University of Alberta

A Healthy Journey:

Indigenous Teachings that Direct Culturally Responsive Curricula in Physical Education

By

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Abstract

This study examined the issue of culturally responsive curricula in physical education. The primary question was, "How can Indigenous knowledge inform physical education curricula, and the pedagogical practices of teachers, to create culturally responsive physical education curricula?"

Contemporary educational practice is increasingly challenged to address the unique educational needs of First Nations students by recognizing and valuing their particular ways of knowing. This recognition can lead to change, accompanied by the realization that Eurocentric curricula design is not the only way to transmit knowledge. Cultural negotiation is vital for the advancement of education curricula development (LaFrance, 2000).

Contemporary curricula in physical education, includes Aboriginal perspectives and encourages Indigenous knowledge in the context of the course. Teachers strive to accomplish this goal; however, they are often reduced to bridging "piecemeal" activities such as playing a game, or dancing a dance, with minimal connection to Indigenous knowledge; which is unknown to many educators.

This qualitative study investigated Indigenous knowledge that could inform culturally responsive curricula in physical education, and guide the creation of a working framework. Knowledge was gathered and shared through conversations between myself, five Aboriginal teachers currently working in the field, Elders, community educators, and other cultural experiences encountered by the researchers including a pow-wow, and a sweat. A working model influenced by Indigenous knowledge was created and is embedded in the symbolism of the Medicine Wheel.

Physical education is in a unique position to impact the lives of students and is the only curricula area of study that addresses the whole child: the physical, the cognitive, the affective, and the spiritual aspects. Indigenous knowledge is well placed to inform the curricula in physical education because the Aboriginal philosophy teaches to the whole child, and embraces the ideology of holism. This study shares the knowledge of the Aboriginal people in relation to physical education and also in the broader terms of health and Wellness. Aboriginal people "wrote the book" on Wellness years ago. This study provided an opportunity to respond to the call for culturally responsive curricula in physical education by bridging Indigenous knowledge with contemporary curricula.

Acknowledgements

We are all on a journey....

Where would any of us be without those who love us the most, and provide unwavering support for what we do? In some ways, the acknowledgements and the dedication of a written work are the most important pages of the writing. These acknowledgements are the closest to truths that one will encounter along this writing journey. The essence of these truths live deep within the soul and allow the spirit to soar. The interactions with those in our lives that love and support us create some of the most meaningful teachings. These experiences carry us through our cyclical journey as we continue to live life. It is with humble thankfulness that I express these thoughts to the following individuals:

To my husband, Bill: You lived the journey with me every day, deep within your heart. You are a wise and learned man who constantly shared a strong and all encompassing love. I knew from the first of many conversations shared with you about this dissertation topic that I was on the right track. I value your knowledge, insight, and attentiveness. You became both mother and father when I was busy studying. You never complained, but then, you never do. I guess that's what team work is all about. You continue to be my strength through life and I am so thankful to share everything with you.

My daughter, Lecia, and son-in-law, William: It's a good thing you had me to practice some parenting skills on! You always had the right bit of encouragement and provided the old "pull up your socks" and get going pep talk. Lecia, you've walked with me on this journey for many years and your constant encouragement was always uplifting. Your phone calls from afar just to see how I was doing, demonstrated your love and kindness that emits from you in all ways. I was nourished over our luncheons by your methodical approach to helping me look at the small pieces and not the monster that lay ahead. You are about love. Now that I am done with this piece of work, I am ready for grandchildren!

My daughter Amanda: Your spirited advice to keep going and sharing with me in the writing of your Masters thesis was a balm in itself. When you moved to Ukraine for the year, you left a void in all of us, but you left me two special gifts. Thank you for the space to write in your room, because it was there that I was inspired, and also where I remained surrounded by you. Secondly, you left me with the task to water your plant and reminded me that if I took care of it, it would help me write, and it did. What a special relationship that became. The beautiful trees outside your room reflect your love for the environment and the life and peace you bring to all those you encounter. The quiet, steady determination that you exhibit on a daily basis was a strong example to me of staying calm and keeping focused. Thank you for your unconditional love.

My daughter, Holly and son-in-law, Matt: How did we manage with the three of us vying for the computer to write our papers? As you both journeyed to graduate, we shared a common bond of support and love. Holly, when you sat and cried because your honors thesis was overwhelming, I cried with you. You hugged me just at the right times

and your quiet, tenacious determination in life is just a shining example that I always admired. I know you both beat me but I am not far behind! Let's celebrate together and enjoy our accomplishments. Thank you for your love and support in everything and I look forward to your next academic accomplishments! You both have so much knowledge, talent and love to bring to this world.

My son, John: You have traveled this road with me in your own special way. You can simply lay a hand on me and I know your loving touch is saying, "Keep going, Mom." The many times you walked into the room where I was working and generously offered a neck massage and spoke kind words of encouragement were greatly appreciated. You lent more than your hands to this family while I worked at these studies; you gave your heart and soul, as well. You have grown into a wonderful man and I am so incredibly proud to call you my son.

To my mother, siblings, friends and family who volunteered their love and support, I am truly grateful. Every kind gesture of encouragement gave me the impetus to carry on. Thank you, Wally and Joan for the gift of friendship, and the opportunity to write in the solitude of your home. It was a most productive time. Thank you everyone, for all the visits and calls while I was away in Edmonton studying. You lightened the load with your presence. Thank you, Pam for your weekly phone calls to see how it was going. You are a true sister, friend. And to Jen Tupper, my colleague and friend, you were a joy to study with everyday.

To my community of Ukrainian friends; especially Evelyn, Eddie, Angie, Luba and Alex for widening the cultural circle of my life. The laughter, endless fun, hard work, and festivities filled a longing in my heart and nourished this paper more than you'll ever know.

To my advisor, Nancy Melnychuk: Thank you for your continued support on this journey. Nancy, you have become colleague and friend. I appreciate your consideration of the forces of life and your constant understanding when life got in the way of productivity. You always encouraged and supported. Your wise and timely council was insightful, prompt, and kind. Your own life is a reflection of sensibility and caring inside this demanding world.

To my committee members, and examiner, I am grateful for your wise council. Dr. Stan Wilson, who taught me: patience, how to listen, the joy of laughter, and the gift of knowledge. Dr. George Richardson, who taught me about the messiness of research and challenged me to think deeply about research; to Dr. Fern Snart who graciously agreed to join my committee and provide wisdom and guidance, thank you for your commitment to my work. Thank you to Dr. Joannie Halas for your professionalism and insightful contribution to this work throughout the examination process. I appreciate your time, attention to detail, and wisdom in responding to my work.

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Thanks especially to Florence Glanfield, Jay Wilson, Janet McVittie, Angela Ward, Lynn Lemisko, Ralph Fram, Lenna Balon, Reg Fleming, Bev Pain, Jessica Latshaw, Teresa Paslawski and Len Gusthart (College of Kinesiology).

To my Aboriginal friends and colleagues, my cultural guides and all of the Aboriginal people who touched my life throughout this journey of knowledge. I am a better person for having learned from you.

A special thanks to Elder Rose who unknowingly gave me the title to this dissertation with through her gentle and kind wisdom. The moment you said, "we are all on a healthy journey," I knew that was the soul of this work.

Most of all, I give thanks to God for blessing me with all of you. I am thankful for the gifts of knowledge, curiosity, health, perseverance, love, and laughter. It was the Lord's plan that I should journey here and it was this Divine love that provided the silent wings to guide and carry. May my life reflect His greatness and the gifts He has given to me.

Lastly, to Spooky, our silly, old, black cat. He was my writing companion and many times would lay across my books to help me "tink". His writing style was a bit unorthodox but did provide comic relief and his purring reminded me of life's simple pleasures. The last thing Spooky said to me in his pompous manner as I closed the book on this paper was, "So, now dat dis ting is done, what now?"

Good question....let's look to tomorrow for the guided answer.

Dedication

To Dad

You have always loved the pursuit of knowledge.

I have learned many of life's lessons from you.

I chuckle when I think of the games we played together: like vocabulary and phonics!
How valuable these have become.

You have been in my heart throughout this journey.

Now Dad, it is time to kill the fatten calf and have the celebration feast.
Be with us.

Love Brenna
#1

Preface

It is important to understand the context of this research while reading through this document. The terms First Nations, Métis, Inuit, Indigenous, Aboriginal, Indian, people, and peoples have been used throughout the writing. This is due to the direct quotes used from the literature, and indirect references made from other speakers and writers. Over the years different terminology has been used in reference to First Nations people. The working term that I have used in this research is Aboriginal to denote all First Nations peoples and recognize First Nations, Inuit and Métis as distinct societies. The singular version of "people" does not imply that First Nations, Métis and Inuit, are one group with the same ethos, values and knowledge systems and beliefs. Each Aboriginal group is respected for its uniqueness, independence, and personal identity. There is no suggestion of universality and the respect for diversity should be at the heart of the reading.

The knowledge I was privileged to within this research process was a gift given to me by those individuals who shared their life's experiences and knowledge with me. They granted me permission to borrow the knowledge and use it for the good of our work together. The collaborative relationship that we shared is at the heart of this combined effort to seek, and understand to a greater extent, the challenge of culturally responsive curricula. I remained respectful of their knowledge at all times and every effort was made to be true to their words, and to reflect their thoughts and beliefs.

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CHAPTER 1

Prayer of Thanksgiving

I wish to begin sharing this journey of experience with a prayer of thanksgiving.

Most importantly, I give thanks to the Creator for the gift of life that provides us with endless opportunities to live and learn with each other. The Creator's timing is always impeccable. There is a time and a season for all things, and when we are ready we are taken to the next stage of our journey and we see more clearly. If we are patient and pray, we know that all good things will come. When we reach these "times" it is like an epiphany. Writing this paper has not been without struggle, confusion, and set backs. However, when I reflect on the experiences that writing this paper has provided to me I am very grateful.

I am most grateful for my Aboriginal friends, colleagues, teachers, and students who have taught me in some ways, through their sharing and example, what it means to live and think, as an Aboriginal person. Their thoughtful, caring, and humorous natures have led me through this journey. Their wisdom is a balm to the spirit as we grow together in understanding life and knowledge, and how the two impact each other.

I am grateful for the time the Creator has given me to share this story in written form. I will acknowledge this gift by carefully telling this story with honesty and thankfulness. I do not claim to be an expert on Aboriginal education, nor do I claim generalized truths through our conversations. Rather, I humbly give thanks for the knowledge we have shared and created together.

This is a story of re-searching that is centered on conversations of possibilities in relation to holism and physical education from an Aboriginal perspective, and how these

possibilities could direct culturally responsive curricula in physical education. Our knowledge grew from conversations, personal experience and reading. I am thankful to all of these people who have shared their knowledge and allowed me the gift to interpret and use the knowledge. They have taught me that once they have shared the knowledge, I must use it, make it my own, and continue to share it with others. They were honored that I would do so. I was humbled by their graciousness.

So, in the spirit of thanksgiving, please journey with us.

O Great Creator,
We praise and thank you
For all blessings.
May our lives be enriched
By your great gifts
O Great Creator.

Help our hearts grow
With respect and humility
For all.
Fill our minds with wisdom
And understanding of the work
We must do for you.

Remind us to love
And be patient.
And lift us out
Of our own self importance
So we can do your work.
(Spence, 1999, p. 11)

Storied Lives

Situating 'Self" Inside the Research

Each day, as we live, we write another page of our story. As we grow, we begin to layer our storied lives through experiences that are first and foremost beyond our control, and then through experiences that allow us to exercise personal control, choice, and volition (Four Worlds Development Project, 1989).

Born into this world as tiny infants, our first experiences of love and nurturing are formed by our interactions with those who care for us. The layers of love and emotional strength, physical care, spiritual connectedness, and intellect are all beginning to form within us, based in part by the actions and stimulus that surround us. These actions by our care-givers are acts of love, if done well. Typically, these actions are not given in isolation by one individual; rather they are an accumulation of actions from family, friends, and community who provide us with the beginnings of our cultural context of what we come to know as home, language, interactions, sustenance, spirituality, intellect, emotional connections, and physical well being. These actions are not compartmentalized throughout the minutes of our day where we only receive nourishment, or love, or hear words spoken to us. Words are spoken with emotion, with tone, with love or disapproval. We learn that our behavior is acceptable or needs to be altered by the tone of voice we hear, or from the expression of the face that we see. These interactions provide us with experiences, thereby knowledge, which provides us with the foundations for making decisions, and understanding our world. These experiences help us to grow and develop and move towards higher levels of achievement and understanding. This increase in knowledge allows us to move towards more intricate life experiences. We are all beings

made up of our intellect, physicality, spirituality, and emotional dimensions. These dimensions are all dependent on the other and must be honored in this way. The nurturing of one dimension enhances the well-being of our total being.

As we move throughout our storied lives we are encouraged to remember that we are compiling historical narratives through our temporal experiences that occur on a daily basis (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). These authors suggest that as we build the context of our lives, meaning in our lives changes as we evolve. Building on experiences helps us to navigate the channels of life and ultimately come to "know" according to our personal experiences. No two of us are alike. We all bring aspects of individuality to the world that only we experience, because of who we are, where we came from, how we were raised, loved and nurtured, and ultimately, how we perceive ourselves and our world.

All of the participants in this research, came to this experience in the process of living their storied lives (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Merriam, 2002). We came together bringing our stories, memories, experiences, knowledge, questions of wonder, and lives in progress. We are all living multi-dimensional lives that intersect with home, family, school, community, and the world. The landscapes we have and continue to experience are similar in some ways, and very different in other ways. The joy is that we came together to begin a new, collective experience of wonder, and to pay attention to our curiosities, questions, struggles, passions, doubts, insecurities, strengths, trust, and respect. This is a journey that recognizes the past, the present, and the future within each of us.

Cultural Awakenings

When we enter into a question of inquiry, we must at some point try to understand what brought us to the inquiry. Stopping and reflecting on this question causes us to look into our past and "wonder, why we wonder." After taking my students on this type of reflective journey during a graduate course I was teaching, one of my students (Bourassa, 2003) summarized his experience with this thought:

> Wondering is wonderful because it leads us on a journey of reflection, inquiry and research which will result in new knowledge, better understandings, and new ways of doing, all of which will have the same end result. The "wonderer" becomes a more knowledgeable, effective and professional educator. (p.1)

We need to bring our passion to our investigation and recognize that this passion may represent a personal investment, a need to influence the world, a genuine curiosity, and a need to further understand our self inside these inquiries (Merriam, 2002; Worthen, 2002; Bloom, 2002). Part of understanding our-self comes from looking into our past and reflecting on our thoughts, experiences, and early influences in life. Throughout this dissertation I have chosen to italicize *my reflective thoughts,* and invite the reader into my world, my space, and my experience in relation to this study.

My Journey to this Place of Learning (Dear Mom)

Initial memories of culture stem from family gatherings at my paternal Grandparent's home. The aroma of lovingly prepared Romanian food permeated the air. Cabbage rolls simmering in Grandma's copper cooker warmed the kitchen, as mothers scurried around assisting with the numerous ethnic dishes we were about to give thanks for. Mosu (grandfather and priest) poured whiskey shots for the men as they relaxed in the other room and waited for dinner. The Romanian language told stories about old times not forgotten. My senses absorbed the beauty of this cultural world that I visited on Sundays. My weekly lesson over, I returned to my "other self" at home that carried on in "traditional Anglo" fashion. As a young child I reflected on the differences, while looking forward to my next cultural visit.

These wonderful memories ceased to grow upon the death of my Grandmother, for she was the set designer. It was a sad time and at sixteen years of age, a personal

void began that I would carry for some time. I recognized that I had identified myself within this gift of culture and I mourned its silence.

I married into a family rich in Ukrainian culture. Immediately I opened myself to the traditions demonstrated by my mother-in-law that were reminiscent of my grandmother's home. Finding cultural nourishment so similar to my early cultural experiences awakened the silent, sleeping part of my identity. I loved the richness of this cultural environment and I decided to embrace this gift and live it within my own new family. When the first of our four beautiful children were born I pleaded with my husband to teach them the Ukrainian language. He applauded this romantic notion; however, he believed he was not a teacher. Determined, I said, "You don't need a lesson plan and a chalk board! Say hello, pass me the milk, how are you today, what did you learn? I could learn, too!" Well, it didn't quite happen the way I envisioned. Time passed and I learned as much as possible from my mother-in-law. My ears strained to learn the language, my fingers learned to create facsimiles of perfected dishes and embroidered designs; while my feet learned to dance the steps and interpret the music. Our children grew and their exposure to the Ukrainian culture continued through schooling, dancing, the language, and celebrated traditions. Today, they embrace this culture daily. They speak, read and write the language, cook the food, know the traditions, and thirst for more. Two of our daughters have lived and danced professionally in Ukraine. I was fortunate to travel to Ukraine with them and I thought about my husband every day as I sang the Ukrainian national anthem after each dance performance. I contemplated my Romanian relatives who still live in the mountains just across the border. I wish I had time to see them, but I would need the language.

I have been so thankful for my culturally enriched life. Friends and the Ukrainian community think I am Ukrainian. I struggled silently with being an imposter. Can I claim this culture as part of my identity, or has it claimed me? Family discussions at times verbally imagine the gift of grandchildren we someday hope to enjoy. The kids jokingly call their dad, Gido and I often wondered who I would be to these new, little, imagined people. One day they looked to me and said, "Mom, you will be a Baba!" Gazing into their eyes, I replied, "Really"? A Baba is different from a Grandma, not better, just different. What about Boonika (grandmother in Romanian) Somehow, it is a position requiring authentic qualifications. I find myself in a position of not knowing who I will or should be when this time comes. This is important to me because the language of title denotes a certain character and I am in search of myself in regards to this aspect.

Casting Out to Sea

Like many Canadians, my great-grandparents emigrated from Europe in 1902 with the hopes of finding a new life in the promised-land; called Canada. My mother's family traveled from Germany, and my father's family traveled from Romania. Most of my identity has been shaped by the Romanian side of my family. These are the people I knew, as my mother lost her parents when I was an infant, and the only sense of knowing them was through some of her twelve siblings. The stories of my father's families both on his mother's and father's side have been told and re-told. These stories have been written by my uncle who had many conversations with my great-grandparents. Reading these historical journeys, and listening to stories told by other relatives, I have come to know some of the history of my people, understand myself from this context, and it is from this personal landscape that I share.

Prior to their immigration, my great-grandparents Petru and Zamfira Avram lived high in the Bihor Mountains in the province of Transylvania, Romania. They were deeply religious, poor peasants who scratched a living from occupied land. Romania was dominated for centuries by various groups including the Turks, Hungarians, Russians, Bulgarians, Romans, and the Greeks (Avram, 1981). Through these occupations the Romanian culture was tested, land was lost and regained, and life was difficult. Petru, a cooper (or barrel maker) was an illiterate man of large stature. He was known throughout the village as "Ciubligan" (p. 1) which described a man of solid, sturdy character and physique.

My uncle recalls times by the fire, when nostalgia would grip my great-grandparents and they would recall life in the village in Romania, their friends, and both

the good and bad times. Great-grandfather often lamented his illiteracy, and he longed to write a book that would tell his grandchildren and his great grandchildren of their life experiences, so that subsequent generations would know this part of their history. In infancy, Petru lost his father to a war and regretted to his dying day, never knowing the love, compassion, and guidance of his father. This loss served to fuel his passion for his family and many accounts seem to show his soft hearted nature as he bowed to the wishes of his wife and children.

Zamfira, a fiery little woman, was often seen scurrying around on her five foot frame. If someone asked what she was doing she would reply, "I'm keeping busy and not wasting the time the Lord has given me" (Avram, 1981, p.13). Zamfira was a beautiful singer, jokester, talented homemaker, and she had an incredible passion for mothering. It would seem from past stories that she called the shots in many cases especially when it came to the well-being of her family. When it came time for their eldest son, Nicholas, to be conscripted into the army she decided that was the last straw. Hard work wasn't making a difference in their lives or the life in the country; the family couldn't provide decent dowries for their daughters (that were measured in gold coins that hung from the girls' necks); living in peace on the land without having to steadily migrate to better places was impossible and she worried about her husband frequenting the Crisma (saloon) and getting into a brawl. Now her son, faced with army prospects, decided that he was going to America. Zamfira, not about to lose her son, decided that she was going with him and advised Petru in no uncertain terms that he should liquidate everything they had and proceed with "underground" preparations of passports and documentation. Petru told my uncle,

> The pressure was on from my family to move to America and I could observe their sadness and loneliness in this part of the country. Besides the prospects for the future did not look good but I was 50 years of age and rather reluctant to move to a country where I would be a total stranger. (Avram, 1981, p. 16)

Petru and Zamfira, along with their seven living children, left behind their country, a way of life, five deceased children, and many friends. They lived in a hole in the earth when they first homesteaded in Saskatchewan; however, over the years they built a home, a farm, and a new way of life in this new country: Canada. In 1923 they constructed a two story home on their homestead. I have been in this now abandoned home with many of my relatives over my lifetime. Our last visit was in 2002 at a family reunion and I stood in the kitchen of the house with my cousins. We took time to listen to the quiet of our own thoughts and allow our imaginations to paint pictures of storied lives from the past. My father grew up in this house and he told me many stories of life on the farm. The walls seemed to speak and the abandoned kitchen held the smells we have come to know from our grandmother's house, smells that we try to duplicate today.

So, from these stories I come into the cultural aspect of who I am. I come from a family who lived and loved with tenacity. Telling colorful stories to each other has been a big part of our history and continues to be today. My children know about these people from hence they came and I am happy that it is important to them. My daughter, while living in Ukraine traveled to Romania in search of her relatives and to walk the ground of her ancestors.

Petru and Zamfira have left a legacy they could not have imagined. In this book written in memory of my great-grandparents, my uncle has provided biographies on many of the 846 documented descendants of Petru and Zamfira. Several family reunions have demonstrated the conviction to the roots of this family that these two people passed

on. The first major reunion in 1982 drew over 400 family members. Though illiterate, I would say that Petru has written many volumes and continues to write today, through text, verbal story, and the family that continues to love each other.

Reflecting on my great-grandparents emigration to Canada, I think about identity and how much might have changed for them when they left Romania. They were strangers in a new land so different from their own. However, they chose to emigrate and over time, many other immigrants settled with them creating pockets of similar cultures. Many of their Canadian villages began to resemble those of the homeland. They maintained their languages, their food preparation, their handwork, music, dancing, and memories. They were able to keep their culture and yet flourish inside the Eurocentric notion of society. They left a land of occupation and arrived to settle on a land that was being dominated by a new government and its settlers.

Bridging Experience

It was from this land that my ancestors immigrated to, that Indigenous people had been displaced. There were ongoing attempts to strip them of their identity and cultural ways of knowing, which will be elaborated on further into this thesis. I somehow feel that my history and the history of the Aboriginal people who were a part of this study, collided along the way. I feel apologetic and in some ways responsible for their loss. As I slip my feet into their shoes I begin to understand how they might feel, and I empathize and recognize the importance of their quest to re-identify their cultural ways of knowing which are vital to their healing and growth as Indigenous people.

I value my history and though my cultural history has been diluted over time, I mourn its loss and strive to re-identify myself through my continued lived experience. I

live in a world that is colored with mainly positive history; however, my Aboriginal friends have a sad history of struggle, domination, and loss of identity. I recognize this and so it is important for me to embark on this collaborative research study; for I truly believe that their knowledge and experience should guide their people into the future.

I was repeatedly *called* to the question of this study. It was as if *it* chose me. I kept asking myself, "Why am I doing this?" (asking this question) and, "Why do I keep coming back here?" (to this question). The answer was always the same. I wondered what the knowledge is that would guide or lead culturally responsive curricula in the area of physical education. I wondered what the teachings of the Indigenous people are and how those teachings could inform us all regarding a healthy approach to life. The cultural aspect was especially intriguing for me, because I believe that the cultural ways of people do direct their lives, and influence their identity and over all well being.

I have had many positive and intriguing past experiences teaching, learning, and living with Aboriginal people and I have always felt a need to know more about how they think and live in their cultural worlds. Educators have been called to respond to issues regarding Indigenous education over the past few years; however, feeble attempts to fully address, understand, and apply the knowledge have been the result. We are called to be attentive to the passion Aboriginal people have to regain their identity, in part through education.

Reflections of a Young Girl

When I was eleven years old, we moved to a small town in Saskatchewan that had a significant Aboriginal population. As the new kid in town, everyone knew who I was and I knew no one. The first person to befriend me was Yvonne, who sat behind me in class. She invited me to her home for a visit and we spent the evening visiting and laughing as two eleven year old girls would do. I loved Yvonne's shiny, long, black hair and "tanned" skin. I thought she was of Asian decent, and when I somehow learned of her Aboriginal identity, I was intrigued and honored to have her as my friend. We remained friends and graduated from high school together.

I had the unique situation of living in the town hotel, which my parents owned and operated. One of the busiest places in town was the bar, inside the hotel. My father ran a tight ship with a code of conduct which included: no hats, no swearing, no un-gentlemanly conduct, and no intoxication. Breaking the rules resulted in life expulsion from the premises. Period. I learned a great deal watching my father interact with the Aboriginal patrons and demonstrate his respect for them. More than once I saw him pay for a cab to send someone home, or put them to bed in the hotel for the night free of charge. These people came to respect my father and his way of doing things. He had an excellent working relationship with the chief, and many times they shared stories and laughter.

With tuition to pay and the "coming of age," I worked long hours inside the bar and began my own relationship with the Aboriginal patrons. They loved to tease me and we shared many a laugh. Their peaceful, respectful attitude was often contrasted by the obnoxious ways of other patrons. They rarely argued when told they "had enough" and it was time to leave. They listened. They spoke softly. They chose their words wisely, and they always called us, "my friend." Some of the men used to salute my dad and call him "boss." These cultural disclosures were something I was beginning to identify as unique.

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My first teaching job began on the reserve that many of our Aboriginal friends lived on. I will never forget the look on one gentleman's face when he walked into the little two-room schoolhouse and saw me standing with my multi-grade class. He saluted me and was happy to see the "boss's daughter" teaching the children! I did my best as an enthusiastic beginning teacher; however, I realize now that I failed in some ways. I taught from my Eurocentric understanding of pedagogical practice. I understood very little of the culture in terms of education; therefore, I failed to realize these children were bringing different ways of knowing into my Eurocentric classroom. My university education program neglected to prepare me in regards to Aboriginal education. Recollections of university courses are void of culturally responsive perspectives within curricula except for the odd reference to multi-cultural education. Culture in the classroom existed as units of knowledge, dispensed, explored, and then placed in the binder until next year; this was not unlike individuals who "embrace" their culture on the weekend.

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Twenty years later, at the University of Saskatchewan, I began teaching with the

Indian Teacher Education Program [ITEP] preparing Aboriginal teachers for their careers. Experience had taught me something and I began to appreciate a new cultural sensitivity working with these pre-service teachers. We shared an excellent working relationship and mutual respect. I "see" my students so much differently. I watch them think, contemplate, choose their questions and responses with care, and sincerely embrace their learning. Teaching at Aurora College in the North West Territories was a new cultural education. Learning about my students' communities, their students, the challenges they face as teachers, and their personal and educational needs, challenged me to understand yet another dimension of relationship and culture. I felt a sense of community inside my Aboriginal classrooms, which is different from my other classrooms. It is like walking into a room filled with family, who have come together to share in learning. However, when I ask my Aboriginal students how we can make the university course curricula more culturally responsive, most are at a loss to know. We remain in our Eurocentric curricula.

Recognizing Personal Experience In-side the Research

It is a relatively new phenomenon, recognizing research participants as individuals with lives and experiences that are welcome inside the research itself. Research participants now have an invitation to recognize who they are historically, and respond to what they bring to the research. Clandinin & Connelly (2000) suggest that historical autobiographies are central to narrative inquiry. They state that, "These narrative beginnings of our own livings, tellings, and retellings, and relivings help us deal with who we are in the texts that we write on our experience of the field experience" (p. 70). It is a new way of thinking for each of us to identify that we, as creators of new knowledge, can reflect on what we know and have experienced, and that this knowing can be a contribution to the learning experience and to the development of curricula. As teachers, we have an opportunity to be recognized as creators of responsive curricula, and acknowledge that we are indeed a part of the curricula (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) and situated to impact positive outcomes for our students.

This is not always easy as we surf between the boundaries that we have grown up inside. Living and learning in a hegemonic society that encourages us to think about

limited facts and knowledge that are provided for us, can contribute to the suspension of one's self, and may find us defining ourselves inside the status quo. Steinhauer (2001), an Aboriginal teacher, so eloquently describes the tensions she endured when trying to transcribe the data she collected in her study, into the storied experience of her participants. Working with Aboriginal students who provided her with rich, intensive insights into their experiences, went beyond all the factual statistics that had been previously documented regarding Aboriginal students' low academic achievement. She struggled to turn grim statistics into inherent wisdom. When she allowed herself to speak from her cultural understandings, and trust a new conceptual approach to her work, only then did she find a rewarding way to honor the knowledge that she had acquired through her experience and that of her participants. I recall a reflective situation from one of my courses on Wellness, attended by Aboriginal students:

The students and I had spent time discussing nutrition, exercise, calories, and cultural foods. They were hungry for this information and found it intriguing and scary. There were facts on calories, fat contents of food, the impact of poor nutrition, and how lifestyles have evolved over the years. The tensions involved understanding that not all of the food choices we make are healthy and some of those unhealthy choices involve cultural foods. The students struggled with this new knowledge and shared some of their concerns:

- With all of this new knowledge, what do we do when we go back to our communities?
- How do we honor and respect the foods when we know these aren't necessarily good for us?
- What do we do with this education inside of our culture?
- How do we teach our families this knowledge without being dis-respectful?

So here we have Aboriginal teachers who are faced with new knowledge and the struggle to make sense of how this fits into the cultural essence of their world and their communities. How can these new teachers apply both contemporary knowledge and Aboriginal ways of living and being in the world that help to define their culture?

Throughout my life and my cultural journey, I have come to value and appreciate the uniqueness of culture. Culture has allowed me to experience community in a particular way. It is colorful, enriching, personal, and it provides identity and a means for celebrating who I am as a person of distinction. Claiming culture transcends beyond birthright, weekend visitations to grandparent's homes or attending cultural events. Culture permeates life through language, education, traditions, religion, ceremony, faith, and other ways of being. I believe that living and learning through one's culture is different than learning about culture. Culture can be learned, but to be lived, culture must be embodied.

I have come to know myself more fully through the experience of culture and I rejoice as our children embrace their gift of culture that transcends beyond contemporary adaptations. It leads them forward, shapes their identity, and infuses love from ancestors who have gone before them. Whether we chose it, or it chose us, the embodiment of culture is a celebration.

Indulging in this reflective opportunity has helped me understand my journey to this space of learning. Through these personal, cultural experiences, combined with my professional, educational practice, I recognize my intrigue with understanding the issues of Aboriginal culture, pedagogy, and their educational visions. I have become sympathetic to the historical injustices that have challenged Aboriginal people and I can appreciate the passion in their silenced voices.

As an educator, I have observed piecemeal injections of Aboriginal curricula that are meant to satisfy educational standards set out by various boards of education. Teachers, not knowing how to include Aboriginal perspectives in curricula areas, may play an Aboriginal game, learn a dance, create a piece of artwork, for example that directs attention to Aboriginal context but does little to relay the meaning or knowledge inside the learning task. These attempts merely teach about culture, not through culture. I

question the ensuing role of the university educator with regards to Aboriginal education and ask how courses can be expanded to pay much better attention to Indigenous knowledge.

As Aboriginal people move towards self-government and defining their own educational practice that embraces their cultural knowledge, values, communities, and ceremonies, I wonder what these knowledge are and how Indigenous knowledge can inform the curricula in physical education, to create culturally responsive experiences that will contribute to the well-being of both Aboriginal students and non-Aboriginal students?

Historical accounts inform us that long before the hegemonic infusion of European thinking shaped this great land, Aboriginal peoples lived in harmony with Mother Earth and all of her gifts. Life was not always easy; however, all necessities were provided for. Clean water, healthy food, ceremonies, community, and education were shared amongst the people. Their days were filled with physical movement involving hunting, fishing, trapping, sewing, gathering, chopping wood, tanning hides, preparing food, dancing, singing, ceremonies, caring for children and Elders, and other members of their community. Living in these ways provided them with health of spirit, mind, emotion, and body. European invasion discounted Aboriginal ways of knowing and living in the world, and thus began the deterioration of a way of life (Lux, 2001).

Today, Aboriginal people are actively attempting to re-search, re-learn, and re-teach these old ways and combine them with contemporary ways of knowing. Although life will never return to the old ways, there are teachings from the past that can be brought forward in to today to help re-establish harmony and balance among Aboriginal

people. These teachings, this knowledge, can help bridge contemporary ways of the Western world with Aboriginal ways of knowing and being in the world. This is a time of discovery, a time to learn, and to re-learn. It is also a time of respecting the knowledge of Aboriginal people.

This landscape, this space where I find myself, causes me to wonder how the teachings of the Aboriginal people can guide culturally responsive curricula in physical education. As they establish their presence in the practices of education, I seek permission to travel with them on this journey of discovery.

Purpose of the Study

The acquisition and teaching of knowledge has always been important to First Nations people (Cajete, 1994; Ermine, 1998; Hampton, 1995; La France, 2000). Contemporary educational practice is increasingly challenged to address the unique educational needs of First Nations students by recognizing and valuing their particular ways of knowing. As First Nations people abandon the imposed hegemonic notion of Western education and re-define their ways of knowing through Aboriginal pedagogy, all educators must work collaboratively to understand and implement the ideologies of the First Nations people within our schools (Bear Nicholas, 2001; Cajete, 1994; Gilliland, 1995; Hampton, 1995; Swan, 1998; Taylor, 1995; Weenie, 1998). Swan (1998) explains that if the educational process today recognizes the negation of particular cultural groups, educators can become active participants in directing change by reflecting on curricula, and the pedagogical approaches used to teach. This recognition can lead to change, accompanied by the realization that Eurocentric curricula design is not the only way to

transmit knowledge. Cultural negotiation is vital for the advancement of education curricula development (LaFrance, 2000).

This study seeks to investigate how Indigenous knowledge and pedagogy can inform the curricula in physical education to enhance the well-being of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students and teachers through culturally responsive curricula. Being responsive to Aboriginal people and their knowledge challenges educators to first of all respect the unique and diverse knowledge of all Aboriginal people, and to recognize that their knowledge should hold a vital place within the context of learning both in and out of schools. Collaboratively working together to learn the knowledge and then apply them in our curricula is the first step to culturally negotiating Aboriginal knowledge and pedagogy.

Significance of the Study

This study will serve to inform educational practice and curricula development in physical education. Knowledge gained from participants could serve as a foundational framework for culturally responsive physical education curricula design. This framework could serve to inform teacher education programs, and assist current teachers in understanding how to include the teachings of Aboriginal people in physical education. Teachers who work towards developing culturally responsive knowledge can become leaders in curricula design.

Definition of Key Terms

I asked the advice of various people in the learning community regarding correct terminology for this writing. The respondents were from the Saskatoon Boards of Education, University of Saskatchewan, Office of the Treaty Commissioner, and local

Aboriginal educators. It was agreed that the term Indigenous knowledge has replaced Aboriginal knowledge when referring to knowledge. At the time of this writing and to my knowledge, there is no official umbrella term that is used to refer to First Nations, Métis and Inuit. Some organizations will use the term Aboriginal to encompass these groups; while others will use First Nations, Métis and Inuit, keeping each separate.

For the purpose of this writing I have chosen to use the term Aboriginal, in reference to First Nations, Métis and Inuit, mainly for convenience of reading and writing. This term recognizes all of these individual peoples as distinct societies. However, throughout this text there are other terms used in direct quotations that will remain as quoted and may not follow this terminology such as First Nations, Aboriginal, Indian, Native, First Nations people/peoples. First Nations will include Métis and Inuit people and will be used when the references and literature refer to Aboriginal people in this way. The singular form of people does not suggest that all of these Nations act or think with one identity or set of principles. The diversity and uniqueness of each group should be respected throughout the reading.

Aboriginal:

Is defined by the Constitution Act (1982) in Saskatchewan Professional Development Unit (1996) and refers to Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada.

Indigenous knowledge:

Is understood as the cultural knowledge of local peoples and encompasses their traditions, values, practices, beliefs, and world views. These teachings may be transferred to younger generations by Elders or result in personal experiences with nature and its relationship with society (Sefa Dei, Hall, & Rosenberg, 2002). Indigenous

knowledge encompasses the teachings of First Nations, Métis and Inuit people. Elder Rose teaches that Indigenous knowledge is new knowledge that is always evolving. This concurs with Sefa Dei, et al., (2002) who state, "An important dimension of Indigenous knowledge relates to how traditional forms continue to emerge and coexist in diverse situations and settings as part of a local people's response to colonial and imperial intrusions (p. 19).

First Nations :

"First" denotes primacy, while "Nations" indicates the organization of people into social, political, and economic groups within distinct cultures, languages, and lands. The plural form of Nations denotes diversity among these groups (Stiffarm, 1998, p. viii).

Aboriginal Pedagogy:

Addresses the ways in which First Nations, Inuit, and Métis groups acquire and teach knowledge within their living communities, and in relation to the outside world (Cajete, 1994; Stiffarm, 1998).

Aboriginal ways of knowing:

Includes both the knowledge of Aboriginal people and their pedagogy (i.e., means of instruction). Knowledge is gained through experiences that are provided for learning.

Research Question

The primary question asks, "How can Indigenous knowledge inform physical education curricula and the pedagogical practices of teachers to create culturally responsive physical education curricula?"

The focus of this study is to collaboratively work with a group of Aboriginal teachers to acquire Indigenous knowledge that could direct a framework for creating culturally responsive curricula in physical education.

CHAPTER 2

Historical Understandings

The Big White Bird

The participants in this study stressed that in order to understand the present educational situation of Aboriginal people there must be an understanding of past historical situations that impact the thinking of today. The following literature overview talks about the struggle of the Aboriginal people as they faced Eurocentric- assimilation and the abrupt halt to a way of life that had sustained them for thousands of years. Lux (2001) points out that, "The Canadian government's attempts to open the west for settlement and assimilate the people, at the least possible expense, created a perilous situation" (p.4). Disease, poverty, starvation, social disruption, annihilation, and oppression were some of the by-products the Aboriginal people endured through this time. Lux (2001) adds, "Aboriginal people were different: their languages, cultures, and religions, and especially their appearance, did not conform to Canadians' dreams of a west that would mirror the societies of the east" (p.5). The big white bird of imperialism had landed and began its assault on the First Nations of this country.

Bear Nicholas (2001) suggests that the story of the big white bird who stole children from their parents with a spell-binding call, is still living and still stealing children today. The notion that Eurocentric influences have let up due to an increased awareness of Aboriginal identity, self-government, and education, are false. She insists that parents must guard their children and take care not to continue to lose them.

First Nations have struggled with the Eurocentric philosophy of education for several hundred years as colonialism intentionally fractured their ways of knowing and

being in the world. The process of colonization works towards stripping away, ... "our standing in our own eyes" (Smith, 1999, p. 173) and a civilization's right and ability to determine their own destiny. Some of the harshest fractures to First Nations ways of living began with the family. Children were isolated from their parents for extended periods of time while living in residential schools. There was a systematic drive by Eurocentric ideologies, to eliminating First Nations language discourse, and to dismiss Aboriginal pedagogy within the practice of education (Battiste, 1998; Huntley, 1998; Jonker, 1998; RCAP, 1996). Children and parents not only lost their connection with each other, they became foreigners within their own cultural worlds. Many lost their connection with the land, which is vital to the education of Aboriginal people. Indigenous knowledge is gained through experiences, and particularly experiences with the land, which provide a connected-ness to the natural world (Cajete, 1994; Ermine, 1995; Huntley, 1998; Ward & Bouvier, 2001).

As contemporary Western education begins to recognize the uniqueness of Aboriginal education as distinctive, this does not imply a notion of segregation. Rather, there is a desire for self - definition by Aboriginal people, as they strive to have their ways of knowledge and pedagogy be respected and validated through education. Recognizing the educational value of all people, First Nations wish to educate subsequent generations in ways that enhance their consciousness of being an Indian and a fully participating citizen of Canada or the United States (Hampton, 1995; Ward & Bouvier, 2001).

The rich tenets of Indigenous knowledge and pedagogical beliefs need to be recognized and understood in order to rectify the historical injustices that have occurred.

The condemnation of Indigenous knowledge as heathen, folklore, and savage is being replaced with a new-found respect for this knowledge. After many years of educational oppression First Nations voices are about to be heard and their knowledge is being valued and validated (Huntley, 1998). All educators, including Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, need to search for collaborative understanding with Aboriginal people to respond to the need for culturally responsive curricula that will meet the unique needs of Aboriginal students. As we turn to the wisdom of the Aboriginal people we must listen to them and learn about their teachings.

"Education" Through Assimilation

Cultural traditions unique to First Nations communities were passed down through the generations, and treasured as important ways of learning and being in the world. Maintaining these traditions and ways of knowing, through times of oppression, required resilience, concentration, and passion for the culture (Hampton, 1995; Huntley, 1998). Hampton (1995) speaks eloquently of this resilience:

> The Europeans took our land, our lives, and our children like the winter snow takes the grass. The loss is painful but the seed lives in spite of the snow. In the fall of the year, the grass dies and drops its seed to lie hidden under the snow. Perhaps the snow thinks the seed has vanished, but it lives on hidden, or blowing in the wind, or clinging to the plant's leg of progress. How does the acorn unfold into an oak? Deep inside itself it knows-and we are not different. We know deep inside ourselves the pattern of life. (pp.31-32)

An imposed exile that forces individuals to abandon their ways of life may cause confusion, loss of hope, feelings of alienation, and may lead to an identity crisis (Graveline, 1998; La Roque, 1975). Conflicts arise among community individuals that foster frustration, resentment, a loss of power and dignity, and forced conformity to alien

ways of being. The lived experience, as it was known, no longer exists, leaving individuals and communities in a state of disharmony.

The influence of colonialism within our schools has been a concern for Aboriginal people for over one hundred years. The following excerpts from Jonker (1988) demonstrate the struggle of one grandmother, Moraha, when her young grandson, Sitting Wind, was taken from her and sent to school in 1929:

> Moraha is convinced that Sitting Wind, if properly raised, could become a strong fighter for the preservation of the old ways, and help bring back the game required for the survival of all Indian people in Canada. This could be his special destiny. It could be why the wind preserved his life when he was a baby. (p. 49)

Moraha was fighting to keep her grandson at home with her and avoid the residential schooling process for she did not trust the white-man's education system. Her friend commented:

> ....kids coming home from school for summer months are different, more like the whiteman-they don't respect the elders as much as they should. They used to help and respect each other: that was the most important thing to learn in the Stoney way of raising children. But school children seem to learn no shame, they become bullheaded. The school should be teaching them respect and manners. (p. 53)

The teachers in the schools felt they had a mission to educate the "savage" Indian children. After a sound colonial education, they would be permitted to enter into a "real world of progress" (Jonker, 1998, p. 57). The main goal was to "...remove these children from the squalor of poverty and heathenism" (p.57). The teacher in this biography believed that these children had hidden talents that had been dormant due to their lack of education and civilized living habits. If carefully nurtured by the white-man's way, the result would produce children who would then become good members of society. They weren't allowed to speak their language, use their Indian names, or

practice their cultural ways. One can easily see the tension that would be created inside the mind of the child. Hawthorn (as cited in Archibald, 1995) stated:

> It is difficult to imagine how an Indian child attending an ordinary public school could develop anything but a negative self-image. First there is nothing from his culture represented in the school or valued by it. One of the main aims of teachers expressed with reference to Indians was "to help them improve their standard of living, or their general lot, or themselves," which is another way of saying that what they are and have now is not good enough, they must do and be other things. (p. 349)

The Aboriginal child feels displaced and misunderstood in school with the absence of relevant cultural benchmarks. Children were stripped of their identity and conscripted into conforming to western European standards. Authors (Cajete,1994; Hampton, 1995; Ward & Bouvier, 2001) agree that First Nations students have struggled to adapt to an educational process that is different from their own. Contemporary approaches to education are not necessarily relevant to all students, and students' valued learning potential may be stunted or go unrecognized due to the irrelevant curricula or pedagogical strategies. First Nations children may appear as underachievers when in reality, they are victims of an uncomfortable and unfamiliar learning environment. Academic, emotional, spiritual, and physical failure by these students is often accepted as inevitable, when in fact, it may be the result of educators' short sighted approaches to meeting the pedagogical needs of the First Nations student. Therefore, it is important to consider the cultural backgrounds, values, ways of learning, languages, and community structures that students bring to the learning situation so that more relevant and sensitive learning experiences may be provided for these students.

If school curricula do not reflect the attitudes, values, and philosophies of diverse cultures represented within our classrooms, students of a minority culture may find

themselves in conflict, as they strive to exist inside contradictory learning communities. They may be faced with questions of self-worth and impose self-doubt regarding the tensions they are experiencing. Young children are good in heart and they want to do what is right and good. School should not be a place that draws students away from who they are. As Gilliland (1995, p. 7) points out, "...education shouldn't try to make students into something they are not."

Battiste (1998) indicates:

> It has been the means by which the rich diversity of peoples have been denied inclusion in public education while only a privileged group have defined themselves as inclusive, normative, and ideal. Cognitive imperialism denies many groups of people their language and cultural integrity and maintains legitimacy of only one language, one culture, and one frame of reference. This has been singularly achieved through education. (p.20)

Children become culturally orientated during childhood. Values, world views, and concepts are learned and experienced according to their lived culture. Children growing up in minority cultures are quickly faced with the challenge of analyzing and questioning the cultural assumptions of their home experience when they enter school (Gilliland, 1995; RCAP, 1996; Tripcony & Price, 1999). Schools are one of the first places where minority cultures recognize rejection when they are expected to conform to the dominant, yet foreign approach to learning, that assumes Western superiority over other paradigms of learning.

A common concern among First Nations people in relation to school curricula and instructional strategies, is that the education of First Nations people has been carried out by non- First Nations teachers who lack understanding of the First Nations ways of learning and living. These teachers, according to Hampton (1995) also use Anglo models of education that foster Anglo purposes. (Archibald, 1995; Battiste, 1998; Hampton,

1995) agree that curricula were taught by teachers who did not understand First Nations people and in some cases did not care to understand them. Curricula that perpetuated myths about First Nations people tended to paint inaccurate stereotypes of them, and further foster a climate of Western superiority by the Anglo approach to education. High failure rates among native youth are often the by-product of these agendas. First Nations people want to help to develop positive and meaningful ways of learning that will ensure education *by* First Nations people, and not education *of* First Nations people. The imperialistic purging of knowledge and domination is being challenged and Aboriginal peoples are now claiming their right to learn through culturally responsive curricula and pedagogy that will affirm their identity and uniqueness. Aboriginal people are looking for a post-colonial framework to help their people reclaim their knowledge.

Weenie (1998, p. 59) states, "It is apparent to me that the resistance and alienation of Aboriginal students is escalating." Due to Western world view dominating the pedagogy of children, there is a lack of traditional teachings and understandings of Aboriginal pedagogy within the school systems. For many years, Aboriginal people have felt silenced within the Western systems of education. Today, they are no longer silent and are urging to be heard, recognized, and respected within the realms of education. Their pedagogy has much to offer and there is much to learn.

As educators, we need to begin to understand Indigenous knowledge, respect their frame of reference, and applaud the uniqueness that Aboriginal children bring to the classroom. Their knowledge has been handed down through the generations and provides lessons about how to live life, and the values that guide these principles. They believe the Creator gave them these laws so they would know how to live in harmony with

themselves and their world. Each Aboriginal culture has its own knowledge system and ways of interpreting knowledge. However, there are some commonalities that they share.

It can no more be generally assumed that all Aboriginal students have learned the same tenets of life, any more than we can assume that all children have learned the same criteria for manners. Each Aboriginal community is guided by the uniqueness of its ethos. However, through the literature and the stories we know that thematic frameworks of Aboriginal pedagogy have been prevalent within many Aboriginal communities that reflect their unique ways of being in the world.

Aboriginal Pedagogy

Pedagogy is defined as the science of teaching (Concise Oxford Dictionary, 1990, p. 877). The scientific approach to teaching recognizes a variety of instructional strategies, management conditions, learning styles preferences, and adaptive dimensions that can be applied to the instruction of lessons, in order to enhance learning environments and reach learning objectives. Knowledge on the nature of learning has been tested, measured, applied, and adapted within classrooms for many years.

Hodgson-Smith (2000) points out that seeking knowledge from an external source (science), contrasts with the Aboriginal teachings that acknowledge the internal, personal nature of knowledge from within the individual. When Hodgson-Smith asked her grandmother for advice about the concept of pedagogy, her answer was, "We teach what we know as an act of love" (p.157). This definition of pedagogy would not be found in the dictionary and cannot be measured in the quantitative paradigms of science. However, Aboriginal teachings recognize the internal source of knowledge that comes from the inside and moves out, in contrast with Western education that moves from the

external into the individual. There are many scientific traditions within pedagogy focus on information delivered externally to a host learner, while Aboriginal pedagogy encourages the discovery of learning from within the host learner.

Hodgson-Smith (2000) believes that in order to speak about Aboriginal pedagogy one must include an understanding of the epistemological beliefs that inform and guide the cultural practice of the people. Aboriginal pedagogy goes beyond learning styles, strategies, and methods of instruction.

Aboriginal teachings are often conveyed through storytelling. In the following section I have constructed a fictitious character "Annie", who shares her insights regarding Aboriginal pedagogy and knowledge that she brings to school from her life experiences. Relevant literature incorporated within the section highlights pedagogical teachings that teachers might consider when she comes to their classroom.

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Annie's Story

Hi! My name is Annie. I am from the Cree First Nation. My other name is Four Winds. This name was given to me in a special naming ceremony that my mother arranged for me when I was born. She was praying that the Elder would give me a special name, a nice name and she was very happy with it. My name represents strength, wisdom, and challenge. The Elder said I would have the wisdom to hear the teachings from the four directions, the strength to persevere in hardships, and the ability to listen to the ways of my people.

When students come to school, teachers must realize that we have been taught many of life's lessons in several different ways. These pedagogical approaches have

helped us to acquire and transfer knowledge within ourselves, and the community, in relation to our outside world. Remember that we are taught through experience, and our people believe that experience is knowledge. Knowledge is always about the lesson and our personal interpretation of the experience.

Pedagogy from the Ethos

I have learned that the *ethos of a community* is described as the characteristic habits and attitudes of the totality that contributes and creates the spirit of our home community. Inside this ethos there is an inviolable spirit built from the norms of a community by the ancient people that were, and continue to be constructed through the essence of experience and timeless knowledge that informs the construction of spirit (Ermine, 1998, p. 12). Elder Ermine believed that the ethos is sacred because it contains a covenant that her community had with eternity and echoes the ancient teachings of the people before her time. Living these teachings (the knowledge) in everyday life provides our Aboriginal culture with its own unique identity and ways of being in the world. The framework of knowledge has been passed down through the oral tradition of storytelling. Cajete (1994) shares that the subsequent generations must be mindful that the story of our community is really the story of our selves. With an understanding of this ethos, we young people must learn how to construct our own life stories.

We learn that the *Elders* are the bearers of this knowledge and they spend time sharing the knowledge with their kin, in order to sustain the identity of the particular culture and teach the subsequent generations the cultural values that are to be embraced to maintain a harmonious, balanced life. Elders are selected by our people because they are respected as having the knowledge of life's experiences to lead us. Elders are given

the authority and responsibility to bear the truth of the knowledge and their teachings. They believe the responsibility to maintain the ethos of the community must be passed on to the younger generation; therefore it is important that *learning relationships* between young and old are established to maintain this understanding, and to sustain the knowledge of the ethos of our community.

Our Elders are considered specialists in certain areas. For example, an Elder may have great knowledge about nature, plants, and their medicinal uses, while another Elder may teach about spiritual concerns. We have a great respect for our Elders in our Cree community because Elders who are able to maintain a traditional Cree world–view, passed on from the preceding Elders, are a rich resource for our Aboriginal community.

Ermine (1998) describes an Elder Cree woman as having significance within her community because of the many titles she has held. Her wisdom was garnered through the experiences of motherhood to great-great-grand-motherhood, and in the Cree community her relationship with many people was that of mother. Traditionally, values were taught through the matriarchal lines of the community, even within the father's presence.

Kinship within the Aboriginal communities is much broader than in non-Aboriginal communities whereby interconnectedness is reinforced by relationships of family and community. The Elder also held a place of significance because she was able to retain the traditional Cree-world view passed on to her by the ancient people of her community and her journey through life was guided by the ancient truths of her community that were left untainted by western philosophy. The knowledge base, built on the traditions of the ethos of a community, is the root of learning. Her position as an

Elder was earned through her knowledge and passion toward life. The Elder is a person of great humility who believes that his or her knowledge base is not great, but very limited. It is the community who recognizes the wisdom of the Elder and the wisdom comes from the knowledge gained through the ethos of the community.

Losing an Elder, through the physical passing of the person into the spirit world, is a great loss to the whole community. Not only do we lose the individual personality but the resource of knowledge has also left. Only recently has there been written documentation of the teachings of Aboriginal people. The tradition of oral storytelling is so important to the Aboriginal way of knowing, and the perpetuation of knowledge through this form of pedagogy demonstrates why the passing on of knowledge is vital for the retention of the community's way of being in the world.

Aboriginal education focuses on developing personal growth from the time that we are born until the day that we die. This includes learning how to be good human beings, and developing life skills that contribute to our community and the larger society (Lanigan, 1998). Traditional educational practices within Aboriginal communities have been in the form of, "oral histories, teaching stories, ceremonies, apprenticeships, learning games, formal instruction, tutoring, and tag-along teaching" (Hampton, 1995, p.8). One of our most important ways of learning is through storytelling.

Storytelling is a teaching tool and one of the oldest forms of intergenerational communication among my people (Lanigan, 1998). We learn about ourselves and our relationship to others, through storytelling. Smith (as cited in Lanigan, 1998) studied stories from many cultures and identified several themes of learning from the stories. Through listening, visualizing, and interpreting these stories we learn to set goals,

confront challenges, grow close to others, deal with loss and grief, give kindness, maintain an open-ness to the world, solve social problems, and form a positive self image. All of these elements provide meaningful learning experiences that should be a part of the pedagogical approaches within our school learning experiences, and would serve both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students.

Stories contain truths about life, and are a vehicle to teach us who we are so that we may become all that we can be (Cajete, 1994). Storytelling is done to teach and not to entertain (Lanigan, 1998) and the stories contain many teachings that are essential to the culture of our community (Cajete, 1994). When we listen to stories it is serious business (Lanigan, 1998; Sterling, 1992). Some stories are told as myths and can only be told in the winter, by a trained storyteller. Our job is to listen to the story and interpret its meaning, of which there could be many. As we listen closely, we will be able to learn different aspects of the story, as the story increases in contextual difficulty in relation to the age of the listener (Lanigan, 1998). Other stories are told as narratives, which provide factual information regarding historical episodes and personal narratives that direct our attention toward personal people and their lives. These stories are told in the winter and should be told while sitting on the ground in a circle because the stories come from the earth and we need to be in contact with the earth. The circular formation reminds us all that we are equal, for the circle has no place more important than the other (Lanigan, 1998).

We believe that there is a great art to effective storytelling. When we listen to a story we learn, visualize, and see with our minds' eye the message within the story. The moral of the story speaks to us and we are able to interpret and analyze its contents, and

then apply personal meaning to our daily lives, from the story. The story is open for interpretation, but not for change. The story is the story. The Elders' experiences within their communities provide them with the wisdom and authority to deliver the truths and teachings through the stories.

The story is the perceived truth about the community and reflects the tenets of rationale that describe its being. This knowledge is constructed over time, through experience, and the knowledge recognizes the changes within the community and its people; however, the consistencies which guide and hold the community together are recognized as persistent tenets that identify our people (Ermine, 1998). When teachers use Aboriginal stories in the classroom they need to be aware of the culture the story originates from and respect the protocol of storytelling (Lanigan, 1998).

First Nations view Eurocentric approaches to education as fragmented, compartmentalized knowledge, lacking interconnectedness to the life-world (Cajete, 1994; Ermine, 1995; Graveline, 1998; LaFrance, 2000; LaRoque, 1975). Examinations are given to test understanding of theories, facts, formulas, and laws. Knowledge delivered from this paradigm is not only fragmented academically by subjects, it is also disconnected from living by preventing interaction with the learning environment (LaFrance, 2000). Aboriginal people view the world from a *holistic view- point.* Lightning (1992) and RCAP (1996) describe learning as a process requiring internalization and actualization within ones self in a total way. There are four domains that encompass this knowledge philosophy which are: 1) mental, 2) physical, 3) emotional, and 4) spiritual. These perspectives are all recognized as equally important, and the Aboriginal epistemology or way of knowing is centered on spirituality.

The process of teaching must embrace the ideology of *holistic connections* in education. Learning should not be seen as isolated compartments of facts or events; rather we need to experience a connected-ness that demonstrates the usefulness of knowledge, and its application to life. If school learning experiences fail to connect with the learning that occurs within our community, little importance is placed on this knowledge, due to its lack of relevance. When you teach us you must realize that we are thinking, feeling, physical, and spiritual people. The ethos of my community has taught me to believe in this ideology and to formulate my learning from this framework.

Aboriginal people believe the attainment of knowledge should be through the spirit, the heart, language, culture, prayer, and ceremony which are all instruments of knowing from the Aboriginal perspective (Ermine, 1995). Much Aboriginal learning is done through ceremonies, sweat lodges, fasting, pow-wows, and sun dances. There should be opportunities for us to learn from these ways through school experiences, and explanations to non-Aboriginal students about these other ways of knowing will help to bridge the gap of understanding that looms over us.

Here is a story about moose hunting that was told by Terry Fortin (2001). This story describes two epistemologies regarding learning and experience. He pointed out that if a First Nations person (hunter/teacher) took a youth moose hunting, he would take five shells for the gun. If the youth was unsuccessful in shooting the moose, the advice to the hunter from the First Nations teacher would simply be to pay closer attention. The youth would be challenged to heighten his awareness and expand his knowledge through the experiences of observation, developing patience, critical thinking, analyzing, anticipating, sensing, listening, and understanding the animal, the environment, and

himself in relation to these factors. This is a great lesson and the objectives of the lesson become apparent. If the hunter wants to be successful at completing the objectives and tasks (fed and clothed by the moose) then the hunter needs to learn how to be more proficient at this task. The task becomes very meaningful and through the experience of the task, knowledge is gained. In this example, the student is challenged to be a creative, critical thinker, realizing that self- evaluation, and self-pacing informs results. Five Shells is a mighty lesson in itself and reinforces that, "Experience is knowledge" (Ermine, 1995, p. 109). It speaks of caution, choosing your shots well, wasting not, thinking clearly, and making each shot count.

A contrasting approach by the hunter/teacher sees the teacher take a box of shells on the hunt, which might imply quite a different attitude toward the hunt. The hunter may be more wasteful, and not as calculated because there are more shells. Developing thinking skills may not be as important due to the greater number of "chances" afforded the second hunter. If unsuccessful, this hunter will be told by the teacher where he made his error. He would be encouraged to fix the errors, which may or may not be possible, depending on the level of understanding and the skills the student brings to the task. The student won't be challenged to identify the weaknesses of his hunt and limited learning may occur. One student learns through dictation and the other student learns through reflection and action.

Each hunter/teacher brings a different approach to the task and the methods of processing information, meeting objectives, and learning. The outcomes will vary with different pedagogical approaches, the needs of the learner, and the methods of gaining the knowledge. Teachers need to be aware that we are all hunters of knowledge and the way

we conduct the hunt is important. Learning styles of First Nations students and common classroom instructional strategies vary and some researchers note this to be a major cause of student failure among First Nations students (Kaulback, 1984; Saskatchewan Education, 1998).

First Nations students prefer to be shown how to learn generally through observation (Brant, 1990; Ermine, 1998; Lux, 2001; Swan, 1998). Children learn through *role modeling* and demonstration. We watch and analyze as adults show the learning opportunity that is demonstrated by their actions. Through Aboriginal pedagogy the individual is *shown* rather than *told* how to achieve desired goals.

Modeling also helps to build group association and cohesiveness within communities. It allows us to be informed in a contextually relevant environment that has a connectedness with the physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual modalities of our learning (Swan, 1998). Role modeling allows us to attempt demonstrations of our learning when we are ready.

Knowledge gained through traditional role models such as family and community members has been disrupted by the school year. Seasonal experiences like hunting, trapping, fishing, and learning to read the environment have been lost because we are in school during these peak times and during daylight hours (Jonker, 1998; Ross, 1992). Both our parent's and our community's influence in our education has been replaced by the teacher, textbooks, and classrooms that bear little resemblance to what we know (Swan, 1998).

Cajete (1994), Hampton (1995) and Swan (1998) believe that schools have an obligation to revitalize learning through these life sustaining skills that First Nations

people used for so many years. Smith (1999) agrees that First Nations people are striving to take control of their education and implement Aboriginal ways of knowing within the educational system. Educational practice must recognize the way knowledge and information are constructed is demonstrated in various ways, and none are more valid than the other.

I need to be allowed to *pace* my learning, make personal decisions about it, and take responsibility for my learning. Teaching should move at a reflective pace that allows me to learn at my own rate. I need time to think and to select my words carefully. Brant (1990) reinforces that the Aboriginal student should never be placed in the uncomfortable position of having to perform something until the student feels prepared. Performance anxiety is reduced by respecting the individuality of the student, and the possibilities for excellence are enhanced.

It is believed that learning is a *reciprocal endeavor*, by both the teacher and the students. If motivation to learn is lacking by either participant, then learning will not occur. Brant (1990) shares that Aboriginal teachers do not appear to know more than their students; rather they work together with their students, demonstrating through action, useful information for the student to adopt or reject. Cajete (1994) points out, "Indigenous teaching is planted like a seed, then nurtured and cultivated through the relationship of teacher and student until it bears fruit" (p.223).

Learning should be a *gentle process*. Children are valued greatly within our community and should be respected in a kind and loving way (RCAP, 1996). "Traditionally, children were viewed as gifts from the Creator by First Nations people" (Goulet, Dressyman-Lavallee & McCleod, 2001, p. 137). Ermine (1998) shares that his

mother had seven children who passed away and, that losing a child reinforces their importance within the community. Scolding children causes remorse when one realizes the value of their presence. Children should not be yelled at; rather they should be spoken to in a kind, slow, and gentle manner. Ermine (1998, p. 22) said, "If you talk angrily to a child, the child will not listen. The child will do worse. But, slowly, slowly telling the child, maybe they will listen to that." Ermine mentions the *giftedness* of children, and that they have a capacity and potential to make contributions to humanity. If you push them too hard, or too fast, combined with a stern approach, this will not be comfortable and may affect their potential.

Teaching should be done in *relation to the land* because Aboriginal people see themselves as an extension of the land. There is great value placed on the land and the environment, and the purpose of the land is to teach the children on it. Anytime you can take our learning outside and engage the lesson with the land, we will learn more successfully. Again, meaningful relationships and connectedness show themselves to us through this interactive process.

Ross (1992) discusses how learning by observing the environment helps us develop knowledge through a process of "patterning" (p. 70). This process requires us to make accurate predications about nature that come from being immersed in the natural environment. We learn to be responsive to everything we hear, see, smell, and touch, and we learn to use these stimuli to our advantage. For example: observing animal behavior can predict seasonal changes; weather disturbances can be observed; hunting and gathering activities are predicted by the environment; learning to read water conditions is possible; as well as many others that counted on our survival for so many years. Swan

(1998) points out that we must be in contact with people who are very much attuned to the environment so we can learn these strategies from them and through interactive experiences.

There is a *spiritual element* that guides learning which goes beyond the aspect of the Creator. There is a spiritual relationship between all things because life is revered in all things of the world (Archibald, 1995; Hampton, 1995; Ross, 1992). When we take willow branches to make baskets, we must first give thanks to the tree for giving up its branches because we respect the life in everything. So, it is not enough if our teachers just take us through these activities without understanding the cultural significance behind the tasks.

Children must learn *protocol, respect, and the hierarchy* of their community and the learning should be relevant to the community. We are taught that it is disrespectful to look into the eyes of an older person or a person in authority. When the teacher tells us to look at her, this could lead to feelings of disobedience toward the community's teachings. We will answer your question if we feel we have an answer. We often won't provide information or answer a question where the answer appears obvious or we believe that you already know the answer. For example, if you ask a simple question, "What is this?" and you are pointing at a clock, we won't answer because we know that you know exactly what it is. Questioning techniques that require opinions are best because they provide a larger scope of reference. If we are not sure of an answer we probably won't answer, because we must be sure of an answer before demonstrating our knowledge.

Many of our people have lost the ability to speak our Cree *language*. For many years we were forbidden to speak it and we were forced to learn English. While it is

important to know the English language; whenever possible, learning through our language is encouraged. Sometimes language can be confusing because we have certain ways of saying things in Cree that cannot be translated into English. This causes comprehension problems for us because we may be thinking in Cree but we have to respond in English, which does not always allow for good articulation of thoughts.

It is unusual to demonstrate or verbalize *gratitude and approval* within our Aboriginal society. It is expected that we should be good students, teachers, doctors, nurses, farmers, and hunters (Brant, 1990). To develop into less than our potential would be an embarrassment, and would deprive my community as a whole. As individuals, we have been taught not to call attention to ourselves because this would take away from our communal philosophy that guides the tenets of our society. The intrinsic rewards for doing a good job are deemed reward enough. Obtaining an advanced education is not for personal gain, but for the betterment of my community (Hampton, 1995).

We have been taught to be *non-aggressive, non-competitive*, not to interfere with others, and to demonstrate emotional restraint. Personal assessment of achievement is sometimes incongruent with external praise from teachers. If we don't personally feel accomplishment, the teacher's praise may be interpreted as a non-truth. Praise, reward, and reinforcement are not readily accepted even if it is warranted. There is a fear of embarrassing our peers who may not have achieved the same level of accomplishment, if we acquire too much attention. We will also refrain from answering a question that is posed to a peer to avoid embarrassing them, if they are unable to answer the question.

Educators have long been challenged to recognize *different learning styles* among students. It is believed that instruction aligned with a child's perceptual strength will

enhance learning potential and successful outcomes. The various ways that information can be processed to foster learning such as audio, visual, and kinesthetic, are sometimes forgotten within the context of teaching and learning. The blame for First Nations student failure in schools is associated with the poor alignment of teaching and learning styles. Studies have documented that First Nations children excel in visual learning and have very keen perceptual skills that are often developed through experiences in hunting, learning to read the land, observations, and carefully observing the demonstration of many skills (Kaulback, 1984; Henry & Pepper,1986). Learning through observations and visually connecting with information produces stronger results for First Nations students. Lesson content that is verbally saturated proves to be a disadvantage, perhaps due to a language barrier, or under-developed linguistic skills.

We often accompany family members to all types of activities, meetings, ceremonies, outings, and we learn a great deal by watching and imitating what we observe. We remember things when we see them and experience them first hand. Contextual experiences that allow the imagination to create a whole picture, and not just fragments of the picture, help us formulate knowledge. I like to make choices when I learn. Working in small groups and having the ability to move within my learning space is advantageous.

These are some of the teachings of my people. The ways in which we are raised and taught to learn don't fit into the structured school experience. These are considerations to keep in mind if you want to be respectful of Aboriginal teachings and enhance my education.

I hope this has provided you with some insights into my uniqueness as an Aboriginal student who comes to your classroom to learn. My learning depends a great deal on your knowledge and understanding of who I am and where I come from.

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Implications for Teacher Education

It is important for all educators to acknowledge and understand the historical issues of oppression from the First Nations perspective, in order to appreciate their frustration with the processes of education and the disregarding of their knowledge and pedagogy. First Nations people are looking for a balance in their education, and they wish to work constructively with educators to bridge the possibilities of education from both world views (Ward & Bouvier, 2001).

Hodgson-Smith (2000) cautions educators not to apply pedagogical practices that isolate Aboriginal students. Although preferred learning styles of Aboriginal students have been studied, it is important that preferred styles such as right-brained audio, visual, tactile, and kinesthetic preferences not be seen as the only way in which First Nations learning occurs (Kaulback, 1984; Hodgson-Smith, 2000). Hodgson-Smith (2000) points out that this assumption could suggest that First Nations students do not have the capability for logical sequential learning associated with left brain learning thereby, labeling learning style in terms of genetic differences between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal students. Once again, reinforcing understanding, philosophy, and epistemology along with pedagogical practice is important.

Lightning (1992) shares that First Nations people believe Aboriginal knowledge must be revitalized through a philosophy of educating for harmony, balance, and the well

being of the individual. Katz and St. Denis (1991) believe that teaching must embrace the ideology of teaching as healing that redefines the teacher's role in the life of the student. A healing teacher must seek to find wholeness for the students within the culture and the educational community. Healing is viewed as a movement towards meaning, balance, connected-ness, and wholeness. Ermine (1995) states that through ... "subjective experiences and introspection" (p. 102) individuals seek out inner guidance as the first step to healing. Much of this introspection can be gained through sweat lodges, fasting, and sun dances. Educators also need to search for guidance to learn about, develop, and apply meaningful curricula for Aboriginal students. This may be achieved through meaningful dialogue with committed change agents in education (Saskatchewan Education, 1993).

Classrooms must reflect the affective domain and the issues of humanity as we strive to understand cultural differences and uniqueness. Calliou (1996) and Hodgson-Smith (2000) stress that we combine our emotions with thought to observe the shortcomings in our actions, and understand that emotions are a gift that have been provided to help humanity recognize what it shares. We must challenge ourselves to go beyond the assumptions we have of another culture, and understand what it must be like to "be" in that other culture, and why other ways of knowing are unique and important from the historical, intellectual, and emotional paradigms.

Understanding Aboriginal pedagogy is much more than sharing in a common bowl of soup and bannock, through piecemeal pedagogy or the blending of a culture into a lesson (Ward & Bouvier, 2001). Eisner (1979) discusses the notion of multicultural pedagogy which promotes quaint studies of other cultures through food, dress, and

significant people, that facilitates a null curricula by ignoring fundamental issues of humanity, and social issues that require emotional as well as cognitive understanding. Education through cultural epistemologies transcends into understanding the philosophical teachings of the culture.

Chief Dan George (n.d.) comments on integrating learning and meaningful education for First Nations children:

> You talk big words of integration in the schools. Does it really exist? Can we talk of integration until there is social integration? Unless there is integration of hearts and minds you have only a physical presence...and the walls are as high as the mountain range. (p.14)

Calliou (1996) reinforces that all students must be equipped with skills that will promote personal examination of issues relating to other ways of knowing and being in the world. The recognition of Aboriginal education as distinctive demonstrates a desire for Aboriginal people to have their children educated in ways that complement the Aboriginal consciousness of being Aboriginal within the world. Educators need to applaud the knowledge that Aboriginal pedagogy can bring to our classrooms for all students. Calliou (1996) further shares that in the First Nations world, all peoples are respected unconditionally because we are all seeds from Mother Earth. We must strive to honor our diversity and uniqueness as gifts from Mother Earth and the Creator. As Hampton (1998) described, it is important to, "...gather our scattered thoughts and experiences to create a better understanding of Indian education" (p.13).

Blades, Johnston, and Simmt, (2000) and Gilliland, (1995) suggest that multicultural education has a positive, reciprocal influence on the learning of both the minority and dominant societies. Multicultural education can serve to free students from cultural biases and open their minds to the possibilities of seeing the world from multiple

cross-cultural perspectives by learning about other cultures and how these cultures live and think in the world. Teachers must recognize a need for change in order for reformation of curricula to occur. Curricula that respects cultural uniqueness serves to bridge the various ways of knowing, and allow students fuller opportunities to reach their potential (Ward & Bouvier, 2001). When children fail to understand the relevance of what they are learning or see its application to their world, or if the learning actually disrupts their world, then learning does not evolve into meaningful experiences. Teachers need to address the diversity among their students, and work toward enhancing learning potential through meaningful pedagogical practice.

Gilliland (1995) and Lake (1990) point out that the so called "disadvantaged" First Nations student in fact has been living within two cultures, while often the non-First Nations teacher has been living inside of one culture. If teachers operate under the assumption that existing "neutral" curricula is in fact superior, they may be expecting conformity from their students and send the message that the students' culture is not important or valued. Even First Nations teachers who have not practiced their culture may be challenged to learn more about their cultural practices and transform these into relevant curricula for their students. First Nations students have been under pressure to conform to a societal way of knowing as they struggle to maintain and learn inside their own culture. Gilliland (1995) encourages teachers to:

> Honor the good in both societies, recognize that two opposite approaches can both be right, that either can be the best, depending upon the individual and the circumstances. Teach students to think for themselves, to know the alternatives, and to make their own choices. (p. 9)

Gilliland (1995) shares an American Indian college student's thoughts:

> I think White people think education is good, but Indian people often have a different view. I know what you're going to say—that education provides jobs and skills. It's true. That's why I'm here. But a lot of these kids, their parents, they see education as something that draws students away from who they are...I would like to tell them at the university that education shouldn't try to make me into something I'm not. (p.7)

Gilliland (1995) suggests that teachers stand back and allow First Nations students to show you some of their ways by stepping into the students' shoes and learning from them as cultural resources. Teachers who strive to understand and accept the First Nations culture and try to include the essence of the First Nations ways within their curricula are indeed concerned with providing quality learning experiences for their students through relevant curricula (Hampton, 1993; Saskatchewan Education, 1998). Learning must include the development of the student's cognition, physical body, spiritual awareness, and emotional aspects through the unique lens of Aboriginal knowledge.

Hampton (1995) comments:

> No aspect of a culture is more vital to its integrity than its means of education. As I have been taught, nourished, and sustained by my culture, so it is my duty and privilege to transmit it. I value my Anglo education and respect its necessity and power in this society, but my deepest values and my view of the world were formed within an Indian culture. (p.7)

Despite Canadian constitutional reform regarding Aboriginal education, Battiste (1998) points out, "The provincial curricula continue to disinherit Aboriginal languages and knowledge by ignoring their value" (p.17). Until educators and society in general, honestly learn to value intercultural knowledge and pedagogy we cannot move forward. Aboriginal pedagogy has much to offer to the education of all children; for they all love stories, hands on experience, playing and learning in their environment, small group activities, and contextual learning. We also recognize that learning to share, taking turns,

valuing other people, creating space for everyone, and walking through the world hand in hand, are virtues we instill into our children in kindergarten. These tenets of Aboriginal pedagogy will contribute towards helping foster more inclusive pedagogy within our classrooms. Before this can occur we must learn about Aboriginal knowledge and how we can share in this knowledge. It is at this point that everyone, both non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal people, should move forward together to appreciate our collective uniqueness, applaud our differences, and celebrate our humanity with dignity.

Hodgson-Smith (2000) reinforces that learning is a life-long process that begins at birth. We are all products of our interactions with people and our environment, and experiences are the basis for formulating and applying knowledge in our lives. Reflecting on her education from the cradle to graduate school, Hodgson-Smith states:

> My family and the land from which I was born were my first teachers. Then walls were built that kept my family and the land away. Within these structures, I came to be schooled in a "formal" way, and, twenty-two years later, I have returned to my mother's kitchen and my father's armchair to learn again as a child. (p. 156)

Curriculum

> Gaius Julius Caesar and his cohorts of the first century B.C. had no idea that the oval track upon which the Roman chariots raced would bequeath a word used almost daily by educators twenty-one centuries later. The track - the *curriculum* – has become one of the key concerns of today's schools. (Oliva, 2005, p. 1)

This imagery of an oval track sporting a chariot race is an interesting one to me. One could ask: Is the head leading the tail, or is the tail chasing the head? Is the race equitable and fair for all the contestants? Do they all have a strong chance of succeeding in the race? What is the point of the race? Where is the focus? Who is the trainer and does that make a difference in the outcome of the race? What environments do the trainer and the horse come from and are they similar? Do the trainer and the horse understand each other? Does it matter? Is the race important and meaningful? Is there a beginning and an ending? Who watches this race? Who plans the event? Perhaps a parallel can be drawn; substituting students, schools, environments, teachers, society, evaluations, and experiences into the race.

According to Marsh and Willis (2003) some commonly asked questions about curriculum are as follows:

1. What should count as knowledge? What types of knowledge are essential? Who decides what should count?
2. Who should control the selection and distribution of knowledge? What social and political forces influence curriculum?
3. Who should be involved in ensuring that a curriculum has a sense of unity, relevance, pertinence, and purpose? Are some of these attributes diametrically opposed?
4. How is the curriculum best organized? Can there be multiple forms of organization for the curriculum? Who is responsible for deciding? Who is responsible for doing the organizing?
5. How do changes in curriculum take place? What influences from society lead to curriculum change? Who are the major change agents?
6. When has learning taken place? How can schools assess whether the goals of curriculum are being reached?

The ongoing challenge of planning curricula, describing or defining curricula, implementing curricula, planning the outcomes of curricula, and meeting the needs of a diverse group of learners faces educators every day. Curricula has been interpreted in a variety of forms including: a set of subjects, content, program of studies, set of materials, sequences of courses, a set of performance objectives, course of study, extra-curricula activities, a series of school experiences, and so on (Oliva, 2005). Some individuals applaud these differences seeing them as dynamic and varied, while others view its constant change as detrimental leaving it searching for purpose and direction (Marsh & Willis, 2003; Ornstein & Hunkins, 2004). Marsh and Willis (2003) discuss the idea that many adults seem to think they know what should go into school curricula because they have been students in schools; however, there is little agreement as to what that content should be or how the curricula should be experienced.

Regardless if the definition narrows itself to a collection of subjects or broadens itself through wider school experience, schools and teachers are challenged to implement

curricula; how they accomplish this, will ultimately influence students' experiences. There is the tension between what curriculum is, and what curriculum is meant to achieve (Oliva, 2005).

Education serves a variety of societal and human needs and generally responds to the forces affecting it. Curricula decisions reflect current issues in society and changes in curricula occur as a result of the people involved in curricula development. Decisions as to what should be emphasized within curricula, and why, relate to methods of delivery and reflect current thinking in society.

Society can influence change within our schools especially where issues of cultural minorities exist. There are ongoing movements within education to change and improve the content of curricula, the delivery of curricula and the environment where students of other cultural backgrounds learn (Oliva, 2005). The challenge of recognizing and affirming distinct cultural ways of knowing through education is one result of different groups in society re-claiming their right to responsive curricula in school.

Tensions arise when one group believes in the opportunities for cultures to be schooled through knowledge and experiences that are relevant to them and in their own languages, versus those who believe that the society as a whole should strive for assimilation. In general, North American people have been slow to recognize and acknowledge diverse peoples in relation to education (Armstrong, 2003; Ornstein & Hunkins, 2004); while McLaren (2003) suggests that this recognition might threaten those whose interests are served by the dominant culture.

The integration of minority groups into the study of curricula results in a melting pot within society (Oliva, 2005; Ornstein & Hunkins, 2004). Oliva writes:

> The core issue in multiculturalism or cultural diversity is the predominance of a culture that blends various subcultures into a "melting pot" versus the maintenance of separate and distinct subcultures within an overall framework. Those who champion a melting pot concept point to the eventual assimilation of early immigrant groups....(p. 522)

The result of these melting pots is a loss of identity, language, and customs among cultural groups and is seen as an acculturation of immigrant and Aboriginal groups into the larger Eurocentric societies. Over time, some minority groups have fought this domination and are striving to re-claim their voice and their knowledge inside of education today. These issues have been the focus of the research study as we investigated the Eurocentric imposition of Western curriculum and pedagogy on Aboriginal people.

Armstrong (2003) describes a traditional perspective of schooling that believes society shares a set of values that are present in the educational institutions of today, and these perspectives have the potential to serve all learners. The critics of this approach argue that these programs fail to recognize student diversity, resulting in conflict where dominant groups strive for supremacy that can be related to race, culture, and class.

The struggle for Aboriginal people to be recognized in education today is mirrored inside of critical pedagogy. Attempts at oppression and assimilation by dominant societies over the years has led to the disruption of traditional knowledge and ways of living for societies that have been oppressed, including the Indigenous people of the world. These dominant societies have created educational institutions and curricula that have been cosmetically designed to serve the masses, but fail to conceal the blemishes caused by negating personal experience and knowledge of other peoples.

Macedo (2000) discusses Friere's (2000) belief which encourages oppressed people to rise up and challenge existing institutions, giving rise to their own voice and way of knowing, which will transcend their object position to subjective living. Through this liberation they may release themselves from a static reality and become critical about how they want to exist in the world. Friere (2000) commits to this belief:

> The truth is, however, that the oppressed are not "marginals," are not people living "outside" society. They have always been "inside" – inside the structure which made them "beings for the others." The solution is not to "integrate' them into the structure of oppression, but to transform that structure so that they can become "beings for themselves." (p. 74)

Conscientious and progressive educators work towards developing and implementing critical pedagogy which strives to eliminate inequalities in education. Critical pedagogy educators recognize and applaud the differences that students bring to their classes and strive to understand how they can create meaningful curriculum for all their students. McLaren (2003) summarizes learning principles designed by Friere to assist teachers in developing their pedagogical practices. These principles include:

1. Learners actions of knowing are to be stimulated and grounded within their own being, their experiences, needs, personal circumstances and destinies.

2. Historical and cultural worlds must be recognized as created, transformable, and constantly in the process of being shaped and made human according to ideology and representations of reality.

3. Learners must learn how to actively make connections between their lived conditions and being and the making of reality that has occurred to date.

4. Recognizing that new histories can be made through the re-makings of reality. New makings are collective, shared, social enterprise where all voices must be heard.

As Aboriginal people voice their determination for Aboriginal education, they are in-fact re-shaping their destiny. They strive to work towards re-establishing their knowledge systems while working within contemporary society.

Current Trends in Saskatchewan Education

Aboriginal communities often define success in school as mastering a curricula and retaining cultural heritage (Saskatchewan Education, 1998). Eurocentric measuring of academic achievement to define success can isolate learning into compartments, and does not necessarily demonstrate the valued application of knowledge and experience that First Nations value. First Nations Elder, Ironside (as cited in Saskatchewan Education, 1998) advises that it is important for students to try and learn their culture, and obtain an education to make them strong. Aboriginal people have made attempts to integrate both their cultural ways and contemporary education to foster traditional values.

Aboriginal communities across Canada have promoted team sports as well as their traditional games and physical activities. These activities are implemented for recreational purposes as well as for a method of retaining and enhancing culture (RCAP, 1996). It is believed that the activities have the potential to promote traditional values including spirituality, strength, mental capacity, and emotional stability. Gallup (as cited in RCAP, 1996) is a member of the First Nations Ski team who believes the physical challenges of sports and activity can help Aboriginal youth rediscover the physical and mental conditioning required of their ancestors. Achieving these outcomes is possible through culturally responsive curricula that have been recognized as important and are

supported by Saskatchewan Education initiatives over the past several years (1991, 1998, 2000).

Four principles to guide the development of culturally responsive curricula for First Nations people in Saskatchewan Education are to recognize: a) Indian and Métis peoples as full participants in the education process at all levels, b) the uniqueness of Indian and Métis cultures and the differences between the Anglo establishment, c) that all levels of the educational community need to work cooperatively to meet the needs of Indian and Métis students, d) that programs of improvement should be focused primarily at the school and community level where they are the most effective (Saskatchewan Education, 1998, p.7). Saskatchewan Education (2000) states:

> Authentic multicultural curricula in physical education would also honor and help to preserve the cultural traditions of the many groups that are part of our society. This would of necessity involve the games, dances, language, celebrations, and other forms of physical culture. Traditional mainstream Anglo-Saxon sports and activities will not suffice. (p.7)

The creation of task forces for the improvement of culturally responsive curricula development is a positive educational initiative. Before responsive curricula can be developed, an understanding of the cultural teachings must be learned. In order to facilitate cultural learning, culture must be valued, studied, and implemented through dialogue, careful planning, and meaningful activities; otherwise students will continue to experience piecemeal activities that attempt to qualify as culturally inclusive learning experiences (RCAP, 1996).

Innovations in curricula development have been attempted. However, these have been inconsistent and slow, yielding few results (RCAP, 1996). Past attempts at curricula revision have failed because there is no recognizable contemporary theory of First Nations

education to guide the implementation or direction of curricula development (Battiste, 1998; Cajete, 1994; Tripcony & Price, 1999). Despite the addition of resources to aid teachers with Aboriginal education, Saskatchewan educators continue to identify challenges when implementing the holistic approach to Aboriginal education. Erlandson (2006) states:

> One of the challenges identified is the need to develop comprehensive, widespread understandings about Aboriginal education and move away from a view of Aboriginal education as distinct units of study, native studies course, or the *Teaching the Treaties* kit. (p.6)

Teachers also experience different comfort levels with respect to their knowledge about First Nations cultures and the protocols that might be required when addressing these educational issues (Erlandson, 2006).

First Nations content within the physical education curricula often exists as fragmented injections of cultural activities with no guiding framework to provide relevance for this learning. However, there are a few good resources that have been created for teachers specifically related to Aboriginal content in physical education and health that make particular reference to the four aspects of human nature: spiritual, mental, physical, and emotional (Aboriginal Nurses Association of Canada, 2002; Desnomie, 1996).

Changes in current curricula must recognize that First Nations people develop their deepest values and views of the world within their First Nations culture (Cajete, 1994; Hampton, 1995; Hinchey, 1998). Therefore, First Nations people must engage in meaningful dialogue that moves toward creating contemporary theory for First Nations education that originates from them and their collective experience (Cajete, 1994; Erlandson, 2006; Ermine, 1995; Hanohano, 1999). Encouraging collaborative

investigations for the purpose of creating culturally responsive and appropriate curricula is vital to First Nations education (Archibald, 1995; Assembly of First Nations, 1988; Battise, 1995; Hampton, 1995). There is no aspect of culture more vital to its integrity than its means of education (Hampton, 1995).

Throughout my twenty-five year career as a physical educator, I have observed the national trend of declining physical activity levels and increased obesity in students of all ages. Some research indicates that First Nations students, as a segment of the general student population, show an even greater tendency towards obesity and related cardiovascular diseases (Donatelle, Davis, Johnston Munroe & Munroe 2003; Young, 1994). I have heard colleagues and pre-service teachers echo my concern by asking, "How can we help these students by influencing the way they relate physical activity and a healthy lifestyle? Is there a way to include a culturally responsive framework that would be meaningful for students?"

Student Health Issues

In Canada, physical education curricula have been re-designed to reflect a national philosophy of active living that focuses on physical activity for improved health and wellness. The impetus for this trend in curricula is due in part to the fact that cardiovascular related illnesses such as heart disease, osteoporosis, and diabetes are more prevalent in those with inactive lifestyles, and are a leading cause of death in Canada.

Although often observed in aging populations, these diseases are of pediatric origin and can be prevented (Health Canada, 2005; Rowland, 1990; Waldram, Herring & Young, 1994). Over 25% of our youth are obese, due in large part to a lack of exercise and poor nutrition. As well, juvenile diabetes is rising significantly, and studies indicate that

48% of people with diabetes develop ischemic heart disease. Canadian youth are at risk of dying a premature death due to obesity and inactivity (Statistical Report, 2006; Canadian Pediatric Society, 1994). Cardiovascular disease is the greatest health hazard for diabetics, and therefore causes growing concern for First Nations children across Canada who are developing diabetes at a rate higher than normal (Statistical Report, 2006; Rowland, 1990).

Changing demographics within Saskatchewan school populations demonstrate a significant increase in the number of First Nations children. These changes challenge teachers and the education system to be better prepared to meet the unique curricular needs of First Nations students (Long & Dickason, 2000; Tymchak, 2001). In particular, Saskatchewan has a projected First Nations school population of 46.4% by 2016 (Tymchak, 2001). This significant population of students, combined with related health issues, provides fertile ground for an investigation of culturally responsive curricula in physical education. Tymchak (2001) states:

> This demographic shift represents at once a challenge for change, and an unparalleled opportunity. There are obvious curricular implications for a demographic shift of this magnitude, as well as for many other aspects of school programming. Certainly there can be no question about the fact that it constitutes a factor of tectonic significance for Saskatchewan education. (p. 9)

The challenge of creating a framework of First Nations ways of knowing in physical education and health and applying culturally responsive curricula within the school system directs this dissertation topic. The overall health issues of all students are important; however, this paper focuses on Aboriginal student populations.

Historically, First Nations individuals enjoyed low risk factors for diseases such as obesity and cardio-vascular illness due to their holistic lifestyles. Urbanization and

Eurocentric pressures may have contributed to these changes by altering First Nations ways of knowing and living. Health Canada (2005) indicates some aspects of First Nations health are improving such as increased life expectancy and lower mortality rates; however, these are still below the average Canadian population standards. Areas of concern include:

- Circulatory diseases and injury account for nearly half of all deaths among Aboriginal people including suicide and substance abuse
- Compared to the general population heart disease is 1.5 times higher among Aboriginal people
- Type 2 diabetes is 3 to 5 times higher among First Nations people and increasing in Aboriginal children populations

Health Canada (2002) promotes physical activity and states the following benefits of being physically active:

- Individuals are less likely to develop type 2 diabetes
- Individuals will enjoy an increased level of energy
- Individuals are better able to cope with life's problems
- Individuals will reduce the risk of heart disease
- Individuals will increase in strength

Health Canada also recognizes that Aboriginal people approach health and wellness from the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual spheres and they also recognize non-medical factors that can affect health such as education, employment, and living conditions. Recognition of these above factors points to the need to balance one's life in all dimensions in order to be in good health.

Physical activity is one of the contributing factors to being well that can influence the other three areas of life: mental, emotional, and spiritual. Physical education in school is a unique area of study because it is the one discipline that has the potential to address all four aspects of the student. If physical education were taught from a holistic perspective containing Aboriginal knowledge it may prove effective in increasing activity levels among Aboriginal students by providing a deeper contextual meaning to movement and thereby, contributing to healthier lifestyles and reduced illness. The holistic philosophy of education knows no boundaries, and it would serve all populations of students regardless of culture or background experience.

Changing negative behavior and motivating students to take responsibility for their health and well-being can be a slow and difficult process. Knowing the implications of poor lifestyle choices is not enough to motivate some individuals to change (Donatelle et al., 1998; Robbins, Powers & Burgess 1997; Weinstein & Rosen 2003) and there is often the idea that illness "will never happen to me" or "disease is for old people." These authors also reinforce that each person's health reflects his or her own behaviors and choices. These choices are often reflected in the values that the individual has come to know in life from family, community, and self.

Weinstein and Rosen (2003) stress the importance of recognizing values and attitudes that students bring to school, understanding their multiple ways of learning, and their multiple intelligences. They believe that the emphasis should be placed on the *learner's* values; and in doing so behavioral change may have a greater chance of being influenced because there is more meaning directed toward the change in behavior. If the behavioral change is directly related to who I am, where I come from, my contextual

frame of reference, and my knowledge, values, and beliefs, there will be a more meaningful relationship between myself and my learning. Therefore, being responsive to culture inside of curricula may influence the lifestyle choices of students who could greatly benefit by improving their health and well-being.

Physical Education Curricula

The primary function of physical education in school curricula is to contribute to the growth and development of the child through movement experiences and is seen as, "education through movement" (Pangrazi, 2006, p.5). Physical educators embrace the philosophy that physical education pays attention to all learning domains: the physical, the cognitive, and the affective. In textbooks, the spiritual domain is not noticed or negated; however, in curricula, the writers have included the spiritual domain in print.

The aim of physical education is to develop physically educated students who will understand the benefits of a physically active lifestyle and adopt an active lifestyle to enhance their overall health and well-being. Physical education is one component of education that has the potential to contribute to the overall health of the student. Major content standards of physical education curricula include: 1) developing movement competence, 2) maintaining physical fitness, 3) developing and valuing personal health and wellness skills, 4) the application of movement concepts and skills, 5) developing a plan for lifetime activity and, 6) demonstrating positive social skills (Pangrazi & Gibbons, 2003; Pangrazi, 2006).

Physical education typically addresses the psychomotor skills of the student, with the goal of teaching skills that students can apply to physical activity for a lifetime, to enhance their overall health. Recognizing that physical education is one component of

study that can directly affect the health and wellness of the individual student, there has been an integration of philosophy between physical education, health and wellness. The term health goes beyond the notion of an absence of disease and is composed of many different aspects of life. Health has evolved into the term wellness, which refers to the highest level of health that an individual can achieve in several key dimensions. Donatelle et al., (1998) define these terms and comment that, "Today, *health* and *wellness* are often used interchangeably to mean the dynamic, ever-changing process of trying to achieve one's individual potential in each of several interrelated dimensions" (p. 3).

These dimensions vary from six to eight depending on the source and typically include the following:

1. The Emotional Dimension – relates to feelings, the ability to express emotion, appropriate emotion, self-esteem, self-confidence, self-efficacy, trust, love, awareness, acceptance, and management of self.
2. The Physical Dimension –sensory acuity, susceptibility to disease, good choices to affect health, fitness, endurance, flexibility, cardio, strength, body composition.
3. The Intellectual Dimension - the mind, continuously acquiring knowledge, creativity, curiosity, critical thinking, growing from experience. The intellectual health may be perceived different from mental health which deals with emotion; while the intellectual health refers to knowledge.
4. The Spiritual Dimension – may include a belief in a supreme being, connection to the environment, oneness with others and nature, guiding sense of meaning and values in life, understanding one's purpose, care and respect for all things.

5. The Social Dimension – having healthy interpersonal relationships in a variety of environments, caring about others and the community.
6. The Environmental Dimension – preservation, protection and respect for nature, animals, natural resources, recycling, conservation, commitment of care for all aspects of the environment.

At the centre of wellness lies self-responsibility. The individual is challenged to strive for the ultimate state of well-being and recognize factors that are beyond one's personal locus of control (Donatelle et al., 1998; Robbins, Powers & Burgess, 1997; Weinstein & Rosen, 2003).

Physical education directly addresses the physical dimension of wellness. Providing students with quality physical education experiences on a daily basis is a national mandate of the Canadian Association of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (CAHPERD) in Canada (Pangrazi & Gibbons, 2003) which can contribute to the overall health and wellness of the students in our schools. This depends on quality curricula that focuses on the whole child. The difficulty arises when we, as physical educators, subscribe to a position under the umbrella of health and wellness, but the curricula and teaching in physical education remains focused on motor skills and the psychomotor domain, and is separated from the health curricula. Physical education curricula in high-school does include the dimensions of wellness, however, after grade 10 in Saskatchewan, physical education becomes optional and many students may leave school without relating physical education to the broader context of health. When this occurs, the teaching of physical education remains limited in the physical.

Physical education curricula are fairly consistent across the country in terms of objectives and outcomes. In Saskatchewan, there are three main perspectives within the curricula: 1) Foundational Perspective that addresses physical fitness and motor skill development in relation to lifestyle related activities; 2) Activity Perspective which consists of the activity components of aquatics, games and sports, educational gymnastics, rhythmics and dance, fitness, and outdoor pursuits; 3) Personal-Cultural Perspective addressing the affective component, social skills component, and the cultural awareness component (Saskatchewan Education, 1995). This document refers to the following cultural components:

> The cultural awareness component states:
>
> Physical activity enables learners to develop conceptualizations of the relationship that exists between their cultural heritage and their own places in the modern world. Physical activity also promotes respect for the play and sport traditions of other cultures in a multidimensional global setting. This component recognizes the importance of developing and supporting a lifestyle that extends the learner's cultural heritage in physical activity and sport. (p. 12)

Further to this, there are the Indian and Métis Curricula perspectives that state:

> Physical activity has, from a historical perspective, played a significant role in Aboriginal culture. It has been used to display strength, courage, and self-discipline. It also serves as a form of relaxation and leisure and is accepted in both its competitive and recreational forms. (p.22)

Saskatchewan Education recognizes that:

> .... the Indian and Métis peoples of the province are historically unique peoples and occupy a unique and rightful place in society. It also realizes that curricula must meet the needs of Indian and Métis peoples while at the same time benefiting all students (p.22).

These well stated objectives are outlined in the curricula to allow for the inclusion of the cultural perspectives within all the learning perspectives. The spiritual aspect is

stated in the opening introduction of the curricula; however, I have not seen examples, evidence of inclusion, or mention of the spiritual domain in any other area of the document. Since the spiritual domain is first and foremost in importance to Aboriginal people, it would seem logical that it should bear significance in Aboriginal teachings in all subject areas. Spirituality should not be confused with religion; rather it serves as an inter-connectedness to all things and all people within one's self, the community, and nature, and is the premise to all First Nations teachings (Graveline, 1998; Hampton, 1995; Ross, 1992).

Although spirituality is mentioned in the provincial curricula, it is interesting to note that in the public school system there is no allowance for the practice of spirituality within the classroom. During 2001, any form of audible prayer which is one practice of spirituality was banned from the school system and replaced with Bill 1030 which allows for an optional moment of silence (Bernhardt, 2002). This spiritual nature is aligned with religion and is not taught within the context of curricula, unless through an academic approach with the goal of gaining an understanding of different forms of spirituality. In the separate school system and other Christian schools, spirituality and religion are an integral part of their mission statements, teachings, and inter-relatedness within the school environment and teachers are encouraged to include a measure of spirituality in every subject area (Saskatchewan Education, 2000). These contradictions in policy, understandings of spirituality, and practice within educational institutions pose challenges for educators and students alike. How do these contradictions affect the actual cultural aspects within physical education curricula, of Aboriginal individuals, and teachers?

As Aboriginal groups question the knowledge and the pedagogical practices of knowledge taught to students through school curricula, in particular Aboriginal students, the question of meaningful curricula arises. Responsive cultural curricula should provide for meaningful learning that demonstrates respect for Aboriginal cultures, and relevant learning opportunities for both teachers and students.

Interviews within the Field

In order to gain insight into current challenges and ways of perceiving culturally responsive curricula in physical education, I conducted several tape recorded and transcribed interviews with various educators before beginning the formal study. These interviews revealed common concerns, observations, and suggestions in relation to the challenges that teachers face implementing culturally responsive curricula. Although the sample of interviewees was small, it provided a cross section of opinion from educators who participated in curricula challenges on a daily basis. The interview participants consisted of: 1) two superintendents (one who is Aboriginal) ; 2) two Aboriginal consultants; 3) the director of Indian Teacher Education Program (who is non-Aboriginal); 4) one director of education (who is non-Aboriginal); 5) four elementary school teachers (three who are Aboriginal) and, 6) two principals; one elementary and one secondary (one who is Aboriginal). The following is a summary of the interviews with these educators. The text consists of their opinions and understandings of these issues at this time and some of their direct quotes:

1. *What are the current curricula issues in general for both non- Aboriginal and Aboriginal teachers regarding Aboriginal pedagogy? (Issues being concerns, challenges, questions, problems, perceived needs).*

It was felt that the language of cultural knowledge and pedagogy hasn't reached the status quo and teachers haven't yet perceived that there are students in their classrooms that approach learning with different mindsets, cultural perspectives, learning styles, and different life experiences. Teachers aren't using the language of culture within their programs yet, and cultural knowledge is still in the realm of "add-on" when it comes to Aboriginal content, themes, and perspectives. Teachers ask, "How can I bring in a "flavor" of Aboriginal content, not processes, and call it Aboriginal pedagogy?"

The demand for Aboriginal pedagogy is recognized by the Saskatchewan Education teacher education programs and school divisions. There is a need to affect change around Aboriginal pedagogy to enhance the learning potential for all students. It is understood that the demands on teachers are exhausting. Some interviewees admitted that if the teacher lacks expertise in an area they do the best they can to address the need but don't have the time or the background to develop the theories or strategies that need to be implemented. They have limited understanding regarding Aboriginal education and non Aboriginal teachers sometimes ask, "If an Indian is just like me except a brown person, why would I have to turn things upside down and find new ways of doing things?" This demonstrates the lack of understanding and acceptance towards Aboriginal initiatives in education. There are some areas of Saskatchewan that have a very small Aboriginal population and those areas don't pay significant attention to the needs of the Aboriginal student. Of course, there are some teachers who are making strong efforts to provide inclusive education for their students. They do however, express concern about teaching Aboriginal information accurately and respectfully.

Aboriginal teachers face challenges of their own. Some are not aware of their Aboriginal culture and also struggle to become more knowledgeable regarding the implementation of culturally responsive curricula. Other Aboriginal teachers are inundated with requests to help other teachers with issues of curricula inclusions. There is also the challenge of colleagues and administrators who don't understand Aboriginal teachers and their perspectives.

One Aboriginal consultant shared that Aboriginal teachers are sometimes challenged by parents as to why there is so much Aboriginal content in their teachings in the classroom, yet this is what they know. These teachers are teaching from their reference point; that is, their life experiences. This is where they draw their examples from, share their stories with their students, and give meaning to experiences through First Nations knowledge. The Aboriginal content is what they know. He asked why this should be a problem if white, Eurocentric individuals, teach from their frame of reference? If teachers grew up on a reserve, their experiences will be different from others who grew up in an urban environment. This is what they will talk about, so we have to ask ourselves, "Is this wrong?"

There is the concern among some parents and educators who question if Aboriginal teachers are 'leaving something out', being too one sided and not focusing on the 'real learning.' Lack of understanding towards other ways of thinking demonstrates the arrogant approach that still perpetuates educational practice.

Many participants agreed that implementing Aboriginal curricula and pedagogy to enhance learning is important for Aboriginal education. There is great need for dialogue between Aboriginal people/educators and teachers, to help inform educators about the

importance of Aboriginal pedagogy. The Saskatoon Catholic School Board is implementing in-service initiatives for educators to address these needs. These will be extensive and progressive in nature to address Aboriginal issues regarding education, treaties, culture, history, politics, and economic development. One consultant said,

> It is important for teachers to observe from a very unapologetic stand point, that the Aboriginal people have a different way of seeing the world. They will be trying to make a point that there is a whole other world out there in Indian country that others need to understand. Aboriginal people have separate histories, lives, dreams, desires, and cultures that must be understood before the teachers can gain empathy and understanding about Aboriginal people. The whole idea that Aboriginal people have lost their traditional culture is just not true. Looking beneath the layers of Aboriginal communities shows that people are closely associated with their traditional culture and language in Saskatchewan because their history has not changed that long ago.

2. *What are the current curricula issues in physical education for non- Aboriginal and Aboriginal teachers?*

Generally speaking the individuals that were interviewed felt there probably aren't many cultural issues that have been identified with regards to physical education. Most teachers don't see it as an inclusive, culturally adapted course of study, and many teachers likely perceive physical education as a culturally neutral zone. Unfortunately, many teachers again, are just looking for piecemeal injections of activities to satisfy the inclusion of culture within the program. This takes the form primarily of games and dances.

Several of the people interviewed admitted they had never considered the cultural link in physical education. After reflecting, they applauded the possibilities of culturally responsive curricula in physical education. Historically, Aboriginal people have valued a healthy body, mind, and spirit and the essence of physical activity has centered around their communities. Walking long distances, carrying heavy loads, foot racing,

competitive and social demonstrations of strength and endurance relevant for survival, have all been part of the Aboriginal community. Today there is a strong presence of Aboriginal athletes within the Indigenous games movement and many Aboriginal communities rally around sport. Individuals who were interviewed felt that there is a desire by the Aboriginal people to keep the body healthy and strong. One interviewee spoke about a friend who runs competitively today for enjoyment because that is what she did as a child growing up in Ile la Cross, Saskatchewan.

3. What are the perceived needs of teachers and students in physical education curricula in relation to Aboriginal pedagogy?

Based on these interviews it is believed that Aboriginal pedagogy in general has not been on teachers' agendas. It was felt that the kind of preparatory work I am doing in this dissertation is valuable. As previously mentioned, there are many requests made to education consultants from teachers requesting information on Aboriginal games, dances, and activities that can be incorporated into their physical education curricula and requests are on the rise. Many teachers want to include Aboriginal content that is valued from the Aboriginal perspective. Teachers realize they should work towards themes, content, and inclusions but they need a philosophical curricula basis to help them go beyond the sporadic infusion of cultural activities.

There are also teachers who recognize excellent psychomotor abilities among some of their Aboriginal students. In some cases these students struggle in the classroom with behavioral or cognitive problems and the teachers turn to consultants searching for innovative ways to "hook the child" and providing Aboriginal content in the gym could be a very good catalyst for the child.

Educators and administrators are hearing teachers discussing wellness with their students, and this is a good start. It was felt by these educators and administrators that there is a need to find common ground between Aboriginal ways of knowing about physical wellness and contemporary curricula. There needs to be a bridging of philosophy that will draw the diverse aspects of physical education together. It was felt that holism that focuses on leading a balanced life, eating a healthy diet, participating in regular exercise, and promoting sport for social and intellectual growth is an example of common ground. It was agreed that the Aboriginal philosophy goes much deeper than this by including strong ecological relationships and spirituality as key frameworks of knowledge. These educators said a philosophical framework does not exist to guide this process in physical education. Upon reflection, several interviewees thought that perhaps physical education and culture are closer that they thought, and the Elders would have a wealth of knowledge regarding this topic.

4. *Do the curricula in physical education currently serve the needs of teachers and Aboriginal students? What are the strengths in the curricula? What are the weaknesses in the curricula?*

Physical education curricula as it exists today is flexible and allows the professional teacher many opportunities for Aboriginal inclusion. The physical education curricula have a good general framework; however there is a need for concrete suggestions, examples, and theoretical directions towards infusing Aboriginal pedagogy in physical education. If educators are going to make Aboriginal content a priority, we need to demonstrate how this can be done. In Saskatchewan, demographics point to large populations of Aboriginal students that demonstrate the need to seriously consider how

Aboriginal approaches to learning may be validated inside curricula. Interviewees believe that Saskatchewan has taken great initiatives towards creating "Aboriginal friendly" content within the province; however, further support is necessary to facilitate teachers' understanding in this area, and to continue to create frameworks of curricula that responds to culture.

At the time of this writing, Saskatchewan Education was in the process of creating some indicators regarding the inclusion of Aboriginal pedagogy within curricula in general. These indicators will serve to provide teachers a better understanding of what the inclusion of Aboriginal content should look like, as well as identify opportunities for inclusion. The physical education curricula will need to address specific indicators relevant to enhance learning opportunities for all students within physical education.

5. *Is there something missing in the understanding of Aboriginal curricula needs? Have the needs been interpreted by Western philosophy?*

Educators understand curricula to be a mandate of society, a blueprint, which prescribes what society believes is important to learn. If we believe students' background experiences to be the same then curricula would serve all students equally. The Eurocentric impositions on Aboriginal people have resulted in historical interruptions in their ways of learning; therefore, their experiences do not necessarily coincide with the general population. Questions regarding the beliefs about educational success should be asked and we need to inquire if all students endeavor to be "at the same place" in the future, what is that place, and how will we get there? The common misunderstanding in curricula is that we have all had the same experiences and we all share a common goal. We need to realize that what we do in schools came out of Eurocentric philosophies, and

the students who come to school come from many different backgrounds that do not always understand or thrive under this philosophy.

They felt that alternative cultural methodologies and theories of learning are often not considered within the classroom. Many educators teach the way they were taught and from their personal frame of reference. University programs for teachers need to address unique cultural needs in curricula but before we do that we need to understand what those needs are.

In the past, dialogue regarding Aboriginal pedagogy, and ways of knowing have not always resulted in positive changes. Today, the ingredients to enter into critical dialogue are being felt. There is a need for: Aboriginal people to guide education in creating culturally responsive education for students; recognize the increasing Aboriginal populations; and recognize that teachers, who need to be informed, are the foundation for creating frameworks of education from which to work.

The interviewees believed that we need to ask what the goals should be for the students we are teaching and how we can reach these goals. There needs to be an understanding of First Nations philosophy to guide the creation of a framework of learning in physical education. The biggest challenge is educating teachers to realize that the Eurocentric ideology is not the only way to approach curricula in education/physical education. Saskatchewan Curricula is called *Evergreen,* signifying constant renewal, and we need to approach change from this perspective, by creating ongoing opportunities for change that will benefit everyone.

Consultants report that unfortunately, there are some teachers who don't use the adaptive dimension to its full potential within curricula. In some cases they openly admit

the adaptive dimension is not for them even though this provides them with the opportunities and flexibility to reach the unique needs of all the students and the learning environments. They have built their courses and have no room for cultural dimensions within these courses. Some educators have openly stated they don't think about cultural inclusion because they have a subject to teach and they don't care about culture. They also don't understand why people from one culture should think they are unique and deserve special curricula attention. Dialogue must point out that you don't lose one way of being by talking or learning about another way of being.

6. *Who needs to inform and interpret curricula to make it responsive to Aboriginal people?*

It was agreed that a collaborative approach should be used to create culturally responsive curricula. In the past, educators have been criticized for researching the educational needs of Aboriginal people and then subsequently interpreting the outcomes to suit the Eurocentric notion of education. We need a meeting of the minds with people who are responsible for shaping and directing the development of culturally responsive curricula. For too long we haven't associated with the change agents in Aboriginal culture. There needs to be sincere dialogue among philosophers and teachers of Aboriginal cultures. Elders need to supply knowledge and direction. Community leaders, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, administrators, educators, practitioners from both communities are all people that need to offer inclusion. Most inclusions to date have been through resources that offer some sort of a Pan Indian view. Many academic views are not local, not accurate, and not concurrent with Aboriginal ways of thinking. It was

also felt that dialogue among educational peers was important for educational change to be affective.

7. *How is Aboriginal pedagogy addressed in the final report to the Minister of Education, Government of Saskatchewan with regards to curricula reform?*

During the mid eighties, Saskatchewan Education reformed education by implementing documents that focused on the goals of education, common essential learnings, required areas of study, resource based learning, and the adaptive dimension. These reforms provided structure to education along with the flexibility for teachers to adapt their teachings to suit unique situations. Today, ten years later, there is a major thrust identified to actualize this reform (Tymchuk, 2001).

Educators feel there is an attitude of working together in education to reach these goals. Some interviewees hoped this would go beyond lip service and the goals for inclusion would be realized in Aboriginal education.

People in the department of Saskatchewan Education are aware that there needs to be a welcomed input from stakeholders within the community regarding what education should look like, and that partnerships need to be endorsed through sincere collaboration. Some educators/administrators believed that in the past, partnerships may have risen out of fear. Aboriginal people have let it be known that the curricula must meet the needs of their people or they may choose to create their own education system. Several of the administrators who were interviewed suggested that school boards are afraid of this move.

The Aboriginal consultants feel that Tribal councils and the Saskatchewan Federation of Indian Nations (SFIN) are very eager to work on education policy and

programs with other educational stakeholders. They wish to be accepted as peers and work cooperatively to create education initiatives that would serve their people. There needs to be a moral mandate to include the whole community to shape education. Indian governments are very interested in contributing; however, they request that genuine, sincere people be involved in this change. They want to work with individuals who are prepared to listen and work collaboratively with Aboriginals regarding education and leave the legacy of colonial arrogance behind.

Advice to Me

The individuals that I interviewed believed this study is much more than an opportunity to include Aboriginal content within physical education. It was suggested that this study has the potential to open up a dialogue and debate regarding education that transcends beyond the uni-cultural approach. This study provides an opportunity to serve a diverse community through the re-shaping of curricula to build a true community of education and to begin to assemble a cultural framework for physical education teaching.

They reminded me that dialogue is crucial. Aboriginal people are anxious to sit down with others to define what is important to them through education, and how that will be manifested in the class. Together we must determine what values and knowledge we share, and recognize distinctions.

The individuals interviewed admitted the idea of this study was not something that jumped out to them inside their educational experience. After reflecting on these questions, the potential for a culturally responsive physical education framework became an exciting possibility to them, and they determined the study to be fresh and different. They also perceived the environment of the gymnasium to be "a less threatening

environment" to conduct the study. All of these educators/administrators were very supportive and intrigued with the question of culturally responsive curricula in physical education. They looked forward to the outcome.

CHAPTER 3

Research Design

Qualitative Methods

This qualitative research study catapulted from the intended action research framework into a combined research design which maintained traditional methodologies of documentation, systematic analysis of conversations (Hollingsworth 1994) and narrative inquiry, which provided me a voice to share my experience. In what seemed like a nanosecond, after our first group meeting as research participants, it became clear that the proposed outline of action research planning, acting, observing, and reflecting, (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988) was not going to happen as I had envisioned.

The main participants were five Aboriginal teachers who designed their involvement in the study very quickly. They felt they were too busy to be immersed in journal writing, planning, or action circles. Applying knowledge and implementing change within their classrooms wasn't practical at this point because the teachers felt they were in the process of understanding themselves, and the question of culturally responsive curricula. The initial research question was immediately challenged by one of the co-researchers which directed us towards thoughtful action in our conversations and this will be discussed in chapter 5. The teachers wanted to talk about the question, think, dialogue, and direct me to other sources for knowledge and I respected their approach. Talking, listening, and reflecting made sense since this is part of the Aboriginal frame of reference. I had to force myself to relax and follow them and their research design.

Dr. Richardson's words resonated in my ears, "This is going to be messy!" Messy! This is out of control. I felt like my heart was coming out my ears. I told myself to get a hold of my physiological response to this quick shift in gathering data and re-position myself. Be calm. Everything will be fine. Hmmm...

This repositioning experience led us into the beginnings of a respectful, reciprocal relationship. We became a community of researchers who recognized the varied and unique knowledge that we brought to the study. There was no question of equal participation in this study between researcher and the participants even though the tasks varied from being engaged in conversation, reflecting, attending ceremonies, writing, researching literature, reading, formulating ideas, and transcribing. We all agreed that our gifts we brought to the study were unique and valued. Our roles merged together to collaborate toward a common mission and I felt as though these teachers had taken charge. I listened to them. I went forward and created charts as they directed me to, "try and put it together, because I knew the curricula," as Debbie said; reorganized our thoughts on paper; came back and provided them with a (review) overview of our past conversations and data; member-checked with them to assure accuracy in our thinking; visited other people and venues that they suggested, and formulated new directions for our thinking. As the wheels of this study began to turn the road became steeper to climb and more interesting. This participatory research approach we became engaged in, reflected the description expressed by Hall (2002):

> This process involves the community differently than does conventional research, in which participants merely respond to the researcher's agenda. In participatory research, all members of the community support one another in an ongoing manner to actively inform the purpose, context, methodology, and emerging data of the work. (p.xiii)

The notion of community also expanded and we maintained a core community of researchers (myself and the teacher-researchers); however, they challenged me to go out into the community of learners and teachers to ask more questions. They insisted that we must not stagnate inside of our own little circle and they just plain admitted they didn't

have all of the answers. This spoke to me of the many references in the literature to Aboriginal community and how knowledge is gained from many perspectives and many people. These teacher- researchers were encouraging community involvement inside the question of culturally responsive curricula in physical education. By community, I refer to any person or opportunity that might contribute to our knowledge of this question.

This provided me with multiple experiences from individual and group conversations, to the sweat lodge, pow-wows, conferences, observations, and reflections. Aboriginal people value all of the individuals in a community because each one possesses special gifts of knowledge. They believe in collective actions and voices that work together with the goal of creating a better community (Friesen & Friesen, 2002; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000; Ross, 1996). Through our collective interactions and voices we all gained more insight and knowledge.

This tension between the boundaries of planned, structured, research procedures and learning to recognize that the study had taken on a new life can be challenging (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). I had to let go of my proposed agenda of interviewing, observing, and coming away with a neat package of information. Rather, I had to learn to follow the Aboriginal philosophy of conversation, listening, thinking, and responding, working together as a community of learners, relaxing, and letting the moments speak to me. This was a transformation in my thinking patterns and it was reminiscent of my first experience hearing an Elder respond to a question by telling stories:

> *When I first listened to some of the stories of the Elder, there were times when nothing seemed to fit together as we slowly moved along. I wondered where the stories were going and at first the words and ideas seemed disjointed. There was a logical sequence but it was presented differently than stories told from the western context of beginning, middle and ending. At times the stories seemed to be talking about many different topics; almost lacking focus. Far from the truth, this demonstrated the*

differences in the way different cultures tell stories and the way we listen to stories. The Elder would punctuate the end of the stories with silence, and allow us to interpret the message as was needed for personal growth and understanding. I learned to listen differently. It's hard to explain, but I began to open my mind, awaken my senses, and really listen to what was being said. The lesson in the story was always there. Learning to listen was so exciting because it was at that point that I realized the readings I had done and the experience of the stories were coming together. Through this new experience, I was gaining knowledge about myself, my potential, and Aboriginal knowledge.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) discuss renowned educator, John Dewey's belief that experience is both social and personal. These two criteria are always present in some integrated form and the relationship between the experience and its social context can influence learning outcomes. Another criteria for experience is continuity, that allows one experience to lead to another experience; thereby, building knowledge along the way. Past experiences lead to present experiences that take us into future experiences. These experiences define our thoughts and actions; our education as humans. The multiple learning opportunities I experienced throughout this research, in a variety of social contexts, reflected these two criteria. I became excited as I started to see links between the stories told, the experiences I had, and the knowledge that was evolving. I was challenged to allow the research to evolve and grow with a naturalistic flavor.

The qualitative inquiry approach remained relevant and applicable to this research. I had to sit back and ask myself, "What was happening inside this research?" The study became one of experience and the development of knowledge. As I mentioned on the first page of this writing, the Creator creates a time and a place for all good things. The time that I have been given to contemplate, reflect, re-story, re-tell, and re-think the life of this study, has provided me with the opportunity to share this research as a narrative journey of my experience. From the beginning of my research career, I struggled with the "right" way to write. I felt too much tension with typical academic

structures in writing. I believed that there must be a more creative way to present research findings that remain rigorous, meaningful, and authentic by deliberately focusing on paying close attention to the details of the research through careful listening and observation. The opportunity to explore various forms of writing throughout my studies all contributed to the formation of this research. It was like one of those epiphanies when I found myself "at home" in my writing.

This study is a combination of exploring experience through conversation, observation, discovering of knowledge through experiences, and documenting and analyzing emergent themes. The major portion of the narrative process is more about my own experience inside the research and less about the teacher researchers' experiences.

The value in qualitative research is in its ability to examine the process of experience and provide a rich understanding of any given phenomenon (Glanz, 1998; Merriam & Assoc., 2003). Qualitative research is also referred to as naturalistic inquiry, as it searches for meaning inside the natural settings of the participants (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

Lincoln & Guba (1985) encourage data collection through qualitative methods that are "...extensions of normal human activities: looking, listening, speaking, reading, and the like" (p. 199). Active participants who are directly involved with the experiences of the study are in the best position to inform the process and produce valuable data (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Glanz, 1998). Glanz (1998) states, "Qualitative methods assume that human reality is socially constructed and is best represented, if you will, by the subjective perceptions or observations of individuals" (p. 88). Rich details of experiences within phenomena can be described through a variety of methods.

Qualitative researchers search for the processes individuals employ to derive meaning from their experiences, and recognize that each method conveys the world in a different way (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Elliott, 1991; Glanz, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam & Assoc., 2003; Stringer, 1996). Qualitative inquiry provides for the unfolding of these processes as it is characteristically patient and allows time for themes and data to emerge within the research (Glanz, 1998).

Dewey (as discussed in Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) believed that, "life *is* education" (p.xxii) and we gain education through experience. Social scientists concern themselves with humans and their relationships to themselves and their particular environments; therefore, individual experience is the impetus for inquiry.

Throughout this narrative inquiry the research participants searched for answers to the question of culturally responsive curricula in physical education. We searched for understanding of the question through conversations of possibilities. As well, participants recognized that their experiences of life brought them to this research, and helped them to explore further experiences through this inquiry.

As I reflected on my initial proposal of action research design with a more structured approach for this study, and the changes that occurred in methodology, I began to believe that there was a better method awaiting us, for which I was unknowingly preparing. The focus of the study remained unchanged; however, I feel that the procedures and outcomes we implemented are in closer harmony with Aboriginal knowledge, and that this study would not have been best represented through my initial plans. The study became a relationship among all of us.

It felt as though the study came to life in a way that transcends beyond a linear description of questions and answers. It began to rotate and intersect with each new piece of knowledge or experience, with each one building on the other. We all learned from our research and this was no exception; yet it was different for me. This study seemed to do the teaching. Something would happen and the answers were not always apparent as might be in a situation of interviewing and observation. Rather, the multiplicity of the knowledge began to grow as if to say, "I am alive and you have come to re-discover me." So much of the struggle, history, and knowledge of the past, presented itself today, and invited us into tomorrow. It was as Elder Three advised that as we search for knowledge the answer is always ahead of us (McClintock, 2001).

Data Gathering

Triangulation

Several methods of data collection should be implemented in order to validate the data through a process of triangulation. No one method of data collection should be accepted as a singular source of information, and researchers should understand that each method of data collection reveals the world in a different way (Brickman & Rog, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Glanz, 1998; Maxwell, 1998; Merriam & Assoc., 2003). Elliott (1991) and Glanz (1998) suggest that these methods of data collection may or may not be prescribed, and that teachers may select methods of data collection with which they are comfortable. Brennan & Noffke (1997) discuss how data is non existent without the group relationship and the data depends on the social conditions of their making in order to exist. The reciprocity between relationships and social conditions and the collection of data can serve to enhance the relationship among the group members.

Implementing a combination of methods serves to add rigor, increase complexity, richness, and depth to the study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Glanz, 1998). Trustworthiness and credibility also increase when multiple data collection methods are employed (Alberta Teachers' Association, 2000). Elliott (1991) agrees that comparing and contrasting the relationship of evidence solicited from different methods and from a variety of perspectives helps to address systematic thinking. Although these multiple methods for obtaining data are important, Guba (1996) encourages a movement away from the restrictive rules of research when implementing research and human inquiry. While concerns with validity, reliability, objectivity, and generalizations are important in the physical sciences, when we work in human inquiry Guba states:

> Inquirers do not "discover" knowledge by watching nature do its thing from behind a thick one-way mirror; rather, it is literally created by the interaction of inquirers with the "object" (construct) inquired into. (p.x)

Within this study it was important to explore Indigenous knowledge, methods of obtaining knowledge, and Aboriginal approaches to pedagogy. Opportunities to invest in furthering knowledge were interesting, diverse, and in some cases, unexpected. The following methods were experienced in this study: storytelling; interviews; talking circles; conversations; listening; visual depictions; visits to classrooms; ceremonies such as a pow-wow, and attending a sweat lodge; and visits with Elders.

Interviews and Conversations

The initial meeting with the teacher researchers began with informal interview questions regarding their backgrounds, interests in the study, work situation, meeting availability; as well, I provided an overview of the study. An outline of the questions that were asked during the initial interview are listed in Appendix A.

It was an opportunity to get to know each other. After the first formal question regarding culturally responsive curricula in physical education, the interaction quickly became one of conversation. I will elaborate on this in the next chapter.

We began a sharing back and forth, carefully listening, and probing further into the question. Although there were some conversations that held interview characteristics, the rest of our interactions together became very conversation orientated. The following text provides an overview of the differences between conversations and interviews.

Interviews and conversations feel differently. Carson (1986, p. 74) states, "The interview is designed to elicit information from informants concerning a topic which is of relevance to the researcher." Although no less valuable, the interview feels more clinical in the sense that the researcher suspends himself or herself outside of the question, listens to the responses, probes deeper meanings, and formalizes the responses in a written context that relates the knowledge and the experiences of the interviewed person. There is no sense of collaboration to impact change or improvements in practice. The information provided becomes data to be "...recontextualized in the form of generalizations which have a wide application" (Carson, 1986, p. 74).

Interviews may be structured or semi-structured which allow for the interviewed individual to initiate new insights and directions regarding the topic (Creswell & Shope, 2002; Tisdell, 2002). There may be opportunities to engage in shared conversations during interviews when the interviewer shares himself or herself with the interviewed participant (Tisdell, 2002); however, the primary focus is on the interviewed person. Generally speaking, the interview is controlled by the interviewer, and has an inequality about it (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Conversations on the other hand, have a much more participatory relationship between all research participants. Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p. 110) share, "...researchers who establish intimate participatory relationships with participants find it difficult, if not impossible, to conduct such interviews with participants...the interview often turns into a form of conversation."

These conversations bear characteristics of mutual trust, careful listening, and a genuine care for the other participants and their experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Hollingsworth (1994) agrees that during conversations, researchers must engage with the research participants understanding that the research becomes, "...a process of working with them as a co-learner and creator of evolving expertise through non-evaluative conversation," and to accomplish this, the researcher must become, "...still and listen" (p. 5). Carson (1986) explains that a conversation lends itself to a mutual, common goal that is shared between the participants.

Initial interviews with participants were conducted to learn about the researchers' perspectives and experiences with Aboriginal culture and the physical education curricula. Interviews recognize and legitimize the participants' unique position within the research and the knowledge they contribute (Stringer, 1996; Glanz, 1998). To avoid imposing the researcher's perceptions, perspectives, and interests on the interview process, Stringer (1996) encourages the use of grand tour, guided, and task types of questions. These questions are global in nature and allow the participants the opportunity to describe their own situation (eg. "Tell me about [your work]" (p. 62), "Could you show me around [your school]" (p. 63), and "Could you draw me a map of the place you've described?" (p. 63).

Elliott (1991) and Bogdan & Biklen (1998) suggest that during the initial phases of research, using an unstructured interview format is probably best to allow the conversation to remain open to relevant information, allowing the participants to speak from their own frame of reference. Semi-structured interviews are also appropriate where the participants respond to pre-set questions, yet are free to pose their own questions.

Throughout this study, it was important to hear the voices of all of the researchers. Many of the interviews were more like collaborative discussions as the teachers raised issues, asked questions, shared information they discovered, or were challenged by new ideas. Mishler (as cited in Glanz, 1998) agrees that, "the best interviews are flexible and open-ended, allowing for natural conversation" (p. 143).

Group interviews and conversations occurred more often than individual interviews and conversations. The teacher researchers felt that group meetings were more productive because the collaboration of ideas could be shared through conversation with each other, and they appreciated the opportunity to dialogue with each other. Group interviews again may be informal in nature with opportunities for each person to address issues and concerns. The gathering of these teacher researchers was not seen as a "public meeting" as Stringer (1996, p. 68) would applaud. Rather, it was viewed as a meeting of teachers who represented different ways of seeing the world, yet who were all committed to investigating the question of culturally responsive physical education curricula. The difference was that we had established a relationship of collegiality and trust. We relied on each other for knowledge and conversation.

At times, when a new question was posed we would begin our conversations with a talking circle. Each individual would have the opportunity to speak or pass as the conversation moved clockwise around the circle. Generally, four rounds of conversation occurred during a talking circle. Experiencing a talking circle is a special way of communicating. Listening was enhanced as we respectfully paid attention to the words others spoke and the knowledge took on a life of its own and spoke to each of us. Most of these conversations were tape recorded and later transcribed to recognize emerging themes of information that continued to shape the study. If at any time the participants felt uncomfortable with the recording they were invited to shut off the machine. This never occurred.

I was cautioned by one of the participants that tape recording may not always be a welcome addition during discussions with First Nations people. As Isbister (1998) was preparing to tape record a lecture given by Elder Kanapotatoao, the Elder taught him:

> Grandchild, you should have more confidence in the faculties and senses bestowed upon you by the Creator. The mind, eyes and ears, when used to capacity, facilitate the learning process. Machine learning, on the other hand, dulls our capacity to learn and takes away the essence of the moment. This very moment is crucial; therein lies the truth. Truth is yesterday's problem and tomorrow's lies. Learn, then, my grandchild by use of your faculties and senses and you will discover the beauty and essence of the moment. (p.78)

For the most part, tape recording was not an issue. However, when I met with the Elders I was invited to just listen and to trust myself that I would take what I needed from the conversation.

The first time I was invited to just listen, I recall breaking into a cold sweat. I thought to myself, "How on earth am I going to remember everything that is important and then write it down without transcripts?" I need to absorb the sights, sounds, smells, and textures of the space as well as the knowledge presented through this conversation. I leaned into the conversation and I think at that point, I stopped breathing for a moment. Then I decided to take the advice of the speaker and just listen. I relaxed once again and

trusted myself. I went home after this and sat at the computer and just wrote. So many pieces of information were alive and speaking to me. It was a great experience. Once again I was challenged to cross the boundaries. We think we are ready to head down stream in our research and be open to possibilities but when these non-structured incidences show themselves, the products of our Eurocentric notions of conformity bump up against the opportunities that call us to trust ourselves inside other ways of knowing.

This experience called to mind a quote from an Oglala Elder, Four Guns who stated in Friesen and Friesen (2002):

> The white people must think paper has some mysterious power to help them in the world. The Indian needs no writings; words that are true sink deep into his heart, where they remain. He never forgets them. On the other hand, if the white man loses his paper, he is helpless. (p. 47)

The location of the interviews and conversations were varied and these will further be described when I discuss the gathering of knowledge in chapter five.

Storytelling

Storytelling crystallizes an ethos or a way of being, transmitting critical cultural values and lessons and underlying values (Fetterman, 1998). Stories can take us into the secular, sacred, intellectual, and emotional life of a people (Cajete, 1994; Fetterman, 1998; Harrison, 2002; Lanigan, 1998). Storytelling is the oldest of the arts and is essential for the communication of knowledge and ideas; it provides a variety of angles to develop solutions from, and incorporate many possible explanations for phenomena (Lanigan, 1998). Storytelling requires listening, thinking, reflecting, internalizing information, and allows for new knowledge to become new action in one's life.

Stories may be told by anyone and we may be informed through stories from a variety of people, places, and events. Throughout this research study there were many opportunities for me to listen to stories and to read them in print. Each story held a

lesson. Sometimes questions would be answered with stories and the knowledge from these stories helped formulate new ideas and questions about the research.

Journal Writing

Journal writing was encouraged by all participants, including myself. Writers will be encouraged to share more than just "bald facts" (Elliott, 1991, p.77) regarding reflections, personal observations, hypothesis, and explanations through journal writing. An account of feelings, reactions, interpretations, hunches, and further questions can also be encouraged. Bogdan & Biklen (1998) and Merriam & Assoc.(2003) discuss the importance of feelings in the writing and reflective process to generate understanding about one's experience. Reflecting on feelings and experience can also serve to generate thought and action based on questions that arise from feelings. A journal is a personal account of each person's experience and should be respected as such. It is an opportunity to reflect on one's personal journey and follow the path that may show itself through the writings. Directions and detours of the educational journey help to reveal themes of writing, feeling, and reflection. Journal writing can also act as a self-member check, ensuring focus on the issues at hand.

I invited the teacher participants to enter into journal writing but none of them did. In lieu of this, I tried to encourage conversations that would address issues around feelings, reactions, hunches, reflections, observations, etc., which might contribute to the rich data. This proved to be fairly successful as I invited the teacher participants to talk about some of their feelings in regards to the discussions.

Field Notes – Descriptive and Reflective

When the researcher is acting as a participant-observer within a qualitative study, all data collected are considered field notes (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Field notes are a method of recording observations in the field that extend beyond the interview, observation, photographs, or transcripts. Field notes are chronologically documented by the researcher during observation opportunities and consist of both an objective section containing detailed descriptions of the observation, and subjective accounts of reflections or speculations about the observation (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, and Glanz, (1998). These written accounts also aid the researcher in tracking the project as it develops, reflecting on how the research plan is affected by the data, and remaining aware of how the researcher is influenced by the data (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998).

Descriptive field notes call for accuracy, specific details, and objective documentation of observations. Bogdan & Biklen (1998) and Glanz (1998) encourage anecdotal notes to keep the researcher from drawing conclusions or allowing biases to cloud the details of the observation. Capturing the reality of the situation and paying attention to exact detail is vital to gather 'rich' data that are seen to be filled with good description and relevant pieces of evidence that help the participants make analytical sense out of the study (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Merriam & Assoc., 2003).

Reflective field notes allow for the subjective descriptions regarding hunches, ideas, feelings, problems, impressions, and prejudices that were observed, or are emerging within the research. Bogdan & Biklen (1998) stress that it is important for the researcher to use this information for self-reflection in order to remain responsible and responsive to the study.

Throughout the course of this study, I kept field notes that allowed me to record the structural and objective parts of the experiences as well as the personal subjective interpretations of my observations. These helped me to see not only what was recorded as happened, but also how I responded to it.

Purposive Sampling

Glanz (1998) suggests that all participants should have an equal chance of being selected to participate in the study. Purposive sampling can be pursued to facilitate the researcher's ability to devise grounded theory that embraces local experiences of condition, experience, and value, and participants should be chosen who could provide information from experience that will contribute to the knowledge and data of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1990; Merriam & Assoc., 2003). Aboriginal individuals are in the best position to share their knowledge regarding culturally responsive Aboriginal curricula.

In order to gather participants for this study, I made appointments with both the superintendent of the school division and the consultant involved with Aboriginal studies, to convey my research proposal and to request participants for the study. I presented them with a letter of request (Appendix B) and they put forth a call through the schools to recruit participants. Fetterman (1998) refers to this as "the big-net approach" (p. 479) whereby the researcher tries to interact with as many individuals as possible in the beginning. At the time of the onset of this study (2002) there were 55 Aboriginal teachers within this school division which was 5% of the teacher population (Saskatoon Catholic Schools, 2000). Although background knowledge and experience in culturally responsive curricula would be an asset, it was not necessary. I requested individuals who were committed to culturally responsive curricula and who were willing to become

researchers to experience this journey of acquiring knowledge. I believed that both elementary and secondary teachers could effectively work together on this study. The goal was to search for the knowledge that would contribute to cultural relevance in physical education, and could be applied to multiple grades.

I was provided five names of teachers who responded to the call for participants. I contacted these teachers and we set up our first meeting to become acquainted and initiate a meeting schedule. Four of these teachers did participate in the study on an ongoing basis and the fifth one left before the end of the study but still provided very rich data before leaving. We had three group meetings each lasting two hours. I had two individual meetings with each teacher in their classrooms or office. We had two meetings with pairs of teachers who were able to attend. I had one shared meeting with two different Elders arranged by one of the teacher participants, two private meetings with one Elder's Assistant, and I attended three conferences where I was able to listen to Elders talk about educational issues in relation to curricula.

Participant Observer

As a participant observer I attended to the lived experience of my participants while maintaining a professional distance to allow for adequate observation and recording of data (Fetterman, 1998). As mentioned in prior text, I had the opportunity to collect data through various learning experiences. A more holistic look into Indigenous knowledge and perspectives in physical education was gained by observing and participating in Aboriginal group conversations, ceremonies, pow-wows, feasts, meetings, and other cultural events. These provided a multi-layered and interrelated context that framed these learning experiences into a larger perspective (Fetterman,

1998). Remaining open to the possibilities in research and allowing the life of the research to direct the search encouraged the participants to trust in the process and the knowledge they brought to the study.

My experience inside this research study was quite different from other studies I have been involved in. I came to this study with substantial knowledge of existing physical education and health curricula and pedagogical practice from the Eurocentric framework. My participants were focused on the questions of culturally responsive curricula in physical education even though this was not an area of specialization for any of them. They did, however, teach some physical education in their classes.

They contributed their current cultural knowledge and we built a community of researchers who continued to question and learn from each other about culture and knowledge. The participants were always respectful of each other, passionate about their ideas, and open to the views of each other. It was a journey for me of letting go of 'self' in terms of lead researcher as I felt the essence of these re-searchers directing the research. I believe this collaboration among the researchers and my-self evolved because we recognized and valued each other for what we brought to this study in terms of knowledge and personality. The teacher researchers were very forthright with their commitment to the study and they openly spoke their minds about the knowledge and processes we were searching for.

As a non-Aboriginal person I remained mindful that I did not have the Aboriginal frame of reference that these teachers brought to the study. We had a common bond as teachers but not as Aboriginal people. There were several highlights for me during this research process. First of all, the immersion into the literature and learning about the

teachings of the Aboriginal people opened my mind to the struggles of the Aboriginal people and the impact on education today. As I read through the literature, I learned of how the Aboriginal people live their knowledge through actions of conversation, ceremony, thinking, storytelling, questioning, respecting, and so on. I was told that I need patience and time to think about the study and learn from what was occurring inside the study. I listened and it did take time. The grandest celebration of this study for me was seeing the stories of the past, the literature that I read, activated through the lives and experiences of the re-searchers who worked with me during the study. These people were living their knowledge as it made sense to them at this time. When I started to "see" what I had read and heard, I felt that this was the ultimate learning experience because it was alive.

Cultural Guides

I asked two Aboriginal educators to be my cultural guides throughout this study. Michael, an administrator, and Theresa, an academic advisor, agreed to guide me through the cultural protocol within my study. Whenever I had a problem or a question I turned to them for advice and/or clarification in any cultural matter. This study provided me opportunities to engage in unfamiliar situations, such as: 1) meeting with Elders, 2) partaking in unfamiliar ceremonies, 3) in-service meetings and, 4) approaching others for advice. I would go to my cultural guides to solicit advice regarding protocol prior to these experiences to ensure that I came with good intent to these experiences and did not offend anyone. My cultural guides were generous with their time and their counsel for which I am grateful.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is an ongoing process done simultaneously with data collection (Glanz, 2003). Collecting data may begin even before the first meeting with participants. Personal reflections on the process or experiences preceding the actual gathering of participants could provide insight for future reference by the researcher. Throughout the research process, there were constant opportunities to reflect on what was happening inside the research and plan for the continuation of the research. This was, in part possible through the identification of recurrent themes evident from the interviews, observations, writings, and interactions of all participants. The data was also turned back into the research which helped to formulate new data.

Transcripts of interviews provided opportunity for thematic analysis and reflective thought. Re-reading and listening to conversations that revealed insights of experience provided understandings, created new questions, and provide new directions for actions and conversations. Data analysis must consider the process of research, the outcomes of the research, and the application of the data.

Ethics

Glanz (2003) provides a set of ethical principles to consider when conducting research:

- Principle of accurate disclosure – participants should be informed of the purposes and procedures of the research they will be involved with.
- Principle of beneficence – no harm will be done in any way.
- Principle of confidentiality – information shared by participants and their identities will remain anonymous.

- Principle of honesty – report findings in an honest and accurate way.
- Principle of privacy – only information that is necessary for the study will be asked and permission will be requested from participants if personal information is required.

Fetterman (1998) also suggests the researcher must be sensitive and respectful when sharing in other cultural values and ways of thinking. Respectful behavior will ensure the rights of individuals, the integrity of the data collected and a productive and positive relationship between all participants.

The ethical guidelines established by the University of Alberta with respect to human participants and research were respected and followed within this study. Permission to conduct the research study was requested from the Ethics Committee and the Faculty of Secondary Education, University of Alberta.

Each study participant received written information as well as a verbal explanation regarding the objectives of the study and their roles. They understood that their participation was voluntary, and they had the privilege of withdrawing at any time without fear of penalty. Consent forms were completed by each participant prior to the gathering of data.

Pseudonyms have been used to protect the identity of the participants and respect confidentiality. The participants were allowed to review the transcripts to ensure the accuracy of the text. All data was stored in a secured space within the researcher's office during the study. These data will be maintained for a period of five years after the conclusion of the study, upon which time the data will be destroyed.

From the Outside Looking In

"What happens to research when the researched become the researchers?" (Smith, 1999, p.183).

First Nations people from all over the world have voiced concern over being the subjects of research that produces inaccurate, generalized conclusions about First Nations people. The suggestions of dominance and power over First Nations groups generated by Western thinking, attitudes of colonial correctness, and Eurocentric rightness, have created a large space between Western thinking and Aboriginal groups. First Nations want to be recognized for their unique ways of knowing and acting within the world, as they search for ways to walk between these two spaces (Hampton, 1995; Ross, 1996; Smith, 1999, Ward & Bouvier, 2001). Applying Aboriginal knowledge to curricula has been an ongoing educational issue for some time now. We need Aboriginal expertise to lead this research and apply cultural knowledge that will foster more meaningful educational experiences for all students and teachers.

Dominance by the Western researcher inside the lives of First Nations persons has created spaces of distrust and disharmony between the two groups (Smith, 1999). However, there is a desire by both groups to learn to walk together to build educational practices that will honor both ways of knowing and living in the world (Friesen & Friesen, 2002). Smith (1999) suggests that non-Indigenous researchers have an obligation to support the research of Maori as Treaty partners within her country, and that non-Indigenous researchers can become colleagues with Indigenous people in research. It is imperative to establish trust and to remain accountable to the goals of the research.

To avoid objectifying knowledge and people, more equitable relationships are vital. Wilson (2001) suggests that if we are following Indigenous ways of learning and researching we must be diligent in our relationships. He states:

> As a researcher you are answering to *all your relations* when you are doing research. You are not answering questions of validity or reliability or making judgments of better or worse. Instead you should be fulfilling your relationships with the world around you....you are asking how am I fulfilling my role in this relationship? (p. 177)

I recognized in some ways that I was an outsider in this research, even though I don't believe the participants made me feel like an outsider. To me, the most important element of this research was respect for the co-researchers, their knowledge, their past experiences, and their sincere desire to learn together. I focused on suspending any act of power, academic arrogance, and bias in order to be true to myself and to my participants, as we worked towards creating a mutually respectful learning environment. Smith (1999, p.173) suggests the following questions require attention while working in a cross-cultural context:

1) Who defined the research question?

I defined the initial question. It was of interest to me and I believe an important question for several educational stakeholders. Subsequent meetings of the researchers re-defined the question and procedures, creating a collaborative relationship among all of us.

2) For whom is this study worthy and relevant? Who says so?

The study could potentially benefit: physical educators, researchers, curricula writers, students, education programs, and pre-service and practicing teachers in the field. The educators I interviewed in the pilot inquiry agreed the

study was necessary and potentially informative to a wide range of educational stakeholders. The teacher researchers believed there was benefit to this study as well.

3) What knowledge will the community gain from this study?

As educators, we gained insights into Indigenous knowledge that relates to culturally responsive curricula in physical education. This knowledge came from the Aboriginal people who were in the best position to provide the knowledge necessary to formulate a working framework. This knowledge will be used in the communities that it serves.

4) What knowledge will the research gain from this study?

The knowledge gained from this research could serve to create a framework of understanding for what it means to live and learn as Aboriginal people in relation to physical well-being. This knowledge could be applied to methods of learning to teach physical education, curricula development, in-service programs, physical activities, and address issues of health and wellness. Generalizations were not to be formulated; however, common themes of knowledge among Aboriginal groups did emerge that could serve as the framework on which to adapt or build curricula.

5. What are some likely positive outcomes from this study?

Aboriginal teachers will be leading contributors in the field of culturally responsive curricula. This knowledge may also be disseminated through in-service programs, conferences, course planning, and implementation of culturally responsive curricula. Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal teachers and students all stand to benefit from this knowledge.

6) What are some possible negative outcomes from this study?

If I were to inaccurately interpret and disseminate the information in a biased manner that would prevent the Aboriginal perspectives from being heard, there would be no gains in understanding from the research. The research would not reflect nor respect the intended aim of the study.

7) How can the negative outcomes be eliminated?

I have made every attempt to be attentive to the ethics of this study, in particular respecting the individuals and the knowledge they bring to the study. This research belongs to all of us.

8) To whom is the researcher accountable?

There is ongoing accountability to the research participants, the university, my graduate committee, the co-operating board of education, and to myself.

9) What processes were in place to support the research, the researched and the researcher?

- Approaching the methodology from an open framework; recognizing that Aboriginal ways of knowing and learning are valuable and must be respected for shaping this research.

- Approaching the methodology from an open framework; recognizing that Aboriginal ways of knowing and learning are valuable and must be respected for shaping this research.
- Recognizing that all stakeholders share equitably in power, knowledge, and ownership of the research.
- Creating an ongoing awareness to do no harm along the way; by fostering positive and respectful relationships.

Smith (1999, p. 16) uses the term "sharing knowledge" deliberately rather than "sharing information" which implies a much deeper sharing of theories and analyses that inform the way knowledge and information are constructed and represented. Smith suggests this approach will help to close the gap between communities and individuals who perhaps do share a much wider world of common interests, struggles, and dreams.

CHAPTER 4

An Over View of Aboriginal Knowledge in Relation to Culturally Responsive Curricula

Journeying through this study I carried with me the question of culturally responsive curriculum. Before delving into the literature, the term evolved in my mind and I had to analyze what that meant to me at that time. The key word seemed to be 'responsive' and I asked myself – to what? My journal held the following reflections:

In order to do this research as a non-Aboriginal educator, I need to validate why I have come to this question and summarize what is necessary for me to be true to this investigation. I believe:

- *in the importance of Aboriginal epistemology in curriculum*
- *that I must learn from the Aboriginal people what that knowledge might be and how it could direct curriculum*
- *a meaningful and empowering education for all students would promote positive relationships with self, others, our communities, and our world*

Believing in this quest to understand how Aboriginal epistemology can influence thinking about physical education curriculum, required a belief that there has been an ongoing injustice regarding the exclusion of Indigenous knowledge and pedagogy within our classrooms, by deliberately ignoring the cultural knowledge and experiences that the students bring to school. I believe, from my own experience, that we all have a uniqueness that we bring to our learning and this should be respected. Cultural groups have an even greater need to be recognized since they have been marginalized for many years in reference to education. Eurocentric models of curricula and pedagogy need to put aside their intellectual arrogance and recognize that there are other ways of understanding knowledge in this world, and some of the most profound ways of knowing are vibrant, strong, empowering, sustaining, and existed long before the coming of the European influence.

I have discovered that my thoughts regarding culturally responsive curriculum are reflected in the writings and research of other authors in the field of education, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. Curwen Doige (2003) shares three summarized principles that are required to influence Aboriginal curriculum and pedagogy: a) to accept and thus validate Aboriginal epistemology as a basis for learning; b) to create a relational, safe learning environment that values students; and c) to promote authentic dialogue. The foundation for responding to understanding culturally responsive curriculum [in physical education] lies in these three principles. Archibald (1995) stresses that in order to develop appropriate curricula an understanding of the essential elements that represent the culture must be identified.

In 1991 the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples was established by the Canadian Federal Government. The purpose of the commission was to carry out an independent inquiry to look at the tensions between Aboriginal peoples of Canada, the government, and Canadian society as a whole. This commission was invited to suggest possible solutions to the problems that adversely affect intercultural relationships. A five-volume report was completed in 1996. The primary recommendation to establishing harmonious relationships and equity for Aboriginal people in Canadian life was the recognition and respect for cultural differences, and the moral, historical, and legal right of Aboriginal peoples to self determination. Health and education were two areas where the commission recommended application of Indigenous knowledge and traditions to encourage initiatives in these areas that would express Aboriginal philosophies, world views, and ultimately improve social relations both in school and in their communities (Brant Castellano, 2002). Ultimately, the highest courts in Canada have recognized these

inherent rights of Aboriginal people to create appropriate educational opportunities for their people.

Sources of Knowledge and Mode of Transmission

Knowledge that is valued within Aboriginal societies is derived from various sources from the self to the wider community. The sources of knowledge intersect and influence each other. Brant Castellano (2002) outlines three sources of knowledge which are briefly discussed. The first source is traditional knowledge that is passed down from generation to generation through oral traditions and demonstration. Topics centre around creation, origin of clans, ancestors, spirits, genealogies, battles, boundaries, treaties, values, and beliefs. This knowledge provides the substructure of individual civil societies of the different nations. The wisdom of the Elders favors highly in passing down the teachings to younger generations.

The second source of knowledge is empirical knowledge that is acquired through careful observations by many people over extended periods of time. The construction of knowledge is constantly inter-related with existing knowledge, re-interpreted, and revised when necessary. Waldram (as cited in Brant Castellano, 2002) provides a contrasting example between Western academic traditions of empirical knowledge acquisition and the Aboriginal approach. He explains that while the Western researcher may gather information, "... based on quantitative analysis of repeated observations in a controlled setting", the Aboriginal approach, "...represented a convergence of perspectives from different vantage points, accumulated over time" (p. 24).

The third source of knowledge is revealed knowledge. This knowledge is recognized and valued in various forms through dreams, intuition, and visions that are

believed to be spiritual in origin. This knowledge is also acquired through fasting, ceremonies, vision quests, gifts at a moment of need, or through an intuitive sense that the time is right to act.

Regardless of the source, Aboriginal knowledge is considered timeless in its value and teaching (Brant Castellano, 2002). The disruption in the acquisition and flow of Aboriginal knowledge provides many challenges for Aboriginal people to rekindle these sources and continue to pass these teachings on to subsequent generations, and apply these to contemporary society.

Brandt Castellano (2002) explains that although there is a small group of individuals writing about Aboriginal knowledge in a Canadian context, there is generally a consensus on the characteristic content and the mode of transmission and states, "Aboriginal knowledge is said to be personal, oral, experiential, holistic, and conveyed in narrative or metaphorical language" (p.25). Within the knowledge there is the underlying thread of inter-connectedness of the knowledge and the learner with everything. Couture (2002) writes, "There are only two things you have to remember about being Indian. One is that everything is alive, and the second is that we are all related" (p. 160). Therefore, writing about one aspect in singular context would be impossible. Consistently, Aboriginal learning intersects with other characteristics of Aboriginal knowledge.

Personal experience is firmly rooted in Aboriginal knowledge which allows for knowledge to be used by the individual and lays no claim to universality or sweeping generalizations (Brant Castellano, 2002; Ross, 1996). There is not a competition in Aboriginal society to prove correctness; rather these societies distinguish between perceptions which are personal, and wisdom, which has societal value and is validated

through many observations and through collective agreement amongst many people. The proper use of this knowledge is seen as wisdom (Brant Castellano, 2002; Smith, 2001).

Brant Castellano (2002) tells the story of an Elder Cree man who, when being asked to swear to tell the truth during court proceedings, inquired what was meant by the word truth. The translation of the word implied that this truth could be generalized for all people; so the Elder simply responded, "I can't promise to tell you the truth; I can only tell you what I know" (p.25).

Ross (1996) shares how an old Cree man taught him that, "You cannot pass along what another person 'really' told you; you can only pass along what you heard" (p. ix). He further shares that Aboriginal people value allowing the listener to make personal meaning from what they hear or see. Oral story telling allows the listener to take a message from the story. The learning is seen as developmental and no matter what age you are, there is something inside the story for everyone (Akan, 1999; Young, 2003). Ross (1996) helps us understand the nature of storytelling and the role of the storyteller with this example, "...the storyteller will never say, 'That's not what I *meant*". The Western preoccupation with such questions as, 'What did Shakespeare really mean in *Hamlet*?" is nothing more than our preoccupation; the pertinent question for most Aboriginal people seems to be something like, 'What did *Hamlet* cause *you* to think, feel or do?" (p. x).

Experiential learning allows for the interaction of the self with the environment, sharpening the senses, and allowing the learner to connect in a tangible way with his or her world. Brant Castellano (2002) relates a story about Matthew Coon-Come, a Cree leader from northern Quebec. Years of study in a residential school and at the university

drew him back home to ask his father to teach him about his ancestors and the land. When he arrived in the bush he had in his possession a topographical map of the territory he was to learn about. His father took the map and tore it into little pieces. He said, "I was committing the white man's mistake, making plans for the land without ever setting foot on it, without ever getting a feel for it" (p.29). This demonstration of the multi-dimensional approach to learning clearly integrates more than one type of knowledge. This holistic approach to learning that challenges the senses, the intellect, the intuition, feelings, and spiritual insights is part of the harmonious song of Aboriginal education.

I am reminded at this point of a story I read as told by Mary Young (2003) from her experience as a young girl:

> When I was a little girl, my mother and father would take my brothers and sisters fishing every Sunday afternoon in the summer. One Sunday afternoon-I am not quite sure why, but I was the only one who went with them. My dad gave me my own fishing rod, and I found a spot where I thought I might catch a fish. I cast my rod over and over again. Nothing. Suddenly I felt a jerk and started yelling and called my dad to help me. In his quiet way he said, "Kikwaashquepina na?" I was expecting him to come and help, but he continued to fish. Occasionally, I would look at him, but he was not paying attention (I thought). I tried to reel in the fish, but I couldn't: it was too strong for me. My rod just kept bending, almost touching the water at times, and I was getting tired. I was also scared I would fall in or that the fish would pull me in. My father must have been watching me all this time because out of the blue he said, "Eshcum paki ta piigin." Release it every once in a while. "Taani ayaakosi. Ki kaki kane dan anapi shiwii ko piñata." You will know when it is tired and you can reel it in. I was getting impatient and getting more tired. I now knew he was watching me, but he still did not come over to help me. Finally, I could tell whatever was on my line was getting tired because it was not pulling so much. Ever so slowly I reeled in the line-until I could drag the catfish onto the rock formation I was standing on.

When Mary reflected on the importance of this story she related:

> My father was a hunter, trapper, and fisherman, and he had years and years of experience. The lesson I learned from this true fishing story is that by not running over to come and help me, he honored me by trusting and believing that I could bring that fish in myself.

She saw this experience as her first lesson in perseverance and she learned that facing fear directly is important for success. She continued:

> That fish did not beat me that afternoon. My father taught me what to do, because if I had just kept trying to reel it in, my line would have broken. My father knew in his head and in his heart how the fish think, how the animals think, and what to do when you want to catch them. Naashihay, intipachim oway ka gi ishisake; miigwetch intina impapaipun, kwayak aki pikiki inaw a mawit.

I love this story because it speaks of many powerful teachings. Firstly, and most importantly, I was struck by the thought that her father *honored her ability* to bring in that fish. *Honored her*...I had to stop and reflect as an educator if we really honor our students. Many times we encourage them by saying, "Oh, come on you can do it," but are we really thinking – "I wonder if they will do it and I better stick close by so I can show them" (how to do it)? Do we fall short in putting into action, our beliefs in students' abilities? We would do well to follow the Aboriginal example in our teaching that promotes independence and encourages the learner to take responsibility for their learning.

Mary's father trusted in her potential and capabilities and he directly encouraged her success through observation that was punctuated with a few comments. Can you imagine someone believing in you so much that they *don't* intervene? Secondly, his wisdom allowed her to experience learning in a holistic manner by acknowledging the multiple ways of knowing that are possible for this one lesson. He gave her the opportunity for self-directed learning by encouraging her to think, experience the physical challenge of catching the fish, feel many emotions and sensations, and ultimately enjoy the satisfaction of completing the "lesson."

This story brings to mind a personal experience I had as a young girl.

It was a hot summer day at the cottage where we spent our summers on Katepwa Lake in the Qu' Appelle Valley. An uncle who was on leave from the Canadian army was visiting with us and he was an avid fisherman. He invited me to join him for some fishing one beautiful, calm, sunny day. As we set out in the little motor boat he told me stories of the big ships that he sailed in around the world while on duty. They were a huge contrast to the little boat he maneuvered throughout the water while looking for the best spot to stop and fish. Finding the perfect spot, he shut the motor off and we bobbed gently on the water. I gazed over the side of the boat into the not so clear water, wondering if there were any fish around (not doubting that it was a perfect spot, mind you!) I had done some fishing with my dad and I was intrigued with the motion of casting the line into the water. That was the most enjoyable part to me. I loved the whir of the line as it set out an arch into the sky, the little plunk at the end when it hit the water, and the challenge to send it further each time.

With everything ready to go, my uncle gave me one of his fishing rods. I so wanted to do a good job and show him how I could cast. So, with my first attempt I rotated slightly backwards from the ankle, hip, and shoulder to prepare my cast. This was my style; however a little too aggressive because as I rotated forward to cast the hook, I threw the whole fishing rod into the lake. It was my most ridiculous moment. I couldn't believe what I had done! I was horrified that first of all I could be so stupid. Secondly, I felt awful as I sat and watched my uncle's fishing rod sink into the abyss. In all of this there were no words from him at all. I finally had the courage to look at him and in his kind, crazy way, he burst out laughing as only he could do. I was relieved and confused all at once. I don't know what response I was expecting but I subconsciously don't think it was laughter. He immediately offered me another fishing rod.

This, too, was a powerful lesson. The focus for me was on forgiveness. A negative, angry response would have taught me a completely different lesson. His response gave me a spiritual lesson that lasts to this day. Giving someone a second chance doesn't cost you anything but understanding. My uncle still believed in me and my abilities by providing me with a second chance.

Acknowledging Culturally Responsive Curriculum

Curwen Doige (2003) suggests, "To accept and validate the Aboriginal knowledge paradigm as a basis for learning calls for an understanding by a teacher that Aboriginal students conceptualize differently than non-Aboriginal students...(p.149). As teachers we are called to learn about these differences, respect them, and be attentive to the needs of the Aboriginal students we teach. Smith (2001) and Ignas (2004) acknowledge the importance of responsive curriculum to strengthen the Aboriginal worldview and create inclusive opportunities for Aboriginal students to learn about their

world and themselves. Goulet, Dressyman-Lavallee and McCleod (2001) reinforce that in order to facilitate cultural appropriateness in program development, it requires the establishment of a community based philosophy accompanied by curricula that supports and teaches the philosophy. Ignas (2004) confirms these ideas and adds that these curricula need to consider the students, the community, and the knowledge that reflects the uniqueness of the learner.

It is vital that education is created by learning and living communities, and the knowledge that is created is used in the community. This respects the knowledge and recognizes that it should be used for the betterment of the community. This practice guards against the imposition or high-jacking of knowledge by other groups that has been consistent with past Eurocentric experiences. As well, this empowering respect for curricula is encouraged by Aboriginal people as an enlightening process. If students are able to maintain knowledge and reference to their own cultural identity, they can assess how the Eurocentric forces have impacted their knowledge. Gaining this knowledge may better influence their position in the world and create more diversity and strength in their knowledge (Brant Castellano, 2002; Ignas, 2004).

The Aboriginal mandate is not to be separated from existing curricula or used to create a struggle for dominance in relation to approaches to knowledge; rather Aboriginal people are committed to harmonizing both the cultural and academic components of knowledge that will empower and advantage their children into the future (Hampton, 1995). Creating harmonious spaces between non- Aboriginal educators and Aboriginal educators/learners can be an enriching experience for both peoples; this will recognize and strengthen knowledge, increase understanding between Aboriginal and non-

Aboriginal people, and influence culturally responsive pedagogy and curricula (Brant Castellano, 2002; Curwen Doige, 2004).

Characteristics of Culturally Responsive Curriculum

Culturally responsive curricula must reflect certain characteristics. The reaffirmation of Aboriginal languages is seen by many to be key to learning and instruction (Antone, 2000; Archibald, 1995; Smith, 2001; Young, 2003). Embedded in the language is a value system, social structure, relationships, connections, and the context of meaning. Education through languages proves to be a challenge as there aren't many teachers who are prepared to teach in Aboriginal languages; however, the revitalization of language continues. Curricula must be enhanced through cultural resources such as Elders, oral traditions, and publishers who respect and are willing to publish educational resources in Aboriginal languages.

Ultimately, while gathering knowledge for this study, I have learned that the underlying characteristic of the curricula should be one of holism (Curwen Doige, 2004; Gilliland, 1995; Ignas, 2004; Smith, 2001) This involves the education of the whole person through the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual paradigms. Embedded in holism are spirituality, relationships, harmony, balance, and an inward seeking of knowledge. Knowledge that is learned through the holistic approach is constantly being inter-related with every other aspect of the person and is seen as transformational. Smith (2001) suggests the holistic approach allows individuals to incorporate cultural knowledge into their personal lives, improve self-esteem, and relate this knowledge to the larger context of a global society. The focus on relationship is multi-faceted according to Smith (2001). He states:

> The focus of holistic education is on relationship-relationship between linear thinking and intuition, the relationship between mind and body, the relationship between the various domains of knowledge, the relationship between the individual and the community, and the relationship between self and self. In the holistic curriculum the student examines these relationships so that he or she gains both relationship awareness and the skills necessary to transform the relationship where necessary. (p. 83)

Archibald (1995) agrees:

> First Nations people traditionally adopted a holistic approach to education. Principles of spiritual, physical, and emotional growth, as well as economic and physical survival skills, were developed in each individual to ensure eventual family and village survival. Certain learning specialties in these areas were emphasized, including independence, self-reliance, observation, discovery, empirical practicality, and respect for nature. (p. 289)

Spirituality and religion should not be confused (Curwen Doige, 2003; Smith, 2001). They suggest that spirituality focuses on the balance that all humans strive for in their lives; while religion serves as a dogma or objective system of beliefs which aids the individual in achieving a balanced life. Goulet et al., (2001) agree that, " First Nations philosophy of education is built on the foundation of Aboriginal spirituality" (p. 139). Cajete (1994) writes that spirituality focuses on the affective, emotional, feeling aspects of the individual. He states:

> ...it is the affective elements-the subjective experience and observations, the communal relationships, the artistic and the mythical dimensions, the ritual and ceremony, the sacred, ecology, the psychological and spiritual orientations-that have characterized and formed indigenous education since time immemorial. These dimensions and their inherent meanings are not readily quantifiable, observable or easily verbalized, and as a result have been given little credence in mainstream approaches to education and research. (p. 20)

Curwen Doige (2003) supports this ideology and affirms that, "The Western secular system of education appears to be blind to the spirituality that infuses or underlies Aboriginal epistemology and thus culturally appropriate education for Aboriginal students" (p. 144). She affirms that all of us must be attentive to the Elders who teach us

that, "...spirituality is the essential link needed to wed traditional Aboriginal education and the Western system of education" (p. 148).

Forbes (1979), a Native American educator, believes that it is dangerous to think of knowledge without a spiritual core because learning is reduced to skills and facts, void of values and morals, which are the heart of spirituality and education for Aboriginal students (Akan, 1999; Battiste, 1998; Cajete, 1994; Ermine, 1995). Curwen Doige (2003) states that, "The connection between morals, values and education are fundamental to Aboriginal identity" (p.147). Couture (as cited in Curwen Doige, 2003) and Cajete (1994) stress that the Elders teach about Native identity as being a state of mind, centered in the heart, and has a holistic relationship with, "Father sky, the cosmos, and with Mother Earth, the land..." and is ultimately, " ... marked by a trust and a respect which stems from a direct and sustained experience of the oneness of all reality, of the livingness of the land"(p.147). Cajete provides the analogy of an ecological connection of spirit to a place; that is the innermost places of the person that Ermine (1995) would call the soul, the spirit, the self, the being, and, "The priceless core within each of us" (p. 103). Forbes continues, "A life of the utmost spiritual quality is a life that experiences to a high degree the connections in the relationship of the self to all reality" (p. 11).

Curwan Doige (2003) supports the philosophy that traditional Aboriginal ways of knowing remains the product of inner space or spirituality in connection to life and to the environment. This connection to the environment is rooted in the land and Wilson (2001) states, "Indigenous people's sense of self is planted and rooted in the land" (p. 91). This

relationship with the land calls on Indigenous people to maintain a responsibility to the land and all living entities sustained from the soil.

In summary, I turn once again to Curwen Doige (2003) who encourages the understanding of three main ideas for educators to grasp the notion of spirituality for our classrooms, which are: 1) spirituality and learning in education refers to the connections between the intellectual and moral qualities of a student that must be accepted, respected, and celebrated by teachers; 2) the celebration of a student's spirituality is not directly related to the religious practices in the school but may be influenced by it; 3) we must continue to dialogue with the Aboriginal leaders and teachers who can direct Aboriginal epistemology for our students.

The challenge for educators, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, is to acknowledge the importance of spirituality to everything that encompasses the Aboriginal student. Our task is to provide a learning environment that will foster the unique needs of Aboriginal students and celebrate this diversity within the cultures of our classrooms. As a non-Aboriginal educator I cannot assume that I understand this knowledge from a tribal, personal, or community perspective. However, as a unique individual myself, I can understand the basics of these teachings and I have incorporated them into my own life in my own spiritual way. As an educator, I am called to create opportunities that will be inclusively holistic for all students that will encourage opportunities to focus on their identities, their spirituality, their existing knowledge, and beliefs in relation to the content of the lessons I teach. I don't have to assume responsibility to teach them the values that are inherent in their lives nor should I; rather, my job is to allow them to explore the knowledge that they come to school with and acknowledge the ever present spirit in each

of them. I believe riding with this challenge is the obligation to learn about and understand the history of Eurocentric colonization of the Aboriginal people and how this has impacted their perspective cultures. Steinhauer (1997) agrees that teachers of Indian children should learn as much about Canadian Indian history to better affect the learning possibilities for the students.

A Working Metaphor

Mary Young's (2003) fishing story triggered in me a working metaphor for this study. I began to envision this study as a fishing trip. All of the participants of the study came together to cast out their line of knowledge in search of educational nourishment. We didn't know for sure what we would find but we did know generally what we were searching for and we knew that we needed certain tools to begin. Just as the fishermen and fisherwomen cast off into the different locations to catch fish, we also cast our lines into various locations in search of knowledge. At times, we felt hungry and wondered what was out there. Sometimes the lines became tangled, we lost our bait, and we had to reload our hook; we fought the current (of yesterday, today, and tomorrow); we engaged in perseverance; and we harvested what we could at this time. At the end of our trip we assessed our catch.

This academic fishing trip began from the dock. We sat on our chairs and cast out into the waters of knowledge. As we collected our data (netted our catch) through our conversations, thoughtfulness, and travels, we began to build the framework of our vessel, which is likened to culturally responsive curricula. This process is not unlike the traditional ways of building a birch bark canoe. Contemporary boat builders start with a sturdy framework and add the hull as a final step (Behne, 2005). With birch bark canoes,

the process is reversed. Behne explains, "The loose bark hull is laid out first and progressively shaped and stiffened by adding framework elements. The ribs - the "skeleton" of the canoe – are added last" (p.29).

As we laid down all of our materials, gathered our information, interpreted, discussed, and formulated understanding from our data, we too, built a framework of understanding regarding this knowledge. We did not generalize or theorize that we had the sole answers, nor that we were done with the investigation. Rather, we respectfully acknowledge that ours is but one story along the road of life and learning. Our discoveries made sense to us today. Tomorrow our continued growth and development as educators, parents, partakers of knowledge will cause us to add to our ideologies. This encapsulates the idea of multiple realities and individual truths. Just as no two birch bark canoes are identical (Behne, 2005), no two studies are identical. We search for commonalities, themes, understandings, and teachings that helped us to create a foundation to work from and further our re-searching of culturally responsive curricula.

The outcomes of this study will be shared from our conversations as teachers, with Elders, and through other educators in the community. It is a beautiful knowledge system that focuses on how everything works together to create meaning.

CHAPTER 5

The Re-Searchers

Fishermen and Fisherwomen

I think it is important to understand the context of the conversations that emerged throughout this study. The five teachers who participated in this study taught me more about flexibility than I could have imagined. Fortunately, I am quite flexible both in the physical dimension as well as the cognitive dimension. This flexibility resulted in conversations with more than just these five participants and the conversations, or sometimes just listening opportunities, were held in a variety of venues. A typical research situation of meeting with teachers, either individually or collectively, did not always translate into meeting around a table and tape-recording the conversations. I met them on their terms and in their situations. They taught me that learning occurs in the moment that it presents itself and we must go to those moments and become immersed.

Therefore, we had conversations around a table; in the living room of someone's home; on the gymnasium balcony at school while painting a mural; in the community where I listened to others talk; in their classrooms; and in their offices. They also directed me to other people and places to learn. They also encouraged me to go out and find the answers and not just sit and wait to talk to them. They would phone me and say, "I have arranged for you to talk to this person, can you be there?"

I was invited to a sweat, attended conferences to listen to Aboriginal speakers, and met with Elders. Travel opportunities provided me with other cultural experiences that helped me to formulate thoughts on culture, identity, and education. It was an eclectic experience that I had to give myself permission to experience, and the knowledge

was obtained from a community of learners. Therefore, within the text of the knowledge that we learned, there will be inserts of knowledge from other people besides these five main teachers. I will share who these people are when I share their knowledge.

The participants all demonstrated, whether knowingly or not, how Aboriginal people acknowledge and respect knowledge from a variety of sources and experiences. So, there were times when we were all together in the boat, bobbing around in conversation; and times when we were alone on different shores, thinking, and silently casting.

The five participants within this study were all teachers within an urban situation, who took up a personal and professional challenge to investigate the question of culturally responsive curriculum. Each of their stories will be summarized in the following text which will provide an overview of their personal lives, their curiosities, their challenges, and their visions for culturally responsive curriculum. Collectively we strived to learn more about how we, as educators, could enhance the learning experiences of all students through Indigenous knowledge in physical education. Allow me to introduce you to my research colleagues.

Jyl

Jyl is an elementary school teacher who teaches physical education to her grade one students as part of their academic day. Jyl relayed to me that when she opened the mail that requested individuals to participate in this study her initial thought was, "This is crazy, but in a good way!" She elaborated:

> I felt that creating culturally responsive curriculum in other areas in general was one thing, but just looking at it in p.e. seemed to pinpoint it and I thought that was neat. I think it is an easy question to answer generally, but when you get down to it....you usually see people focus on the whole curriculum.

She commented that p.e. is a subject area she would like to improve on so she thought it would be a good opportunity to extend her learning. She also said that she felt somewhat selfish coming to this study because she didn't know if she could really give very much to the study. She thought maybe others would have the expertise that she lacked and she could learn more, but she also felt that she should not just take from the study without giving. I assured her that through her learning she will be giving back to her students and her feelings of selfishness perhaps could be softened. Jyl is also interested in pursuing graduate studies in her future and shared that, "I would like to learn the process of research to do my masters some day."

Jyl mentioned that she had a lot of view-points on Aboriginal education. Her sharing included these thoughts:

> For me, it is more from the heart. Like maybe I can't answer the question but I know how I teach those children and what I want for them. It's not like I have some formula, it's about loving them and looking at their situations and recognizing that everyone has different needs...I want to give to all my students and not just the Aboriginal students. I work from my own personal philosophy, not from books that I have read. I work from what I know.

We talked about this as being intuitive knowledge and working from our frame of reference. Jyl has a wise, thoughtful presence and she combines her cultural ways of knowing inside her teaching and her everyday life. Her story is beautifully told:

> Born in British Columbia, I grew up in Saskatoon Saskatchewan. My dad is Métis and my Mom is European. Quiet and introverted, my dad never talks much about his culture, but leads by example. He grew up in British Columbia, living off the land by hunting and gathering. To this day, he has a profound respect and reverence for the land and the life that the Creator has bestowed upon us. Whenever we go on road trips, my dad sees and hears animals in the distance effortlessly. I am always in awe of his keen senses and the way in which he is in harmony with nature. My mom always encourages me and my siblings to take pride in our culture. She often tells us family stories and passes on our family

genealogy. Due to my mom's influence, as a child, I never once felt embarrassed about being Métis.

Despite my parents influence, my grandpa has been the greatest impact on my cultural identity. He is a highly respected and sought out Elder who takes pride in his Coast Salish heritage. He has a museum of family history and Indian artifacts right in his property, which he generously shares with visitors everyday. The most effective educator I know, my grandpa's way of teaching has highly influenced mine. When I seek knowledge from him, he often does not give me the whole answer right away. Rather, he gives me clues and sets me out on a journey to discover the rest. This can be frustrating at times, but it has allowed me to value and respect the knowledge that he has to share with me. My grandpa's guidance has also enabled me to become a better listener and a more critical thinker. Every time I visit him, I sit with my grandpa by the fire and listen to stories of the old days. He has taught me the value of oral tradition, the value of discovering knowledge, and most importantly, the values of my culture. My grandpa is now ninety four years old. I dread the day that the owl calls my grandpa's name, but I know that he will leave me with many gifts, the most important of which is the ability to patiently seek out knowledge and discover answers. I hope to pass on the same gifts to my students.

Matthew

Matthew is a high school teacher who taught some classes in physical education although it is not one of his teaching majors. Matthew challenged me constantly from day one. He questioned and probed inside the group and provided many thoughtful moments for all of us. His first curiosity was to understand why I wanted to do this research. At our first meeting he questioned me by asking, "Why Aboriginal education?" "Why do I want to learn about Aboriginal people?" and then he immersed himself in his own question and asked, "How can we make this Aboriginal education happen?"

I explained my respect for culture from my personal experience, as related in Chapter One and I also told him stories of my quest to learn about the epistemology of Indigenous knowledge, so that the knowledge would benefit teachers' work, and students' learning through responsive curriculum in physical education. Matthew taught

me a great deal throughout this study. The lessons involved his own personal challenges as a teacher and his knowledge of his culture.

Matthew didn't begin to understand his Métis background until he was in his last year of high school. He told me that at the university level he became more aware of what it meant to have a cultural background and what that meant to him as a Métis person. Matthew seemed to be quite a private person but he did share a few thoughts:

> I was referred to as a half-breed. My parents said we weren't Métis, we were French-Canadian. This comes from the Riel Rebellion where the Métis fought and were defeated. Many of the Métis people denounced their culture because if they were Métis, they could be charged. I have a Cree grandfather who did go to jail. A lot of my cultural background was enhanced when I attended Paul Simon School. I was uncertain as to what this meant at first but I learned the history of things and began to know more about who I was as a Métis person. Today there is still a struggle but I refuse to become political about it. I can be Métis without belonging to a group. So living an identity is far more than a political venture; it is a personal venture.

He told me that he wanted to be a social worker and then certain incidents within his family unit made him realize that wasn't where he wanted to be. He said, "I didn't need to be getting up at 3 am to go work with a kid or take away from my own family. I realized in teaching that I can still counsel by talking to students and so I decided to become a teacher."

Debbie

Debbie is a high school teacher who came to this study out of an interest in Aboriginal education. She stated, "Even though I don't have a p.e. background, my broader interest and broader base of Aboriginal teaching will be relevant to what you are looking for".

One of the days that Debbie and I were to meet for a conversation, I arrived at her school to find her not in her office but on the balcony overlooking the gym, busy setting

up paint to begin painting a mural for the graduation exercises. My mind went into overdrive very quickly as I tried to figure out how I was going to gain her attention regarding our study. We had a casual conversation about what her goals were with the mural in-between me glancing around for a plug in for the tape recorder (which I didn't think would work anyway due to the noise) and students rustling about, asking directions, and then disappearing to attend to their tasks.

After some thoughtful discussion on the mural and the meaning it was trying to convey I asked her if I could help her with it since I have some expertise with a paint brush and she readily handed me a brush and I began to paint some feathers. The unfolding of the mural and our conversation, became for me, a highlight of this research project. I loved the way we allowed the exchange of artistic expertise to intertwine with our conversation. Also, for me, this was such a blend of trust, accommodation, listening, and sharing. It allowed me to practice being attentive and taking the knowledge that the moment produced. It was during this session that Debbie shared her story with me and I will share a synopsis of my painting experience with you, inside of this text, which is written in italics.

Debbie's story of identity and culture was, and still is, a challenge. She related:

"My dad is Métis and my mom is Hungarian. Growing up my mom didn't want anything to do with anything Indian at all." (*This looks beautiful, it's just part of the background...how about you go get me that...please...thanks... The feathers are looking really good, Brenda, thanks for helping*).

"How did your dad feel about your mom not wanting him to recognize his cultural background?" I asked.

Debbie said that he wasn't ok with it and added:

> He came from a French Métis community who all spoke French and my mom was very insecure and she didn't want him to speak French to us because she didn't understand it. She was an immigrant who grew up on 20th street for part of her

life and she saw many Indians there. She decided that that's the way they were and she didn't want anything to do with Indians. (*I need Kleenex, please can you pass me some?)* My mom just pretended that he didn't have that background. So we didn't go to pow wows or do a lot of those things but there are still a lot of good things about the way he raised us that (*pass me an eraser now, too, please, thanks*) that you don't really know, that you know certain things, until you come to a cultural school like this one and you teach certain things and you go... "oh, I know that!"

For example my dad always taught us that if you need to figure something out you go and spend some time alone; you go back to nature to figure things out. I just figured that everybody did that. Coming to a school like this a lot of things that were from the Aboriginal perspective had been taught to me but I didn't realize that's what it was that I grew up with because of my mom's thinking; my dad just taught me without labeling it Aboriginal and I didn't know I was doing Indian things.

She told me, "I feel comfortable inside the culture and if it feels right for me then I continue to embrace it and learn it."

I asked her, "Do you feel some of this is inside of you because of your birth...?"(*swish, swish, swish)* and she replied,

"Hmm, I think it's more about ways of doing things", (*am I painting in the right places? Yes, just keep on this side and make it black...don't put too many lines in...ok...good...thank you. You are pretty brave, Debbie, to let me walk in here and help you with this; you had no idea if I knew what I was doing! We laughed and she said, oh we can always paint over it, and besides, there's not many people who would just say to me, "we'll let's just paint as we talk. I like that!"*)

Debbie shared that her journey in life includes learning how to be an Aboriginal person and part of this passion is imbedded in transferring the Aboriginal perspective into the curriculum. She had a fairly open perspective regarding blending the curricular disciplines with the cultural perspectives, and her thoughts will be revealed in forthcoming text.

Shauna

Shauna was teaching in an urban high-school and was in the process of transferring to an elementary school to begin teaching the Cree language. She was so excited to be teaching her mother language as this was something she never envisioned she'd be capable of doing and now she finds herself on the brink of a great new experience. Physical education was part of her way of teaching but not necessarily as a class. You will see how this unfolds in further text.

Shauna was raised in a very small northern community. She didn't speak much about her mother, only to say that she was French and different. She said the family struggles were ongoing and their existence was modest. Her father was taken away from his family when he was two years old and this provided him with challenges in life along the way. Shauna said her family taught her the value of kinship and how important family is. Some of her stronger memories are of being raised to respect her parents, the value of cleanliness, prayer, and going to church. Sharing is also part of their cultural responsibility and she commented:

> Sharing, you know is part of the native culture. Good child rearing was really important. Everybody had a role to take care of children. A child is never left. If a mother left, auntie took over and it went on and on. Everybody was responsible for the child.

She talked about the family unit in relation to the tarp that wraps around the teepee. Shauna said, "An ultimate protection is the tarp that went around, you know, to protect you just like a grandma [wrapping her arms around you] they use that as an analogy."

Shauna talked about intuitive knowledge and one experience she had in regards to that knowledge. She talked about her dad and what a poor, humble man he was and she

felt that his humbleness was deeper than just his spirituality lived through his religion. She said she knew deep down inside that his great humbleness came from somewhere else. Shauna said that after Bill C31 her dad learned that he was status Indian. She said for her that was the connection that was missing. She said:

> I was so full of pride because it was a connection. I knew something was, somewhere along the way something was missing. I knew when I heard the drum, there was a sense of - come, you know, like come here. I was raised Métis and with those traditions but something was missing. I made the connection when I heard the drum and understood more about my true ancestry.

She believes the spirits were trying to call her and bring her to herself and heal her. An Elder told her that she was, "A very wounded eagle", and now she feels whole because she has been healed through the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual aspects of human nature. She also refers to herself as Cree-Métis and feels that is a good balance. She remarked:

> It is a balanced feeling inside. I think that's what is missing in a lot of people, is not being able to realize who they are. If you think about this historically, we were told not to think that way, not to pray that way, not to feel those feelings.

Shauna's life experience and knowledge allowed her to share many interesting ideas for this study.

Karen

Karen is a high school teacher who became interested in the research question and she also has a desire to do her Master's Degree. She felt that engaging in this study would be a good opportunity to explore more about Aboriginal culture in curriculum, and learn about the process of research.

Growing up, Karen did not personally experience racism; however, she did observe it occurring in others' lives. She went through a period in her life when she

thought culture didn't really matter; however, experiences and reflection changed that perspective. She grew up "being" Métis, until Bill C 31 was introduced in 1985 in Canada, which restored her mother's Aboriginal status as a Dakota person. At this time she chose to identify herself also as a Dakota person. It was at this point in her life that she said she had to decide, "Who was I to be out there for?" "Who and what did I want to represent with my life?" She said when she became First Nations she dropped the Métis agenda and immersed herself in the First Nations struggle. She said she has to identify with something before she can become passionate about it and that's what happened to her when she re-identified herself.

She told me one of the more defining moments in her life with regards to valuing culture came when she sat and listened to her Koshie (Grandmother) tell her story and listened to tapes that her Koshie's partner, an Elder had recorded. She said:

> I became over-whelmed with emotion because I realized that that is who I am and I needed to find that and I never knew that before. This led me to believe that if we don't provide children with that option and that validation of their own Indian-ness then we aren't providing them with an overall, insightful perspective of who they could be and they need that choice.

She shared that she felt troubled initially with the feeling that she should know all about being Aboriginal but realized that she didn't, and that this was a journey and she learned to ask a great deal of questions of others who could guide her journey. She stated that in her experience, not everyone values or agrees with culture inside of school or life. She told me about being challenged by other Aboriginal individuals who felt that Aboriginal culture was not important in school. Other individuals felt that it was more important to just be productive members of society and not worry about culture.

Her academic interests centered around parents and their choice of schools for their children. She noted that many parents who were victims of residential schools in particular, felt that they had lost their understanding of culture as they were immersed in Eurocentric schooling. These parents chose to send their children to band schools in the hopes of learning through culture as opposed to learning in mainstream schools that focused only on subjects. Other parents who chose to go to urban centers felt that it was better to focus on the academics for their children and send them to mainstream schools.

Based on her own experiences, Karen reflected:

> If you've never had Aboriginal content or perspectives in the curriculum how can you be proud of something you don't know or understand? Aboriginal people need choices and we need to allow our children to be immersed in culture as well as contemporary ways so they can make choices. How can they know if culture is important to them if they aren't allowed to experience learning through culture and make their own choices about how it fits into their lives?

Aboriginal education is about process and the experiences that an individual has through their journey. Lamothe (1993) spoke about the Dene Elder's response to learning to become Dene, "If you want to know how one is taught to become Dene then do what needs to be done to be Dene and you will have your answer" (p. 6).

Throughout our conversations, the literature that was discussed in previous chapters began to take on a life within this study. The challenges that Aboriginal people faced in the past were translated into the present through their continuous quest to learn more about who they are today and how the past influences their identity, their thoughts, and their beliefs.

As you have read, each of these participants experienced life to date in different ways, and each one had been challenged to learn what it means to be Aboriginal and live within contemporary society, as well as how this translates into living and teaching. The

study is not about their search for identity; however, I believe we must recognize that this is a part of what, and who they bring to the research. Each of them is coming from a unique place because each of them and (my-self included) are unique individuals who have experienced life and culture in unique ways. Each of them continues to experience their own personal challenges with regards to their Aboriginal culture. Each has experienced the impact of the Eurocentric influence on the lives of their parents and grandparents. There is little doubt that these past experiences have caused these individuals to redefine who they are as Aboriginal people.

I can reflect at this point about my cultural experiences or lack there of. My great-grandparents coming to this land also faced prejudice and dominance. The difference is that they kept their cultural practice of faith and customs within their homes and communities. The second difference is that they chose to assimilate into the Eurocentric culture. Even so, I felt that something was missing in my life. The experiences between the participants and my-self have some similarities.

Karen pointed out the importance of exposing individuals to their culture so they can make choices about identifying with the culture in their lives. How would we have known that our children would have embraced the language and customs of their Ukrainian culture to the point of moving to Ukraine if they hadn't had opportunities to experience their culture? Would they have felt that something was missing?

It points out how important identity is and how an individual chooses to live their life's journey.

Myself as a Non-Aboriginal Researcher

I have shared some of my experiences and my reasons for coming to this study question in previous chapters. I hope you have a sense of who each of us is and the challenge that we gratefully embraced together.

Throughout my experience in this research as a non-Aboriginal I was cautioned by some individuals to expect criticism and negative responses. Fortunately, I experienced little of this. Each time I met with individuals there were positive challenges presented in ways for me to think, evaluate my understanding, ponder the meaning of the conversations, dialogue, and sometimes just listen. Debbie encouraged me by saying, "Yes, you might reach some resistance but you know if we don't work together, nothing will get done."

I strove to be attentive to details throughout the study and to let all of my senses and sensibilities engage in the experiences. I embraced every opportunity to learn and I immersed myself in these opportunities.

Meeting With The Elders: Gaining Trust

I was fortunate to have several opportunities to learn the wisdom of the Elders during the gathering of knowledge for this study. My experiences with the Elders were a big part of my education and my personal journey. Sitting in the presence of an Elder; whether it was just three of us, or within a large group, garnered immediate respect by everyone. Often the shared space for the meeting or ceremony was very quiet. Everyone just sat and waited for the talking to begin.

Debbie advised me to just be myself with an Elder. It is important to demonstrate respect and humility, and genuinely ask for the Elder to share his or her knowledge with

you. The offering of tobacco was also a humbling experience for me. I felt honored to be welcomed into their spaces and have them affirm their interest in talking with me. They were also very excited by the amount of tobacco I offered them and they always seemed to make a joke about this during our times together. Karen explained to me after one meeting with the Elder that I could have given even one cigarette instead of a whole pouch! We had a good laugh!

Each time that I was privileged to meet an Elder or an Elder's assistant, it was because it was arranged for me by someone else who had a connection to this person. Paul, an Elder's assistant, explained that there were important values that I must bring to my work in Aboriginal Education. These were honesty, sincerity, and an open-ness to listen and learn from Aboriginal people.

Sometimes I would ask my cultural guides advice about protocol, and other times I would consult the participants who were meeting the Elders with me. These respected persons told me that they would be glad to make the arrangements because they believed in my sincerity and reasons for requesting the meetings. I would always ask about the proper protocol because it could vary depending on the request. Sometimes there would be an exchange of tobacco and other times it wasn't necessary.

The individual that arranged the meetings for me with Paul, called me to ask how our meeting went from my perspective. I told her how emotional it was and how much I had learned. She said, "He told me that you would have made a good Indian woman." When I met with Shauna she told me that I had a good spirit and she could feel it. These were benchmarks for me that were both humbling and encouraging.

One day I received a call from one of my cultural guides and he asked me if I would like to attend a sweat. He told me that a sweat was being held out on the prairie and would consist of: several members of the educational community including teachers, police, and health care workers; the Elder; and his two assistants. The sweat was a ceremony to pray for the success of a new school program being implemented in one of the schools in the city that involved members of these professional groups. My cultural guide said he was extending the invitation to me because he felt that I was ready to attend. To me, this invitation was an indication of the trust that I had established with the community of learners, and a demonstration of my sincerity to learning with the Aboriginal people. I readily accepted and immediately processed a million questions in my mind, beginning another cycle of asking about protocol and what to expect. This was such a special invitation; here is some of what I experienced:

It was an extremely cold, sunny, winter day. The snow sparkled like diamonds as we drove out to the sweat. There was a group of men centered around a fire outside the sweat and they had been heating the rocks for the sweat for some time. The ladies led me to our change area inside a quonset and I began to put on the brand new flannel gown that one of the teachers asked me to wear. This teacher was supposed to join us at the sweat but that morning found it was "her time" and she couldn't attend so she handed me her new gown and said she'd be honored if I wore it. At the invitation of the Elder we entered the sweat and I sat with the women on one side; the men on the other. The flap to the sweat closed and we were in such darkness. I sat with my legs together and out in-front of me as directed and listened to the Elder begin to speak. He welcomed us and told us to be comfortable. He assured us that if we felt that we needed a break we could sit out one of the four rounds that were going to take place in the sweat. I was so nervous because I didn't want to miss anything and I don't respond very well to heat so I just had to wait and see what happened. I loved the explanations and stories the Elder told. He talked so sincerely and simply, with great care to both teach us, and make us feel welcome. As he told us about the sweat lodge being like the mother's womb, the Grandfather rocks to whom we should throw our troubles and prayer, the steam created by pouring it over the fire taking our worries and our prayers to the Creator, sitting on Mother Earth, I was immediately drawn to the similarities of the Christian ceremony I am accustomed to. The quiet solitude of conversing with God, the Creator, the incense rising with our prayers and worries, the quiet chanting, singing, the perseverance and obedience we are building by sitting through all the rounds, the feast at the end of the

ceremony. Somehow these two worlds seemed very close. I was so thankful I was able to sustain the rounds and as I drove away from the sweat I took my memories and new knowledge with me. Many times I have reflected on this experience and picture myself sitting out on the prairie as a guest of the Elder. I feel so amazed by that.

I had to admit that my first private meeting with the Elder, made me feel very nervous. I waited to be introduced to the Elder and after shaking his hand, I asked him if he would share his knowledge with me and then I presented him with tobacco. I shared with him who I was and what I was trying to learn. I was intrigued with these moments of introduction. The Elders didn't look at me when I was introducing myself and my work, but they listened carefully as they gazed downward. I got that sense because their expressions were very attentive; they smiled and nodded their heads as I spoke, which made me feel affirmed and welcomed. They graciously acknowledged me by inviting me to listen.

The context of storytelling was very evident in my interactions with the Elders. Lamothe (1993) stated that, "To understand the message of Elders, one has to accept their way of communicating" (p. 8). They requested that I not tape the conversations because they just wanted to talk and I should just listen. I did take some sporadic notes but for the most part I just tried to listen. Elder Rose, at one point asked me not to write because what she was about to say was a teaching for myself and for Karen. That felt like a gift; something very special.

I was constantly challenged to be mindful of the two worlds we were working within. One was the contemporary academic quest for knowledge that we as educators were searching for through our conversations together, and the challenge to try and learn through the Aboriginal teachings. Elder Rose reminded me that, "You people call this Indigenous knowledge, but we call it teachings."

Elder Rose shared a personal learning experience of hers with us that reminded us of our own challenges and experiences in research. She told us that she went to visit an Elder for knowledge. Throughout the meeting she said the Elder just sat there quietly and didn't say anything for a long time. She said the Elder's wife brought her some tea, which she drank, and still the Elder said nothing. After a long silence he simply told her to go home and come back in four days. She said she was perplexed at first because she was thinking of the long distance she had driven, the time it took, and the fact that she'd have to return. She laughed when she told us that at the time she thought that the Elder would simply turn to page ten of his knowledge book and give her the answer! She said it wasn't until later that she realized that the Elder was giving her an opportunity to learn patience and return when it was a better time for her to learn more about her question.

In a similar way, I asked the question of my participants and thought the answers would simply unfold. My goodness! This journey was necessary for me to learn many lessons, too. I believe that I have been guided by time, place, individuals, and personal experience that brought me to this right time and space to tell the story of this study.

Lamothe (1993) shares how other researchers have experienced these awakenings. He provided the example of researchers who asked Elders for specific knowledge that could be utilized within a healing program in a treatment center. They expected an academic response that could be readily applied. Instead, the Elder prayed. He spoke of disciplining children, and about the relationships individuals must establish with the land and animals, and with healthy people.

Based on the Elder's response, we could surmise that the researchers would be expecting to hear the Elder tell them to encourage the clients to pray. Instead, the Elder

demonstrated the response to the question and in essence, lived the question, through the answer, as the mode of teaching. As individuals, learning through this researcher, we really have to listen attentively to what Lamothe (1993) says might seem like, "a panoramic series of disjointed images" (p.8). I learned that we must not become lost in the story details trying to turn them into academic answers; rather we must allow the stories to speak beyond facts and show themselves as living pieces of our journeys.

I am forever humbled by my experiences with Aboriginal people. There was a certain gentle thoughtfulness about them. They tell you things without saying anything sometimes. My first meeting with Paul was at a pow-wow where we sat for two hours and watched the ceremonies. He patiently answered my unending questions about costumes, the dances, the feathers, the teachings. He told me about his four sun dances, the perseverance of the dancers and what it means to be pure in heart when coming to the pow-wow to dance. He believes that the dancers must be pure in all aspects of body, mind, spirit, and emotion. The dancers must not be involved in alcohol or drugs. He told me of his visions and his experience with intuitive knowledge.

When it was time to leave he looked at me straight in the eyes and said, "We will talk again." I knew that this would happen. I didn't know where or when but as he says over and over again, "There is purpose and reason in everything," so when the time was right we did meet again, one year later, over bacon and eggs in a restaurant. We chatted for over an hour and at the end of the meeting, unexplainably, tears began to fall from my eyes. I was so moved by his words. We had talked about my study question and he told stories mostly about "purpose and reason."

He said that I must write a book after this one and he sees the content and the cover of the book. I am purposely not going into further detail here because this was such a personal moment. However, I do think it's important to demonstrate again from the literature, the ways that Aboriginal people demonstrate their beliefs of intuitive knowledge, ceremony, traditions, and beliefs through their words and their actions. The point is that I was seeing these teachings in Paul.

In every case, I requested permission to use the knowledge I had gained. Every response was positive and with gratitude that I would and should use the knowledge to benefit the study. I shared the writing with the Elders to ensure that they were supportive of my written context.

The Elders and the teachers encouraged me to be honest in my writing, recognize that we don't all think exactly the same, and use the knowledge for good. They were honored that I would use this knowledge within the context of this study. I was told over and over again, that once we share in the knowledge it now belongs to us all. It is important to recognize that the knowledge is not "taken"; rather it is still "out there" because it is not static. It is alive and is there for everyone to learn from and to use. We don't "take it away" because we have heard it. It remains alive and grows for others to use.

My Aboriginal colleague and friend, Carol, explained it to me like this:

> We "borrow" knowledge. This is a term she used when discussing knowledge. It's like asking for permission to invest in this knowledge. This investment is in the self and for others. When we ask a question, hear a story, or inquire about something, we are suggesting that we want to know and learn. As we listen, we take the knowledge and transform it for our personal use and experience to which it should apply in our lives. The knowledge is transformative if it leads to social /personal action. Each person must take the knowledge and learn from it. The knowledge then becomes your own but you don't really own it. It's still out there. We learn to understand each other's knowledge

through listening, acting, and through conversation. When we borrow from one way of knowing, we are asking to use the knowledge but it's not like a taking of the knowledge, for you leave it where it is and use what you need. The knowledge is not static. It is alive and growing and becoming, through action, and the lived experience of the individual. Knowledge is built upon. We must ask what purpose the knowledge has. What do we do with the knowledge to keep it viable and not to waste it? It's like listening to a story. The story is given as a gift. I take it for my use and leave the story whole. I interpret the meaning and value of the story based on what struck me and how the knowledge from the story can be meaningful to me.

Carol told me that when she came home from school her Grandfather would ask her what she learned in school. She would tell him and then he would ask her what she was going to do with this knowledge. The question was, "So now what...?"

When I asked her about the knowledge of the two societies and how she sees them working together she responded that integration of knowledge is not an "add on." It is more like a blending of knowledge where we borrow knowledge from each other and learn through each other's teachings. There is a space between the two that is called ethical space. Here we write relationships between people and knowledge. The protocols are about respect for the boundaries.

Aboriginal knowledge is about understanding today's challenges. We build on the foundation of the grey haired thinkers. The past knowledge should blend with the current knowledge of today. We must give respect to the knowledge.

Knowledge: Gathered and Shared

What I share through this writing is a compilation of a form of knowledge from a variety of individuals and contexts that have contributed to this study in their own humble and unique ways. As researchers, we have identified some common themes within our conversations, and hope in some way, that this knowledge will contribute to others' knowledge. This knowledge may not be embraced by everyone, but the knowledge and dialogue represents our attempt to contribute to responsive curriculum.

I struggled with how to write about this knowledge. Stubborn and hard to learn sometimes, I found myself reverting back to trying to write and think in themes. Ultimately, there was one main theme that was identified. The knowledge centered around holism and is revealed through the four aspects of human nature (Bopp, Bopp, Brown & Lane, Jr., 1985) which encompass the holistic framework of Indigenous

knowledge with respect to the individual. These four aspects of human nature are: 1) the Spiritual, 2) the Emotional, 3) the Physical, and 4) the Mental components of people.

These aspects were the general focus from which we discussed Indigenous knowledge and pedagogy within physical education curricula. Writing about each of these separately was not possible due to the inter-connectedness of each aspect and I felt would not honor the holistic nature that the participants stressed. Therefore, I am going to allow these themes to flow and intersect with each other. There is some semblance of themes within the text but please read these with the holistic relationship that is intended.

The teachers and other participants didn't just answer the questions directly, in the sense that we might be accustomed with a deliberate and so called factual answer. The participants would make reference to the question of "physical education" in ways that were inter-relational with other aspects of human nature. Sometimes, as with the Elders, the conversation and ideas just flowed and there were times when I wasn't sure it was making sense or that, "I was getting anything." In some ways they spoke like Elders, talking in inter-connected stories. The knowledge reflected through these stories and conversations, ultimately, always related back to the question and provided new knowledge. Through much reflection, re-reading of transcripts, and member checking, I came to see the parts of the whole and the rich text of information that had been shared. The conversations are stories of discovery, questioning, learning, and imagining as teachers and as researchers.

The writing will unfold in two parts. The first part will embrace our conversations and experiences while gaining the knowledge. The second part will apply the knowledge to the contemporary concepts of curriculum that we have now; to honor

the words that were repeated often by the Elders, "We must walk in both worlds, side by side."

While talking to Karen and I, Elder Mike reached over to his bulletin board and removed a feather. Holding it and stroking it gently up the sides, he said,

> If one person does all the talking and all the yelling like an army Sargent, always walking in-front of everyone and telling them this is the only way, it is wrong. We must walk together, beside each other, to work together.

He also talked about the Medicine Wheel and the four colors that represent the human race. Red, yellow, black and white peoples of the earth must learn from each other because each race brings special gifts to humanity. Pruitt (2006) points out that,

> All races are a part of the same human family, as brothers and sisters living on the same earth. The Medicine Wheel embodies the harmony with which they are to abide by. Harmony is achieved by becoming aware of each other's cultures and practices; by not imposing one's culture and practices on another; and by sharing cultural ways with others (p. 1).

CHAPTER 6

The Four Aspects of Human Nature

One Teaching of the Medicine Wheel

As the teachers began to discuss their knowledge, ideas, and experiences of practice, they spoke of the spiritual, emotional, physical, and mental aspects of human nature. These four areas are a basic teaching of the Medicine Wheel and teach that traveling through life's journey is relational and dependant on the balancing of all of these aspects of the person. The individual cannot be without one of these aspects in their life. If the individual lives with a deficit in one or more of these areas they are not in harmony with themselves or their world and a state of imbalance exists. This results in an unhealthy person.

A brief overview of the Medicine Wheel will provide the reader with a basis for following the conversations of the teachers and other participants. The teacher participants, and other individuals who gave of themselves throughout this study, all discussed the Medicine Wheel and the possibilities for direction and learning that this symbol could provide.

Without exception, each one encouraged me to learn from the book called the Sacred Tree, collaboratively produced by (Bopp et al., 1985). This book has provided direction for all of us to understand the holistic nature of life and how we can apply this to culturally responsive curriculum. As well, there were other resources that were used.

Bopp et al., write that for all the people of the earth, the Creator has planted a Sacred Tree under where they may gather, to find healing, power, wisdom, and security. The roots of this tree spread deep into the body of Mother Earth. Its branches reach

upward like hands praying to Father Sky. The fruits of this tree are the good things the Creator has given to the people: teachings that show the path to love, compassion, generosity, patience, wisdom, justice, courage, respect, humility, and many other wonderful gifts. The ancient ones taught us that the life of the Tree is the life of the people (Bopp et al., 1985, p. 7).

Aboriginal peoples use symbols to express and represent meaning. Human beings derive purpose and understanding through these symbols. Understanding meaning is important for the health, well-being and wholeness of individuals, and of their communities, and for living out the beliefs that these symbols represent. The health and energy of a community is measured by the people living out the beliefs of the symbols, and passing these ways of life on to subsequent generations.

One of the symbols of the Aboriginal people is the Medicine Wheel. I must qualify the term 'wheel' for the purposes of this paper and the research study. In all of my conversations and readings as pertained to this research; all of the participants openly referred to the term Medicine Wheel. I have been informed otherwise to the effect that the term "wheel" is a European term, and the true symbolic term should refer to this symbol as the Medicine Circle. Since the literature and knowledge that I learned referred to the symbol as the "wheel," I have chosen to use this term. I was having a conversation with my husband about the disparity in these terms, and he made what I thought was a very insightful observation.

He suggested that the term 'wheel' was something that goes "around", but the term "circle" seemed to represent a symbol that an individual must follow around. In a truer sense, an individual must take personal action to engage in the motion of the circle. This would complement the teachings of volition and the medicine "wheel."

The Medicine Wheel is an ancient symbol used to show relationships that can be expressed in sets of four; for example, four grandfathers, four winds, four races, four directions, four seasons, etc. (Bopp et.al., 1985; Fiddler, Tourangeau, Male & Marlor, 2000). The number four is often reflected in Indigenous knowledge and is represented symbolically to help with teaching and learning

The Medicine Wheel is metaphorically referred to as a mirror because it allows an individual to see things not normally visible; it allows an individual to look back on one's self and better see what is going on within the self (Bopp et al., 1985; Fiddler et.al., 2002; Pruitt, 2006).

The Medicine Wheel teaches that we have four aspects to our nature which consist of the spiritual, emotional, physical and mental aspects. Each of these aspects must be equally developed in a healthy, well-balanced individual through the development and use of volition or personal will (Bopp et al.,). These four aspects of our nature are like seeds and each has the potential to grow into powerful gifts.

The volition or will is seen as a force centered in the middle of the Medicine Wheel and it enables an individual to make decisions and then act on those decisions by: 1) concentrating, 2) setting goals, 3) initiating an action, 4) persevering, and 5) completing the action. The Indigenous teaching is that this volition, or will, guides the development of the four aspects of human nature that need constant developing. This volition centers on self-responsibility to live and grow in all four areas and to achieve balance and harmony throughout one's journey in life.

The individual is also taught to have a vision of personal potential and to look towards becoming all that he or she can become in life. Most importantly, the teachings

stress wholeness and that everything is interrelated and is in constant cyclical change. Change is vital to help the individual grow and become all that he or she can become.

Experiencing changes in life helps the individual to acquire new qualities, or gifts of learning, which are represented on the Medicine Wheel through the four directions: east, south, west and north; and animals, which represent symbolic qualities to strive for such as courage or perseverance. The teachings of the Medicine Wheel are reflective of the meanings of the Sacred Tree, which is a symbol representing life, the earth, the universe, and cycles of time.

Human development never stops and the journey moves cyclically, beginning in the east. Traveling this circular pathway around the four directions teaches the individual new lessons. Each direction represents new teachings and offers new gifts. Reaching the north, which is identified as the direction of completion and fulfillment the individual does not stop learning or moving in the cycle. Rather, the north encourages the individual to complete what he or she has begun and no matter how difficult the journey, one must persevere with the knowledge that the goal can be achieved. As an individual continues throughout life, he or she may begin again in the east with a new teaching that takes him or her to a higher state of learning (Bopp et al., 1985).

The First Cast

The conversations that I experienced with the teachers and the Elders were a free sharing of thoughts and ideas. The spiritual, emotional, physical, and mental components of the teachers were a main focus and flowed constantly throughout the conversations. I have chosen to use the text of our conversations extensively throughout this section. I feel it is the truest way to honor the knowledge of all the participants and how they

shared their knowledge and their practice. All of the participants spoke from their hearts as they shared the Indigenous teachings they have come to know in their lives. Through their sharing, the question of this study came to life. I must stress that it was *our* conversations. They expected me to be involved and many times they would comment that it was my job to figure out how the knowledge all fits in relation to the initial question and is connected with contemporary curriculum.

The task of casting out our nets and searching for Indigenous knowledge with regards to culturally responsive curriculum in physical education began with a big hole in the net. The hole appeared because the initial research question wasn't whole. The initial conversation unfolded with a flurry of questions and emotions. It began with my initial question being sunk to the bottom of the lake that left me paddling for shore as a result of rough water!

I asked the question, "What is the Indigenous knowledge that can be applied to physical education that will guide us in creating culturally responsive curriculum in physical education?" "How can this knowledge lead the discipline of physical education and take us beyond the piecemeal activities that we generally do inside our physical education classes?" For example, I suggested that playing an Aboriginal game or learning a dance does not necessarily constitute learning about Aboriginal knowledge through the physical actions. I asked the teachers about the knowledge that can lead us to create responsive curriculum in physical education that will take us beyond just the actions, and allow us to give meaning to the actions.

Matthew tangled my line immediately by challenging me with a series of questions. He immediately expressed his concern that I was, "Trying to learn too much

inside a box and Aboriginal education must be much bigger. It must be holistic and all encompassing." He said, "Without the holism in teaching, it doesn't work."

He asked, "Why Aboriginal education? Why do you want to learn about Aboriginal people?" He also quickly responded affirmatively that he wanted to make this Aboriginal education happen but he just couldn't see it right now. He also inquired why I wasn't asking the same question about the Japanese, the Ukrainians, etc.

Debbie responded to him, "This is different from multi-cultural education. She's trying to focus on Aboriginal people because our knowledge is supposed to be represented within curriculum. She wants to know how we can figure this knowledge out so the curriculum in physical education can respond to Aboriginal people."

Karen added, "We have to keep the question open because it will allow for more ideas and open the mind. I just think anything can happen so let's be positive." Jyl agreed, "This can work, it's so exciting!"

Matthew said:

> Yes, physical education is a physical thing but it's also an emotional and mental thing as well, but it's never looked at in a phys. ed. program, so what I am trying to say is from the Medicine Wheel. It's a holistic thing and we are trying to talk about one component of the thing and if we look at it culturally, it wouldn't be broken up. Subjects shouldn't be broken into math, science, etc...."

Jyl agreed but added, "Yes it is difficult to see one part isolated but we almost need to take it apart to figure it out and then put it back together to use it."

It was an interesting moment because we were immediately working through a conversation together to search for answers. Although it was a moment of friendly challenge, it was also a moment of connected-ness between the teachers. I am still moved by the thoughtfulness that Matthew displayed through his questions and his listening. He

was really working hard to get his mind around the question; likewise, throughout the study, at times someone would ask, "What is the question, again?"

At first, this confusion concerned me greatly but after awhile it made good sense. It became obvious that the original question could not be answered simply, and because we were trying to take it apart, we were often frustrated seeing it as part of the whole. Matthew's question and challenge took hold, though, and from this point on I found myself questioning my own question. I no longer felt justified in asking about one part of the whole. In fact, further on into the study I was almost apologetic in referring to the context of "physical education." However, since none of us had come up with a better way to ask, and work towards answering the question, we just agreed to stick with it the way it was.

So, the wording of the question didn't change; however, the way we thought about the question in trying to answer it was re-framed by Matthew's prompting. Although it was apparent after this first meeting that we could no longer think of physical education as an isolated idea, we worked at understanding the parts and the whole in a holistic way. We started to piece together our collective knowledge and work towards creating a model that would honor Indigenous knowledge inside physical education curriculum as we know it today.

Although we did continue focusing on the physical aspect, we also had to talk relationally about the other three parts of the traditional beliefs of the Aboriginal people. The four components of self: the spiritual, the emotional, the physical, and the mental cannot be truly separated but rely on each other for balance in life.

We agreed that living a culture is a daily process and learning shouldn't be sporadic or patronizing. Matthew and Debbie began a dialogue about the question. She told Matthew, "You're too idealistic," about curriculum and she doubted if some of these questions would ever be completely resolved regarding Aboriginal content in curriculum. She encouraged him to recognize that yes, complete Aboriginal ways of knowing would be desirable, but she commented, "We don't even know what those are because everyone is coming from a different place. We know that there are some commonalities, but we have to recognize the differences and also know that we are trying to bridge two worlds in our teaching. We have to recognize this to make it work."

Debbie then lamented that sometimes the whole process of Aboriginal education seemed hopeless. She shared her frustration:

> Some of our own people are not even interested in Aboriginal education. Their attitude is, 'so what, who cares'. She said that we have Aboriginal phys. ed. teachers on our staff and I asked them to come along to this study because it could be really good for them and their work with the kids and they just said to me, 'no way, we're not getting into that, we're going home'. She believes they just want to teach the athletes and the teams and she struggled with their lack of attention to possibilities for the students and the culture through education. She said some common practices like smudging and praying are not even considered inside the gym. She mentioned that she talked to another teacher who works with Aboriginal students in the gym and he said that he never prays or smudges in the gym.

Debbie wanted me to spend some time with a physical education teacher in her school. I met Rob in his office and we talked about his classes. He hadn't given any thought to aligning Aboriginal teachings with physical education. I asked him about the Medicine Wheel that is drawn on the center of the floor in the gym and if he used it during his physical education classes. Again the answer was negative. I had some quick thought as to some possibilities using the Medicine Wheel such as: you could play some games like

four square around the wheel; the students could gather around the circle during the warm up and cool down of the lesson to listen to their heart beat, stretch, talk about the directions of the wheel, and the strengths that each direction brings.

I noticed some rocks that were sitting on the window ledge in his office and I inquired about their importance. Rob said they were from his grandfather's farm. Asking permission, I picked one up in each of my hands. They were smooth and heavy and just fit into my hand perfectly. They felt comfortable. I thought of the earth and my visit to my great-grandfather's homestead. I thought about how connected I would feel to these rocks if they were from his farm. I thought about the stove covers I took from my husband's great-grandmother's stove from the farm-one for each of our children. I thought about weight training, and how I would let the students use these stones for small weights. The students could hold them, feel them, lift them to gain strength (in body, mind and spirit) and connect with the earth. The stones also reminded me of the sweat lodge and talking circles. I thought they had multiple uses in his classes. I mentioned these ideas to the teacher. He seemed amused at best.

We went back to the question about physical education and Matthew reaffirmed his struggle to see the parts of the question from the whole. He said, "We can't just teach physical education because there is so much more there. We have to consider the whole person, the intellect, the emotions, the physical, the spirit. You can't just divide it up." Debbie commented, "You have to think about the pieces that go into the whole part of learning and the physical is one part of the whole picture in phys. ed." Matthew reminded us that his context of thinking comes from the Medicine Wheel and he said,

> Aboriginal knowledge looks at using all four areas and not just one. I think you can use all those areas in any class you teach whether it be math or anything else. Understanding the Medicine Wheel also lets you know that if you are doing something in one area of the Medicine Wheel it's going to have an affect on the other three areas, and you need to be aware of what that affect is going to be and what are you going to do with it as you go along, and so when you are in a p.e. program and all you are doing is the physical part and not really addressing the other stuff, I don't think you have a good phys. ed. program. You have p.e. but you don't have a p.e. program. Maybe that's not the right term to use but if we are doing the physical then we must ask how is it going to affect us mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and how are these connected?"

Matthew stressed, "The biggest thing here is that we have to show the connectedness between the four areas."

Debbie agreed that the Medicine Wheel can help us associate our achievements and feelings in all four aspects of human nature. She commented:

> The Medicine Wheel looks at the four aspects of being well and doesn't allow you to focus on the physical or mental in isolation. It all goes back to needing to have a balance in all the areas to be truly healthy. You can be physically fit and run a marathon but be emotionally unwell or not be doing anything for your mental part. Unless you are working in all four areas you are not balanced and if you aren't balanced in a good place and you are not healthy. The physical is only one aspect. We always need to stop and reflect and ask, 'How am I doing in respect to the Medicine Wheel?' 'Where am I lacking and where do I need to improve?' When we teach physical education we would have to look at all four aspects and how each has an impact on all the other areas of well-being. This would aid in developing a healthier individual in all four areas.

Shauna felt that we could use the physical as a main heading, so to speak, but really described it in holistic terms. She said:

> In the physical aspect there is always the emotional and the mental attached to it. Take karate for example, which I do. You have to know the discipline part, right? They have to learn different techniques, history. Then there are the feelings. Kids might be feeling very angry and working out brings out those feelings. Maybe the kids are not feeling well and they don't feel like going [to karate] but when they realize if they get their body physically going, those bad emotions start deteriorating and go away and the kids learn that. I tell my kids in class the next time you get angry, go for a jog. Just go. Don't talk to anybody, just go. Just swallow and go out there. Run, jog, scream. I don't care what you do as long as you're not hurting yourself or anybody else. Some of the kids really like this and

> they use it now [to deal with their emotions]. They were telling me that they just let it out. I tell them, it is energy, energy inside of you and you need to get it out.

Debbie added that cultural dancing is also part of their physical activity. She commented:

> And sure we teach them the physical steps but we also teach them the meaning of each dance. This would be the emotional and spiritual meaning. Cognitively they would understand the meaning and also feel the meaning of the dance. A lot of the dances stemmed from the dancers dancing away their pain. The pain was usually emotional but it could be physical.

Matthew continued:

> That's just the thing...it's a physical thing, mental, emotional, and spiritual. That's what I am trying to say about the Medicine Wheel and that this has to be a holistic program, which it's not in p.e., and we are talking about only one component of it, the physical, and we can't break it up. And the Medicine Wheel is for all peoples. It is made up of four different races: red, yellow, white, black, earth, fire, water. Everyone can use it. We are all from the Creator.

He also mentioned that another consideration regarding the Medicine Wheel ideology is that teachers have to understand that achievement is a personal thing for both teachers and students, which means they both have to do their work for themselves. Teachers also need to work towards connecting themselves before they can help their students.

We had a very energizing moment when we were talking about the big picture and the small picture in reference to teaching physical education and the Medicine Wheel. Matthew said:

> Some teachers see the big picture and they don't see the small picture. Just like the pe. guy who sees the big picture where everybody plays p.e. and enjoys it; but he has to think about that one individual who doesn't like p.e. and get down to the small picture and realize that not everyone likes p.e.

Debbie piped in at this point and asked Matthew, "So there is hope [for you to see the small picture]?" We had such a big laugh at that point!

Matthew replied:

> Yes, I know deep down there is a way of it being applied to p.e. If you can't apply it to p.e. you can't apply it to the big picture or other areas of learning/academics. It has to go both ways. I guess maybe I'm here to be able to take the Medicine Wheel from the big picture and to understand it at a small level. Because most of my understanding is in the big picture. Mike, the Elder, taught that the Medicine Wheel consists of many parts and the big picture begins with *you.* You affect the Medicine Wheel, your family, your community, yourself, reservations, and before you can affect all that you need to look after you. So to me that is big, big, big.

This conversation was a significant event. It allowed a venue for sharing concerns and possibilities, and the foundation for building positive relationships between all of us as educators and researchers.

Conversations Centered on the Spiritual, Emotional, Physical, and Mental Aspects of Human Nature

Spiritual Aspects of Human Nature

Summarizing the last chapter, Aboriginal authors (Akan, 1999; Battiste, 1998; Cajete, 1994; Curwen Doige, 2003; Ermine, 1995; Forbes, 1979) outline some key teachings regarding spirituality. Spirituality is a deep connection of the individual with all aspects of life. Spirituality centers on balance in life and is not based on a system of religious beliefs, although you will see how some of the participants have learned to balance the two systems while still honoring Aboriginal teachings. It focuses on the affective domain and the subjective experiences of the individual. It is a state of mind, centered within the heart and bears strong connections between morals and values and education. Other terms used with the spirit are the soul and the self, and these are all connected to reality, and affect the emotion, the physical, and the mental aspects of human nature.

The knowledge and experiences that the participants shared in this text reflect these teachings. They demonstrated their knowledge by emphasizing that spirituality exists from the moment of conception, is connected to all aspects of the individual, and grows constantly through the experiences an individual encounters in life.

The Elders all spoke about the spirit with great reverence. The spirit is with us always from the moment of conception, and it connects us to everything in life. We build relationships through our spirit so everything is alive and everything is meaningful. The spirit is something you can feel and those around you can feel your spirit.

Shauna said:

> What I find about the Medicine Wheel is that it accepts everybody as who they are. It accepts you as an emotional person, a physical person and accepts you as a mental person. From the spiritual aspect I believe the spirit is right there in you. The spirit is there when you are born because you are your spirit. If I die, people remember who I was because of my spirit. I really believe that when we are born we have a spirit where we develop spiritually, emotionally, physically, and mentally as we go along our way. We learn as we go along in every aspect. I believe this potential is in you when you are conceived. I have five children and I felt each of their spirits.

Matthew pointed out:

> Aboriginal people are not living the spirituality aspect of the wheel in the way they say they are. If the kids get embarrassed or put down in the classroom and we are not teaching contrary to this behavior then a little bit of that person is taken away and that erodes their spirituality.

Matthew added that spirituality is not religion; nor does it have anything to do with reading the gospels.

Matthew said:

> You can develop yourself spiritually through the physical aspect by finding out what you can and cannot do. Ask yourself the question, 'Are you happy with where you are at [on the wheel]?' Matthew summarized that if you are not happy with your situation, the individual needs to apply a solution to improve and this will aid the individual in spiritual development.

Developing spiritually can be viewed from a variety of physical contexts from fine motor learning such as beading, to large body movements in activity. These activities require a relationship with the self, the object, the environment, and/or others in order to connect the task and the spirit. Some examples of this from our discussion follow:

Matthew reflected on applying spiritual aspects to activities in class. One example he referred to was field lacrosse outside. He remembered working with 16-18 year old boys who were quite rough. He was concerned about putting an object in their hands and the lacrosse sticks are hard and big.

He described:

> We thought that before we do this we would smudge all the sticks and have a smudging ceremony. We prayed for everything to go well in class and that nobody will get hurt. We played for the hour and a half and everything went really well. Before I experienced this I wouldn't have believed that this would be the outcome to have a peaceful game. It was really quite amazing.

Matthew said he realizes the affect of smudging on himself but didn't know the impact it could have on the students. He said through this lesson and smudging:

> We taught respect basically. Looking at one's body and how it relates to other people as well as respecting other people. It was a quick ceremony of asking for things to go well.

Debbie talked about hoop dancing and how important it is to have your spirit connected to your physical movement in the dancing. She said:

> When you are dancing and you don't have your spirit connected, you will not do a good job. You try to understand everything [about the dance] before you go out and do it. Traditionally, it is a process you go through. The more you understand the more meaningful the activity.

One day I arrived at Debbie's classroom to find the students working on beadwork. She told me that:

> You need to connect with what you are doing. If you are doing some beading or making a dream catcher using your manual dexterity, you need to have good thoughts while you are creating your piece. If you have bad thoughts you won't be able to do it and you shouldn't be involved if you have bad thoughts. The energy that you come to the craft with becomes the energy that you are putting into the object whether it is a key chain or the dream catcher. If you are frustrated by your efforts, say beading on the key chain you should put it down and then come back to it. Your first key chain is a real special one because you give it as a gift to someone. Because you give it as a gift to someone, because you put all of your emotions into it, what presence you have about yourself when you are making it matters. The energy going in is what's coming out.

Debbie was teaching the students to develop a relationship with the object they were creating. Wilson (2001) points out, "It is not necessarily an object that is important, it is my relationship with that object that becomes important" (p. 177). When an individual engages spiritually with their task and the environment he or she is also establishing a relationship with the object or task that they are engaging in.

Bopp et al., (1985) discuss that many people collect objects on their journey in life that have particular symbolism. These objects become sacred and are part of a person's spiritual journey if a person understands that it's not the object that is the source of power; rather it is the deep meaning associated with the object that is important. "Contact with these special objects can have the effect (for those who understand their use) of raising the person's awareness about the deep spiritual significance of the ordinary things of everyday life" (Bopp, et al., p. 55).

> *I reflected on the many different articles that I have created in my life as gifts for other people. I remember thinking that the best part of making the gift was being able to think about the person and what they meant to me in my life. I thought about their struggles, their successes, what they have brought to me or maybe how I have helped them. It was just like being connected to them the whole time and the gift became more than just an object for both of us. I believe this is an example of spirituality. The*

energy that I felt and put into the creation made me feel good. If I wasn't in the mood or it didn't feel right then I had to walk away from it and come back when I was feeling more connected.

It was extra special that day with Debbie because one of her students presented me with her first key chain. After the student gave me the key chain I found myself pondering its intricacies, color, texture, and spiritual nature because of the spirit that the student tried to put into the creation. I developed a relationship with the key chain that took it past merely being an object.

Karen agreed that when students use their gifts or talents it will lead to the development of self-esteem and emotional growth. She said that it is important to be able to feel good about the physical things that you do.

Debbie shared her ideas about respecting each others' gifts in physical education class. She said:

> We have to respect the uniqueness of people. Everybody has strengths and gifts...this person may be very good at coming up with a strategy for the team but may not be skilled physically. We should be respecting these differences and this is the way you really build a team. The Medicine Wheel accepts everybody as who they are. It accepts you as an emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual person.

Matthew talked about the journey that an individual takes to discover personal gifts. He said:

> The Elder said that by the time a child is three or four they are starting to demonstrate their gifts. If others don't recognize it and foster it then the gift goes unnoticed. Such as the gift of math, speaking, beading, singing, concern for animals, people, etc. It will show itself again but it will take more time. We try to notice it and steer the child towards that work in their life.

Karen added,

> I think of my body as a temple and I must treat it with respect. I think of all of these elements, the physical, the spiritual, mental, and emotional and how I am going to strive to be my best.

She said that she spoke to her students about this earlier in the day. She shared that she had gone on a canoe trip and was able to keep up nicely because she had been lifting weights and maintaining her strength. She told them how she set goals for herself and she said that by being healthier physically, she also was healthier spiritually because she was achieving success and reaching her goals. Karen concluded:

> Physical activity creates an energy within you that you may not have if you're not physically active. It opens your mind; you are able to think clearly and better after you work out. You have more energy and you can do tasks that you may not be able to do without exercising.

Jyl said, "Your body is a gift from the Creator so being physically active combined with spirituality is honoring the Creator and showing respect because you are using your body in a good way."

Emotional Aspects of Human Nature

The participants emphasized several components regarding the emotional/social aspects of the individual. The emotional side of the individual indicates how they feel as a person and how those feelings translate into the wider context of their social environment. Developing skills of cooperation, understanding, empathy, responsibility, values, confidence, teamwork, and goal setting were highlighted through these conversations. Jyl shared her thoughts on the emotional aspects of the child:

> We have to be careful in p.e. and teach to the social/emotional sides of the child. P.e. can be scary because in the classroom if you can't do something the students can sort of hide in their desks but in p.e. you're right out there where people can see you. We need to talk about how it felt when someone stole the ball from you.

She feels the child needs to be taught these skills of cooperation and understanding and she uses the talking circle formation to do much of this teaching. She encourages the children to talk about their feelings, both before and after class so the children can learn about how to work together so everyone is happy. Jyl wants her kids to be laughing and having fun inside physical education.

During one of our discussions I shared my observations with them in reference to some of my students within the university. I recognize that for some of my students the last place they want to be is in a physical education class due to their unpleasant past school experiences. If they didn't do well in math or english, they may have been able to conceal those weaknesses; however, if they don't succeed in a kinesthetic way, it's visible to everyone. They may be heavy, awkward, unable to run, or jump or throw for example, in a skilled manner, and this causes them to feel inadequate and embarrassed. Some students will grapple with these problems and work towards making changes so they can be successful; but for many, they'd just as soon avoid these situations. Their spirits have been wounded and their past experiences follow them through life. My biggest challenge is to change their attitudes towards physical education by improving their self-esteem and emotional well-being before I can expect them to learn in a non-threatening environment. This is accomplished by providing them with the knowledge and the opportunities to succeed personally in the activities, and to see themselves as teachers of physical education.

Debbie gave this example of respecting the emotional connected-ness of a student to their learning. She explained that before beginning a reading class with new students and those who are not reading at their grade level she does a reading inventory by asking

them the following questions, "What are your attitudes toward reading? What has your past been like with respect to reading? What's happened to you? How do you feel about that?"

She said when she learns more about how her students feel and what their experiences are she can set realistic expectations for her classes. The group believed it should be the same in p.e. Karen explained, "When we teach to the whole child we are able to teach to their potential. We look at them. We see them for who they are at this moment and dream for where they can go."

Jyl shared some thoughts on the aspects of teaching the whole child. She said:

> I think in p.e. there is a lot of emphasis on competition where the emphasis should be on skill development and things like that. In Aboriginal culture cooperation is more valued than competition. Aboriginal kids working in the classroom will help everyone get their work done so they all finish together; not all but some work like this. I find singling individuals out for praise is not as effective as praising the whole group.

She also felt that teamwork can have value if it works toward building cohesion and togetherness. Jyl believes:

> You must learn the skills before you can compete. There is no point in competing without skills. Working as a team should come as a result of acquired skill having been developed. Once students learn the skills they could apply them in a team situation and that could be healthy.

She said that when she was in elementary school she wasn't even taught to throw a ball. She said, "Even to this day when I throw a ball my brother laughs at me and I went through 12 years of school."

I asked her, "So, do you mean you throw like a girl?" She affirmed this and we both laughed.

Matthew said that p.e. classes can favor the athletes and the activities while ignoring the other aspects of the student:

> I think a lot of the high school classes in p.e. are geared toward identifying the athletes for the sporting programs and teams. This can create tensions and competitions. We need to look at developing skills without the presence of competition. When kids are working in p.e. you don't know what has happened to them at home or elsewhere or the trials and tribulations they have gone through. You don't know if they have been yelled at because they haven't been able to throw a ball properly by their parents or coach. So to have that happen in the classroom they are going to shut down and their emotions are going to be at such a level that they aren't going to do it. The teacher is thinking, 'Oh, they don't want to do this because they are being a jerk, they have an attitude...but we have to ask, why is that attitude there?' The teacher doesn't ask that question because they are just focused on the activity.

Matthew further noted, "If students are athletic and have success all the time you receive gratification but if you can't do something well then you don't want to do it anymore and that becomes a problem."

Karen pragmatically responded that kids working together on teams or in groups may not like it, "But they will have to learn that it's part of learning to get along with others. We may encounter frustrations in our emotions." She agreed that emotion and how you feel about yourself can have an impact on your physical performance and success. She shared one of her experiences from physical education as a young girl:

> I thought - don't put me by myself to do an activity because that puts everything on me and I feel very uncomfortable and I feel that somebody might make a comment to me afterwards. I didn't like that kind of stuff. I don't like everybody yelling at me, 'Come on Karen, you got legs like a gazelle...run'! But you can't run! I can't run! I don't know what's wrong with me. I can run far but I can't run fast. She said she was shamed as a young child in p.e. She said being a risk taker in a group situation feels better because she is not singled out.

She also said that as an adult she is more confident and feels much more comfortable in single activities and believes that she had to grow into this level of

comfort. She remarked, "Now I go out of my way to make sure that I can prove that I can take a risk and do it [face a physical challenge] but when I was younger I felt uncomfortable."

Jyl pointed out:

> I don't give my kids any rewards. What happens if we all get our work done? We are all happy. Some people give a point system and I understand that can be good that some kids need to see how they are doing but to me, it just plots one kid against another and makes for competition. Students who don't succeed at the top feel badly. Others might try not as hard because they wouldn't want others to look bad. I don't want my kids to say, 'I have more stars than you'. If I bring candy or say we are going to watch a move, they all get candy and the movie. If they did something wrong, the consequence is separate from the activity we are doing. If the kid is already in trouble and you deny them the candy you are already hurting their self-esteem. It also teaches them responsibility for their actions.

Mental Aspects of Human Nature

In relation to the mental aspects of the individual, the participants discussed several important issues they felt related to this aspect. They focused on choice for the individual to aid in decision making which relates directly to responsibility, goal setting, appreciating other individuals' strengths and gifts, and some of the learning opportunities that teachers can provide to facilitate this aspect of learning.

Karen expressed her opinion regarding students' having a choice in physical activity which would allow them to understand themselves better through physical activity. Choice is a personal decision and there are reasons why we chose to engage in an activity and this choice generally represents our interests and our experiences. She said, "We need to recognize the talent that students have in p.e. and help them develop physically; then they are also developing emotionally and having success with their self-esteem." She believed that students should have a choice in the activities that they participate in.

Matthew added, "Right now, everything is dictated by the teacher and there is no meaning for most of the kids [in p.e.] unless you're a jock type of kid and you really like sports and stuff like that." He further suggested that the students will refuse to engage in the activities and the teachers will respond by saying, "You'll fail the class," and the students wind up sitting out of the class.

Debbie concurred, "Letting the kids have a say in the curriculum includes the mental because they need to critically think and decide why or what they want to learn and how they can learn a certain skill." She also reminded us that in going through these thought processes, the students learn about themselves as well as about the skills.

Matthew believed that choice provides students with ownership, which directly feeds spirituality because in order to have ownership you have to have some pride in what you are achieving. Jyl thought that older students could have opportunities to teach a dance, for example, to their peers which would give them ownership and responsibility for the activity. She thought this would also provide opportunities for fun, laughter, and recognizing individual strengths. This would also make them accountable to complete their tasks and be responsible for their learning.

Matthew said that providing choice for students sometimes provides challenges for some teachers. He said many teachers like to have control over everything that occurs inside their lessons, suggesting that:

> For teachers to hear that 30 kids are going to choose half their curriculum would send them off the deep end, I think. You know, because they aren't in control. If we fail to allow students to have a voice in their learning we are actually being disrespectful towards them. We need to respect the fact that kids have knowledge and experiences that they bring to the lesson and this should be rewarded by allowing the kids to have a voice. When they choose to be involved in activities that they enjoy or excel at, it will serve to fuel their physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual self.

I shared my thoughts with the teachers regarding this point and agreed that teachers should implement pedagogical strategies that could provide students with choices, engage them in decision making, and encourage self responsibility in relation to their learning. Teachers should also create a learning environment where the students may participate without fear of ridicule and failure. Of course, in line with our quest, teachers should also implement Aboriginal teachings inside these strategies. I provided this example of how I thought it might look:

If I wanted to encourage children to jump to build strength in their legs and think about using their upper body to help them jump then I should be creative about it. I need to ask myself as a teacher how I could motivate and encourage students to become engaged in the physical activity. I also need to think about how I can use the Aboriginal teachings within this activity and teach to the four aspects of the child even in small ways.

If I asked anyone just to jump in space continuously, it would be very boring. I would set up different colored lines on the floor or markers of some kind that would be separated by say three meters. So the beginning line or space might be yellow. The next line is red, then black, then white (which are the colors on some Medicine Wheels, others have blue instead of black depending on the First Nation) and each line is three meters farther than the first one. Students would have the choice of jumping to any of these lines and back. Therefore, the jackrabbit could take off and go as far as he or she wished with great spring in their legs, and the turtle could move slowly and steadily at his or her own pace by moving to the first line and back. There would always be the possibility to challenge one's self and move to the next level of competency. Imagery could be used in

reference to the lines. The space in-between could be large rivers with rapids to jump over or hunting trails. Of course, you could jump in a circle moving clockwise beginning in the East, in and out of hoops any number of times, jump rope, jump in zig-zag or meandering pathways. Providing choices for students like this gives them opportunities to succeed in all four aspects of themselves.

Now some people might challenge this and say, yes, but what about kids noticing where each other jumped to and teasing the heavy child for only jumping to the first line. My answer is that you teach the children about respecting each other's choices and decisions before you begin the activity. This is part of not breaking the working circle that you can create within your classrooms and activity spaces. Children don't come to school with halos on all the time and you have to teach them affective objectives if you want to achieve them. Don't settle for anything but their best. They will respond and be happier for it.

The participants said it was valuable when I shared my ideas with them. I always asked them if the ideas made sense and seemed plausible from the Aboriginal perspective. They listened attentively and nodded their heads many times in understanding. They said the ideas were helpful to them in generating their own thoughts and providing them with some ideas about applying cultural knowledge in physical education. The teachers began to formulate holistic pedagogical ideas in relation to physical education.

Karen said, "I was just thinking about resource based learning and the things the kids might be interested in. I can see myself teaching phys. ed. now!" She furthered,

> I do the same thing in native studies when I send my students off to explore something they are interested in and then come back and teach the class about what they have learned. I could see this happening in p.e., too.

Debbie agreed:

> This would encompass all four aspects. They could write about it after/or during to encompass the mental and the emotional aspects of what they were thinking and feeling. Ask questions on the emotional aspect-how was it to present to the group? Responsibility for having all of your facts straight. How did the group receive it?

Matthew added that they could participate in journal writing and everyone became excited by these ideas. Matthew said sometimes we have to encourage kids to express themselves in different ways and writing is a good way to encourage students to deal with emotions, questions, or something else that they may not wish to say verbally.

Physical Aspects of Human Nature

The participants cast a broad focus on understanding the physical aspect of the individual. First we must understand the physical aspect existed from the moment of conception. Physicality involves much more than using the body to play a game or dance or sing. It encompasses building physical, mental, and emotional strength and endurance through personal challenges such as attending a sweat or participating in a sun dance. Aboriginal people used the skills of the physical, emotional, spiritual, and mental to engage in hunting tasks to feed their communities. These tasks require perseverance, obedience, and discipline to accomplish all physical tasks. All activities, regardless if they use fine or gross motor skills, or the mere action of sitting in a sweat, are all regarded as physical elements of the human aspect. The participants thought that physical activity should be used more often as a way of helping students deal with their emotional

problems. In doing so, the whole individual would have a better chance to obtain a balanced life.

Matthew shared the story:

> I heard about this story from an Elder a few years ago about dealing with kids and problems and some kids don't want to talk. The Elder said to get them up and do something physical and it will help them feel better. Just last week this happened with one of our kids at school who was working with a counselor. The kids didn't want to talk to anyone. The counselor suggested that they go for a walk, which they did and the kid opened up, as they walked.

Shauna began to talk about strength and how she believed we could think about strength in holistic terms:

> When we talk of strength there are many different types of strength. When we ask the kids about physical strength, right away they think about being strong....but being strong in the physical is just as important as being mentally strong, spiritually, and emotionally strong. A lot of our people are hurting emotionally because of whatever has happened. They need a lot of balance in the wheel. If we don't balance somewhere then we are off balance. It is always good to get back to balance. The way I teach my grade nine class is we do all these things: mentally, we do math, english, etc.; spiritually we practice the traditions of sweet grass ceremonies, sweating, smudging, talking, teaching; emotionally, we do things with them regarding feelings, how do we identify feelings, what are our feelings, how do we say what we are feeling; physically we try and do things. If I see they are edgy I take them outside to get some fresh air. Or to the gym. If they don't have the physical part of them they are not going to get revived energy like new cells, oxygen going into their body, so we need to do that for them. We need to do that everyday. Go for a walk or do some stretching and get that part of them alive and rejuvenate in their cells.

I agreed that encouraging more physical activity could be part of an anger management program. I suggested that when a student becomes angry or has issues to deal with we have to recognize that anger produces physiological changes in the body that can be harmful to the self. I asked them to consider offering the students an opportunity to work their problems in a variety of contexts by talking, moving (running, walking, dancing) writing, etc. I suggested it came back to balancing one's self and that

ultimately had a great deal to do with self-responsibility. In this way we would be honoring the wholeness of the students' capacity to learn and heal in a variety of ways.

Jyl added,

> I do that lots. Instead of just getting my kids to sit in the hall for punishment or a time out I get them to take a walk around the school and come back in, do some spider push ups, just to take their mind somewhere else.

Debbie said she gets her students to do deep breathing that she learned in yoga.

Matthew contributed:

> Another thing I think is really important is visualization and it probably never gets done in p.e. class. Physically, if you do some visualizations it can help you to move better. It helps you mentally and emotionally. For example, if you listen to the professionals in sport they visualize a lot....seeing what they do is so important. They see the home run; all those things they see brings the action into their body from their mind and helps them accomplish that goal. So if a child has a problem throwing a ball take them aside and help them visualize it. Have them relax, calm themselves. Throwing a ball might be a stressful thing so help them see the goal and relax and they might actually do better.

Shauna agreed that it is very important to pay attention to the whole student. She said that her students have emotional problems and sometimes that causes them to feel physically tired. She said when this happens she encourages them to:

> Go out and sit on Mother Earth, make a connection and try to become revived again. Get out of this stuffy room. Go for a walk or whatever it is you want to do physically. I always tell them to say a prayer to connect with the spiritual aspect.

One day, Jyl and I had a long conversation in her classroom. We talked about ways of implementing Aboriginal culture within her physical education classes. I talked about how I use a tambourine/drum/shaker in my dance classes to illicit emotion and motion with the students. I've always loved the sound of the drums used by Aboriginal people and I talked about the drum in relation to the heartbeat. Some ideas that I shared were:

I would begin the lesson with the children gathered in a circle sitting on Mother Earth. I would use the drum to get their attention by hitting it once and I would ask for silence. The drum could be used in the warm up in various ways. I would get the children to place their hand over their heart, find their heartbeat, and think of the drum as a heartbeat, too. They could become aware of their heart rate at rest. I would have them close their eyes and do some deep breathing while listening to the drum beat. I would encourage them to imagine their heart beating the blood through their body that gives them the gift of life. Next, I would take a CD of good pow-wow drumming music and engage the children in a cardio-vascular component of the warm up that would increase their heart rates and prepare them for the lesson. Immediately after this part of the warm up I would call them back to the circle to feel their heart rates again and talk about the relationship between exercise and increased heart rate. Related ideas include the blood physically being pumped throughout the body, the expansion of the lungs filling with oxygen and combining with the blood to circulate throughout the body. The children would realize the impact of exercise on the heart and learn that the heart is a muscle that needs to be exercised for it to be strong. Of course, this is very simplified physiology but the basic learning foundations begin here. The second part of the warm up is the stretching component and the children could engage in some total body stretches while listening to a slower Aboriginal song. I would talk with the children about the impact of exercise on the body and encourage them to feel happy about moving because it shows that they are taking care of themselves and their body. They can feel proud of themselves, realizing that they must take responsibility to move their body through exercise every day. This combination of Aboriginal teachings and activity would provide

opportunities to learn through the mental, the physical, the spiritual and emotional aspects of human nature.

Jyl liked these examples and we furthered the discussion. She said:

> This is the life-force, the heart beat of ourselves and the drum. Without that strength in that life force we live, but we don't live as well. If you are disconnected from your environment, your people, culture, drum beat and if your heart is not working to capacity you are living but not as well as you could be. Getting up and moving and feeling your pulse or heart rate is connected to all of this. It's all part of balancing yourself.

We both agreed that this had direct relevance to Aboriginal teachings. She also believed that the circle was very important and the children must learn to not only meet in the circle but to work in the circle. She said, "If you're stealing the ball from someone or hurting someone's chances in the game you are breaking the circle."

I clarified, "So working and playing in the circle could constitute keeping in mind the whole person that you are and respecting the wholeness of someone else. You wouldn't want to break either circle?"

Jyl said, "Yes, that's right. We need to live and work in harmony with each other and we can teach this in many ways and phys. ed. is one of them. It is a really good way to teach Aboriginal teachings. I really like the drum beat ideas."

Jyl told me that she uses legends and stories in her teachings. She showed me the artwork in her class that is related to Aboriginal teachings. When we looked at the dream catcher I said, "Can you imagine using your body to create shapes like the dream catcher? Imagine students working together to create a web of body shapes and you could climb up the climbing frame in the gym and take a picture of it!"

We laughed and then she said, "Yes, I could teach them to see or experience the dream catcher in another way, through the physical, besides making it with their hands, and they would be working together, too."

In another gathering, the teachers talked about the fact that in the past, Aboriginal peoples depended on strong physical activity for survival. Hunting and fishing for sustenance required strength and skill, and that today, for many Aboriginal peoples, this is no longer the case. I asked Shauna her philosophy and rationale for instilling new meaning about physical activity with her students. She felt that running and walking activities and sports programs are good. She felt that there are many opportunities for students to become active both in and out of school. She expressed her concerns with issues of obesity, smoking, and drugs and how this affects ones physical wellness.

We discussed different ways of using the knowledge inside of games play that was such a prevalent part of Aboriginal culture. There are examples in the literature and other research studies that relate to Indigenous knowledge inside of games play. Karen said:

> There's a spiritual aspect to playing a game or being involved in physical activity, and I think that it's important that that is there. I wonder how that can unfold [inside physical education]. I know it's not just about the game itself it's about everything else that permeates the whole process to get there and understand the cultural aspect inside the game.

I suggested we could think of it in terms of:

> The animal eats from the earth; then we give thanks for the animal's life for the nourishment one receives from eating the animal and for the parts of the body that are used for making equipment and playing the game to gain the skills to be strong and to be healthy; then to understand and use the skills in terms of targets, for war in the past, the social aspects of the game which contribute to fun and laughter which are revered by the Aboriginal people; and then hunting for food which feeds the people.

This was how I envisioned a circle of thanks and knowledge and how it could relate to understanding culturally responsive curriculum in games play. Karen agreed that she thought this made good sense. This provides an example of relationships.

A few good examples were provided by the Dene people in relation to games play and knowledge. Lamothe (1993) summarized some of the Dene teaching methods from a study of the Dene people's games and activies. He talked about the belief that a good hunter is capable of providing his family and community with moose. To be a successful hunter a person must be able to read animal tracks (cognitive); read the weather, the land, the seasons, the habits of the moose, and then be able to apply that knowledge to track the moose (physical). Tracking and killing the moose would require knowledge and skills. The skills would be good body strength, stamina, lightness of feet, excellent hand-eye coordination, focus, and timing to execute the actual kill. So, any game that is played today that would simulate these actions could be related back to the relationships between the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual, all of which would require discipline. Young boys would have learned these skills through careful observations and following and watching their elder parents and grandparents. They would be educated through example until the day came that they had to demonstrate their learning by hunting their own animal.

Lamothe (1993) shares this story from one of the Dene Elders who described a fall hunt:

> On this trip there were some young people with us. I decided to return by way of the river at the end of our hunt. Two of the young people decided to come with me. I was ahead of them, like a guide. In the older days when people traveled on the river there used to be a guide traveling ahead, especially in the rocky sections of the river (rapids). I was able to guide them down the river without difficulty. When we arrived, one of the young people thanked me. He said, 'Now that you

have done it in-front of us we know it is possible if we ever have to do it. We can count on this experience'. (p. 15)

Perseverance

Bopp et al., (1985) say that the closer one gets to their goal [immediate or long term] the more difficult the journey becomes. To assist the individual in this struggle the Creator has provided the gift of perseverance. Perseverance and endurance were important concepts discussed by the teachers who summarized that perseverance can show itself in a variety of situations. The physical is the endurance part of the Medicine Wheel and can involve the whole person physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. Matthew commented:

> Training the mind to get through challenges is perseverance. If you go on your journey too fast you may miss something you should pick up; something you'll need for your journey along the way...the thing you miss might be something you need right away. People today are lost getting through their day. Perseverance in itself, can mean just getting through an exam or five exams. This is progression and perseverance. Years ago perseverance would be like hunting.

Shauna also shared some of her thoughts and experiences with students in relation to perseverance. She mentioned how a guest in her classroom came to teach the students about teepee teachings. The poles that hold up the teepee each represent an Aboriginal teaching, and obedience is one of the most important teachings. Shauna said, "Without obedience there is no discipline. Without discipline we just don't learn." She shared an example of how she saw the kids learn about obedience and discipline through the physical aspect:

> For the teaching of obedience the teacher made the kids stand up for fifteen minutes...silently. It took two or three weeks before everybody could do it...learn the skill of discipline and could stand there in obedience. One guy was leaning on the desk. He was obese and had diabetes. So we tried to help him by suggesting that he go and have a drink of juice or sit down. He did ok and it was

> a neat thing to watch him because over time he could do it because he learned the discipline.

Shauna commented that she noticed that they had to think about how they were standing. She said, "One girl was whining and complaining that it was uncomfortable and I said, 'Well, stand straight', and yet some of the students knew to stand straight."

She added:

> Another thing is when these kids at this school are always late; not on time, we know that the discipline is not there. Or when they need to get rest, we try to encourage them to get to bed at 11 and wake up at 7. We try to teach them little by little and hopefully by grade 12 they'll have more discipline. We always go back to our family and who we learned our lessons from. We talk about society and how our behavior affects society. If we are drinking too much we get into trouble and go to jail and that affects society as a whole.

Shauna continued:

> I challenge them by asking them how we get out of this situation. We are open and talk about that and what it's like in jail or detention centers. They say it's boring and they do a lot of reading because there isn't a lot of physical activity for them to do unless they are in the bigger institutions.

Shauna believes that the school is vital in helping the kids see the connections for a balanced life. She said the kids may not have support for their lives outside of school and good school programs can help the students succeed. She reinforced the aspect of volition and self-responsibility. She said:

> I have a student who wants to be a basketball player. We promote this and try to enhance his ability by encouraging him and telling him that he can achieve what he wants. We always go back to the center of choice. We don't try to take blame and we don't want to hear someone else blaming someone else [for your failure]. For example, the boy in my class who has diabetes has to help himself get better. All we can do is give him ideas and support.

Matthew described the cyclical journey the individual encounters on the Medicine Wheel. Each direction teaches new lessons and moving through each progression brings

one to a higher state of knowledge and experience that can be applied to the next lesson. This takes time and it takes patience. He said:

> When you are going on your journey, if you go too fast you may have missed something that you should have picked up, something you should have learned along the way. This piece of the lesson might be something that you need right now today and because you ran by really quickly without giving it much attention because you didn't think it was important and today you find out it is very important. So we must take our time and this takes perseverance and discipline and it takes time to establish that. In today's society everything is about a quick fix, quick solution, it's all about right now because that's what everybody wants.

The circle travels around itself but it also spirals outwards and layers the knowledge and information gained upon its self to discover new knowledge and methods to apply to improving oneself in one's life. The spiral never stops ascending into space or eternity; representing life's journey. Matthew said that the journey begins new every day. He stated, "Each time you enter into a new question we enter back into the beginning, the east. Every new problem or idea we begin at the infancy stage." Matthew gave this example:

> You get into the spiral and you start going up. I think you take things from each one of these areas [spiritual, emotional, physical, spiritual], but it's not until you get to the higher stages [of learning and experience] that you get to utilize these skills. In some ways a person may be wise beyond their years but they may not have it developed enough to deal with it in the best way. You may have a lot of good information and knowledge but you don't have the wisdom to know how to use it. Or you may use it in the wrong way. You have the knowledge that an Elder has but you don't know how to use it because that comes with experience. So, each phase that we pass through in gaining knowledge we think, 'ya, we have it now', but then you'll go through a hard struggle with it, which is that physical part, or mental or emotional, and then it starts again and it creates another layer [of struggle and experience] and it just keeps going up. When you learn something in one area it changes everything in the other three areas. Learning and growing is like an onion. It grows in layers from the inside out. It's these kinds of teachings that I don't know how you fit into phys. ed. I guess that's your job to help us figure that out.
>
> The Elder says you always have to start with you. You have to be proficient for you. In Western society we always judge our skills against someone else's skills.

We have to get out of that and ask...ok, what skills have you come in with, where are you now and have you shown improvement? So you have become more proficient and you have more to go if you want to go there and maybe you don't want to. It's about choice but you can get better. But you are proficient considering where you were. Based on ability, effort, body type, that's how we should be evaluating progress and knowledge. We have to ask ourselves what learning and progress are for our students. Perhaps progress is a change of attitude, a willingness to try as opposed to just a measurable change in skill? We have to consider the whole child including their mind and their emotions and their spirit.

The Elder at the school talked about being on your path. When you are on your path you have to try to get to your destination. If you get there too fast you may have missed one of the things you needed when you get to your destination. Because those things that you come across, or learn on your way there, you are learning them for a reason. So you find out only when you get to your destination why you have to slow down and listen and hear or learn that. If you go from point A to point B too fast you can miss a lot of good things.

Our belief is that if you didn't learn it this time the opportunity to learn will come again. It will come a little bit harder and a little bit stronger the next time. If this continues to happen then there is something that is being said to you that you're not getting and you're not taking the time to understand why. You need to do that and in p.e. it is the same thing. You can go through and I think that p.e. teachers just go on the physical doing of something. If a kid is doing it well physically, then everything is fine. I think the kids that can't do it...I contend that you address some of the other issues (3 quadrants) they might not be able to do it at the same level as the other person but they can improve. There might be some other parts of themselves that keep them from meeting their goals. And again, maybe they have reached their level or whatever it is but if you continually keep coming at them with the same things and they don't improve what is it doing? You haven't addressed anything else and so that I think to me that is one of the things that Aboriginal cultures have in their philosophy, knowing, understanding that would look at the whole person in phys. ed. and not just the physical part.

When we struggle in life we need to ask ourselves what we are supposed to learn from that struggle. When we do struggle we come back stronger for the struggle. If we "don't get it" [the meaning in the lesson] it will keep coming at you until we get it. This is how the wheel keeps moving. Some people are quick learners and others are stubborn. People need to learn that not everything happens the way that we want it to. The lesson challenges us to ask, 'what is being said to you, what haven't you learned yet'?

Shauna's eloquent words remind us that:

> Our lives are like running into the wind. We can keep running and keep pushing. Sometimes it blows us back a bit...but if we let it blow us completely off course, we have allowed that to happen. That's right because no matter how tired we could just stand and wait for our energy to come back. Again, it goes back to self-responsibility. We need to focus and ask who is in charge here. Even if the wind blows you over we need to get up and walk again. Even standing in the wind for awhile is always a spiritual connection because the native people believe that they pray to Grandfather wind so if you are just standing in the wind saying a prayer for strength it is answered back through the blowing of the wind.

Two World Views

The Elders have taught us that we need to learn to walk together in this world, side by side. No one should dominate over the other because we have all been made equal. Each of us has special gifts that we bring to life and knowledge that we should share and embrace from each other. The struggle to bridge the two worlds is not easy but that is part of the journey. Setting goals, making choices, and learning to see the world through more than one pair of eyes is part of the cyclical journey of life. The participants shared some of their experiences in the following words:

Shauna talked about how she was raised and how important prayer is to her. She shared that she had the opportunity to learn from both worlds with regards to prayer. She said:

> I say the Our Father but I pray to the Creator. When the Elders pray I know they are praying to the Creator, The Greatest One. To me Our Father is the greatest one so I kind of put the two of them together. We have to bring these ways of knowing together.

Debbie said there is a challenge to figure out both ways and that has to come from the individual. She described the students preparing for graduation:

> The girls were trying to write a slogan or a meaning behind their graduation theme and they came up with something about dreams and creating some kind of future vision for your-self. It was something about choice. They were thinking that there were three different ways to look at this idea. There was the Aboriginal way, the plain white person's way, and the Catholic way. They contradicted each

> other because the white secular society says you have all the choices. The Catholic way says that, 'No, it's not you, rather you are being guided by God and you need to recognize that and give thanks for that.' The Aboriginal way was saying you have been given those dreams for a reason and you have to figure out how to use them and understand why they have been given to you. It's hard because you have to keep all of this in mind because you don't want to go against your culture or your school.

Debbie also noted, "I think about a sweat and about cleansing myself out. Physically it is good for me. You have people going to saunas, there's no difference, except it is spiritual and emotional to go to a sweat."

Debbie felt that the students need role models in their lives and a philosophy to live by. She believes it's never too late to change. She said:

> All of this educating is great but a large part of it is going to come down to realizing that young children have to get some enjoyment out of it. For older teenagers they have to get some feeling of connected-ness with the instructor or the coach and if they can't get that they won't care if it's helping their cardiovascular or whatever, or reduces their risk of diabetes.
>
> There's still the issue if it's being done at home because in school we're always going against that if it's not. If nobody at home is showing that physical activity is important then it's just a school thing. It's not a life thing. I ride my bike to school; I ride my bike to work everyday. I make my kids ride their bikes, too, so they're seeing it and doing it. You want kids to read, well they've got to see you sitting there reading. A lot of people are naturally lazy. The teenage mentality is - even if you show them the pictures about illness, there is still the idea that, 'It'll never happen to me.'

We talked of culture and curriculum and some of the challenges that teachers face when some students have been engaged in cultural experiences and others haven't.

Debbie shared:

> We are trying to take teachings that would come naturally just from living and growing with people in a natural, cultural environment. We take these teachings and isolate them in a false teaching environment and try to make them natural. I think this is a struggle.

She looked to the positive side:

> There are a lot of people and kids who learn about their culture here [at school] and it's a lot more than what they learned growing up. There are a lot of people who learned about their culture before coming here and disagree and say that's not the way they learned their culture. Then we have to respect those differences. However, there will always be the main constants of respect, treating Elders in a certain way, and rarely, will the kids not know these things unless they grew up in a foster situation and didn't learn these things.

Shauna spoke about both worlds and her journey. She told me that she had a rough journey and had to get help to figure things out in her life. She said:

> I am able to go on my own now [after being here in the city]. I'm healed, I'm ok physically, I'm ok mentally, I'm ok emotionally. More so; my spirit. I've found I've made the connection. I've balanced everything in my life. I no longer have this complicated view of life, kind of like, who am I really? Why am I in both worlds? It's just to bring the two together. Now, I know that I can still go to church out of respect for my father. I'll always be that way. In my community there is now an integration of the traditions. They have a sweat there and in the church they have sweet grass and it's really beautiful. And I feel balanced. Today I could pray any way but growing up, I kind of learned that Sunday is for praying. Today I pray anytime that I am really in need. I'll pray in the morning or at night but I needed to learn that. Maybe it has to do with age, too. You know, because when you're fifteen, is that really as important as when you are thirty, you know to pray?

Shauna said that it's so important to keep your mind and your thinking positive. She said:

> It's all in the mind, too, about you're thinking. That line of 'Thy will be done' is not for us to understand all the time as to why things occur but it is there to build and strengthen our faith through our experiences. This would be like walking into Grandfather wind.

The teacher researchers were eloquent in sharing the challenges and possibilities of living within the context of two worlds. The tensions between one world and the next should not be outweighed by the many ways we can be compatible as we strive to maintain our unique identities within the world. Above all else, we can remember the words of the Elders who repeatedly remind us to walk in two worlds, side by side.

Paddling to Shore

Throughout this fishing expedition, the research participants shared a rich text of knowledge, gained through their life experiences. This knowledge was put forth in an attempt to connect it with the physical education curriculum. We have already ascertained the challenge of identifying only one aspect of human nature: the physical, and through these conversations their stories have demonstrated the inter-connectedness between all four aspects. I think this also demonstrates what they have learned throughout their cultural education. Their words and experiences have reflected the knowledge from the literature review and this gives strength to building common themes of practice and beliefs.

The participants believe that living a culture is a daily process that intersects with all we think, do, and feel. Matthew reminded us consistently that we must demonstrate the interconnectedness between all four aspects of human nature.

The conversations centered on spirituality, emotions, mental cognition, and physicality. The participants provided many examples of how they perceive the relationship between these aspects and how they can be applied in physical education. This application is with the understanding that each aspect affects the other three aspects, and thus, the life of the student.

The Medicine Wheel teaches that the individual is at the centre of the wheel and this signifies the individual's gift of responsibility or volition. The individual has the power to choose the pathway of his or her journey in life. This responsibility challenges the individual to strive for excellence in all aspects in order to achieve balance and harmony in life. A large part of this balance can be attained through ceremonies such as

smudging, attending a sweat, dancing, fasting, etc. These ceremonies teach respect, spiritual connections, recognition of special gifts, perseverance, potential, patience, etc., on the continuing wheel of life.

Wisdom

Elder David told us that we were on this earth to follow a journey. Elder Rose said it must be a healthy journey. They both agreed that the spirit is always present from the moment of conception and the child becomes physical upon conception. Therefore, as humans we are created in a relationship between the physical and the spiritual.

Elder Rose so gently explained that we are physical from the moment of conception. From the very beginning, when the cells meet and begin to divide, there is motion. The new life is constantly in motion and we are in motion inside our mothers. We cannot escape our physicality.

Elder David said that we are given freedom by the Creator and we must be free to learn. We must remember that everything is tied together and that we are all children of God. We have the power to have peace on earth. We have this power in our hands, our minds, and in our hearts. He said the soft spot in the baby's head is the gateway to the mind. The spirit moves into the woman and enters the child. Through ceremony the spirit who walks with the child is identified.

We come from eternity and will return to eternity. If you want to be good on this earth you must know who you are. We have the power to reason, which puts us beyond animals. We have morality and we know what is right and wrong. We have a will/volition so we can make choices and ask question. We must not question truths.

He told us that we are free to make our own pathway. Try to be faithful to the teachings. He said he follows the teaching of his Grandmother and tries to live what she has taught. He encouraged us to follow the teachings of the great people. He advised:

> Look at the footsteps of your teachers. The Son of God didn't write. What does that tell you? Concentrate on His actions. Our people didn't write. Concentrate on their actions. Sometimes people focus too much on the interpretation of the writings instead of the actions.
>
> You can be healed through prayer and feel the power of healing. Once you are healed you can help someone else. To be healed you must come to terms with yourself through prayer, working with Elders, prayer cloths, connecting with everything through a good relationship.

Elder David said that crying is good. If you are angry and you cry it shows you have conscience. Your conscience is attached to your tears.

CHAPTER 7

Coming Full Circle

Creating culturally responsive curricula is a commitment by educators to provide relevant learning experiences for students. This requires learning about culture and respecting other world views. This study has researched the issues of Eurocentric domination, the suppression of Indigenous knowledge, and how Indigenous knowledge can direct the curricula in physical education. More recently, Aboriginal people have begun to assert their quest for creating culturally responsive learning for their people and challenge educators to recognize culture within education.

Barnhardt (2000) assures us that learning to relate to each other and teach in culturally considerate ways benefits the whole learning community. He also states that, "One of the first things to recognize is that the more you learn about another culture, the more you will find out about yourself" (p. 169). Throughout my journey to learn about Indigenous knowledge and how this knowledge can guide culturally responsive curricula in physical education, I have had the pleasure of working with knowledgeable and sensitive Aboriginal people who have contributed so much heart to this study through the sharing of their knowledge. The personal impact that I have experienced has been related throughout the text of this study.

Throughout this next chapter my goal is to provide some insights into how the Indigenous knowledge that has been learned through this study can inter-relate with the curricula in physical education. From these conversations of possibilities, I will be focusing on themes from the discipline of physical education. Components of health and wellness will be included in this discussion. The terms of health and wellness are much

better qualifiers of this study because they lend to a more holistic language and perspective regarding the benefits of physical education and how this discipline contributes to the overall wellness of the individual.

I am writing this section with an alert conscience. I will focus on Indigenous knowledge first; complimented by the contemporary curricula within the model and the explanations. I want to avoid any implication that this work would be an "add-on" or one more piecemeal attempt that only reduces itself to integration of Indigenous knowledge or treating it in a subordinate fashion. The visual and verbal representation is designed to bridge the two worlds in respect to a healthy journey.

> *I was sitting listening to Elder Rose and when she explained that we all need to "go on a healthy journey" it was like an epiphany for me. It brought the whole study together and reduced the tension of "physical education" into a working framework where physical education is but one component of the holistic paradigm we need to consider when addressing the question of culturally responsive curricula in physical education.*

Creating holistic curricula respects the wholeness of the individual. The individual is alive in all human aspects of self, including the spiritual, the physical, the emotional, and the mental. All of these components are connected, interrelated with values, and the ability of each person to achieve their maximum potential is dependent on self-responsibility or volition. Holistic experiences in life create wisdom.

It is with this paradigm at the forefront, that as educators, we must inspirit curricula by recognizing that the individual does not separate the mind from the body, or the spirit, or the emotion, and that learning experiences should encompass holistic opportunities for the individual to embody knowledge and recognize that this knowledge gives life. Curricula needs to provide an invitation to both teachers and learners and recognize that there are different ways of being in the world (Aoki, 1987; Regnier, 1995).

Ultimately, we must strive to lead our students through experiences which will allow them to achieve harmony and balance in their lives through their school based education, and this education should respect the knowledge and experiences they bring to school.

> To live a balanced life means to be aware of movement toward harmony in the interconnectedness and interdependence of all entities and to express that harmony in one's relations with them (Regnier, 1995). Hampton (1993) relates that, "... Indian education is dynamic" (p. 280) and in a state of motion.

Physical education is about motion. The following model (Figure 1) represents the relationship and interconnectedness between Indigenous knowledge gained from this study and the current framework of physical education curricula (Saskatchewan Education, 2000). This is a journey that bridges two ideologies. Just as the builder creates the birch bark canoe from the inside out, this model works from the inside out and is guided by Indigenous knowledge gained from this study and the review of the literature. THE ABORIGINAL KNOWLEDGE IS WRITTEN IN THIS TEXT; while the curricula content is written in regular text.

Each wheel layers upon the previous wheel and each one will be explained throughout this model.

A Healthy Journey

We all are on a journey in life. The journey never ends. To have a healthy journey we need to take care of our spiritual, emotional, physical and mental, aspects. The journey is cyclical and moves clockwise, continuously around the Medicine Wheel. The journey always begins in the East (Spiritual) and moves towards the North (Mental) in the quest for knowledge. Experiences build knowledge and ultimately, the outcomes in my journey depend on me.

A Model for Indigenous knowledge in Physical Education

This model is supported by the Sacred Tree:

- Planted by the Creator where people may gather to find healing, power, wisdom and security
- The roots spread firmly into Mother Earth
- The branches reach in prayer to Father Sky
- The fruits of the tree are the gifts given from the Creator (path of love, compassion, generosity, patience, wisdom, justice, courage, respect, humility)
- The life of the tree is the life of the people

The Medicine Wheel:

- Is an ancient symbol used by many Aboriginal people
- Is used to help us see or understand things not normally visible
- Acts as a mirror so an individual can look back on one's self and look within to see where one is going
- Reflects wholeness and interconnectedness
- Demonstrates that everything is in a relationship
- Shows not only what is but what could be possible in our lives
- Demonstrates that the process of human growth in all aspects never stops
- As a cycle moves constantly as the human develops on life's journey
- Involves four directions

LAYER 1

THE CENTRE: VOLITION:

VOLITION: CENTRE OF THE WHEEL	**BRIDGING CURRICULA:**
• YOU, THE INDIVIDUAL IS IN CHARGE OF YOUR HEALTHY JOURNEY • INVOLVES SELF-RESPONSIBILITY • HELPS YOU TO REALIZING POTENTIAL • REQUIRES PERSEVERANCE • HELPS YOU GROW IN ALL FOUR ASPECTS OF HUMAN NATURE • IS A FORCE AT THE CENTRE OF THE WHEEL THAT HELPS THE INDIVIDUAL MAKE AND CARRY OUT DECISIONS BY: o CONCENTRATING o SETTING GOALS o INITIATING AN ACTION o PERSEVERING o COMPLETING THE ACTION	Behavioral changes require self-responsibility, discipline and action. These are based on five stages of development (Prochaska, Norcross & DiClemente, 1994, p. 54): 1. Pre-contemplation: The individual resists change and denies that change is needed 2. Contemplation of change: The individual acknowledges that change is needed 3. Preparation: The individual intends to take action to change behavior 4. Action: The beginning of action and change 5. Maintenance: The individual stabilizes change and maintaining positive behavior

LAYER 2

FOUR ASPECTS OF HUMAN NATURE:

- THE MEDICINE WHEEL TEACHES US THAT WE HAVE FOUR ASPECTS OF HUMAN NATURE AND EACH ONE MUST BE DEVELOPED TO ACHIEVE BALANCE IN ONE'S LIFE
- THESE ARE DEVELOPED THROUGH VOLITION
- GROWTH IN THESE AREAS COMES THROUGH STRUGGLE
- PROCESS OF DEVELOPING THESE QUALITIES IS CALLED "TRUE LEARNING"

Each aspect of human nature will be taught through physical education. These will be taught through the activity perspectives including: Aboriginal ceremonies, games, dances, gymnastics, outdoor pursuits, and alternative environment activities. As well, a variety of movement opportunities using a variety of equipment will be utilized within the curricula. The aspects of human nature written on the left side represent the knowledge of the researchers; combined with the literature from the Sacred Tree (Bopp, et al., 1985). The examples provided on the Bridging Curricula side represent some ideas that may be incorporated into physical education.

Students learning from these human aspects may learn the Aboriginal teachings on the left column, and inter-relate this knowledge with the teachings, or possible teachings from the curricula. If the teacher or students are non-Aboriginal it is place to learn how to respect each other and recognize that the same values may be taught in different ways and maybe in the end, we are not so far apart in the things that we strive to learn as good human beings on a healthy journey in life. Aboriginal students will have the opportunity to bring their life experiences to their school learning experience.

We receive special gifts of knowledge from each aspect of the wheel. We never leave one behind as we travel to the next. Each round of the circle creates within us a knowledge that is ever growing and attainable if we persevere and keep in mind the gifts that await us.

As we stand in one direction we can see across to the other three directions. This helps in balancing ourselves…looking back…looking ahead. Standing too long in any one part of the wheel will lead to an imbalance in one's self. We must keep moving in order to grow.

*If any of the layers on this model turn in a clockwise direction there will always be a relationship between the intersecting aspects of this model.

SPIRITUAL (EAST) **LITTLE MOUSE SISTER DOES WHAT SHE DOES WITH ALL OF HER TINY BEING.**	BRIDGING CURRICULA
o FIRST STAGE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE HUMAN WILL o EXISTED FROM THE MOMENT OF CONCEPTION o THE DIRECTION OF CHILDHOOD o THE DIRECTION OF BIRTH, REBIRTH, AND ILLUMINATION, NEW LEARNING o ALL JOURNEYS BEGIN IN THE EAST o A PLACE TO LEARN HOW TO WATCH OVER AND CARE FOR OTHERS o A PLACE TO LEARN TO BE SELF-RELIANT o GIFT OF FOCUS — LEARNING TO PAY ATTENTION; BE IN THE MOMENT AND LEARN WHAT IS HAPPENING NOW o THE PLACE OF INNOCENCE — THE ABILITY TO BELIEVE IN POSSIBILITIES o DEALS WITH THE AFFECTIVE DOMAIN o INVOLVES THE SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCE o MORALS AND VALUES ARE TAUGHT o WE CAN FEEL EACH OTHERS SPIRIT o EMOTIONS ARE AFFECTED BY OUR SPIRIT o WE DEVELOP RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE OBJECTS WE INTERACT WITH o THE SELF IS PART OF THE ENVIRONMENT o INVOLVES CHALLENGE TO BE THE BEST YOU CAN BE o INVOLVES CEREMONY o RESPECTING THE BODY o YOUR SPIRIT IS CONNECTED TO YOUR PHYSICAL MOVEMENTS o SETTING GOALS AND ACHIEVING SUCCESS o FEELING POSITIVE ABOUT THE PHYSICAL THINGS ONE DOES	➢ Teaching morals and values o Fair play o Respecting others and self ➢ The affective domain o Appreciating that everyone is important o Respecting the abilities of others o Helping others to learn o Respecting the body as an instrument of movement o Give thanks for the gift of health to be able to participate in activity ➢ Learning new skills o Realizing that each new skill or progression learned is a new challenge o Motor learning is never complete ➢ Recognizing that athletic ability is a gift ➢ Giving thanks for the life of the animal or plant that has contributed to the game through equipment ➢ Recognize that the player has a relationship with the object of play, the playing space, the opponents/team-mates, and the equipment being used ➢ Recognizing that following these teachings through physical activity can lead to improved self-esteem (emotion), increase in knowledge (mental), spiritual growth and physical wellness

EMOTION (SOUTH) COUGAR TEACHES CONCENTRATION	BRIDGING CURRICULA
o SECOND STAGE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE HUMAN WILL o THIS IS THE PLACE OF THE HEART o LEARN TO MAKE SACRIFICES AND BE GENEROUS o LEARN TO BE SENSITIVE TOWARDS OTHERS FEELINGS o LEARN TO BE LOYAL o LEARN ABOUT LOVE o LEARN TO BE PASSIONATE IN THE WORLD o FEELINGS CAN BE REALIZED AND CONTROLLED BY ACTS OF VOLITION o LEARN DISCIPLINE OF EMOTIONS o DEVELOP CONFIDENCE o IS THE PLACE OF FULLNESS OF YOUTH AND TESTING OF THE PHYSICAL BODY o THE BODY MUST BE RESPECTED o REALIZE THAT EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS CAN AFFECT YOUR PHYSICALITY o WE MUST MAKE WISE CHOICES TO KEEP THE BODY HEALTHY AND NOT LET THE BODY CONTROL OUR WELL-BEING o ALL OF THESE REQUIRE EXERCISING OF THE VOLITION o GIFTS OF THE SOUTH INCLUDE GRACE OF MOVEMENT, APPRECIATION OF THE ARTS, POWER OF DISCRIMINATION o IF ONE IS WORKING WELL INSIDE THEIR EMOTIONS THERE WILL BE A STRONG SPIRITUAL CONNECTION o PRAY AND CONNECT WITH MOTHER EARTH	➢ Learn to share ➢ Learn to be fair ➢ Respect others' feelings during play ➢ Learn to play with everyone ➢ Teach friendly competition and recognize not everyone likes competition ➢ Learn about teamwork ➢ Demonstrate winning and losing with pride ➢ Recognize that exercise releases tension ➢ Exercise requires discipline ➢ One must exercise the will to maintain an active lifestyle ➢ One must choose how they like to move through physical activity ➢ Learning stress management to apply pro-active responses to emotion ➢ Relaxation techniques to calm the body ➢ One can learn to balance feelings while balancing the body in different ways ➢ The centre of gravity can be related to the 'will' where one must find the balance inside and outside of the body in relation to the base of support (Mother Earth/ a balance beam) ➢ One must make choices about how they need to live in order to be on a healthy journey

PHYSICAL (WEST) BLACK BEAR (STRENGTH) TURTLE (TEACHES TO GO "WITHIN" AND GRANTS THE GIFT OF PERSEVERANCE)	BRIDGING CURRICULA
o THIRD STAGE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE HUMAN WILL o EXISTED FROM THE MOMENT OF CONCEPTION o NEVER CUT YOURSELF OFF FROM THE SPIRITUAL ASPECT OF NATURE o REPRESENTS THE PLACE OF TESTING AND THE SOURCE OF STRENGTH WHICH MUST COME FROM WITHIN o THE PLACE WHERE PERSEVERANCE CAN BE WON THROUGH TESTING o PERSEVERANCE AND TESTING CAN BE LEARNED THROUGH CEREMONY o (SUN DANCE, FASTING, HUNTING, SURVIVAL, GAMES) o LEARNING TO STICK TO A CHALLENGE o THE DIRECTION OF POWER (TO HEAL, PROTECT, DEFEND) o RECOGNIZE POTENTIAL o A PLACE OF SACRIFICE – NOTHING SHOULD BE TAKEN WITHOUT GIVING BACK o ONE MUST LEARN TO MANAGE POWER o SPEND TIME IN PRAYER TO GAIN INSIGHT o LEARN TO LOVE AND KNOW THE CREATOR o LEARN WHAT THE CREATOR WOULD EXPECT OF YOU AS A LEADER o ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO SET GOALS FOR THEMSELVES AND ACHIEVE THEM o RESPECT THE GOALS THAT OTHERS SET FOR THEMSELVES	➢ How to make wise decisions (for your healthy journey) ➢ Try your best and never give up ➢ Challenge yourself and test yourself through your activities to learn more and strive to become more proficient in applying motor skills to your activities ➢ Run faster, jump higher, throw farther ➢ Control your emotions and recognize the power you have (spiritually, emotionally, physically, mentally) ➢ Work on the fitness components of strength, flexibility, cardio-endurance, power, and body composition and use these to test your will and your possibilities ➢ Learn obedience by listening, following instructions, respecting self, others and equipment, playing fair, following the rules ➢ Learn to lead with fairness and wisdom when interacting with others

MENTAL (NORTH) THE GREAT MOUNTAIN (SYMBOLIC TEACHER OF THE NORTH)	BRIDGING CURRICULA
o THE PLACE OF WINTER, WHITE SNOWS SYMBOLIC OF THE WHITE HAIR OF THE ELDERS o A PLACE TO LEARN AND GUIDE OTHERS WITH WISDOM o DAWNING OF THE PLACE OF TRUE WISDOM o INTELLECTUAL GIFTS ARE REALIZED IN THE NORTH o SOME OF THE SPECIAL GIFTS OF THE NORTH: THINKING, SYNTHESIZING, SPECULATING, PREDICTING, DISCRIMINATING, PROBLEM SOLVING, IMAGINATION, INTERPRETATION OF HIDDEN MEANINGS, ORGANIZATION o THE MIND CAN BE TRAINED TO BECOME STRONG o PERSEVERANCE MUST BE STRONG TO SUCCEED WHEN THE TASK SEEMS TOO GREAT o THE DIRECTION OF COMPLETION AND FULFILLMENT o LEARNING TO FINISH WHAT WE HAVE STARTED o FINAL LESSON IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE POWERS OF THE WILL- VOLITION	➢ Relate story telling to physical activities – create dances, games from stories and legends typically told in the winter ➢ Learn to be leaders of others in class, on teams, in partners ➢ Understand that the mind and the body are connected ➢ Learning motor skills is a relationship between the mind and the body ➢ Learn to challenge yourself and complete your goals ➢ Set new goals continuously in different aspects of wellness ➢ Understand the connection between the spiritual, emotional, physical and mental aspects of human wellness ➢ Understand what it means to become a physically educated person ➢ Understand the impact of a healthy lifestyle and value the benefits of health ➢ Teach others in your family and your community the way to wholeness and the relationships between all things ➢ Encourage others to become physically active ➢ Value your self and your will ➢ Recognize that you have been given the gift of choice in life and that these choices impact your healthy journey ➢ Strive to be in balance on the wheel of life

Layer 3

HUMAN MOVEMENT CONCEPTS (Pangrazi & Gibbons, 2003)

- These concepts are part of a framework designed for analyzing movement
- These concepts create endless possibilities for movement
- These concepts provide individuals with creative possibilities to understand movement, progress through stages of motor learning, and apply creative approaches to movement
- These concepts never stand alone – they are all interrelated
- Every movement requires an instrument (the body) to move in space, with effort, in relationship to someone or something

RELATIONSHIPS	**QUALITITES OF MOVEMENT (EFFORT)**	**BODY**	**SPACIAL AWARENESS**
o Is the WITH WHOM OR WITH WHAT of movement o PLACED IN THE EAST (BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS) o ALL ASPECTS OF HUMAN MOVEMENT OCCUR WITH SELF AND /OR OTHERS o ALL ASPECTS OF MOVEMENT MAY OCCUR WITH AN OBJECT AND IN SOME RELATION TO SPACE AND THE ENVIRONMENT	o This is the HOW of movement o PLACED IN THE SOUTH (REPRESENTS EMOTION AND FEELING) o HOW DOES THE MOVEMENT LOOK AND FEEL? o WHAT FORCE OR TIMING IS USED IN THE MOVEMENT? o Is it fast, slow, heavy, light, sneaky	o The body is the INSTRUMENT of movement o Placed in the West (physicality) o The body forms many shapes as it is engaged in movement with people, in the environment o Focuses on balance, transfer of body weight, flight o THE PERSON IN THE BODY STRIVES TO ACHIEVE THE GIFTS OF INTUITION, SENSES, EMOTIONS/FEELINGS, SKILLS, STRENGTH, ENDURANCE, PERSEVERANCE, PATIENCE, INTELLECT, SPIRITUALITY, BALANCE	o Is the WHERE of movement o Placed in the North (understanding the capacity for movement in space) o Where does movement occur in space? o General space o Personal space o In different directions (right (E), left(W), forward, backward, up(N), down(S), clockwise, counter-clockwise) o At different levels (high, medium, low) o In different pathways (straight(E), meandering(S), zig-zag(W), circular(N)

Layer 4

MOTOR SKILL ACQUISITION (Graham, Holt/Hale & Parker, 2004)

- EACH TIME STUDENTS LEARN A NEW SKILL THEY BEGIN IN THE EAST, IN THE INFANCY STAGE OF THE SKILL, AND PROGRESS TO THE NORTH WHERE THEY ACHIEVE PROFICIENCY.
- ALL ACTIVITIES THAT THE INDIVIDUAL PARTICIPATES IN REQUIRE MOTOR SKILLS
- MOTOR SKILLS ARE LEARNED THROUGH PROGRESSIVE, DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE ACTIVITIES AND PRACTICE
- THERE ARE FOUR STAGES OF MOTOR LEARNING
- THE MIND AND THE BODY ARE CONNECTED IN THE ACTIVITY : THE LEARNING NEVER STOPS
- WHEN THE BODY ACHIEVES SUCCESS, THE EMOTION AND THE SPIRIT ARE FED

1) **Pre-control:**	2) **Control:**	3) **Utilization:**	4) **Proficiency:**
o ALIGNED WITH THE EAST o THIS IS THE INFANT STAGE OF MOTOR LEARNING o There is no real control over the object or the body in relation to the object or space o Motor learning requires plenty of practice o THIS IS THE BEGINNING OF LEARNING A NEW SKILL	o ALIGNED WITH THE SOUTH o REQUIRES PRACTICE AND PERSEVERANCE o the student gains experience and some control of the object achieves some success. o Progressions are applied within the movement variables (body, effort, space, relationship) o STAYING CALM AND REMAINING FOCUSED ARE IMPORTANT SO THE STUDENT DOESN'T BECOME FRUSTRATED o Student still doesn't have the skills to utilize the body and the skill inside a game situation or more advanced activity	o ALIGNED WITH THE WEST o students continue to PERSEVERE IN PRACTICE o APPLY MOTOR SKILLS THROUGH MORE ADVANCED PROGRESSIONS o CREATE MORE ADVANCED OPPORTUNITIES FOR VARIED RELATIONSHIPS IN MOVEMENT AS THEY RELATE TO THE GAME, DANCE, OR OTHER ACTIVITY o students are enjoying applying the skills to activity due to increased success in motor learning	o THE PROFICIENCY STAGE IS ALIGNED WITH THE NORTH o THIS IS THE FINAL STAGE OF MOTOR LEARNING o THE STUDENT IS ABLE TO USE THE SKILLS ALMOST "AT WILL" REQUIRING VERY LITTLE CONCENTRATION. o Competent stage of motor learning o CAN CONTRIBUTE TO POSITIVE EMOTIONAL FEELINGS AND SPIRITUAL WELLNESS, PHYSICAL STRENGTH, AND WISDOM

Layer 5

ACTIVITY PERSPECTIVES:

STUDENTS NEED TO BE ENGAGED IN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN ORDER TO LEARN MOTOR SKILLS; BOTH FINE MOTOR AND GROSS MOTOR. THE ACQUISITION OF SKILL IMPROVES THROUGH PRACTICE. TEACHERS NEED TO PROVIDE A WIDE VARIETY OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS TO BE PHYSICALLY ACTIVE WITHIN THEIR CLASSES. THESE ACTIVITIES SHOULD MAKE CONNECTIONS TO STUDENTS' LIVES, EXPERIENCES AND KNOWLEDGE THEY BRING TO SCHOOL. AN INTEGRATED APPROACH BETWEEN ABORIGINAL KNOWLEDGE AND OTHER CLASS SUBJECTS CAN ALSO INCREASE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY. FOR EXAMPLE, BEADWORK REQUIRES FOCUS, GOOD HAND-EYE COORDINATION AND FINE MOTOR SKILLS. BEADWORK COULD BE PART OF THE ART CLASS AND STUDENTS CAN BE TAUGHT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE EMOTIONAL ASPECTS OF CONNECTING WITH BEADING, THE PHYSICAL SKILL NEEDED TO BEAD, THE MENTAL AWARENESS YOU NEED TO CREATE PATTERNS, AND THE SPIRITUAL CONNECTION ONE MUST HAVE WHEN CREATING AN OBJECT IN ORDER FOR THE OBJECT TO HAVE LIFE AND MEANING.

CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE SHOULD BE RESPECTED WITHIN CURRICULA AND OPPORTUNITIES TO ENGAGE IN ACTIVITIES RELATED TO CULTURE SHOULD BE INCLUDED.

THE FOLLOWING EXAMPLES DEMONSTRATE THE TYPES OF ACTIVITIES THAT STUDENTS CAN EXPERIENCE INSIDE THE CURRICULA TO DEVELOP THEIR POTENTIAL:

FASTING	Aquatics	BEADING	Outdoor Pursuits
TRACKING	Games	Dance	POW WOW
SUN DANCE	Gymnastics	ABORIGINAL GAMES	SWEAT
ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVITIES: MOOSE HUNTING		CANOEING	TANNING HIDES
BERRY PICKING (field trips)	BUILDING A CANOE (collecting the tree, hulling it out, finishing)		CAMPING

Layer 6

BECOMING PHYSICALLY EDUCATED

- THE VOLITION CONNECTS TO THE FOUR ASPECTS OF HUMAN NATURE
- THE MOVEMENT VARIABLES HELP THE INDIVIDUAL PROGRESS THROUGH ACTIVITIES AND DEVELOP MOTOR SKILLS
- MOTOR SKILLS ARE APPLIED TO ACTIVITIES
- KNOWLEDGE GAINED THROUGH PRACTICE LEADS TO SUCCESS

APPLICATION OF THIS KNOWLEDGE MOVES THE STUDENTS TOWARDS THE GOAL OF BECOMING A PHYSICALLY EDUCATED PERSON WHO IS:

STUDENTS ARE:

o ABLE TO MAKE THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN ALL ASPECTS OF HUMAN NATURE o WORKING TOWARDS BALANCE, HARMONY AND INTERCONNECTEDNESS ON THEIR JOURNEY o PERSEVERING, SETTING GOALS, LEARNING PATIENCE, ENJOYING THE BENEFITS OF A PHYSICALLY ACTIVE LIFESTYLE THAT LEADS TO A STATE OF WHOLENESS AND WELLNESS AND SHARING THIS KNOWLEDGE WITH OTHERS	o Developing movement competence (W) o Able to apply movement concepts and skills to activities (W) o Becoming physically fit (E) o Understanding and valuing the health and wellness benefits of being physically active (N) o Developing lifetime activity skills (N) o Demonstrating positive social skills (S)

Level 7

A HEALTHY JOURNEY

As we strive for a healthy journey we climb many mountains and meet many obstacles. The most important obstacle to deal with is the self, the will, the volition. We must realize that we are strong and have great potential as human beings. Bopp et al. (1985, p. 63) state that the great mountain is one of the symbolic teachers of the North and:

> The higher we climb its slopes, the steeper and more difficult the way becomes. And yet the higher we go, the more we can see and the stronger we can become.

As we strive for harmony, balance, inter-connectedness, and good relationships in life we work towards balancing our lives in the spirit, the physical aspect, the mental capacity, and the emotions. A balance in these will lead to a state of wellness in these contemporary dimensions:

1) Spiritual
2) Emotional
3) Social
4) Mental
5) Physical
6) Environmental

In Closing....

At the onset of this research I hoped that there would be a collaborative and inclusive relationship between myself and the participants within this study. Wilson (2001) reminds us that relationships from the Aboriginal paradigm extend beyond relationships with people or objects. Furthering our knowledge in a research setting we need to build a relationship with the ideas and concepts we are trying to explain. Researchers who fail to establish relationships beyond researcher and participants have led to issues of mis-appropriation of Indigenous knowledge and culture. Reflectively reading through my field notes helped me to see that only over time, did I realize a better understanding of what this relationship really evolved into.

From the first meeting my heart was in the right place but I realized my structured thoughts were still clinical in nature. I thought the study would unfold in the typical fashion and I would walk away with a binder full of data. Collaboration was key, but only as time went on did I realize that the wisdom of the Elders foretold the outcomes and the realities of this study. I was told that knowledge takes time to learn and the answers are out there and we just have to find them.

As I journeyed through this study beginning in the East, my knowledge was very juvenile. I knew I had much to learn but I didn't realize just how much. I went through the frantic, emotional, filled with fire South; which caused me much concern and uncertainty. Climbing further to the West I began to piece together the knowledge and the experiences and tried to ascend to the North; the point of wisdom. Each time I learned something new with my participants, I journeyed further. I took the lessons and the knowledge with me each time I began again in the East. Of course, this took a long time and each cycle led me to a new beginning and a more satisfying piece of understanding. There was purpose and reason in everything.

Developing relationships evolves through the interaction between individuals, the knowledge, an open-ness to learning, and to each other. The transition that I encountered throughout this study grew from a conscious effort to pay attention to all the possibilities; yet reflecting back on this journey, it seems as though the study transformed me at will.

The life of the work poured itself over me and I was re-shaped by the knowledge and the journey.

Elliot (1989) discusses how the nature of education can become clarified through the process of reform. When this occurs he states,

> Education is no longer viewed as a process of adapting or accommodating the mind to structures of knowledge. Instead it is viewed as a dialectical process in which the meaning and significance of structures are reconstructed in the historically conditioned consciousness of individuals as they try to make sense of their life situations. The mind *adapts with* rather than *adapts to* structures of knowledge. (p.5)

My belief is that Aboriginal people "wrote the book" on Wellness years ago, and lived it. Today, educators write the books, print the ideologies of holism, but often neglect to bring this philosophy to life through the curricula. Physical education has the unique position to impact the whole student if taught with the care and knowledge of the Aboriginal people.

This has been a healthy journey for me. I have struggled and grown. I have followed my instincts from the beginning of my PhD program and persevered in studying the question of culturally responsive curricula in physical education. It all just boiled down to trust in God. I felt from the beginning that He brought me here. I had no plan to climb this mountain but the circle of life opened a door and I walked through it. As is written in the Code of Ethics, (Bopp, et al., 1985, p. 82):

> Listen to and follow the guidance given to your heart. Expect guidance to come in many forms; in prayer, in dreams, in times of quiet solitude, and in the words and deeds of wise Elders and friends.

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APPENDIX A:

GUIDING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

APPENDIX A

Guiding Interview Questions

Initial questions were asked to allow for all participants to share both their personal and professional background. These questions were addressed initially and were built upon throughout the course of our conversations throughout the study.

1. Please share your name, your First Nation, the school you teach in, the grade you teach.
2. What brought you to this study?
3. What are your thoughts regarding the research question?
4. What are your thoughts regarding the research design?
5. What are your thoughts regarding the research procedures?
6. What level of comfort are you feeling with regards to your cultural knowledge?
7. How important is cultural knowledge to you?
8. Are you using the cultural knowledge you have inside your teaching now?
9. How important is it to implement culture in school?
10. What is the Indigenous knowledge that can be applied to physical education that will guide us in creating culturally responsive curriculum in physical education? How can this knowledge lead the discipline of physical education and take us beyond the piecemeal activities that we generally do inside our physical education classes?

APPENDIX B:

LETTER OF INVITATION TO PARTICIPANTS

Participant Request

Letter of Invitation

Dear Teacher,

Some of you may remember me as your instructor during your Physical Education Methods Course, or your Kinesiology 145 course on Physical Education/Wellness. I am currently on education leave pursuing doctoral studies and I am beginning my research study at this point. The reason for this letter is to invite you to become a part of this study.

My question wishes to investigate how **First Nations teachers create culturally responsive curriculum in physical education.** I *need you* to help me learn more about this interesting question! You do not have to be an expert in this area, in fact you may never have considered this possibility in your teaching career. It doesn't matter! I am looking for teachers who are committed to developing culturally responsive curriculum and who would be willing to spend some time exploring knowledge and sharing with myself and other First Nations teachers in this area.

Of course, I would be asking for a commitment from you, however, you would be free to withdraw from the study at any time if you felt that you could no longer participate. Your identity will not be revealed in the written text of my dissertation, and you will be treated with the utmost respect. I will not infringe upon your regular teaching day with any extra demands. We would have to meet at times that would be agreeable to you outside of the school day, unless I visit you at your school. I will do everything in my power to accommodate you.

I believe that you will find this a very valuable personal and professional experience. It is crucial that I begin this project as soon as possible, therefore, if you are at all interested please phone me at 373-7288 or email me at brendakalyn@hotmail.com by March 5, 2002. Leave me a message that you are interested in more information regarding the study and leave me your phone number or email address so I may respond to you as soon as possible. Thank you so much!

Sincerely,

Brenda Kalyn
Doctoral Student

Figures

Figure 1: A Model for Indigenous Knowledge in Physical Education