Getting Started

I described the talking circle as a form of sharing that came from the traditions of First Nations peoples of Canada. I explained that the emphasis is on listening, so that, unlike a discussion, there is no jumping in while someone is

speaking. Participants were encouraged to listen attentively to what each other was saying, rather than use other people's time to mentally prepare what they themselves would share. I encouraged them to speak from the heart, to speak of what they knew, to take their time, and that silence was fine, or choosing to pass on a turn at any time was fine. I emphasized also that they share only to the extent that they felt trust and comfort in the group, and I clarified or reviewed the expectations of the talking circle at the beginning of each session.

I provided each participant with an outline of the cluster of questions that interested me for each of the four sessions, as outlined in Appendix A. I also gifted them with a U of A clipboard, pen, and paper with which they could journal or make notes between sessions.

In addition to consent forms, each participant signed a confidentiality agreement. The agreement specifies confidentiality of what is shared, respect for what each member of the group has to say, the need for attentive listening, and an attempt to listen without judgment. In honor of First Nations' practice, we proceeded around the circle to the left, to follow the natural cycle of the perceived movement of the sun. We used a stone representative of the local area for participants to pass along the circle, indicating whose turn it was to speak. I used dim lighting, rather than the bright overhead fluorescent bulbs of the classroom, and provided a table with reasonably healthy snacks for sharing after the circle.

Being non-Aboriginal myself, and given the diverse ethnic and spiritual backgrounds of participants, I did not presume to set the space with any ritual, ceremony, or prayer other than the simple preparations above. Rather, I trusted in

the inherent simplicity of the circle, and in my intention for deepening connections and understandings.

Adapting the Process

Participants agreed to attend the talking circles largely because, in addition to sharing their newcomer experiences, the circles provided them with social contact, and an opportunity to practise their oral/ aural English skills in an informal setting. Because of limited participant facility in English, I discovered the need to address my question topics one by one, rather than in clusters as initially intended. This meant we went around the circle multiple times in a two hour session, rather than once for reflection, once for feedback, and once for closure. I also learned to begin each session with an unrecorded "check-in". This created more comfort and informal relationship in the group, something Wilson (2004) also noted to be of importance.

Toward the end of each session, we tended to adhere less formally to turn-taking, a phenomenon also noted by Martin (2001) and Wilson (2004). These researchers incorporated understandings with their groups to create adaptations for that particular function of the circle. Participants also occasionally needed to ask for vocabulary assistance to express a particular meaning. By and large, the circle sharing proceeded respectfully from one person to the next, with participants attending carefully to each others' input. Participants referenced each others' comments, and often were asking questions of each other toward the end of each session.

Reflections on the Process

As a facilitator, I noticed the distinct difference between conducting interviews versus talking circles. The interviews proceeded much more like conversations, where I was able to directly impact the responses of the interviewees by asking specific questions relative to what they shared. In the talking circle, I had to hold my questions, and then, when it came back to my turn, to formulate a general response to what had been shared before proceeding with the next round. What participants shared was therefore more fully and clearly their choice, without probes (beyond the initial topic questions). Our role as circle members was to listen, to sit with the meaning that was offered, and to accept rather than question.

In the following chapter I describe the process that helped me distil the vast content of what was shared into a reduced form that I share with you as empirical data.

Chapter 4: Empirical Data

Over a period of six weeks I developed a weekly relationship with a group of individuals with whom I conducted talking circles. The rural location was at some distance from my usual home and work life. I had no prior relationship with any of the participants, and no community role that might create a power dynamic between us. As part of the established white Alberta population, I held some of the privilege accorded by my race and socio-economic security, but most of the participants had similar or higher levels of education than me. In many ways, it felt like they were indulging me in this research process. It was certainly these newcomers who were engaged in much more intensive "research", as they took on the risks and challenges of immersing themselves in a new place, language, and culture to see how their lives might evolve.

As the daughter of immigrants myself, there were some resonant threads in the stories that I was able to share in the circle. Other than sharing my family's migration story, however, and some history, experiences, and impressions at the request of circle members, my role in the circle was distinctly different from that of other participants. I usually led the rounds with active listening reflections and questions rather than sharing much from my own experience.

Following the final talking circle, my task was to gather and review an overwhelming volume of transcripts, and begin the process of representing the meaning of what had been shared. I began by extracting each participant's contributions into a separate document, so that I could provide each person with a copy of what they had said, along with my initial summary of their story, for their

review and feedback. I shared only the participants' own individual contributions and stories with them in order to further protect their confidentiality. Revised versions of the stories are shared in the next section to introduce you to the participants.

Introducing the Talking Circle Participants

Seven recent international newcomers, who are/ were trying to make their way in a rural Alberta town, participated with me in a series of talking circles:

- a young, recently married immigrant Pakistani woman,

- two middle aged Korean women on extended visitor visas while they accompany their children through the Canadian school system,

- two young male Mexican temporary farm workers,

- a young Mexican woman on her second extended visitor visa, and

- a young Brazilian man here for a year to learn English.

Following is a more in-depth introduction to each of the participants. I have used pseudonyms to protect their identities:

Haniya's Story

Haniya is a young woman from a large city in southern Pakistan. A few years ago, her fiancé moved to Toronto, and began the process of applying to be an immigrant to Canada. Friends of the family from Pakistan had moved to a small Alberta town, and he moved there to join them. He found he loved the peaceful, secure nature of the small town, and he stayed on when that family moved away. When his immigration was finally accepted, he went back to Pakistan to marry Haniya, then applied to sponsor her to come to Canada.

Haniya recently arrived in small rural town Alberta. She misses her parents, friends, and people with whom she has relationships back home, as well as the gatherings they have to celebrate their religious ceremonies. She and her husband celebrate these ceremonies now alone together. She calls her family back home, and tries to recreate Pakistani food and traditions here by purchasing Asian foods from

the larger urban centre when she has a chance. She misses the big city life, where a variety of cultural and culinary activities are available late into the night.

Haniya's only motivation for coming to Canada was her husband's desire to live here and experience more freedom in his life. He is encouraging her to experience that greater freedom as well, and she says that is changing her life. Her one goal when she came was to complete a master's degree in mathematics, as she already has that credential from Pakistan. In rural Alberta, however, she has discovered it is almost impossible to pursue graduate studies. Instead, now she is looking to take local accounting, management, or banking courses, or courses in French to improve her employment opportunities here. She is also learning to drive, which should allow her the freedom to eventually be able to take courses in the city.

She is amazed by certain physical aspects of her new life, such as the extreme quiet of the streets, the easy adherence of travellers to traffic rules and signs, and the fact of seeing deer run freely in town and along the highway. She appreciates that she can walk alone safely, even at night, and so far she enjoys the cold. She appreciates the politeness and friendliness of cashiers and people on the street compared to her city back home. She likes the local library services, and appreciates that even though she may not be able to pursue her first choice goals in a small town, options to pursue other interests are available.

As her husband has a graduate degree in computer sciences, she sees it as inevitable that they will be moving to a larger city, the size of at least Calgary or Edmonton, to enable him to work in his field of expertise. Until he finds a suitable job in his field, however, he prefers to stay in a small, calm town with low crime rates. He has been working as a manager of a local restaurant.

G. Sun's Story

G. Sun and her husband have two children, 10 and 14 years of age. They heard from another Korean family about the reasonable cost of education in rural Alberta, so they made the decision that G. Sun would accompany the children for about 4 years while they study in a small town Alberta school. Meanwhile, her husband continues to work and travel in Asia with an internet company, sending money to Canada to support the family. As the accompanying parent, G. Sun does not have the right to work here. In Korea, she had worked in an office.

G. Sun's children very much enjoy their school experience here, and her daughter is now thinking about wanting to attend Stanford University in the United States when she completes high school. G. Sun takes a lot of satisfaction from her children's happiness, however she is very limited to household duties here, and misses her husband, family, and aging parents in Korea.

G. Sun appreciates the friendliness and helpfulness of some of her neighbors, and of one particular teacher at her children's school in Alberta. The

small town atmosphere reminds her of her town back in Korea. She hopes to return to her small town when her husband retires, but they do consider the possibility of immigrating to Canada depending on how life transpires for their two children. Her husband visits for three weeks at a time when he is able. He also likes small towns, and loves the recreational opportunities of a province with mountains.

Hope's Story

Hope was a teacher of mathematics at the high school and junior college level in Korea for many years. She enjoyed her career and the lifestyle of travelling that it provided during her extended vacations every year. She lived in a small town near the Pacific ocean, and loved the peace that she could find by walking along the sea.

In 2005, she and her husband came on visas with their three children to Calgary, where her husband worked for one year as an exchange professor at the university. Hope stayed at home, and their three children attended junior high and high school in Calgary. Their children very much enjoyed the Canadian school system, which put much more emphasis on extra curricular activities and sports than in Korea. Her children found the school system in Alberta less stressful.

Hope's daughter, now 20, wanted to attend university in the United States, but Hope was concerned about the perceived higher crime rate in the United States. She gave her daughter permission instead to study in Canada. The family also discovered that the educational fees for international K-12 students in small towns was about half of that in larger cities such as Calgary. Also, the ESL program for international students in a small town was less prescriptive, so Hope's children would be able to progress more rapidly through their high school courses than in a larger city. So Hope and her husband decided that Hope would accompany her younger children while they finished their Canadian high school studies in a rural Alberta town. Meanwhile, their older daughter would begin university studies as an International Student at a nearby regional campus. Hope's husband returned to Korea to teach. He supports the family by sending money every month. He comes for extended visits during school vacations, but Hope worries about his loneliness in Korea. With the recent global recession, the unfavorable exchange rate has seriously cut into the family's monthly budget.

Hope has now been living in Canada for three years, on the extended visitor visa of an accompanying parent. Her life is restricted to her household duties, driving her children to school and sports activities, and to the few community, volunteer, and church activities in which she is involved. She finds her life excruciatingly boring at times. She misses her career intensely, and wishes that she could at least work part time. She is happy that her daughter has finally been given the opportunity to work under the new work regulations for international post secondary students.

Along with the friendliness that she and her children experience in a smaller town, Hope finds the proximity to peaceful lakes helpful in relieving her stress in Canada. She appreciates some aspects of Canadian culture, diversity, and natural habitat that differ from Korea.

Hope and her husband are intensely committed to doing whatever they can to fulfill their children's futures and dreams, even though Hope sometimes envies what she perceives as the Canadian way of allowing children more freedom and independence at the age of 18. For the time being, she feels that she has given up her own life in favour of her children, and the remaining year until her last child graduates from high school feels like an eternity to her. She longs to take on new professional challenges herself.

Since her eldest daughter wants to go into medicine, and the Canadian post secondary system is extremely restrictive for International Students in that field, Hope and her husband are seriously considering immigration to Canada, so that their daughter will have the status to be able to pursue a full medical degree. They are still in transition with these decisions. Hope's future is uncertain. On one hand, she longs to return to her home town, career, family, and neighbors in Korea. On the other, she hopes her young family may be able to create a happy life here.

Ricardo's Story

After doing university studies in communications, Ricardo worked for seventeen years in the television industry in Mexico, including 10 years in Guadalajara where he also taught at the university. He ran his own business, producing television shows. The last four years in Mexico, business became very challenging, with strikes and economic problems that were shutting down the city. Ricardo was forced to do freelance work, and constantly juggle short term contracts, working many long hours for very little income, frequently with clients who could not pay him. One of his contracts included hosting a Canadian learning television. His contacts there planted the idea that he come to Canada.

Ricardo finally made the decision that he needed to close his business, and could not see re-opening again in another Mexican city. He thought again about work in Canada. He had heard good things about the standard of life in Canada, and was willing to give it a try. Through the cousin of a friend, he found a contact for a job on a farm in rural Alberta, and within two months had completed the paper work to come and begin work.

Ricardo was finding the pace of life on the farm to be less stressful than his television life. He found he could make enough money to put a little aside and make plans for future goals. He appreciated that Canadians seemed to demonstrate more respect for each other than Mexicans, and for laws such as traffic laws. He found the economy to be more stable. On the other hand, he found the social contacts much more formal, and missed some of the depth of history of his colonial cities in

Mexico. Ricardo felt he was adjusting to his new work environment and life, and was making plans to eventually get residency, citizenship, then hopefully get back into television and raise a family in Canada.

Unbeknownst to Ricardo, his employer in Alberta suddenly decided to end his contract. Between one Monday talking circle and the next, we discovered that Ricardo had lost his Temporary Foreign Worker job at the farm, and had been put on a plane back to Mexico.

Abel's Story

Abel is of Aboriginal heritage and grew up in the south of Mexico. At an early age, he left his family and traveled in the north, where he completed high school and university, including a master's degree. He was always interested in the different ways that people behaved in different cultures, even within the same country. He was a student of agriculture, and went on an exchange with 18 other Mexican students to Olds College in Alberta, at the age of 24. Though his English was poor at the time, he was very interested in learning about how things were done differently in Alberta. He was intrigued by Alberta's economy and landscape, where the landscape seemed to lend itself more readily to agricultural practises, and where customs, work ethic, and social practises were so different from back home. He initially accepted a job as Temporary Foreign Worker on a poultry farm, though he had to go back to Mexico to complete the paper work. He thought at first he would just do this for a year before returning to Mexico to settle down and have a family.

During his first year, Abel found it a challenge to keep up with the expectations on the farm where he worked, where he seemed to be expected to learn just by watching, even without understanding the language well. He was alone a lot of the time, and was isolated on the farm in the evenings because he did not have a local driving permit. He also took a position herding sheep in northern B.C. for three months, where he impressed himself with his capacity to deal with that level of isolation. Gradually, he began to make more social contacts, especially by attending a local church. His language and local social skills improved significantly through the challenge of working the booth at weekly farmers' markets. Abel loves agriculture, so he took on the farm tasks with energy and commitment, loving the challenge of doing the work well. He was impressed by what he saw as a Canadian work ethic, where people are expected to work at a good speed, and expected to do the best they can.

Abel was regularly torn between returning to Mexico or staying in Canada. At one point he returned to Mexico, and had accepted a local job offer there. On the day that his job was supposed to begin, his work visa for Canada arrived. When he realized his wage would be about three times higher in Canada, he decided he should return. His family and siblings also encouraged him to return to Canada,

even though missing his usual connections with them was one of the most difficult aspects of his decision to return.

Over three years, Abel served as a contact for other temporary workers to work on the farm where he had a contract. At one point, a young woman with whom he was in relationship for a few months was one of the workers to come to the farm. His girlfriend lost her contract, and decided she did not like the social customs in Canada. She chose to return to Mexico and would not be persuaded to return to Canada. Abel then had to make the difficult choice between maintaining that relationship, or independently continuing to pursue a life in Canada.

Serving as a contact for other workers created tensions for Abel. Abel had accepted management responsibilities on the farm, and worked well with his employer, whose expectations, personality and culture he understood and accepted more and more as time went on. He found himself encouraging his co-workers from Mexico to not expect to create a "little Mexico" in Alberta, as social and work customs are very different here. On several occasions he has been in the awkward position of knowing that a co-worker was going to lose his or her job and be sent back to Mexico. He also saw multiple Canadians who came to work on the farm, who did not last long in their positions.

After three years, Abel finds that he has passed a transition point of deciding that he will prefer to make his life in Canada. He has observed aspects of Canadian society and systems that he respects and admires, which provide a level of safety that he finds valuable. He has the independence of owning a car so that he can visit friends, and feels he has been able to be helpful to others in his new community. Though he misses the close connection to his family, and will always feel the connection of his native heritage, he has decided to take the steps to apply for permanent residency, then citizenship in Canada. He also has taken steps to begin further studies at the nearest university. As a compromise to himself, he is also purchasing land in Mexico. He realizes his vulnerability, as a Temporary Foreign Worker, and chooses to have a back up plan, should factors outside of his control impact his choice to stay in Canada.

Citlalli's Story

Citlalli is a young woman from the mountainous region near Mexico city. She completed her high school and worked for several years, in jobs such as at a call centre for an airline company. She had applied to get into a cinematographic program at university for which there were only 15 spaces. She was not accepted, in part, she believes, because she had no experience living outside of Mexico. When a girlfriend who had been working in the tourist industry invited her to come to Canada to visit for a few months, she decided to try it. This would give her some international experience to further her educational goals. In addition, with an imminent economic decline, she was concerned that her job in Mexico was insecure.

Citlalli spent her first six months in Canada taking care of children for a small family, which helped her learn English. She also ended up meeting a young permanent resident of Canada, from Belize, and getting into relationship with him. When her visa expired, he came down to visit her in Mexico, and she went with him on a visit to Belize. He then brought her back to Canada, still on a visitor visa. Unable to work, Citlalli has been living with her boyfriend, his brother, and step-father in a village in rural Alberta. Feeling quite isolated, she fills her time with some activities at the local arena, keeping house, and learning to prepare healthy meals on a very restricted budget. Her participation in an ESL class and the talking circles in a town further down the highway were a bit of a social lifeline for her, giving her the opportunity to get out and meet a few new people.

Citlalli is torn between her love of Mexico, its deep history, the art and cultural activities that abound on its streets, and her appreciation for some of the peace and social order that Canada offers in comparison. She had not expected to fall in love in Canada, and this confounds her choices. While she loves and appreciates her very supportive boyfriend, they do not want to get married just as a means for her to obtain family status to apply for permanent residency. She wants to make her life decisions independently of external pressures. Citlalli would like nothing more right now than to be able to work and contribute financially to her Canadian household as she figures out what she needs to do, but the visa regulations prevent that, and she finds herself forced to likely return to Mexico. There, she would need to start over again at something else in the process of trying to meet work visa regulations for Canada. Citlalli finds the emotional and financial stress involved in this back and forth movement to be very discouraging, especially when combined with the uncertainty of external regulations that may restrict her choices.

Edmilson's Story

Edmilson is from a small city just 20 kilometres outside of Salvador, Brazil. He lived in Salvador, a city of 3 million, for five years and completed his high school there. He met Canadians from rural Alberta who were studying in his high school from 2005-2007. They convinced him to come to Canada to learn English. He went through the very lengthy and difficult process of obtaining a student visa, and is now enrolled in ESL classes at a rural Alberta high school for one year, while billeting with a local household. His goal is to learn English before he begins a law degree in Brazil in 2009. Lawyers in Brazil need to speak English as well as Portuguese and Spanish.

Edmilson enjoys the opportunity to study with other students from around the globe, from Korea, Japan, China and Hong Kong. He enjoys the music and sports opportunities here, playing soccer regularly, and learning to play hockey. He needs to walk everyday, and finds the cold very challenging. He uses the computer to stay in touch with friends in Brazil.

Edmilson has not found a single person in this community who speaks Portuguese, though he knows someone in a nearby town, with whom he has travelled once or twice to the larger city to participate in activities of the Brazilian association there. Edmilson is enjoying the friendly atmosphere of a small town for now, but prefers living in large cities.

Interpretive Process

The main threads of these introductory stories gave me initial clues as to how to present the content of the talking circles. The stories indicate motivations and desires of the newcomers, and what brought them specifically to rural Alberta. They refer to losses, gains, challenges, feelings, creative ways of coping, and to what participants are learning as they try to compromise and adjust. The stories also imply significant levels of personal strength.

Further review of the transcripts engendered a process that I thought of as "distilling" the talking circle content (deleting direct repetitions and explanations). My intention was to seek out as much as possible the full substantive content of what was shared by choosing the most succinct or fully expressed excerpts. My guiding question became, "How do I do justice to the quality and uniqueness of all that has been shared?" It became clear to me that the best way to remain true to the participants' intended meaning was to use their own words. This would provide the reader with a feel for the content of the actual circles, and decrease the interference of my interpretive filters. My interpretive role came largely through the reflective process by which I organized the material, by determining the headings and subheadings that I felt reflected participant experiences and expressions.

During the talking circles, participants were more responsive to some of the guiding questions (see Appendix A) than to others. I therefore chose some headings

to reflect that content. In further review of the transcripts, I became more fully aware of multiple points of tension that characterized the stories beyond the questions that were asked. These included challenges related to the rural setting, challenges related to migration regulations, noticing and negotiating cultural differences, and dealing with uncertainties. Some of the content that I noted specifically circulated around the following topics:

- The significant role of relationships in struggling with life choices, and the sometimes coincidental role of "place".

- Tensions around the right to work, or lack of right to work.

- The challenge of working and living in a cultural context with unfamiliar and unnamed expectations. An important example is a work ethic very intricately linked to a linear and competitive relationship with time, seemingly at the expense of family relationships. Adapting to and attempting to adopt a more individualist approach to work and livelihood.

- Struggling with vulnerability and isolation that come from restrictions, or from being surrounded by unfamiliar norms. Developing a stronger sense of self in the process.

- The struggle of awareness that Canadian parenting values seem vastly different from those in Korea, and the tension of living on this soil as a parent trying to come to grips with that.

- The important role of the original home place, values, culture, or history in providing a connective thread with present day life.

I am aware that the narrative threads that emerged for me were not necessarily those that another researcher would have picked up on. Some content alluded to gender relations for example, and possibly identifiable gender responses and needs during the migration experience. I chose not to highlight those, though they are present in the passages shared. There were also reflections on the differences in experience depending on the characteristics of specific rural towns or villages, which I have simply left embedded in the text. There may well be other topics to which I am not attuned, and which therefore escaped specific note. By providing the reader with first hand access to much of the content shared, my intention is to alleviate some of the bias that is in inherent simply in my choice of how to present the material.

The narratives were not shared in isolation nor in chronological sequence. The weaving together of the excerpts through the circle rounds likely facilitated the gathering of narrative threads and overlaps. Also, because we revisited research questions on different evenings, there was a deepening to some of the stories as participants returned to a previous reflection from a slightly changed perspective.

I occasionally considered deleting sections with potentially mundane content, such as the experience of a traffic accident, or reactions to winter cold, but upon reflection chose to relay that content because it formed an important backdrop to describe the real lived experiences of these newcomers.

Following the empirical data, an entire chapter is dedicated to my interpretations, discussion of the content and process, and how they inform my thesis intentions.

What the Talking Circle Participants Shared

I chose a series of eleven headings under which to weave the contents of what the circle participants said. A few further sub-headings are included in the form of questions that reflect the content of what the participants shared, without always a direct correlation to the questions that were asked. Content is necessarily truncated, but hopefully without compromising the essence of what was intended. Some content also comes from my own reflections either during the circle, or in my research journal (*italicised*). I do not reiterate every question that was asked as we took turns around the table. A small number of entries come from the journal reflections of Abel, one of the talking circle participants.

I was feeling quite disheartened to have only four individuals show up for the first circle, when I was expecting six, if not eight. Also the English level of three of them is really quite low for this project. And three of them have visitor status. They are here for the inexpensive school system and educational opportunities… For them it seems that legal immigration is only a fairly impractical idea, given their livelihood and breadwinning options…Haniya has been here only a few months, but at least is a permanent resident (Journal, Nov. 4, 2008).

Motivations for Migration

Heather: I was born in northern Alberta…but my parents came from Holland, which is a small country in Europe… They had a farm. They had dairy cattle for many, many, many years, and they milked by hand…So I grew up on a farm and I lived close to a small town, smaller than this town, and I went to school there… Eventually, because my father was very much older than my mother, we had to give up the farm and move into town. I loved living on the farm… so that was a very sad thing for me and for my family. I was about 15 or 16…and then I went off to college and university…But my parents grew up, they lived in the war(s) in Holland so they wanted to get away from the poor economy after the war, all the bad memories of the war, and they wanted new possibilities to make a good life. My father wanted…to have his own farm and be able to be more independent…In those years most people went to rural Alberta because most of the work was in rural Alberta. Nowadays most people go to the cities because the work is in the cities. So when it comes to your turn, part of the question is "Why did you come to a small town and what motivated you to come here" (T.C. Nov. 3, 2008)?

Ricardo: I have a big problem, I need a big solution and one solution was to come to Canada … Canada is a wonderful country…The level of the life is wonderful … I think okay I need start one more time… but I need start in a good place and for me was Canada (T.C. Nov. 10, 2008).

Abel: I was impressed about what I heard of Canada. I was really curious about why people do things in different way and how people do it… The motivation was because I want to do something different (T.C. Nov. 10, 2008).

Edmilson: Me go…for school… I stay in Canada because English (T.C. Nov. 10, 2008). In July 2009… I'm study law in university Brazil. I necessary three different languages. English, Spanish, Portuguese (T.C. Dec. 8, 2008).

Citlalli: I was trying to came to the cinematographic school and…they just have 15 places and I remember in the application they ask do you live in other country … It's a little elitist…You need meet a lot of people…who have the status, right? … And one of my friends she make the same test and I remember that she was living two years in Canada before come back to Mexico to test, and …now she's in the school…(Then) the business going down…and I'm start to think if I don't have a job, if I'm gonna lose my job, I'm don't gonna have money to pay my school and I'm gonna lost everything…so my friend find me a job, like babysitter …I was sure I don't have nothing to lose…so I say yes and then I came to Canada …I was thinking it's gonna be a great opportunity to meet a new country, to learn a new language, and to meet new people (T.C. Nov. 10, 2008).

Citlalli: I want to try to make a career in Canada because even if I don't stay here …my…life's gonna be better...If I make a career here, I know that…I can get a better job in my country, or other country. Or if I can stay here and make a life, and make a career, for me that's gonna be the best. I try to focus in that. But who knows, everything can change, you know. Maybe I get married and I'm gonna focus in my family and my children, and I don't think that's wrong either…I know if I try to stay here, make a life in here, it's gonna be better for my childrens …If don't, well it's other places in all the world, but I find Canada like a good place to start…so that's why I want to make a career here, because I know that a lot of doors gonna be open for me, not only in my country, in other countries probably (T.C. Nov. 24, 2008).

Hope: I came to my decision just for my children (T.C. Nov. 24, 2008).

- What drew these newcomers to rural Alberta?

For most, coming to a rural area was a haphazard result of factors beyond personal choice. It was because school opportunities were less expensive in a rural area than an urban area. It was because of contacts made previously through family or friends. Only one participant had consciously made the choice to move to

this area for work, because of an interest and passion for agriculture (Journal, Nov. 11, 2008).

Haniya: I am here because my husband is living here… He likes this town because he likes small cities, not large cities. He likes peace and calm… less crime (T.C. Nov. 3, 2008).

Hope: Education fees so cheap…public high school…all around about half…In Calgary...there are five grades ESL class…all around to finish it two years and one half…. But my childrens very hurry up. He wants to go to university… So in here, just one semester he learned ESL. Now he study English 20, English 30 (T.C. Nov. 3, 2008).

G. Sun: My husband recommended small city… My children's education to learn English… Education fees very cheap (T.C. Nov. 3, 2008).

Ricardo: I have a friend that are working here…He say me OK, maybe I have a cousin and maybe he has job…I …take the first opportunity (T.C. Nov. 10, 2008).

Abel: One of my friends … said, "Would you like to come and just have a look and see if you would like to work with us?" (T.C. Nov. 10, 2008).

Citlalli: My friend she got married with that guy (from Canada) and she one day asked me "You want to come to Canada?" and I (said) sure (T.C. Nov. 10, 2008).

Edmilson: My Canadian friends … talk to me go Canada 2008, study English (T.C. Nov. 10, 2008).

<u>Challenges of Migration</u>

- What challenges do participants face in rural Alberta?

Meaningful social contacts seem to pose a barrier for participants, not just because of language. Abel spoke of a kind of resistance on the part of the farming community where he lives. He thinks it has to do with cultural "closed-ness" and the age of farmers. He is optimistic it will change with time (Journal, Nov. 11, 2008).

Abel: I would like to get to know, to have more friends…I'd really like to have more contact with young people, my age. It has been hard, like really hard for me to interact with people like my age, even in church, sometimes that is a tough thing to break the ice and talk to them. Part of that is maybe…defence mechanisms that everybody has (T.C. Nov. 10, 2008).

Haniya: Here after 9:00 or 10:00 (p.m.)…so much silence and darkness. There is very big, big difference for me. That is why I miss my city…I … miss my food (T.C. Nov. 10, 2008).

Haniya: (My husband) has a friend… from Iran. So he enjoy with him… So he has a boyfriend, but I have no girlfriend (T.C. Dec. 8, 2008).

Citlalli: I stay for two weeks in (another small Alberta town) and it was more comfortable for me, because it has more stores, more places. But in (this village) it's just the small store, they close at night. They have a restaurant too, and a tavern, and the arena and the school, that's all. You don't have Tim Horton's like in here. You don't have MacDonalds or Extra Foods, we don't have nothing and I remember in (that other small town) it was kind of like this town, maybe smaller, but it was nice …more people or … (The village where I live) is a good place because it's close(r) to the city and maybe it's in the middle, but for me that I can't drive it's more tough. Probably if I could drive, probably it's better for me so I can do more stuff (T.C. Nov. 10, 2008).

Abel: I was living like 10 miles out of town I guess, something like that and nobody was going give me a ride. I was living outside in a trailer and had to work and at night you come back and you are alone, right? You have no friends to phone. I couldn't even talk… and nobody really gonna give you a big hand to bring you and show you things (T.C. Nov. 17, 2008).

Abel: I had to say yes sometimes even when I didn't understand what they told me. They dropped me off to a farm and I was living there and that was my first experience trying to understand the people I was living with and their lifestyle… Most of the things I was just doing by guessing and trying to know the way they'd like to do everything (T.C. Nov. 17, 2008).

Citlalli: I feel more lonely because… I'm just staying home and cleaning…It's not the kind of life that I used to have before…Go to some small town is really hard for me because it's not a lot of stuff to do…Here is nothing, just some trailers and the people, well they have a life, they go work …I miss my home (T.C. Nov. 17, 2008).

Haniya: To get admission in university is still challenge for me (T.C. Nov. 17, 2008).

Abel: I was spin the truck over and went to the ditch, so…But it was teaching me a lot, how to drive… in winter time (T.C. Nov. 17, 2008).

Citlalli: Sometimes I feel like, oh my god, it's so cold. That's the only thing that sometimes make me down, you know, it's like, I can't go out. I can't do nothing (T.C. Nov. 24, 2008).

Hope: This town…public traffic, car, public buses, I need it (T.C. Nov. 24, 2008).

Haniya: (This is a) good place, but some problems in here, like transportation problem, local bus or something like that, some education problem. So is good place for living, but not for everlasting …If you're in good economical position then you can stay here, but if you want to… make stronger economical situation then I think you must move from here to another city (T.C. Dec. 8, 2008).

- What challenges do people face because of visa or migration regulations?

Hope: In Canada many students work in here… My son's friends make money… They work in weekend, so my children very envy them (T.C. Nov. 3, 2008).

G. Sun: My daughter want to work. But my children student visa (T.C. Nov. 17, 2008).

Hope: I am disappointed in that … I have no working visa. I just visitor… When I go working I like meaningful…I like living life (T.C. Nov. 17, 2008).

Citlalli: I still fighting because I don't have a work visa, I don't have a student visa…and it's pretty hard, tough…And if I want a work visa I need to get a job before I came…How I'm gonna get a job in Mexico to go Canada? I don't understand that…That really stress me sometimes…I'm gonna leave in a couple of months and I'm gonna try to come back here. But I don't want to come back like tourist again…I want to come back with some work visa if I could or maybe student visa…I don't feel ready to get married…I'm gonna need to come back and start again. And start again is hard for me because I already do that. I came here the last year and leave everything to came here and start in a new place…stay in a new place, in a new world, other language, other people, other weather, is hard…That stress me a lot, because I can't start every time, every six months (T.C. Nov. 17, 2008).

Citlalli: Sometimes I see some business…looking for help and it's like, man, I wish had a visa so I could get any kind of job…And it's like, oh my god, they need help and I need work, but I can't. You know it's like frustrated (T.C. Nov. 17, 2008).

Hope: In Canada expensive education fees so difficult (for) International Student … My first daughter now in university, she is studying science. She want a medical science. So she wants doctor…International Students don't give… chance in medical subject, so my husband and me wanted it…So last year my husband try it immigration in Canada, so…maybe next year we are immigrated in Canada, I don't know (T.C. Nov. 24, 2008).

Edmilson: I'm go Canada…I visa, me go hospital, examine, go passport very, very, very difficult. Visa long, long time…A long wait, yeah. Brazil – Canada. Both. Very, very difficult, difficult (T.C. Dec. 1, 2008).

Abel: As a foreign worker or temporary, I feel that we arent´t 100% sure of last in one place for at least the long of our contract, or at least no at the place where I am working. It seems that we have to give 200% of what we are able to do, and even that is no enough…I would like to know more about my rights …to know more about if … the ways we are treated in wages...is… properly (Participant Journal, Dec. 10, 2008).

Abel: In the agricultural side I think there are some missing rules, that make people like me to feel bad, and seems that no much help you can find (Participant Journal, Dec. 10, 2008).

What is new for me here, is the number of people with temporary status, who are trying to make a go of Canadian living for themselves. I am used to working with people who at least have permanent resident status already. But with this being the first year in Alberta's history that the number of temporary foreign workers exceeds the number of immigrants, it is appropriate that I be seeing dynamics of the whole "in limbo" reality of many current would-be immigrants. It brings a whole new unsettled element to the concept of developing "sense of place". The transition moments we spoke of last Monday evening seemed to move toward those moments that clarified the decision to stay – both internally and externally driven (Journal, Nov. 19, 2008).

Abel: I think it all depends what we want…A year ago, I wasn't taking too much care about staying in Canada…As long as they're paying me, I am still living and I still earning some money, it can be OK right? (T.C. Dec. 1, 2008).

<u>Gains and Losses</u>

- What have people gained through migration to rural Alberta?

Abel: I feel good in my relations that I have and feel good in my pocket… Even when it's hard to be away from home, my small community with my boss, my co-workers and the three or four friends that I have, that makes me feel good, makes me feel like home, so I think that I'm in good place (T.C. Nov. 10, 2008).

Haniya: I got independence, here. Something, self confidence like, that…if I want to do something I can (T.C. Nov. 24, 2008).

Citlalli: Canada have a lot of people from everywhere and it's nice to met people from anyplace … I feel that I gain, like new friends and maybe new language. … Now I'm learning…maybe be a homemaker, something that I…never did before…I think it's good to feel prepared to have a home someday. I think you learn everyday…Some days it's a new word, some days it's a new people, or some days you learn to ask somebody about something that you're interest you know…I don't feel so scared to speak anymore…even if I speak wrong. I feel more…what is word? Comfortable?…Confident now, yeah…The first time that I came here

before, I was crying with my Dad, I was so scared. I was like, I don't even speak that language. But now I feel better. Yeah, I feel more, more confident (T.C. Nov. 24, 2008).

Hope: My English improved a little bit. First came here, I don't say one word…I meet many different race, different place. I meet black, I meet white. I meet all over the world place…My children… are happy in life in Canada's life, more than Korea's life… So my children very happy. Sometimes, in this point keep me satisfied (T.C. Nov. 24, 2008).

Haniya: Here…I can walk anytime I want, even after the midnight, even at one a.m., two a.m.…So it's a peaceful place…In Pakistan we can walk anytime, but with some boy, men, brother, father, husband, cousin. You can't alone walk…We can drive alone, but we can't walk alone. Is too difficult there, sometimes (T.C. Nov. 24, 2008).

Haniya: I…gained…here chance to go to library. I love to go to the library…In Pakistan there was library, but very far away from my house. But here is 5 to 10 minutes walk, and in Pakistan you can't lend any book…from public library…So here I got the chance to lend some books and study at home (T.C. Nov. 24, 2008).

Abel: There are a lot of resources, there are a lot of things here, a lot of opportunities that I won't find in my country, but I have them here and to me is almost like a privilege to be here in Canada because I can do what I want, even when you have to lost something…and gain something because I kind of gain a lot of friends now. I gained a good relation with my boss and I just get to be feeling better (T.C. Dec. 1, 2008).

G. Sun: I like this town (T.C. Dec. 8, 2008).

- What do people feel they have lost?

Haniya: I can do nothing for master's (T.C. Nov. 10, 2008).

Citlalli: I don't driving here and depend on somebody to drive me is hard, because in Mexico you just walk, take a bus, and you move anyplace that you want, you don't need a car... I was more independent, so now I need to depend to my boyfriend and sometimes it's pretty hard for that (T.C. Nov. 10, 2008).

Heather: What have you lost in adapting to this new place? Maybe you haven't lost it forever, but what kinds of things have you lost (T.C. Nov. 24, 2008)?

G. Sun: I think, I cannot ever see my parents old. So I'm very sad… Everyday, everyday my parents worried to me.
Heather: They worry about you or you worry about them?
G. Sun: Both. Yeah (T.C. Nov. 24, 2008).

Haniya: First thing (I lost), my parents. Then my culture…So my husband told me to buy some trousers and still I am not understanding how I will wear that dress, so is very big change for me. After that my country food, I miss that a lot…Then my family get togethers, I miss them a lot. My ritual ceremonies…I miss that too. My parents, my cousins, I lost everything (T.C. Nov. 24, 2008).

Citlalli: Sometimes I feel that I'm losting my time because…I can't do nothing here. I can't work. If I want to go to school I need a lot of money, so if I don't have work, obviously I don't have school…but I try to think, I don't try to think bad about the situation because I'm gonna sick myself thinking bad things, so I'm start to think that I didn't lost…I'm just learning to live in other place. I'm just learning other language or culture that is not mine. But that don't means that I'm changing my country, you know. I always gonna love my country. I always gonna be a Mexican (T.C. Nov. 24, 2008).

Citlalli: Dentist here, they're a little expensive, more than Mexico…and well, (my dentist in Mexico) was my dentist (since) I was a baby so, I have that confidence with him (T.C. Dec. 8, 2008).

Hope: In here, my life is nothing…My life is based on my children…When I was in Korea, I worked (as) a teacher…was giving me another something. So in here, I have no job, in here don't chance me another job, just me everyday I work in my home…I everything very miss (T.C. Nov. 24, 2008).

G. Sun: In my case I lost time, because…my parents and my sister and my brother. Not see…So, my husband is stay in Korea…Yeah, don't see (T.C. Dec. 1, 2008).

Abel: What I lost…the most…really, really important part for me was…to be close to my family…I used to see them at least every five, six months, and spend like two, three months with them. Now this year, I just went for a week and then I came back. It was a really busy season at the farm so I couldn't be that long…I lost that contact, because of the distance (T.C. Dec. 1, 2008).

Hope: I do all things for my children. Sometimes they don't listen to me. It is very give me stress. Give me very painful. But, I adapt my children's life…My life is give up…This year and next year, very long, long time (T.C. Dec. 1, 2008).

Coping and Creative Responses

- How are newcomers coping?

Haniya: I am just improving my English and…I am searching for short courses… regarding management or accounts or something like this (T.C. Nov. 10, 2008).

Citlalli: Sometimes the only thing that I do is just call home…When I call I talk a lot, one hour, two hours maybe with my friends, or my mom, or my dad, or my brother, so that's make me feel better…When I'm alone in home and nobody's home well you just think too much right (T.C. Nov. 17, 2008).

Haniya: I have only one system to forget my loneliness…I shed tears. Weep, starting weep for one or two minutes and then I get relax. I don't call home at that time when I'm feeling loneliness, because I know when I will start talking I will start weeping on the phone, so I just weep for one or two minutes and then wash the face and happy…I never tell my husband that I am sad (T.C. Nov. 17, 2008).

Hope: Lately, I start writing…from Bible…My goal is to write everything Bible. I really want to do it so everyday I write one hour, and this time gives me help, in English (T.C. Nov. 17, 2008).

Citlalli: I go to the internet and I just listen, the radio Mexico, or watch TV shows in Mexico (T.C. Nov. 17, 2008).

Edmilson: Brazil sports, soccer, me go computer and talk to MSN my friends in Brazil. News...music (T.C. Nov. 17, 2008).

Hope: These days I enjoy the computer, so I manage a home page so I put in there my pictures, and my life, and my diaries…In Korea my friends visit my home page. Sometimes I visit my friends' home page in Korea…This computer is help me some these days (T.C. Nov. 17, 2008).

Citlalli: I start learning cooking here (T.C. Nov. 17, 2008).

Haniya: I have learned here traffic rules and I am trying to learn driving (T.C. Dec. 1, 2008).

Abel: As much as I think about that, it just hurts me, so I have to…just think about something else (T.C. Dec. 1, 2008).

Citlalli: Being in the home, and being homemaker, in the first days it was really hard. It was really, really hard. It was like, oh my god, what I'm doing here? I'm just losing time. What about my career…I want to help to build something together, you know, with my boyfriend…Some days I was so frustrated, I was crying…But one day I start to think that, h'm, I'm not losing time because I feel that I speak better than the first time that I came. And even if I'm being home, I'm start to learn how have the family…and I want to have a family in the future. So I'm start to think more positive. I don't want to stress myself…But yeah, it's really hard (T.C. Dec. 1, 2008).

Citlalli: All these months that I was here, (my boyfriend's) boss, he never pay him on time, so it was like, I just have one hundred for this week and I don't know when

he gonna pay me and he was like…pissed off, and he was like…oh I just have forty bucks for the gas and some groceries and for me it was like, oh my god, I can't do nothing. If I just can get a job, probably we can work it out, but the most that I can do for him is try to…because if he is stressed and I get stress because I can't get a job we gonna break up. So I try to be positive. So I'm gonna try to cook this and I try to make the most...cooking something and if he's like, oh they don't pay me yet and, it's OK, maybe tomorrow…But yeah, even my boyfriend, we passing hard times, because…I'm pretty sure it is not the same for him, have other responsibility, like have a girlfriend, and pay everything for her …I just get sick this weekend and we just have around two hundred dollars and you know, we went to the doctor and the appointment it was $33.00 and my medication, it was $28.00 and it was like, oh my god, and the gas…and, yeah it's really hard for us some days…So yeah. It's hard, but I think nothing is impossible, it just sometimes take a little while, take some time (T.C. Dec. 1, 2008).

- What are people creating?

Heather: Now I'm thinking about things that you've created for yourselves. I know some of you haven't been here very long, but what kinds of things have you created in your life, as you've been learning to adapt to the different ways that we do things here (T.C. Nov. 24, 2008)?

Haniya: I try to create Pakistani food…So I go to the big city. There are some Asian shops…Our ritual ceremonies… me and my husband try to celebrate it at home… He and me just pray…so just we are trying to remember our ritual ceremonies (T.C. Nov. 24, 2008).

Citlalli: Here I try to create better place for me and my boyfriend and his family …I try to make more like the family place…I try to comfort them and try to put them together at the table so we can have some family time, talking…So I try to create… like a circle of family in the home. More…yeah, atmosphere…for me and for them…I was thinking, what can I do to spend my time in here because…I was have bad feeling every day that I need to do something…I'm gonna start to go run and start to walk. I'm gonna start to eat better… try to cook. So I think I'm gonna try to make more healthy, more peaceful…I feel more healthy here actually because I try to eat better, make exercise, have time for me, contemplate the sky (T.C. Nov. 24, 2008).

Hope: Every Wednesday…I studied in Bible…my two children played basketball, play in high school…So, next time I will try…volunteering another women's help, children. I interest in. Last day, I volunteer in church. I dish wash in kitchen … funeral mass. Sometimes I tried it. Now… is very busy, so everyday I am tired … Next time, I one more try (T.C. Nov. 24, 2008).

Hope: I try everyday western style food…I try Canada style food. Sometimes I was internet. I searching another Canada food. Sometimes I went library so I borrowed

food books…and holiday food…In Korea I was almost vegetarian. In here, I compromise bread, cheese, meat, all of it try (T.C. Nov. 24, 2008). I created many different kinds…Canadian food, plus Eastern food…I mixed another foods. I create (T.C. Dec. 1, 2008).

Appreciation for Canada

- What do participants appreciate about Canada in general?

Heather: How do you expect that life might be better here, for whatever reason?... Why do you think it would be better, or what specifically about life here would be better than life back home?… A couple of you have said you still love your home country. There's still some social reasons, or economic reasons, or maybe societal reasons why you feel that Canada is a good choice compared to back home (T.C. Nov. 10, 2008).

Ricardo: I sometimes say…I was working in Mexico like a TV producer, but they pay me like a farmer, and here I am farmer and pay me like a TV producer…I am relax because I have money (T.C. Nov. 10, 2008).

Abel: I think it's just a healthier society, I haven't been even in States…but I feel like I'm in a good place, a good society…good laws, good services, good education (T.C. Nov. 10, 2008).

Haniya: Everything is almost very complete here, education wise, health wise, jobs. If you want to do something and you can't get it there must be something alternate you can do. You have more opportunities than our country…You can find many alternate ways…I really appreciate the education and health (T.C. Nov. 10, 2008).

Citlalli: When I see Canada I can see the taxes work for the service. You see all the money from there, it's working, right, because even in the small town that I am they have a public school, they have a library, and they have better library there...I don't have a problems to pay taxes if I see that they really make the job, if I see the government it's working with my tax to be a good thing to the people (T.C. Nov. 10, 2008).

Citlalli: When I'm here and I see the streets that are clean, the people know the law, they respect the people on the streets to cross the street. In Mexico…nobody stop for you. The cars don't stop so you can pass. No.
Edmilson: In Brazil, same in Mexico.
Haniya: In Pakistan as well. *Laughter* (T.C. Nov. 10, 2008).

Citlalli: I can see people, it's more friendly and respect more the law than in our country…I think it is a better place to raise my kids (T.C. Nov. 10, 2008).

Abel: When you see, when you see the roads being graded, the gravel roads and the big trucks clearing the snow in the winter time, and when you go to any government service and you go for ten minutes and then do your papers. When you go to the bank you don't need to line up really long to get into the service. You go to the museums, anywhere you go is usually it seems that the service works, like everything works and the health card, next year is gonna be free, so, I mean that's a huge, huge thing for me…I feel safe. In Canada, and you see that I have my health card and that allows me to go and get anything I want from them, any health problems I got, right, so that's really important, real important, so when I see my pay check and I see the taxes they are taking I say, it works…In Canada…really there is not many people yet, right. Is getting more populated, … and the rules that they set out to bring people in, I think that's because they want to have a good, healthier quality of people in society…just to get into the routine that people who are gonna come is gonna work, is gonna earn some money…I've been hearing is that you really get good training when you come…I think is a very healthy society because you can make money, you can live comfortable and you can be safe in many ways. Even when you get your driver's licence you have to pass a test and you really have to show to the instructor that you are good to go, and that just makes me feel safe here (T.C. Nov. 10, 2008).

Ricardo: Here you should show respect all the peoples and the people's rights… Here the people respect things. The government respect and all the streets are clean and the people…if you driving you need to stop and here stop is stop (T.C. Nov. 10, 2008).

Ricardo: Like say Haniya, there are more opportunities for many things. This is, I think the big difference (T.C. Nov. 10, 2008).

<u>Noticing and Negotiating Cultural Differences</u>

- What do people notice and appreciate about cultural differences here?

Abel: (I) really like competitivity at work and keep working, work hard, and try to do the best what you can do…In the work culture here in Canada, I really found that, you really do your best and that's something that really struck me when I understand that (T.C. Nov. 10, 2008).

Citlalli: In Mexico you cannot wear a shirt that looks like this because the guys they're looking at you like this. It's uncomfortable if you have a small shirt and the guys whistle, oh "Mamacita!" Yeah. And is really uncomfortable…but in Canada, here everybody use tops and shorts and nobody cares, nobody bother you. I like that too…In the city in Mexico, for the girls…it's pretty nasty…(In Canada) nobody cares if you use a small skirt or top or, nobody sees you that way. You know, like… But, in the small towns outside to the Mexico city the people is more rural too, is more friendly (T.C. Nov. 10, 2008).

Abel: One of the nice good things about Canada is that most of things you gotta learn it by yourself…In Mexico…sometimes even when you don't know much about it you can get along kinda easy because they take time for you…When I came to work (here), this work, field work, as farming…you have to really watch what they're doing, how they're doing and try to keep up with them because people here have a nice speed, they all want to do it quick, fast, easy, use all the tools, all the technology that I didn't know before. So it was kind of hard for me to get at the speed that people used to work (T.C. Nov. 17, 2008).

Abel seems to contradict himself at different times when he speaks about the work ethic he has perceived in Canada. At times he speaks of it admiringly (perhaps partly because he does not want to offend me?) At other times he speaks of how hard it is to have to figure things out for himself and to work under tight time pressures (Journal, Mar. 31, 2009).

Edmilson: I like it games in Canada…and high school very good (T.C. Nov. 17, 2008).

Hope: Canada is very peaceful. And friendly city, helpful to live (T.C. Nov. 17, 2008).

Haniya: People stop their cars for the lights, traffic lights, especially the signal of train…Here people stop like simply and smoothly they stop at the traffic lights (T.C. Nov. 17, 2008).

Edmilson: Brazil. Different. Like, drive car…Brazil very, very fast…My city very fast. No very good (T.C. Nov. 17, 2008).

Haniya: From the people of this town I have learned hospitality…manners wise. They talk to strangers, even hi, how are you. In Pakistan, if…someone say, or looked at me…he is trying to flirt. I think here everyone has good manners…Even …cashiers? they say, how are you and have a good day, like small things, so I learn from these manners (T.C. Nov. 24, 2008).

Citlalli: I think that I learned more respect about the law... No, actually I was always like that, I think, came from home too. It all depends on how they teach you (T.C. Nov. 24, 2008).

Citlalli: Here you start learn be patient…Even when you drive…I learn to be more patient here with people who lives around me and I know everybody here be nice with me because I don't speak well. They patiently and they try to understand me and listen me (T.C. Nov. 24, 2008).

Hope: Canada's culture is a different than Korea…Canada's holiday is made … about Jesus' life. I thought it: Easter day, Christmas Day, and Thanksgiving Day, all of relate to God in Canada's holiday…In Canada many peoples all over believe

in God, Jesus…Christian God…So, in my case I believe in Jesus, so in Canada… many holidays, and all of life is either related to Jesus Christ, I thought (T.C. Nov. 24, 2008).

Hope: Last week I went in hockey ice field. I first time saw it, very interesting, very exciting (T.C. Nov. 24, 2008).

Hope: In Korea and in Canada…many people very similar method in life (T.C. Nov. 24, 2008).

Hope: I attend all of our Canadian party so I attend all of festival, for museum, for Jaywalkers festival, and… I went Festival of Trees…In Korea is so very, a little bit parties. In here very many parties…A lot of Canadian peoples invite for my family…sometimes all different conversation… In Canada so different, the first time just give me a drink, so talking about one hour. Next time they started eating, but so different…Different people bring their themselves the party…potluck?... Potluck…So I understood all over Canadian party culture (T.C. Dec. 8, 2008).

There is so much appreciation for how Canada "works". There are not huge line-ups. People see their taxes get put to use. People are respectful, stop for pedestrians; men do not stare down women's shirts. There is a sense that there are alternatives here, that if one thing you have in your mind doesn't work out, you can find something else, a different path (Journal, Nov. 11, 2008).

- What cultural differences do people find surprising or hard to accept?

Ricardo: Some cultural things…here you shake hands, is a little difference, but not a problem (T.C. Nov. 10, 2008).

Citlalli: The first time that I was here I ask…do you have museums?…I want to know about the history of Canada, about the Indians…In Mexico is like part of us, you know…You can see the history in there and the future too just in one city and the art too, because they put a lot of monuments in the city…We have lots museums...lots of culture events...artists…huge free concerts (T.C. Nov. 10, 2008).

I recall particularly Citlalli talking about how the museums in Mexico are "us"... that that history is so integral a part of the society, and she had a hard time understanding that lack of history here (Journal, Nov. 11, 2008).

G. Sun: Grandfather, Grandmother drive…oooh! Yeah. My home town grandmother grandfather everyday so stay in house (T.C. Nov. 17, 2008).

Hope: Grade ten students are drive…Very young people driving is very surprising (T.C. Nov. 17, 2008).

Abel: (It) just surprised me how people live here. Like we are very family related where I come from, and here is almost once you got married, there's just your wife and you. Just really surprised me how people live (T.C. Nov. 17, 2008).

Abel: That you gotta do things by yourself, that really surprises me a lot (T.C. Nov. 17, 2008).

Haniya: In Pakistan, until the kids are married, they live with their parents or sometimes after married they live with their parents and look after them. They don't separate at the age of 18. Either girls or boys. We live in with our parents (T.C. Nov. 17, 2008).

Citlalli: The only bad thing surprise me here is I see some old people, couples, smoking…Actually, it don't bother me, you know, but in Mexico the people is moral people (T.C. Nov. 17, 2008).

Hope: In Canada, many women smoking. Very very surprise...Sometimes nose… is piercing. I was very surprised (T.C. Nov. 17, 2008).

Citlalli: I was surprised to see too more open people, like lesbians, but the curious thing for me is people who first get married and after they older they...change and be lesbians. I never see that in Mexico…See that transformation is kind of weird … But don't bother me at all, is just a surprise for me…In here, I think the people is more open…The girls go over my boyfriend, even if I'm there. It is like, oh my god! I'm not invisible, I'm here OK!…Like hey man, it's my boyfriend you know …disrespect. I think…that surprise me here (T.C. Nov. 17, 2008).

- How are people negotiating cultural differences?

Abel: I think one of the, the toughest part was…dealing with people…At my work I have to talk to people. I have to work and organize things…It was really hard for me because we have people from my country and I know our background, the way we enjoy things, the way we do things…because, we think different…but you gotta make things work and you gotta keep everybody comfortable where they are, with what they are doing, right…But once you start dealing with people…and trying to make things go, I feel that was the really toughest part, but at the same time was the nicest part for me, because after that I kind of got to know way better how to…how you say?...relate...The toughest part was the greatest part for me because it just make me feel way better now too (T.C. Nov. 17, 2008).

Abel: We are used to customs, used to music, used to many things… really family related, and once you come here you have to be open to everything. I mean it doesn't matter if you are young, or whatever in age. But…realize that you are coming to country where it's not your country. Everything gonna change, everything is different, and you have to be open and willing to learn. Otherwise you just gonna get frustrated (T.C. Nov. 17, 2008).

Haniya: I can't compromise with food and ritual ceremonies, but I can compromise with dress…For dress I am trying to compromise. (I think) compromise mean the thing I don't like, but I have to do it…Language I like, but dress I don't like, but I have to compromise with dress (T.C. Nov. 24, 2008).

Abel: Once you realize that you are just here by yourself and you are in a different culture and you have to do things by yourself and don't expect anybody else to do it for you…Even realizing how different is being in Canada than being in your country, they way people express their feelings here…You are in a different place and you have to do things, thinking about you and no about somebody else. It's not like you don't, won't help people (T.C. Dec. 1, 2008).

Abel: Learn the common things people do, the way people decide things, and the most important traditions, because that is an important part when we talk to others. I decide to be open to socialize. Probably I still learning a lots about the culture, and the way things work in this country, but always do the best you can is something that work. Don´t matter where you are, is very important the way we act in front of people, being who you are, but now updated to a different way to socialize (Participant Journal, Dec. 10, 2008).

<u>Landscape, Climate, and Language</u>

- What do people notice or appreciate about rural Albertan landscape and climate?

Heather: How does the landscape of where you come from compare to the landscape where you live now? The countryside, the natural environment… (T.C. Nov. 10, 2008).

Abel: Most of Alberta is flat and good land for cropping and good land for livestock and seems to be really good for agriculture… (T.C. Nov. 10, 2008).

Citlalli: The first time that I came to Canada the sky for me was huge…and… it was great to see the sun shines in here. You can see a lot of different colors, purples and reds. Where I live, well, it's a lot of smog, so sometimes you can't see the stars... but in here in the night, when the sky is open you see lot of stars (T.C. Nov. 10, 2008).

Citlalli: Here is more natural, like in the summer the green here, is really green… it's sparkly green, it's like you see all the land green, and the big blue sky (T.C. Nov. 10, 2008).

Heather: Most people, about 70, 80 percent of Canadians live in cities, but you're part of the 20 percent that are living in the smaller areas. For me too, I work in the

city, but I live…outside the city because I love the stars, I love the green, I love the quiet and the peace (T.C. Nov. 10, 2008).

Citlalli: You can see lot of animals around here and that surprised me…And in the winter…I see everything was white. That surprised me too…And in the mornings, see all the snow, you can see how sparkly, like diamonds… it's beautiful too (T.C. Nov. 17, 2008).

Haniya: In Pakistan, animals are always in the zoo, not on side the road (T.C. Nov. 17, 2008).

Heather: Is there anything about the natural environment where you are living now that has an effect on how you feel about your life here and now (T.C. Nov. 24, 2008)?

Hope: In Korea… just I see…confined animals…Here, sometimes I see deers, a group of deer, sometimes a rabbit...Last summer vacation I went Rocky, I saw a black bear…Many, many animal were peace and free…So very fantastic country (T.C. Nov. 24, 2008).

Citlalli: Here, well everything looks big because you don't have a lot of buildings… and it's a lot of nice lakes (T.C. Nov. 24, 2008).

Abel: I wasn't used to being this cold. It took me a year or two to get used to it, I'm still learning about the weather (T.C. Nov. 17, 2008).

Citlalli: The snow, well it's too cold, it made me sick (T.C. Nov. 17, 2008).

Edmilson: Cold, cold, is very difficult (T.C. Nov. 17, 2008).

Citlalli: Probably the weather's gonna be the hardest to…what is...adapt? Everyday I try to see the positive thing about the world (T.C. Nov. 24, 2008).

Haniya: I love winter season. I like cold…and the noises of wind. (T.C. Dec. 1, 2008).

Hope: Horizon is very beautiful…wide land is very impression…Very lucky country, because very big, grand, big environment... In my country, Korea, history is five thousand…very long history, but my country is very small. So just didn't develop. So sometimes so sad (T.C. Dec. 1, 2008).

Citlalli: When I came here and I was looking my watch, and see it was just… eleven and it was the sun still shining, it was just start to go down…Yeah, it was new for me. It was like, oh my god. It was different…and I remember too that in the winter the day is short too, because it's just around five and is already dark. Yeah, is new (T.C. Dec. 8, 2008).

Citlalli: I like more the light, because when it's too dark I feel like down…My boyfriend don't like that I open the windows because he don't like everybody see inside, but I like the light come inside.
Heather: They've talked about an emotional feeling that's exactly that, it's called seasonal affective disorder, it's quite common in northern Canada. So when the season is very short, when the nights are very long and the days are very short, it's easy for people to get depressed.
Citlalli: Oh, yeah, for sure. Yeah I think it's the weather, even my dad and I we were talking about people who live in the south…because like Edmilson, right, is hot, is warm, so the people is more…you know, relaxed…and when it's cold, even you start to do things, right, because you're cold…So I think the weather change that a lot…Every people is different…When I'm here a lot of people talk to me about…when the winter start come, when the weather change or the season start change, they told me I get depressed, I don't like go out. A lot of people talk about that in here.
Heather: And yet, I love the change in the seasons.
Citlalli: Everywhere I think change, even for the south place…you can see the difference, or when they have like dark days, or a lot of rain, but…I feel other people is more relaxed and more like, not so depressed (T.C. Dec. 8, 2008).

Hope: I want to saw northern light…So every night I will try it, I saw north sky (T.C. Dec. 8, 2008).

- What are peoples' language challenges?

G. Sun: Always, always I challenge to learn English (T.C. Nov. 17, 2008).

Citlalli: Well the first challenge, well it was the language too, because…when you start to speak it's really, it's hard because you don't know if you speak well and all that (T.C. Nov. 17, 2008).

Haniya: Language…still is a problem for me (T.C. Nov. 17, 2008).

Hope: Very hardest times I had in this town, when I got in a car accident. I was just going straight in the green light. But one guy just right side hit on my car … He blamed for me. I was very sad...So at that time, I couldn't speak much English, and didn't know what to do, so I very surprised, so very insure...Many people pass by the place. Call me police. At that time police came all over so solution for me, but in my case very (disappointed) (T.C. Nov. 17, 2008).

Abel: If you cannot speak you are like in a box…One of the neat things for me is that even when I didn't know much English, the thing that I was doing for my work, I was enjoying it a lot and sometimes just by guessing you go and do something. And you're boss is saying, "That was good". You just know that it's

positive, but you don't know much about what he's talking about (T.C. Nov. 17, 2008).

- How are people learning English?

Abel: The great part was that they do market direct…so they took me to markets and that was a big challenge for me…Somebody else needs help, so, whatever, you have to talk and that was a great thing for me (T.C. Nov. 17, 2008).

Citlalli: My boyfriend, he born in Belize, but he have already been here 6 years… Belizian people speak…a fusion with English and Caribbean...It's not clear English, it's different…so…he told me that it was hard too, because the first time that he came nobody understand him…He don't speak well and probably I don't speak well because I learning to him (T.C. Nov. 17, 2008).

Citlalli: The first time that I came here…I was working like a babysitter, so the kids teach me a lot…I was talking like the kids and…the parents, they used to teach me too…We used to be watch the TV, the child's channels...and they used to have CD's…that teach me a lot…I used to put the video for the kids and at the same time I was learning. I used to take the books for the kids and her mom…she used to take everyday one book and sit the kids…So that's how I learned (T.C. Nov. 17, 2008).

G. Sun: I…try it English, every day…I try writing children's story…I watching TV every day…I listen to radio…This is a very hard study and different…I can't read every day and remember…I always listen to pronunciation (T.C. Nov. 24, 2008).

Citlalli: Everyday I try to learn to listen so I can understand more and maybe the people understand me more clear than before (T.C. Nov. 24, 2008).

Haniya: I just decided to do some job…I will try for a job and I like improve my English (T.C. Dec. 8, 2008).

<u>Feelings, Supports, and Staying Healthy</u>

- How do participants feel?

Last week's session seemed to glow with praise for Canadian society - mutual respect and so on. This week there was much greater focus on the loneliness and isolation of trying to adapt. It is also the week that the temperatures dropped and we got our first snow (Journal, Nov. 19, 2008).

Heather: Most people talked...more than just language…about loneliness or boredom because of isolation, from not having the language strong enough and then the culture, waiting, trying to figure out what you're supposed to do…I don't know if there's more that you want to say about…how you've made it through. Like, Abel, you've stuck with it for 3 years, right, all those times of loneliness… So if

there's more that you want to say about that, the loneliness that comes or how you're coping with that (T.C. Nov. 17, 2008).

Haniya: Sometimes I feel emptiness, because of missing my parents (T.C. Nov. 17, 2008).

Citlalli: Don't have a job, and don't go to school or some stuff like that, don't make me feel pretty happy…Makes me feels like useless, sometimes…I feel like if I just could help to working and together to do something (T.C. Nov. 17, 2008).

Hope: Many months single mom…so all day long I am so tired, but sometimes (my children) are so happy. It is giving me happy. But sometimes it is so not happy, because I have no life (T.C. Nov. 17, 2008).

Hope: (When I came) I thought…just I will lived in one year...I come back home. But my children, they didn't come back. Just I take care of my children…I very painful heart...My son's case…his life is very happy because he likes Alberta sports, study, all of things, he very like it...If they lived in Korea, they don't play the basketball. So they lived in Canada, so they played basketball…so they are so so happy times. I think my children happy. Just is happy to me (T.C. Nov. 17, 2008).

G. Sun: Because, my husband, my parents, my children and any other neighbours are very good so…I think I'm very, very happy person (T.C. Nov. 24, 2008).

Haniya: I'm living with my husband …(in) privacy and so it's good. Life without any disturbance. Except only one thing that my parents are not with me, everything is perfect here (T.C. Nov. 24, 2008).

Citlalli: Here I feel very safe…In Mexico…every time the USA change president everybody is scared and stop, and the prices up or stuff like that...So I know that in my country right now, it's hard, especially hard time. Even I know that a lot of immigrants in USA start to come back to my country because they can't find jobs. So probably it's gonna be harder for me when I come back…So…for now I feel safe, I have a place, I have food and I have everything…Here you don't lock. Your yard can be open, you don't need…bars, gates…So, I feel very safe here (T.C. Nov. 24, 2008).

G. Sun: To hear the story of the others, was a lot of…pain (T.C. Dec. 1, 2008).

Hope: Sometimes I think I feel so good, sometimes not good… Sometimes I feeling…lonely…I miss my country, my friends, my neighbors. But my childrens need me. I help them (T.C. Dec. 1, 2008).

Abel: The hardest part is to replace the feelings of being with my family with other alternative activities (Participant Journal, Dec. 10, 2008).

Abel: I think that is not just the language, but also the fear of don´t to know more about people attitude is what reprime (holds back?) for foreign people to became more adapted (Participant Journal, Dec. 10, 2008).

- What are people learning from their feelings?

Abel: Sometimes you think less than you really are…like, when I first came, man, my boss is like that tall and they have a big huge house. I was feeling like… feeling less than…I was feeling bad about myself and I think most depends on me but they were really supporting, like they didn't make me feel any bad... But I think the other side…or even half of it is yourself. If you are waiting for somebody to make you happy, you are waiting for somebody, something to come make you forget your bad stuff, your bad thinking…I found now that you've got to push yourself even harder when you are finding that you are having a hard time …It was a really tough experience, being alone, but that surprised me in the end because I was able to survive that experience to be able to get it through and even while it was…long…at the end I was happy…One of the things that I want to do, is gets me up too, I think that's going to school again, trying to have a course or trying just to do some more schooling…That really push me to…keep going (T.C. Nov. 17, 2008).

Citlalli: You need to be independent, you know. Your partner…no always gonna be there…your Mom too, so you need to learn, and it's hard. I cry a lot all my life… when (my parents) break up and…my dad is all for me, you know…So when he left, I was like, in crisis for a long years…Now I try to…you know, let him go (T.C. Nov. 24, 2008).

G. Sun: Every day in my self…very, very hard so…for myself not control. Yes… self, myself, my control…Every weeks I go to church, I prayed. Every week, I prayed… for me… power, for me. I control, power…Please, God. Please Jesus. Every week.
Heather: You ask for more personal power?
G. Sun: Yeah (T.C. Nov. 24, 2008).

Citlalli: I start to think that if you don't feel good with yourself, it doesn't matter if the place that you are now is wonderful (T.C. Nov. 24, 2008).

Abel: We are very vulnerable, when you don't know what to do, you are so vulnerable. Somebody tells you, you got to come to work here and then just because you're not sure about where you are standing now, and then they can hurt you very easy, or even trying to change your ideas, your attitudes, right, because you are not sure what you want even with yourself…I'm working for them…I was doing that as if that was mine for some reason. I don't even know why. But I was working a lot time and…and I wasn't like asking for a raise or anything like that, I just, I was working…Later on, like after a year I came to my mind that those feelings might weren't right, because even though they treat me, they pay me, let's say good. But

you have to realize that they are not your family and you have to realize that you are independent, that…I have to do my life separate and I have to do my choices and I have to do my circle of friends and I have to start being picky about what I want (T.C. Dec. 1, 2008).

Citlalli: (The) compromise that I have is with myself to be a better person, to learn every day…I try to see everything in a good way. That's a compromise that I have with myself, because I'm a really negative person, so I try to be more positive every day and, adapt the place where I am now. I don't know if tomorrow I'm gonna stay out here or I'm gonna leave and I'm gonna come back Mexico or I'm going to other place. It doesn't matter. The compromise is with myself to be a better person… Sometimes it's hard because it's not your place, it's not your language. Your family is not here, but…my family is not gonna be with me all time. I need to start to build my own family so I don't care if it is here or it's gonna be in Mexico. I just want to be better (T.C. Dec. 1, 2008).

- What supports, other than family relationships, are helping people to get by?

Heather: You've already spoken about relationships or friends or people you've met. If you have anything else to say about the experiences or the things in your life here that have supported you as you've been learning to live in this town or the area around this town…What's helping you get by?...What kinds of things in your life here support you to have a good life here?…What helps you to make your life easier (T.C. Nov. 17, 2008)?

Citlalli: When the lady in the community place, she find me this course, I was so happy, I was like Yeah! I'm gonna get a course. I'm gonna meet people, and that really make me happy…Just a couple hours a weekend, in the arena in the village …sometimes I just work 2 or 3 hours, but I like to because I talk with all people and that makes me learn more too, because you're in contact, right, with the customers…I think that's the…stuff that makes me feel better in here (T.C. Nov. 17, 2008).

Haniya: People are very nice in my (ESL) class. All people are very good. So last week we have no class and I miss that class a lot (T.C. Nov. 17, 2008).

Abel: I start going to church…and then I start feeling…more bold, just better myself adapting to this country. Once you see that people are good to you as well… it's a good relation then…Then that just gives you more kind of security when you want to do something else (T.C. Dec. 1, 2008).

I find myself imagining talking circles as a model for community contact and for integrating newcomers. In small groups of six to eight, people can check in and hear each others' stories and experiences. From the stories, feelings and needs emerge that can be addressed one on one with the group or by matching needs to

community resources. After and between the circles, the facilitator can facilitate connections with potential supports or resources in the community. With permission of the participants, the talking circle can serve as an ongoing focus group that informs the facilitator's sponsoring organization of what is going on, what is being experienced, what is needed. Meanwhile, participants are building relationships that go beyond one-off research experiences (Journal, Nov. 19, 2008).

With this group, I heard the frustrations of one or two participants about the lack of access to education and training opportunities. I could inform them of local and on-line opportunities of which they were unaware. I could direct them to where local and on-line support was available for job search as well. Hope and G. Sun feel bored and lonely with how narrow their lives feel as homemakers. They want ways to engage in the community, so knowledge of potential volunteer activities is critical to them. The possibility of assisting with local seniors' needs, for example, provides potential for meaningful local contact, work, and language practise (Journal, Nov. 19, 2008).

- How do people stay healthy?

G. Sun: I learn to swimming...exercise (T.C. Dec. 1, 2008).

Edmilson: I play soccer every Wednesday…in community centre. Yeah. And me everyday walking to school, every morning. Very cold (T.C. Dec. 1, 2008).

Abel: On a farm…we do a lot of physical work so that keeps me in shape I guess (T.C. Dec. 1, 2008).

Haniya: I walk, sometimes 15 minutes sometimes 30 minutes. Until I got fresh, or tired… I want to play here something like table tennis or badminton…but I don't know in this town, is there a sports club or not. I don't know (T.C. Dec. 1, 2008).

Citlalli: I like run…but start to get too cold for me outside, so I stop run…I try to eat vegetables and drink a lot of water and I like the fruits (T.C. Dec. 1, 2008).

Hope: Sometimes I took a walk in area, sometimes with G. Sun…We meet (by) lake took a walk about one hour. In winter time is so cold I never go there. Sometimes I went in community centre…for play the badminton…One time play it's just, adult is three dollar. Children is two dollars I pay. These days it is so cold every day…stay in home…Sometimes I had Vitamin C with my children (T.C. Dec. 1, 2008).

Transitions and Uncertainties

- What points of transition did participants experience?

Abel: Now I'm changing my mind in the way that I really want to be in Canada... It was hard for me to take a decision. It's easy to think about it, but to really trust in it is hard. But now I'm in there. So I think my expectation now is to be here, to become a Canadian (T.C. Nov. 10, 2008).

Citlalli: Everything change after I met my boyfriend…I'm still interest to go and learn some degree of photography and cinematographic and I hope can do that here…If I have someday kids, I'm pretty sure they gonna have a better life in here than in Mexico. I still love my country…It's kind of hard sometime. I'm pretty sure that if I raise my kids in Canada they gonna have a better kind of life, better quality (T.C. Nov. 10, 2008).

Abel: Once you get the language, you know the culture, and just start making friends, that's really when you start feeling like home again…I'm still missing home, but not that much now, so I think I'm feeling way better than when I just first came (T.C. Nov. 17, 2008).

Haniya: In Pakistan, I was not independent and sometimes I want to do something, but I can't do. But here my husband has given me permission that I can do everything what I want…So I am trying to be independent so this is changing my life (T.C. Nov. 17, 2008).

Abel: One of the hardest part is always decide, should I keep going with what I'm doing or should I go back to Mexico?…My girlfriend…decided to go back home ...She preferred to stay down there, so that was a big thing for me...It was a really hard decision…I said I know a little bit of English, I can work with that in Mexico. I know how to work a farm…But…I said no, I think I'd better stay in Canada, and now that even convinced me more that when you let go of something that was attaching you to your country, that was really pushing you to come back ... Now is just like, OK I'd better start looking for somebody else. But that was a really hard thing for me, just really hard (T.C. Nov. 17, 2008).

Heather: Does anyone else have something more to say about the transition or as Abel put it, as letting go of something back home? Not everyone has let go. Three people are going back, right? (T.C. Nov. 17, 2008).

Abel: As long as you still pushing yourself, you still working, you just go for what you are focused on and I think the transition point is gonna pass and you're won't realize it (T.C. Nov. 17, 2008).

Haniya: (My husband)…got also freedom here. He got independent, so he like this country more than me. So my husband…don't look back. He always go straight

forward…So just to get some professional job is his main target nowadays. Nothing else (T.C. Nov. 17, 2008).

Abel: Now…I feel comfortable…I start having the feeling that you belong to the … place and that kind of make me feel good now…I wanted to have a car before and once I could afford it, then…I bought a car…Now I can visit my friends on weekends. I can chum around…It seems that you start belonging to the place and start doing things, with feeling confident and don't be afraid same as I was before when I first came (T.C. Dec. 1, 2008).

Abel: That is amazing how your life change when you start doing things by yourself and talking to the friends, booking your flights…or doing some travelling or go help somebody. I think social work really helps too, when you just go to help…I think that's something that gives you more…You just put yourself outside and then people won't pay you to do something, but you just want to help somebody…that isn't even in your family…you don't even know them. But it's just a part of getting involved in the future, trying to make things better in the place where you are living…So I think I am getting…to be here (T.C. Dec. 1, 2008).

- What uncertainties are people facing?

G. Sun: Next year, I likely to be a new decision, but I do not want to leave this town…Maybe I want to (immigrate) (T.C. Dec. 1, 2008). Next week…my husband come here so, haven't decided. (Next) year move to another country and another province maybe…But I really like this small town…lovely here (T.C. Dec. 8, 2008).

Abel: Most of the new people who come to Canada…we are not sure if we're gonna stay here longer…We are not sure of many things, because we don't know …When I came the second time and then the third time, now I am feeling Canadian (T.C. Dec. 1, 2008).

Heather: For most of you there's a tug of war, right, because you've come on a temporary arrangement and it's common now in Canada. This is the first year in Alberta and it's the first year in Canada that there are more newcomers to Canada who are temporary instead of coming as permanent resident immigrants. So it's a little bit new for me too, because I've worked with immigrants for a long time, but who are here permanently. They've made the permanent decision. So my question is, how are you impacted, how are you affected by the fact that…(the) government of Canada has said, well you can come, but only for a little while and …then you have to apply again and there are rules, external rules…that have some control and some impact over your decisions. So I'd like to ask you, how does that impact you? What effect does that have on you as you're trying to negotiate your life and decide what to do (T.C. Dec. 1, 2008)?

Abel: I start thinking a little bit ahead…I can apply for my landed immigrant in 2009 and by 2010 I can have my landed immigrant status and then I can…have a little bit more rights to be in Canada…If I get married here…I'm gonna be a Canadian citizen. I'm gonna spend my life here in Canada. But at the same time … we don't know. So at the same time…I started to do payments in Mexico for a piece of land where I want to work. And eventually if I don't stay here…at least the time that I've been spending here I have been earning land that I want to be working on, because I'm a farmer…If I am alone, if I am able to make some money…I want to start building something for my future…Those kind of decisions come because I'm not sure if I'm gonna stay here or if I'm going back later on. But for now I'm feeling like staying here. I don't know what's gonna happen (T.C. Dec. 1, 2008).

Haniya: I'm lucky. I have immigration. We make up our mind here (T.C. Dec. 1, 2008). Maybe after 6 or 7 months we will move from here to something like Edmonton or Calgary, because there are Pakistani communities…Then me and my husband will be bored from each other (*laughter)* and then we will move from here. So (now) we are not bored (T.C. Dec. 8, 2008).

Heather: Ricardo…was here a much shorter time and then got sent back…That to me really shows a vulnerability. He was here, he wanted to be here, and then against his choice he was sent back (T.C. Dec. 1, 2008).

Abel: I have been working with these people for over two years and…we know … how much you have to get done at the end of the day…One of (the workers) … was slower than the other one…and then our boss became a little bit, like mad, because well that should be done by now. Is not done yet, sorry…I don't know if that is right or not, but I know that it was the speed…It was on both sides I think. My boss, because he was not patient, he wanted it just like, *snap*, just like that. And he was a little bit mad because the worker didn't speak much English and he didn't understood many things, right. And on the other hand, the worker, his first goal wasn't to work…I think his first goal was to have one feet in the door, just trying to be in Canada…those are my hours and I don't care if I'm being efficient or not…I told everybody who comes…here is very competitive…You have to do it, you have to show them that you are able…So that make me feel bad and at the same time it's hard for me to tell them, "You know what, you don't do that, you gonna go back"… I like the job and I like what I'm doing, but obviously not everybody has to like the same thing. But depends on your purpose...The attitude gotta change. If you don't change, I mean nobody else gonna do it for you. It is a different culture, a different way of thinking, different ways to do things…You have to be willing to learn and do your best. If you just come…just because it's a better living standard…that's not the point…So I kind of trying to tell them that they have to push themselves even twice when they come, because is not (so) your boss feeling better, it's just because yourself is gonna be feeling better at the end. Because at the end you're gonna realize that you're able to do things that you didn't know how to do…The worker didn't realize how things were going at the farm and my boss is just not patient.

When you don't realize where you're standing, it just like, well, you know, and then he went back…My boss…has no patience…So it's just the way he is and the way they are, and the power that they have as well. If they want they can just send you back next week and you get your ticket and you're back, that's it (T.C. Dec. 1, 2008).

I am not sure what to do, learning that Ricardo has been shipped off, back to Mexico by his employer. Just last week he expressed being so satisfied with the way things were going. I can't imagine following up on the story of how this happened, without also offering some advocacy support, and I am not sure that is my place. (It might be my place if I my main role was as a community facilitator rather than a researcher). I will check with my supervisors before seeing if I can or should follow this up with Ricardo (Journal, Nov. 19, 2008).

I was dreaming about getting put on boats to be sent to places we didn't want to go. Even the queen was put on a boat headed away from her place, and had to be rescued (Journal, Nov. 30, 2008).

I also dreamt of a large institution of language classes for adults. But the adults were not treated in a relational way. They were ordered about and mistrusted. They also seemed discontent, and had an edge of anger about them (Journal, Nov. 30, 2008).

Hope: All of things uncertain…So, when my children go to university, at that time…I will change mind. Maybe I will come back. I don't know…I searching the internet…I try (a rural area one hour from Edmonton) because…in here very good environment condition for education for my children. My husband stay Edmonton for very short time…So if we (immigrate and live), just one hour, everyday I visit Edmonton. Very good place. Now so good (T.C. Dec. 8, 2008).

Citlalli: I will like to stay long, but I can't, so my next move is gonna be come back Mexico and while there try to get a job and enjoy my family and try to save money…see my dentist…and get my license…I don't know if I can try…the work visa or the resident, I'm not sure. I'm gonna see…but…I like Canada, it's a nice place and I wanna still learn…I think that gonna be my next move (T.C. Dec. 8, 2008).

Citlalli: In Mexico right now…a lot of people can't find jobs…A lot of companies start fire…Last week AT&T just fire around 10,000 people in Mexico…So if the situation in my city is hard I probably I am gonna move with my friend…I hope come back in a couple of months…But I'm not sure (T.C. Dec. 8, 2008).

Long Term Desires and Continuity

- What do participants desire in the long term?

Abel: And the other thing that I'm expecting now is to pass my TOEFL test and … take a course in university…and keep working as well. I really enjoy my work now…but I really want more English…I'm trying to remember what I took in Mexico and how to do it in Canada as well. That really makes me too excited. So that's my expectations to be in Canada longer and to take school and have a family (T.C. Nov. 10, 2008).

Abel: I can see myself having kids in Canada…And I can see myself doing what I like to be doing in Canada. I don't see myself really, going back, long term (T.C. Dec. 1, 2008).

Hope: So my future I hope my daughter and my son all of us…experience the happy day (T.C. Nov. 24, 2008) In Korea…I enjoyed my life. But I moved in here. I am so busy. Everyday I have no time. I have no life…I help my children. But, in my future, I will try another something. I want a challenge my new something. Everything I want challenge. I want get another job. I think I want doesn't waste time. Yeah. Time is very important. In future I will change another something. I wanna try it (T.C. Dec. 1, 2008).

- What gives people a sense of continuity in their lives?

Heather: I want to ask you about connective threads…If you think of your life as the past…where you were in the past, where you think you might be in the future, who knows? But where you are right now and what are the main threads that connect your life. What's the main, maybe it's one, maybe there are a few things.
Haniya: Can you give some example?
Heather: So for example…my parents…immigrated separately to Canada. They met in a small town in northern Alberta and they created a family, four kids including me…They came from huge families in Europe, in Holland, but I barely know my family…I barely know my aunts and uncles and cousins…Here in Canada I grew up with very little family…It's not, like if you're still living in the community where your parents were born. You have cousins and aunts, and uncles and grandparents, all those other people. So it's been for me only a nuclear family, but the importance of those relationships connecting my past and my future and my present. So I guess what are the threads, what threads are important? Maybe it has to do with ritual and ceremony, or, what is it that's important that kind of holds your life together, even though you're changing places. Does that make sense? It might be different for everybody (T.C. Nov. 24, 2008).

G. Sun: Connective thread with my past, always my parents. Present…and future, I think my husband important…but sometimes my sister, my sister a little help to me…and…I believe…in God (T.C. Nov. 24, 2008).

Haniya: My religion…connects my past, future, present. Wherever I will go, or wherever I will stay, it's a main, strong part of my life, my religion and after that my parents. So, these things are in me, in my soul, so I can't get rid of these things, my parents, my religion (T.C. Nov. 24, 2008). My religion…always give me energy to…do something good. And my parents…and my country. These three things are the main things which can never be changed. They will remain same for me as long as I live (T.C. Dec. 1, 2008).

Citlalli: Well, in my case I think is all the moral things that my family teach me. How my grandma, my dad, my uncles, my mom, raised me, you know. I think that's the more important for us, and its still in me…I believe in God, but I don't believe in...what is…religion?…For us it was more important, the moral, you know the moral things like, be good, and respect the old people and all that they teach me I think, like be nice, be clean…I think all the moral they teach me is all that I have (T.C. Nov. 24, 2008) And…I'm always gonna be a Mexican…I never going to forget where I from. But that don't means that I can't make a life in other place. And I always gonna have that, all that experience that I get from my family in my country…my culture and I always…proud of that, even when I know that we have hard stuff in my country…Because is a nice place…I think it's gonna be nice if somebody else know about my country too…It's like me when I'm here. I sometimes ask about Canada, right. About how is the culture in here. Some people don't know what to tell me…I always gonna have that connection about my country and my family and all that I have (T.C. Dec. 1, 2008).

Abel: I come from a native community in Mexico…And then you come here and you start hearing about how the reserves are…who came here first, how the whole story was like. That kind of connects me as well, who I am, something that will never change…Sometimes generally we have some impressions about, oh this culture is like this and this culture is like this. When I think about where I come from…we are a really rich culture place…All the things that our parents taught… us, all that we learn from all over…and how to make a living and all that stuff. I think that we start getting those values from there…That gives you understanding how to measure things. And when you come to a place like Canada…it's just like something that will never change. It's just something that you learn before and you are going to keep…all the values from that (T.C. Dec. 1, 2008).

I am pleased that everyone came, and that we went into all the questions of last week again, as well as a couple extra, about keeping healthy, and about the effect of temporary status. After Abel spoke about the importance of his native heritage, I launched into the history of Canadian Aboriginal people, from John Ralston Saul's perspective. And Citlalli spoke again about the long history of Mexico, and asked more about Aboriginal history. I tried to answer. I think they appreciated it, but maybe I got carried away. It felt like I was giving back a little bit (see Appendix B: How I Answered Participants' Questions about Canadian History) (Journal, Dec. 1, 2008).

Response to Talking Circles

- How did participants feel about the experience of the talking circles?

Abel: For me was a great chance to met people, and express my feelings, and understand…that there are more people who are going through the process of been adapting themselves to another place. However there are aspects I think are important as well, such as: How the financial situations influence their lives, or probably more personal questions that we may won`t answer as a group. Or the legal status of each of us, because, it influences the decision taking and susceptibility of people to going back to their country…It is good to share what we feel, and important to understand that wherever we do or any goals we set up, need to be realistic so we don´t get frustrated (Participant Journal, Dec. 10, 2008).

G. Sun: I think also improve my English, listening (T.C. Dec. 8, 2008).

Haniya: Was good experience…Now I can understand some more people, but not the people who are very fast. But here everyone is speaking well, even you speak well. We can understand you. And develop also some speaking power and enjoy the food you bring every Monday. It was good experience to know something about Mexico, like what you say about Portuguese, or Korea. Is a good experience. Very good experience (T.C. Dec. 8, 2008).

Citlalli: It was great for me…For me came to the classes and came to the talking circles is like have a direction with people and not only that, it's just met people from other places, cultures and know more about that places too and, and about the people, how they feeling here. This is nice here, and talk about it because…I don't have friends in the town that I live. So the only people that I talk about these things is my boyfriend and you guys. So for me is like…maybe you have something inside and you sometimes come here and, how do you say that, like exchange ideas…At the same time, to improve my English, to talk more and listen other accents… because in Canada…you need understand a lot of kind of accents, because people is from…every other country…Because in the school you just go and…listen the teacher. In our classrooms we just listen the teacher and we never, what is the word?…share? Yeah, share with everybody...I think everybody's learning to live in here…You share that experience that you have…I don't have a lot of contact with people where I live…So be around girls at the same time is like, like breathe some…It's not the same than when you talk with guys, right? So, yeah, I really pleasure be in these talks, circles. It was good experience for me (T.C. Dec. 8, 2008).

Hope: In my house…everyday I speak Korean...So I want English so…give me a chance to think in another country's thinking…I meet another country people…I want a conversation, English conversation. So, first of all this class all free. I don't

pay the money, so give me a notebook, give me a pen, every day, every Monday very good times (T.C. Dec. 8, 2008).

Citlalli: (I) learn more about the place…the art classes. We talk about the history about Canada. We talk about…little small things, like make pie…what things you can do…I learn a lot (T.C. Dec. 8, 2008).

Hope: I thought the talking circle, this differ (ESL) class. Very quiet place. Quiet, yeah, not noisy. So, I peace at each in here…Not bright, so very good mood. It give me peace and comfort. Have a good mood, very is happy time. But some times cassette tape is give me tension, so. But all over happy (T.C. Dec. 8, 2008).

Citlalli: Everybody misses home and I feel the same way sometimes, and it's good talk about it with somebody else. I talk about it with my boyfriend, but for me like woman, for me is not enough. Always is good talk about how you feel with somebody else. I think it was good. How do you say, relief? Yeah, I think sometimes you feel that pressure, or sometimes you don't want to show to your, in my case to my boyfriend, because I don't want he feel sad about how I'm feeling here. Is like, for me it is hard to tell him sometimes…I miss my home…I want to come back now. But it's not because I want to leave you. Sometimes they don't understand that stuff, but when you talk with somebody else who feel the same…I think is…You connect that (T.C. Dec. 8, 2008).

G. Sun: I a little know this town…I want to meet, I want to many people talking…I learn English and Canadian cultures (T.C. Dec. 8, 2008).

Edmilson: Me like this town. Very good class, Monday, talk circle for me. My English, is good, so so. Not very…Talk to peoples, Canada peoples, students. Yeah, is good. Obrigado. Thank you (T.C. Dec. 8, 2008).

Haniya: In this case, you help me regarding Alberta university. You help me about that, or about some volunteer work, you gave me that. So in this talking circle I just learn about the Royal Museum, the Alberta Museum…I learn from Hope, about the community centre and badminton (T.C. Dec. 8, 2008).

Hope: Everyday, almost similar subject, so I understood Canadian culture here (T.C. Dec. 8, 2008).

Haniya: I will miss this class, because I do not know anybody else, even now anyone from my country, not a single girl. Sometimes I miss some company…No friends, so…I have exchange ideas with you, Citlalli, and G. Sun…with Hope. So, all the people in our class are very good, very good. So I will miss them (T.C. Dec. 8, 2008).

Citlalli: I enjoy being here. I can't take the rock because my hands are…sticky, but, yeah. It was a pleasure being here with all you guys…It was nice for me to talk too,

and learn more about everybody. That was a good experience. I hope that help you, Heather, with your… thesis? I hope that help you a lot. To me help me too. Being here. I'm gonna cry now (T.C. Dec. 8, 2008).

Having now listened yet again painstakingly and diligently to all the talking circle tapes, I realize I am happy, in the end, to have had participants with very rudimentary English skills. I have the distinct impression that they were expressing themselves more fully by the sixth week; or perhaps it was the deeper level of relationship by then that allowed us all to better understand each other. To only have had participants with a sophisticated level of English would have been to miss some of the bluntness and awkwardness, the searching and reaching for elusive meanings and expressions, which I think characterize some of the newcomer experience. Expression is imperfect, halting, lurching, bold, timid, and yet no less profound (Journal, Jan. 7, 2009).

Sequels

Several weeks after the last talking circle, the group met one last time so that I could give them copies of their stories and transcripts as I had understood them, and to request their feedback. At that time I learned some of the follow-up to their stories, the ongoing challenges and uncertainties in their lives (see Appendix C: Sequels to Talking Circle Participants' Stories).

Overlapping Threads in the Story of the Longer Term Immigrant

There were several points of similarity between the talking circle participant stories and the story of Hélène, who had moved to this same rural community from Switzerland in the early 1970s. She too came because of relationship and family connections. Proximity to the mountains was an added draw. She lost the depth of relationship with her close knit family back home. She had challenges getting her professional credentials recognized, although her eventual acceptance was facilitated by the support of two Swiss professors at the U of A.

Hélène continues to feel challenged by functioning in a language and culture that differ from those of her origins, even though she had English

conversational fluency on arrival. She has made significant cultural adjustments to her behavior, after facing the uncertainties of what behavior might be accepted (see Appendix D: Hélène's Own Words). She has consciously chosen to make the best of her opportunities here, without making constant comparisons to life back home. Like the participants of the talking circles, she also feels and nurtures an ongoing bond with her home country and relationships, by visiting and investing there, even though she still chooses to live here.

Somewhat unlike the current newcomers, Hélène felt embraced and welcomed by her new community. She had married into a local family. Her language and teaching skills were in demand not only professionally, but led to numerous levels of civic and volunteer engagement in the community. She feels she has been able to contribute significantly to the community, especially by helping develop services for its francophone members. She found the challenge of the cold to enhance her connection with the people and the place, and though it took many years, she has also developed an emotional bond with the prairie landscape. She notes the weakened sense of belonging for herself and for the second generation, her children, in her home country (see Appendix D).

Compared to recent newcomers, it seems that Hélène's transition into the community was facilitated by more ready acceptance and supports, given her relative cultural and family closeness to the established community, and the fact that she came with immigrant status. Like recent newcomers, she also has had to negotiate cultural differences, and bonds with at least two communities.

Chapter 5: Discussion

In order to draw together my learning from this experience, I will circle back to the intention, objective, and questions for the study:

Understanding /Responding to Needs and Experiences of Rural Newcomers

The first layer of my intention was to better understand the needs and experiences of rural newcomers in order to improve our ability to be more intrinsically welcoming and inclusive. In many ways the content of this empirical data speaks for itself. It provides answers to most of my basic research questions regarding immigration experiences and intercultural learning. While the depth of the content reflects experiences unique to these individuals and their particular cultural "take" on the world, it also provides key insights, and, I think, voluminous evidence for why sharing opportunities such as talking circles are important. Particular people in particular communities who are living, breathing, and working beside each other need opportunities to get to know each other, and to learn and take delight from the ways each other plan and think and feel about life experiences.

The empirical data provides a wealth of clues from which rural communities can learn to best "leverage" their assets in order to attract and retain newcomers:

1) There is great potential for attracting people to come for educational opportunities at the K-12 level because of the promise of a safe, friendly, and reasonably low cost learning environment. The cautions related to this activity include a concern that a school board might attract newcomers because of lower costs, but then not provide an ESL system with adequate supports to allow the

students to actually achieve to their potential (see sequel to Hope's story, Appendix C). Also, the parents of young international students need their concerns addressed. If parents accompany their children, the community would do well to consider welcoming and social supports for them, including finding a way to allow the parents and/ or the children the opportunity to contribute creatively and/ or to earn money locally.

2) Newcomers seek employment and/ or training opportunities relevant to their interests and skills. They also seek social contacts, recreational activities, and health care networks. Regular focus groups using a format such as the talking circle could assist communities to find out what specific needs and interests their newcomers have, plan for those needs, direct newcomers to current resources, while at the same time providing them with a forum for building local contacts and relationships.

Biles, Burstein, & Frideres (2008) flag the need at the "umbrella" agency, or Citizenship and Immigration Canada level to track empirical indicators of integration. They list multiple indicators that, if gathered in enough communities, would help the region or the nation acquire a holistic picture of the integrative successes of immigrants. Many of the indicators on their list were reflected in this short study. If data is gathered respectfully with the permission of participants, and with adequate attention to context, the regular focus group format could also help provide clear and regular information useful for planning beyond the local level.

3) Newcomers in this study found the members of their new rural community to be, on the whole, friendly, polite, respectful, and in some instances,

helpful. However, they still experienced intense levels of isolation and loneliness. The friendliness was to some extent superficial, and there were multiple occasions of linguistic or cultural misunderstanding, and some occasions when the newcomers were apparently taken advantage of due to their vulnerability or lack of knowledge of language or cultural norms. Rural communities have an opportunity to build on that initial perception of friendliness and respect, and to foster greater openness to different cultural perceptions of the world. Getting to know the actual people who come to their communities is a start.

For this particular group of newcomers, it would have been helpful for community members or work colleagues to have taken the initiative to learn about the newcomers' different relationships to time and work expectations, their perceptions of family roles and responsibilities, and overall, to become more attuned to newcomer vulnerabilities. (What might we learn as a society if we were to consider the benefits of a more relaxed or relational approach to work tasks and schedules?) Also, employers taking on some of the responsibility for understanding intercultural differences would relieve some of the tension that their more experienced international workers carry in holding and brokering this knowledge with new workers.

4) Many rural communities currently offer some sort of supports, such as ESL or LINC tutoring or classes, community centres, and church groups. These supports can be better attuned to meet ongoing social and relational needs of newcomers. Note that the participants remarked on the overlapping but distinctive differences between the functions of ESL classes and what the talking circles

provided: ESL classes focused specifically on language acquisition, whereas the talking circles offered more opportunities to share personal experiences, to exchange conversationally, and to learn about others.

5) This group of newcomers appreciated many aspects of the natural environment of their new rural community. The established community could build on the attraction of its natural assets by providing opportunities of better access to, and understanding of the environment for its newcomers.

The data also provides evidence of multiple skills and opportunities that rural communities could benefit from, if only they got to know their newcomers:

1) Even those newcomers in "low-skilled" employment, bring a wealth of professional connections, interests, and expertise. (In the case of this group: television production, agricultural training, mathematical, business, and information technology credentials, and cinematography interests). Succeeding better at building relationships with these people can open opportunities for local skilled initiatives, as well as more international connections.

2) The desire for newcomers to have better access to cultural, art, music, and culinary resources from their home regions could lead to local co-operative or business activities.

Getting to know rural newcomers, and attempting to support them in meeting their needs enhances the likelihood that that they will pass a transition point of wanting to stay. The depth of learning here is that meaningful "retention" is achieved by building relationships.

One of the most severe impediments to making the transition to stay, for those in this study, seemed to be their isolation and vulnerability once they arrived. They seemed to be largely on their own in terms of cultural and financial survival. In the current environment, more newcomers are here on temporary arrangements. If communities are going to recruit newcomers either for work or school purposes, there needs to be a level of commitment to those relationships, both the "permanent" ones, and those that are initially "temporary". Otherwise we are giving the message that these people do not really count. As long as they are temporary, we may tell ourselves that they are going to leave, so we do not need to invest any time or energy in them. We may imagine that nothing of consequence will change after they have worked or studied here. We may forget that if they leave, they will share the experiences they have had with others in their home countries, as unofficial ambassadors of what life is like in Canada.

If we recognize that newcomers are here for a time, and may stay, we can imagine the positive consequences of their input and presence in our communities. As a first step, I believe that Citizenship and Immigration Canada, and Alberta Employment and Immigration need to review the policies behind the restrictive requirements of temporary work and visitor visas, something I will address more in a later section.

Ways and Means that Humans Create Connections / Establish Sense of Place

My second layer of research intention was to stimulate learning about ways and means that we as humans create connections and establish a sense of place. I

wondered first whether greater potential for connection with nature in rural settings impacted newcomer experiences of place.

Impact of Access to Natural Environment on Sense of Place

Overall, study participants appreciated the peace of their rural settings. However, those from urban settings missed the cultural amenities of their home cities, perhaps even more because of the quiet of their new surroundings. Those originally from rural settings showed no greater appreciation for the rural setting here than "back home". From the parameters of this study, I need to conclude that greater potential for connection with nature was secondary to other needs: for social connection and well being. As expressed by Hélène, a sense of emotional connection to the physical place seems to take time.

Transitions Through Uncertainty

In spite of uncertainties regarding their place of residence, their livelihood, and local cultural expectations, study participants found continuity in their lives through the support of their families, their religions, and the morals and values they carried within them from their home cultures. They appreciated whatever opportunities for significant social contact that were available to them here. Two or three seemed to have passed a transition point of choosing to stay, while the others were on a continuum of intending to return to their original homes, or considering letting go of that primary connection. Two participants in the study, Haniya and Hélène, made the transition to choose rural Alberta as their new "place" because of a most significant relationship in their lives. Abel seems to have made the choice after several years of weighing the pros and cons, and finally feeling a base of

significant connections here. Building connections and relationships in the new place seem key to making a transition. In the face of uncertainties, it seems it is the degree of intention that modulates.

In partial answer to the question of how transience or uncertainty impacts sense of place, a rereading of the history of Alberta shows how "impermanent" much of the settlement experience of newcomers has been.

Rereading Immigration History and Statistics

In revisiting Alberta's history of migration, I became aware of how much "unsettledness" actually characterized early 20th century "settlement". The prairie population from the 1860s to the 1940s was characterized by emigration as much as immigration. In rural areas, forty to forty five percent of homestead agreements failed because homesteaders could not, or chose not, to meet the contract agreements (Friesen, 1984). Friesen records one estimate that fewer than half of the original two million European immigrants to the prairies were still here by 1931. In other words, numbers of emigrants back to the United States or to Europe in the early twentieth century were comparable to or exceeded the number of people moving in. Many folks came, tried out the lifestyle for a few years, and then left again.

At closer look, immigration statistics show that a vast number of immigrants were transient young men who drifted according to where jobs could be found – in railway construction, coal mines, or logging camps. Many were "paupers" or "navvies", who were recruited as labourers. Though not always single, they would not demand or expect good working conditions (Friesen, 1984), and

they often did not settle or stay. Transience or impermanence, then, has made up an important piece of the immigration puzzle over the decades of Alberta's population growth.

In light of the talking circle experiences, I began to take greater note of the recent TFW statistics in Alberta. Numbers have been rising exponentially in Alberta (at least until the economic downturn of 2008-2009), such that 2007 was the first year that TFW numbers exceeded immigrant numbers (over 24,000 TFW compared to just under 21,000 permanent immigrants) (Watt, Krywulak, & Kitagawa, 2008). Numbers of International Students have been rising significantly as well. (We know that close to 14,000 post secondary International Students were studying in Alberta in 2007, but I do not have the numbers for K -12 students) (Watt, Krywulak, & Kitagawa, 2008). To add to the "impermanence" of the current climate:

> A 2006 Statistics Canada study found that a significant proportion of skilled immigrants who come to Canada are later lured away by opportunities elsewhere. Of the cohort of migrants entering Canada in the skilled worker and business [permanent] classes, for example, forty percent moved on within the first ten years. (Watt, Krywulak, & Kitagawa, 2008, p. 7)

I was well aware of rising TFW numbers through my work, yet somehow still expected to connect with "immigrants" during this study. I expected to meet people who had already made a decision to stay, or commit, or settle in their new rural area. Instead, only one of the participants that I was able to recruit actually had permanent status, and that status did not translate into permanence with regard to

the rural area where she resided. I seemed to carry a myth of what it means to "settle" in rural Alberta.

My consideration of the temporary status, experiences, and treatment of the participants in this study led me to a further consideration of Canadian immigration history.

Immigration History: From Racist to Classist Policies

Early immigrants to the land now known as Canada, including Alberta, were by and large the poor people of European society (Friesen, 1984; Palmer & Palmer, 1985). They were the peasants and labourers, or disinherited who had nothing to lose by trying out life on a new continent. During the period of "nation-building", national immigration policies intentionally tried to populate the west with hard-working white skinned folks who would have the drive, and some knowledge, to stick with tough rural living conditions (Palmer & Palmer, 1985). The well established European elites, other than the young and/ or adventurous, had nothing to gain by such an enormous displacement.

In the 1960s and 1970s, Canada replaced its policy of recruiting immigrants from "preferred" source countries, with a policy of recruiting immigrants with "preferred" educational and economic status. We instigated a system whereby applicants gained "points", mostly according to age, education, work experience, and knowledge of English or French (Mulder and Korenic, 2005; Palmer & Palmer, 1985). This policy effectively ensured that the majority of immigrants coming from non-traditional source countries in Asia, the Indian sub-continent, Central and South America, Africa, and the Middle East have been of somewhat privileged

social classes. Seventy percent of immigrants to Canada in 2001 came under this "Economic" class. Yet we expect these well educated newcomers to put up with our reluctance to accept their actual credentials and qualifications. We have expected them to put up with a recent pattern of declining financial success (Alboim, 2002; Biles, Burstein & Frideres, 2008; Mulder and Korenic, 2005).

Our much lauded shift to a more "open" immigration system ignores the fact that we shun would-be immigrants of less educated, less privileged classes from any continent. We chant a repeating theme of recruiting "the brightest and the best" (Biles, Burstein & Frideres, 2008, p.277). Michael Ignatieff (2002), current leader of the National Liberal Party of Canada, suggests that we need to pay more attention to our Canadian "myths of welcome" (p. 3). He reflects on the fact that his own immigrant grandparents would not likely have been accepted into Canada under current immigration "standards". Fantino, a more recent first generation immigrant to Canada states that she would not have been accepted under current formal language requirements (personal communication, December 12, 2008). Come to think of it, my parents would not have been accepted. Folks of lesser educated classes who wish to immigrate to Canada nowadays are unlikely to be accepted unless they are sponsored as a family member or as a refugee. They can try to find employment in Canada under the recently growing Temporary Foreign Worker program, however they have no guarantees of continued contracts, and certainly not of being accepted as an immigrant (Byl, 2007).

Our early migration nation-building history tells us that those with the greatest propensity to migrate are those with not much to lose. Certainly many of

those early immigrants and their succeeding offspring have gone on to contribute in significant ways to the fabric of a successful nation. Are we being wise to scorn the applications for permanent residence of the labourers and workers of the world? Why are we being discriminatory toward the working classes? At least two of the participants in this study expressed sentiments of having "nothing to lose" by trying out life in Canada. They are willing to invest time and energy and innovative thinking into exploring life in this country. They are extremely motivated to do well, to create happy lives, to possibly study, and to work in areas that interest them. What more could we ask of would-be citizens?

The migration status of people in this group was so transitory, I had to question how much I associate permanence with place. As I progressed through the talking circle process, it became more and more apparent that I needed to examine some unconscious underlying notions of my own concepts of place, and sense of place, especially as I sought insights into human need for connection with place and with the land.

Revisiting my Conceptualization of Sense of Place

As a result of this research, I became aware that I had been largely imagining place as a construct wherein one feels quite settled, and has put down roots of a fairly permanent nature. After considering and realizing that none of the circle participants, nor even the immigrant of forty years had established a sense of permanent commitment to this rural place, I began to question my assumptions of place as associated with settlement.

My initial concept of sense of place conjured up something firm, something that imparts a notion of permanence or security in which to contextualize a human life. It carries with it a semi-conscious valuing of attachment to the land, specific land, or land holdings. It reminds me of the justifications I wondered about as I began to be aware of global issues in the 1970s. I heard the argument that people who were going to settle and work the land had more intrinsic rights to it than nomadic peoples who were not perceived as "productive". (This in reference to Jewish displacement of Palestinians, and sounding very similar to white justification for displacing Aboriginal and Métis communities in North America. According to Razack [2002], we use this justification to deny the exploitation and violence that was used to acquire the space). Was my personal quest for sense of place somehow confused with an unconscious valuing of proprietorship, as if ownership of land or some fixed dwelling somehow imparted connection to that land? After all, my father, of peasant laborer status in the old country, worked extremely hard for the right to "plant his feet under his own table" every night after a day's honest work.

I grew up on this soil with white privilege, taking for granted my rights and my place as the child of respected European settlers who were active in community and church affairs, and running a successful farm. Was my sense of place shaken by losing the family farm when my elderly father had to retire? Was my sense of place perhaps never very strong because of the lack of family history, connections, or rooted-ness in this place? Was it shaken when intercultural experiences challenged my notions of "what is"? Was it shaken by my questioning of Christian, and then

capitalist ideology? Was it shaken by realizing more and more that my presumptions of normalcy were built on constructions of meaning that were no more solid than transitory land ownership, or specific cultural and religious regimes? So what then does it mean to "have a sense of place"?

Insights into Community and Sense of Place from an Aboriginal Perspective

I found Claudine Louis' perspective on community to be particularly instructive. According to Claudine (personal communication, December 9, 2008), community is not just a little land base, or one home. It is based on relationships at four levels:

- with self and with anything that holds spirit
- with others that are close, such as family and friends
- with people that I have a passion with, related to my path in life
- with the whole world

Community then begins with the person and spirals out to the larger world, so sustainability is always important, is paramount in fact. She says that the North American continent known to Aboriginals as Turtle Island is a place meant to be shared. However,

> Claudine: We're all connected to a land space in this world somewhere…And when you're connected to a land space you stand firm, you know, you're grounded. You know who you are. When you're not connected to the land space, you're not grounded. You don't know who you are. A lot of our own people, because of my own Aboriginal ancestry, some of my relatives and my family, when they don't know their own history, they're not connected to the land space. And then they're not firm in who they are… It's a gap that I found that needs to be addressed in order for people to start standing firmer. And it's not standing firmer to trample or stand on top of you. And that's the misconception of settlers who've come here, because they did it in a way to stand on top of and to trample on top of others. And even that behaviour, there's consequences to that behaviour.

Claudine: There's callings, and we all have a connection to a land space…So if more people would take, would be open hearted about that, then they, there could be more healing that could go on. Because there were some, and there are some of our ancestors that did come here with the intention of trampling over and, you know, monopolizing, and that kind of…

Heather: When you say, our ancestors, who do you mean…?

Claudine: Our ancestors, like ancestors, like everybody's, you know, those individuals that have that attitude. You know, that, to hurt, or to monopolize, or, you know, colonize, whatever word you want to use, and there needs, we need to undo some of that and that will continue until those of us that are strong enough, and it could be generations yet in our own families, generations yet, to stop that, so that healing could be done so that we could get connected once again.

Claudine: It's a serious, serious tragedy. So I'm trying to undo some of that, you know. It's important to go back to the history and it's important in your work, that you know the history of this whole land base. Because that has been invisible in the minds of people coming to this land, you know. So that's what I have to share with you… and find a way to work with it (Interview, Dec. 9, 2008).

Claudine's words help to contextualize the whole puzzle of individuals trying to find meaningful connection with self and community on this planet. She points to the link between colonizing or dominating behaviors, and the fact that we are experiencing disconnection with our history and land spaces.

The Need to give "Place" to Aboriginal History on North American Soil

As I listened to myself on the tape responding to participant questions about Canadian history (see Appendix B), I was struck by some of the passion (and even anger) that I felt, having been born and growing up in Canada. I realized how shallow had been my Canadian historical education, and that I felt short-changed about the real depth and history of this, my birth and homeland. I had grown up with the unvoiced assumption that my "Indian" neighbors and classmates were quite inconsequential. I certainly had no comprehension of their ancestral roots, nor the many factors induced by white colonization that had impacted their lives, their

perceived poverty or lack of academic and financial success. In later years we made a societal move toward treating them with tokenism, but it is only after many decades of Aboriginal groups standing up for themselves that finally we are beginning to show some respect and acknowledgment for the significance of their history, our awful role in their more recent history, and the value and contributions of their distinctive ways and views.

My growing appreciation for Aboriginal worldview opened me perhaps to embrace the thesis of Saul's (2008) recent book "A Fair Country", which makes the point that much of our national moral fabric is really born of two and a half centuries of métissage of the incoming white population: the earliest European immigrants learned values such as egalitarianism and fairness from their First Nations counterparts, and their children learned these and other values from their Aboriginal mothers. Saul claims that it is only in the last century and a bit that we took a very destructive Euro-centric turn in our myths about our heritage, and began claiming a short history of this country, and status only for the recently arrived whites.

For the purpose of this thesis, the more important insight for me, as a second generation immigrant, is that perhaps we need to pay more attention to the need for a grounded sense of history for the people born of this place. First generation migrants, such as the participants of this study, and such as my parents, have a birth connection to a place that is imbued with history. As expressed by almost every participant, including the long term immigrant, Hélène, that origin provides an enduring sense of continuity in their lives. Perhaps what is lacking in

my life (and maybe the lives of other second and third generation Canadians) is a depth of knowledge of the roots of this place we were born. Perhaps that was part of my unconscious motivation for this thesis.

Trustworthy Relationships

After the talking circle when participants spoke so much about the respect that they perceived in Canada, for things like traffic laws, and courtesy toward customers and pedestrians, I found myself reflecting on the interpersonal ethic that I have developed, as a second generation Canadian who grew up in rural Alberta:

I will do my best to treat you with open hearted courtesy, and with my mind open to understand the differences between us. When I know you well enough to believe in your trustworthiness, I will treat you with deep respect, and expect that the feeling will be mutual (Journal, Nov. 11, 2008).

Canada has likely caught on to something important by building a reputation in the world for at least superficial layers of respect (maybe what Razack [2002] calls "the legendary niceness of European Canadians, their well-known commitment to democracy" p. 4).

Deeper layers of disrespect and disregard for some groups of humanity contaminate our history however, including disregard for Aboriginal people and appropriation of their lands, reluctance to welcome non-white races, and most recently, our treatment of lesser educated working classes. As long as we consider others to be inconsequential, or we look to "make use" of them for our own purposes rather than acknowledge first our equal humanity, we are perpetuating a disconnection, a lack of relationship, commitment, or responsibility.

As the interpersonal ethic I articulated for myself points out, this is not a one way responsibility – the openness to learn and develop trust needs to be present

on each side of a mutual relationship, and trustworthiness needs to be established in order to take the relationship deeper. Without going beyond the superficial layers of respect however, and working to eliminate the structures of dominance whereby one group disregards, takes advantage of, or perpetuates overt or covert violence against another, I do not believe we will reach the level of connection that many of us, including newcomers, seek.

Final Research Question

Have the experiences of recent migrants to a rural Alberta community provided insights into a need or manner by which we develop sense of place? Inasmuch as sense of place is established through building relationships with ourselves, with family, friends, and outward to our whole environment (to "all our relations", as North American Aboriginal Elders would say), the talking circle participants in this study seemed to have significant tension in their lives regarding sense of place in this new setting. From the participants, and from the many background readings of this study, however, I gather that migration in and of itself is not the main challenge to well developed sense of place.

Two critical realities seem to create the greatest threats to a healthy set of relationships and sense of place, at least on this continent: an economic system that seeks capital gain regardless of localized community or worker concerns; and unconscious or conscious cultural norms and biases that hold power to disregard others, including a disproportionate societal focus on individual interests.

What are some of the ways we can promote a healthier sense of place? What means are available to us, specifically in the context of welcoming rural newcomers?

Recommendations

Foster Opportunities for Newcomers to Build Relationships

Talking circle processes have been shown to play a significant role in strengthening indigenous communities that already exist (Martin, 2001; Wilson, 2004). I feel talking circles also show enormous potential for creating community where none initially exists. Certainly the participants of this study expressed appreciation for the brief role the talking circles played in their lives. By setting the parameters and expectations of respectful, non-judgmental listening, the process offers a foundation for a group to form bonds, create trust, and, if they continue to meet, to subsequently strengthen these relations. Lorraine Sinclair initiated a process such as this to create community among strangers (Martin, 2001), as did Graveline (1998). For newcomers who need to build meaningful connections in their new community, taking the effort to set up intentional talking circles could provide them with a lifeline. The experience would be equally rich for established community members who might join.

If led by Aboriginal community members, or with the blessings of Aboriginal elders, ceremonial aspects of preparing the space to acknowledge the spiritual (not religious or dogmatic) (Claudine Louis, personal communication, December 9, 2008) dimensions and meanings of gathering in this way could also be incorporated.

Listen and Respond to Newcomer Needs

Hold regular focus groups, forums, or talking circles to hear what newcomers are experiencing, so that they can be referred to existing resources, so that the community can creatively respond to and with the newcomers, and better plan at a local and regional level.

Build Relationships with Newcomers

I invite established members of rural communities to join in cycles of discourse with newer or "marginal" members, and nurture attentive and mutually respectful social relations. Attentive discourse that follows talking circle principles of non-judgmental listening provides opportunities to understand and work with cultural differences.

As outlined by Graveline, and related in the section on "Characteristics and Cautions of the Talking Circle", there are some hazards associated with these apparently simple processes. Participants need to be reminded to share only to the extent that they feel trust and comfort in the group. Real or perceived power differences between individuals, roles, or cultures represented in the group can lead to misunderstandings that get entrenched or enflamed as long as members of the group are unwilling or unconscious of how to suspend reactive judgments towards that which we do not understand. Community trust and relationships can be built up gradually, and it can be expected that there may be honeymoon phases as well as much more challenging phases as people build the trust to hear each other at deeper levels.

As presented earlier through the work of Arlene Stairs (Fettes, 1999), the narratives of others can assist us to reflect upon and modify our own goals and actions. Stairs' optimism about the potential for evolving cultural relations in the context of Canadian indigenous groups can perhaps be transferred to our potential with newcomers. There is opportunity for a negotiated experience wherein all participants learn and evolve, especially if we are willing to recognize the role of the dominant discourse systems, consider power relations, and move beyond superficial layers of exchange. As members of the established communities, we have a responsibility to respect the greater vulnerability of newcomers, negotiate our relative power with conscience, and be willing to build trust. Stairs sees the levels of cultural negotiation as progressing in meaning from language and content, through environmental and social relationships, to changes in values and worldview.

Facilitate Options for Migrants with Temporary Status

At a local level, perhaps municipalities, employers, and school boards can dialogue with and about actual temporary foreign worker and student group situations. Look for welcoming strategies that are respectful and responsive to misunderstandings or insecurities that might be experienced on all sides: by the workers, students, parents, and/ or by their employers, workmates, schoolmates, and teachers.

At the policy level, question the logic that restricts work visas for visitors, and that typically makes people leave the country in order to apply for work or permanent resident status. In today's global context these historical controls seem

ill-advised for at least a couple of reasons: a) it seems irresponsible to require global travel that unnecessarily increases our carbon footprint, and b) if we want to attract and retain committed citizens, it is not a good strategy to discourage and send away those folks who have actually tried living here and have passed a transition point of wanting to stay. Rather, we should be encouraging and welcoming these people, and facilitating the process for them to stay. Recent immigration changes to create a "Canadian Experience Class", and to allow International Students more working opportunities are federal policy moves in the right direction. The creation of the Alberta Immigrant Nominee Program is a move in the right direction on the provincial front. These measures do not go far enough however, and regulations remain cumbersome and restrictive (Watt, Krywulak, & Kitagawa, 2008). The recent Conference Board of Canada report on "Renewing Immigration" (Watt, Krywulak, & Kitagawa, 2008) outlines numerous recommendations and supports for streamlining Canada's immigration system so that migrants on temporary status face less bureaucracy, benefit from more rights and transparency regarding their contracts, and can better access permanent residency.

Teach Aboriginal History to Newcomers and Children Born Here

Bring Aboriginal educators into our K-12 schools, and into our LINC and ESL classes for adults. Give newcomers and children born here the opportunity to learn a full and respectful history of this place.

An Opportunity to Blend Cultural Learning and Recreate a Sense of Place

Readings by authors such as Lindemann Nelson (1995), hooks (1997), Lorde (1996), and Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, (1986) lead me to

consider that I am healing from growing up in an individualist society, dislocated by economic systems that disregard our communities and our physical relationship to the land. It is partly this personal and social history, and its setting, that have driven my inquiry into sense of place. For me, as for Lindemann Nelson, the "answer" lies not in "returning" to any rigidly defined concept of human community, nor to collectivist values that belie individualism (which are partly what my parents were trying to escape from in their old country). The answer, I believe, lies in a mid ground where we can negotiate our meanings and our relationships with ourselves and with others.

My initial research interest focused on the individual experiences of immigrants, and the learning that we could gain from better understanding new members of our communities. I now see more clearly that discursive cycles of learning are integral to community development. The learning process has an impact on the collective. It seems that we live at an exciting historical juncture in which we have the opportunity to blend the more positive aspects of individualism with the values of collectivism, in our attempts to create a more holistic society. At its best, an individualist upbringing develops critical thinking skills and an ability to understand different relative points of view, whereas the strength of a collectivist upbringing seems to be that the well-being of the group is considered fundamental to both the group and the individual. Perhaps we are now in a position where individualists can mature beyond the selfishness that brands so much of our approach to the world, and collectivists can develop greater appreciation for the perspectives of groups other than our own. Perhaps together we can create more

healthy bonds of authentically attentive community, that also respect our connection with the places and the environments we inhabit, and stand up to the harmful disconnecting tendencies of capitalist economics.

Links to Adult Education and Democracy

Wiebe (2001) and Epp (2001) write, from a rural Albertan perspective, about the role of sustainable connection to place and the need to recreate community democracy. They see these as crucial in tempering the destructive influences of globalization. Educational writers such as Apple (2004) and Giroux (2003), among others, point with urgency to the predominant influences of competitive individualism in our economic and educational institutions. They challenge and urge us to flesh out critically and culturally aware policies and practices for adult education, which will enhance democracy and the common good. Democracy requires the trust engendered by civic relations (Putnam, 2002; Mawhinney, 2004). Discursive cycles of listening and reflecting, such as that ventured in this study, have the potential to strengthen understanding and trust in a diverse population. Talking circles can provide a pedagogical entry point into adult learning, cultural negotiation, and community development processes in our rural communities.

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Appendix A: Guiding Questions for Talking Circles and Journals

Developing a Sense of Place in Rural Alberta:
What are your experiences?

Each talking circle session will consist of three rounds:
- the first for each participant to respond to the guiding question,
- the second round for deepening or reflecting on each other's responses,
- and a final round for closure before sharing refreshments.

You may want to bring one small item or picture to the first session, which somehow represents where you come from/ or where you are now.

First **Date:** *(November 3, November 10, 2008)*

Where did you come from and how did you come to be here?
- stories of departure
- motivation for migration
- what led you to rural Alberta
- expectations

SecondDate: *(November 17, 2008)*

What experiences have challenged, supported, or surprised you as you have been learning to live in this place?
- points of tension and transition in the new social and/ or natural environment

Third **Date:** *(November 24, December 1, 2008)*

How do you feel about your life here and now? What have you learned, gained, lost, created, or compromised in adapting to this new place?
- connective threads with your past or future
- what decisions have you come to

Last **Date:** *(December 8, 2008)*

How do you feel about the experience of these talking circles?
Has this process contributed to your sense of place?
How would you like to move forward from here?

Appendix B: My Answers to Participants' Questions about Canadian History

(After Abel's sharing about his Mexican Aboriginal heritage and values…)

Heather: I'm reading a book right now by a white guy, a white Canadian, John Ralston Saul. Anyway he's quite well known in Canada. But he's written a book just this year about how Canada, really very many of our values were formed because of our long native heritage. Because for two and a half centuries when the first whites came, they came and it was cold, they didn't know how to survive and they were hunting, they were travelling by foot, they were very reliant on the Aboriginal communities here, and there was a lot of intermarriage for two and a half centuries, right. Many, most of the Canadians were mixed whites from Europe with native Americans. So we have a strong Métis background in this country that we've forgotten, because in the 19th century, 20th century actually, so many more people, so many more Europeans came, a lot more Europeans came, a bigger wave of immigration, and they said, no this is like little Europe and we're just like Europeans and we're going to have a British government and a French government in Quebec and they created I guess, status. You had greater status if you were European. But he's saying that really, and that's been for the last hundred years, but that underneath that there is, we have a strong tradition that is really powerfully influenced by our native history, and that intermarriages and the values and things like circles and things like mutual respect and being polite, and all those things. So, it's just a very interesting current book in Canada. He's trying to bring back that awareness (T.C. Dec. 1, 2008).

Citlalli: Do you know something about the Indians in Canada?

Heather: A little bit.

Hope: What?

Heather: I know you said before that you were interested and wanted to know more about it. Yes, I know a little bit…

Citlalli: In Mexico …they teach us the history world, but they teach us the Mexican history, and is longer like the world history. So I have the idea then in every country is like that, but now I'm here and I feel that it's not like that, because I always ask some people and they don't know a lot.

Heather: Well the history…because I grew up in Canada…I learned more history of Europe than I learned history of Canada and the history that I learned about the Aboriginal people, it was taught to us that, oh the whites came and they took advantage of the Indians. The whites took… They sold them guns and they brought smallpox and all of that is true, but the way that we were taught it, it was as if the natives weren't really very smart, right. We took advantage of them, they weren't smart enough to realize we were taking advantage of them, and … so, the history

that I learned was that we, the whites were bad in the way we took advantage of the natives, but really the natives aren't very smart right, because, because they let it happen. They had to bring, they had to pile up the furs to the height of a rifle in order to buy the rifle and they got taken advantage of and we took their land, and they signed away their land with treaties. So that was the history that I learned as a child in Canada, it had no depth. Now…

Citlalli: Nothing before?

Heather: No nothing from before.

Citlalli: Because in our history, our history start before the Spain come…A thousand years before, so… clearly I have a wrong idea about the history of other places…

Heather: It's not that... I don't think that you have a wrong idea of the history. It's just that in Canada it's very shallow, because when more white immigrants started to come, we ignored everything before. We thought only our history is important and it's not that there isn't history, it's just that we don't talk about it or we don't understand. We don't share it. So now I understand much more that the native communities in Canada had a completely different value system, and that's why they wanted to trust. They wanted to understand the whites who were coming and they were willing to make agreements. It was the whites who were …, it's not that they were less smart at all, it just that they had a more, on some levels a more noble value system…Because it was a much more egalitarian society, whereas the French and the English came and there were the extremely rich people and the extremely poor people. And that wasn't the case for the Aboriginal populations. Everybody took care of everybody.

Hope: How many Aboriginal in here now?

Heather: One and a half million or one point two million, but it's growing. At the end of the 19th century, after small pox, a disease that wiped out so many people there were only a hundred thousand. So when the whites first came in the sixteen hundreds, they estimate there were about two million native Americans in Canada, and it grew somewhat, but then it just was wiped out. The population was wiped out because of whites taking over the land, destroying livelihood, all the buffalo. The livelihood was made from buffalo for all the plains natives and that was wiped out. And then small pox, small pox came over and whole populations were decimated. So, but from a hundred thousand, about a century ago, or a hundred and twenty years ago…now we're at one point two million in Canada. So it's growing again. And I think a lot more people have Metis background that don't acknowledge it, you know. I know that I don't because my two parents came from Holland in 1950: 1920s for my dad and 1950s for my mom, so I know that I don't, but a lot of Canadians do.

Heather: There have been native Aboriginal Canadians, they weren't Canadians back then, but people have lived here for at least twelve thousand years. It's usually understood (by whites), it's been about twelve thousand years in Canada. But it was an oral history, it still is an oral history and we've spent the last hundred years trying very hard to decimate the history. You must have heard about the residential schools, and I didn't even know this as a kid growing up, but… starting at the end of, again the nineteenth century, when the population was so low, there were about a hundred thousand natives all around Canada. The government said, well obviously they're all dying…so the ones who are left, we'll make them white. We'll just educate them in our schools. We'll educate them in residential school. We'll take them away from their parents so that they learn to be white. They'll learn white values. They'll learn about property ownership, and all those things. And so for a hundred years it was illegal for native people to have their traditions, it was illegal for them to have spiritual practices of their own. It was illegal for them to speak in their own language. For seventy five years it was illegal. And all of the children were taken from their parents and kept for months at a time and educated by Catholic and Anglican… in religious schools, usually run by, usually Christian schools. So their intentions were good, but they separated them from their families, and the children lost their language, they lost their culture, they lost their spiritual traditions. They lost everything. And (the people) were put on reserves, so they were given little tiny bits of land, but the reserves were all separate from each other right? The chiefs, the leaders of the native groups wanted the reserves at least to be touching each other, so they could have community, so that the wild life could get from one place to another, but the Canadian government made them be separate. They had to get permission to leave the reserves. It was really very controlled…But at schools they didn't teach us that. They didn't teach us that as children growing up…We just learned that the Indian kids were not quite so smart. I was born in 1960 and the first, the very first native children who were accepted into the white schools… because there were residential schools from the late 18 hundreds …That was the way that they were educated for 75, 80 years, that was the way that native kids were educated. They were separated from their families. It was only in about 1960 that they started to educate native children in white schools, but they were a minority. They were separated all, most from their families again. So I started school in 1966 and there were native kids in the schools. But I didn't know as a child that they had never been in our schools before. I didn't know that these kids didn't have a family like my family. Anyway…So the kids in the school, they were very marginalized, they didn't do well, all those things. But they're starting to do much better now, starting to regain. I think we're starting to learn as a Canadian culture to value the native background, and the native values. Because for about a hundred years we were just trying to wipe it out. That's a big part of our history. Anyway, I've talked a lot.

Citlalli: That's good to know (T.C. Dec. 1, 2008).

Appendix C: Sequels to Talking Circle Participants' Stories

Haniya had taken the only job she could find within walking distance of her house. It was working in the meat department of the local grocery store for minimum wage. The work was heavy and cold, and involved working hours opposite to her husband's hours, so that they rarely saw each other. She was committed to staying with the job to earn some money to contribute to the household and to her eventual study plans. She also recognized the very intensive investment of time her supervisor had made to train her, and did not want to disappoint this person. The rest of the circle members and I cautioned her to not get stuck long term in this work…

G. Sun was in the process of moving her family into a home with lower rent. She had misunderstood the requirement to give a full month's notice at her old place however, and had given exactly four weeks notice. Her old landlord was threatening to hold her responsible for the next full month's rent, which was creating a huge financial stress for her…

Hope's husband was here for an extended visit and was driving their son every weekend to sessions with a tutor they had found more than an hour away. They felt he needed the extra help to try and ensure success in his exams. Hope was not getting much opportunity to actually see her husband…

Citlalli had found Ricardo on-line, and learned that he was mostly unemployed in Mexico, but had occasional contract work. He was looking for another opportunity to come to Canada…

Abel was unable to attend the circle because he had just been fired by his employer of almost three years. He was looking for other work in agriculture, and contributed his last thoughts to the process via email…

Citalli had about ten days left on her visitor visa and was very intently putting in job applications, mostly at fast food establishments that would be handy to her boyfriend's driving route to work. She had hopes that one employer, in consultation with his lawyer, was going to be able to sign a temporary work contract with her. If not, she would go back to Mexico as planned. I had found a TFW recruiting agency with a good reputation that she might apply for work in Canada with, but she would have to go through the process from Mexico…

Edmilson was excited because another student from Brazil was going to begin the next semester at the same high school. He was going to go with the school group to meet him at the airport. He was also excited to find out that my daughter was about to leave on a six month study trip to Brazil…

Appendix D: Hélène's Own Words

Hélène: I have lost some of the contextual references that are the constant of my family and friends in Switzerland. That means our connection is a bit more superficial and I have a wish to get more involved there when I go every summer, and not just be the visitor.

Hélène: It caused me some grief to face a situation of seeming rejection when my expectations were very clear that I would fit in… and fit in the professional world of teaching French. So that was maybe the hardest thing.

Hélène: Professionally, I read mostly in French, and so I miss some of the connections that happen because people don't read the same things as I read.

Hélène: It took me many years to get emotionally attached to the flat prairie, or to the few grain elevators that would acquire meaning emotionally because of events that were experienced within that landscape. But what drew me immediately more than the flat prairie was of course the mountains.

Hélène: I consciously, I made an effort not to judge one comparing it to the other… to Switzerland… consciously setting myself into this new slice of life… I really was … making the best out of opportunities that arose and I must say that there were many, maybe it's because I was looking for them.

Hélène: I realized and eventually accepted that the more expressive ways of the society and the family I had been raised in, meaning emotional expression of how you feel and what you think, which was fairly extrovert … had to be more reserved because of the, not fear, but uncertainty as to how dominant a person you would be. This is because of the circle that I met here, people who were more discrete in their reactions, would express less, would be less extrovert, and realizing myself that rather than keeping my possibly overwhelming personality because of the local context, I adopted consciously a way of being more considerate and fitting in the level of expressivity … I find certain surroundings as still a bit foreign and needing on my part a kind of acting my role more than being truly what I would instinctively feel I want, I am, and that's in terms of being…, well expressive, or intervening, or bursting out, or saying certain things. I hold back and think out and am more cautious in English and possibly in certain groups here than I would have been in French in the original context that was instinctively familiar to me.

Hélène: At the beginning I would stare just so I could understand everything, but I noticed that the reaction at the other end was one of unease and so for the sake of facilitating the relationship I consciously looked at other places and not to express a lack of interest, but for more concern for the other person.

Hélène: The whole area of our children being from a Swiss mother but only experiencing that context when they are on holidays …means that they are

perceived and then, myself, I feel I'm being perceived as being from the outside. So that sense of belonging is weakened at the next generation, but reflects on myself in my original country.

Hélène: After 40 years in this country I see myself belonging here and being involved … in this context while keeping the close connections with Switzerland… so I go to Switzerland also every year. So we can still afford this transition of being back and forth. It's like an added dimension to my belonging here, so maybe secondary, well primary roots that have become secondary over the last 40 years.

Hélène: I hope to, in some way to regain, although you can never regain, but to develop in new ways by doing things with people from Switzerland… We've done renovations for the last 13 years and we have some partners in owning that place … It allows a whole new area of relationship in southern France and of having my family and friends come down there and reconnect around that new centre of activities for us.

Hélène: We find ourselves very tied down to here, both to people, to activities, and we're not going to move away from here, at least in the near future. So … the decision is to remain here in spite of say weather, or certainly we can go in third world countries and …do development projects in the months that are not so pleasant here. So the issue of weather may drive us to different places and create new opportunities, but not to the point of leaving all the roots that have been built through 35 years of involvement locally.

Heather: I hear you deciding really to build … meaningful connections to at least three places … So a complex web of kinds of relationships to places and communities (Interview, Dec. 2, 2008).