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An Autobiographical Narrative Inquiry into the lived tensions between Familial and School Curriculum-Making Worlds

by

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Dedication

I wish to acknowledge and honor my late granny, Mary Pruden for believing in me and always encouraging me to *become somebody*. It was her words, stories, and our experiences together that helped carry me through this journey.

Granny, you continue to give me strength and inspire me every day.

I miss you and I love you.

Abstract

This autobiographical narrative inquiry explores my lived experiences in both the familial curriculum-making and school curriculum-making worlds. Drawing on Huber, Murphy & Clandinin's (2011) reconceptualization of curriculum-making as occurring in two worlds, I inquire into my own tensions and bumping places as I travelled between home and school, both as student and teacher. The research puzzle explores the importance of remaining attentive to the familial curriculum-making worlds children live in. My field texts include conversational transcripts and handwritten notes alongside my granny, photographs, and written stories of lived experience, as granddaughter, student and teacher. Using the methodology of narrative inquiry, I was able focus on how the tensions and bumping places shaped, and continue to shape, tensions in my stories to live by as teacher. Using a paper format, this thesis includes two papers for publication with a beginning and closing chapter. The first paper inquired into the lived experiences alongside my granny where I wonder of the *costs* to my familial curriculum-making world when the school curriculum-making world is privileged. The second paper inquired into my tensions and bumping places as a teacher as I continued to privilege the dominant school curriculum and explored how I learned to attend to children's lives in their familial and school curriculum-making worlds. The findings in my autobiographical narrative inquiry have allowed me to shift my curriculum making practices by awakening to my lived tensions, and by highlighting the importance of attending to children's familial

curriculum-making worlds in classroom settings as ways to imagine new possibilities, together.

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Chapter 1: Stories of School[1]

Early Familial Stories of School

Familial stories about school began at an early age, told to me alone in safe, secretive places by my late granny, Mary Pruden. She was born in the northern community of Grouard, Alberta in 1914. Her father, William Alexander Gairdner, a Métis, was an outpost manager with the Hudson Bay Company, leaving their home for ten months of the year to work in various posts set up in the northern parts of Alberta. She told me he was an educated man, although she did not share with me of where, how long, or the type of education he received[2]. He spoke English and Cree. Her mother, Nancy Gladu who was also Métis, only spoke Cree and it is unknown if she attended school. My granny attended the Grouard Mission Day School[3] up to year three until her mother required her to stay home to help raise her siblings. She was requested to do this so her mother could tend to her trap lines, which meant she would leave the home in my granny's care for days at a time. My granny never spoke of her school experiences, except for her regret of not being *educated.* Instead, she told stories of experiences about having to leave school to become a housekeeper, tending to livestock, and raising her younger siblings, with variations of both fondness and regret. It was expected, at that time, for young women to remain in the home and live out certain roles. Eventually, my granny became a mother and wife at an early age, forfeiting any

[1] This thesis follows a manuscript format. Chapters two and three are papers that will be submitted for publication.
[2] My mom later told me that he had been sent to Scotland and received two years of education.
[3] The Grouard Mission Day School was established by the Roman Catholic Church in 1913.

dreams and hopes of going to school[4]. She eventually moved from Grouard with her younger children to Edmonton, Alberta and found work cleaning houses. Although my granny had very little money she was able to provide the basic necessities for her family by using her familial knowledge of making moccasins, mukluks, and moose hide garments to supplement her income.

My granny was interested in learning despite having little formal education. I was reminded while growing up that my granny had taught herself to read and write, and she enjoyed collecting and reading books. The headboard attached to her bed had two shelves, which were filled with many novels and magazines, including her bible. I remember lying in bed next to her as she read at night. She read aloud to herself in whispers, very slowly, and kept the books she enjoyed. Perhaps these were her silent successes and her way of keeping track of the books she did complete. I never did ask her why she chose the books she did, but I do remember romance novels taking up a lot of space on her shelves. She also loved playing crib and was able to count up her points faster than anyone else in the family. She seemed to enjoy knowing she was a faster counter than anyone else. She knew she was smart and dreamed of living a different life. At an early age, I learned how important education was in my granny's life as she encouraged me to go to school and *become somebody*[5]. Her reminders to *not be like her* and to finish school seemed to be a consistent theme as I was growing up, even though she knew very little of what I was learning in schools. School and home were two different worlds. I did not share what I was learning in schools with her, nor did

[4] I recently learned my granny was offered to live with an aunt and attend school in Calgary, Alberta, but was denied this opportunity by her mother.
[5] There is a more detailed version of this experience in chapter two.

she ask[6]. I learned from my granny that receiving an education was a privilege in my life and something I needed to take seriously. She seemed satisfied knowing I was going to school and receiving an education, something she never had. She would tell me to listen to my teachers and to do well in school. The thought of questioning my teachers or the education I received was never encouraged…I was told to be a *good* student.

I too began to believe that receiving a formal education would lead to a better way of life and began my post secondary education to become a teacher, in hopes of improving the educational experiences of Aboriginal children. My granny was very proud of me when I chose to become a teacher and would introduce me as *the teacher* to visiting family members well before I completed my teaching degree. I received my undergraduate degree in 2000 and was on my way to having a *better life.* However, it was the tensions I experienced as an Aboriginal teacher in designated Aboriginal schools that lead me back to university[7]. Nine years later in September 2009[8] I returned part-time to pursue a masters degree, while still remaining in the classroom as a teacher. Sadly, my granny passed away at 95 years old on October 19, 2009, shortly after I began my graduate program.

I returned to university and entered my masters program with a story that I had wanted to challenge myself to become a better teacher *to* Aboriginal children.

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[6] There were moments in my school curriculum-making world where I tried to involve my learning at home. However, as I inquired into my experiences I was able to see how I included, or rejected, her narrative alongside the dominant narrative I was living in schools.

[7] I write of this experience in more detail in chapter three.

[8] I enrolled January 2009 in my first course *Theory and Practice in Educational Technology*[8]. Immediately, I sensed a tension between what I imagined technology could be and what I was told, and I withdrew from the program. I enrolled in the program again in September 2009 and completed two online courses while teaching full-time.

A story that I did not speak of was that I had become bored and detached from teaching the mandated curriculum to children. As I look back now, I imagine in some way my experiences were mis-educative[9] for me, and for the lives of the children I was teaching. I had lost hope and I was no longer able to see teaching as a life-long career. I imagined, in some way, obtaining a master's degree would allow me further opportunities, outside of the classroom and school walls, carrying the same ideas of supporting the educative experiences of Aboriginal children. During my second year of part-time studies, I became aware of a methodology that "allows for the intimate and in-depth study of individuals' experiences over time and in context" (Clandinin & Caine, 2012, p. 166).

Entering a place of inquiry

I enrolled in a course titled, *Life in Elementary Classrooms,* offered by D. Jean Clandinin. On the first day of class I entered the room, known as *The Centre for Research for Teacher Education and Development*[10] and found it to be an open, inviting place. A regular practice at the beginning of every class involved a brief sharing of our lives. The practice carried into the development of work-in-progress groups with others. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) speak of this practice when they write,

> we encourage beginning narrative inquirers to form into works-in-progress groups, groups in which ongoing work is shared and response from several

[9] Dewey (1938) wrote that "any experience is mis-educative that has the effect of arresting or distorting the growth of further experience" (p. 25).

[10] Since 1991, the mandate for the Centre for Research for Teacher Education and Development is to foster and produce high quality research for teacher education; to provide a scholarly community for graduate students and post graduate students and faculty; and to collaborate with agencies, researchers at other Universities in Canada and internationally, and schools around research in teacher education.

> individuals is given…as sustained conversations in which narrative inquirers have an opportunity to share their research texts over several weeks or months as they are composed" (p. 165-166).

Over time, I began to realize the importance of creating sustained, meaningful relationships in understanding experiences. This was a new experience for me as a student and teacher within the school environment, a practice I did not experience in schools. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) help me to understand the relational aspect of the inquiry process when they write

> As we worked within the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space, we learned to see ourselves as always in the midst located somewhere along the dimensions of time, place, the personal, and the social. But we see ourselves in the midst in another sense as well; that is, we see ourselves as in the middle of a nested set of stories – ours and theirs (p. 63).

As I wrote stories of my lived experiences, gathered in my works-in-progress groups, and provided written responses to my professor, I came to experience curriculum making unlike any that I had experienced in previous university classes. I had understood curriculum making from a student and teacher perspective defined from a pre-determined set of measurable learning tasks and outcomes known as the mandated curriculum. This became a well-learned and supported activity I had practiced both as student and teacher in the school curriculum-making worlds I had lived in. It was in this class I began to shift my thinking of curriculum making as Connelly and Clandinin (1988) write of curriculum as "becom[ing] one's life course of action. It can mean the paths we

have followed and the paths we intend to follow" (p. 1). They later on wrote that, "curriculum might be viewed as an account of teachers' and childrens' lives together in schools and classrooms" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1992, p.392). I began to see curriculum making differently and realized that I was not creating space inside the classroom or attending to the lives of children. I was becoming aware of this bumping place, a tension I lived in schools, both as a student and teacher. During this class I slowly awakened to the idea of co-composing a *curriculum of lives*[11], alongside others. With the support of others, I began telling more storied narratives of my earlier home and school life. This sharing triggered and brought forth other stories that were buried deep inside of me. Hoffman (1994) writes of "resonant remembering," that is, through telling, listening, responding, and interacting with one another's stories of experience I was reminded of my own stories by the stories of others (p. 392). Downey & Clandinin (2010) call this a "process of calling or catching threads from the teller's story" (p. 392). It was, with the help of others, that I began to inquire more deeply into my stories of experience, 'catching threads' as I told stories of both my familial and school curriculum-making worlds. Huber, Murphy & Clandinin (2011) define the familial curriculum-making world as a world in Lugones'[12] sense, a world

[11] Clandinin & Connelly (2002) share their "vision of curriculum as a course of life" (p. 392). Clandinin et al. (2006) also wrote, "a curriculum of lives is shaped as children's and teacher's diverse lives meet in schools, in in- and out-of-classroom places. As children's and teacher's stories to live by bump up against stories of school and school stories, a curriculum of lives is, in part, shaped (p. 135).

[12] Drawing on Lugones (1987) understanding that a "'world' need not be a construction of a whole society. It may be a construction of a tiny portion of a particular society. It may be inhabited by just a few people. Some 'worlds' are bigger than other" (p. 10). Lugones calls me to pay attention to the concept of 'world' – travelling where "those of us who are 'world' – travellers have the distinct experience of being different in different 'worlds' and of having the capacity to remember other 'worlds' and ourselves in them" (p. 11).

composed of "parents'/families' and children's lives together in homes and communities where the parents and families are an integral part of the curricular process in which families, children/learners, subject matter, and home and community milieu are in dynamic interaction" (p. 7-8).

Beginning with stories of family

Early in the course, I was asked to write a story of my experience as a student and teacher. It was during this time I began writing family stories, specifically stories of my granny. Before I began writing about my own school experiences, I felt that I needed to share the contexts and background of our family view of education, recalling a deeply rooted thread as school curriculum making became a marker of success in my family stories.

> *The lifeline of formalized education in my family history is a very short one. My granny was formally educated to year three in the Grouard Mission Day School. She also learned how to live and survive on the land by her familial teachings from her parents and grandparents. There were stories told with excitement and laughter, along with stories of sadness or anger, followed with tears. Her stories were of survival. Her mother relied on traditional land knowledge, and survival was more important than any formalized education. My granny believed formal education would lead to a better way of life. She was always happy with the idea of classroom education and measured her ideas of success alongside it. She lived her entire life feeling unsuccessful because her mother forced her out of school to stay home to raise her siblings and to help provide for the*

> *family. My granny would often say, "I could have been someone important if only my mother let me stay in school."* (Life in Elementary Classrooms, Written response 3, September 27, 2010).

I had always sensed my granny's lived regret at not being able to attend school and I assumed the responsibility to not follow in her footsteps. It became an early story to live by[13], from an early age that I would go to school to become *somebody*. I began focusing on the tensions I experienced between school and home, as I travelled between both places. It was in retelling this story fragment I was able to see how I had been shaped by the stories of school within my family and realized how easily I had carried this embodied knowing along with me into my own classroom as teacher. I began to write more stories of experiences alongside my granny, and my focus turned toward the familial curriculum-making world we had lived together. I began to write of experiences where I, like my granny, was convinced of the benefits of the school curriculum-making world. As I inquired more into my stories of experiences, I began to recognize that I had privileged one world over another, as student and teacher[14]. It was in this course I slowly began to learn and awaken to narrative inquiry, as both a research methodology and a way of understanding my experiences, both as learner and teacher.

Narrative Inquiry

People shape their daily lives by stories of who they are and others are and

[13] Connelly and Clandinin (1999) developed the term "stories to live by" as a narrative conception of identity, which links together experiential knowledge and storied contexts (p. 4).
[14] I write of this experience in more detail in chapters two & three.

> as they interpret their past in terms of these stories. Story, in the current idiom, is a portal through which a person enters a world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful. Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. Narrative inquiry as methodology entails a view of the phenomenon. To use narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular view of experience as phenomenon under study (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 479)

Narrative inquiry is a methodology that recognizes and honors the complexities of human experiences and the contexts, which are shaped through the past, present and future and through the stories we live and tell. Grounded in Dewey's (1938) philosophical view where education is life and life is experience, narrative inquiry is based on Dewey's two principles of experience, *interaction and continuity*. The first principle *interaction* draws attention to the shaping relationship between the person and the contexts in which they live in the world. This includes the personal and social conditions of an individual's experience, always situating the individual within the world when Dewey (1938) wrote,

> The statement that individuals live in a world means, in the concrete, that they live in a series of situations…An experience is always what it is because of a transaction taking place between an individual and what, at the time, constitutes his environment, whether the latter consists of persons with whom he is talking about some topic or event, the subject talked about being also a part of the situation . . . The environment, in

other words, is whatever conditions interact with personal needs, desires, purposes, and capacities to create the experience which is had. (p. 43–44)

Dewey believed that past experiences interact with present situations, creating present experiences. The context, in which a person lives is shaped by past experiences and continues to shape other experiences. In other words, we are always in relation in the world and our experiences are both personal and social. Dewey's second principle of experience was continuity. Dewey (1938) explored his principle of *continuity*, or the experiential continuum, as recognizing past experiences when he wrote, "every experience lives on in further experiences" (p. 27). He continued, "the principle of continuity of experience means that every experience both takes up something from those which have gone before and modifies it in some way" (Dewey, 1938, p. 35). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) explore this continuum through inquiring into experiences as part of our past, present and future, "lead[ing] to further experiences. Wherever one positions oneself in that continuum—the imagined now, some imagined past, or some imagined future—each point has a past experiential base and leads to an experiential future (p. 2). Using Dewey's principles of *continuity* and *interaction,* narrative inquiry has three commonplaces or dimensions,[15] which provide the conceptual framework, temporality, sociality, and place. The principle of continuity creates the notion of temporality and the principle of interaction creates the notion of sociality in narrative inquiry, always situated in place. It is through the simultaneous exploration and weaving of these three commonplaces, together, that sets narrative inquiry apart from other methodologies. By attending to the

[15] Commonplace and dimensions are used interchangeably throughout narrative inquiry.

three commonplaces in my complex lived experiences, in the past and present, I was able to imagine future possibilities and new ways of becoming. Freeman (2006) writes that,

> there exists a dialectical relationship not only between past and present but between the past, present, and future. Even in the midst of my present engagement with the past, I am moving into the future, giving form and meaning to the self-to-be" (p. 138).

The Three Commonplaces/Dimensions in Narrative Inquiry

The three commonplaces or dimensions in narrative inquiry are rooted in Dewey's (1938) criteria of continuity (past, present, future), interaction (personal and social), and situation (place). It is through this framework that a narrative inquirer is able to move forward, backward, inward and outward, located always in place (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In telling my stories I return to my earlier familial curriculum-making world and school curriculum-making world, both as learner and teacher. In returning to my earlier curriculum-making worlds in both home and schools, I needed to simultaneously remain attentive to the metaphorical three-dimensional inquiry space or commonplaces of temporality (past, present, future), sociality (personal and social) and place (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 50).

The first commonplace or dimension is **temporality**, which "points inquirers toward the past, present, and future of people, places, things, and events under study" (Clandinin & Huber, 2010, p. 3). I return to my earlier school curriculum-making world and familial curriculum-making world to explore the

bumping places and tensions between both worlds. As I attend to the stories situated in the past and present, I am able to wonder how my stories to live by were shaped over time as I create forward-looking stories. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) remind me of attending to temporality when they write, "when we see an event, we need to think of it as happening over time. Any event, or thing, has a past, a present as it appears to us, and an implied future" (p. 29). Carr (1986) also calls me to pay attention of the importance of temporality in the stories I tell as he writes, "we are composing and constantly revising our autobiographies as we go along" (p. 76). In writing this autobiographical narrative inquiry I inquired into my earlier stories, the stories I lived and told both as a student and teacher in order to create forward looking stories and as I changed my practice as a teacher attending to the lives of children and families.

The second commonplace or dimension is **sociality**, which is paying attention to both personal and social conditions. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) explain personal conditions as "feelings, hopes, desires, aesthetic reactions and moral dispositions of both the inquirer and study participants. By social conditions we mean the existential conditions, the environment, surrounding factors and forces, people and otherwise that form the individual's context" (p. 50). As I travelled to the world of my late granny, I tried to remain attentive to the personal and social conditions that both my granny and I lived. In exploring our familial curriculum-making world, I recognize that I was only able to inquire into a few small fragments in both of our lives and our stories to live by.

The third commonplace or dimension is **place**, which Connelly and Clandinin (2006) define as "the specific concrete, physical and topological boundaries of place or sequences of places where the inquiry and event take place" (p. 480). In my earlier school writings, I had come to realize that I had viewed my granny's home as my home place[16]. These three dimensions, or commonplaces are explored simultaneously through my autobiographical narrative inquiry into my lived experiences in both my familial curriculum-making world and school curriculum-making world.

Beginning to frame my research puzzle

Through the retelling of experiences I continued to experience more bumping places, or tensions in my stories to live by, alongside my granny. It was in retelling my familial stories of school I awakened (Greene, 1995) to the tensions I was living in choosing an *educated school life* over my familial curriculum-making world. I began to wonder what my granny and I had to *give up,* particularly of the '*cost*' to our lives as I became more *educated.* Thoreau (1854/2008) helps me to frame the use of the term *cost* when he wrote, "the cost of a thing is the amount of what I will call life which is required to be exchanged for it" (p.20). Clandinin et al. (2011) also wonder of the *cost* of becoming a teacher when they write, "The cost of becoming a teacher is paid from the 'life' of the teacher, much of which takes place off the school landscape" (p. 72). It is in this sense I use the term *cost.* I began to frame my research puzzle and wonder of the *cost* to my life and familial curriculum-making world as I privileged the school curriculum-making world, as a student and teacher. For this

[16] There is a more detailed version of this in chapter two.

autobiographical narrative inquiry my research puzzle is an exploration of the bumping places between my family stories and the stories that I lived in schools, alongside my granny.

Why Autobiographical Narrative Inquiry?

I was drawn to autobiographical narrative inquiry as a way to imagine myself as being a better teacher. Like Connelly & Clandinin (1995), I began to wonder, "how does the embodied, narrative, relational knowledge teachers carry autobiographically and by virtue of their formal education shape, and become shaped" (p. 3). In looking back at familial experiences alongside my granny, I was able to recognize how important familial curriculum-making was in my own life, and in the lives of the children I teach. Huber et al. (2011), suggest

> Asking teachers to narratively inquire into their autobiographical writings allows them to understand that they have experienced two curriculum-making worlds. Their understanding that they live(d) in two curriculum-making worlds scaffolds the possibility for them to attend to those two worlds for children and youths" (p, 150).

Autobiographical narrative inquiry is a transformative, always-in-the making process that allowed me to inquire into and retell earlier stories of teaching and learning from both familial and school-curriculum-making worlds. I am reminded of this transformative aspect of autobiographical narrative inquiry as Freeman (2006/2001) writes, "We might therefore think of the self as a kind of *work,* an unfinished and unfinishable poetic project issuing from the narrative imagination as it is manifested in the process of autobiographical understanding"

(p. 139.) By inquiring narratively into my own lived experiences, I began seeing new possibilities of being both teacher and learner, alongside children who are nested within the familial experiences they bring into the classroom.

I began my autobiographical narrative inquiry by inquiring into field texts including transcripts of conversation alongside my granny, handwritten notes she gave to me, photographs, earlier school writings, and written stories of experiences, alongside both my granny and in schools. I selected a paper format for my thesis. It is in the telling and retelling of experiences I write the following two papers in response to my research puzzle.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter 2: Unbundling Stories: Encountering tensions between the familial curriculum-making world and the school curriculum-making world

This chapter is an autobiographical narrative inquiry into my lived experiences within both home, and school, curriculum-making worlds. Drawing on Huber, Murphy & Clandinin's (2011) reconceptualization of curriculum-making as occurring in two worlds (Lugones, 1987), I explore the bumping places and tensions that existed within my early familial curriculum-making world, and my school curriculum-making world, over time and places. The intergenerational reverberations between the dominant narrative of schooling and my experiences with my granny become visible as I explore how these bumping places and tensions shaped, and continue to shape, my "stories to live by" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999, p. 4). As I continued to privilege the school curriculum-making

world over the familial curriculum-making world alongside my granny, I wonder of the *costs* to both of us and explore how these tensions have shifted my practices and "stories to live by." In this way I wonder about the *costs* to children and their families when familial curriculum-making worlds are silenced in the grand narratives of schooling.

Chapter 3: Learning to attend to children's lives: Making a space for familial curriculum-making in the school curriculum-making world

In this chapter I continue to use autobiographical narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990) I inquire into my experiences as a *teacher,* beginning with an inquiry into my early experiences on home and school landscapes. I explore my teacher stories to live by (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999, p. 4) and inquire into how my stories have shifted and changed, over time and place. As I explore the bumping places and tensions I experience as teacher, my purpose is to show the ways I learned to attend to children's familial curriculum-making worlds (Huber, Murphy & Clandinin, 2011). In doing so I offer a possible counter narrative of curriculum making in schools, which honors and validates children's stories of experiences lived and told in homes and communities.

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Chapter 2: Unbundling Stories: Encountering tensions between the familial curriculum-making world and the school curriculum-making world

Coming to Stories

I first came to learn about the importance of understanding experience as narrative life composition and of telling of stories of experience as a way to explore my personal practical knowledge[17] in a graduate course titled, *Life in Elementary Classrooms.* It was in this course I began to learn of narrative inquiry as both a way of understanding experience and a research methodology. Connelly and Clandinin (2006) write,

> People shape their daily lives by stories of who they and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories. Story, in the current idiom, is a portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful. Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience (p. 479).

As I told stories of earlier experiences in various contexts, alongside others, I began to illuminate my earlier stories of school and teachers, and their importance in my familial world, alongside my late granny[18], Mary Pruden. While I began to

[17] Connelly & Clandinin (1988) define personal practical knowledge as being in each "teacher's past experience, in the teacher's present mind and body, and in the future plans actions. Personal practical knowledge is found in the teacher's practice. It is, for any teacher, a particular way of reconstructing the past and the intentions of the future to deal with the exigencies of present situation" (p. 25).

[18] I identified my granny using the terms *Grandma* and *Grandmother* in early school writing pieces. The words grandma and grandmother were rarely used at home, unless we were speaking about someone else's relation. All the grandchildren referred to her as *granny*, yet this is not present in my earlier writings. I wonder now, did I use these words because they were more acceptable in my school curriculum-making world?

tell and retell stories of who I was, and who I was becoming, professionally and personally, resonances of *place* and *belonging* began to emerge. Other wonderings around *identity* also began to surface, specifically around my experiences of becoming a teacher, and how this was shaped alongside my experiences in earlier school and familial worlds[19] of curriculum making. I found myself writing more stories about the life of my granny, and of my experiences alongside her, listening and remembering our shared familial stories. These stories became my focus and I began asking questions to family members about experiences I was remembering, wondering if they, too, had similar experiences of tension between their experiences of two worlds of familial, and school, curriculum-making. I also began to search for physical, tangible items such as early writing pieces, photographs, and recorded conversations that brought me closer to my experiences I lived alongside her.

It was also in this course where I began to learn from stories, revisiting stories once told, and lived, inquiring into, or retelling (Clandinin & Connelly, 1997) of the bumping places, the places of tension. As I began to think about important stories, I returned to my familial world where I began to form my identity, or my "stories to live by" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999, p. 4). Connelly and Clandinin (1999) developed the term "stories to live by" as a narrative

[19] Lugones (1987) understanding that a "'world' need not be a construction of a whole society. It may be a construction of a tiny portion of a particular society. It may be inhabited by just a few people. Some 'worlds' are bigger than other" (p. 10). Lugones also calls me to pay attention to the concept of 'world' – travelling where "those of us who are 'world' – travellers have the distinct experience of being different in different 'worlds' and of having the capacity to remember other 'worlds' and ourselves in them" (p. 11). It is my hope in opening my familial curriculum-making world, I will be able to travel into my granny's world with "loving perception," the ability to "understand what it is like to be [her] and what it is like to be ourselves in [her] eyes" (Lugones, 1987, p. 17).

conception of identity, shaped by the narrative telling and retelling of secret and cover stories (p. 3) in various contexts.

An important starting point for thinking about who I am, and am becoming, as a teacher, I was encouraged to revisit the beginning places as I was developing my sense of belonging and stories to live by while I navigated between my school and familial worlds of curriculum making. As I began to inquire into my stories of experiences in both worlds, I was able to see possibilities in retelling stories. Clandinin and Connelly (1998) write about the importance of inquiring into, or retelling of, stories as a way to move forward when,

> the promise of storytelling emerges when we move beyond regarding a story as a fixed entity and engage in conversation with our stories. The mere telling of a story leaves it as a fixed entity. It is in the inquiry, our conversations with each other, with texts, with situations, and with other stories that we can come to retelling our stories and to reliving them (p. 251).

At one time, I believed stories to be fixed, frozen in time and place, stories told of my family and I, stories I told of my family and self and who we are in the world, as these became stories to live by. However, in the course, I participated in a weekly works-in-progress group, where I worked in a group with two peers to share stories of experience and to respond in ways that allowed each of us to see other possibilities in future retellings (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 60). As I listened, and responded, to others' stories of experience I was encouraged to remain attentive to the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space of temporality,

sociality and place[20]. It was in this safe place, in the works-in-progress groups, over time, relationships developed as we began to tell and listen to the secret and cover stories[21], both on and off our professional landscapes.

In another graduate course called *Building a Curriculum of Community* offered by Janice Huber and Shaun Murphy, I began to share more stories of earlier experiences alongside my granny. It was in these two courses I learned curriculum making occurs in multiple worlds, the school curriculum-making world with children learning alongside their teachers and other children in classrooms, in schools, and the familial curriculum-making world with children living alongside their families, homes and communities. Huber, Murphy & Clandinin (2011) define the familial curriculum-making world as,

> an account of parents'/families' and children's lives together in homes and communities where the parents and families are an integral part of the curricular process in which families, children/learners, subject matter, and home and community milieu are in dynamic interaction (p. 7-8).

Inquiring into these growing understandings of my experiences with my granny in our familial curriculum-making world, my research puzzle for this paper began to take shape. In this paper, I make visible my narrative inquiry into my telling and retelling of stories. I wish to explore how my experiences in my familial curriculum-making world intercept, bump against, my experiences in my school

[20] Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) narrative inquiry research framework consists of the simultaneous exploration of temporality (past, present, future), sociality (personal and social), and place while moving in four directions,' allowing inquirers to travel – inward, outward, backward and forward, while always situated in place (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 49).

[21] Secret and cover stories are lived out on personal and professional landscapes. Secret lived stories are stories told to others in safe and secret places. Cover stories allow us to cover over secret stories, in order to protect the secret stories we live. (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999, p. 3).

curriculum-making world, and to inquire into how these bumps shaped, and continue to shape, tensions in my stories to live by as teacher. By focusing on the tensions I experienced as I lived in both worlds, I attend to the *costs* of silencing my familial curriculum making as I privileged school curriculum making. The stories of the past, as I retell them in the present, carry the resonances of both dominant and Cree/Métis linguistic, social, cultural, institutional and familial narratives.

A beginning

I will tell you something about stories,

[He said]

They aren't just entertainment,

Don't be fooled.

They are all we have, you see,

all we have to fight off

illness and death.

You don't have anything

if you don't have the stories.

…

He rubbed his belly.

I keep them here

[he said]

Here, put your hand on it

See, it is moving.

There is life here

for the people.

And in the belly of this story

the rituals and the ceremony

are still growing.

(Leslie Silko, 1997, p. 2)

Laguna storyteller Leslie Silko (1997) helps me to understand narrative inquiry as she speaks about the importance of attending to stories, reminding me that stories carry me through life, moving and growing "in the belly," shaping my experiences and the stories I live and tell. When I think of the stories I tell, I also pay attention to the stories I don't tell, the silent stories, and I wonder how these stories shape me, as I move forward. When she writes of *the rituals and the ceremony,* I am reminded of how the stories I carry are sacred stories, from places I came to know first and how, over time, the stories I carry shaped, and continue to shape, who I am and who I am becoming. Crites (1971) refers to sacred stories as unspoken resonances living in stories of the past, while presently creating a forward-looking story, when he writes, "and certainly the sacred story to which we give this name cannot be directly told but its resonances can be felt in many of the stories that are being told, in songs being sung, in a renewed resolution to act" (p. 311). I imagine sacred stories reverberating through generations, carrying on, moving and growing through stories, spoken and unspoken. The resonances of the stories I tell of my experiences are filled with experiences from my familial curriculum-making world with my granny. I have returned to the stories of my

granny, stories of the person who has shaped me the most, stories from a place of love, stories I remember were told to me, by her. I return to the stories she believed were important to her. As I carry these familial, intergenerational stories in my body, they are helping me change and grow, as I move forward in a "renewed resolution to act" (Crites, 1971) and begin to wonder about the importance of awakening to stories of experience from the familial curriculum-making world as I lived in the school curriculum-making world.

Encountering Tensions

King (2003) reminds me to be mindful "that stories were medicine, that a story told one way could cure, that the same story told another way could injure" (p. 92). I hope in the retelling of my stories that I remember of my experiences with my granny, I do not injure anyone in the process, including myself. As I return to my experiences in my familial curriculum-making world, I am filled with many ethical dilemmas around writing my early stories. I feel tensions alongside family members who will read my work and the relational ethics I hold alongside them and my late granny; therefore it is important to mention the wonderings I carry are mine alone. I can only share my inquiries alongside my experiences through the stories told or given to me, by my granny. I hope I remain attentive to the stories of my granny with respect and integrity to our experiences. I also worry about how readers will interpret the storied experiences I write about. I know the stories I tell come from a place of love for my home place, my first place of knowing and living. I also know I cannot tell the whole story of my experiences with my granny, but rather can only inquire into a few small

fragments. As I lay fragments of my stories alongside fragments of her stories, I am able to wonder and inquire into what becomes visible to me.

Story Bundles[22]

With a focus on narratively inquiring into stories from my familial curriculum-making world in a good way, I was drawn to Anderson's (2011) metaphorical image of a "story bundle." She reminds me of how sacred and relational our stories are. I imagine these bundles as relational, layered, living, dynamic, changing stories living within each person. I imagine we embody story bundles and, within each bundle, there are individual stories, as well as stories from multiple sources. We carry them whether we wish to carry them or not, spoken or unspoken. Story bundles may also present themselves generationally and are part of our knowing through our earliest familial curriculum-making world. The notion of wrapping and unwrapping of story bundles occurs simultaneously, knowingly or unknowingly, creating "stories to live by" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999, p. 4). Okri (1997) reminds me of the importance in opening the stories we live by, and in, as transformative when he writes:

> we live by stories, we also live in them. One way or another we are living the stories planted in us early or along the way, or we are also living the stories we planted - knowingly or unknowingly - in ourselves. We live stories that either give our lives meaning or negate it with meaninglessness. If we change the stories we live by, quite possibly we

[22] I borrow the term 'story bundle' from author Kim Anderson. She does not directly define story bundle, therefore, this is my interpretation. Metaphorically, the story bundle represents the stories each person carries. The story bundles I will be referring to throughout the text are pieces of my story, lived and told in relation with others and stories yet to be created.

change our lives (p. 46).

It is to my familial, intergenerational stories, those planted in me, knowingly or unknowingly, that I attend. I inquire into the gaps, silences, and bumping places where there were lived tensions alongside my granny as I developed my forward-looking stories. I wish to expand my own story bundles, as I create new stories to live by. Neumann (1997) reminds me to pay attention to the silences in stories of human lives and the difficulties of separating the intertwining of relational and generational stories, alongside our own stories (p. 92). These lived stories weave backwards and forward, inward and outward and cannot be isolated and separated from my familial world, the places I have come to know, and live, first. Setterfield (2006) allows me to see the parts and the whole, simultaneously, when she writes,

> Human lives are not pieces of string that can be separated out from a knot of others and laid out straight. Families are webs. Impossible to touch one part of it without setting the rest vibrating. Impossible to understand one part without having a sense of the whole (p. 59).

The stories I write about are stories woven throughout my being, mind, body, and spirit. As I attend to my experiences in the familial curriculum-making world, which granny and I co-composed (Huber, Murphy & Clandinin, 2011), I am reminded of Greene's (1993) words, "the narratives we shape out of materials of our lived lives must somehow take account of our original landscapes" (p. 148). They are living stories; organic stories continuously being reshaped, as long as I continue to inquire into them. In inquiring into my lived and told stories, I looked back to remember and to wonder why these experiences with my granny

and schools 'sit in my belly' more profoundly than others. I wonder why I pay more attention to these stories than to others. It is through my autobiographical narrative inquiry into the stories lived alongside my granny, that I hope I will be able to learn more from them and to create shifted stories to live by.

My Home place

My mother and I experienced many transitions as she completed her Bachelor of Arts degree, first at the University of Calgary, then at the University of Alberta. As I moved from place to place, from school to school, I came to view my granny's home as a place of security and belonging. During a year of many transitions, I lived with my granny for a short period. I recall from early written school artifacts and from my memories, I had considered her home to be my home place.

Story Bundle 1: Sliding back to an early forward-looking story

When I returned to my *home place* through the telling of my earlier experiences, I began to share sacred familial stories, unwrapping and reshaping my story bundles as granddaughter, student and teacher, in both my familial and school curriculum-making worlds.

Looking back: A story to live by.

My girl,

Go to school. Don't be like me.

Gee, I wish my mom let me go to school.

Once you have kids, that's it, your life is over!

Always go to school and become somebody first.

Okay!

(Recalled Memory, Interim Research Text, 2011)

When I was a young child, teenager, and young adult attending University, my granny repeated this statement to me every time we were alone in her bedroom. Alongside her advice, my granny often spoke of a shift in her stories to live by when she was in grade three, a story that not only shaped her life, but mine as well. Her story would slide backwards in time to a place when her mother, Nancy Gairdner (nee Gladu) took her out of Grouard Mission Day School during her third year. At first she mentioned it was because her tongue was swollen, implying this physical ailment was the main reason her mother would not let her return. Her demeanor and story shifted as she began sharing her secret story of having to stay home; she was expected to raise her younger siblings and take care of the house, while her mother left for days to tend to her trap line. I remember watching her bang her clasped hand on her bed at this memory, expressing regret and anger as she imagined her life would have been much different, if only she had gone to school. Sitting next to her, I remember as a child I did not disagree with her; instead, I was empathetic to her stories of regret and sadness for not being allowed to go to school. I became more convinced of the importance of school. I also remember assuring her I would complete school and become *somebody.* She seemed satisfied in knowing I would not follow in her footsteps, even though I admired who she was and who she had become. As I now slide backwards, remembering my experiences where she expressed the importance of what happened in the school curriculum-making world and becoming somebody

first, I wonder about the stories of school I was living. Were my experiences in the school curriculum-making world seen as more important than our familial curriculum-making world?

Handwritten notes

I remember sitting with her at her kitchen table, watching her write notes on pieces of scrap paper in 1999. She spoke out loud as she slowly and carefully connected letters together, handwriting her thoughts into words and sentences. As I sat and watched her write stories, I was reminded of how others related stories to me of how she taught herself how to read and write beyond grade three. Her handwriting was often difficult to read and filled with scratched out, misspelled words or words written over other words, as she corrected her spelling. She would often ask me how to spell a word or inquire if what she was writing was spelled correctly. Many times I helped her spell words she did not know, but I also remember telling her the words she wrote were correct, even though they were not. Looking back, perhaps I did this because I saw her frustration when she had trouble spelling certain words by crumpling and throwing away the paper or flipping it over to start again. She was determined to write her words and sentences correctly. During this time in 1999, she handed me a small pile of handwritten papers that included stories of school. One particular note stands out from the others. It read, "not going to school made me dumb. I always blame school or my mom I guess because if I had any school [I] am for sure I never ever think Grouard [as] home. This life, very ugly poor life." (Hand written note, Mary Pruden, 1999). Now 12 years later, as I inquire into her handwritten notes I am

filled with regret and wonder. I wonder what I was thinking about when I received these notes, and why had I put them away for so long? Was I ashamed of what she was writing? Did I withhold her stories from others because I knew in some way she truly believed she had a poor life and was 'dumb' in the ways of school? Why did she share this with me, alongside contradictory stories of fond memories of her life in Grouard? I remember her telling me many stories where her life was *good* when she was younger, living in the North. I wonder what my granny was experiencing as she summed up the story of her life as a "very ugly poor life." At the time she gave me these notes, I was in University studying to become a teacher. She introduced me to her visitors as "Cindy, the teacher," years before I graduated. I smile at this memory and am reminded of how proud she was at knowing I was going to school to become *somebody,* to not have an "ugly poor life," in her eyes. As I now slide backwards, remembering my experiences where she expressed the importance of the school curriculum-making world and of becoming *somebody* first, I wonder about the stories of school I was living as I traveled between the two worlds. Was the school curriculum-making world seen as more important than our familial curriculum-making world? I wonder when my granny's idea of *somebody* shifted from living and navigating the land, to becoming educated in the schooling system. My granny had a wealth of knowledge and yet I wonder now why she viewed her knowledge as having no worth? I also wonder about the shift of place in her stories to live by, when she believed the city to be home, yet always spoke of Grouard as *our home place,* a place situating and identifying our family as Cree-Métis people.

Story Bundle 2: A bumping place

In 1999, I asked my granny to tell of her experiences of traveling to her father's Hudson Bay post in Fort St. John in 1930 when she was 16. During this time, I was an undergraduate student in the teacher education program and enrolled in a course titled *The Métis.* It was also during this time where tensions between my experiences in my three (familial, school, and university) curriculum-making worlds surfaced. I did not know how to address these tensions, and, like the handwritten notes she gave me, the recorded conversation had been neatly stored in a safe place until last year. As I listen to, and inquire into, our recorded conversation now, I recognize many tensions when my experiences in my school curriculum-making world bumped up against my experiences in my familial curriculum-making world, alongside my granny. I now pay attention to our words, our silences, the way I asked questions, and how I responded to the stories she told me. I notice surprise, shock and disappointment in our voices; especially mine when the stories my granny tells do not follow the plotlines, events, and settings of the stories told in my school curriculum making, the curriculum making I valued as I was becoming *somebody*. In the transcription segment below, I ask my granny if she ever ate pemmican while they cooked bannock by campfires during her trip to the post. This was a lesson I learned in my school and University curriculum making about the diets of travelling Métis people with images of them, *us*[23], making and eating meals of pemmican.

> ***Granny:*** *Going across in the fall and ah we used to make 50 bannocks every night, we had to, to take them for the next day for our trip. We used to make a great big long fire and the boys used to help with those*

[23] The use of the word *us* refers to identifying my family and myself as Cree-Métis.

bannocks and my mother was busy making them, cooking them in the frying pan around, around the campfire, 50 a day or 50 at every evening we use to make, rain or shine never mind.
Cindy: Did you ever eat pemmican with that, did you ever eat pemmican?
***Granny:** Pumpkin?*
Cindy: Pemmican? (wrote the word pemmican down on paper for her to read)
***Granny:** Pemmican, what's that?*
Cindy: It's um, it's, it's like [trying to remember my learning in schools about pemmican] dried buffalo meat and they, they ground it and they add berries and lard?
***Granny:** We never see no buffalo, we never had no meat of buffalo.*
Cindy: oh?
***Granny:** They killed a bear over there on the way going and they skin it and everything and not very, not very [much], my dad, my mother wants one hind leg eh, one quarter. So they brought it for her and ah she sliced it but she smoked it a little bit there and she took it with her, she wanted to eat it.*

(Recorded Conversation, November 26, 1999)

[24]

[24] Great Grandfather, William Alexander Gairdner (Centre) at Hudson Bay Post, Date Unknown

 [25]

Looking back now, as I listen to the recording and look at these photographs taken of a trip to the post, I recognize that at the time I was not inquiring into her experiences, but merely listening and imposing the curriculum making I was engaged in at University. I was learning about the diets of Metis people and of their dependence on buffalo meat. I imagine, before I began speaking with my granny, that surely she too lived this way and knew what pemmican was. I was

[25] Photograph traveling to the Hudson Bay Post in Fort St. John, British Columbia. (L-R) Louise Gairdner, Fred Beaton, Nancy Gairdner (nee Gladu), unknown boy, Elizabeth Gairdner. Location unknown, Date. 1930.

surprised and began to stumble when my granny began to question the knowledge I was imposing into our conversation. As part of this curriculum making, I was also composing stories to live by as a Cree-Métis person in three different worlds, the school curriculum-making world, university curriculum-making world, and the familial curriculum-making world. Sliding forward, as I listen to the tape over and over again, I also pay attention to my story bundle, by inquiring into my stories to live by, as I was composing stories around my granny's kitchen table in 1999. As I do so, I encounter another bumping place between my experiences in my three curriculum-making worlds. Granny continued to share her experiences as she traveled to the Hudson Bay Post, while I continued to impose my school and university curriculum making of Métis people onto her story.

> ***Granny:*** *And ah, and we all got the same saddle horse all the time. And then when it comes to uh day in, and day in, every day, every day we travelled for 2 weeks and now you can get there in an hour's time. So then we uh had to, we had to stop by the river, now we had to camp there, right close where the bush is eh?*
> ***Cindy:*** *Do you know which river?*
> ***Granny:*** *Well the Peace, one of them is Peace River and the other one is Blueberry River and the other one I don't remember what was the name of it but we crossed three of them. We crossed three, three rivers. And we had to camp there and we'd get ready to cross, put everything right so that it won't get wet you know from…*
> ***Cindy:*** *[Interrupting] How did you do that? Do you remember?*
> ***Granny:*** *Well they, they have, they have ah, uh*
> ***Cindy:*** *[Interrupting] 'Cause you had carts right, did you have carts, horses pulling these carts?*
> ***Granny:*** *No.*
> ***Cindy:*** *No? [Questioning voice]*
> ***Granny:*** *They have ah, they have a way of fixing stuff so it won't get wet*
> ***Cindy:*** *Uh huh.*
> ***Granny:*** *'cause you'd starve eh?*
> ***Cindy:*** *Yeah.*
> ***Granny:*** *And then they put higher, they put it higher and then uh, then two rivers we didn't have to make a scow. Gee why didn't I write all this when I was there. I could write already then even if I didn't go to school huh.*

Cindy: Uh huh.
***Granny:** So ah I stayed there by the river um over night I think so they can, they can make a scow. We stayed there 2 days there.*
Cindy: Draw me a scow, what's that look like?
***Granny:** Scow?*
Cindy: Oh no, what does it look like? Yeah, what does it look like though Granny?
***Granny:** Well it's a, it's just like a big, did you ever see a, uh, oh, did you ever see a raft?*
Cindy: Yeah, yeah.
***Granny:** Well like that.*

(Recorded Conversation, Field Texts, November 26, 1999)

[26]

[26] Mary Pruden (nee Gairdner) riding her horse Boldy to the Hudson Bay post in Fort St. John, British Columbia. Location Fort Nelson, British Columbia, 16 years old, Date. 1930.

 [27]

As I reflect back on this conversation and look at these photographs, I wonder how was I making sense of my school curriculum-making world alongside very different stories of my familial curriculum-making world. What was I learning by recording and listening to my granny's experiences? Was I even really listening? Did I imagine my granny's experiences of knowing as

[27] Photograph titled "Fording the North", Date 1908.

unimportant and not 'authentic' Métis experiences, as I tried to categorize her lived experiences into the knowledge I had learned in the school curriculum-making world? I recall being disappointed because she did not do the things I learned about Métis people from my school curriculum making. How was I supposed to make sense of her stories of experience when they did not follow my learning in schools? Feeling disappointed, I shelved our recorded conversation because it did not fit the story I was learning in textbooks about Métis people. As I did so, I disregarded my granny's experiences as being 'not good enough' and continued to privilege the stories I had come to know in schools.

As I attend to the bumping places I experienced between my three curriculum-making worlds, a tension resonated throughout the recorded conversation. I pause now and wonder, was I being taught a homogenous narrative of Métis identity in my school curriculum-making world? As I pay more attention to our interaction and the stories we both were telling, I notice I interrupted Granny's stories of her experience and imposed my stories of Métis identity with pemmican, buffalo meat and the use of carts pulled by horses, stories learned in the school and university curriculum-making worlds. My granny never spoke of the symbols I was learning in my school curriculum making, which identified Métis lifestyle and culture. As I listen now, I recognize my naivety. I sense frustration in both our voices. She seems annoyed with my questions and I am disappointed her responses did not validate the knowledge I was composing in my school curriculum-making world. I also recognize now how my knowledge from the school curriculum-making world shaped the conversation, as I pay

attention to how I tried to guide the conversation to fit a safer story; a story I thought to be true and most recognizable in schools. I now wonder what she thought about my questions. How did she make sense of my interruptions against her stories? When I began to question her stories to live by, did she see her stories as less than, and my stories of school as more important, just as I did? What did she think about my learning of Métis people in schools, about *her*, about *us*? I wonder now about the costs of living in those three curriculum-making worlds, as I became *somebody*, especially when in 1999 I did not value the stories she was sharing with me; instead I silenced them as I continued to follow the grand narratives learned in the school curriculum-making world. I began to privilege the school curriculum over my familial curriculum making, when I put aside her stories of experience.

So What? Reverberations Backward and Forward

As Silko (1997) writes, "you don't have anything if you don't have the stories," I wonder about the sacred stories that are often silenced in classrooms. I now pay more attention to the shifting story bundles, to the unfolding of lives inside classrooms, alongside others. I wonder how I can create more spaces to listen to and to tell stories of experiences from the children's and my familial curriculum-making worlds. If I continue to privilege the school curriculum-making world over the familial curriculum-making world, I wonder now, at what *cost* it is to me, and to others?

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Chapter 3: Learning to attend to children's lives: Making a space for familial curriculum-making in the school curriculum-making world[28]

Bringing school curriculum making home: Beginning a teacher story to live by

I began to compose my stories to live by[29] as a teacher when I entered grade two and met my teacher, Ms. Z[30]. She was different from my grade one teacher; she was warm, friendly and caring. She spoke in soft tones and was gentle in her teaching manner. I admired her because of how she treated me, often allowing me to visit the classroom prize box, which contained pencils, erasers, smelly stickers and extra photocopied worksheets. I always took the worksheets home. It was at the same time that I began creating my own classroom space at home when my dad bought two wooden student desks, the ones with a drawer just beneath the seat. He placed them in the basement and I began to play out stories of teacher, using worksheets as my main teaching tool. I began to compose myself through "imaginative play" (Steeves, 2006, p. 107) of *teacher* by becoming *teacher*. Steeves shares stories of "imaginative play" as she played with her sister where they were "authoring or co-authoring our 'stories to live by', keeping our lives moving through trying out diverse ways of being in response to the landscapes we were living on" (p. 107). Through play and imagination I became

[28] Huber, Murphy & Clandinin (2011) outline two worlds of curriculum-making, the school curriculum-making world and the familial curriculum-making world. Children live in both worlds on a daily basis.
[29] Connelly & Clandinin (1999) developed the term "stories to live by" as a narrative conception of identity, shaped by the narrative telling and retelling of secret and cover stories in various contexts (p. 4).
[30]Names have been changed to pseudonyms to protect the identities of those I write about in my experiences.

teacher by mimicking the school landscape I was living in and creating, for myself, a place of belonging. In this school curriculum-making world that I was trying to recreate at home in the basement, I was beginning to compose stories I would later live as teacher. Being with Ms. Z in her classroom, that is, the school curriculum-making world, and becoming like her outside of it, that is, in the familial curriculum-making world I was creating in the basement, allowed me to create a stronger sense of belonging. Ms. Z created this sense of belonging in the classroom as she built a relationship with me and lived what Noddings (1986) refers to as "an ethic of caring" and "fidelity to persons" (p. 497).

As I reflect now, I believe I was creating a classroom in my basement where I could become somebody else, the teacher, and begin to compose a story of teacher while creating a place of belonging for myself. It was in this space I began to develop my personal practical knowledge, as teacher, by being a teacher through my imaginative play. Clandinin and Connelly (1995) describe personal practical knowledge as, "that body of convictions and meanings, conscious or unconscious, that have arisen from experience (intimate, social, and traditional) and that are expressed in a person's practices" (p. 7). In other words, personal practical knowledge is the stories teachers' "live and tell of who they are and what they know" (Clandinin et al., 2006, p. 7).

Now, years later as I inquire into my experiences, I wonder how I adapted to the school and classroom environments, and how this has shaped me as teacher, and how I shape the children I now teach. Paley (1986) reminds me "real change comes about only through the painful recognition of one's own vulnerability" (p.

123). In this paper, I share my personal practical knowledge, my experiences on my professional knowledge landscapes, and my "stories to live by", allowing myself to become vulnerable as I return to my earlier experiences of curriculum making in an effort to imagine new possibilities.

Not the teacher I imagined

During my Advanced Practicum, I taught in a grade six classroom in a newly created urban school, with an Aboriginal[31] population of approximately 95%. The school was designed for Aboriginal learners from years four to nine with the story[32] of having innovative teaching practices, a balance of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal teachers and teacher professional development, specifically designed for Aboriginal learners. Children in years four through six travelled by yellow school buses from various neighborhoods, while children in years seven through nine took public transportation, with few from nearby communities. The school was storied as an inner city school, and a '*bad place,'* full of academically challenged children with behavior problems. The school was well known as a challenging place: staff turnover was high with teachers leaving their assignments during the school year; student assaults on teachers and leaders occurred with few consequences for children; leadership changed frequently and, alongside that, came new expectations and directives from the district on ways to improve the academic achievements of Aboriginal children. I too hoped to find new ways to improve the educational experiences of Aboriginal children as I prepared and

[31] Aboriginal peoples of Canada are defined in the *Constitution Act*, 1982, Section 35 (2) as including the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada.
[32] As a way to describe teachers' experiences and dilemmas faced in the professional knowledge landscape, as they move in and out of classroom places, Clandinin & Connelly (1996) developed the terms, "teacher stories – stories of teachers – school stories – stories of school" (p. 25).

delivered the curriculum-as-planned (Aoki, 1993), the "planned curriculum" (Clandinin et al, 2006), or the mandated curriculum. I also held the hope of creating places of belonging in my classroom, yet there did not seem to be any space for this within the mandated curriculum.

I felt tension between the dominant curriculum and the lived curriculum (Aoki, 1993) or the curriculum of lives (Clandinin et al., 2006) as I was preparing the children to write the Provincial Achievement Tests[33] (PAT's). During my practicum, children shared aspects of their lives and were curious about mine, yet these reciprocal wonderings occurred mainly in out-of-classroom places, such as the schoolyard, playground or hallways. In the classroom I felt as though I needed to be someone who 'gave' knowledge to children as I hoped to improve their academic lives, preparing them for the *real* world, as though the world we were living inside the school was somehow irrelevant in their *preparation* in who they were becoming outside of it. While I wanted to share more about myself and learn more about the children, I was uncertain and uneasy whenever we moved away from the mandated curriculum or when children were "off task." On the last day of my practicum, I raced home to retrieve my dog, bringing her back to show the children. I realize now this was one my earliest attempts to share a bit of my life from outside of school, with the children when I was finally *free* of the mandated

[33] In Alberta, children in year 3, 6 and 9 are required to write a standardized Provincial achievement exam. In year 3, children are required to write the Language Arts & Math exams. In years 6 and 9, children are required to write the exams in the four core subjects known as Language Arts, Math, Social and Science. According to Alberta Education (2012), the purpose of the Achievement Testing Program is to determine if children are learning what they are expected to learn, in order to report to Albertans how well children have achieved provincial standards at given points in their schooling, and assist schools, authorities, and the province in monitoring and improving student learning (Alberta Education, 2012).

curriculum, and the expectations of the co-operating teacher and university facilitator. My co-operating teacher recommended me for one of many positions for the upcoming year. I was offered, and accepted a probationary position[34] in a combined year 4/5 classroom.

Broken Dreams: Living a story of "good" teacher

I remember returning home after the second day of my first teaching position, questioning and wondering whether I wanted to continue teaching. Something did not feel right. I cried that night and for most of the weekend trying to convince myself things would get better. Things did not get better, instead I just adapted to the environment over time. (Narrative Inquiry course, written response, May 12, 2011).

I was now the teacher in my classroom. Most of what I had imagined about creating a classroom that included the lives of all children and myself were put aside. School stories of effective classroom management took precedence; older teachers encouraged me *not to smile until Christmas*[35]. I had few relevant teaching resources. I photocopied anything I could use, hoping it would be engaging, creative and, most importantly, directly link to the mandated curriculum. I needed to keep the children *on task* and the only way I knew how was to have *them* learn what was required. I now recognize that I was silencing the voices of children, as I was determined to follow the mandated curriculum

[34] Within the Public School Board I worked, teachers are granted various types of teaching contacts, supply, temporary, probationary, and continuous contracts.

[35] The saying 'don't smile until Christmas' is a term I heard a lot during my beginning years as teacher. The message behind this saying is that children will take the teacher more seriously if she/he never smiles. The message implies smiling and having fun with children will create disorder and noise in the classroom, preventing any learning from occurring.

where children completed curricular learning that I thought they needed to know, in order to be *successful*. There was no time for *interruption* in the classroom; there were curricular objectives to be met, especially since I was on a probationary contract and being evaluated by my principal. Researchers (Clandinin et al, 2012) found early teachers would "*do anything* in order to obtain contracts and teaching assignments" and "frequently took on extra responsibilities at the expense of personal well being and familial needs in order to try to receive contracts and continuing assignments" (pg. 6). I, too, was silent about the struggles and challenges I faced in the classroom and school landscape.

I usually returned home around 8 p.m., ate dinner and then retreated into my office to plan the next day's lessons, making sure to link my planned curriculum to mandated curricular objectives. Saturdays and Sundays were often spent at the school, marking, changing bulletin boards, searching for resources, creating resources and photocopying student booklets. Immediately, tensions between my imagined stories to live by as teacher and school stories as teacher began to surface. I did not speak of them anywhere. I received my continuous contract and was told I was doing a great job as teacher. Whispered words among the staff were that once you received your continuous contract, it was important to stay one year and then move to a more desirable school. I began to feel the dis/ease with the stories I was living inside and outside of the classroom and school as teacher and my body began to make these lived tensions visible. I developed severe eczema on my hands. Along with deteriorating health, personal and familial relationships were suffering. I was exhausted physically and

mentally, and felt drained emotionally and spiritually. I was merely surviving. My earlier imagined story of teaching as creating a classroom environment of belonging for everyone seemed far out of reach. There were no places of belonging in the school landscape among staff or in my classroom. Other teachers seemed just as exhausted; teacher talk focused on teachers' lives rather than on children's lives. Was this the life I had dreamed of as a little girl in my basement as I imagined myself as a teacher who created a place of belonging as teacher? One story remained, worksheets seemed to dominate the classroom environment becoming both my tool of reliance and survival.

The following year I stayed with the same children in a combined year 5/6 classroom. I continued living the same pattern from the previous year, personally and professionally. I began searching for relevant teaching materials for the new grade, which was a PAT year. I also began intensive teacher training in a district–wide language arts program. I *lived* at the school, spending most evenings and weekends preparing myself with mandated curriculum-related work for the children.

Because I had stronger relationships with the returning children, I began to see glimmers of the teacher I had imagined, as my relationships with the children grew stronger. They began sharing more of their lives inside their homes and communities with me. Even though there were common threads among the stories children told, these stories were often told to me privately, inside and outside of the classroom during supervision. However, my confidence as a teacher grew less, as I was encouraged to focus on preparing the children for the standardized tests.

I accepted a teaching assignment in another public school designated as an Aboriginal elementary school the next year. I taught year two in the morning and in a year 3-6 *special needs* classroom in the afternoon. The *special needs* classroom was filled with children labeled behavior disordered and/or academically challenged. I was offered this position because I was storied as a teacher who had *effective classroom management* and was told *I would be able to handle it*, even though I had no specific training in special education. I was a "good" teacher. I continued in this assignment for two years, until a new administrator accepted my request to teach in a grade two classroom. Very little seemed to have changed in my stories of teaching. I imposed the mandated curriculum on the children and continued to feel discouraged that I had chosen to become a teacher. I wrote the following reflection about a time I began not liking who I had become as teacher, and as I awakened to knowing I could no longer live the same stories.

> *Staring out my classroom window, while the children worked silently, I thought to myself, "what the hell am I doing here?" I was trying to imagine a different life, a different way to be. I had become completely disengaged from learning and teaching and I had hit a low point in my career. I was still spending countless hours in the classroom. Personal relationships were ending, I was physically exhausted, and I was unable to see teaching getting better. This was not the dream I had imagined or planned. I knew I wanted to work alongside Aboriginal children, but not in this way…not in the way I was taught (except in grade two). Efforts to*

change my methods of teaching were met with criticism from those I relied on to give me support in the school. I felt an enormous weight of guilt and shame that I wasn't being true to myself in how I imagined teaching and I wasn't being fair to these young children. Why was my classroom so quiet? Where were the lives in the classroom…where was the joy? I felt as though I was repeating a traditional form of teaching. There were glimmers and times where I was able to become that imagined teacher, having conversations with children, baking birthday cakes for every child, creating a belonging place in the classroom. However, these were fleeting moments, unable to sustain me. I returned to a way of teaching that was supported by the school landscape by having a quiet, compliant, well-run classroom. (Life in Elementary Classrooms course, written response, November 2010).

I knew the story of school very well and the markers that defined good and bad teachers. Good teachers were seen as having quiet working classrooms. Children were expected to be silent as we walked about the school. The expectation was that children would meet specific academic goals, produce good grades and results '*better than the year before'.* Improved standardized test scores were the markers of success. Teachers who had loud, busy classrooms were seen as ineffective, unable to *manage* children and, most likely, would not last. I remember using a strategy I had once seen other teachers use to keep children quiet as we moved about the school. It fell into the school plotline of *good* teacher and *good* children. At one time, I remember instructing my young grade two

children to place their fingers on their mouths as they walked in line formation down the school halls. This was to remind them, and others, that talking was not permitted in the school hallways. I comfortably accepted praise from others, teachers and administration, about how *quiet* and *good* my class was and the children would each receive an entry slip for the weekly Friday school-wide draw[36]. Two slips would be entered if they received a compliment. In actuality, I received the compliment for being a *good* teacher.

Beginning to retell and relive earlier stories to live by

Year after year, children in my grade two classroom shared their desires about becoming a *teacher*. Instantly, I was caught up in the nostalgia of my grade two experiences of practicing being a teacher at home. I enjoyed hearing these stories, reminding me of my stories of Ms. Z, confirming the wonderful job I was doing as teacher. However, over time, I began to feel tensions as children continued telling me of their dreams to become a teacher. I wondered how the children were coming to know they wanted to become a teacher. What part was I playing in their dreams of becoming? I wondered if they, too, imagined a story of belonging in the classroom? I began to question, would they, like me, follow the same traditional path of becoming a good teacher laid out by the "grand narrative" (Bateson, 1989) of schooling? I secretly wished they would imagine becoming something different.

[36] A school wide incentive program encourages children to collect as many entry forms as they can throughout the week and place them into their classroom draw bins, where one winner is chosen every Friday for a prize, to be collected from the school office. At one time it was a box of smarties, now it is a dried fruit package, in response to the Apple school project. Children earn entry stubs of paper for showing 'good' behavior and following school/classroom rules.

Their stories of becoming teachers provided a bumping place, an interruption, for me to begin to imagine otherwise, imagining a new way of being *teacher*. I awakened (Greene, 1995) to how I was teaching young children who adored me and wanted to become like me even as I was growing bored and detached from teaching…and from the children. I knew, if they were grounding their dreams of becoming a teacher on their stories of me, it would come at a *cost* of broken relationships, declining health, and growing tensions between the curriculum-as-planned and the curriculum-as-lived or "living" curriculum (Clandinin & Connelly, 1992; Aoki, 1993). Change, however, came slowly as Bateson (1989) reminds me of the powerful hold of continuity and the fear of change when she writes,

> We hold on to the continuity we have, however profoundly it is flawed. If change were less frightening, if the risks did not seem so great, far more could be lived. One of the striking facts of most lives is the recurrence of threads of continuity, the re-echoing of earlier themes, even across deep rifts of change, but when you watch people damaged by their dependence on continuity, you wonder about the nature of commitment, about the need for a new and more fluid way to imagine the future (Bateson, 1989, p. 8).

I continued to hold tightly to continuity for several years before I returned part-time to graduate school in 2009, hoping to change the teacher stories I was living. One story I told others of why I returned to graduate school was that I needed a challenge. The other story that I kept silent was I had grown bored with the mandated curriculum and with the quiet, predictable, planned rhythm in my

classroom. Every year of teaching I was reminded, in some small way, that the mandated curriculum I was delivering was silencing the voices of children. I knew the way I was being teacher was not the ways I imagined. Carr (1986) reminded me that

> Our lives admit of sometimes more, sometimes less coherence; they hang together reasonably well, but they occasionally tend to fall apart. Coherence seems to be a need imposed on us whether we seek it or not. Things need to make sense. We feel the lack of sense when it goes missing. The unity of the self, not as an underlying identity but as a life that hangs together is not a pre-given condition but an achievement. (p. 97).

Things in my life and in my teaching no longer made sense. I had grown tired of not being able to live the story of teacher I had long ago imagined. I needed to find new ways to be alongside children. I desperately wanted to remember why I had become a teacher in the first place, not as a marker of success or becoming *somebody*, but as a way of living alongside children and creating a place of belonging. I was seeking coherence in my stories to live by as I tried to make sense of what I was living in the school and classroom landscape that contradicted what I had so long ago imagined as belonging places. I realized I was not alone in following the grand narrative of teaching and I recognized myself in Paley (1986) when she wrote,

> In my haste to supply the children with my own bits and pieces of neatly labeled reality, the appearance of a correct answer gave me the surest

> feeling that I was teaching. Curriculum guides replaced the lists of questions, but I still wanted most of all to keep things moving with a minimum of distraction. It did not occur to me that the distractions might be the sounds of children thinking (Paley, 1986, p. 122).

Looking for answers: Struggling for narrative coherence

I entered the masters program at the University of Alberta, Department of Elementary Education in the *Technology Integration in Elementary Education* program in 2009. I chose this program because I had found *success* with school curriculum making and the products children were *producing for me*, using technology as a teaching and learning tool. However, after my second course I realized the program was not helping alleviate tensions between the way I imagined teaching and the way I was living alongside children. This path in the masters program was not helping my search to make sense of teaching and learning in the classroom. I needed to remember why I wanted to become a teacher, working alongside Aboriginal children. It was my hope that by to undertaking my graduate degree someone would tell me how to be a better teacher *to* Aboriginal children. I was looking for *the* 'magic teaching method' that would make me a better teacher and desperately wished someone would tell me what that was.

Slowing putting the story pieces back together

In fall 2010 I began a course titled, *Life in Elementary Classrooms*, in the Centre for Research for Teacher Education and Development[37] (CRTED),

[37] Since 1991, the mandate for the Centre for Research for Teacher Education and Development where is to foster and produce high quality research for teacher education; to provide a scholarly

alongside Dr. D. Jean Clandinin and others, and began revisiting my stories to live by. I began to inquire narratively into my stories of experience as granddaughter, student and teacher, becoming aware my stories to live by are always *in the midst,* always in the making, and not fixed. I began to think narratively when I was asked to write a story of my early school experiences. I was surprised someone was genuinely curious to hear my stories of experience lived in both school and home places. The course became a belonging place for me, a place missing for me inside the schools and classrooms where I had lived. It became a place I wanted to create in my classroom. In this course I found I was not alone. There were other teachers feeling as I was. I remembered the sense of belonging I lived in, and created, as a little girl who imagined *teacher* and *learner,* in both school and home places. Like Paley (1990), I began to recognize that, "in my early teaching years I was in the wrong forest. I paid scant attention to the play and did not hear the stories, though once upon a time I must have imagined such wondrous events" (p. 5). Through telling and listening to stories of experience with others, I began to imagine *wondrous events* and imagine a counter narrative or counterstory[38] (Lindeman Nelson, 1995) to what I lived as deliverer of curriculum. I began "shaking up my addiction to harmony" (Greene, 1990, p. 69).

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community for graduate children and post graduate children and faculty and to collaborate with agencies, researchers at other Universities in Canada and internationally and school around research in teacher education.

[38] Lindemann Nelson (1995) defines counterstory as "a story that contributes to the moral self-definition of its teller by undermining a dominant story, undoing it and retelling it in such a way as to invite new interpretations and conclusions (p. 23).

Listening with the heart

A Cree Elder stands up in class and asks, "Are you being truthful? Are you being honest?" He is talking to the participants in the course about our learning and teaching selves. He continues, "There needs to be a holistic approach to learning, you have to have balance with the body, mind and spirit. Wake up that spirit of knowledge, it does not only exist in the mind, but in the heart as well. The hardest journey one can take is traveling from the mind to the heart." (Indigenous philosophy and curriculum course, May 12, 2011).

His words pierced and lingered, as though he was speaking directly to me. I scribbled his words down fast and wondered silently, *had I been truthful and honest with myself and with the children I taught, as well as with those I was currently teaching?* I thought of the tensions I felt since entering the classrooms eleven years ago, as I was trying to live alongside the children and their families, with the mandated curriculum firmly in hand. I began to wonder, *where were the voices of the parents? Where were the voices of the children? Was I really 'listening' to the experiences children and their families were telling me in my efforts to be 'good' teacher?* Through the years these tensions were unidentifiable, I just knew they had been present from the beginning of my teaching career. I now knew, like Paley (1986), that "the rules of teaching had changed; I now wanted to hear the answers I could not myself invent" (p. 125).

I now understood I needed to create a space of belonging where children could share their lived experiences. By inquiring into children's stories to live by

alongside my stories to live by in our curriculum making, I awakened to my stories of experience, both in the school curriculum-making world and the familial curriculum-making world. I wanted to focus on the children's stories of experiences and the familial curriculum-making world they were creating at home and in their communities. I wondered what we could learn about one another as we listened to each others' stories of becoming, while allowing ourselves to imagine new possibilities as we co-composed our school curriculum-making world together.

Creating Spaces: Imagining and living out a counter narrative

> *I arrived early on the first day of school to prepare the area for our first peace candle gathering[39]. I carefully laid out the Pendleton wool blanket in the centre of the room with an unlit candle, a basket of rocks and smudge[40] material resting in the middle. I wanted to start our circle in a good way and an Elder was joining us to speak about coming together in a circle and about protocol. With the lights dimmed, Kokum[41] and I sat visiting around the blanket and waited for the children to trickle in. As they arrived, I could tell some children were unfamiliar with entering a room this way and were unsure of what was about to happen. I asked the children to join us around the blanket once they hung up their heavy, overstuffed backpacks on the coat hook. Other children quickly made their*

[39] Huber et al., (2003) write of peace candle gatherings "as a way to move forward, to talk about how children were making sense of their experiences, a space for children to speak their stories, to listen to others' stories" (p. 344).
[40] Smudge material includes a smudge pan (tiny cast iron pan), smudge such as sweetgrass or sage. Smudging is an act of cleansing and prayer. The smoke that rises from the burning smudge is wafted over ones body to cleanse, the body, mind and spirit. As you smudge yourself, it is believed that the rising smoke carries your prayers to the Creator.
[41] Kokum means "your" Grandmother in Cree, Nokum means "my" grandmother.

way over to the circle, with backpacks still strapped on, and were told by other children to put their backpacks away. Some children sat quietly waiting for us to begin, some gave small waves to friends they recognized from grade one. Some were whispering about the smudge, telling us they too smudged at home with their families. Kokum shared lessons about respect for one another when coming together in a circle, and the importance of listening to what one another is saying, without interrupting. I introduced students to the basket of rocks and to the smooth wooden stick I had lying in the centre of the blanket. The items served two different methods of sharing. With the passing of the basket of rocks, each child would choose a rock and hold it until they were ready to share by placing their rock in the centre of the blanket, back into the basket. The other method was the use of a stick. The stick moved in a clockwise direction around the circle and whoever held the stick was the only one talking. Students were unsure and not used to sharing their ideas in a group setting and many struggled at the beginning. My goal was to create a comfortable space where children could share their stories of experiences.

It was in this space, in our classroom that I began to create a safe place of belonging where we would be able to share daily stories of experiences and a place where students were in control of their learning. Paley (1986) calls me to think about the importance of having curiosity in creating a space for the stories children tell when she writes

> The key is curiosity, and it is curiosity, not answers, that we model. As we seek to learn more about a child, we demonstrate the acts of observing, listening, questioning, and wondering. When we are curious about a child's words and our responses to those words, the child feels respected. The child *is* respected (p. 127).

Most of all, I wanted to stop silencing children and to awaken them, and me, to what they were really telling me about themselves and who they were becoming in both worlds, the school curriculum-making world and the familial curriculum-making world. I wanted to " be there to listen, respond, and add a dab of glue to the important words that burst forth…[where] children who know others are listening may begin to listen to themselves" (Paley, 1986, p. 127).

In the beginning, some children resisted coming together in this way by 'passing' their turn. Others cautiously spoke about their experiences, saying one or two sentences, and others struggled to find their words. Some welcomed the experience and began to share about their lives. In the beginning, circle often lasted only 15-20 minutes. I began to wonder, were these children afraid to tell stories of themselves, alongside others in the class? Were they afraid of how I, or others, would respond to their stories? Did they even see themselves as having valuable knowledge worth sharing? Perhaps they didn't want to speak because they knew very little about me. I shared more about who I was, and the many roles I played in my own familial stories as granddaughter, daughter, auntie, as well as a graduate student, and teacher. I wondered about the ways children saw themselves in the classroom, and I asked if any of them saw themselves as

teacher. Very few had. The conversation began with the traditional narrative of teacher and moved into new possibilities where the children began to recognize themselves as *teachers.* They shared their experiences of *teaching* younger siblings, cousins, friends, and older adults in their families. Looking back, I wonder if this practice of sharing experiences in a safe place was unfamiliar to them in their earlier experiences in classroom spaces? As I was trying to disrupt the stories of teacher I had been living so long, I also sensed the dis/ease in the children's adherence to the restrictive practices of the dominant school narratives.

As relationships grew over time, stories began to develop and in my efforts not to silence their stories of experiences, our peace candle gathering circle often lasted 90 minutes. Children began to see themselves as holding knowledge and being knowledgeable by sharing experiences of their familial curriculum-making worlds. They were eager to tell stories of communities they were from, who they lived with, and how, for some, this frequently shifted. Often children shared stories of having many home places and belonging to multiple communities. They spoke about those who were important and less important to them in their families and told stories of being alongside their siblings and/or pets. They spoke about the addition of new siblings, as well as the loss of loved ones. Others shared the tensions of traveling great distances and spending up to three hours a day on the bus to attend school.

The children quickly learned the daily routine of circle and were eager to start. Together, we began to welcome the start of a new day as we met in our peace candle circle gathering. Stories of experience were already being shared as I

walked up to my classroom portable, as children asked if we were having circle. Some children excitedly 'bounced' their way to class ready to share some new experience that happened the night before or on the weekend. Soon children began offering to help set up the space by grabbing the blanket, smudge, candle and matches and laying them in a spot they reserved for me. The children began to preplan their seating space with those who were eager to share finding spaces on the left side of where I sat, knowing we sometimes moved in the clockwise direction with the stick. They began to see themselves as knowledge holders and began seeing our peace candle gathering space as a safe place to tell of their experiences in story form. Bruner (2012) writes, "we never have to explain to kids what a story is…you start one…and they understand it" (p. 30). Children were sharing stories, sometimes with a beginning, middle and ending, and sometimes not. It did not matter in our circle and students were respectful to one another as they listened, often triggering their own stories in relation to the stories told by others. Most days I allowed circle to continue without concern for time, however there were times I began to feel tension around the length of time we spent in circle, even though we were creating our own lived curriculum alongside each other. It was a curriculum of lives in the making. It was during these times I began to worry and wondered if I would have enough time to "do" or "cover" the mandated curriculum. Tensions became more noticeable around reporting time and during the evaluation and writing of reports cards, as I was reminded to check off the curricular objectives the children could or could not do. Around reporting time, I began limiting the time children were able to share, even sometimes

canceling circle. It was during these times when I would cancel the circle that tensions grew, especially as the children expressed their disappointment. I struggled deeply with this tension once again feeling as though I was silencing the children in my efforts to teach the mandated curriculum. As tensions developed, it became increasingly difficult to continue to privilege the mandated curriculum in the report cards, as there were no spaces to share the other ways I had come to learn alongside the children. There seemed to be little space in the reporting process to share how the children began to know themselves differently and where they began to envision themselves in newly imagined ways.

What matters most: Attending to children's lives in familial and school curriculum-making worlds

Greene (1993) speaks to the importance of giving children time and space to begin telling stories of "what they are seeking, what they know and might not yet know, exchanging stories with others grounded in other landscapes, at once bringing something [self] into being that is in between" (p. 218). The "in between" Greene speaks about is the meeting place that allows us to unfold who we are and who we are becoming, but do not yet know, alongside others in our interwoven "webs of relationships" (Arendt, 1958, p. 182; Chung, 2008). By creating the in between spaces of belonging and honoring children's worlds of familial curriculum-making within school curriculum-making worlds, I have become open to the endless shaping possibilities, both as learner and teacher.

I have come to understand through creating a space for children and myself while paying attention to our own familial curriculum-making worlds that

I now could see ‘otherwise’ (Greene, 1995). I was able to imagine a new way of being alongside children, within our stories of experiences in the school and in the familial curriculum-making worlds. As we moved forward in this process of coming together and sharing our stories of who we are and who we were becoming, I noticed the children began to imagine and see themselves and others in new ways. Children began to see their knowledge and the familial curriculum making they were engaged in at home as belonging within the school curriculum-making world. While many classrooms today continue to privilege school curriculum making, as I had, it is my hope that by sharing my stories to live by through my experiences in our classroom peace candle gatherings, I offer a counter narrative or “counterstory” (Lindemann Nelson, 1995) to the dominant curriculum making. As children travel daily between both worlds, there needs to be safe conversational spaces in the school curriculum-making world where children are able to come together to imagine new possibilities. Greene (1993) attends to the importance of conversation and dialogue in classrooms.

> There can only be – there ought to be – a wider and deeper sharing of beliefs, and enhanced capacity to articulate them, to justify them, to persuade others as the heteroglossic conversation moves on, never reaching a final conclusion, always incomplete, but richer and more densely woven, even as it moves through time (p. 213).

The peace candle gathering circles provided opportunities for the children to envision new possibilities in their lives, alongside others, as they developed their own counter narrative. I imagine as these children move forward with

confidence and strength, they will be able to recognize the value in the stories they live and tell. I hope they find safe spaces to continue to share their experiences as they move forward. Through this process of curriculum making alongside children, I too am able to envision a counter narrative as I have returned to live out my earlier imagined stories of teaching. Greene (1995) reminds me of the importance of creating spaces in the classroom for stories to be heard and shared, always in a state of incompleteness when she writes

> Our classrooms ought to be nurturing and thoughtful and just all at once; they ought to pulsate with multiple conceptions of what it is to be human and alive. They ought to resound with the voices of articulate young in dialogues always incomplete because there is always more to be discovered and more to be said. We must want our students to achieve friendship as each one stirs to wide-awakeness, to imaginative action, and to a renewed consciousness of possibility (p. 43).

In creating belonging spaces for the children and myself in the classroom, I return to my earlier stories of becoming teacher. Together, we co-composed curriculum as we listened to, honored and validated the stories of experiences lived and told by each other, beginning with our familial worlds of curriculum making. I was reminded in this way of coming together, we are all in the process of becoming, who we are, not yet (Greene, 1995).

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Chapter Four: Sliding Backward and Forward to what Matters Most

Revisiting my Research Puzzle

At the outset of this autobiographical narrative inquiry I framed my research puzzle around the tensions between my familial curriculum-making, and school, curriculum-making worlds I experienced as granddaughter, student, and teacher. Through this process of retelling stories of experience alongside others, I learned a language to articulate the process I was going through, and I began to imagine "otherwise" (Greene, 1995).

In chapter two I inquired into the tensions I experienced alongside my granny as I traveled between the two curriculum-making worlds I was living in schools and home. In retelling an experience of tension between the curriculum making I was living in schools and the curriculum making I was living in the home, my puzzle grew as I wondered of the *costs* to a life (or lives) when the school curriculum-making world is privileged over the familial curriculum-making world. Huber, Murphy & Clandinin (2011) also wondered what happened to children as they travelled between familial, and school, curriculum-making worlds, and of the long-term shaping reverberations of privileging one curriculum making over another (p. 135). As I slid backwards, I was reminded of how I had become silent of the lived experiences my granny spoke to me about, and placed them on the shelf, instead of illuminating the stories I was experiencing at home. Looking back now at my own silencing of tensions, I wondered how my granny must have felt during our conversations as I was interrupting her stories of experience with my curriculum making from the schools. As we both privileged

and supported my school curriculum making, I imagine her confusion with the questions and stories I brought forth from my school curriculum-making world that made no sense to her and her experiences. Inquiring into these embodied tensions I carried from the past to the present, I began to wonder about how I was continuing the practice of privileging school curriculum-making over familial curriculum making as teacher, and at what *cost*. In doing so, I wondered how I was silencing the children's and my own life as teacher.

In chapter three I return to my earlier shaping experiences of school as I was trying to create a belonging place inside my home while I was developing my earlier stories to live by[42] as teacher. I began reliving my earlier school experiences around becoming teacher, and inquired into my own lived tensions as I worked alongside children in schools. I awakened to my own silencing ways as I focused on the mandated school curriculum, paying little attention to the stories children carried with them from home to school. As I slid backwards, I became attentive to my own shaping experiences in my familial curriculum-making world, and I was reminded that our stories to live by are fluid, and always shifting, on a temporal continuum from the past, present, and future. Clandinin & Connelly (2000) write of this temporal notion where "experiences grow out of other experiences, and experiences lead to further experiences" (p. 2). Returning to earlier shaping experiences, both in the home and school, I wondered how I could live differently as teacher by attending to children's familial knowledge and create new ways to attend to the curriculum making we were co-composing inside the

[42] Connelly & Clandinin (1999) developed the term 'stories to live by' as a narrative conception of identity, shaped by the narrative telling and retelling of secret and cover stories in various contexts (p. 4).

classroom. Through inquiring into my earlier stories of experience as teacher, student, and granddaughter, I found new possibilities and began creating new stories to live by as I began attending to a curriculum of lives[43], which included both the children's and my familial curriculum-making worlds. By creating safe spaces inside my classroom, children were free to tell stories of experience. What became visible to me, as teacher, was the embodied familial knowledge the children carried within from their homes and families. Although I wrote my thesis from my vantage point around moments of tension, alongside my late granny and the defining moments in my stories to live by as teacher, it is my hope that others will also wonder of the *costs* when one world is privileged over the other.

Making Familial Curriculum-Making Worlds *Visible*

By attending to the silencing and tensions between my familial and school curriculum-making worlds, I awakened to the importance of making visible children's familial curriculum making in the classroom. Greene (1995) helps me to think about this shift in my teacher practice from seeing small to big when she writes,

> To see things or people small, one chooses to see from a detached point of view, to watch behaviors from the perspective of a system, to be concerned with trends and tendencies rather than the intentionality and concreteness of everyday life. To see things or people big, one must resist viewing other human beings as mere objects or chess pieces and view

[43] Clandinin et al. (2006) write, "a curriculum of lives is shaped as children's and teacher's diverse lives meet in schools, in in- and out-of-classroom places. As children's and teacher's stories to live by bump up against stories of school and school stories, a curriculum of lives is, in part, shaped (p. 135).

them in their integrity and particularity instead. One must see from the point of view of the participant in the midst of what is happening (p. 35)

I knew the stories I was living as teacher were ones shaped by seeing small, and becoming teacher came at a *cost* to my familial curriculum-making world, alongside my granny. I also knew that the stories I was living were no longer sustaining me as teacher. I now wanted to 'see big' and play with the idea of including the familial knowledge children experienced in their daily lives within my classroom. I began to shift my practice as teacher from focusing solely on the mandated curriculum to creating belonging places for the children and myself, where we could co-compose our curriculum through peace candle gatherings[44]. Chung (2008) also writes of "creat[ing] spaces for children to share and reflect upon their lived experiences as well the open-ended possibilities for their lives as well as for the lives of others" (p. 73). By attending to my own and the children's stories of experience in our familial curriculum-making worlds, I noticed the children also began to see themselves and others in new ways. The peace candle gathering circles not only provided opportunities for the children to envision new possibilities in their lives, it also became a space where I too began to imagine a "saving-story[45]" in my teacher stories to live by.

[44] Huber et al., (2003) write of peace candle gatherings "as a way to move forward, to talk about how children were making sense of their experiences, a space for children to speak their stories, to listen to others' stories" (p. 344).

[45] Cardinal (2010) writes autobiographically of her own "saving stories" (p. 1) and refers to King's (2003) description of saving stories as, "a particular kind of story. Saving stories, if you will. Stories that help keep me alive" (p. 119).

Justifying the Research

Clandinin & Connelly (2000) write, "narrative inquiries are always strongly autobiographical…[and] it is crucial to be able to articulate a relationship between one's personal interests and a sense of significance and larger social concerns" (p. 121-122). These interests and social concerns are made visible through the personal, the practical, and the theoretical justifications. The personal justification "often fuels the passion and dedication" and is often relived and retold through autobiographical stories of experience (Clandinin & Caine, 2012, p. 174). Before coming to learn of autobiographical narrative inquiry I had lost hope in my imagined stories of teacher. I came to learn of narrative inquiry at a time in my life when I was struggling to sustain my life as a teacher. As I inquired into my lived tensions and earlier stories of experience, as granddaughter, student, and teacher, I began to develop a renewed sense of hope and possibilities in my stories to live by. In coming to learn alongside children and inviting them to share fragments of their familial curriculum-making worlds, I, too, began to create new stories to live by inside the classroom. Throughout this thesis, it is my hope that I was able to attend to the importance of inquiring into my own lived tensions between my familial curriculum-making, and school curriculum-making, worlds as ways to imagine new possibilities of becoming.

The second justification, the practical, is shaped by possibilities into the shifting or changing of the researcher's own and others' practices (Clandinin, Pushor & Orr, 2007, p. 25). Inquiring into my earlier stories of experience alongside my granny allowed me to shift my practice by creating a space inside

the classroom where the children's and my familial curriculum-making worlds were recognized and honored. I knew from my own experiences, alongside my granny, that silencing our own familial curriculum making in my school curriculum-making world had come at a *cost* to both her and I. Through this process of inquiry, I was no longer able to keep children's familial stories of experience silent, nor did I want to further contribute to the children's (or my own) mis-educative[46] experiences inside the classroom. I was no longer planning my daily schedule based on the mandated curriculum as I had done in the past. Instead, I wanted the children's experiences to shape the curriculum we were co-composing through our peace candle gathering circles. Together, we would listen to each other's stories of experiences and connect threads from our familial curriculum-making worlds to the school curriculum-making world we were living in the classroom. Greene (1993) writes of the importance of giving children the opportunity to tell stories of experience by

> creating the kinds of situations where, at the very least, students will begin telling the stories of what they are seeking, what they know and might yet not know, exchanging stories with other grounded in other landscapes, at once bringing something into being that is in-between…releasing potential learners to order their lived experiences in divergent ways, to give them narrative form, to give them voice" (p. 218-219).

There were many times when this in-between place, a place of inquiry, entered our peace candle gatherings where we were able to imagine new ways of learning

[46] Dewey (1938) wrote that "any experience is mis-educative that has the effect of arresting or distorting the growth of further experience" (p. 25).

together rather than following a carefully laid out, imposed plan of curricular objectives.

The final justification is the theoretical, which attends to the 'so what?' and "who cares?' question of narrative inquiry. Clandinin & Huber (2010) write, "theoretical justification comes from justifying the work in terms of new methodological and disciplinary knowledge" (p. 436). What I offer throughout this thesis are storied accounts and possibilities of how one might bring together the concepts of familial curriculum-making worlds and school curriculum-making worlds. Through the stories told in this study, I demonstrate how I began including the children's familial curriculum-making worlds inside classroom spaces through peace candle gathering circles. Together, as we shared our familial curriculum-making worlds, the children began to see themselves as having valuable first hand, experiential knowledge. In their sharing, children began directing their own learning and choosing what was important to them as we began to co-compose our school curriculum-making world around their familial curriculum-making world. Children began seeing their familial knowledge as having value and chose to include stories of experience in daily writing practices, which became more meaningful and authentic experiences. This adds to the theoretical possibilities of reconceptualizing curriculum making in new ways, joining the conversation begun by Huber, Murphy, and Clandinin (2011).

A New Beginning

As I prepare for our first peace candle gathering circle on the first day of school, I imagine inviting the grandmothers and grandfathers into our

classroom. The children begin arriving and begin tentatively gathering around the Pendleton blanket, unsure of what to expect. Each finds a spot around the blanket to rest on. I begin to prepare the smudging material when I start hearing stories of how they too, smudged with their grandparent(s). I smile at this knowing. After we smudge, I read aloud the story, My Kokum Called Today (Loewen, 1993). The story is familiar and I connect with the images and words gleaning from the pages as they pull me back to my early familial curriculum-making world. As I begin to read, I am carried along the familiar narrative of the little girl who is living in the city with her mom. I see myself in the little girl. As she excitedly prepares for, and anticipates, visiting the home of her Kokum, I recall my own granny in this moment. The images beautifully reflect how I too, like the little girl, carry and hold on to the memories of lived experiences of being alongside my granny. Beaded moccasins, clotheslines, knowing which plants are for healing, long walks in the bush, making bannock & preserved jam, and tanning moose hide all remind me of her. As I close the book, I wonder, as the girl is preparing to travel[47] *from one world to another (Lugones, 1987), about the familial embodied knowing we all carry with us as storied memories, as we travel between home and school curriculum-making worlds. I begin sharing stories about my granny, and about the experiences I had as a little girl alongside her. As the children begin sharing within the circle, they too, begin sharing their own stories of*

[47] Lugones (1987) refers to travel as "the shift from being one person to being a different person" (p. 11).

experience, alongside their grandmother(s) and/or grandfather(s).

(Reflections on starting school, September, 2012)

As the children and I planned for our upcoming Grandparent's Day celebration, children continued sharing stories of their familial curriculum making in circle, through writing activities, and through the books they chose to read. They became excited knowing their grandmas and grandpas would be attending our classroom. The children created artifacts as presents and completed written paragraphs on why their grandma or grandpa was special and important to them. The following Monday we began preparing for their arrival. The children set out the Pendleton Blanket, cake, tea and juice for our guests. Chairs were placed in a circle around the blanket with space between the chairs and blanket for the children to sit. The grandparents began arriving, choosing a chair close to their grandchild. Soon our room was filled. The children, along with their grandparents, began enjoying cake and tea/juice, reading their writing aloud, presenting artifacts they made, and creating a fridge magnet as a future memory box artifact. As I look back on this experience, I notice a bumping place or tension as the children gathered around the cluster of desks that were set up for the fridge magnet activity. Although there was plenty of space, it was during this time, many grandparents moved away from their grandchild, becoming observers instead of participants. Once I reassured our visitors that they were to help create a memory of this special day, they immediately began to involve themselves alongside their grandchild in creating a fridge magnet decoration together. I wonder now, did they see themselves as outsiders, resting in the margins, while their grandchildren

completed a "school activity?" Were they waiting for me, *the teacher*, to say it was okay for them to be involved? I was surprised that initially they moved away as I began to explain the activity and showing the materials. It was only when I commented that their participation was welcomed they moved in closer towards the children.

This was a tension I became aware of in hindsight, as I reflected on the experience. Being aware of this tension highlights the importance of creating spaces within classrooms to allow for the sharing of familial curriculum-making worlds, alongside those who live within them.

Sliding Forward: Forward Looking Stories

I know that children cannot, and do not, live in one curriculum-making world as distinct from the other. They live in both worlds and both worlds live in them. I wonder, what might happen if all classrooms created belonging spaces where children could share, alongside others, stories of their familial curriculum-making worlds. I wonder how such spaces would shape who they, and their families, are becoming in the school curriculum-making world. I end with the words of Maxine Greene (1993) who allows me to reflect on the importance of recognizing and honoring the knowledge children and families live within diverse familial curriculum-making worlds, in schools, when she writes,

> We require a curriculum that can help provoke persons to reach past themselves and to become. We want to see them in their multiplicity linking arms, becoming recognized. We want them in their ongoing quests

> for what it means to be human to be free to move. We want them – and we want to enable them – to exist (p. 220).

I am left wondering of the possibilities if teachers purposefully created spaces for familial curriculum? I imagine by creating safe places and including familial curriculum making in schools, we not only will see schools as places of becoming and shaping identities, but also as sustaining and engaging places for children, families, and teachers.

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