University of Alberta

Reverence for the Ordinary: A Reciprocal Inquiry Into Stories of Local Knowledge and Teacher Education on a Traditional Cree Reserve

by

Christina Mader 

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

Department of Elementary Education

Edmonton, Alberta

Fall 1996

National Library of Canada

Acquisitions and Bibliographic Services Branch

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0N4

Bibliothèque nationale du Canada

Direction des acquisitions et des services bibliographiques

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa (Ontario)
K1A 0N4

Your file Votre référence

Our file Notre référence

The author has granted an irrevocable non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of his/her thesis by any means and in any form or format, making this thesis available to interested persons.

L'auteur a accordé une licence irrévocable et non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de sa thèse de quelque manière et sous quelque forme que ce soit pour mettre des exemplaires de cette thèse à la disposition des personnes intéressées.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in his/her thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without his/her permission.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège sa thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

ISBN 0-612-18075-1

Canada

University of Alberta

Library Release Form

Name of Author:	Christina Mader
Title of Dissertation:	**Reverence for the Ordinary: A Reciprocal Inquiry Into Stories of Local Knowledge and Teacher Education on a Traditional Cree Reserve**
Degree:	Doctor of Philosophy
Year This Degree Granted:	1996

Permission is hereby granted to the University of Alberta Library to reproduce single copies of this dissertation and to lend or sell such copies for private, scholarly, or scientific research purposes only.

The author reserves all other publication and other rights in association with the copyright in the dissertation, and except as hereinbefore provided, neither the dissertation nor any substantial portion thereof may be printed or otherwise reproduced in any material form whatever without the author's prior written permission.

C Mader

Box 455
Squamish, BC
V0N 3G0

Date 96-09-14

To my daughter,

in celebration of my re-emerging delight in her.

As a child she put sparkles in my day.

As an adult she puts sparkles in my day.

University of Alberta

Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a dissertation entitled "Reverence for the Ordinary: A Reciprocal Inquiry Into Stories of Local Knowledge and Teacher Education on a Traditional Cree Reserve" submitted by Christina Mader in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Dr. D. Jean Clandinin, Supervisor

Dr. Stan Wilson

Dr. Daiyo Sawada

Dr. Peggy Wilson

Dr. Olenka Bilash

Dr. James Raffan, External Examiner

Date September 13, 1996

Abstract

For two decades I have heard the lament "We are not meeting the needs of our Native students. School has no meaning for them." I want to know what *does*. My inquiry takes me to the northern Alberta Cree community of John D'or Prairie. From 1993 until 1996 I am a periodic visitor, researcher, and friend in the lives and stories of seven traditional educators. Helped by the work of Trinh (1989), I keep an open agenda. I ask, "What is important for people to know around here?" Through photography, storytelling, modelling, or simply going about ordinary tasks, each participant responds in her own fashion. We examine local knowledge (O'Brien & Flora, 1992) from within face-to-face reciprocal relationships.

Thus, in a culture where answers to questions are not always spoken, I study local knowledge, how I gain it, who gives it away, and under what conditions. Narrative research methods (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994) tie my work to prior knowledge. As the teacher who is being educated, I notice how understanding comes in indirect ways from a realm of Oneness (Boice, 1992), across time, and on various levels—the physical, spiritual, emotional, and cognitive. This lets me connect new insights to some very old Cree ways of educating teachers. I make contemporary home-to-school connections and explore an approach to curriculum where bi-polar opposites are conspicuous in their absence—learning/teaching is a single concept. What emerges is an affirmation of the wisdom of indigenous traditions. In John D'or Prairie, people cherish the ordinary things that they do for and with each other.

At a traditional community celebration, and in a companion dissertation, we share this local knowledge in a photography exhibit. We show how children learn reverence for the ordinary, the future, the land, the spiritual, the old ways,

and the old people. Reverence means an attitude of deep respect and esteem mingled with affection (Kellerman, 1975). We add *fun.*

Local protocol and the metaphor of a Giving Circle guide our study.

Acknowledgements

I wish to acknowledge in writing the patience, the generosity, the humour, the pain, the joy, the hard-to-talk-about, the friendship, the deep respect, and the esteem mingled with affection and fun of everybody who worked with me. I wish to acknowledge the direct and indirect relationships we established on many realms during this research. If anybody's name has been omitted, it is an oversight, and I apologize. At the risk of talking about what everybody knows, here, then, is "everybody": Agnes Moberly, Shawna Moberly, Mary Seeseewatum, Louis Moberly, Alice Seeseewatum, Nora Nanooch, Richard Dumaine, Shirley Poitras, Wayne Poitras. Cow Moose, My Mom's Dog Rufus, Critters from the Woods who visited and walked with me. International Development Research Centre, whose consultancy contract was well timed to help pay photography expenses. The trails around and on the North Saskatchewan River. The Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, who gave steady advice and support. The paths through northern swamps, eastern deserts, southern jungles, western cities. Johnson Sewepagaham, Nelly Nanooch, Dolores Sand, Thomas Potts, Evelyn Potts, Tammy Paul, Richard Potts. Chickadee, Robin, Eagle, Woodpecker. Jean Clandinin, Pat Rafferty, Myer Horowitz. Camera, VW Golf, Cross-Country Skis, Computer, Telephone, Cessna Aircraft, Garbage Bag, Crosswalk. Sr. Bernadette Gautreau, Sr. Jeanette Berger, Father Paul Hernou. Pottery, Pictures, Posters, Printings, Paintings, Carvings, Stones, Baskets, Beads, Tapestries. Martha Hivon, Nigel Minchin, Hedy Bach, Debbie Schroeder, Kathie Webb, Barbara Heather, Olenka Bilash, Woody Morrisson. Pea Soup, Moosenose Soup, Stone Soup, Lemongrass Soup. Ray Hance, Susan Hance, Carmen Hance, Ryan Hance, Jason Hance, Derek Sill. Northern Lights, Southern Cross, Ceremony. Stan Wilson, Jane Ash Poitras, Lori Nielsen, Mark Markley, Jim Bowman,

Mrs. Hansen, Daiyo Sawada. Trees, Paper, Recycled Pages, Final Draft. Daughter, Mom, Dad, Brother, Geddi, Goddi, Cousin, Oma, Opa, Myrtle Philip. Bannock, Sliced Bread, Fried Bread, Pretzel, Roti, Chapati. The Old People, The Little People, middle-aged people. Breath, Wind, Air, Smoke, God, Creator. Tom Bediako, Ted Aoki, Tom Sampson, Bill Mussell. Blue jeans, Dancing-Women Shirt, Cutting-Up-Elk Blouse. Alex Philip, Jack Scott, James Raffan, Trinh Minh-ha, Walter Lightning, Linda Akan, Charity Laboucan, William Blake. The Woman Who Passed Away, Fish Soul, Hummingbird, Fly. Tony Hunt, George Hunt Jr., Norma Pete, Ida Matthew, Louise Creyke, Sheila Frank, David Rattray, Mary Thomas, Mary Anderson, Virginia Moore, Verna Billy, Rena Bolton. Oginee, Dandelion Candles. Gabe Bartleman, Josie Jules. Sincerity, Joking, Spirits, Intuition, Laughter, Play/Work, Honesty. R. Williams. ** **. Jean Parranto, Linda Pasmore. Water—still, flowing, foggy, hoary, swampy, frozen, healing, snow, rainbow, moon dog. Ordinary, Stories, Silence.

Big Old Man who wished to tell me his stories if only I understood his language.

The wisdom in what many withheld. I trust their judgment to not talk about what should be communicated without words or perhaps not even passed on to me at all.

Many include me in their giving circle. I find quiet pleasure in figuring out ways to reciprocate and pass on our time and stories.

Table of Contents

Page

PART I: I LOVE MY WORLD

Chapter 1: A Sense of the Whole: Diary of a 90-Day Wonder 1

The Title Story 3
Somethings I Know From Before,
Somethings I Know From Reading 10
Two-Row Wampum 11

Chapter 2: A Sense of Place 22

The Story of Wit Skwaththim Upoo 22
Introducing the Research Consultants 27

Chapter 3: A Sense of How 31

Methodology 33
Narrative Research 34
The Numbered Steps of Our Narrative Research Process 39

Chapter 4: Choosing Stories and Photographs 44

Chapter 5: The Structure Behind the Sense:
Ordinary Power of Transmission 51
Hints on Style 1-10 51
Message From Technicians of the Sacred 69

PART II: I LOVE MY OLD PEOPLE

Chapter 6: Local Knowledge from Marie Nanooch 71

School Education Into Culture 84
An Epic: Marie's Life on the Trapline 87
Marie Nanooch: A Research Story 97
Local Knowledge in Marie's Stories 108
Local Knowledge in Marie's Living 117
Oneness 119

Chapter 7: Local Knowledge From Agnes Moberly 125

Local Knowledge in Agnes' Living 125
The-Hard-to-Talk-About 127
Local Knowledge in Agnes' Stories 138
The-Joy-to-Talk-About 159
Hard-to-Talk-About On-Campus 163
Hope and Confidence 166

Page

Chapter 8: Local Knowledge From Sister Bernadette Gautreau . . . 175

Local Knowledge in Sister Bernadette's Stories 175

PART III: I LOVE MY CEREMONIES

Chapter 9: Giveaway 213

Pictures as Companions to Research Stories,
Words as Companions to Research Pictures 213
Reverence for the Ordinary: A Photography Exhibit 219

References 244

List of Photographs, Drawings, and Illustrations

Page

Chapters 1-5:

"Two-Row Wampum" 11
"The Day Of The Moosehead Photo" 45
"Yet And Knotted Moosehide" 56
"Filling Her Waterbucket" 65

Chapter 6:

"Vandalized Car On The Road To JDP" 72
"Alberta" 77
"Giving Them Their Lessons" 83
"Sank)fa" 105
"The Time I Dream Into Another World" 119
"The Night of the Memorial Dance" 119

Chapter 7:

"Lac Ste. Anne Ceremony" 137
"Letting A Relationship Develop" 151
"An Untold Picture Story" 162

Chapter 8:

"Kohkom Makes A Long-Ago Toy" 188
"Following The Law That Moose Has" 194
"Re-Discovering The Law That Moose Has" 194
"We Do That For People Around Here" 205
"From Within The Giving Circle" 208
"An Untold Picture Story" 210

Chapter 9:

"Moosenose" 215
"Picture Giveaway" 216
"#1—Making Moosehide" 220
"#2, #3—Gatherings at Little Red River" 222
"#4—St. Joseph's Catholic Church" 224
"#5—Travelling From School to Home" 225
"#6—1994 Primary Readiness Class" 227
"#7—Oneness: Past, Present, and Future Relations" 229
"#8—Muskeg" 230
"#9—Round Dance" 231
"#10—The Woman Who Passed Away" 232
"#11—Ogineebush in Winter" 233
"#12—1995 JDP Community Feast" 234
"Letting Knowledge Come" 243

List of Stories

Page

Chapters 1-5:

The Title Story 3
Behind Bars 15
The Story Of Wit Skwathtim Upoo 22
1991 Aboriginal People's Survey 23
Old Ladies Making Moosehides 25
Introducing The Research Consultants 27
Remembering 32
The Numbered Steps Of Our Narrative Research Process 39
Trout-Spirit Connections 47
Bear Glacier As A Generality 48
Hints On Style 1-10 51
Somehow Moose 52
Nelly Nanooch 54
Disappointment 57
We've Always Done It Like This 64
The Basket As Folk Song 67
Entering The Giving Circle 68
Message From Technicians Of The Sacred 69

Chapter 6:

Message From Technicians Of The Sacred 75
Clip-Art With Marie's Life Stories 81
In Fall People Walk To Their Winter Cabin 87
Women Work On Moosehides Together 88
They Never Get To The Cabin Fast 90
The Men Make Storage Racks 91
How Sisters Help 91
Ten Births, Eleven Babies 91
Babies Share Women, Women Share Babies 92
What Marie's Mom Tells 93
Families Have Healthy Dogs 93
She Has A Hunter For A Husband 94
She Makes Moosehide All Alone 94
Here's How To Tan A Moosehide 95
Both In-Laws Teach 96
Husband Francis Makes A Horizontal Pull 96
It's Your Story Now 97
Who Counts What Counts? 98
Research Promise 100
Curriculum From The Belly 104
Research Unfolding 106
The Mail And The Male Man 114
Dreaming Up Gender Curriculum 115
Figuring Out Cow Moose 115
The Time I Dream Into Another World 119
The Night Of The Memorial Dance 120

Page

Chapter 7:

If You Were Little, How Old Would You Be? 126
Abuse 129
Hard-To-Talk-About Poems 132
Important For People To Know Around Here 141
Letting Pups Learn, By Agnes Moberly 142
Learning From Mistakes #2 145
When They Tell The Kids Something 147
My Daughter And Me 154
1 + 1 = 3 159
Don't Go Till The White Man Says Go 161
I'll Probably Stay 166
Good Enough Moosehide 170
What Counts? 173

Chapter 8:

Acadian Ancestry & Timeline 176
Only When I'm Home, Of Course 178
Local Friendship 180
Who Is "Everyone"? 182
Replacing The Elders As Educators 187
Mark 6:1-6 191
That's How It Was Done, You See 192
The Law That Moose Has 193
Teaching From Within Local Knowledge 196
More Local Knowledge And More Insights 199
Moosehide Relationship 203

Chapter 9:

Letting Pups Learn 227
Reverence For The Ordinary: Handout 236
Can I Smoke Your Tobacco Now? 237
Experiential Education From A Traditional Cree Reserve
(Workshop Proposal) 240

List of Footnotes

Chapters 1-5

1 consultant
2 process, method
3 elder, Elder
4 mainstream
5 Cree people
6 types of field notes
7 local knowledge
8 something
9 Native, Indian, indigenous
10 concrete
11 connections
12 unity
13 certified school teacher
14 wampum
15 traditional
16 academic rigour
17 curriculum
18 levels
19 reverence
20 answer
21 White, Caucasian, Anglo
22 academic
23 generic
24 tribe
25 statistics, community
26 ~
27 active & passive volition
28 day school
29 mediate
30 properly
31 lip-pointing
32 small stories
33 Oneness
34 look good
35 re-name, re-frame
36 post-2dary ed. certificate
37 modern
38 giveaway
39 generalizing mainstream
40 conative
41 Green

Chapter 6

1 space—earth, inner, outer
2 they say
3 academic (again)
4 Erickson & Mohatt study
5 analysis
6 pack
7 bannock
8 stories in italics
9 re-construct
10 lies
11 unfolding stories
12 people
13 talking circle
14 remembering
15 Hole-Through-The-Sky
16 rubbing cheeks

Chapter 7

1 organic process
2 healthy
3 protect
4 medicine
5 comfort foods
6 underlined titles
7 not scolding
8 the editorial *we*
9 shortcomings
10 Safeway Hunter
11 relation
12 sentencing circle
13 later
14 Afghanistanisation
15 search for the guilty
16 received knowledge
17 let's see what happens
18 thesaurus

Chapter 8

1 visiting, joking
2 intellectualising
3 tease
4 touch
5 camped
6 Eucharist
7 triangulate
8 think about
9 tanned my hide

Chapter 9

1 all my relations
2 merci

PART I

I LOVE MY WORLD

Chapter 1

A Sense of the Whole: Diary of a 90-Day Wonder

I like this. This slowly putting a dissertation together. Because my field work comes from a place where asking a direct question does not guarantee a verbal response, it takes patience to put a dissertation together. The patience is in part what honours a companion audience made up of readers from a Native community and readers on my Ph.D. committee. My relationship with the one audience is on-reserve; with the other, on-campus. Local protocol for both is very different. On one hand, the process of understanding, even a little, Cree cultural traditions that are thousands of years old gets richer with time, and I like that. On the other hand, even academic traditions that are merely several hundred years old have some traditions carved in stone, and I like that reminder *not* to push the river.

This research study is an inquiry into local knowledge on a traditional Cree reserve in northern Alberta. Part I is an overview called "I Love My World." I deviate from conventional research practices in that I allow the local knowledge to emerge, and I speak in the first person. In Chapter 1 I tell the story behind the title. In Chapter 2 I describe the community of John D'or Prairie (JDP) where the field work took place and describe the research consultants.[1] In Chapter 3 I outline the process[2] involved in this research. In Chapter 4 I show

---

[1]Footnotes are my dictionary. Here I will explain what I mean by the underlined words. I choose consultant because the word is commonly used by the people in JDP. The term research participant, common in my academic community, is not part of their ordinary vocabulary. As time goes on, consultant gives way to traditional educator and then to friend.

[2]I use process to mean also methodology or method. It is the "how-it-is-done" of this work. A list of footnotes is included for easy reference. If readers skip over footnotes and at a later time want to go back and read about how I use a certain word, the footnote list will help.

how I as researcher pick the stories, pictures, and photographs included here. In Chapter 5 I explain the ordinary power of transmitting stories, I explain the computer-typing conventions used, and I introduce the metaphor of a Giving Circle. Part II—Chapters 6 through 8—is called "I Love My Old People." Stories in those chapters come from my family, from my university community, from the families of individual research consultants, and from the Cree community I continue to visit. Some are a joy to write; some are hard to talk about. They tell the stories of three principal elders[3] and my relationships with them. I explain the stories behind the titles for Parts I, II, and III. Part III is called "I Love My Ceremonies." It is where I share our research in pictures with my academic colleagues. It is where I describe the ceremonial giving away of our research findings with the people of John D'or. I tell how a visual representation of our work stays in the northern community which I have come to know and love. It is such a privilege to share the rich fragments of life in another culture! A Giveaway Ceremony completes and continues my metaphor of a Giving Circle. A reference list closes this book.

Why do I use *I*? And so many of them? Qualitative research conventions aside, it is the only way that I am able to write about events in a Cree community where it is simply rude to speak for anyone else and bad manners to ask a lot of questions. Using *I* makes sense in a place where even replies to

---

[3]An elder is someone who has lived many years. Elder is a title of respect for someone's wisdom. The person does not necessarily have to be very old to gain that honour. Joseph Couture (1991) pays "tribute to their contemporary emergence" (p. 201). He shows how their traditional values are dynamic and continuously re-expressed in new forms. Shawn Wilson's (1995) master's thesis tells more about Elders. *Old people* is ambiguous and refers to either Elders or elders depending on the context. According to Knudtson and Suzuki (1992)—and I use their description—this is the Elders' role:

> They have painstakingly accumulated reservoirs of personal experience, knowledge, *wisdom* or compassionate insight and a sense of the enduring qualities and relationships around them. They freely offer this wisdom to living generations of their people in an effort to help them connect harmoniously with their past, present and future. (p. 179)

In my experience, they freely offer it to newcomers as well. Using stories and living lives like stories (Cruikshank, 1990), old people point their students towards ceremonies and their own growth. Through them I also know that ceremonies are a source of knowledge.

spoken questions are ordinarily non-verbal. Using / allows me to present this dissertation to my academic community so that it also fits within the mainstream[4] custom of putting learning into books. In my experience, those who most comfortably navigate in main streams (Internet, oceans, politics, etc.) prefer to put their trust in directions that are written down on paper.

As mentioned, I like this. The last time I felt this calm about my work and the direction it was taking me was after being with Sister (Sr.) Bernadette Gautreau in John D'or Prairie in northern Alberta last summer, the summer of 1994.

The Title Story

> I had thrust some papers at her and said, "Four pages. Will you read this? What I'm learning is nothing less than quite ordinary bits of life. That's what people do and say around here. I do believe I need to give up on my idea of getting stories about life experiences and then interpreting them. I now realize what it means to know too little about Cree people."[5]
>
> The Catholic nun who for 30 years has lived in the community where I am doing my Ph.D. field work said nothing. You have to understand, this is a woman who always has something to say. She sat down on the couch to read the first paragraph. Then she got up to get her glasses. I walked around in circles in her trailer. I watched while she became absorbed in my writing. I burst in again. "I mean, today I'm transcribing our conversation from last year, and all I can think about is what you said about the many people who come around to interview you. They stay a moment and leave again. In three months they become experts. Then they write a book about Indians. '90-Day Wonders' you call them. But by the rules of Ph.D., that's exactly what I'm supposed to be doing—two years of classes, then write a book in four more years!" I swear I read "Shut up!" politely spelled out in the creases on her forehead.
>
> She said only, "So you listen between the lines, huh?" and went back to my text. There was a relatively long silence. Suddenly she laughed and laughed. "This is it! You've captured her! I can just see Nelly talking to you like this!" Sr. Bernadette read aloud: "'I was exactly on time, but Nelly made me wait

---

[4]Mainstream as I use it means dominant Canadian society. Native people also use the phrase *general public* or *majority* to refer to the values and the groups who hold power in Canada's institutions—be they political, social, economic, religious, or academic.

[5]Anthropologists refer to local Cree people as Woodland Cree or Wood Cree. The term is not used by the members themselves. I hear them refer to each other as Bush Cree or Bush Indians or just Cree. I follow that convention.

anyhow. . . . In her custom she pointed inside and disappeared again. . . . She hollered, 'Shut the door! It's windy out there and blowing it all in here!'"

Sr. Bernadette laughed some more and read aloud other parts. She put her chin on her chest to look over the rim of her glasses. Thoughtfully, she said, "Look, after thirty years I've barely scratched the surface here. I could never write a book about Indian people. But your questioning, your uncertainty! Not knowing what to make of things! That's what it's like trying to understand another culture! You wonder about the meaning of Nelly's comment 'Can I smoke your tobacco now?' Just write about that. This is fascinating. It's honest. Teachers could learn from that. People here would read it."

I hesitated. "You think?"

"For sure! Talk about what you learned and how you learned it."

I stopped pacing circles and threw up my arms. "But I really wanted to tell people's life stories the way they wanted them written. I promised!"

"They won't mind."

Sr. Bernadette was right, of course. I could well imagine the two Cree women who had told me how they learned some of what they thought was important knowledge to pass on. They would merely nod and repeat, "That's all right. It's your story now. It's all right to do what you just said."

Then Sr. Bernadette offered: "Call it 'Diary of a 90-Day Wonder.'"

I grinned. Yes, I would give up writing life stories. I would focus on my own teacher education about local knowledge. That's when the calm rolled in. (*Reflections,*[6] 1994-1996, 94-06-27)

That was another time that I felt so calm about my work. And now in this time and place—the moon is slowly coming up to half phase, November 13; a secluded room on the banks of the North Saskatchewan River—circles of ice are beginning to form and float past with the wind. When they brush against each other the sounds are like rubbing hands. This time I am calm because I took my own advice from a yellow sticky stuck to my filing cabinet two years ago: "Reread these before you write your dissertation." Added underneath was a short list of book titles I felt I would want to return to as role model—

---

[6]There are several ways I keep notes related to this study. One is in a small diary that I always carry with me (I have kept diaries for 40 years); another is on my computer in a file called Reflections; a third is on audiotapes, with their transcripts on paper; a fourth is various field notes written on scrap paper and kept in a binder. Sometimes these field notes are scribbled in the margins of transcripts.

though at the time I could not have said what my topic was. I have just finished Walter Lightning's (1992) *Compassionate Mind* for the second time. Others I recently re-visited are *Ceremony* (Silko, 1977); *MA Space-Time in Japan* (Isozaki [1979?]); *Mama Day* (Naylor, 1988); *Woman, Native, Other* (Trinh, 1989); *Life Lived Like a Story* (Cruikshank, 1990); *Changing Academic Discourse About Native Education* (Urion, 1991); *Mother Earth: Through the Eyes of Women Photographers and Writers* (Boice, 1992); and *Dancing With a Ghost* (Ross, 1992). It is my birthday. The coyotes are partying; I am with them in spirit.

Lightning's (1992) master's thesis adds more calm. He writes:

> One thing that I am beginning to comprehend is that, in basic terms, all Elders are saying the same thing. The message is all one and the same, but expressed from many different perspectives and from multiple angles. . . .
>
> From my own experience, based on my perception and the thoughts that represent the accumulation of my involvement with a number of Elders, their teachings, and the forms that their teachings take, I would like to share some thoughts and ideas. . . . The first is to point out that the more information and knowledge I come upon, the more obvious it has been how little, if anything, I know. (p. 84)

After 30 years in John D'or, Sr. Bernadette expresses the same thoughts in an equally humble fashion. Compared to her, I know nothing at all. Nonetheless, I want to give away what I have been given. And knowing, truly knowing, how small the amount that I have to share is brings me calm.

In truth, what I know is not even an amount; is not an object, but a how. It is a verb, a way of doing things. It is important because of how it was given. And that is what I write about. Why? Because I believe that how I come to know small bits of local knowledge[7] in a Bush Cree community will help

---

[7]I use the term local knowledge to mean a shared way of life that teaches a set of values through action—and stories about those actions. I include in that meaning a sense of place described by William O'Brien and Cornelia Butler Flora (1992). They say that local knowledge "is context-specific, . . . accommodating the global variety of people expressing and generating such knowledge: Turkana herds-people, Colombia peasants, and Kansas farmers are thus similar in their common ability to produce context-specific knowledge" (p. 97).

teachers and educators understand some things. And knowing a few somethings[8] may make schools a place where Native[9] students might choose to be. Leslie Hall Pinder (1991) explains local knowledge, explains the way that the Beaver people have of doing somethings, like this: "The Beaver people of Northeast British Columbia say of their prophets that 'they know something.' It's such a quiet acknowledgment of wisdom. It seems just right" (p. 13).

Similarly, in the novel *Mama Day,* Gloria Naylor (1988) writes about local knowledge as "18 & 23"—her variation of "knowing something." The story mentions a visiting ethnographer, Reema's son from off-island, who does not understand that kind of knowing. Unwilling to accept that there is knowledge in relationships, in a place, in experiences, and so on, Reema's son goes on a hunt for definitions. People tolerate him because of who his mother is—their friend and neighbour.

> He was all over the place—What 18 & 23 mean? What 18 & 23 mean? And we told him the God-honest truth: it was just our way of saying something. (p. 7)

Eventually, Reema's son creates his own interpretation for local knowledge and for 18 & 23.

> And he sent everybody he'd talked to copies of the book he wrote, bound all nice with our name and his signed on the first page. . . . None of us made it much through the introduction, but that said it all: you see, he had come to the conclusion . . . that 18 & 23 wasn't 18 & 23 at all—it was really 81 & 32, which just so happened to be the lines of longitude and latitude marking off where

---

[8]In JDP children often ask me, "What are you doing? . . . Something?" I take it to mean the following: I am paying attention to you, I am not prying, I am interested, I want to be near you. You can give details if you want to, or not. I'm being friendly. I am being curious. I am being non-intrusive (*Diaries,* 1982-1996, 94-07-05). Adults use it to offer an explanation without giving information away. Once, to cut off a lengthy phone conversation, Agnes says, "My mom's waiting here with her coat on. She wants me to take her somewhere. She's waiting to give something to someone" (Moberly, field notes, 95-02-03). A very gentle way of saying something! See Naylor's (1988) "18 & 23" in the next paragraph.

[9]There is no universally accepted term to refer to the indigenous people of Canada. In western Canada, in everyday unselfconscious conversations, people refer to themselves as Indian or Native. When they are taking a political stand, they use First Nations. I follow that convention.

> Willow Springs [the community he studied] sits on the map. And we were just so damned dumb we turned the whole thing around. (p. 8)

This story of local knowledge ends with the author laughing at the ethnographer and despairing of the education he receives. Their evidence is his dissertation.

> The people who ran the type of schools that could turn our children into raving lunatics—and then put his picture on the back of the book so that we couldn't even deny it was him—didn't mean us a speck of good. (p. 8)

Naylor then devotes the remainder of the novel to *showing* and *hinting* what local knowledge is all about. Without ever actually defining local knowledge, she tells the story that Reema's boy would have been given had he known how to reciprocate. This is how she addresses her readers (the "you"), moments before she begins that tale:

> Think about it: aint nobody really talking to you. . . . You done heard it the way we know it; sitting on our porches and shelling June peas, quieting the midnight cough of a baby, taking apart the engine of a car—you done heard it without a single living soul really saying a word. Pity, though, Reema's boy couldn't listen, like you, . . . or he would have left here with quite a story. (p. 10)

It is exactly the way that local knowledge is expressed in John D'or. It is exactly the way that I come to understand it—through ordinary living and through simple listening, with the only purpose being to understand and to reciprocate what I am given. And yes, I leave with quite a story. Because I am an educator who loves to teach by example, I make concrete[10] how I

---

[10]Concrete. I fall back on a term from my earlier teacher education to translate an intangible concept into a tangible one. An example might be assigning numbers to pebbles. Researchers have over the years tried many ways to figure out how to use language to teach intangibles experienced by the body, spirit, heart, or mind. They find a term which works. But it soon becomes overused and is dropped in favour of a new term. Examples are "giving voice," by which some mean "really listening to someone"; and "reflective teaching," which to some means "teaching with sensitivity." No matter which of the word-pair in my examples is used first (giving voice means really listening or really listening means giving voice), in mainstream society, where knowledge is chiefly understood in terms of words, the question is always, "How do you change knowledge from a non-verbal medium to words?"

understand local knowledge. To do this I offer connections[11] that those understandings lead me to make in the hope that they might be useful to others. Those connections are not always neatly closed off the way a short story is in Western tradition. Some of my stories, some of the stories of the research consultants, and some of the stories of other writers are left for you the reader to take up and make your own connections with.

I mention two writers who examine what I term *local knowledge.* Philosopher Michael Polanyi (1958) in *Personal Knowledge* makes unnamed, generic individuals the central focus. He writes, "The personal participation of the knower [is] in all acts of understanding" (p. vii). Clifford Geertz (1983) has a book of interpretive essays about local knowledge from the perspective of a centrally located "clever" anthropologist—himself.

> When a meanings-and-symbols ethnographer like myself attempts to find out what some pack of natives conceive a person to be, he moves back and forth between asking himself 'What is the general form of their life?' and 'What exactly are the vehicles in which that form is embodied?' (p. 76)

His focus is on common sense within a local knowledge base where the group and the place are equally important, but both are slightly less important than the author. What is missing in his work for me is a sense of the sacred. I bristle at being included in his "us." I take no pride in being clever.

> The fact that a particular creek was formed because Possum happened to drag his tail along the ground right there makes it no less a creek. It makes it, of course, something more, or at least something other, than a creek is to us; but water runs downhill in both of them. (p. 86)

By contrast, the writers whose book titles ended up on stickies on my filing cabinet describe local knowledge based on experience and on

---

[11]Connections are simply my way of talking about how the same piece of knowledge might make sense in other settings and at other times. Connections are my metaphor for making sense of previously unrelated stories. *Uhuh* is one JDP expression for a connection. In my mind I take an experience, leap with it across time and space to one that I want to contrast or compare to, and place them side by side.

relationships filled with respect. Arata Isozaki's work ([1979?]) serves as a good example. His book *MA Space-Time in Japan* was developed from his Paris art installation. Here is how he explains the concept of the work:

> . . . Japanese gods KAMI come from the misty world of clouds.
> . . . Together with the Sun they appear at the mountain-top.
> . . . Sometimes what falls from heaven to earth becomes kami.
> . . . Sometimes Kami is what rises from earth to heaven.
> . . . MA is a way of situating the place where *kami* descend.
> . . . When worshippers wished to summon *kami* to earth they prepared a holy place, *himorigi,* by setting four poles in the earth to mark the corners of a square or rectangle. At the centre of the space stood a column where *kami* dwelled. (pp. 1-27)

In the book each statement is illustrated with a photograph of the exhibit. A sense of reverence for traditional Japanese knowledge is unmistakable.

When a Cree elder and I first speak about local knowledge in JDP, it is in the context of my wanting to learn somethings important to people on her reserve. I had not yet figured out my research question, but merely that the certainty that whatever it might be will help me as educator and be useful to teachers of local students. I ask her to help me. Would she be like my consultant? Agnes Moberly smiles. I smile too, thinking of all the dollars that Indian bands annually spend on consultants. She answers, "But we want to get to know you too!" (*Diaries,* 1982-1996, 93-11-02). I hear and accept her unmistakable request for reciprocity. I say I will show her a slide show with pictures from all over. The photographs show what I know and who taught me. They explain my ancestry. She is curious. She says "yes" to working together. No. I remember she says, "I suppose it's all right."

Somethings I Know From Before,
Somethings I Know From Reading

Currently, the moment that Native students gain the legal right to choose (turn 16 in Alberta), most of them flee from academic institutions. But even before that they often simply do not bother to go to class. In my experience, Native children, even very young ones, determine their own school attendance. Few Native students graduate from high school. "They seem to think education is good. But they're not quite sure what it's good *for*" (Gautreau, transcript, 93-11-01). I believe that what is missing is a connection to their non-school lives. A unity[12] between concrete life and abstract thought is rarely experienced by Native students in schools. To give just one example, personal autonomy expressed by respecting individuals' rights to make their own decisions (Sheppard, 1984) is reinforced in a hundred little and big ways in John D'or Prairie homes. This right also belongs to children and animals (see photograph, Chapter 7, "Letting a Relationship Develop"). But all too often certified school teachers[13] have no idea how highly regarded this value is and insist on telling people what to do. This goes against what many parents (Native and mainstream) want their children to learn—self-sufficiency in decision making, not compliance. For over 20 years I have felt and heard

---

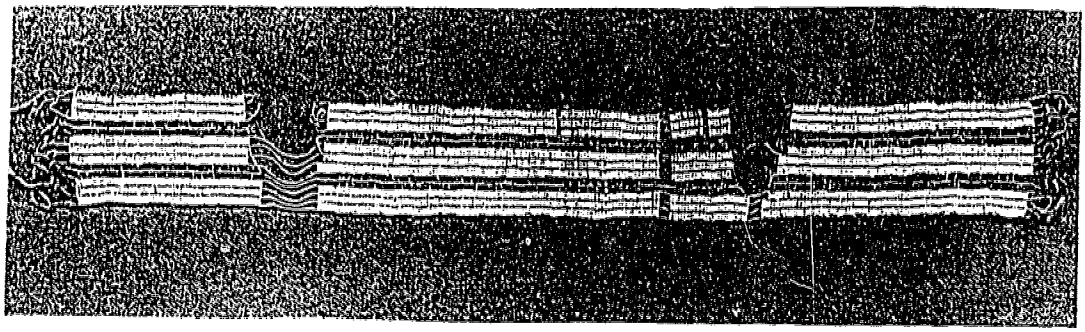
[12]Unity as I use the word means a congruence. It means an easy fit between different characteristics of perceived difference. Different attributes are combined—not polarised—by labels which identify them. For example, *activities* is a label which unites two words into a single concept. It establishes a unity within the words *work* or *play*. English has polarities built right into word definitions.[*]

[*](This is a footnote within a footnote.) One of the biggest problems I have in my work is to discuss concepts of unity in a language that has bi-polar oppositions built into almost every word.

[13]Certified school teachers come from all cultural backgrounds. The certification and accreditation process that is in place in Canada is intended to ensure standardisation. Hampton (1993) calls the process a failure. Even Native people who become certified teachers follow the dominant society's tradition that the teacher act as master in charge. Permission to go to the washroom, to start or stop activities, to turn the page, and so on are all teacher controlled, usually with words. In my experience, and supported by research (Erickson & Mohatt, 1982; Philips, 1983), Native teachers more readily give control away to students or share it with them than do their mainstream colleagues.

Native people's dissatisfaction with contemporary education. At the same time I have found that First Nations always advocate their own solutions to that problem. Their words differ, but their intent never varies; their stories are always one story—respect for local knowledge. Many use the phrase *local control.* Others speak of *self-determination* or *inherent right.* Some hope for one tribe's solution—which once, long ago, a woman beaded into a belt. The local knowledge behind it is old and yet contemporary.

Two-Row Wampum



"Two-Row Wampum"[14]
Iroquois Collection of Six Nations Confederacy
Six Nations Reserve, Ontario
(McMaster & Martin, 1992, p. 58)

Translated into print, the belt represents treaties of peace and friendship as two rows of purple. The white beads symbolise the purity of this agreement made between Haudenosaunee and Europeans when they first met in 1664. Not writing but beading legalises the occasion. The pattern is read as "Gus-Wen-Tah" or Two-Row Wampum. It means that two vessels going down the same river together will do so undisturbed.

---

[14]A wampum is a series of beads threaded on strings and used as money by North American Indians.

> One, a birch bark canoe, will be for the Indian people, their laws, their customs and their ways. The other, a ship, will be for the white people and their laws, their customs and their ways. We shall each travel the river together, side by side, but in our own boats. Neither of us will try to steer the other's vessel. (Haudenosaunee Confederacy and Tehanetorens; cited in Penner, 1983, back cover)

To continue that metaphor, without wishing to steer or in any way give advice to locally controlled schools, I *do* plan to give advice to members of my own community; that is, to certified teachers and their educators. I do this by offering connections that tie what Native children are expected to learn in Native homes to what they are expected to learn at school. I call them home-to-school or on-reserve-to-in-school connections. I do not add "and around again" each time I use the phrase. It is understood that knowledge repeats that cycle from school to home to school, and so on.

Here is the advice: To colleagues working with Native students, it is to get involved in the lives and stories of traditional[15] educators. I was given this insight casually. It came attached to quite ordinary relationships with indigenous people all over the world.

In this research study I examine that understanding with all my being—with all my senses, with knowledge from every conceivable place and time

---

[15]I use traditional in the broad sense that Native people themselves do when they say someone is steeped in the "cultural way" that things are and have always been done. Built into such a definition is room for cultural adaptation from time to time and place to place. The following are all comments I remember well:

> "They're traditional dancers all right, but they sure jump around more than we did in the olden days." (personal communication, 1990)
> "She is traditional. Raised by her grandmother." (personal communication, 1984)
> "Traditional . . . means those Native people who are maintaining and living according to Native traditional values and are usually more spiritually oriented." (Bull, 1991, p. 9)

Traditional education or traditional educative relationships as I use the terms also apply to old European customs where people learned and taught each other by telling stories, listening to them, playing games, copying masters, and practising. In Europe before there were schools as mainstream societies know them today and before the Reformation made reading and writing a tool for the indoctrination of Christian ethics about work, women, and nature through Bible study, back then, apprenticing locally then travelling was how one learned. "Before the scientific revolution the act of knowing had always been understood as a form of participation. . . . The very act of participation was knowing" (Heshusius, 1994, p. 15). Many White people share my beliefs in ancient educational techniques and holistic thinking. But most Canadians do not.

including academic rigour.[16] I can get my knowledge any way I like, but for a Ph.D. I *must* present that knowledge in a combination of 26 letters and in the English language. I *may* add other ways of communicating my findings. Indeed, although I offer my field experiences as examples for how one may gain local knowledge, and although I describe them in words, I also use sketches and photographs.

Connected incidences that I am unable to shake off tumble along. What emerges for me and maybe for others as well is a circular way of understanding local knowledge that's freely available even to outsiders. The way is one of reciprocal relationships.

For 500 years mainstream local knowledge has passed mainly from communities associated with the ship and White people, to communities associated with the canoe and Indian people. This research is intended to become a part of the knowledge circling the other way. Why is that needed?

For Native students it is a question of survival. Eber Hampton (1993) insists, "Western education is in content and structure hostile to Native people. It must be straightforwardly realized that education as currently practiced is cultural genocide" (p. 300). As Canadians we (the "we" is mainstream) like to tell each other that we do not support cultural genocide. In addition, Michelle Fine (1987) notices that in mainstream schools what is not honoured does not get talked about or is subverted, appropriated, and dismissed. My experience in Canadian public schools with curriculum,[17] intolerance, racism, and First

---

[16]Academic rigour means "thoroughness," as outlined by the multiple ways that university regulations permit me to conduct research. I am free to choose one of those ways. I am also allowed to deviate from those regulations provided that I can convince *in writing* six people (my Ph.D. committee) that to do so is a good idea.

[17]Curriculum is what is learned and how. This includes subtleties such as when, where, why, and taught by whom. School curriculum is highly structured and controlled by representatives of dominant society's government. Giroux, Penna, and Pinar (1981) describe three prevalent views of a school curriculum. One view sees the modern school curriculum as a means to a measurable, observable end—the transmission of facts and skills. The second view is based on learning theory. It shows students how to become mini-professionals and

including academic rigour.[16] I can get my knowledge any way I like, but for a Ph.D. I *must* present that knowledge in a combination of 26 letters and in the English language. I *may* add other ways of communicating my findings. Indeed, although I offer my field experiences as examples for how one may gain local knowledge, and although I describe them in words, I also use sketches and photographs.

Connected incidences that I am unable to shake off tumble along. What emerges for me and maybe for others as well is a circular way of understanding local knowledge that's freely available even to outsiders. The way is one of reciprocal relationships.

For 500 years mainstream local knowledge has passed mainly from communities associated with the ship and White people, to communities associated with the canoe and Indian people. This research is intended to become a part of the knowledge circling the other way. Why is that needed?

For Native students it is a question of survival. Eber Hampton (1993) insists, "Western education is in content and structure hostile to Native people. It must be straightforwardly realized that education as currently practiced is cultural genocide" (p. 300). As Canadians we (the "we" is mainstream) like to tell each other that we do not support cultural genocide. In addition, Michelle Fine (1987) notices that in mainstream schools what is not honoured does not get talked about or is subverted, appropriated, and dismissed. My experience in Canadian public schools with curriculum,[17] intolerance, racism, and First

---

[16]Academic rigour means "thoroughness," as outlined by the multiple ways that university regulations permit me to conduct research. I am free to choose one of those ways. I am also allowed to deviate from those regulations provided that I can convince *in writing* six people (my Ph.D. committee) that to do so is a good idea.

[17]Curriculum is what is learned and how. This includes subtleties such as when, where, why, and taught by whom. School curriculum is highly structured and controlled by representatives of dominant society's government. Giroux, Penna, and Pinar (1981) describe three prevalent views of a school curriculum. One view sees the modern school curriculum as a means to a measurable, observable end—the transmission of facts and skills. The second view is based on learning theory. It shows students how to become mini-professionals and

Behind Bars

Aboriginal people make up a disproportionate percentage of Canadian jail population.

Province or region	Aboriginals in general population	Aboriginals in provincial jails	Aboriginals in federal prisons
Atlantic	2.5%	4.5%	4.3%
Quebec	2.2%	2.0%	1.7%
Ontario	2.2%	7.0%	4.4%
Manitoba	11.5%	47.0%	40.2%
Saskatchewan	10.8%	72.0%	34.3%
Alberta	6.2%	34.0%	31.0%
B.C.	5.0%	16.0%	13.9%
Yukon	29.0%	62.0%	*
N.W.T.	59.8%	90.0%	*

*There are no federal prisons in the Yukon or Territories.

Source: Correctional Service of Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Federal Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Sneath, 1995, p. A2)

Streaming, lowering standards, silencing, expelling—too often perhaps only because of their visible minority status—are only some of the patronising and racist practices that Fine (1987) points out in her New York studies. I see those happening to Native students in Canadian schools where local knowledge is also ignored. Mary Belenky, Blythe Clinchy, Nancy Goldberger, and Jill Tarule (1986) call knowledge that travels only one way "received knowing." Experts from somewhere else give it to them (students), and they (students) receive it. In my experience, the phrase "We're not meeting the needs of Native students" is all too common. The "we" ranges from mainstream principals and teachers to band members who are speaking out about certain practices in their locally controlled school. I call what they are critical of "imported solutions to imported problems." Even after all my researching, I do not have the solutions. I know only that responses that fit come from within their own community.

Finally, knowledge originating in Native communities, shared with mainstream communities, and given back again is needed because it enriches both places. My personal, professional, and political response to such cultural reciprocity as educator is to find ways of using Native people already in schools and to bring others into schools who act as role models. Carefully, I hear what they have to say about how they learn. Then I begin to work on reversing the stereotyping that I find amongst teachers, administrators, myself, and students. I do this slowly. As Rius (1970), a Mexican artist-author, writes, "A radical change doesn't take place from one day to the next: you have to work towards it as if there wasn't any hurry" (p. 61). For example, in my job as school district educator for Native Education, I refined a way of learning/ teaching which traditional educators from here, there, and everywhere have shared with me. First, I hear what local knowledge is passed to me from the indigenous community. Next, I set up with teachers one-to-one or one-to-very-small-group relationships involving Native people. There everyone can tell their own stories and show examples from their own child-rearing practices. I make sure both happen in an informal setting around an activity that is relevant, challenging, supportive, social, and fun. I get great pleasure from knowing that we, the Native resource people and I, can make a difference in the lives of others by a simple process of research-share-celebrate. I follow that way in my dissertation. Although each part is visible in every other part, Chapters 1-5 explain the research, Chapters 6-8 are the shared stories, and Chapter 9 is the party.

What I know about that way of educating is easily understood on intuitive and practical levels.[18] What this research project adds is an intellectual level.

But knowledge local to my home province of BC does not necessarily match local knowledge in specific areas of Alberta. Therefore, in my field work I study afresh the physical, emotional, and spiritual levels of exploring local knowledge. In addition, I study what others have written and done in the area of local knowledge, *and* I study my own past experiences. I celebrate the completed process with the community and with my friends. *The date for that gathering—a traditional round dance—has been set (first for November 1995, then for February 10, and finally for March 2, 1996. After a last-minute hesitation—can we compete with a bingo* and *a winter carnival?—it took place March 3, 1996.) Adding these sentences in* italics *and adding them near the beginning of my work lets me bring home to the reader the cyclical nature of my research process. Clearly, I do not start at Chapter 1, continue to Chapter 9, and quit. Instead, I go back and forth from on-reserve to on-campus (John D'or to Edmonton) in my attempt to present and represent local knowledge. The most dramatic change in re-presentation over time is how I no longer think in terms of "consultants," or even "traditional educators." We are friends.*

"Reverence[19] for the ordinary" is the unspoken message which emerges. Coming from within face-to-face relationships, reverence for the ordinary represents my own interpretation of Lightning's (1992) quotation about all Elders' stories telling the same story. My interpretation is that their stories are about affection and respect and are expressed in ordinary day-by-day events. Although none use the term *local knowledge,* many authors help me clarify

---

[18]Levels Most commonly referred to in this paper are physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional. I include intuitive in the spiritual level and practical in the physical level. For more, see the earlier use of levels in a quotation by Urion (1991) and the discussion in Chapter 5 on Cree language and word clusters.

[19]I love and use Webster's definition. In the college edition, reverence is "an attitude of deep respect and esteem mingled with affection" (Kellerman, 1975, p. 1285).

what I mean by it (Cruikshank, 1990; Isozaki [1979?]; Lightning, 1992; Naylor, 1988; Ross, 1992; Silko, 1977; Trinh, 1992; Urion, 1991). In my work this happens when I spend quite ordinary moments with six traditional educators. I acknowledge that that may not be how most members of my dominant society get educated; nonetheless, it suits my work and personality. I never can separate the living from the telling! Like Trinh T. Minh-ha (1989), I view story and life as one unfolding.

I choose a way of simply being *with*—and being with entirely on Bush Cree terms—to help me gain some insights into Bush Cree culture. I come having no local knowledge. Although I do have some idea of what might happen because of my experiences as consultant and Native Studies administrator, I am nonetheless astounded by the width and depth of what I do not know and the many demands on their time I would want to make of my research consultants. I have an ongoing desire to have things explained for me. But I don't give in to it, not even after we become friends. Instead, I try to understand what is happening around me as would a Bush Cree child. A Bush Cree child can ask questions until around six years but after that is expected to observe. As I continue to learn like that child, I never forget how firmly my thinking is rooted in mainstream conventions. I am especially conscious of that on the many occasions I paddle along in the canoe. What can I possibly learn in 90 days or 3 years or 30 that makes a difference?

One answer[20] is in the title of the companion piece to this dissertation—my photography exhibit—my picture story. It is called "What Is Important For People To Know Around Here? Reverence For The Ordinary." A second reply

---

[20]As answer I offer my experiences on spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical plains. I am unable to say whether my experiences are "an answer," "The Truth," or even "a truth," or if they are "correct" or not. I am able to say with confidence that "this is my understanding of local knowledge." I am also able to make some comments and connections that might help make schooling more meaningful for Native students.

In the context of local knowledge, *response* is a better word than *answer.*

is part of belonging to the John D'or Prairie Giving Circle. How I come to understand that metaphor is explained in Chapter 3. Later I give a detailed account of how I become part of that circle when in Chapter 9 I describe how I share my research findings with the community. An answer of another sort to the question "What can I learn about local knowledge in three years?" is this very dissertation. Gloria Naylor's (1988) work enchants me. Like her work, my work *shows* rather than *tells* the unique way that I am given local knowledge. It disburses examples that range from hide strips in a tree to hints buried in a joke. And with it, the dissertation, I show how I come to understand John D'or Prairie local knowledge. I believe my understanding has somethings to do with the ability to tie one connection to the next and leave plenty of room and time to pursue the unforeseen. Indeed, I do what Naylor invites her readers to do: "Think about it: ain't nobody really talking to you. . . . You done heard it the way we know it, without a single living soul really saying a word" (p. 10). And you, my readers? Just think about it: No one's really talking to you either. You read it the way we (my new JDP friends and I) know it too.

Why is this type of knowledge important? It is important because indigenous people who have lived on this continent for thousands of years before White[21] contact show it to be so. They have developed local knowledge, which includes relationships, skills, attitudes, dreams, and habits that have sustained them and their many cultures before and after European arrival. It may be wise to incorporate some of their traditional ways into the schooling of children, certainly into that of Native children. Elders who spend time with me make very clear their expectation: I must tell their stories in mainstream institutions. They rarely say so, but they make it very clear. By

---

[21]I use White people synonymously with Caucasian, Anglo, or European. These and other expressions are used in different regions of Canada or by some and not other groups of Canadians.

volunteering as role models, they show clearly that traditional-education/ traditional-knowledge/traditional-wisdom/traditional-ways (I use hyphens and slashes to show how we use different words for their one concept) might be used to improve the education of *all* children. There is the hope that we (the "we" is simply elders and I) might even make schools a place where youngsters and teachers who currently feel alienated there (Heshusius, 1994) might like to be.

Now that I have given you an academic[22] overview, a sense of the whole, a feeling for my relationships, and have defined some terms, I will complete Part I like this. First, because local knowledge in my work is tied to a specific piece of earth known as John D'or Prairie, I sketch that place with word pictures. Next, I briefly introduce the seven research consultants. Then I describe the way I gain local knowledge. A few background stories complete the first part of this study.

Throughout I insert relevant pictures; all but the wampum illustration are mine. And I insert relevant literature; not all of that is my work. Some comes from northern Alberta (Meili, 1991; Pillwax, 1992; Sewall, 1981; Young, Ingram, & Swartz, 1989). Because so much relevant writing about Native Indian peoples is of a generic[23] nature, I connect and compare what I learn in John D'or Prairie to stories from elsewhere. But when the emphasis shifts to other Native tribes,[24] important local differences sometimes get swallowed up,

---

[22]I mean <u>academic</u> to mean what it does in ordinary unselfconscious mainstream conversations—theoretical and thought about. This is Webster's (Kellerman, 1975) definition: "Pertaining to a school, particularly of higher education; relating to liberal or classical studies, rather than vocational; theoretical; having no practical value; learned, but lacking in practical application of knowledge" (p. 8).

[23]<u>Generic</u> applies to all of the individuals of one group. It also means not registered as a trademark. Here I use the word in reference to *generic Indian.* This brings to mind an imagined person who does not exist in blood and spirit, but does exist as an image. The image is most often created by commonalities in beliefs that tend to hold true for all Native nations while not really belonging to any one of them. Nor does it necessarily fit a specific person.

[24]I define <u>tribe</u> as a distinct group of people who have a shared cultural ancestry.

and I am unable to establish a clear dividing line between generic and stereotyped knowledge. At the very start of this research I asked the Little Red River Cree Nation Board of Education for help with this question. Once I had a draft document, they appointed two people to read my work and offer valuable advice. I incorporated their suggestions.

Carolyn Heilbrun (1988) in *Writing a Woman's Life* says, "Power consists to a large extent in deciding what stories will be told" (p. 44). I pray that I decide wisely which stories to tell and which to leave alone. The closer they get to my heart and to my academic community, the harder they are to talk about. "Creation is not passive," Lee Maracle (1990, p. 8) reminds me. I take risks readily and often, and I approach each with a sense of wonder and fear. Which story is best to include? Best for whom? My fear is justified when I misjudge who I can safely tell my stories. I get clobbered but recover.

Rupert Ross (1992) risks being inaccurate rather than silent. After toiling for four years against unequal power relationships, I am silent. Fear of retaliation by those in power prevents me from discussing many of my on-campus experiences with even close friends.

Not so in John D'or Prairie. Although we begin this process as research consultants, we finish the process as friends. The reciprocal process is one of "trying to explain ourselves to each other in terms that the other can understand" (Ross, 1992, p. xxv). Most often that means non-verbally: in sketches, in the colour of moosehide tanned until it is precisely "good enough"; or in the sound of squeaking snow when boots release it (Ridington, 1990). I put my life on hold while I play with words to translate *all* experiences into writing. Throughout my field work I wonder, Do I get it? Do I get the meaning? Do I understand what local knowledge is in JDP?

John D'or Prairie. How I see it, feel it, hear it described, or read about it.

Chapter 2

A Sense of Place

The Story Of Wit Skwathtim Upoo [The One Who Sits By The Door]

> A prairie is a natural meadow. A clearing in a boreal forest. A hard, tough-grassed open space surrounded by a lot of spruce and poplar trees. In the spring it is a swift river that pushes brown water in and around that prairie. In the summer it is a small creek. People call both Lawrence. The resident of this prairie when White people first came was a Cree man called Wit Skwathtim Upoo. [There are different ways of spelling Cree words in English, and every Cree speaker who reads this makes some change.] It was his trapline. The first newcomers promptly gave him the common Christian name John, translated his Cree name into English as "Sitting-by-the-door," shortened that to "Door," insisted that that was his "last" name, and wrote it down in French. The French *D'or* translates into English as "made-of-gold."
>
> I wonder, How did Wit Skwathtim Upoo the old man look back on these liberties taken with his identity? Did he laugh? Did he cry? Was he really given no other names after that last one? Did he care? (based on conversations in JDP with speakers who did not wish to be identified, 94-06-01)

Soon many more people settled in John D'or's prairie. What was once a trapline became a community. By 1991 an Aboriginal People's Survey (APS; Statistics Canada) reported that 585 people young and old said that they lived in John D'or Prairie. The next story, based on statistics, shows what else community members put down on paper about themselves and their families. Well over one third of the people who answered describe their community in terms of a good place to live despite high unemployment. I agree.

The homes—a few log cabins; mostly frame houses or trailers—are arranged into family groupings. Footpaths through prairie grass connect them; so do gravel and dirt roads. Two small towns lie within an-hour-and-a-half drive over gravel roads. High Level, the nearest large centre, is 130 km away. Fort Vermilion, about 90 km southwest, is smaller. A popular pastime is visiting family and friends and driving with them to "town" (High Level), "Fort" (Fort Vermilion), or "The City" (Edmonton). The weather is hard on vehicles

1991 Aboriginal People's Survey

Population reporting aboriginal identity:

Adults ages 15 and over	285
Children ages under 15	300
Children ages 5-14	180
Children ages 4 and under	120
Persons who speak aboriginal languages	265
Persons who participate in traditional aboriginal activities	215
Persons who feel that in their community unemployment is a problem	205
Persons who report availability of someone to contact in case of an emergency	260
Persons who report feeling safe walking alone at night in their community	220

(Statistics[25] Canada, 1991)

travelling those roads. Sometimes heavy mud, high water, dust, or snow isolates small-car owners for a day or two. But many people own pickup trucks, 4x4 vans, all-terrain vehicles, or skidoos. Almost all children have bicycles. There are several horse-drawn wagons, and they reliably transport youngsters to school in all road conditions and temperatures down to minus 35°C. At that point the school closes. This local knowledge came to me through ordinary walking and driving around the area. These data are based on my own experience.

Basic modern necessities are available and generate some jobs. These include a radio and t.v. transmitter. Several families have home-satellite systems. There is one grocery and hardware store, one confectionery store

[25]These particular statistics were chosen for this story because they are all items which were answered by more than 200 people. I generalise from that and wonder if this is how a large number of people feel about their community or if this is how they want the government to view them. In either case, it hints at a place where many feel comfortable with their traditions and proud of their ancestry. It is important to note that community is the word that Native people use when they describe where they belong.

with a videotape outlet, a laundromat, a health centre staffed by two R.N.s plus two community health representatives, and a unique teepee church administered by two Catholic nuns. The Catholic priest and various Jehovah's Witness and Bahai representatives pay periodic visits, as do the R.C.M.P. from Fort Vermilion. By 1995 everyone has electricity, but only the communal centre area of the reserve has sewage and indoor plumbing. The Little Red River Cree Nation operates a water purification plant and delivers water to outlying houses. Some people don't like the taste and prefer to get their own drinking water from nearby hills. There is a scheduled garbage pickup. There is an airstrip maintained by Little Red Air. This airline is owned by the Little Red River Cree Nation, to which John D'or Prairie belongs. Small-business contracts in road maintenance, re-forestation, and firefighting provide additional seasonal work. There is a community hall available to rent for bingos, dances, wakes, weddings, or classrooms. There is an Adult Education Centre with state-of-the-art technology. One of its programs leads to a university education degree. There is a locally controlled school for pre-school to Grade 9 pupils. Most of its teachers are from the dominant society. The JDP band provides subsidised housing for them in a compound next to the school. There they live in a modern fourplex, duplex, or single-family homes equipped with washers and dryers.

At the right time of year many people like to go into the bush with tents or campers or to their cabins. There families hunt and prepare their kill to provide a basic meat diet—moose, deer, duck, geese, beaver, rabbit—for their extended families. The right time of the year depends on which animal is "in season." Knowledge about such seasonal rhythms is passed on from generation to generation. Modern hunting laws on occasion match the local wisdom of knowing when that right time is.

Some of the organised recreational activities are sports leagues and tournaments for softball, slowpitch, hockey, and volleyball; as well as bingo and card games. In addition, there are many traditional gatherings with handgames, drumming, singing, and dancing that often mark important events such as 50th wedding anniversaries or graduation. Included in this category of traditional gatherings is the group of old ladies who went into the bush to the cabin of one of them for eight days or so. This is the way I heard their story. What I heard could easily be different from what was meant.

Old Ladies Making Moosehides

I was told little more than that. For me, the story I call "Old Ladies Making Moosehides" takes a step into silence. I do not know that story. I was not there. I do not like to talk about what I have not experienced.

"And then in the spring~like this, the women would gather~and then fix~moosehides. I used to have~a lot of moosehides too." (M. Nanooch, transcript, 94-05-14)[26]

Here is some of that knowledge I was not privileged to:

**
**
**
**
**
**
**
**
**
** (*Diaries,* 1982-1996, 94-06-16)

That June evening I left blank spaces. Except for the first entry, they never got filled in. (In the rhythm of my writing, space and time become smoothed together, and I get mixed up when I try to keep them separate.) Do people think what happens there or here is none of my business? "My mother doesn't like to have

[26]Before I settle on a system of transcribing that suits people's individual preferences, I experiment with various methods. This accounts for the different ways the same words are written. For example, in an attempt to capture local speaking patterns, I use this sign ~ to indicate a silent space in Marie Nanooch's work. Sometimes ~ marks a space where she draws a breath; sometimes it is that as well as a space to think. I am sharing with you some of the possibilities of writing down Marie's spoken words. Where the silent space coincides with the writing convention of putting a period, sometimes I have used the period instead. Perhaps it will make you conscious of how dominant society imposes structured rules (in this case, rules of writing). In a later section on narrative research I show how Trinh (1989) draws attention to that custom.

> her picture taken" was the gentle non-answer when I asked what the women do for 10 days. Do people think what happens in the bush is too ordinary to talk about? I got confirmation of the latter when a woman casually mentioned that a mutual friend thought I was a little crazy. "She's interested in talking about things no one bothers to talk about," my friend apparently had said. "If everybody knows, why talk about it?"

From such conversations I conclude that in John D'or people take their time to speak. I conclude that they communicate non-verbally first. I conclude that they ask and answer a different set of questions than does the dominant society. Shirley Brice Heath (1982) finds this in her study of Trackton as well. She wonders why African-American children talk non-stop at home but are silent in school. She discovers that once teachers ask a different set of questions, youngsters do indeed have something to say in class. Once there is genuine questioning—that is, once teachers ask questions to which they do not already know the answer (e.g., "What colour is this?")—students speak up. In Trackton and in John D'or, if everybody knows, why talk about it?

Through traditional learning/teaching from experience, understanding happens in the body, mind, heart, and spirit. Understanding happens within a relationship. This research and the work of many others address that. It is Lous Heshusius (1994) who writes that whatever it is that we may want to learn, "if one merges, one can come to know even from silence" (p. 18). It is Barbara McClintock (cited in Keller, 1983), a geneticist, who closely identifies with a kernel of corn to gain a feeling for the organism. It is Hampton (1993) who writes about the need to build our thoughts together" (p. 276). It is Lightning (1992) who mentions mutual thinking. Julie Cruikshank (1990), Douglas Porteous (1990), Gary Snyder (1990), and James Raffan (1992) all experience knowledge by being sensitive to a certain place. Raffan writes:

> I came to see [that] land-as-teacher is a resonant concept for most people, but finding out *how* and *what* people had learned from land was very difficult.
>
> I came to see that the information I was seeking was internal, meaning subconscious, as impressions and intuitions often are, as opposed to external types of knowing which have to do with conscious observation, reflection and analysis. (p. 333)

He goes on to talk about inner and outer geography and mentions how difficult those concepts are to put into words. I certainly agree. After spending only a short time in John D'or, I come to a similar realisation. I accept the hint given to me for how to put intuition into words: Trust it. The hint becomes visible once I understand that people in John D'or value "wait-and-see-what-happens" or "watch-and-do" attitudes. I wait and see what happens inside of me. I notice how I write about my inside on my outside—in my diary (*Diaries,* 1982-1996). I realise that my own behaviour and my relationship with intuition both count as clues to local knowledge.

With that in mind I revise my original study and expand it beyond listening to two elders. I accept that non-verbal and non-human relationships are critical, and I look for ways to let them happen. Six find me. Let me introduce them. Please welcome Cow Moose, Nelly Nanooch, The Woman Who Passed Away, Marie Nanooch, Agnes Moberly, Sr. Bernadette Gautreau, and Christina Mader.

Introducing The Research Consultants

(1) I, Christina Mader, will make my presence visible. Contrary to common practice, I will introduce myself first. As good at listening as I like to think I am, I do not pretend to be an uninvolved author or a dispassionate recorder. Try as I might, my own opinions are a filter I can't escape. My belief in a universe where everything matters because we are all related and my view of myself as a traditional educator influence how and what I include in this study. Or leave out.

(2) Cow Moose is included quite simply because she will not go away. Everywhere I look I meet moose. Two on the drive home from JDP last month, one on my walk through trails to the river today. I can still hear her crashing through the snowy woods (*Diaries,* 1982-1996, 94-11-15). My research is wound through and through with images of moose—What do they mean? Why so many moose stories? And why are they given to me? I receive Cow Moose's

teachings on an intuitive level by being actively still; *active volition*[27] some call it. And I treat as ordinary the importance of learning from nature. Similar to Raffan's (1992) land-as-teacher, in this study Cow Moose represents nature-as-traditional-educator.

(3) Nelly Nanooch likes to speak about her life as a widow. A great deal of our lengthy conversations are confidential and not included here. Most of the local knowledge I receive from Nelly comes by working on moosehide together. And while driving from garage sale to garage sale. She teaches by living. At school her name keeps coming up as a parent who is thoroughly involved in her five boys' schooling.

(4) The Woman Who Passed Away represents knowledge from the spirit world. Her teachings are everyday messages of respect. They require careful watching and careful listening. The continued presence of a woman who passed over can in no way be interpreted as exotic. Through her, my intuition lets me understand ordinary messages from the world of intangibles. She helps make "non-ordinary reality" quite ordinary.

(5) Marie Nanooch talks at length about life on the trapline and how for her that kind of experiential knowing only begins after she leaves mission school at age 15. As she talks, Marie demonstrates with ordinary items within her reach to help me understand what she is talking about. Marie works with primary children in the school. She has done so for 20 years—this time as classroom aide, sometimes as teacher, and sometimes as principal. She is my friend.

(6) Agnes Moberly vividly speaks about learning her culture as a young woman. Like Marie, she too attended boarding school in Fort Vermilion. Agnes has a certificate as classroom aide, yet works as a pre-school teacher. For me, she connects stories and jokes from her long teaching career with various local experiences. They range from band politics to skinning moose. Sometimes she invites me to participate. Agnes has become a treasured friend.

---

[27]What I know about active volition comes from a 1979 graduate seminar called "Visionary Forecasting and Transpersonal Knowledge Processes" taught by Dr. O. W. Markley. A Futures Studies class is an unusual place to rekindle interest in traditional knowledge, but that's what happened. Paradigms shifted for me.

Active volition means moving to cause a change. We need active volition to control our voluntary nervous system and physically shift things about. We need passive volition to control our involuntary nervous system (e.g., our temperature). This means letting go of the wish to exert control. It means relaxing the mind and the body and allowing the will to remain sharp and alert but without interfering and without moving things intended to cause change. "It involves letting go of the idea of being-separate-and-in-charge" (Heshusius, 1994, p. 18). The will when it is passive is an observer. The will when it is active is a player. Using active volition, travellers might first build a boat so that later they can float downstream using passive volition while allowing the river to carry them. Still, they have to stay alert or the trip may end badly and the boat capsize. I thank Dr. Markley for introducing me to those concepts and the proverb "Don't push the river."

(7) Sr. Bernadette Gautreau's stories tell about teaching as a young nun in the very first community day school[28] of the region and moving on to being principal and later working with area teachers as a consultant. Though she is long retired, one-time students and their children still visit her for tutoring and counselling.

As I write, the moon is clearly visible in the day sky. Trees are turning golden, and the forests are filling up with dry leaves. Touching them releases so many sounds that the mice and deer going about their ordinary lives often don't hear me coming. I swim in the river one last time this season. I begin a new calendar year of knowing the six traditional educators. That spring, face-to-face I ask each one, myself included (balance is important to me) to share life-experience stories. "How do you learn what you think is important? Who taught you?" Sometimes I word it a little differently, but the intent remains the same: "What is important for the next generation to know around here? And how do you learn those things?" Or "How did you learn what you value?" Eventually my research question finds me: "What do you think is important for people to know around here?" In the beginning I often search for "unmediated meaning in the event observed" (Trinh, 1989, p. 157). Admittedly, I never find any. I have the ultimate power to mediate[29] and choose. Yet I admit that I can never quite grasp truly how to "understand another way of life from the native point of view" (Spradley, 1980, p. 3). The best I can do is describe the relationships within which I notice and do things. Perhaps a reader here or there will also say, "Oh, I can do that; I can learn that way!"

It is with self-confidence about my work that I think with nature as I walk in beauty. Surrounded by trees which hold an ebb and flow of insect sounds

---

[28]Day schools are schools which children attended during the day only. They did not sleep there, as was the custom in boarding, mission, or residential schools.

[29]Mediate is to act as a broker for someone, to interpret for them.

I've never heard before (choruses of bees?), and before that glorious Indian summer ends and while its poplar bark still smells of heat, I begin the slow analysis of data.

Now that I am no longer in John D'or Prairie, I rely on memory and look at all that stuff from last year. I ask my notes, tapes, pictures, and mementos, "What local knowledge am I supposed to 'get' from these stories?" I know old people put lessons in their stories. I know I don't always get them right away. Sometimes I don't ever get them all. No matter. The beauty of the research method I am using—I explain it in the next chapter—is that it fits with traditional ways of seeking knowledge. There is no need to prove or disprove pre-conceived ideas! My faith in gaining local knowledge through face-to-face experience is total. It may take years to write it properly,[30] but I am not disturbed by that. While I was still in John D'or Prairie, they used to tell me, "It takes a long time to tell a story properly." Is that because life so often interrupts it? I leave plenty of open time and space for those interruptions. My body taught me the value of spaces. I am blessed with a medical condition which demands that I pace and space my projects with serenity. And so I hear coyotes howl as I watch the moon. First the leaves fall, and then the snow. I keep analysing. On the river the ice circles that in the previous moon brushed the shore with sounds of "sh-sh-shsh" have joined together. Near campus, the surface of the North Saskatchewan River is no longer moving. I have plenty of open time and space to deal with life fragments or entire chunks of life. Soon I can walk on the river and do my thinking there. The next chapter of Part I is about that thinking.

---

[30]Here I confide that properly is one of the blanks mentioned in Old Ladies Making Moosehide. Many authors refer to the proper way of doing things (e.g., Akan, 1992; Knudtson & Suzuki, 1992; Lightning, 1992; Ross, 1992), but none define it.

Chapter 3

A Sense of How

Because my thinking is an unfolding, and folds hide the unexpected, change is involved. I change my thinking, and my thinking changes me.

> A story [is] a living thing, an organic process, a way of life. What is taken for stories, only stories, are fragments of/in life, fragments that never stop interacting while being complete in themselves. (Trinh, 1989, p. 143)

Recall the earlier, less ambitious plan—to find out what local knowledge might be in the stories that two traditional educators tell about their lives. But when I take those exploratory taped conversations home and examine them carefully, I get frightened by what stares me in the face. If I cut out a piece, where do I fit it? Local knowledge quickly emerges exactly as Trinh describes it—an interactive organic process. She writes, "The same story has always been changing, for things which do not shift and grow cannot continue to circulate" (p. 123). Barre Toelken's (1979) words are related as he writes about "variation and tradition." He makes the point that it is the relationship between change and continuance which allows cultures to adapt and live. And me too! Because of this work I also shift my positions and grow emotionally, spiritually, intellectually, and physically (I put on weight from all that sitting). I learn that to participate in fragments of/in life in a Bush Cree Native community, I need to form ongoing relationships. And that too changes me on all levels. Those levels, I notice, are all hooked together. No matter what the story, whether I live it with my research consultants or hear them speak it, the non-verbal fragments of/in life remind me of each other. Each one is tied to the next. Pull out one, the rest tumble along. And so it is with the lives of my research consultants. Their beliefs and actions seem to say, "I try to do what I say is important." And mine too. It is as though each of us nods, "I answer with my

living." It is Cruikshank (1990) who quotes Yukon elder Mrs. Angela Sidney: "I've tried to live my life right, just like a story" (p. 20). How Mrs. Sidney acts is who she is. Just like Marie, Agnes, and Sr. Bernadette do in Part II. Just like Cow Moose, The Woman Who Passed Away, Nelly Nanooch, and I all do, throughout Parts I, II, and III.

I now give to you a story as told to me on October 8, 1994. I put it here to show one way I fit within our research story.

Remembering

> Marie is telling me this story on the phone. "They mentioned something about you. They remember the way you were working in the bush. You like to do those things. You were really interested in our culture. My husband and Agnes' husband Louis, my sister and my other brother—you remember him: He cut up the moosemeat. That day you took pictures too—we were cutting up moosemeat. We were remembering you."
>
> "'They were trying to help her out in remembering. The way we lived it. Seen it. Heard it.' One of the men said that."
>
> Here I imagine the husband who spoke was probably lip-pointing[31] at Marie and Agnes to indicate who "they" were. (based on M. Nanooch, field notes, 94-10-08)

As one of seven consultants, I come for brief periods from the Outside and go back to the Outside. But although I do that, I join the community. I make friends, I work and play, I watch and listen and help out. I notice how readily people give things away, and I join in that too. They give me an invitation to a potluck; I make double the amount of potato pancakes that's expected and encourage people to take them home. I saw my Cree landlady do that with her rice casserole. People tell me stories about their youth. I show them slides of mine. They tease me with a raunchy nickname I can't shake. I turn red but laugh back with mighty hunter stories and create "in-jokes" about an unnamed friend who snared one skinny little rabbit when he had wanted to feed four of

---

[31] Lip-pointing is a local custom whereby people point out something with pursed lips in the same way that others might point with a finger, an extended arm, or their chin, according to their tradition.

us on moose all weekend. I do that even if the rabbit story sets me up as the target for yet more humour: "She brings us bark from 500 miles away, and it's good for nothing!" People tell me how the mighty hunter freely tells that in-joke at his expense (personal communication, 95-01-09). Of course, there are jokes that people tell which I do not hear about, and there are those that I do not re-tell. A family gives me moosemeat. I invite them to help me eat it. And so it goes. Reciprocal, informal, ordinary, quietly generous. A circle built from giving. A Giving Circle.

Through trial and error and with goodwill and reciprocity and perhaps even a little trust (Axelrod, 1984; Knudtson & Suzuki, 1992), we set up relationships in a circle of giving. "Just make friends with one of us. You'll learn," I have heard Native friends say to anyone who wanted to understand First Nations cultures. This echoes my earlier advice to certified teachers. Furthermore, this phrase is an example of one of Native people's own solutions, also already mentioned, to improve schools. And for years I have said and lived precisely that. Over and over I pass on this advice—a gift from the Native community to the mainstream one. But now that I am "upgrading," as a Stoney friend calls my Ph.D. work, I have a well-defined role. It is to write down what I understand about local knowledge from within my relationship with six traditional educators.

Methodology

There are broad steps I follow as researcher in figuring out how I learn local knowledge. The steps do not go up and down like a staircase. They are more like taking steps on a path around a northern prairie. Observations and disclosures deepen the immediate experience and make an entirely ordinary

walk a memorable walk. Adventures happen. Small stories[32] are traded. Sometimes they appear to be complete fragments like "Remembering" or "The Title Story." But other times, as Rupert Ross (1992) writes, "None of the parts can be fully understood without reference to the whole" (p. xxvi). In either case you, the reader, are asked to show patience until other stories have had a chance to unfold. Each adds to the significance of an earlier story or a later one.

Narrative Research

I chose to follow the conventions of narrative research because narrative research begins with the acceptance that I, the author, am *in* the stories. (This is in contrast to a method of reporting where researchers carefully remove all reference to themselves—no "I's" or "me's" in their work—to achieve objectivity.) Even as we (the six traditional educators and I) hear the stories, reflect upon them, and re-tell them, our being rubs off and changes both the stories and us—politically, personally, and relationally (Carter, 1993; Hollingsworth, Dybdahl, & Minarik, 1993). Michael Connelly and D. Jean Clandinin (1990) define *narrative research* as a way of examining lived and told stories to understand the way we experience the world. People tell stories of their lives to understand them. A backwards look at my experiences results in a series of fragments which I then arrange in such a way that they make a sensible story. Not all are lived. Some are dreamt, others intuited. My research consultants and I, we live and tell our stories about local knowledge to each other so that we can understand both ourselves and each other.

---

[32]Small stories are moments that need no or very little explanation to make sense. Even though they are an extremely brief description from a larger context, small stories resonate with other experiences that the person has had.

Data about such experiences can be collected through various means from interviews to objects (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Such information they call *field text.* It is what the narrative researcher will interpret. As narrative researcher, I look for stories that have a place (where something "takes place"), a timeline (local knowledge tells me that time is circular and events and relationships recur like the seasons), characters (here they are seven major and several minor ones), and a plot (things happen). Who I am and what I value influence my choice of stories for this dissertation. Chapter 4 goes into greater detail. I include, or exclude, fragments of/in life that do, or do not, add a sense of balance and have irresistible timespace, characters, and plot lines; and those with whom I form a sense of the whole or unity (Boice, 1992; Heshusius, 1994; Lightning, 1992; McClintock, cited in Keller, 1983; Silko, 1977). I respect the way the stories unfold. I participate in their unfolding. I try to find meaning in the stories and understand the unfolding. I come to know myself better. I come to know others better. I use that new knowledge to create individual and social change (Freire & Macedo, 1995).

Here I would love to generalize and say "we" to include seven of us traditional educators. I want to say, "We make choices about what to include in this dissertation based on who we are, because that is what influences how we choose." I want to say, "We also choose to include or exclude fragments of/in life that do or do not have irresistible timespace, characters, and plot lines as well as those with whom we strongly identify." I want to change all the I's to we's; say "We respect their way of unfolding," "We participate in their unfolding," "We try to make sense of both," "We come to know ourselves better," "We come to know others better," "We now have new knowledge available with which to create individual and social change—should we choose

to do so." But because it is entirely possible that some may choose not to, I repeat that "I would love to generalize" but don't.

Although I am happy to work for change in my society—specifically in the area of preparing teachers as cross-cultural educators—I leave others to make up their own minds. I come to John D'or to learn how we, the dominant society, might change how we educate teachers. That is my hope for individual and social change. As outsider I leave well enough alone. But as mainstream insider, well, that is another story!

Whether as researcher or as storyteller, I manipulate, arrange, and connect my data collection. As Le Guin (1989) mentions, I intervene and invent reasons to connect possibilities and make them useful. Le Guin writes:

> In the telling of a story, reason is only a support system. It can provide a causal connection; it can extrapolate; it can judge what is likely, plausible, possible. . . . But . . . we cannot ask reason to take us across the gulf of the absurd. Only the imagination can get us out of the bind of the eternal present, inventing or hypothesising or pretending to discover a way that reason then can follow into the infinity of options. (p. 45)

Reason when in support of research follows; it does not lead, whether one beads a treaty or thinks about patterns that stars have. Harold Rosen (1986) writes that we pick and choose and variously order one thing rather than another from a list of random events to communicate with ourselves and others. "Selective sequencing beckons towards somebody rather than anybody" (p. 231). Accordingly, we remember them, those things we choose to keep: They guide our fantasy and our thoughts. Trinh (1989) adds a challenging twist for me as narrative researcher with power to mediate and choose:

> Rare are those who can handle it [structure] by letting it come instead of hunting for it or hunting it down, and filling it with their own marks and markings. (p. 143)

I choose to wait for local knowledge to come forward. Based on the work of John Dewey, Elliot Eisner (1988) also examines the quality of the experience and the tools for looking with which experiences are filled. Is it a hunt for structure? A waiting for the experience to unfold? Eisner distinguishes between looking and seeing and says that's what makes the experience what it is for each of us. It, the quality of the experience, and the conceptual tools that we bring to the experience influence how we see. Both influence the stories that educators tell and what writers do with them. Dewey (1938) calls this influence across time "the continuity of experience" (p. 35). To him, continuity and interaction between the learner and what is learned are what makes an educational experience sound: "Every experience both takes up something from those which have gone before and modifies in some way the quality of those which come after" (p. 35). Dewey goes on to urge teachers to present students with connected learning situations that are historical, social, orderly, and dynamic. Yet another part to experience is the method of involvement. Does the experience involve a relationship with a picture, the northern lights, or rice casseroles? Researchers Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore (1967), Cruikshank (1988, 1990), and Trinh (1989, 1991) all believe that "the medium is the message." They work in mediums that are writing plus back-and-white illustrations, the spoken stories of three old ladies, or photography, yet each work is an expression of their relationship. Their products are a union between form and content. Likewise, my own experiences with Oneness[33]—when the body, mind, heart, and spirit are in unity—most often comes from within traditional relationships.

---

[33]Boice (1992) chooses to see the world in Realms. There is the Human Realm, the Animal Realm, the Mineral Realm, the Plant Realm, and Oneness. "Oneness is the spirit of interconnection and interdependence that bonds all aspects of creation into a related whole. The spirit of Oneness inexorably links our human kind and weaves us into the fabric of the planet" (p. viii). It is what I describe earlier as my "sense of the whole" and "unity."

A commitment to Oneness is a further reason that I chose to do narrative research. In it, "personal and social stories; learners, teachers, and researchers are storytellers and characters in their own and others' stories" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2). This research method lets me join in—in local activities and local stories. After all, a story is a living thing, an organic process, a way of life; and I am part of/in that fragment. It is no accident that my definition of local knowledge comes from agriculture (O'Brien & Flora, 1992). Local farmers produced it. I like that it comes from another discipline (sociology), but especially I like that it comes from the earth. See footnote 5.

But for many—Sandra Kirby and Kate McKenna (1989), Trinh (1989), Kathy Carter (1993), Sandra Hollingsworth et al. (1993), as well as Paulo Freire and Donaldo Macedo (1995)—unity between thought and experience is not enough. They challenge me to take another step and question in whose service are those stories told—to validate research claims? To change power relationships? To entertain? To make me look good?[34] What Trinh says here is front and centre to my work. She feels that political awareness as I answer her question is critical. In whose service are those stories told?

> See them as they see each other, so goes the . . . [researchers'] . . . creed. "Tell it the way they tell it instead of imposing our structure," they repeat with the best of intentions and a conscience so clear they pride themselves on it. . . . What we "look for" is un/fortunately what we shall find. The . . . [researcher] . . . does not find things; s/he makes them. And makes them up. (p. 141).

I have absolute trust in a process that leaves structure alone. First political awareness, then personal change, then social change. Furthermore, Trinh notices that traditional storytellers communicate the story so that it can be

---

[34]*Looking good is very important in JDP as well. These notes are from a justice committee conference, June 1994. The visiting White R.C.M.P. officer talked far too long, and people were getting restless. The chair stopped him to let the chief translate. The chief spoke for a few moments only in Cree, and the R.C.M.P. man got suspicious. The chair saw that and said soothingly, "He made you look good." Everyone laughed. The chief too. "I added a few words to make it better," he said, doubling the strength of the joke. This time, everybody laughed—even the White people* (Diaries, *1982-1996, 94-06-22). I add this story to the final draft.*

passed on. *"Tell it so that they can tell it.* So that it may become larger than its measure, always larger than its own in/significance" (p. 149). "It" to me is the story I see lived and told in John D'or Prairie, the one Lightning calls all one. Trinh suggests that many will not "hear it the way she means it," because the storyteller means for her story to overflow the idea of "story as a finished product" (p. 149) which leaves the mind at rest. The storyteller does not need to have heard of McLuhan and Fiore (1967), who coined "The medium is the message." No. Local knowledge lets her understand how she means for the medium to become the message in each generation. The medium, of course, is she herself. The storyteller is union of form and content.

Remember the call for patience leading to the section entitled "Narrative Research"? Let me return there and outline the steps of the path around and around the northern prairie which I follow. I provide numbered steps for those who find such structures helpful. They are footsteps that continue to change, not steps carved in stone.

The Numbered Steps Of Our Narrative Research Process

Step (1) What I describe fits within relationships established in John D'or Prairie. These might be a dream or face-to-face event. Sometimes I leave with photographs, sketches, or field notes. Sometimes I tape-record conversations. *Sometimes, like here, I leave with an experience safely tucked "outside that part of our memory we can use to form words" (Naylor, 1988, p. 4) and put it in words only* after *the final draft of my dissertation.*

Step (2) Next I write down what I feel happened in my diary (*Diaries,* 1982-1996) or as *Reflections* (1994-1996) on the computer. As I write my impressions, I wonder, How does what happens here relate to teacher education—my own ongoing teacher education? I'm constantly aware that I'm the teacher being educated. Or I ask, How would this make sense in JDP school? In that case I imagine myself as the educator working with local students or their teachers. I think about curriculum possibilities. I pay attention to the still curriculum. I wonder about open secrets.

Step (3) Four separate evenings I share a 20-minute taped slide show I created for just this occasion. It explains who I am in pictures taken around the world since 1965. All John D'or Prairie community members are invited; maybe 30 come.

I transcribe taped conversations. Then I discuss possible changes, additions, or deletions with my research consultants. I include two examples in Chapter 2. I do the same with my photographs and take special care to seek out people who are in the pictures and get their signed permission. Agnes Moberly does most of this. I prepare sketches of photographs where people in them have moved away.

Step (4) Back at university (i.e., for the first part of my study this refers to a rented room on the North Saskatchewan River, a summer-hour's drive from campus. During the second year after a move, university is only a half-hour walk from campus), I carefully and repeatedly examine what I have gathered. My collection includes transcripts, tapes, notes, sketches, letters, documents, books, photos, slides, souvenirs, and so on. I experiment with various techniques in an effort to find unity and fit on many levels and all Realms. I look for common threads, themes, and connections within an overall feeling of Oneness. I study my papers and fold back corners of pages, circle, check, tag, highlight, paper-clip, and underline. I make notes of what stands out. I watch friends' reactions to my photographs and remember which pictures spark a strong response.

Step (5) In doing all these things, small stories emerge from here, there, and everywhere. I choose those that do not detract from the integrity of John D'or Prairie. I re-visit the community again and again. I talk about the stories and hear what local people say about them. I write out the small stories and give them a title. Even such a simple act as re-naming allows me to think about the experience differently.

Step (6) Next, more boldly, I re-think, re-myth, re-name,[35] and re-write the stories. I make tentative connections with past experiences. I ask, Does the story support or deny my relationships in John D'or Prairie? And I ask, How does it fit on a physical, spiritual, mental, and emotional level with what I know about Indian people in a generic sense? Then I comment, again in writing, so that the

---

[35]To re-name means to think about something in a different way. With or without accompanying ritual, it can affect powerful transformations in the mind of the one looking. In these name-change examples, what has changed is the way they are treated after the re-naming—heathen/Christian, weed/herb, crone/elder, flower girl/fair lady, revolution/rebellion. The same can be said for re-frame.

stories may be understood by people who weren't there. There is a lot that I do not understand myself. I wonder how to balance life on-reserve with my life on campus. At this step I begin to write my dissertation.

Step (7) When I am happy with my product I take the Step 6 stories back to the community. Sr. Bernadette agrees to comment on the entire work. I am delighted the Regional Board of Education asked two people to look at them and comment on their accuracy. I make the recommended changes. Although the six traditional educators have repeatedly demonstrated that once they've given me their stories, our relationship within those stories changes and life moves on, I seek that approval, and it comes silently. Thus, what is transmitted from generation to generation is not only the stories, but also the very power of transmission (Trinh, 1989, p. 134). Repetition adds power (Allen, 1986; Silko, 1977; Trinh, 1989). It's my story now. My responsibility is to take care of what I now own. And that is how stories and lives protect themselves. Walter Lightning (personal communication, 93-01-28) says that elders, in the ordinary living of their daily lives, take care of *all* aspects of their culture, including passing it on. *I panic at the weight of that responsibility and listen ever so closely for the emergence of the word "our" next to something that I present for review. The word "our" comes when I least expect it and don't really "need" it any more—in the middle of Step 9, the third year of our relationship. I get the word as a gift when I already have enough knowledge about local customs to act out a small ceremony with confidence. It happens immediately after I send tobacco north with Agnes and ask her to speak to the lead singer of a JDP drum group. In the manner of traditional protocol, I will pay him and his men to organise a round dance. That's when the local knowledge I want to give away (my pictures and my research texts) becomes "Our dance."* That's how Step 7 unfolds.

Step (8) In order to fit within Bush Cree customs, my dissertation has a visual and an oral section. It is designed to keep my work close to the source of that knowledge—the place and people of John D'or Prairie. It is my way of re-presenting my research to the community. Some of my portraits are already on display in various homes. Within the context of a local dance and with funding from International Development Research Centre (IDRC), we give away[36] our photographs in postcards, framed enlargements, and small prints. The final draft is read and supported by the Little Red River Regional Board of

---

[36]A giveaway is a ceremony during which gifts are distributed. Local customs vary from place to place. In western Canada it may be part of a traditional potlatch, round dance, pow-wow, tea dance, and so on. The hosts thank invited guests for participating—for example, in a memorial or a naming, or by acting as witnesses.

Education. I am delighted that the board responds to my plea for corrections.

Step (9) Final approval for this research study rests with my Ph.D. committee. Only then can the research story be considered a finished product. The 25 copies of my book can now be printed. As proof of my upgrading, I will receive a certificate of post-secondary education.[37]

My research may be useful to mainstream educators who wish to teach on a reserve and wonder how to approach people in the community. It may be useful to the community of John D'or Prairie in making personnel decisions about their Native and mainstream staff. *It is not easy to go against modern-day fashion,*[38] *which views education as a business, and* not *hire people who want to administer schools like for-profit organisations (Barlow & Robertson, 1994; Dosdall, 1995).* How it may be useful to The Woman Who Passed Away I do not know yet. How it may be useful to Cow Moose is as follows. If I succeed in convincing others to take up relationships with nature and to learn quite ordinary things about reverence within that relationship, then neither moose nor people may become extinct. A Cree Elder once told Walter Lightning (personal communication, 93-01-28): "We are nature. It is us. There is no separation." I honestly have no idea how my dissertation may be directly useful to the three local elders involved. Somehow I doubt that a finished product will be important. *Indirectly,* however, this dissertation will become important to them if it can influence how teachers and administrators interact with the elders' small relatives and neighbours.

My dream is also that this book may inspire other educators working with unfamiliar local knowledge, such as teachers new to John D'or Prairie, to establish their own face-to-face relationships and home-to-school connections. To Sr. Bernadette, that seems both ordinary and important: "Advice? Advice from 30 years of living here? I'd tell them to mix with the people in the

---

[37]One kind of certificate of post-secondary education is a Ph.D. I was astounded to learn that as far as my professor knows, only 11 Native Canadians hold such a degree (Dr. Stan Wilson, personal communication, 94-10-15).

[38]Here I would like to include David Griffin's (1992) comment on modern. He says that the western world has tried to push all societies towards that concept—by force, if need be—and that modern is increasingly seen as abnormal.

> A new respect for the wisdom of traditional societies is growing as we realize that they have endured for thousands of years and that, by contrast, the existence of modern society for even another century is doubtful. . . . The Modern world-view is increasingly relativized to the status of one among many, useful for some purposes, inadequate for others. (p. 111)

community. Get to know them. Most don't, you know. Not really" (Gautreau, transcript, 93-11-01).

Chapter 4

Choosing Stories and Photographs

I accept Sr. Bernadette's advice and monitor myself as I do so. I am aware that I do not want to make myself invisible and get fooled into searching for Trinh's (1989) unmediated meaning. I put Christina Mader first in the consultant introduction. This fits with what and Clandinin and Connelly (1994) warn about. They say that researchers often do not recognize the part they play in relation to the people with whom they work. Often they fail to acknowledge how central they are to their interpretations.

To pick up on a point made earlier, as author I choose what to write about and how to interpret that text. As photographer I choose what I want to photograph and where to focus. As researcher and artist I take that responsibility very seriously.

Let me give several examples of just how I choose—how my looking becomes part of what I see. It is common knowledge that a person finds who she is and what she looks for. I invite my readers to come "sit with" me in the manner of Marie, who would say about my work: "I'll sit with your papers tonight," she'll say—and do it too! So long as she doesn't get a better offer! Come sit with me then, so that you know how some of the choosing for this dissertation happens. Imagine me studying the "Cutting Up Moose" photographs taken in June 1994. Imagine you're there as I re-visit those pictures and the reminder about them—the small story "Remembering."

As I look at the 36 photographs before me I wonder, Why do Marie and Agnes think of me connected to that day? Why not another day? I search for a purpose and a connection to the day I met Cow Moose. I notice which photograph I look at more than any other. It is the chopped-off-head one. Its soft focus draws me back into that timespace. I remember how Cow Moose

smelled. I remember looking for her spirit. I again repeat the words I whispered at the time when I was kneeling and gently stroking her nose: "Thank you, Cow Moose, for feeding us. Thank you for feeding us." I said it twice for power. Her nose was soft and warm. A good place to keep a spirit. I remember seeing where her blood drained into the moss and became re-absorbed into the earth. I remember feeling her spirit leave and travel down her throat. I could sense it trickle into the moss, the earth, to become part of the remainder of the universe. I knew I would be given some of her flesh to eat. With it the many lessons of that day would become a part of me. I felt the words of Lightning's elder. We are nature. Nature is us. There is no separation.



"The Day Of The Moosehead Photo"

Only once does Agnes ask to see the pictures and what I have written in my diary. Usually I offer. It is that time Cow Moose dies and my photography captures her transformation into stew. Agnes' interest strengthens my interest. I devote extra care to understanding that day.

The photograph of the chopped-off moosehead also captures the sunlight and the shadow patches that kept shifting all around us. Light and shade together transform death into life in a sundance. Even at the time, I knew photography was difficult—after all, what is easy about preserving a spirit in a camera? I throw away several of the pictures because of their poor quality. In hindsight I should have used a flash.

> Visual materials simply make obvious the difficulties we have with every variety of data. Do we worry because the photographic frame, putting a line around much that is of interest to us, excludes everything else? We should, just as we should worry that a questionnaire finds out something about what it asks about, and tells us nothing about the rest. Do we worry about the way the relationship between the photographer and the people being photographed affects the material we get? We should, just as we should try to understand the effect of the relationship between investigator and the people investigated. (Becker, 1979, preface)

Howard Becker, Cow Moose, I, and many others share those moral concerns. Yes, ethical relationships are never easy. "People make mistakes" (Silko, 1977, p. 101). That message is the point of her entire novel, *Ceremony.* Traditions, rituals, stories, and ceremonies are always changing. Keeping them going comes down to choosing an ethical life. "The story goes on. . . . The only thing is: it has never been easy" (p. 254). It is not easy to be with someone who cannot forgive mistakes.

My mind returns to the "now" of my computer screen, and I put Cow Moose guts-and-blood photographs aside. Now that I have explained my way of choosing photographs, I imagine my reader getting up from the carpet and walking outside onto the balcony to feed two chipmunks. They have been leaping against the window for some time. You might want to say "Tk tk tk tk" and put out sunflower seeds.

No? Okay, I'll do it and even eat some. Spirit-caught images of moosehead pictures, squirrel sounds, and sunflower tastes are released with every bite. Mental pictures of my earliest memory of touching a different

being's spirit and its blood and guts are evoked by my chewing. The moment becomes a good time to talk about connections. Connections shift shape into stories. This one tells how connections between Realms and levels first come to my attention and why I see relationships as spirit-to-spirit connections or face-to-face events. Le Guin (1989) has her story: Reason follows behind as a support system. Belenky et al. (1986) have theirs: The authors find that women tend to see the world in terms of connected relationships. Here is mine:

Trout-Spirit Connections

> It happened when I was maybe seven or eight years old. In the early 1950s while my mother, father, brother, and I still lived in the Black Forest in Germany, we hiked and one day went trout fishing in a Bärental creek. My mother was the one who insisted we be "in der Nature" at least every Sunday. One such day my dad taught me and my brother how to fish with just our hands. I grabbed only rocks, but watched as he cleaned the one he caught. He sliced open the belly and pulled out all that yucky stuff. There amidst the guts and the blood, there, against the bones, I saw my own spirit in the fish. The trout-spirit looked exactly as I had pictured my own spirit would look when the nun in religion class described it in Grade 1. Our spirits lay as one in the centre of the fish. A thin, dull-silvery vein, slightly tarnished.
>
> Now, my dad was not a spirit-damper. He let me grow up knowing in my bones, in my head and heart, that if I and a fish have a spirit, so must the wind, the water, or my younger brother. Even if I couldn't see it. Nothing in my experience ever shook that belief. Or my connectedness to nature. (adapted from Mader, 1994, p. 4-a)

For seven-year-old me it was easy to trust and treasure spirit-to-spirit connections. It is much more difficult for me as adult. I say "difficult," not "impossible." During my travels around the world I seek out and photograph moments of spirit connections. I love touching a spirit here, being touched by one there, and always feeling related to all the other spirits-in-things. Years later they are still plainly visible when I create a retrospective slide presentation entitled "Delighting in the Ordinary" (Mader, 1993) for a guest lecture. I remember how once, as a master's student in Houston, Texas, I write, "The

essence of things is such that we are capable of perceiving this essence" (Mader, 1980, p. 1). By essence I mean spirit and vice versa. In all my travels that kind of thinking never leaves me. It does not worry me that mainstream Canadians have not yet developed a way of communicating essence through talk.[39] Without the need to say so, I know that such thinking instills a feeling-of-being-at-home in any place. Four decades later and on another continent, I am as keenly aware of trying to generate such Oneness (spiritual/physical/mental/emotional) as at age seven. *And four decades plus many months later again, at the draft stage of this book, I feel like two characters in Silko's (1977) poem. When the characters in a sub-plot, Hummingbird and Fly, finally get themselves sorted out and can take their ceremonial gift of tobacco to the Elder of Elders, old Buzzard, they say to him, "'Here it is. We finally got it, but it sure wasn't very easy.' 'Okay,' Old Buzzard said" (p. 255). When I give my dissertation to my committee I want to say only what Hummingbird and Fly did: "Here it is. We finally got it, but it sure wasn't very easy." I do hope every one of them says "Okay." I do hope I will not have to discuss how splintered much of my time on-campus was. I didn't get the Oneness I believed I*

---

[38]This is a good place to address the concerns of readers who take issue with my use of mainstream. This story is for those who would like to present me with examples of White people who do not fit my mainstream image.

Bear Glacier As A Generality

When my daughter was 6 years old, one weekend she and I and a friend, B.J. Orr, travelled north to Alaska in her van. It rained the entire time, but as my friend was fond of saying, "If you let rain stop you, you never do anything around here." We would follow the Nass Valley to Hyder. Once past the village of Meziadin Junction, we came upon Bear Glacier. We stopped, awed by its blue beauty. My little girl was fascinated by the concept of snow that didn't melt. She wanted to touch a piece. I promised to get some for her on the way back. To do so, I slid down a ravine through mud and salal vines and brought her back a chunk of glacier. When she saw it, she was devastated. It was ordinary corn snow. I remember B.J. and I both trying hard to convince her that Mommy had indeed brought back a piece of Bear Glacier even if it wasn't blue.

How could I explain that any single piece of the whole, removed from its context, may not necessarily have every one of the characteristics of the group? My daughter wanted the blue. It disappeared when I broke off the glacier. That pieces of the whole, whether someone's neighbour or my daughter's glacier chunk, may not have every characteristic of the whole—mainstream or glacier—does not mean that that mainstream or Bear Glacier does not exist. (based on my memory of May 21st long weekend, 1975, Terrace, BC)

would. The theory-practice crevasse nearly engulfed me. As did my inability to heal it. That was the hardest part of all.

Following the spirit of awareness introduced by "Trout-Spirit Connections," my research now challenges me to choose bits of local knowledge and connect them to school knowledge. I choose the following observation on local language patterns. Even with what little I know about the Bush Cree language, it allows me to think about things in totally different ways from thinking in English or in German. I am told that Cree speakers cannot escape thinking in relationships. They do not lose their place in a relationship—be it with a trout, a moose, or a researcher. The Cree word for *toe* is never just toe. It is always *your-toe, my-toe,* and so on. A road is not just a road. It is a *squirrel-road* or a *wagon-road,* or a *trail-that-people-made.* One road is as important as another. Because relationships are not built into English like they are built into Cree, it takes work to fit "relationships" into the thinking taught at school. But if I look at word clusters from various disciplines, I find that they *imply* a relationship:

Education	Theology	Science	Psychology
cognitive	mind	thinking	mental
affective	heart	feeling	emotional
conative[40]	soul	sensing	spiritual
psycho-motor	body	moving	physical

(Stan Wilson, personal communication, February 1995)

In his essay Carl Urion (1991) describes how these various domains are interpreted in First Nations relationships. Even in English his words allow me to think about levels of relationships in a new way. Discourse is formal conversation on a topic.

---

[40]By conative Dr. Stan Wilson means the power or act of willing; expressing endeavour as in a spiritual quest (personal communication, March 1995).

> It is not that a person of moral authority teaches by telling something. The relationship between a person of moral authority and another person creates the discourse; it is created anew in each generation; it changes, but maintains its stability and its internal organization. The currency for the interaction is not explicit statements of positions, though explicit statements are derived in the process. *The currency for the interaction is the very living beings involved in the discourse* [italics added]. One referent to the moral authority of the person involved has to do with the way a statement fits, observably, aptly, and experientially, in multiple contexts. (p. 5)

In John D'or, persons of moral authority are Elders. The above emphasis is mine. It triggers the question I need to ask the trout-spirit in my story: "Where does your lesson fit?" After much thinking I get this message: "You understood fish messages as a little girl. Now can you recognize them in John D'or? In Urion's formal words: 'The currency for the interaction is the very living beings involved in the discourse'?" I think so. He is talking about process and a relationship as knowledge. Trout and I never had what might be called a discourse. But we certainly did some strong thinking together to create knowledge! Today that thinking together influences the stories and pictures that I include or leave out.

Chapter 5

The Structure Behind the Sense: Ordinary Power of Transmission

To make it easy for my readers to follow this formal conversation on the topic of local knowledge and to help you choose which stories to read and which to omit, I provide 10 visual and stylistic clues. I made them up as a guide to help you skip ahead or turn back to certain parts of this dissertation. As mentioned earlier, my writing is designed for two audiences. The first is the six members of my Ph.D. committee; the second is other teachers and teacher educators—especially those in John D'or Prairie. The first have to read the entire document; the second don't.

What follows is a small story, but I do not indent or single space it. That is because each section (1) to (10) is written in the style which it illustrates.

Hints On Style 1-10

(1) My own thoughts are double spaced in paragraphs that have both a left- and a right-flush margin.

(2) Sometimes I have borrowed lines written by another author. Those words are indented and have both a left- and a right-flush margin. They look like what they are—blocks squarely cut from someone else's work. The author's name and the year the material was first published follow in parentheses. (Author, year)

(3) Stories

Stories which emerge from my field work and related experiences are likewise indented, but they have only a left-flush margin. The right-hand side is left freer and more open. Stories have a wider margin than the general text of this study. They have a title which is centred and underlined. Words in the title begin with capitals.

(4) Stories Within Stories

Stories within stories are indented one step in from the larger story within which they fit. Like wooden Russian dolls within dolls, the stories fit one inside the other. Each can be taken out and stand alone, but all of them together make a set with a spirit larger than that of an individual doll.

(5) I often make reference to other people's work or use their words in the middle of my text. In that case I include their last name and the year the information was made public in parentheses (Name, year). There is detailed information in the reference section of this dissertation for those who want to read more.

(6) *Lengthy comments in italics and this kind of type (called CG Times 12 pt.) indicate that they were inserted at a much later date than the surrounding text.*

(7) "Picture Titles" are in quotation marks and centred. To maintain confidentiality, some of the pictures are sketches of photographs.

(8) Subsection Headings Are Bold, Double Spaced, and Centred.

(9) **Subsection Headings That Are Also Stories Are Bold, Centered, and Underlined.**

(10) Footnotes define my terms and provide additional information. They are numbered and printed small at the foot of the page. The word being explained is underlined. There are also footnotes within footnotes.

I go to some trouble to make this structure visible (1-10) so that you the reader can easily find the sections that interest you.

I now move this written conversation away from stylistic comments and back again into the deeper spiritual realm that Boice (1992) identifies. No. Not deeper into anything. That sounds too alien, too mysterious. Paula Gunn Allen (1986) chastises Carlos Castaneda (1968) for doing that. Castaneda wrote a series of books in the 1960s about his Yaqui Indian relationships within ritual and peyote. This is what Allen writes: "He makes the whole thing sound exotic, strange, beyond the reach of most persons, yet the great body of American Indian literature suggests quite a different conclusion" (p. 68).

In my attempt to re-present local knowledge I risk invoking such criticism. If the next story appears to contain knowledge "beyond the reach of most persons," that could be because Canadians do not ordinarily talk about spiritual knowledge and direct knowledge from nature. In John D'or, for example, they are simply and quietly lived. My next story shows how local knowledge in the community is indigenous to all realms in the area, not just the women who are the focus of this study. When I reflect on my field notes, I see how easy it is to connect everyday conversations—including imaginary ones with spirits. In this case I connect moose images with The Woman Who Passed Away and with Nelly Nanooch. The story seems to write itself.

Somehow Moose

Somehow "moose" seems to hold it all together. "It" is all the notes and memorabilia I have collected and try to sort for recurring themes. This day which I am writing about happened in the third week of my field work. Drawn to water, I am lying in a hammock by the little creek called Lawrence. It meanders through the reserve. This particular day I am thinking and sorting out in my mind hundreds of small moments each with close connection to moose. Wrapped in northern bush silence and swaying between two poplar trees, I invite moose images to drift past me. They do—hunting moose, moosehide, moccasins, dry meat, moosemeat, moosetracks, mooseracks, and the animal itself—male, female, alive, and dead.

Dead!

A week ago I was so sure that I would soon be invited to watch how moosehide was preserved. Suddenly the slowly unfolding sequence of making friends with a woman I'll call Simone for now is cut off. Her real name must not be spoken for a while. Suddenly, getting closer to her who once raised children on this abandoned homestead where I lie in a hammock is cut short. Suddenly, the trust building between Simone and me—I have just sent for developing the film with pictures showing her with grandchildren and four drying hides—comes to an end. Suddenly, that way of doing quite ordinary things within a relationship—drinking tea and laughing over earlier photographs, a man and his horse, both showing lots of teeth, things like that—that process is suspended. Massive coronary, they say. The ancestors are holding hands, they say. A hand reached down from the ancestors and pulling the old people away to the other side, they say. I mourned her passing with many others around her coffin during the three-day wake at her house. I mourned it privately and offered my own prayers of thanks for having been

blessed, however briefly, with her friendship. Each time I string my hammock from these trees she saw grow up, I do that.

The woman who passed away had not been a planned member of my research. But now I wonder how to close the large timespace in my work left blank for her contributions. Those would have been mostly non-verbal. You see, I speak no Cree and she no English.

My mind drifts back to the present. I note that I no longer have the luxury of time on my side—the ancestors had pulled that with them when they took Simone. No. Pulled that with them when they took The Woman Who Passed Away. That is her name now. Without The Woman Who Passed Away, I can no longer wait and linger to see how learning by experience unfolds for me within a gently building relationship. Therefore, in the next few days, instead of letting things be, I would nudge them along. I would ask several local people about meeting another traditional educator, possibly a storyteller. But at this late date I need someone who speaks English.

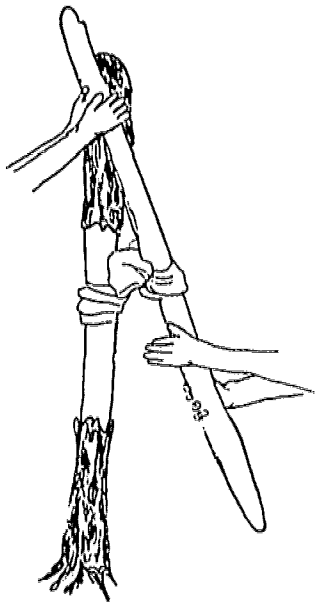
I meet Nelly Nanooch a few days later. A friend of my landlady had spoken to Nelly on my behalf, and Nelly had said yes. "Tell her she can come and visit." I do. Then I record the events on my computer.

Nelly Nanooch

> After asking at three wrong houses, I climbed up the long steps to the Nanooch front door. I was loaded down with what I wanted to show her about my work: a tape recorder, camera, clipboard, my diary, a friend's hard-bound dissertation, and a few other things I thought I needed to explain what I was doing there. I was exactly on time, but she made me wait anyhow. Finally, Nelly opened the door. I faced a Bush Cree woman my own age, size, and build. She pointed inside and disappeared again. I hesitated, struck still by the depth of her black eyes. I could see no pupils. She hollered, "Shut the door! It's windy out there and blowing it all in here!" (*Reflections,* 1994-1996, 94-05-08)
>
> That's what I heard. I'm not changing it! I like her words! I like the wind blowing itself in here.
>
> Despite that turbulent beginning, we had a warm three-hour visit. We spoke about our children, men who abused us, and cooking beans from scratch. I explained my research. We talked about Afghanistan and Mennonites and spotting undercover agents. When we said goodbye it was without mentioning tobacco. Giving tobacco is a local custom. A small ceremony. I had put some on the table for Nelly as a symbol of respect for giving me her time and asking her to give yet more time and consider my request for stories. Because she agreed to call me in a few days, I wrote down my phone number for her. "You don't have to do that," she said. "I remember everything." I grinned and

> thought, I hope she remembers to call me! Because calling was my idea, not hers, I had my doubts.
>
> She never called. When I eventually phoned, Nelly said, "I don't know what stories I'll tell you. I'll have to think about that some more. But I will help you." We would get together again so she could learn by watching me cook her dried beans. Nelly didn't know what to do with them, she said, and I offered.
>
> A couple of days ago we cooked those beans and talked some more. It was fun. We made another date. This one to tan moosehide. (*Reflections,* 1994-1996, 94-05-31)
>
> But when I called early on that morning, she changed her mind.
>
> "If we don't get together before you leave, come by and get that tobacco. It's here." I protested: "Maybe this is the wrong time of year for some stories?" I asked. "I don't know what you people do here about that and other storytelling things." I expressed interest in whatever story about what is important to know around here that she wanted me to have. Nelly never even paused before saying, "What I wanted you to learn was about making moosehides." Cautiously, I asked, "Do you still have your hide?" (*Reflections,* 1994-1996, 94-06-11)
>
> She did, and we agreed when to work on it together. Later that evening I wrote in my computer journal like most evenings, while watching the light from the sunset reflect on the prairie grass.
>
> One thing is clear. If I can figure out the moosehide, I'll have figured out local knowledge. It all seems to wind around it. The way wet moosehide knots and winds itself between the pole and the standing-up-tree when people twist it dry. It seems to be the same thing. Except that I don't yet know how. So I'll hold onto that little word *yet.* (*Reflections,* 1994-1996, 94-06-11)

I draw courage from that three-letter word and reflect on it a lot. "I have no doubt at all but that eventually I will figure out moosehide and understand the lived stories Nelly shares" (*Diaries,* 1982-1996, 95-01-22). And I bet I'll even be able to make a moosehide-to-local-knowledge connection. *"Okay, I'll tell you somethings." Nelly laughs when I visit her and read this paragraph aloud. "I've got seven more [hides] if you want to come back and help me in the spring" (personal communication, 96-02-02). My laughter settles into Nelly's dark eyes.*



"Yet And Knotted Moosehide"

What I didn't yet know the following winter of '94-'95, but do now, the winter of '95-'96 when I am reporting on what I have come to understand, is about fragments of/in life. Those fragments say how "each story is at once a fragment and a whole; a whole within a whole" (Trinh, 1989, p. 123). Or as Trinh also says, each life is a story within a story: "What is transmitted from generation to generation is not only the stories, but the very power of transmission" (p. 134).

For me Trinh's (1989) quotation, which inspires the subtitle of this chapter, connects John D'or and teacher education. Ordinary stories, lived or spoken, carry within them the power of transmission. "Nelly Nanooch" is a story within "Somehow Moose." It is hooked onto my dissertation which is hooked onto my field work. That field work is a fragment of/in life of ordinary John D'or happenings. The on-off, on-again/off-again connection of getting together with Nelly tears me up and down and down and up emotionally. It reminds me of events that I would prefer to forget—the huge meal I cook for seven people where only one woman shows up. It re-opens the wound made

by the school principal who does not return my phone calls or show up for scheduled meetings. It scratches at the panicked feelings when I depended on a mechanic who repeatedly promises to fix my flat tire "later on today," but never does. It brings back the words of warning and the knowing smile of teachers who say, "I don't envy you trying to work to a deadline around here!" In total frustration it has me line up in self-righteous indignation all the Bush Cree people who stand me up in my three months of living in John D'or. I write this story to show how I deal with pain. I draw on all my relations, including author Nel Noddings (1986), to help me get beyond disappointment and heal.

Disappointment

> Not knowing when yes means yes or no or maybe or none of these or something else entirely—drains my confidence in being able to complete this research. Suddenly, my prior knowledge seems hopelessly inadequate. I whip myself into a frenzy of self-doubt.
>
> I note the signals. My stomach knots, my head reels, my heart thumps, my armpits drip. I consider ideas against my better judgment. I am dangerously close to getting overwhelmed by precisely what my intuition and experience have taught me to reject. Disappointment does that to me. Disappointment lets stereotypes leak in.
>
> It takes superhuman effort to reach for the antidote—a walk to sit with water. What I really want to do is get drunk, but this is a dry reserve. Once there, one by one I place the thoughts I don't want on small things that float, a leaf, a bit of bark. I watch the waves carry them away. I do the same with a lineup of disappointments brought on by recent experiences at University of Alberta with White professors. I wait. Pretty soon conversations from my past float by. They re-create what *also* happened.
>
> There is the voice of a young woman (*Reflections,* 1994-1996, 94-07-04). "I'm going to town at noon. I'll pick you up. We'll get your tire fixed in High Level."
>
> After some silence I hear again the breathless voice of a second woman. "I just had to run over and say hello." This is followed by the remembered warmth of her hug.
>
> There are others. Every happy memory chases away a disappointing one when I send them down the river after the first pain-filled bunch of small things that float away. One glad thought is placed on a poplar leaf. The next on a wild rose branch, and so on. And those stubborn ones, those stereotyped thoughts that still clutch me, . . . those, I re-name with the help of authors who also study local knowledge. [I remember that

discouraging day well, even though I recorded very little of it.] For each writer that comes to mind, I also find a little stone that "feels" like their work and drop it in my pocket.

First there is Kwame Anthony Appiah (1992), a Ghanaian scholar at Harvard. He writes that in oral cultures knowledge changes and adapts to time. People are not "held" to what they once said, because nothing is written down. When things go wrong in their work, shamanlike scientists offer explanations consistent with what they know. I pick up three stones. One for every reason why someone who hurt me might not be "held" to what they once said. Car trouble. A wedding. She or he forgot. One stone is like a gold weight. Another one sparkles. The third is just an ordinary rock.

The relationship I have with Peter Knudtson and David Suzuki's (1992) work enters my thoughts. They write that San Bushmen of South Africa have no shame in not knowing the answers. They "simply cannot be held responsible for knowledge that wiser individuals, or the world-transforming gods of nature that instruct them, have not yet chosen to communicate" (p. 69). They confidently answer, "I do not know." That is my cue also to say, "I don't know why he or she would want to disappoint me." They probably never thought about it that way. After repeating that statement with several different names instead of "he or she," I'm smiling. I pick up two stones nearly buried by a deerprint in the sand. Is Cow Moose moosing her way into my life as a world-transforming god of nature that instructs me? Do I see her footprints in the river bank along with those of Beaver and Sandpiper? No. They're not really from a moose. Besides, I already said it was a deer. Nonetheless, Cow Moose is waiting to communicate with me.

However, Trinh (1989) goes first. She "speaks" third on my list. She wants me to remember that she sees knowledge as "an ongoing unsettling process" (p. 40). Yes. Coming to terms with people's shortcomings can be unsettling. If a White or Black or Green[41] friend stands me up, I get angry. But if an almost-friend disappoints me, I skirt around the issue warily—I don't know him or her well enough to know what the behaviour means. And yet I *do* know. Sitting by water—no, I'm walking now—searching for a flat rock to skip; it lets this knowledge splash up when my flat rock sinks on the second bounce. The message in the splash is that I'm not that important to them because almost-friends simply . . . slip . . . their mind. A sick child, a visiting parent, a broken vehicle, television, a meeting, bingo, etc., might qualify as reasons for the "slippage." I take with me some grains of sand to hook my thoughts onto.

Some disappointments no longer hurt. Cow Moose is gone. Whatever she has to say will have to wait. *With all the wisdom of hindsight I insert this sentence during the final draft. It is intended to foreshadow what I have to wait a long time to "get"—her moosehide and friendship message. It comes once I write Chapter 7.*

---

[41]Green friends are environmentalist friends.

> I walk home through the bush so I can hear the water. At the JDP blue bridge I drop over the rail my sand and the pebbles, one at a time. They "glug" and disappear in dark brown water. Back home I look up Trinh (1989) to make sure her work really does support my meditations and not the other way around. This passage is what jumps out at me when I open *Woman, Native, Other:*
>
> > Knowledge leads no more to openings than to closures. The idealised quest for knowledge and power often makes it difficult to admit that enlightenment (as exemplified by the West) often brings about darkness. More light, less darkness. More darkness, less light. It is a question of degrees, and there are two degrees to one phenomenon. (p. 40)
>
> The End

I made this story up. Every bit of it. But it could have happened had I thought of it. It's how I heal.

With my serenity again intact, I carry on in health.

I note how Trinh (1989) is very careful to avoid setting up knowledge in opposition to anything. She prefers to compare knowledge to turning a dimmer switch to push aside darkness in a room where one is installed. More light, less darkness. Ted Aoki (1993) has an almost identical view. He sees knowledge "not so much as something present but rather a production in the throes of being constituted" (p. 260). He also understands that often knowledge leads to more openings than closures. Exactly like cross-cultural disappointments do.

This leads me to consider the commonality of the human experience as an opening. Regardless of ancestral background, every Elder I know would agree with what Noddings (1984) wants for the next generation:

> It should indeed be our goal in education to produce caring, moral persons, but we cannot accomplish this purpose by setting an objective and heading straight towards it. Rather we approach our goal by living with those whom we teach in a caring community, through modelling, dialogue, practice and confirmation. (p. 502)

Elders I know all model, dialogue, practice, and confirm with those they teach. What I learn from work with the elders in this study is a reverence for quite ordinary events.

In "Remembering" I show how people make a point of remembering past moosekills—an ordinary event. By talking about it they let each other know how central to their lives are their relationships with the moose and with each other—another ordinary event. (I am surprised that my name comes up at all.) The moose feeds them and provides some clothing—ordinary once again. In John D'or I see moccasins, mitts, and vests—ordinary. But most of all—most of all to *me,* not necessarily to local people—focusing on moose lets me as outsider see one of a hundred daily little and big ways several Bush Cree families live and casually transmit local knowledge in face-to-face relationships.

What people eat, wear, talk about, and so on is fundamental to their way of life, and they treasure these things. They treasure them quite casually by outsider standards. Oohing and aahing are not a part of local custom, but they treasure them immensely. Robert Leavitt's (1991) generic comments are helpful in understanding the casual way that reverence for their ordinary ways is transmitted in John D'or:

> In Native communities, parents and elders maintain the integration of knowledge as they teach younger people by sharing experiences with them, by not isolating the knowledge and skills required by certain disciplines. Each skill has a social, economic, spiritual, and historical context. Children participate in the daily activities of adults, instead of practising in an artificial setting like a classroom. Knowledge about "fish spawning," for example, is acquired not by taking biology or zoology, but through participating in what English-speakers might call travel, fishing, aquaculture, storytelling, economic development, history, art, environmental studies, law, and so on. From each repeated experience, the student learns more about fish spawning, its relation to other natural processes, and its "place" in society and the ecosystem. There is, in effect, only one, all-encompassing subject and one, lifelong lesson. (p. 274)

Because this day I am sorting photographs related to "Remembering," Leavitt's (1991) lesson has me remember how Agnes' husband Louis took the knife from his young nephew. He showed him how to pull Cow Moose's yucky stuff out through her neck. The boy hadn't understood his uncle's lip-pointing or his brief instructions in Cree given while the boy was struggling and yanking

up to his elbow in blood. The boy and I both learned by watching. For me the unity in that learning is what stands out. The other people in that clearing probably never even thought about the unity of culturally relevant learning taught in a traditional manner. They certainly didn't discuss it. As Nelly says, why talk about what everybody knows? And if the boy doesn't know, he soon will. So why patronize him with an explanation? He'll learn by watching. I can only guess at what the boy pulled out through the windpipe—heart and liver and kidney maybe. But the boy knows. He took learning beyond the first step of being told by uncle, beyond the second step of watching uncle. He took learning to a third step. The boy did something. And at the end of his anatomy lesson he took what he did home and ate it. At the next moose butchering he'll remember all those steps. If not, then at the one after. What was transmitted from generation to generation was not only the stories, but the very power of transmission (Trinh, 1989). Very different from closing the science book and putting it into his school desk. And taking out the book for the next subject.

I remember how I couldn't absorb all of that local anatomy lesson that Cow Moose made available to me. I couldn't yet sort out my need to know and my fear of knowing—two degrees to one phenomenon (Trinh, 1989). I was afraid to rip into her body with my hands. Maybe next time. But I ate her and I learned quiet theology: It doesn't seem to matter who says the prayer, as long as someone does. I learned this without a sound. I re-learn this a season later, as Agnes hears me read aloud the lines where I touch the moose nose and say a little prayer. I learn even *more* when she exclaims, "I didn't know you did that! We always do that! In Cree we say, 'The Creator has given us that to eat.' We always say that."

Besides quiet theology, I learn equally quiet social studies: People's roles fit various needs, and together the learning gets passed on to the next generation. And several seasons later, when Agnes and I discuss my papers while drying moosemeat in the spring, she adds, "I forgot to tell you not to feed the head and heart to the dogs. You do that for the moose. To show respect." She calls it "those laws the Moose has" and adds, "The Bear usually asks for the head to be hung in a tree" (field notes, 95-05-21). In Sr. Bernadette's photo album I saw a picture of that law—a bear head in a tree.

I return to the social studies lesson about roles connected to the people mentioned in "Remembering." Each person in that story has an important role to play. Agnes holds an outside job and provides money to buy her pick-up. Her husband hunts and traps and builds their meat rack. He drives her to places, and she in turn accompanies him to where he needs to go. People don't like to go into the bush alone, I notice; it is both safer and more fun to take others along. (Louis also pays for his own truck by making trips into town for people at the rate of $70 or $80 a trip. He operates one of two word-of-mouth taxi services. Instead of renting seats on a plane for longer travels, his neighbours often hire Louis and his truck for $800 or $1,000.) A brother-in-law comes and helps chop up the moose and pack it to the vehicle. A neighbour helps cut it up. He packs meat too. Eventually, Agnes' mother will make the hide into leather. Later that day Agnes herself will dry the meat over a fire. Her small daughter Shawna will watch, perhaps help. It is how she participates in the very ordinary power of transmission. It is how she learns to make her own place in this lived social studies unit. And me too. I remember also and note my own very ordinary power of transmission.

I am back in Agnes' yard with Shawna. She and I babysit the meat on the meat rack and talk quietly. We are there to keep the dogs away. The smoke

in turn keeps the flies away. I tell her some of the many things I have learned today, The Day Of The Moosehead Photo. How John D'or families spend money on vehicles, not on home furnishings, so that they can go into the bush and live the old-time way. How everyone in Shawna's family works together. How happy I am that her mom tracked me from my home to the school to the store to the band office to the middle of the village road. There my landlady stopped my car and hollered "Agnes is looking for you" so that I could come along and take pictures. "Do you mind if I come too?" my landlady asked. I talk about how generous Shawna's dad is because he shares the moosemeat with many relatives and friends. Moose re-affirms that eventually all of creation is recycled back into the earth. If I wait long enough the moss eats moose. We talk about how she, the little girl Shawna, knows so much more than I do about things in the bush. Even though she's only eight years old, she has far more bush knowledge.

For a little while Shawna listens with interest. That re-affirms that John D'or children are encouraged to form varied and independent relationships with adults (Leavitt, 1991). Then it is my turn to listen. Shawna tells the story of her brand new bike and shows off some riding tricks. She leaves. I notice the reverence there is between us—deep respect mingled with affection. Nice.

The smoke and I continue to sit with the moosemeat and tend the fire. I like being where I am. I like the pungent smoke and how it changes Cow Moose's body and how it makes mine smell. That is a further hint how my local knowledge becomes entangled with understanding moosehide. Active involvement with Cow Moose lets me as outsider participate in local knowledge making. I wonder, How would I prepare Shawna for the next century if I were her teacher? How do her parents, who are "really" her grandmother and her grandfather, prepare her? And what is truly "really"? Because I view

traditional education as a methodology and not a subject like social studies, I have a quick response to the first question; the others I put aside for now. My response is for me to begin to find 101 ways to reinforce the ordinary on-reserve events in Shawna's school life.

Ordinary respect for all types of relationships, including one with smoke, gives a sense of casual awe to the stories in this section. It permits an easy fit between some academic writing and on-reserve living. That connection (ordinary respect and relationships from various realms) surfaces regularly in my research. Unity of thought, action, spirit, and emotion as it continually comes up in the works of Storm (1972), Silko (1977), Allen (1986), Akan (1992), Boice (1992), Lightning (1992), and others already mentioned is everywhere in the ordinary lives of John D'or people. This unity brings up this story about getting knowledge through experience and then facing that knowledge, not in practice, but with academic delight.

We've Always Done It Like This

This morning the first thing Nelly and I did was pack water from Lawrence River. "The water from the reservoir has chemicals in it. It's no good for the hide," Nelly told me. I remember how Agnes refuses to let her family drink it. Nelly puts two white plastic buckets in my trunk. On ocean kayak trips I use that kind, to stuff my sleeping bag into, because the lid seals so tightly it keeps the down from getting damp.

I didn't want water spilling all over my car and quietly looked around for lids. There were none. Nelly watched me and nodded to two big garbage bags. Because the dirt road to the creek was very bumpy, I wondered how two garbage bags alone would keep the water in the buckets. I waited and watched Nelly work without a word. What she did so totally astounded me with its simplicity.

At the river Nelly lined a bucket with the plastic bag. She folded the edges over the rim of the container. She put the water into the garbage bag. When the bucket was 3/4 full, she knotted the bag and carried the heavy pail into my car. Nothing spilled.

I copied her, of course.

"How did you know how to do this?" I wanted to know.

"Oh, I don't know. I've never thought about it before." Did Nelly pause to think about it now? After a while she said, "We've always done it like this." Another pause. "You haven't?" (based on *Diaries,* 1982-1996, 94-06-15)

No. I hadn't. But I had often heard the phrase used on-reserve: "I've never thought about it before" and been baffled by it. I could never figure out if people didn't think about a subject or didn't talk about a subject. But from now on my local knowledge of fetching water will include plastic bags even if the thought had never occurred to me before.

When I share this story with her, my landlady's comment is, "But she will think about it now!" In John D'or thinking often happens in silence. I look at the photograph of Nelly filling her water bucket. I wonder, What does that have to do with learning from moosehide? With educating teachers?



"Filling Her Waterbucket"

Answers come when I allow my mind to drift again. Creative concepts connect. Learning through silent observation. Teaching by modelling without words. Following intuition: In my mind I imagine Nelly as a child packing water with Grandma for moosehide tanning. I imagine it quite differently than she and I do it in 1994. How does that explain customs that change and Nelly's words, "We've always done it like that"? Nelly seems to focus less on

change and more on continuance. Her words point to the importance of maintaining traditions without considering clock time. Perhaps she means that since the invention of plastic bags, local people have always used them?

I also wonder how her phrase explains the transformation of water containers over time. They do change from birch-bark baskets to galvanized buckets to plastic pails! Is it the tradition of packing water that is important here? An idea emerges that whatever-the-water-is-carried-in is less important than the act of carrying. What may also count more than the containers is the relationship between the water carrying and the moosehide making. And the person doing those things. I give credit to the act of making moosehide for bringing me to that insight. In my mind I leave the Realm of Oneness but keep with me the images which have emerged. They alert me to other writers who can explain them in words. I search the literature to see what others say about Nelly's Oneness.

Toelken (1979) is someone who places change *within* age-old traditions the way Nelly does. He introduces a concept of "twin laws of variation and tradition" (p. 34). In these laws, the variations that any individual brings to the local customs of a given culture press against the boundaries of tribal tradition. In Nelly's case that means that when tanning moosehide, Nelly can deviate only so far in how light or dark she'll make her hide before the community won't like the results. Each stretches the other—and in time individuals change traditions, and traditions change individuals. "Balancing the dynamism of change . . . is the essentially conservative force of tradition itself" (p. 34).

Intuitive drifts and academic studies that support them help me unite what might otherwise seem contradictory (Armstrong, 1978; Bry & Bair, 1976; Ornstein, 1977). Added to my own experience, both (intuitive drifts and academic studies) offer unity of mind, spirit, body, and spirit—the Oneness that

permeates this research. I have already mentioned that an explanation must fit on all these levels before it can make sense. Toelken's (1979) explorations into local knowledge are about unity and change within tradition: "The process, not the medium or the content, is central to our investigation" (p. 40). Process is central to mine as well. But, unlike in Toelken's work, medium and content are also important. I do not separate them out the way he does. Over and over in my times in John D'or do I make this discovery. Nonetheless, reading his work gives me a story which is a beautiful illustration of how local knowledge is part and parcel of local practice. The title is his.

The Basket As Folk Song

> Suppose we hear an Indian woman from northern California say that we cannot learn to make baskets until we learn all the proper songs. We are told that the materials for the baskets must be softened and shaped with the lips and teeth, and that without the songs the baskets will be meaningless. We infer as the conversation develops that a basket seems to be in the same category as a song, perhaps because they both come from the mouth, perhaps because they both use the same or similar kinds of images. The basket seems to fit into a genre other than the one we might have assigned it had we not asked into the matter. Suddenly, we think, They must believe the basket is a visible song! and we ask the old woman, who smiles back as if to say, "What *else* could it be, after all?" Note that we have made the discovery and have been able to articulate it because we could hold two generic concepts in mind simultaneously and recognize that for this culture they are apparently registered as one. (pp. 155-156)

Key is: to hold two generic concepts in mind simultaneously and recognise that they could indeed be registered as one.

Native baskets re-introduce packing water and remind me to continue with Nelly's story.

Nelly acts pleased while she takes the first of many smoke breaks the morning we make moosehide. She quietly watches me fill my plastic basket. We are doing things together and enjoying it. That's how we begin our face-to-face relationship. Nelly gets help with her hide; it's too hard to make one alone. I get help with my dissertation; it's too hard to make one alone. Local

knowledge tells me it is better to do both within a community of generous relationships. Once I notice that John D'or is organized like a Giving Circle, photography helps me remember and notice everyday acts of generosity.

I begin by studying the slides and prints that the mail carrier brings this day. Most are pictures of winter. Frost crystals on wild rose berries, long blue shadows at dusk. Moosehide strips frozen to bare branches. People at a round dance. Each is a reminder of a story and a gift I get or give. The pictures stand out as moments soaked with a reverence for the ordinary. They confirm that a Giving Circle is a good way to think about what I experience in John D'or Prairie. The moment becomes a fragment of/in life about the message in a face-to-face relationship, with pictures and silent stories. Like the song basket does for some Navajo people, John D'or stories and the lives of John D'or people hold what community members think is important. I treasure my time in that story and in those pictures. Here is how I think of entering that circle.

Entering The Giving Circle

> Entering the JDP Giving Circle is very like the first time I enter a round dance. It is a long lonely walk from my chair against the wall to the middle of the hall where the dancers are. There, about 40 people are holding hands and dancing with their backs to me. They face the drummers and singers, who also face away from me in a second circle within the dancing circle. Self-conscious beyond measure and without a word, I ask to be included. Gently, I separate two dancers' hands and they just as softly let go and take mine. Had they refused, I think I would have died. Months later and still well before I knew of John D'or Prairie, that situation happens. A friend grins and refuses to let me take her hand. "I want to dance this love song with my husband. Go find your own." I do not die. I am not even embarrassed. I just share in her laughter and dance with strangers.
>
> Thinking back, I believe my entry into the JDP Giving Circle began when I enthusiastically made this offer to my landlady: "I'll cook!" I enjoyed every minute of it—even when the list of diners swelled to six or seven, as it so often did.

Speaking of eating, the bulk of our research stories is in words. Our pictures add a different representation. The summary visual companion piece—

we give it to the community of John D'or Prairie—offers yet another view. In between are snatches of poetry. Although I only now re-print it, the following poem emerged much earlier in my analysis. I read it each time I look up at a starry sky.

Message From Technicians Of The Sacred

****
I*love*my********world***
****
****
I*love*my********time***
****
****
I*love*my*growing*children
****
****
I*love*my***old*people***
****
****
I*love*my***ceremonies***
****

(Rothenberg, 1968, p. v)

To my mind this poem—I am giving it to you—says what takes me 70 pages to explain and 250 pages to show. The poem is my dissertation in 22 words and a handful of computer stars. To Jerome Rothenberg it may indeed be a dedication to the anthology he calls *Technicians of the Sacred.* I like to think of his words as his gift to my work. He speaks to me so strongly that I sometimes forget I did not write the poem, only name it.

This ends Part I. I have described some encounters with traditional educators who hold local knowledge. I supported them with worldwide stories based on experience and many writers' works. I included my own.

In Part II I will study the life experiences of Marie Nanooch, Agnes Moberly, and Sr. Bernadette Gautreau as they told them to me and as I lived them with them. I take the local knowledge that each gives away and re-work some of it into community-to-school connections. In doing that I focus on what may be helpful to others as well—a way of creating knowledge from the

ordinary lives of traditional educators. How? By participating in fun-filled face-to-face relationships mingled with esteem, affection, and respect.

PART II

I LOVE MY OLD PEOPLE

Chapter 6

Local Knowledge From Marie Nanooch

I like this. This slowly putting a dissertation together. In Part II of this work my focus is on three John D'or Prairie elders who have made the community their home. Only Nelly Nanooch was born in the Little Red River area. Each woman is at the centre of a chapter, and each woman tells in her own way what is important. Marie Nanooch speaks about her life on the trapline; Agnes Moberly models a contemporary version of that life within the context of her contemporary village; Sister Bernadette Gautreau speaks straightforwardly to those who come to teach on a reserve and to the people who educate those teachers. For all three, local knowledge lives in the relationships they construct as they go about their daily lives. Once they and I establish a relationship, I become privileged to some of that local knowledge as well. Oh yes, The Woman Who Passed Away and Cow Moose drop local-knowledge hints for me as well.

As researcher I construct knowledge from information written in books. Everyone who reads does this. Not everyone, however, views this as creating knowledge from a face-to-face relationship with print in the way that I do. As I conceive it, the process requires only that I be open to what I can learn from books in the same way that I am open to knowledge given to me by Agnes, Sr. Bernadette, or Marie. The more sensitive I am, the more I learn. When I study books, what I do is read the words, interpret the words, and interpret the context in which the words appear. I make judgments about the writers and whether or not to believe what they write. I set up a relationship with the

printed information and compare it to previous experiences. Stan Wilson, my Cree University of Alberta professor, tells me that this is indeed "the essence of an orally based culture" (personal communication, 95-09-10). I am a little troubled that the writer's face isn't there—but not troubled enough to stop reading. On an intuitive level Marie clearly understands the importance of knowledge obtained this way. Evidence for that is in her life—she has spent 20 years helping children get ready for academic learning. Learning from the ordinary lives of traditional educators also requires that I "read" our relationships based on the larger context unfolding around me. Books, Cow Moose, The Woman Who Passed Away, Agnes Moberly, an automobile, and so on—each can provide me with possibilities for endless connections with what I know from before and perhaps let me add original insights. What is unusual in what I am saying is that I completely trust the messages I get from such intuitive knowing. The message I take from my automobile example is that insensitive fools are everywhere. In this photograph is also the shadowy reminder that the photographer/editor is ever-present.



"Vandalized Car On The Road To JDP"

My family was never one to read for entertainment, yet I value the insights I get from the voice within me as much as I value what I learned in school about books. I do this inspired by those of my ancestors who notice "tongues in trees," "books in the running streams," "sermons in stones," and "good in everything" the way that Shakespeare did in *As You Like It.* Hundreds of years earlier others of my European ancestors looked up at the night sky or into brown river water to get similar messages. They chose this star and that one, but not a third or fourth. They drew imaginary lines between their chosen stars and said "Twins" or "Scorpion." They followed this with a reasoned story which to this day explains the constellations they created. Perhaps they made up the story first and chose the star illustrations later—no matter. In a remarkably similar process of see-think-create a story, or create a story-think-then see it, my face-to-face relationships give me linkages. On occasion I become a link in such a chain myself. Thanks to those ancestors and writers like Rothenberg (1968), when I see stars and sparks, even computer asterisks, spirit-to-spirit connections burst into life.

They spark to life because taking what I know from science lets me imagine how each star is connected by wide spaces sprinkled with bits of atoms or photons or energy—the *somethings* defined in my Part I footnote. I may eventually inhale that something—or my descendants might, in a light year or two. It is no longer revolutionary to say that everything is connected to everything else. It is feasible to think that those bits of somethings in between stars could become my breath some day. Those which already are my breath are easy to see when I breathe out in temperatures below zero. Perhaps they were once Einstein's thought or a tomato or a mosquito bite. I envision possibilities from present, past, or future that are pure joy. But back to the work at hand. Spaces between stars (or sparks or asterisks) are reminders for

me to stay alert to that which I cannot always see but which is still present in everyday relationships. The connectors in my chain which produce the images that spark my thinking—the stars, the sparks, the asterisks, the ancestors, the constellations, outer space, inner space, energy, and breathing—those constant reminders of my place in creation ask me to hear perennial questions about nature and existence. No. They insist. The questions I am driven to ponder help me stay alert to my place in creation. A cherished example is the question framed by a Stoney Elder in Sebastian Chumak (1983):

> Can't you feel the stars
> That have fallen out of the sky and into your hand?
> (p. 149)

I answer, "Yes, I can feel them." I take delight in how others do as well. I take particular delight when our spirits match and our spirits touch. Because of Rothenberg's work, in my own poet-way I now imagine that the stars between his words are places where the ancestors pause. They pause in their travels to give me local knowledge. Those places where they do this are casually scattered throughout the daily activities of old people. In their ordinary doing and talking, elders model a code of conduct that is an open secret. They do this entirely without arrogance. Rothenberg listens and observes carefully. He collects messages from traditional practitioners of local knowledge around the world. He shows how those messages have power (Cruikshank, 1988; Silko, 1977; Trinh, 1991). Repetition adds power, they say. In my readings and my experiences, Europeans group the messages in three, Native Indians in fours, followers of some Eastern cosmologies in fives.

Message From Technicians Of The Sacred

****
I*love*my********world***
****
****
I*love*my*********time***
****
****
I*love*my*growing*children
****
****
I*love*my***old*people***
****
****
I*love*my***ceremonies***
****

(Rothenberg, 1968, p. v)

"I love my time," they say and savour it. "I love my growing children," they say and treat them gently. "I love my old people," they say and show deep respect, esteem, and affection. "I love my ceremonies," they say and share them. "I love my original contribution to research," I say in all humbleness and fun. One of my original contributions to research is to suggest that the *my* in all the above mys is not a statement of possession. The my does not mean ownership. It is instead a recognition of the speaker's place within a reciprocal relationship. Saying "I love my books," for example, does not necessarily mean that I own the ones that I'm speaking about or that I'm being patronizing. It means that I like my books and share that enthusiasm for them with others. What I say is based on repeated readings of Rothenberg's book, my worldwide experience, and many careful observations with traditional educators. Even if some areas in their lives distress me, I respect their lives and stories as a whole. What JDP community members give and are given balances out.

In John D'or Prairie, lives and stories connect time to earth space, to outer space, and round again to inner space.[1] They reach from Native homes to northern lights, to sky, to stars, and back to the community of John D'or Prairie. "Old people," they say,[2] "tell us that this is the trail taken by the spirit of a departed person." Travelling past the stars to the spirit world is how local knowledge explains what happens to a spirit at death. Like so much else, I receive this information in several instalments and as hints from various sources. Evelyn Eaton's (1978) education follows a similar four-part way. She organises her education into (a) observation, (b) meditation, (c) participation, and (d) practice. She recalls:

> I . . . [learned] . . . first by observation, . . . then by meditation on the meaning of what I observed, then by participation, then by practice, but never by communication in classes, courses, tutoring, or even the spoken word. That is not the way for some of us, apparently. Now and then a **hint** [emphasis added] would be dropped, . . . but I had to be on the alert to catch it beneath quite ordinary speaking, and I was always hoping for the time to be right for me to be taught many things specifically. (p. 166)

In this dissertation where I am talking about sitting or travelling or simply being with the elders, all hints are caught beneath quite ordinary speaking. One such hint comes from Sr. Bernadette. She writes that the northern lights are the spirits of the ancestors dancing in the sky (Gautreau, Coderre, & Allison, 1976). When I hear someone volunteer that "Old people say, 'Sometimes they come down close to you,'" I am instantly alert to earlier hints which connect spirit travel, spirit world, after-life, and . . . me.

---

[1]By earth space I mean the distance across earth or water from one place to the next. By outer space I mean the distance across air from one place to the next. By inner space I mean the spirit, heart, instinct, and mind of a being.

[2]I first use the expression they say in my earlier discussion about the cause of death of The Woman Who Passed Away. But it does not seem right to interrupt that story with a footnote. In JDP the phrase *they say* is a convention that protects the speaker from seeming to know more than the listener. It is a gentle face-saving phrase that swallows up what might otherwise be construed as unseemly pride (Ross, 1992). Local people are very considerate about how they share knowledge that others may not have.

I am again alert, this time to my own experience, the night I sleep in my car in Paddle Prairie. It is just south of High Level.



"Alberta"

Two-and-a-half hours away from John D'or I pull off the Alaska Highway, exhausted by the long drive from Edmonton. In between sleeps I observe and catch one hint after the other. I see how the ancestors stay far in the sky, yet dim the stars with their brilliance. They say, "The more you watch, the more they dance." They say, "When you whistle at them, they come down on you." I smile at the sexual innuendo, but I'm scared to get choked by the northern-light smell they also talk about, so I don't whistle. I also know enough not to cook meat in fat over an open fire in wintertime, except if I first spill some of the grease into the fire. That way I'd be sharing my food with the ancestors. That way it would be all right. It is during this northern-light performance that I remember Marie telling me these things. Drifting between drowsy and alert in the sleeping bag inside my car, I re-collect the hints that Marie drops now and again. I pick them up one memory at a time and learn how the deceased are included in the Giving Circle. Somethings are put into cooking fires for

them. They are honoured with memorial dances. I fall asleep one final time that night. I do so with the strong sense that knowledge coming from the canoe is all about being with the elders and sometimes dancing with them.

From that time on I celebrate my learning from Marie and the northern lights as "The Night Of The Ancestors' Dance." Like Byrd Baylor and Peter Parnall (1986) in *I'm in Charge of Celebrations,* I have my diary notes and drawings to remind me of those special moments the night I sleep in my car in Paddle Prairie:

> After sleeping for several hours I woke up to a magnificent display of northern lights. Swirls of white and green with spikes like icicles on some of them. They danced me to sleep again. More of the same an hour later. An hour after that they were still there—I could tell, though, that the clouds were throwing a cover over them. Barefoot, I went outside to have nothing in between us. What I remember thinking is that no matter what else may or may not happen on this trip, I will have seen the dancing ancestors. It will be enough. (based on *Diaries,* 1982-1996, 94-10-03)

The next time I would drive past this place would be several moon cycles later on my way to a feast and dance in memory of John D'or Prairie ancestors. Marie would calm my fears about travelling in mid-winter with the words, "It won't be too cold. Not really! Not like minus 40 or anything" (based on field notes, 95-01-09). I would go to honour The Woman Who Passed Away. I would honour the hint that Marie Nanooch extends. I would participate.

I begin my story of how I get local knowledge from Marie by describing the time that she and I are trading northern-light stories on the phone (field notes, 95-01-09). Gradually, she shifts the subject to a specific ceremony, and just as casually instructs me on how to take part in it. She drops the hint that the memorial celebration is two weeks away. Like Eaton (1978), I too "had a sudden warm feeling of acceptance," followed by "but one mustn't count too much on its lasting" (p. 61). I say, "I'll bring my story about you and read it

to you." She says, "That would be nice." We talk a long time. Then she says, "I'm tired now. I'll tell you more stories next time we meet." We hang up (field notes, 95-01-09). I regret that many of her experiences don't get written down. Of those that do, most will never make it into a book. Two weeks later I write in my diary:

> As it turns out, this trip north is a good time for celebrating but not for reading draft dissertation stories. I cannot compete with Marie's passion for bingo. I have to put away till later my questions about the memorial ceremony I participated in this weekend. I have to wait for the time to be right to discuss Marie's life story. I have to wait for me to be taught somethings specifically. (based on *Diaries,* 1982-1996, 95-01-25)

I wonder, What is the untold story behind that longed-for conversation with Marie which never happens?

So on my own I do the best I can. On my own means trusting my judgment without verbal input from anyone else. On my own means establishing standards based on my intuition and experience of how others, and me too, would *not* want to be seen. In dominant society silencing stories that are hard to talk about maintains the status quo (Freire, 1970). But in Native communities keeping stories quiet that are hard to talk about is a form of respect (Ross, 1992). Because I want this dissertation to be balanced, I devote a great deal of time to thinking about ways that I can unite these apparently contradictory customs and to including stories which are hard to talk about from my own experience in this dissertation. To tell only those from JDP violates my intolerance for Afghanistanisation—but that is a bridge to cross a little later.

This next story is one that never gets discussed at all. I call it "clip-art" after the software I can buy which lets me copy, insert, and re-arrange stock pictures in between my own computer work. To create "Clip-Art With Marie's Life Stories," I clip, I cut-and-paste, I move a word here, a phrase there, hoping

she'll like the result. My re-telling of her life experiences is snipped from winding stories and repeated so that the order of the years becomes central and Marie takes second place. Much of the information comes from a timeline I create and she approves of with clear indifference. I think that I will need the factual information it contains once I am no longer staying in John D'or. Purposefully, I approach Marie with agenda in hand. I worry about not having the words right in case I later want to re-organise or add to the transcriptions of our taped conversations. In them she describes events, but often not in chronological order. Her way of storytelling reminds me of Hyemayohsts Storm's (1972) work. In his book *Seven Arrows,* the same story returns to the lives of many generations of animals and people who often live in different places. It is hard to tell whether the hero in any one story is the grandmother, daughter, mother, or great-grandmother of a relative in an earlier and related story that Storm tells. It becomes obvious in both Storm's and Marie Nanooch's storytelling that the present is only the future from the past. Or as Stan Wilson adds, "The present is only the past from the future" (personal communication, 95-09-10). Time is circular.

Marie humours me. She doesn't seem to think that a timeline, whether with or without mistakes, is important. Three more times "we" revise my chart, and still there are gaps. Each time she says, "This is good. You've got it right." But each time I hesitate. I soon return with more information that I need to fit into that structure. She just shakes her head in disagreement and says nothing. Eventually, I just fill up my chart with my own marks and markings. As I write about my attempts at using a facts-and-figures timeline to sort out circular northern stories, I cannot help but grimace. In the process of creating her life story from it, I've learned somethings important about sorting stories. It is that each storyteller sorts her own, and every edition is

valid. And—as storytellers we sift our lives squarely into all our stories. *"My God!" I gasp as I re-read this section in my draft document. An insight lets me connect it to the joke about the horse that "don't look too good" in picture #5, Chapter 9. Full marks to my gut for alerting my brain that I ought to re-consider the timeline. Full marks to my mind for listening. Full marks to me for taking the hint that intuition dropped and for not including that timeline!*

Exactly how do I realize that stories use me to keep going but do not need me to sort them out? I watch how Marie organises the stories of her life and decides which ones to tell; I practice screening my own and notice how hers are continually set in motion. That's how I learn.

Fifty years into my life, 30 years into my career, three years into my research I feel ready to offer what I can to keep the stories going. As teacher-educator I want my study to make a difference to young women who work with unfamiliar local knowledge anywhere, to those who teach on-reserve, to their children who go with them, and to their children's playmates—the young women's students. One story I have sorted out is how on-reserve schooling uses structures such as timelines to help understanding. And how on-reserve living uses rhythms and cycles from stories and nature to help understanding. Both have their own conventions and language. Marie's life lends itself to either. Here, I present her story in a linear-format first. The story that is circular comes after that.

My questions: What do you think is important for people to know around here? Important enough so that it should be passed on? My responses follow.

Clip-Art With Marie's Life Stories

Marie will be 62 in 1996, she tells me. Born 1934; "March," she confirms. Her parents are Madeline Peechemow and Guillaume Moberly. She calls them her Real Mom and Dad. She is the seventh of their nine children. As a small girl she lived with her Real Mom and Dad, eight brothers and sisters. She says, "I don't remember my childhood days too much, you know. Just a

few things (M. Nanooch, transcript, 93-11-02). With that she skips over her early years. Instead she talks to me about life on the trapline as a young woman with her mom and dad who also raised her. She gives lots of details about making moosehides. She often mentions Little Red, a place that seems to hold her spirit within its land.

By *Little Red* she means the area where the Little Red River meets the Peace River and where families used to meet to trade. Since long-ago-times the river banks have shifted, but people still meet as they did then. They exchange news, re-affirm the old, and support their young. They celebrate their own gathering. They gather bush food. Bush food includes wild meat, plants, berries, and medicine. Each was used in its own season and still is, supplemented by store-bought sugar, tea, flour, lard, and prescription drugs. Now, as then, local people adjust to the winter-spring-summer-fall rhythm of the bush. "Bushlife," Marie calls it.

Marie tells me she is eight years old when she is sent to nearby Fort Vermilion to go to mission school. She does not talk to me about those days. In 1949 when she is 15 she leaves St. Henry's Mission School and spends two years learning how to live in the bush. She says, "That's when my education about my culture started." I never hear her pass judgment on those days.

Two years later Marie marries Francis Nanooch. Over the next 20 years they have 11 children. In 1973, when her youngest is three, Marie accepts a job in John D'Or Prairie as teaching assistant (T.A.). She is inspired to do so by her sister, who was the first T.A. in the school.

> And then she had quit.
> Or was fired somewhere.
> Anyway, ah, she was, ah,
> coming to school irregularly, I guess.
> So they put an application for a T.A.
> So I thought, Ah, why not try?
> Since my sister had tried.
> So I went and put an application.
> And I was the only one that put an application.
> Nobody else.
> So I didn't have to compete with anybody.
> I was on the job right away.
> So I started working. (M. Nanooch, transcript, 93-11-02)

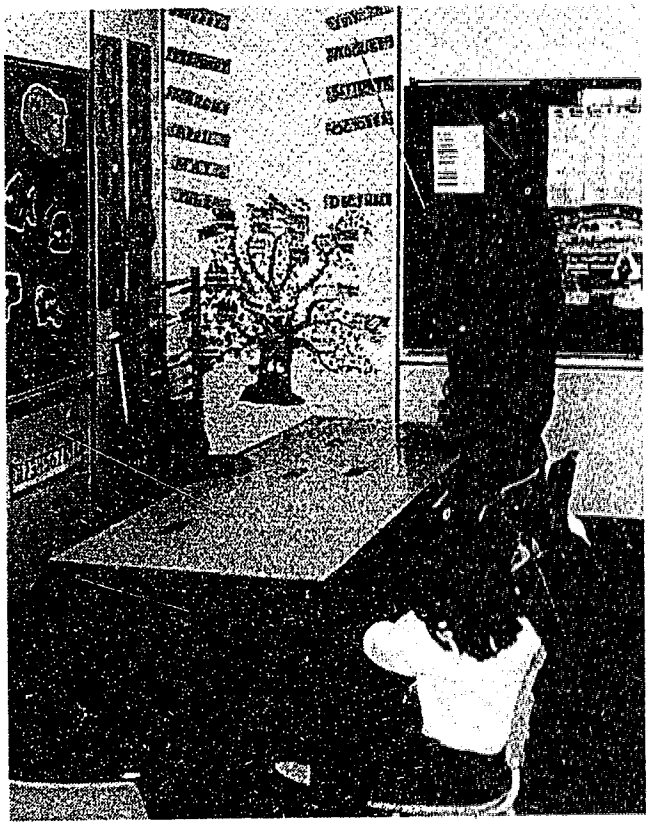
Except for a brief return to trapping, Marie is T.A. for 20 years. Sometimes she does the work of teacher, sometimes of principal. When I meet her she is in her second year as Agnes Moberly's helper in a Primary Readiness (P.R.) room for four- and five-year-olds.

During our first meeting I recall wondering silently how many teachers owe their permanent certificate to Marie's skills as unsung teacher-educator. Aloud I wonder, "I bet you've seen a few things!" She grins:

> Yes, I did. I've seen quite a few things.
> Quite a few new faces too. Old and new [laugh].

Had a lot of experience.
Especially the ones I worked with.
I've learned lots.
Different ways of teaching. (M. Nanooch, transcript, 93-11-02)

Marie likes the academic[3] focus of school teaching. Agnes and she divide their jobs along those lines. Agnes does the book work, and Marie gives lessons. They want their students to graduate from school and to enjoy being there. "I like giving them their lessons," Marie says as she gathers them around and uses a pointer to direct the children's attention to her work on the board. I capture the moment in a photograph. The teaching I see Marie do is colour, cut and paste, choral work: numbers, body parts, calendar, word recognition, and so on. To her, such direct instruction is what school is all about. I see evidence of that in Marie's words when she says, "I'm gonna give you some work now. Some paperwork" (P.R. room, field notes, 94-05-25, p. 1)



"Giving Them Their Lessons"

Later that day she says, "I want to get some colouring stuff for you guys 'cause you don't have any work" (P.R. room, field notes, 94-05-25, p. 2). She learned to value paperwork at

---

[3]See earlier academic footnote.

mission school. It is related to what she means by the "different ways of teaching." Different ways of teaching are the various techniques for helping her students memorize facts and figures. Marie's supervising teachers show them to her. Marie memorizes that knowledge. With the exception of Agnes, most of the teachers have been young and White. It is their mandated curriculum that she follows. And to graduate from the system, the students and their parents will need to choose to pay the price to get the mandated curriculum information (e.g., go to school every day) and understand the value of the price (e.g., is it worth going home early in order to get up and get to school on time the next morning?) and the value of the information (e.g., the times tables or the made-from-scratch cookies without preservatives).

With just a few Cree or English words Marie, like Agnes, also teaches lining up, sitting at a table, waiting for snacks, taking care of younger ones, and so on. Some children speak only one language; some, like their P.R. teachers, are fluent in both. Marie and Agnes show them what to do and expect them to show and help each other, all with very little talk. Children are expected to make their own decisions and to exercise choices without talking about them. Such is a traditional curriculum. By comparison to the school curriculum, most of the traditional curriculum is a still curriculum. Very few of its aims are openly discussed, and none of it is written down. Yet it is followed in all the children's homes. Agnes, Marie, and I often discuss the price and value of the school curriculum.[4]

School Education Into Culture

Next door in the classrooms of certified teachers, small amounts of such local culture are occasionally tacked onto a mainstream curriculum. One teacher tells me that yes, she could include a lesson based on local knowledge "if there is time." I would love to show my readers such a moment where a certified teacher has the time. Unfortunately, during the time of my field work in John D'or, I do not experience such a moment.

With Marie, knowledge from her T.A. career is continually being integrated into classroom bush learning. For her students she models connections from home to school. Getting a paid job is a most obvious reason for going to school. Teaching non-verbally, sharing power with her students, expecting

---

[4]This story re-affirms Erickson and Mohatt's (1982) study of an Odawa school comparing mainstream and Native teachers in *Doing the Ethnography of Schooling.*

those children who "have" or who "can" to share with those who "haven't" or "can't" just yet are other examples. Communicating the importance of "at the right time" is another. "You can't force these little ones to work," she says repeatedly. "We can just help them." Instinctively, Marie knows that she helps them best by letting them learn the way she was allowed to learn as a child in the bush—whenever the need arose, with an attitude of deep respect mingled with affection. Years before we met and since, I recognise Marie's traditional teaching style in the works of educational writers (Dewey, 1938; Freire, 1970; Kaniel & Feuerstein, 1989; Mussell, 1993) and at aboriginal workshops (World Conference: Indigenous People's Education, Vancouver, June 1987). School education into culture, not "culture into education," is a preferred strategy for indigenous culture survival.

Without fanfare, Marie has been doing that for 20 years.

How to capture her "doing that" in a few pages of print is challenging. Here is the sequence as I play with that challenge. At different times during the transcribing of our taped talks, I show Marie alternate ways of expressing what she says in letters. I ask which one she likes the best. She likes the poetic version. So I transcribe the entire tape as an epic. Next, both Marie and I edit that epic. Influenced by what we do and read, we re-write the poem into what we want readers to see. It is how we "sit with" our papers, as Marie says, until we are happy with them. She sits less than I do. "I'll take your papers home tonight and sit with them," she'd say. We laugh about that because we both know that reading for pleasure is not part of her family background either.

My fear that Marie might not be interested in taking time to edit more than one conversation—the "Trapline" story, which is next—comes true. It comes true because our relationship includes Marie's love of bingo and mine of

writing. Bingo is her way of relaxing, and writing is my way of upgrading. Each thinks the other's habit is a little excessive, but neither of us says so. Instead, we decide to take out all of my words from the transcript of our discussion (M. Nanooch, transcript, 94-05-13) to create her piece of writing. It is tough going for both of us. Eventually, I put new words (my words in underlining) back in to help me meet Ph.D. requirements for a research story. In a moment I will explain what those requirements are. These additions become my titles for her story and act as scholarly convenience to make interpreting easier for readers. Will there come a good time to discuss those titles? Probably not. Marie loves to tell new stories, not go over those already given away. Although I occasionally read pieces of my work aloud to Marie, I wonder if she reads the drafts I give her. I never ask. She doesn't offer. The time we have together is enough, and I don't mind that we do not intellectualise my local knowledge. Corrections and validations of my work come in other ways than through face-to-face verbal analysis.[5]

One reason that I don't mind is that I believe that, for Marie, whether the end of a story she tells is the end of the story or merely a pause on the way to other stories is not a distinction. For her, story endings and story beginnings are not a useful local concept. "That's all for now," which she says when she's had enough of tape recordings, clearly is. She says, "It feels okay what I'm telling you. It's your story now. I've never written a story before. I just tell it, and then that's it" (field notes, 94-06-20). I like to think that "that's it"

---

[5]Analysis is the separation and breaking up of a unity of being or thought into component parts. For example, knowledge which is a single concept has often been separated in modern times into smaller units where one unit—the unit of activities—is called *experience* and a second unit—the unit of thinking about what to do or thinking about what has happened or might happen—is called *theory*. Marie's story does not lend itself to such divisions. *Then when it's finished* is a phrase that makes sense only in the context of a hide knotted around a horizontal pull whose pole can't be pressed any further; it makes sense to leave well enough alone. It makes sense to treat the knowledge storied in Marie's head and the knowledge storied in Marie's hands and the knowledge storied in Marie's experience as a unified concept and not to separate and break up her local knowledge into component parts.

not only because Marie so thoroughly communicates that it is indeed my story now, but also because she lets me know how important it is that stories must be looked after and properly passed on. Honestly, I am unable to say how she does that.

Hoping to get the word right (Cruikshank, 1990), I will hand over our gift to my readers with care. Except for my titles, I do not interrupt her words with my comments.

An Epic: Marie's Life on the Trapline

My questions: What is important for people to know around here? How did you learn what you think is important? And who taught you? Marie's response:

In Fall People Walk To Their Winter Cabin

Well, it was like this ~
Long-ago when ~
When people used to ~ go up on the trapline ~
And this was in the fall ~ late in September ~
Well ~ we used to go up ~ using horses ~
The horses used to pack ~ all the heavy heavy stuff ~
Like flour and ~ most of the things that are heavy ~
So the people used to you know ~ to stop and have lunch ~
That's what they used to pack[6] ~
And then we used to have ~ dogs that used to do packing too ~
They had pack sacks, you know ~
People used to make them ~ women used to make them ~
They'd ~ put little things in there ~ a few things ~ like ~
Bannock[7] or something, you know ~ dry meat maybe ~
You know, to just ~ keep it in hand ~
Instead of ~ unpacking the whole horse pack ~
But they used to take the ~ horses' pack down ~
So the horses would have a rest
Yeah ~ and they used to stop about an hour ~ or an hour and a half ~
And everybody's rested ~

---

[6]Locally, pack also means carry.

[7]Bannock is a home-made bread. There are many tribal and regional names and variations on a basic bread-dough recipe of flour, lard, water, salt, and baking powder. Some people bake it in the oven; some deep-fry it; some wrap it around a stick and roast it over an open fire. Some put the dough in a cast-iron frying pan and balance that over a campfire. Bannock is delicious plain or with jam and/or butter.

And then ~ they start packing the horses again ~
And then ~ they go on again ~ for a long ways ~ till it gets dark ~
And then we'd make camp ~
And then ~ some men would ~ go ahead ~ and you know ~
While we're going on up towards the mountains ~
We didn't have a road ~ no wagons ~ just a trail that people made ~
Some of the men used to go ahead of us ~
So the noise ~ you know ~ and the horses won't scare the
Moose or anything that's ~ at the head ~
And at the same they used to do hunting ~
So that's what they used to do ~
And then if they have ~ killed a moose or something ~
Then we used to stop there for ~ maybe a couple or ~ three days ~
Then the women used to make dry meat ~
They work on the meat ~ and work on the hide ~

Women Work On Moosehides Together

[Italicized writings as found in this chapter only *refer to local knowledge that is reconstructed[8] from tapes, transcripts, subsequent conversations, and notes on those conversations.]*

First they would take the flesh out.
They use a bone to flesh [take the flesh from the hide]
And a strap around the elbow.
So it don't bounce. I used a rag once. I guess
It wasn't strong enough. It snapped. So I hit myself with the
Bone. I hit myself on the head. It really hurt. So next time
I know. I used a moosehide to make a strap with.
So then they dry the hide.
The women worked fast. They'd finish a hide in one day.
Take the flesh out. Dry it all in one day.
They make fires under, and it dries faster.
What I'm telling you is in the fall. It's done different in summer.
Then it's hot and dries fast. And in winter is like in the fall.
If you are going to dry a moosehide you have to make a fire
Under the moosehide to dry it.
This is for fall. In the fall it's damp. That's when they have to
Make fires. They [moosehides] can't dry on their own.
Otherwise you'll wait for weeks. Then they'd freeze.
So the women, we'd make four little fires.
Then they scrape the hair off when it's dry. When that's done
They take it out of the frame. Take out the string.
Then they stretch on another hide on the same frame.
Then they leave it overnight 'cause
It's getting late already. They put it up
When they get up in the morning.
Even before they have breakfast they start

---

[8]The stories in italics grow from the taped conversation with Marie. They are a joint re-working of the transcripts. What we do is discuss the transcript. She answers my questions about it. She doesn't mind repeating some things so I can understand the way of working moosehides.

Making little fires under it. By noontime
It's dry and all ready for scraping.
You can feel it when it's dry. Then they flip it [frame with hide on it]
Over and scrape the hair off. With a sharp steel. My husband
Cut an [animal] trap in half and sharpened it.
When it's white that's when it's done~
And you're sure it'll be nice and soft.
And then they'd fold it up~until we get to the trapline~
That's when they used to really work on it~
But sometimes we used to stop longer~
Maybe a week~in one~
One place~if they kill~more than one moose~so that everybody
Has to finish their hides~'cause the women used to
Help one another~fixing one hide~
And then they'd leave~the other hide for a while there~
Maybe sometimes they'd~flesh three~moosehides~in one day~
As it dried~they'd take a spruce~
And just rub the spruce~
Under~where they had scraped~fleshed it~
And then~they would~they know when it's dry enough~
I don't know how they done it~
But I used to know~I used to know that too~
But~it's a long time since I~ever made a moosehide~
Ever since I started working in the~school~
And as I~grew older~I didn't feel like~making moosehide~
I get too tired~
And want to~just sit down~I don't feel like~doing heavy~heavy things~

[More Reconstructions From Notes][9]

One time my mother was really desperate for moosehide. 'Cause they would wear out real fast. Men walk through water, and things like that. So she needed a moosehide. Now, when we were walking to the trapline we used to carry a roll of plastic. We'd put it over a teepee frame. It was really fast. So this one time when my mother was really desperate for moosehide, she put some of that plastic over a frame. Then she soaked moosehide in it instead of a tub. And she always took metal loops along just in case. You know, the kind they use plastic nowadays to hold parcels together. [Marie searched through the office till she found some. Then I could supply the word she was hunting for: "steel strapping."] My dad would loop it and tie it onto a tree with a rope or moosehide. "Savenaby," we called it. Then me and my sister and my mom used to take turns working it through. [Marie shows how with a plastic bag as moosehide, a ruler as pole, and a pencil balanced on a cup as cut-off tree, a still-

[9]I make notes of the exact words while Marie explains her transcripts. Later I re-construct them into one story. I am helped when she demonstrates with a plastic bag how to wring the water from a hide. But it is only after I go through all the steps myself in real life with Nelly Nanooch and help Nelly tan a hide that I know what Marie is trying to say here. Now that I have a little bit of moosehide-making knowledge in my body, I also know what a good description this is!

standing stump.] We'd walk around and around it. We're squeezing out the water. When it's finished you unwind and take the stick out. It's all wrinkled now. Then the two women stretch it. Then you can see if it's dry. Then you swing it back and forth over the fire. Till it's really dry. To test if it's really dry you blow on it with your hand underneath. You have warm air coming out onto your hand through the hide. That's when the hide is dry.

When the hide is dry and you feel like working on it, you throw it over a pole going across. Maybe it's nailed over two stumps. You throw the hide over that pole and hold it. And scrape it. The hide looks dirty. When it's white it's finished. Now you cut the hide again. Cut the edges off that you couldn't scrape. Then it's ready for smoking.

You fold it in half. Then you sew it around two of the open sides. On the other one you sew a cloth or a tarp on. Now you put it over a fire. You dig a hole in the ground. Make a fire. And sit. Once in a while you peek. Peek between the stitches. See if it's brown. And throw more rotten spruce wood on the fire.

This is the way I was taught.

When it's finished, just rip the threads out. It's easy 'cause they're nearly burned off. You think it's finished? Marie laughs and grins at me. But there's still one more step. You cut it. All the edges. All that smoked edge where the smoke comes out is really black. Cut it about an inch more right around. And then finally it's done.

You can make your moccasins now.

Agnes' mother's doing hides. And her sister's got . . . (they didn't kill them around here) . . . ten hides—all of them together. They all help. Agnes goes once in a while to help.

So ~ that would go on ~ usually take ~ pretty near a month ~ I guess ~

Towards the end of October ~

That's when we used to get into our trapline ~

They Never Get To The Cabin Fast

We used to take our time. Look at everything. It's so nice early in the fall.

In the meantime ~ we would be taking our time ~ and sometimes ~
Usually it's ~ already freezing up ~ a few places ~
Small water ~ freezes up early ~
The horses used to walk ~ on that ice ~ you know ~
Break the ice as they're going ~
The ground is slippery and they were sliding with their ~ hoofs ~

Must have been hard for them though ~
For the horses to walk on ice ~
When I think back on those days ~
And we'd never ~ get to the cabin fast where we were gonna ~
Spend the winter ~

The Men Make Storage Racks

We used to stop ~ before we get there ~ and
Then men would make ~ racks ~
So we can store our stuff on top the racks ~
That the men had made on standing-up trees ~
Just half of where ~ the trees are ~
And that's where they used to store our stuff ~
They'd leave them there and ~ cover them with ~ a tarp ~
Tie the strings. They'd make sure it's really tight. So if it rains it won't get wet or if it snows. The men will come back with a dog team and a toboggan. To get the stuff.
Even the meat and everything ~ they'd put it up there ~
We'd take just enough to ~ get us by ~ like our blankets ~
People would ~ pack them ~
And the horses would have to come back ~
Because it's getting too rough for them ~ they can't ~ make it
Right up to ~ the lake ~ so ~
But it did ~ it was nice ~ you know ~
It was really interesting ~
A lot of experience for us ~ young ~ people ~

How Sisters Help

Yeah ~
And I was 15 years old when I was ~ when I started doing that ~
It was really nice ~
When I look back at that it brings back the old memories. We'd come back from our traps. Mom had a hot meal for us. And it was nice and warm.
I used to ~ babysit most of the time ~
For my sister-in-law's kids ~
While she is doing the hide ~ and ~ doing the meat ~
Making her own dry meat ~
She died quite a few years back ~
Until I got married with my husband ~ I was ~ 17 ~
So ~ ever since we've been together ~

Ten Births, Eleven Babies

But ~ we didn't have kids right way ~ I was
Going onto ~ I just ~ turned 17 ~ no ~ it was 18 ~
I had my first daughter ~ Christina ~
I turned 19 when I had her 'cause
My birthday was March ~ 1st
And she was born May 29th ~
We just came out from the trapline in the spring ~
We stayed out there all winter ~
And we came down ~ I had to walk down ~
And she was born in May ~ I think it was the middle of May ~
When we came down from our trapline ~
Yeah ~ and we came walking down ~
And then I only stayed ~ two days ~ at the Little Red ~
That's where my mother was ~

And then she was born on May 29th ~
So we ~ didn't ~ wait too long [laugh]
And as I got ~ you know ~ first-born ~ newborn ~ baby at home ~
That was my first one ~ hmm ~
My mother was there to help me ~ and ~ my auntie ~
'Cause that's just new for me ~ 'cause I didn't know anything ~
How to ~ how the baby was ~ you know ~ what to do ~
To give birth ~ to my baby ~
So my mother was telling me everything ~
As I was in labour ~ telling me what to do ~
Turned out too ~ fine ~ 'cause ~ she was about six pounds ~
She was tiny ~ 'cause here I guess ~
On account of I was walking too much ~
I even had a little pack ~ for my own self ~ you know ~
And ~ packed my clothes ~ when I came down ~ and I was b-i-g
Yeah ~ so ~ I came down like that ~ yeah ~
The baby was healthy ~ strong ~ it was really neat ~
Well ~ that's what they used to do ~ not too many ~ I have
11 ~ no ~
It's 10 births ~ 'cause I had a set of ~ twin girls ~
So I got 11 kids ~ so ~ I think it was about 9 of my kids ~
Delivered them all at home ~ just the younger ones ~
Was the ones I gave them birth ~ in the hospital ~
All the other ones were ~ either ~ here and there ~
All over the place ~ wherever I was ~ when I was in labour ~
Then ~ I had my baby ~ right there ~
I even had Peggy ~ in a tent ~ born in the spring ~ it was like this ~
This month ~ May ~
No ~ April ~ April 26th ~ she was born ~
And we were living in a tent ~ 'cause ~ this was ~ spring hunting ~
Then we were doing spring trapping for muskrats and ~ beaver ~
So ~ we were home alone ~ just the women ~
And I gave birth to ~ Peggy ~ right in the tent ~
But it wasn't ~ cold ~
He really ~ Francis ~ really ~ fixed up the tent ~ nice and warm ~
So it was warm ~ And I was okay ~

Babies Share Women, Women Share Babies

Seems like ~ we were healthier women ~
When we had our kids at home ~
And the kids were strong and everything ~
So ~ was really nice ~
As long as you always have a woman ~
Ready ~ there that has ~ had a baby
And that can ~ breastfeed
So that ~ the woman ~ would take over the baby ~
Breastfeed the ~ other ~ the newborn ~ 'cause then
The mother doesn't have enough milk ~
While ~ while in the meantime ~ you keep ~ breastfeeding your
baby ~
Until you can make ~ milk ~ but ~ and then ~
The other lady used to come and
Fill her up ~

Breastfeed ~ so that's how I think ~ our ancestors and
Great-grandmothers used to do ~
"As long as you have somebody" ~
But then when there is nobody there ~ they would feed the baby
Different ~ mostly ~ just give them water ~
I don't know why ~
If they had spoons then ~ whatever it was
That's the way they used to ~
And I don't know ~
I didn't hear anything about the ~
'Cause sometimes ~ the woman used to ~
When they had their baby ~
The mothers they ~ said ~ 'cause ~ you know ~
Sometimes the baby ~ kills the mother
The baby ~ the mother ~ dies in her birth ~
Sometimes they have a hard time ~
There was one that really happened like that ~
My mother told us ~

This happened long time ago. That's what my mom told us. Before any doctor or hospital exist. This story.

What Marie's Mom Tells

And this man ~ he was alone with his wife ~
And she had her baby ~ and she died ~
And the baby ~ it survived ~
And he didn't know what to do ~
How to feed the baby ~
So he had ~ a fresh ~ kill of a moose ~
A mother moose ~ a female moose ~
So he cut off a ~ tit from the ~ moose ~
And that's what he fed the baby ~
The baby was sucking on that ~
And then he cut that ~ I don't know how he did it ~
But anyway ~ he got the moosemilk ~
That's what the baby breastfeed on ~
My mother used to tell us all kinds of stories like that ~
And this really happened ~ she said ~
All kinds of interesting things like that ~
That's pretty hard to explain it ~
But it happened ~ it really happened ~

This here story was told to my mom long ago. Before my mom's time. She had heard this story from someone. This was a long, long story. A long-long-time-ago story.

Families Have Healthy Dogs

It used to be ~ tough ~ going up ~ and down ~
In the wintertime ~ then they used to have dog teams ~
They'd hitch up the ~ dogs ~
That's how the people ~ used to go around ~
It seems ~ like it was nicer ~ because

Men ~ used to kill the games ~
All kinds of ~ deer ~ caribou ~ and moose
And that's what the dogs fed on ~
And they were strong and healthy ~
They didn't get any ~ any kind of dog food ~ from the ~ store ~
They'd get some ~ but they'd hardly use it
'Cause they always have enough to feed their dogs ~
And they used to cook meat ~ and they ~
You know ~ just thaw it out ~ like ~
They don't really cook it ~ real good ~ but they
It's cooked on top ~ and then it's raw ~
Well ~ the dogs used to be healthy and strong ~
'Cause my husband always used to kill a lot of moose ~

She Has A Hunter For A Husband

We always have plenty of moosemeat ~ all the time ~
Sometimes he'd say ~ "I'm not gonna kill anything today" ~
And just took a 22 ~ he came home and he said he killed two ~
[laughing voice] I said ~
"I thought you said you weren't gonna kill any more"
"But they wouldn't run away ~ they just stood there ~
So I had to shoot them" ~
He killed two again ~ we had lots of moose ~ moosehides ~
So we all ~ my husband took them all down ~
Here in Garden River ~
And then in the spring ~ like this ~ the women would gather
And then would fix ~ moosehides ~
I used to have ~ a lot of moosehides too ~

She Makes Moosehide All Alone

I done my own moosehide one time ~ all by myself ~
I ~ soaked it in water ~ and then I made holes right around ~
'Cause I had to dry it ~
And then I made a fire close to a standing stake ~
When it was standing close to the fire ~
So I tied a string there ~ and I said ~
"That was my ~ person that was supposed to help me
That was standing over there" ~ So I just swung my moosehide ~
There ~ drying it ~ and then I'd take it to another tree ~
Again I'd ~ put it on a string ~ and then I'd just pull ~ and pull ~
And my hide was soft ~ really nice because ~
My strength is all the time the same ~
That's more important ~ if two people are pulling the same time ~
Always the same strength ~ the moosehides ~
They always turns out nice ~
That's what they used to say ~
So I found that out ~
When I done my own hide ~ all by myself ~
It was really nice and dry ~
And I had a lot of fun ~ doing that hide ~
'Cause I was all by myself there ~
And the kids ~ were playing in the road ~

And they were ~ busy playing baseball ~
So I was alone there ~ at the camp ~ and I was pulling this hide ~
And it was shady ~ so it wasn't too hot ~ too warm ~
And I had ~ didn't loop it right ~ I guess ~
So there I was pulling it like this ~
All of a sudden ~ I just fall down ~ and my hide just covered me ~
There was something there ~ I guess ~
You know ~ just the moosehide ~
I was under there covered ~
I covered myself ~
'Cause I fall like this ~
So I covered the whole ~ length of me
Then when I done this ~
I looked around to see ~ if anybody was there ~
[laugh] And I started laughing ~
And there was nobody ~ I was all by myself ~ [laugh]
I told my husband when he came back ~
And he said ~ "I wish I was there ~ I wish I had a camera ~
I could have taken your picture" ~ [laugh]
And then ~ when I finished ~ I scraped it a little bit ~
Take all the flesh that I ~ hadn't taken ~
And then I smoked it ~ it was really nice ~
With ~ rotten spruce wood ~ that's what we use ~
I made a nice moosehide for myself ~
I didn't have to depend on anybody that time ~
But now ~ I don't think I'll be able to do that ~
I don't have the strength any more ~
I suppose I ~ can do it with ~ somebody to help me ~ you know ~
But ~ alone I won't be able to 'cause ~ it's lots of work ~

Here's How To Tan A Moosehide

You put it in a tub first ~ and you got to ~ really tan it ~
Real hard
And ~ you know ~ just to ~ make it soft ~
'Cause it's hard when ~ after you finish fleshing it
And then taking the hair ~ it's just like bit ~ thick ~ paper ~
It's so stiff ~ have you seen it?
Well ~ that's what we use ~ after we finish ~ scraping the hair ~
Right away you put brain ~ and you just fold it up ~
So it soaks ~ and you let it ~ sit ~ overnight ~
And then when you ~ think it's ~ good enough and then you just
Open it and put it in the sun ~ let the sun do the work now ~
And sometimes when it's cold ~ then you have to use ~
Spruce boughs ~
But they're really spruce branches ~ that's what they are ~
Just burn them ~ And you just kind of twist it ~
Just move your hide around ~ and then it really tans it ~
So we used to use that kind ~
You gotta really know how to do it though ~
Because ~ you could easily burn ~ your hide ~
If you put too much ~ too much fire ~ and burn it ~
But I had done that ~ too ~ I done good ~

Both In-Laws Teach

My father-in-law ~ used to teach me ~
A lot of things about moosehide ~
Dry meat ~ and everything ~ I used to enjoy it ~
'Cause my mother-in-law didn't have time ~ to teach me ~
'Cause she had a lot of things to do ~ herself ~
But my ~ father-in-law is free ~
Didn't have to do that ~ and he knows everything about that too ~
So he'd come to my place ~ and he'd show me ~ how to do this ~
He taught me how to make ~ dry meat ~
How to cut it and how to hold it ~
So I won't cut my fingers ~

Husband Francis Makes A Horizontal Pull

And then you got to pull ~ either ~
Francis used to make me a pull ~
Just a ~ put up ~ a piece of ~ a stick on top ~
But not just a tiny little stick ~ you know ~ just ~ a tree ~
And then I used to ~ go around it ~ I used to fold that ~
Hide ~ make knots on it ~ and then I'd stick another pole in there ~
And that's what I used to turn around on ~ walk around it ~
And that was much easier ~ instead of a standing tree ~
And you have to ~ pull it like this ~
Turn the ~ stick around with the hide ~ that's hard ~
Because you ~ need somebody to help you ~
If you slip that thing ~ that can ~ get you in your ~
On your head or on your ~ face ~
'Cause that ~ that stick ~ 'cause can fall like that ~
So the other one is easier ~
You just turn around ~ walk around it ~
Then when it's finished ~ you just start pulling at it ~
And if you still ~ still see ~ some more ~ wet spots ~
Then ~ you fold it again ~
And you put it the same thing again ~ and you go around ~
Until you can't see no water ~
'Cause if you leave water ~ and it's usually blue ~
You can see ~ it's wet ~ and that's where it hardens ~ bone dry ~
That's why ~ you have to really ~
Hmm ~
Know when it's ~ they even used to do it with their hand ~
Some place ~ they just take a ~
[Here and in the next few phrases Marie stops talking as she shows how it is done with a plastic bag making do as moosehide.]
Like that here and just ~
Turn it around ~ make sure there's no water ~
Yeah ~ there's a lot of tricky stuff ~ in making a moosehide ~
And you know ~ you really have to know what you're doing ~
What time is it? ~
Well ~ I'll tell you another story some other time ~ (M. Nanooch, transcript, 94-05-13)

It's Your Story Now

> It feels okay what I'm telling you. It's your story now. I've never written a story before. I just always tell it, and then that's it.
>
> I go by what I was told by the teachers, and I'll carry it in my head. (M. Nanooch, field notes, 94-06-02)

Marie Nanooch: A Research Story

And she does that—she lives by what she has been told by her teachers. Is this how the old people deal with three generations of teachers? In mission school, in the bush, and in contemporary school jobs? What a load for the head to carry! What is the significance of her words? I think about some of the bush-teachers whom Marie discusses in our many conversations and in four taped interviews. ("Marie's Life on the Trapline" is one of those interviews.) I reflect on the Indian day-school teachers she never mentions. I wonder about the school teachers for whom she was T.A. for nearly two decades. In her head she carries fond memories of the first one; Sr. Madeline is still her role model. Given such a dynamic history and the context of her bushlife stories, I wonder, As what kind of teacher does she see herself? After giving the question careful thought, I realise this: For Marie that is a meaningless question. Marie's teacher knowledge, Marie's mother knowledge, Marie's trapper knowledge are one concept—Marie's local knowledge. Dividing and labelling this into three types dissects the unity of what she knows. It doesn't work for her. Following local custom, Marie would not separate her teaching from her mothering or from her trapping. No. Her response might well be, "What do you mean?" An explanation would make as little sense as the question.

But in my academic community people would be comfortable with my effort to explain Oneness by taking it apart and analysing its components. And

yet, try as I might, I keep coming up with 1 + 1 = 3. The numbers are my shorthand for a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. This reminds me of a story:

Who Counts What Counts?

> In John D'or the ability to relate is what counts. Who I am determines the kind of knowledge I receive and am able to give away. On the other hand, within my academic community it is my ability to read, write, and publish that counts. It determines what knowledge I can receive or give away and where I work. The reason I am able to maintain my unity as a person, no matter where the counting is done, is that I see myself as having many talents rather than many roles. I am not Christina Mader the researcher or Christina Mader the artist or Christina Mader—mom. Depending on the place, I may be called Christine or Krischta, Cristy or Cedar Lady, Kegets'g or Sharon. Depending on the task at hand, I may use skills from research, photography, or mothering. But who I am stays solid—though my name may change.

At this point in my studies, Julia Ellis (1995) reminds me that a writer must be aware of "what is shared with the reader and what must be explained" (p. 33). It is easy to share Marie's story, hard to explain it. Research protocol asks me to interpret for the reader what happens in the field. Clandinin and Connelly (1994) are talking about Ellis' sharing when they say, "Sometimes our field texts are so compelling that researchers want to stop and let them speak for themselves" (pp. 422-423). They are talking about Ellis' explaining when they discuss writing that is created "at a distance from field texts and grow[s] out of the repeated asking of questions concerning meaning and significance" (p. 423).

Instead of face-to-face interactions, which is what ordinary on-reserve protocol is, I offer written explanations according to on-campus protocol. I follow guidelines that often have their own language. Records of what I see in the community I am studying (called *field data*) are re-written and re-named with much looking at and probing. (I prefer to use *research story* instead of the more common *research text* because I am anticipating some moment in the

future when my explanation of local knowledge will be translated into Cree.) This is where the question "As what kind of teacher does Marie see herself?" takes on meaning and gains social and political significance. While changing field text to research story, I reflect on the original experience and write down how I see things. As I do this, I keep in mind that my academic community wants me to pay careful attention to separating what I think from what Marie thinks from any stories both of us think through together (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). The trouble is, Marie and I don't talk about our thinking! Talking about thinking isn't part of ordinary local knowledge. This means that sometimes I get lost and can't find the dotted line on which to cut the two apart. I can't tell: Am I clipping into Marie's thoughts called her *voice* or mine, also called my *voice*? My style of writing about our various voices is called my *signature* (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994).

This is the end of my discussion on what counts and does not count as local knowledge. Here I stop explaining in a longer way how research works and how every step gets filtered through what I think. It took me three years to sort this out.

Instead of asking how she sees herself, I say to Marie, "Who would you like to know about your life on the trapline? Who would you like to read this?" And she says, "The younger generation. The grandchildren. The young mothers. If they have hunters for husbands, it'd be nice for them" (field notes, 94-06-17). That's how she lets me know that our ways for reaching the next generation are similar. The children we wish to touch are the same. That's how I come to understand that both of us use local knowledge shared amongst traditional educators.

Because she answers like that, that's why I must put her edited story here—all in one piece so that it can be of some use to her. The reaction of one

of my professors to that decision is to say that this is not research; that it is a beautifully written story, but it is not research. I am told not to include it in my dissertation, told just to use a few examples to illustrate my point.

No.

To support my belief I invite outside experts to speak on my behalf. I quote Silko (cited in Trinh, 1989), whose Inuit storyteller says, "The story must be told. There must not be any lies"[10] (p. 144). It would be a lie not to keep my research promise.

Research Promise

> I remember the day I promise Marie we could write a version of her life story she would be proud of. I remember how I say, "I am interested in your life-experience stories" and how Marie responds. Is still responding. She gives me—no, gives us all, the younger generation, the grandchildren, and the young mothers whose husbands are hunters—she gives all of us a bushlife story. But my interpretation of it is that her true gift to us is her being—both as subject and as verb. She is the local knowledge and the carrier of local knowledge. "Marie's Life On The Trapline" is her edited research answer to my edited research question: "How did you learn what you value?" In my opinion—and here my research signature hollers at me with great gusto—short or long quotations in support of my belief would not be satisfying. The many things I do with her life story—the clip-art, the poetry, the drawings, the photographs, the writing-about that I do—are means to a Ph.D. But as a product, "Marie's Life On The Trapline" clearly shows what is important in John D'or Prairie.

```
* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *
*                                                                         *
*                                In John D'or Prairie,                    *
*                  What is important for people to know around here?      *
*                  The quiet practice of living and telling the ordinary  *
*                                with reverence.                          *
*                                                                         *
* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *
```

So that explains why I include Marie's entire story. Readers can now judge for themselves.

---

[10]Lies, as I understand Trinh to use the word, means stories told that go against the better judgment and experience of the teller.

To me her epic poem contains what I need to know to make connections for my students; this includes hints on how to gain access to their own storytellers by giving away face-to-face time. I hope these details are useful to Marie and to our readers. "You could read your story in your classroom," I remember saying to Marie. "You'd have your own written story to give away to your relatives," I also say.

The poem is our reciprocal gift. There are other gifts which I trade for my learning as we go along: tobacco, tulips in winter, meals at my place, cake and tea that I bring to her classroom; clothes, household items, and food which teachers who flee the reserve at the end of June leave with me. Most important of all, I give Marie my time for hers. For a week I help her with year-end chores such as report cards and classroom clean-up. The striking thing is, as I attempt to give back my time, I receive yet more of hers. It makes me wonder if there is such a thing as "giving back"? I enlarge my vision of the Giving Circle to include seasonal movements which never go "back" but yet repeat. Even now, despite bingo and computer time demands, we continue to exchange new stories and new jokes.

This summer, 1995, Marie and I will go our separate ways. Marie will cook in forest-fire camps and maybe play some bingo. I will create a dissertation with what I have. I have enough. My hope is to write without detracting from Marie's words. I search for a way to make our work acceptable-as-original-research. Carefully, I study my titles between her words. Collected together like this, I like to believe that they help highlight for mainstream readers what Marie's life story tells. Without those titles, without even writing, she passes on to her relatives two values: a reverence for the ordinary, and satisfaction and pleasure in daily tasks.

In Fall People Walk To Their Winter Cabin
Women Work On Moosehides Together
They Never Get To The Cabin Fast
The Men Make Storage Racks
How Sisters Help
Ten Births, Eleven Babies
Babies Share Women; Women Share Babies
What Marie's Mom Tells
Families Have Healthy Dogs
She Has A Hunter For A Husband
She Makes Moosehide All Alone
Here's How To Tan A Moosehide
Both In-Laws Teach
Husband Francis Makes A Horizontal Pull
It's Your Story Now

The titles are my summary of Marie's bushlife stories. What is here is indeed my story now. It is my story not only because Marie says so, but also because by saying so, she approves of the judgment I use in re-making her words into a research story.

Now that I hold some local knowledge in my head, how do I best give it away?

For two years now Marie and I create stories to help us understand each other. No. We catch them as they are unfolding—whether we are there to notice the unfolding or not. Then we re-tell the stories in our own words.[11] When I describe how I listen to Marie; when I describe how I translate what I hear into a dream, a sketch, a word, or a slide; when I tell how I make connections to my past and future, how I participate in on-reserve activities, how I choose which scenes to photograph, how I tell this and that story, yet leave out a third or fourth; when I do all this re-presenting, I find out somethings new about myself.

---

[11]Unfolding story. At this point my friend Woody Morrisson writes this comment in the margin of a draft paper:

> When I start a story I am just catching a ride on it and I give it a push. When I have ridden as far as I want I get off but the story continues. (If a tree falls in the forest, was there any sound?) Starting your story is like jaywalking on a busy street. . . . Pick your opening and go for it. (personal communication, 95-09-20)

Yes. I like this idea that in life or stories or Giving Circles or even traffic there are unseen lines everywhere for connecting with.

I would like all this writing to extend an invitation. The invitation is for readers to learn about yourselves by re-creating your own ways of being in relationships, which may similarly teach you more about yourselves than about anything else.

Marie believes that having her stories written down will let them be available in a modern way to the younger generation, the grandchildren and the young mothers whose husbands are hunters. I believe that my photographs and sketches will let the research be available in a modern way to the same audience. Similarly, I believe that my writing will let this research be available to John D'or Prairie school teachers who want a resource when they develop local curriculum for their pupils.

In her role as Elder, Marie gives away her written story in the hope that it will influence the lives of her relatives in a good way. Suddenly I gasp. For the first time I see my own function in this writing process as undermining the face-to-face component of a traditional relationship. Words put on paper eliminate a person! Words on paper change the meaning of that person! In a flash of vision I interpret Marie's reluctance to read and discuss my work in a new light. For her, does more reading lead to nothing other than more writing and then more reading? Is this experiential education without experience? Suddenly I understand why my curriculum work with classroom teachers is so successful: It is always face-to-face; it always allows for the still curriculum to be explored. But when I commit my words to print, one of the people in the original relationship disappears! Now I am truly scared about diminishing the worth of face-to-face encounters, not just with Marie, but with all people.

Once I name that fear and decide that it is well-founded, I deal with it by staying with what I know best. It is how to merge what I know about curriculum with the traditional gifts and talents of old people as community

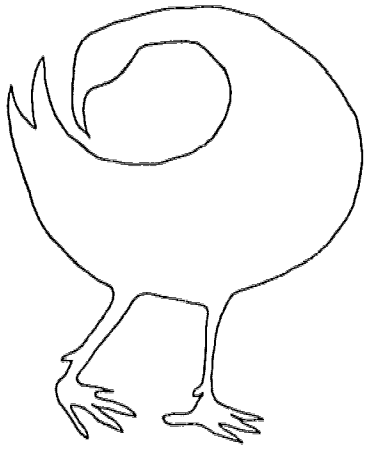
educators. I trust that and do it as easily as I make school-to-home connections or home-to-school connections.

Whenever Marie tells stories for the next generation, my head easily makes up new curriculum. Primary teachers and headmasters helped me name that gift in Ghana in 1982. "I understand your demonstrations better than your sentences," said one (*Diaries,* 1982-1996, 82-07-21) while we discussed our just-created curriculum based on old local knowledge. Most of them were keen to repeat the lesson with their students. And why not? It was such fun! My clearly visible delight in what and how I was learning about their culture reinforced their obvious pride in being African.

Curriculum From The Belly

> It happened during my first lesson to a class of headmasters. I had briefly outlined theories of communication in a "chalk and talk" mini-lecture. Then I had divided the class into small groups, and each group chose a different way of communicating ancient proverbs. They chose to sing, dance, drum, draw, and so forth traditional sayings familiar to everyone. Their presentations stay with me because we laughed so hard my stomach hurt. And also because I received one of the proverbs as a farewell gift. My class gave me a small brass figure with a water jug balanced on his head. It is read as "The person who fetches the water breaks the jug." It is interpreted as "The person who is willing to work for others risks getting into trouble."
>
> I challenged my students as I challenge myself to teach a lesson in at least two different channels of communication and to build in lots of belly laughs.

A few days later a primary school headteacher brought to class a symbol printed on quite ordinary cloth. It and the brass figure have guided my traditional teaching ever since. The symbol is Bird, whose neck and beak are reaching backwards. The proverb is called *Sankofa* (Kayper-Mensah, 1976) in a Ghanaian language. It reads like this: "Go back and bring what you left." It is interpreted to mean, "Go back in time and bring to the present the knowledge needed now."



"Sank)fa"

(based on Kayper-Mensah, 1976, cover)

The Swampy Cree of Ontario hear the same message from Porcupine when they listen to *their* animals (Norman, 1976). Old advice. Current advice. Worldwide advice. Using the gift of trout-spirit insight, I recognise the common message in Sank)fa, Cow Moose, The Woman Who Passed Away, unity thinking, mutual thinking, connected thinking, Oneness, and a feeling for the organism.

There are many authors whose work supports this proverb and its connected thinking. Some are Markley (1974), Silko (1977), Keller (1983), Belenky et al. (1986), Gleik (1987), Kalweit (1992), Trinh (1989), Akan (1992), Boice (1992), and Heshusius (1994). They begin with the old advice. As they try to understand somethings, they reach the point where their own being disappears within the relationship that they study. They end up modelling their work. Holger Kalweit's words are a good example:

> [Rational] analysis leads faithfully to its own self-dissolution and self-transcendence, at which point it changes from a caterpillar to a butterfly. . . . The omega point of analysis to which I am referring is the advance of physics into areas in which matter is converted into events more than rigid structures, events that are indivisibly bound up with one another and cannot be analyzed isolatedly. But this requires a new . . . [way of thinking about knowledge which] is

> somehow connected with the researcher's own consciousness, for consciousness and the object of research form a unity, albeit one that we are unable to precisely define. (p. 267)

Unity as Kalweit (1992) describes it emerges repeatedly in my work. It captures the area in which events are converted into matter. In my pictures that conversion point is wonderfully inspired by Boice's (1992) book already mentioned: *Mother Earth: Through the Eyes of Women Photographers and Writers.* Unity happens on those special occasions when my traditional educators and I concentrate, really concentrate and together become lost, in the same event outside us. At that point the border between the observers and the observed dissolves, and we feel as one.

Extraordinary moments of Oneness in my life involve a Tsimshian totem pole, a Bush Cree dance in JDP, and small children with an old poodle. I will elaborate on these later. My friend and colleague Debbie Schroeder (1996) is investigating the conditions which allow such ordniary unity to occur. She speaks of time and space and feelings merging under conditions that are "safe." She names them *Middle Space.* The following story of how Marie Nanooch, Agnes Moberly, and I first meet and are able to connect school to community is a story of ordinary events unfolding as local knowledge. (Debbie Schroeder would say that the story happens in the Middle Space of John D'or Prairie.) My story answers two questions: How can close relationships begin between strangers? How can an outsider meet community members and experience Oneness?

Research Unfolding

> One of my earlier research ideas was to pair teachers in different band-controlled schools with someone from the community in which they worked. We might tape-record six or eight conversations. Details would emerge, or we could sit down and work them out co-operatively. The study would reflect how research participants acquired local knowledge as well as what was learned. Teachers would learn local child-rearing practices, and local people would have direct input into classrooms. I would

leave plenty of free time and space so that we could be guided by opportunities and personalities that would surely emerge.

Interest in Native communities was high. But it was difficult to find certified teachers. I asked White, Black, and Native teachers if they wanted to participate. After a year of searching, I found three and attended their August 1993 Teacher Orientation. It would be a unique opportunity to be in a traditional gathering place and to experience "camping in the bush." At that gathering I would also meet with the chief and the Regional Board of Education to explain face-to-face who I was and outline what I had in mind. People could ask me questions.

Most things went according to plan despite the cold and rain. Two or three board members spoke at length in Cree. One or two asked questions in English. I spent time with my three teacher-researchers and each of their supervisors. They in turn agreed to help find local Cree men and women who might join us. I asked the teachers to make the first moves in getting to know their future research partners.

Over the next few months I kept in contact by phone. Myself, I hit it off particularly well with the principal at John D'or. She had approached two elders on her staff on my behalf, and I had spoken to them by phone. When Marie Nanooch first returned my call she thought I was her daughter, because she is named Christina too. We laughed a lot that time and still do whenever she re-tells the story to others. She always ends it with, "That makes her my daughter."

But problems emerged immediately. They centred around how incredibly busy the White beginning teachers were. There was no time to meet with their Cree research partners for tea. No time to make friends. "No time" came through loud and clear. The principal suggested that maybe I ought to "come visit, or nothing will happen."

And that's how something happened.

It was love at first sight with the community of John D'or Prairie. After meeting with Agnes and Marie and taping our trial conversations, I privately offered each a ceremonial gift and asked if they would work with me alone. In that casual encounter, by keeping my pouch of tobacco, each accepted the responsibility of sharing some of her stories.

I went back to the three teachers and explained my decision on how to proceed. They were happy too.

At the end of the school year I was curious about whether they had made friends with anyone from the community. Even the two who were returning for a second year said "No time. No opportunity." (based on field notes; *Diaries,* 1982-1996; *Reflections,* 1994-1996)

First-year teaching is a time-management struggle that teachers carry on alone. Those beginning teachers prepare lessons, coach sports, prepare lessons, sponsor fund-raising events, prepare lessons, mark student work, prepare lessons, teach them, and get far too little sleep before starting the

same rigorous schedule all over. They turn to each other and the familiar during brief moments of relaxation. I remember those difficult days from my own beginnings in Kitwanga, BC. What nourished me then was not the familiar, not the mainstream community two miles down the road, but the local—the ordinary contacts with people on-reserve who were my neighbours. They sustained me with their stories as we drank tea together. They taught me with their lives. Skills introduced back then for getting school education into culture re-emerge throughout my teaching and 20 years later re-emerge in my re-searching. *Listening* to Marie's stories lets novel ideas emerge for changing myself and the school system. I can see where it is possible to make innovative connections from school to home. *Participating* in Marie's community life is another entrance to the same connections. In the following section I will elaborate on those two ways of traditional learning, listening to stories and participating in local activities. I begin with the local knowledge in Marie's stories. Then I turn to the knowledge gained by getting involved in Marie's life.

Local Knowledge in Marie's Stories

My new understandings to which I now turn are only some of many possibilities for creating knowledge from stories told by traditional educators. Readers could interpret the information in "Marie's Life On The Trapline" in other ways as well. (In fact, there are hints which Marie drops that I do not pick up and leave instead for the reader to discover. The repetition in her stories is one such hint.)

In the story "In Fall People Walk To Their Winter Cabin" we—no, *I*—learn that in long-ago-times seasons measure the rhythm of family life. People and animals pack up and move all together when the time is right. The concept of

right-time governs all events and pacing. It includes looking after the well-being of every individual plus the group as a whole. If I am alert in John D'or, I see that taking care of others is just as important today. Child-rearing practices that stress self-sufficiency and doing things alone ensure that individuals are not a drain on the community. That is new knowledge and is another way of putting the well-being of the group first. What Janice Sheppard (1983) finds to be true in a certain northern BC Athapaskan village I also find in John D'or—local values of autonomy and self-reliance protect the individual. Generosity and reciprocal obligations protect the group. Then as today, being quiet in the bush increases the chance that a moose won't run away so that the hunters can shoot it. Quiet hunters can feed their family now as in Marie's long-ago days. Then as today, women make bannock and dry meat for hungry people. If someone asks "What time is it?" a 1995 answer—jokingly given—might be, as it once was, "Time to work on the hide" or "Time to pack up." People might laugh, "Time to take out the snowmobile" in a conscious effort to maintain connections with nature-cycles. In South Dakota I once asked a Native man, "What time is it?" I can still see him laugh at me and cover up his wrist watch before he answers, "Now." He wants me to figure out the hour from the sun if I need that information. But most important, he wants to draw my attention to "when the time is right."

A related new understanding has to do with stressing the right time for action or inaction. It stems from my experience with Marie's timeline. By eventually choosing not to use it, I make a decision to return Marie to the centre of the story. The connection to the community from that is a hint to let the process of learning sometimes run its course and to nurture a "teachable moment." In the P.R. class this is common practice. On more than one occasion a child would not want to stop playing and go outside with the group

or to the gym. In all my time there, I never saw Marie or Agnes engage in a power struggle with such a pupil. Always they would find another way. "You bring her to the playground when she's finished?" Marie might ask, knowing that I would.

When people stay in one place and time keeps coming around, long-ago and nowadays are not at the opposite ends of a continuum. Past or future may be thought of as post-dated or pre-dated versions of similar events. In that case the present is central, as Marie is central, and careful attention is given to ensure that it continues. Nowadays, then, John D'or Prairie people[12] may hunt "at the right time" or pack water as always. For Marie it is the fall walk to the cabin in its entirety that is important. No one specific piece of that family event deserves more attention than any other. When every participant takes care that the walk can continue, it inevitably does. In the talking about and walking of their lives, people of Bush Cree culture continue unassimilated by colonialism.

Insights such as these alert me to my own function in this dynamic journey. I see implications for school-community connections in the hint that process, product, and participants may be a single local concept. In dominant Canadian culture each is separate and valued differently. When and how Marie gives me her trapline story, when and how I receive and re-work it, is a process/product/participant whole. This local concept of wholeness is a new understanding for me.

On the other hand, an old understanding is the strength and immediacy of face-to-face instructions. If a traditional educator is right there by the learner's

---

[12]It is well known that indigenous people refer to themselves as *The People* in their own language all over the world. What I only recently figured out is that when my Native friends use the English word *people,* they use it in the same fashion. That insight struck me when I sat in a nearly empty Edmonton restaurant with two Stoney friends. One looked around and said, "There are some people here." She meant the family of other Indians at a nearby table. She did not mean the Europeans at the smorgasbord. I noticed a similar use of people in JDP.

side participating and guiding, it is impossible to miss it. Months after the event I am remembering below, the satisfaction in Nelly's and Marie's voices is with me still. With Marie it comes through even though she uses a plastic bag as hide; it comes through even on paper:

> "You think it's finished?" Marie laughed and grinned at me. "But there's still one more step. You cut it. All the edges. All that smoked edges where the smoke comes out is really black. Cut it about an inch more right around. And then finally it's done." (M. Nanooch, field notes, 94-05-20)

I remember how she pauses and how her black eyes twinkle and her voice rings. "You can make your moccasins now," Marie adds. All that work. All worth it. Her voice implies that. And her hands—those storytelling hands! They too express pleasure at a remembered job well done when they deftly show me how to roil a plastic bag as though it were wet moosehide (see footnote 9, this chapter). A good storyteller can do that—speak with every part of her body.

Nelly Nanooch does that one day when we are working on the real thing. She asks me, "You think it's soft enough?" She asks me this several steps after we have wrung wet moosehide as though it were a plastic bag. The strength and immediacy of pleasure comes through hooked to the satisfaction in her voice.

She asks that in the late afternoon of The Day Of Moosehide Tanning. My hand is numb from so much scraping and urges me to say "Enough!" Yet my cue lies not in my own tired body, but in Nelly's face. My response is inspired by her pleased look and the definite but loving way she thunks down her moosehide scraper and says, "Good enough for now!" My voice copies Nelly's voice, and my face copies her face. I give what I think is an ordinary John D'or reaction. I too lay down my tool with a thunk. I am happy that she is pleased. Local knowledge shapes our interactions, and even young children in John D'or

are credited with knowing how to read them. And me? I am learning how to make moosehide and read moosehide-making behaviour! Moosehide is not part of my ordinary everyday, so I learn slowly. To understand what is ordinary, local knowledge requires being alert to indirect expressions (Eaton, 1978).

The alertness leads me to school-community connections. The hints come from Nelly. The first hint says to listen for satisfied language and look for non-verbal satisfaction. The second hint says to observe tradition bearers when in doubt about protocol. Both hints say that it is okay to wait until clues emerge. Instead of asking for labels such as "What use?" "What colour?" "What shape?" "What degree of softness?" and so on, Shirley Brice Heath (1982) calls them "school questions" (p. 105); I learn to ask in silence, What is going on here? I learn to get answers from watching.

I settle into a second country autumn. I take dozens of photographs of bare trees and grasses that sparkle with frost. I take them because they remind me of Marie's walk to the cabin. They reflect Marie's spirit. They show her quiet enthusiasm for nature in the focused detail of a leaf as well as the unity of things in a picture of white-on-white tree trunks. I try to look at nature the way Marie does. The way Marie is.

What Marie does and says is what taking care and patience may mean—not getting to the cabin fast. Could that be why so often Native students take longer than 12 years to complete secondary school? Or why so many take a break from school after Grade 7 and return to school years later as mature students? Those kids know how critically important a modern education is, but there is always so much else that takes priority! The needs of the family may require a babysitter, a protector, a provider, or a helper more than an individual success story measured by outsider standards. New understanding from local knowledge in Marie's stories tells me that it takes patient adults to let children

have the freedom to teach themselves (Leavitt, 1991). It takes time to tell a story properly and with compassion. It takes time to walk with care and notice how things are: Small waters freezing up make walking difficult for horses. When she thinks back on those days, Marie's voice drifts off, and she is quiet for a long time. Remembering.[13]

Do her memories agree with those of Eva Nanooch (Meili, 1991), a relative from Fox Lake? Marie credits her father-in-law with showing her how to flesh an animal and make dry meat. Matter-of-factly, Eva remembers how women in her time too did all the work:

> The man comes home from trapping and hunting, and he just lies there. We had to do everything. (p. 118)

Dianne Meili writes, "This is the first time I've heard an elder speak so straightforwardly about the inequality of workloads between men and women in earlier times" (p. 118). Eva continues:

> Women had to tan hides, snare rabbits, and always cut wood with a two-handled saw, two of us working together, and we had to haul it. It's not easy when you have a big family and you're always on the move. . . . You had to get new poles [for the tent] and new spruce boughs [for the tent floor]. You'd just get everything put up and then you'd have to move again the next day. And always a mossbag [with a baby inside] on your back, whether you were walking or on horseback. (p. 118)

Marie remembers similar details out loud—the hard work of making a moosehide all alone or with the help of others, the births of her 11 babies, trapping muskrat and beaver, having healthy pups, making a walk-around instead of a push-pull-around for squeezing water from a hide. All this she does without praising her accomplishments or lamenting her difficulties. How

---

[13]Remembering. In the margin of a draft copy of this dissertation, my friend Woody Morrisson shares some memories of his growing up. In part he says, "My Elders used to ask me every day, 'What did you see and what did you learn?'" (Morrisson, personal communication, 95-09-20).

can I let her know that I notice both? Does she know that I know? I hesitate to ask directly.

I wonder what community-to-school connection to make about gender issues. I do not wish to make mistakes and end up looking foolish, although I do that at least once. This story shows that.

The Mail And The Male Man

> In JDP we were having a conversation about a young couple I'd met the night before. One friend, a few years younger than I, called the young women "domesticated." I looked blank. "You know . . . ," my friend laughed, "she doesn't speak when there are men around." "Oh," I said with some understanding because I was just reading Ella Cara Deloria's (1988) novel *Waterlily* about just such a Dakota woman. But because I didn't think the pre-contact custom was that simple and because this was 1995, I asked how the young woman's partner made a living. "Mail," my friend said. I continued to be puzzled. "Mail? He has a contract with the post office in town and gets the mail for the band?"
>
> My friend laughed hard. She laughed till she was crying. "No, no," she gasped. "You know, . . . he's male! He just comes home and lies there. He's male!"
>
> Marie and two or three other women were listening. They laughed with us but didn't say much. Later Marie said to me, "You know, we may be bosses here [in the P.R. room], but at home our husbands are in charge." (based on *Reflections,* 1994-1996, 94-05-11)

It is only now that I remember that my friend and I were the only single people in the room and that I was not alert to who else thought the episode was truly funny. I wish that making connections with gender roles that change across time and space were easy. Instead of offering new understandings, I can only say, "I don't know what to say about gender in other cultures, because my experiences are as a woman from a privileged culture." It is an untold story. But even as a woman from a privileged culture I know a little about how economic powerlessness and inner fear mandate a woman's choices. I remember well what worked for me when years ago I lived with an abuser. A strange ritual kept me going. I would collect wishbones in a basket. Each time I put one in there, I would give myself strength to continue in the

knowledge that I could break all these wishbones and make one terribly powerful wish. I ate a lot of chickens, but I never did break all those bones or make that one terribly powerful wish. Instead, I moved out the moment I finished university. Today when those ugly times are far behind me, I am reminded of them through reading Jacob Nibènegenesábe, a Swampy Cree. He uses wishing bones to change things but says at the beginning of *his* storytelling:

> I try to make wishes right
> but sometimes it doesn't work.
> (cited in Norman, 1976, p. 5)

Wishing right or wishing wrong, I am forever conscious of the White edge with which I am born (McIntosh, 1992). I continue to dream about curriculum connections while trying to sort out gender issues in the still curriculum of a culture not my own:

Dreaming Up Gender Curriculum

> I might say to my imaginary students—practicing teachers or classroom aides working with Native students (I'd make Shawna one of their students)—"Write down 20 things you want to know about someone of your own sex, maybe your auntie or neighbour or parent. Then invite her to tell you stories. Tape-record them. Take photographs. Draw pictures. Make notes. Put together a scrapbook of all these things. But ask her nothing."
>
> What would the students and their teachers learn? And finally—what observations will emerge about men and women, girls and boys after reflecting on everyone's original 20 questions?

I dream up other implications for school-community connections. Gently, Cow Moose interrupts.

Figuring Out Cow Moose

> "Friend, follow me." Her soft nose nudges me to re-read Meili's (1991) chapter on Little Red River Cree people. I notice with interest the list of things that people get from moose. Besides food and clothing, there are glue and intestine carrier bags. In a flash the last two make new connections for me: "We put food in it [the dried intestine], and it kept pretty good in there" (E. Nanooch; cited in Meili, p. 121). So that's what Cow Moose does—she holds it all together in her gut! That quick insight re-connects me with an

Ursula le Guin (1989) short story, "The Carrierbag Theory of Fiction." In it she says:

> We have not heard about the thing to put things in, the container for the thing contained. That is a new story. That is news.
>
> And yet old, . . . for what's the use of digging up a lot of potatoes if you have nothing to lug the ones you can't eat home in-with. (p. 167)

That's how I figure out Cow Moose. Her message fits and satisfies. Female lives and stories carry the culture in their gut. For 30,000 years, give or take a few millennia, it's keeping pretty good in there. That is indeed news stuffed full of new understandings. I want to ask Marie about them: In their own quite ordinary ways the women hold it all together!

While I hope to catch up with Marie to tell her so, moons come and go. Snow falls and falls and falls. When I step on it, it squeaks under my boots. Eventually, it all evaporates into the sky or seeps into moss and the earth. Water on the river first hardens into ice, then rots into slush. I ski through woods one final time this season. Sometimes it is over silky patches of long, beige grass. The snow is no longer noisy. I call to chickadees. They call back. One of the deer leaves an antler for me in the middle of the trail. Suddenly, I need to move from my rented room in the forest by the river. Within a week I have a new place in the city (Edmonton). Cow Moose glides into the water and swims to Hawrelak Park. Hawrelak Park is close to that part of the North Saskatchewan River valley I now call home. I found a place near water and woods again! I need water and woods to stay calm. I make a wish for Cow Moose to stay with me as Nibènegenesábe (cited in Norman, 1976) might. It works. Cow Moose changes into a bird and becomes the first robin I see this spring. Both Spring and Robin live in my backyard these days. The next summer too, whenever I dig in the garden I leave out worms for Robin. I'm glad some worms are willing to be bird food.

This is another good place to insert a short school-home connection—a hint from Moose-bird or worm-bird food. All Native tribes have trickster stories

full of shape shifts. Adults and children respond to them with smiles. I smile too. As teacher I like to see those smiles on the students' faces. When Marie visits at Easter, she hears that robin. Can she tell Robin is really Cow Moose? Or is it Sank)fa? "This is nice," she says. "Listen!" The pleasure that Marie takes from that bird in a direct way repays her for the hour she just spent listening to me read aloud my writing. "This is so good!" she smiles. "We won't hear this back home for another month or so" (*Diaries,* 1982-1996, 95-04-08). I catch her smile. I stuff it in my cheek.

With such support from nature and friends (a single local concept), I continue to invent, make up, and speculate on possible connections with Marie's stories. In the city I review what I have already written. Soon I am again enchanted by Edmonton spring-blossom fragrances. Each trip to campus becomes a walk through soft-scented puffs of wind which make it easy to think about Marie.

In the section just completed I have examined Marie's life *stories* for local knowledge. In the next part I will look at Marie's *actions.*

Local Knowledge in Marie's Living

"Why do both?" I am occasionally asked by colleagues. "Just look at the stories she tells!" I read their faces to try to decide whether to give away the short answer or the long one. I might just say, "Sometimes words are not enough." Sometimes I give a long response. It is this.

Sometimes moving in small steps from the general to the specific and vice versa works well. It works well for those who learn in a linear fashion. Indeed, I have done so with the local knowledge in Marie's stories: Marie → Timeline → Life on the Trapline → Small Stories. But given a definition where life and stories are inseparable cycles, an understanding of local knowledge must

include life and stories as experienced. University of Alberta requires that I pass on to others my research in a book. But University of Alberta protocol also lets me deliver my understandings in other ways besides words. When I realise that, I decide to risk raising questions that I may never be given answers to—I decide also to study what I learn through my involvement in Marie's life. That is when she shifts shape from a consultant to a traditional educator.

My new involvement gives me is a sense of personal renewal and connectedness within the universe. This happens in face-to-face events with every other of the six traditional educators as well, but I focus on examples drawn from Marie's life for one simple reason. It is she who invites me to the feast mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. I go. Because I go, I get to experience Oneness in a most profound way in JDP. And I get to remember a similar adventure as a young teacher in Kitwanga, BC, where I dream my way through a totem pole named Hole-Through-The-Sky.[14] Both become connected as I recall the story of that extra-ordinary moment. The way I tell the older story these days includes Nelly Nanooch and two pictures that make it hard to tell which timespace belongs where.

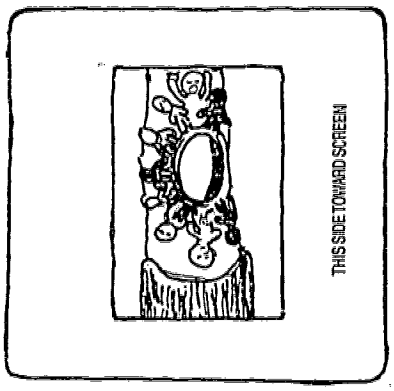
In "The Time I Dream Into Another World" I jumble up events and time—1974, 2274, 1974, 1982, 1995—into a storytelling, time-warped, omega point. And let it be. In the following pages and in the next story I will focus on the present and on the hours of January 21, 1995. It is no surprise that the local knowledge I gain that night unites me with the spirit world. It is now easy to recall the first hints missed 21 years ago, January 1974, on a similar winter night. The hints—they were blue sparkles dropped in the snow by

---

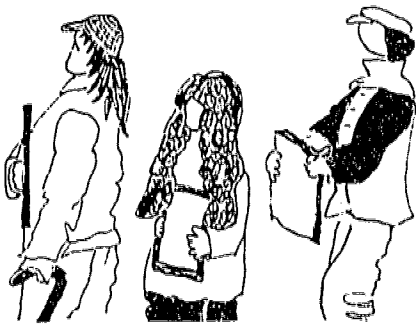
[14]During my time in Kitwanga I was often drawn to visit Hole-Through-The-Sky in the neighbouring village of Kitwancool. The hole is a ceremonial entrance large enough for a person to climb through. I learned what the pole was called and heard stories about similar entrances to other worlds years after my dream, years after I left the reserve. Somewhere, much later again, I read that it is known as the oldest pole in the world.

somebody the time I dream into another world. Maybe one of the people carved around the opening of the hole-through-the-pole that I went through was that "somebody." Whoever it was put those blue sparkles in my adventure to help me get back from the other side of Hole-Through-The-Sky. Once upon a time, it happened that way.

Oneness



"The Time I Dream
Into Another World"
Kitwancool, BC, January 1974



"The Night Of The
Memorial Dance"
JDP, AB, January 1995

The Time I Dream Into Another World

> Although I stay on the other side of Hole-Through-the-Sky for 300 years, I find that in the ordinary world no time has passed. What happens in that other world is a favourite story I like to tell face-to-face. It is about following and not following directions given to me by old people in a dream within a dream. Nelly's matter-of-fact response to my adventure is an interested, "You went there? Into the other world? What was your name there?" (*Diaries,* 1982-1996, 95-02-22). Her questions add a fifth time warp to my story—1974, 2274, 1974, 1982, 1995. The wrinkle is so unexpected that I forget to say the obvious: "Nelly, what was *your* name there?" But because this new layer of knowledge fits so well, why ask a question when I almost know the answer? In Nelly's kitchen, the experience shifts from being exotic to ordinary.

In January 1995, after Marie tells me what I need to know about the Memorial Dance, she leaves me alone to do my own learning and follow-up

reflecting. My diary shows what happens. So does the above sketch of the companion photograph entitled "The Night Of The Memorial Dance."

The Night Of The Memorial Dance

When I arrived at 6:30 p.m. at the community hall, I wanted to sit with Marie, but I did not see her. Instead I ate with Agnes and her extended family. We remained together all night. I feasted and danced the same as everyone else. At first I was conscious of being only one of a handful of White people. But because most of those soon left and there were no other obvious reminders, I forgot about being a minority. I rarely asked for anything to be translated, and people rarely offered. At regular intervals the entire place burst into laughter. I'd laugh just 'cause the people were all laughing and I felt happy to be where I was.

The highlight of the evening came at midnight. Nothing unusual happened, and yet the spirit of the room changed. (For those who think that way, the ordinary and the extra-ordinary were about to merge.) Someone I knew swept an area in front of us. She then laid down a blanket near my feet. People began to pile everyday household items on it. They were things like mugs and bowls, buckets, mittens, crocheted blankets, towels, and kitchen utensils.

I was delighted with how well I could see. But moments later that privilege disappeared. Honoured guests lined up in front of us. Their bodies blocked everything. I could tell that the gifts on the blanket were being blessed only because I smelled smoke.

I felt off balance. Would I also miss the ritual cleansing of photos of people who had passed away? I turned to Agnes and Mary for help. Agnes whispered, "Tell Peggy you've got a picture." "Where is she?" I still couldn't see. Agnes tried another approach. "Stand over there behind William." "Who's William?" I was getting desperate. If I wanted to participate I would need to do somethings without being told. I would need to squeeze through the lineup of old people in front of me. To my surprise, none of them objected. They were busy watching adults form into a single file of dancers. Each of the dancers was holding a photograph of someone who had passed over. Everyone but me knew what to do. I waited for a clue. It came when Sr. Bernadette motioned me to go in front of her.

As I danced I held my photograph of The Woman Who Passed Away so that it faced the audience. My identity as a person quickly disappeared within the unity of the ceremony. Members of the community stood still in silent respect. Men removed their hats. I lowered my eyes.

We circled the hall twice. Perhaps 150 people stood and remembered. Perhaps a dozen of us danced and remembered. Later we went around twice more. It was then that I felt The Woman Who Passed Away dance with me. I thanked her for helping me with my upgrading. Soon she re-joined her living relatives. Before the night was out I danced with several of them also.

> The entire event was in honour of people who had passed into another world. Last night they left their northern-light bodies and came into the hall to dance with us.
>
> When presents were given away, people accepted them in silence. A few nodded. I received a small frying pan. It surprised and delighted me, and I felt honoured. Not everyone got something, but I could not tell what determined who did. *My Stoney friend who read this said, "They thanked you for dancing." Yes. Her words made me see the relationship between drum groups and dancers in a new way. The people who come and dance give the drummers a reason to come and sing.*
>
> Around 3:30 a.m. I sat with Sr. Bernadette. She was getting ready to go home. In a few hours people would be coming to Sunday mass as usual. She added thoughtfully, "Although if this isn't a religious experience, I don't know what is!"
>
> Once she was gone I paid formal respect to Marie. We gossiped a little about this and that. "I won $300 at bingo," she smiled. I nodded. "I'll be thinking about this gathering for a long time." We had danced together earlier, and there did not seem to be anything else that needed doing or saying. After some time I said good night and went home.
>
> I heard some people stayed till 7:00 a.m. (*Diaries,* 1982-1996, 95-01-22)

As I reflect on "The Night Of The Memorial Dance," I notice how events pass in ordinary fashion. Family and friends of the sponsor "put up" a feast, and we all eat. Round-dance drum groups make music, and we all dance. When meetings, bingos, and personal matters that people go to town for are surely over, when all who want to be there are, then the ceremonies happen. These measured rituals are casual. They are followed by more dancing, more visiting, and more eating. Throughout the night young people sell 50:50 Draw Tickets at $1 each. A rodeo-voiced master of ceremonies announces the winner. Everyone claps. We grin at each other, happy for whoever wins. The proceeds of each round of ticket sales are split equally between the holder of the winning number and the men who perform. Sometimes the winners will donate their share as well. I have never yet won, but if I ever do, I would do that, because it is the only money the players get that night. And although drumming to give joy counts for a lot, it does not feed a family. I notice that attending practices and performing at gatherings seem to interfere with holding

down a 9:00-to-5:00 job, and yet it still takes gas. So what I usually do is buy $10 worth of 50:50 tickets and consider them my admission. Local people also pay what they can. When I bring visitors to Native functions, I explain this custom so that my guests do not get irritated at the constant requests for money. Sometimes I buy tickets on their behalf and silently hand them over to my guests. With such a casual gesture, a Native friend at a pow-wow once made sure that I would always remember that lesson.

The lesson of the 50:50 draw tickets is about giving economic support to a community's way of educating by doing. My teacher at the pow-wow models a lesson where the impact will not be missed. This is Bediako's African "Show them, don't tell them" in Canada. In my own work in teacher education I often mention the story I have just explained. I like to think that it deepens my small part in the Giving Circle. Certainly it strengthens my sense of connectedness. At the very least it has implications for school-community connections. For me the main connection is that I lend economic support to the community that indirectly pays my wages. I freely spend money locally to support village events and people. If some goods cost more, I remind myself of the difference between price and value. Paying 20 cents more for a pound of butter ensures that the Fifth Meridian Store will be there the next time I don't feel like driving two hours into town from JDP.

But what about Marie? Where is Marie in this story on Marie's actions?

I think of her absence as a hint dropped by the local universe on the topic of traditional education. Marie invites me, answers my questions, prepares me for the Memorial Dance, and then gives me the freedom to take control of my own learning. When we meet in the early hours of January 22, she beams like she always does when we first see each other. I grin like I always grin when

we first see each other. We rub cheeks.[15] I gesture, "Let's dance." She replies by standing up and taking my hand. Then she says, "You made it, eh?" Her daughter/granddaughter jumps up and holds my other hand. The three of us comfortably break into the large circle of dancers. Because people dance as a group, they hold hands with relatives or strangers without regard to anyone's age or sex.

I hope I can do as well with my own students, the teachers I work with, or the upgrading mature students I help get their certificates! I hope I can make their entry into a dance in progress in another culture (or into a sub-culture of their own culture) as joyful as Marie does for me—and with as few verbal explanations. I would like my students to feel as personally renewed as I do that night. I pray for the wisdom to remember always to provide my students with the kind of relevance, challenge, fun, social component, and support I feel The Night Of The Memorial Dance in John D'or Prairie.

The other people at that feast and dance probably do not think about the Oneness of culturally relevant learning. They don't have to think about it to know what is being passed on in a traditional manner that night. They certainly don't discuss it. Why talk about what everybody knows? And if the young people don't know it, they soon will. So why patronise them with an explanation? They'll learn by watching and participating. Newcomers can do so as well.

Yes. Even! But as newcomer I cannot do it on my own. And for the personal support which made the Memorial Dance so successful, which makes this dissertation possible, I am indebted to Agnes Moberly and her extended

---

[15]Rubbing cheeks is not a local custom. I do not know why I do that. Perhaps it is because Marie is a good foot shorter than I am, and our cheeks rub when I bend down to hug her. I like it. It feels incredibly tender and loving. Sometimes she adds, "We'll hug again next time we meet."

family. No. There is no feeling of debt. But there is a reciprocal relationship based on mutual respect and laughter. For my part, I insist on following the mainstream Canadian custom and speak my thanks repeatedly. Although I think, Why talk about what everybody knows? I cannot stop myself from saying, "Thank you, Agnes." Now that I have deliberately taken care of protocol from my own culture, I can begin to investigate local knowledge with Agnes Moberly. I will also show how, as with Marie, we shift shape from research consultants to traditional educators to friends.

Chapter 7

Local Knowledge from Agnes Moberly

Local Knowledge in Agnes' Living

At the very start of this chapter I want to remember Sr. Bernadette's advice: "Just talk about what you learn and how you are learning," because already the story has changed and changed me. As I re-read what I have written so far, I notice that I am not strictly talking about what I am learning; I am also presenting what I know from before. It comes out all together, hooked to what I am learning. The unfolding process is in full swing. My present understanding of the structure of local knowledge is that it is intimately tied to what has gone on before and what comes next.

However, Sister's words help me focus on my relationship with Agnes and on what that relationship lets me learn about local knowledge. I continue to make school-to-on-reserve connections; I carry on watching for hints and let events and stories tied to Agnes bubble up at will. Because I come to John D'or from the outside, I follow her lead to local knowledge. First I examine how I take part in some of her everyday experiences. Then I show how I come to understand her stories. I interpret my relationship with those stories and events from within our growing friendship. Because of that, I understand local knowledge as a way of getting to know a friend. Our friendship winds and binds our relationship. I see how local knowledge values process as much as it does the bits of information that it reveals. And that process is as important as the two beings who shape the relationship between them. Being in relationship with Agnes makes it clear that that is knowledge. We never discuss knowledge.

While Agnes and I pass the giving and receiving of local knowledge back and forth between us, our stories shape us even as we give them shape. Is

Cow Moose present in that insight? Is that what happens when you make moosehide? Do you twist and wind and wash and stretch yourself right into the making of an organic process?[1]

Central to that process is the knowledge that for the past four days I have camped with Agnes and her family at a pilgrimage near Edmonton. A sacred place to many, it is called Lac Ste. Anne.

At this place I share Agnes' cooking fire and her Catholic ceremonies. Steve Simon (1995) has a wonderful book, *Healing Waters: The Pilgrimage to Lac Ste. Anne,* which describes them. It is filled with photographs that remind me of my own.

It is time to pack up. I am returning to camp after taking pictures of twin rainbows, silvery lake water, and newly washed clouds. Half of John D'or is here, and I feel quite at home. As Agnes pauses from the frenzy of breaking camp with 30,000 other people before the next downpour, I single out a certain little girl I want to talk to Agnes about. I will call the child Betty-Ann, and she is six. Agnes is her auntie. In my diary I describe what happened, but that day, four days ago, I tell Agnes the story from memory.

If You Were Little, How Old Would You Be?

> Two nights ago I was sitting on a rug beside the campfire that Agnes shares with her sister-in-law and with me. I was holding my poodle and playing with three children. I was showing them how to pet the dog. "If he doesn't want you to touch him, he'll tell you. Then you have to listen," I said. "My mother's dog says 'grrr' when he means 'no.' You always have to respect people who don't want you to touch them." It was raining hard outside and dark under the orange and blue tarps. "And if someone touches *you* and it feels bad, you come and tell on them!" We were packed together like puppies, talking quietly about the dog and other things. The children call him "Your mother's dog—what's his name again?" Soon we

---

[1]Instead of explaining organic process, I repeat this quotation and let the reader complete the connection alone.

> A story [is] a living thing, an organic process, a way of life. What is taken for stories, only stories, are fragments of/in life, fragments that never stop interacting while being complete in themselves. (Trinh, 1989, p. 143)

were also discussing age. The dog's age, 11; my age, 50; and their ages, 6, 5, and 8.

We had been playing quietly like this for some time now, prying ourselves apart for a moment only when Agnes' grown daughter silently brought over her small son from the next campfire. It was about 15 feet away and sheltered by the same tarps as ours. Gently, she propped the toddler against my knees and left him alone to make his own connections with us as playmates.

That's when Betty-Ann faced me openly. "If you were little, how old would you be?" (based on *Diaries,* 1982-1996)

"Her question is like a song," I tell Agnes. I notice how Betty-Ann's father has moved closer to listen to my story, but still far enough away to appear not to be doing so. "It is such a healthy question. And so full of self-assurance," I say. "So perceptive," I want to add but don't—it might sound obvious and appear condescending.

Agnes nods. "She was letting you know how you were probably one of them because you were all playing together like that."

"It was a remarkable moment. And the way she was so indirect and clear about letting me know the answer she needed. I told her I was 9 or maybe 6 years old. It was quite magic what happened then." I pause to remember the warmth of the firelight and the sound of the rain and the stinging smoke and the three old people who watched in silence and without intruding from inside their own nearby tents. "What happened was that I noticed how we had become all one bunch. The small dog, the kids, and me all communicated like we were one being."

"Yes," Agnes says.

"I like that!" I add and smile to include Betty-Ann's dad—Agnes' brother.

For a while we adults are deep in thought. But soon we re-connect with the rush to pack up and go—the storm clouds are nearly overhead. We each continue to do things that need doing. The job I choose is to help Agnes' mother pick up garbage. Working in silence lets me bask some more in Betty-Ann's words. I could never have thought of such a tender way to tell an outsider that they fit.

What strikes me about this story are, of course, Betty-Ann's words. Just think: I would never have heard them if I had been too busy to sit down and let quite ordinary things happen! That revelation and the way that an open agenda repeatedly connects home to school for me is a delight each time it happens—and that is often. I have Agnes to thank for modelling that skill for me.

If you were little, how old would you be?

If I were little, how old would I be at six? I would be old enough to know how to fix breakfast. I would be old enough to give away whatever younger children wanted—my juice, my Barbie doll, my time, my money. I would be old enough to get myself to school on time and maybe also a four-year-old neighbour-cousin. I would be old enough to decide my own school attendance and pay the teacher's price if I choose not to. I would be old enough to look after Grandmother and pack her firewood or groceries. I would be old enough to hold in my hunger quietly and not whine about stopping at a restaurant. I would be old enough to know where I wanted to live and why and for how long. I would be old enough to know better than to talk to non-Cree strangers in West Edmonton Mall. I would be old enough to find a place to sleep if I were tired at a gathering. I would be old enough to learn more by watching and to ask fewer questions. If I were six I would. And if I were Bush Cree Indian.

These "if-I-weres" are my interpretations of ordinary things that I see six-year-olds do as I visit or camp or travel with them. In my examples I think they are learning to put the welfare of their group before their own comfort. That's how I think they learn to be strong and self-sufficient and not to be a burden to their family groups.

My wish for these little ones who taught me is that they grow up knowing lots and lots of moments like the one we had on The Day Of Being All One Bunch. And me too.

The Hard-to-Talk-About

The fact that some may not is born out by statistics and health board cases that Agnes works so very hard to turn around. I don't know any details and would not tell them if I did. It is enough to know that Agnes knows. Many times she has been re-elected to serve on that board. I'd like to help

Agnes in her efforts to keep John D'or a healthy place.[2] I'd like to help by referring to an essay by Charity Laboucan (1995), a Cree who lives in Edmonton. Even though her story does not take place in John D'or, Agnes says that she'd like to use it. "Pass the paper around so people could read it and talk about it" (personal communication, 95-08-16). Her way to keep John D'or healthy is for the people to "talk about it." When they talk it would be in such a way that abuse becomes socially unacceptable the way it was in pre-alcohol times. Agnes doesn't say exactly those words, but I believe that she means them. Abuse is unacceptable. In long-ago times this message was commonly passed on through teasing, gossip, and group pressure. People would conform or face abandonment by the community.

Abuse is not ordinary. Neither is alcohol. And their use undermines traditional on-reserve ways. By publishing her story, Laboucan (1995) is modelling new ways of dealing with new problems. By making this essay from an unnamed reserve available in John D'or, Agnes is following old ways. She is helping her community solve its own problems. Using medicine made by people from somewhere else makes sense (Young et al., 1989).

Abuse

> Okay, let's forget the clinical definitions of abuse. Let's forget about perpetuating the silence we have learned. Forget about skirting the issues. Abuse is harsh. It hurts. It destroys people. It kills people. I am tired of not talking about it. I am tired of worrying about who I will offend with the grossness of it all.
>
> What is abuse? Let me tell you. . . . Abuse is the echoing childhood cries when I wasn't old enough to have language, other than calling for mommy when I watched and heard her get beaten.
>
> Abuse is the boys and men who shoved my face into the bed so I wouldn't cry out as they mounted me. Abuse is their threats and making me promise silence and commanding me through fear. (Laboucan, 1995, p. 4)

---

[2]By healthy I mean the satisfied ways that the people themselves describe their community in the survey quoted in Chapter 1.

Laboucan goes on to detail abuse by a father figure who stole five years from her youth. She is thankful that he is sterile and doesn't get her pregnant. The personal list of abuse includes waking up with his semen on her lips. It includes helping a woman who, in the middle of winter, runs barefoot through the night to escape from another beating. It includes not calling the police for fear the woman might lose her children to social services. It includes alcohol and family members killed in a car accident.

In Laboucan's (1995) young life abuse means clumps of hair missing from scalps. It means the purple and black swollen faces of women beaten by uncles and cousins. It means seeing her grandmother sit on her cousin, choking and slapping the girl. It means a family member who jumps from the High Level Bridge, a family member who shoots himself in the stomach. He is found bloodied and dead on the couch by yet other family members.

Laboucan (1995) remembers abuse at the hands of a cousin who forces her to eat mouldy tuna casserole even after Laboucan had vomited in it. She remembers abuse in the pain, rage, and fists of her mother. She remembers abuse as leaving home at a young age to escape, becoming yet another link in the cycle of abused women of her family.

That brings on another kind of abuse: one in which Laboucan (1995) finds herself alone and without help. In order to cope, she becomes familiar with a new abuse—she accepts her loneliness and gets used to being cold, untouchable, and hard. She finds escape in more abuse—in drug-induced oblivion. One day she is holding onto a knife with her own blood-soaked hand. She remembers that moment as a moment when things begin to change for her. Here is how she ends her essay:

> I did die that day. And I was reborn. The answer was found when I was at the bottom—truth. I will tell the truth. I will not be silent. My victory is my life and my love and my ability to see beauty . . . and being still here to write these words. Finally, after all this time, I can write them. (Laboucan, 1995, p. 5)

Why do I use her essay? To try to protect[3] those little children I was one bunch with. Protection from abuse is about adults modelling how to make connections with reverence. It doesn't matter if reverence takes the shape of my mother's old dog or Agnes' dad's young pups—a story I will tell a little later. I include Laboucan's (1995) writing as a companion piece to the hard-to-talk-about poems that I share next. They are not easy to talk about, especially for cross-cultural friends. But we do. And when I . . . when I re-tell what Agnes says, when then I try to reserve my judgment and withhold "shoulds," it does not mean that I am indifferent to the painful side of living. It does mean that, like Agnes in JDP, and perhaps Laboucan on her reserve, I believe that people can address their own problems with local wisdom and compassion. It also means that there are times when help from the outside is welcomed. That is confirmed by the words of Thomas Potts, a Stoney friend who often tells me, "My grandfather always said that we have to solve our own problems. But we don't need to do it alone" (personal communication, 1991-1996). Thomas and I often talk about how to heal our respective communities.

By my own definition, *hard-to-talk-about poems* are situations that I do not truly understand. I have this feeling about them that here or there a piece of local knowledge is missing.

---

[3]Protect. In conversation with my friend and colleague Hedy Bach I come to understand my need to include some stories that are not easy to talk about. They are different from the stories I leave untold out of ignorance or fear. Hedy helps me say, "I want to connect such stories to 'protecting.' Balance is important—relationships hold hard-to-talk-about stories *as well as* positive experiences that are a joy to talk about."

"Rose-coloured pictures of our culture do not help us," someone once said. But the desire to protect my friends from stereotyping is long entrenched. What to do?

Hard-To-Talk-About Poems

#4.
In my travels I met a man
whose man-parts
didn't fit him right.

I saw the sign!
It was him that tied up
the Barbie doll
and hung her
upside down by her ankles
from a teepee pole.

I knew it was him
by the way he laughed
when I said, "Whose idea
of a bad joke is this?"
I knew the moment I untied Barbie
that the man's penis didn't fit right.
I knew, because he grinned and said,
"It's a message for the women."
He said that.

I later heard
His unborn baby
died that week.

#12.
A voice hollered,
"Get your dirty hands
off the fuckin curtains!"

The small girl
who had watched me through
the sparkling trailer window
disappeared behind cascading lace.

#13.
"I hear drumming!" I whispered.
"Oh, it's just Old Jimmy playing tapes.
He'll listen to them for hours."

On my way home I passed Old Jimmy.
His back against a tree,
He stood there
beating his drum in midnight dusk.

Then I saw them—
In the poplar grove
behind their log home
his young grandchildren

sat around the campfire with him.
Practising songs
and playing.

#14.

It was a picture perfect afternoon in a village school. The class was small. Children were doing or not doing things quietly. Calmly. Alone or with a friend. Happy and relaxed, we three adults exchanged soft glances that said, "Isn't this nice?"

The moment stretched on and on. . . . It came around again and again. Suddenly the door flung open. In stepped The White Administrator & Two Mainstream Consultants from the Big City. From their strong body language I could feel how the two men noticed my light skin and cast me as The One in Charge. Their loud voices said what they wanted. Irritated, I took on a stance that gestured all authority towards the small brown woman wearing blue cords and moccasins at the teacher's desk. "Ask Mrs. Jason. This is her territory." I was embarrassed for them. I fled back and faded into the woodwork. The other adult was already there. In mainstream business-friendly voices the men measured and probed. They and the female administrator did most of the talking. They took what information they needed and left. From my place in the wall I learned what people around here do with many certified teachers and principals: They wait for them to disappear.

Later my Native friends said they didn't feel what I did and weren't bothered by what happened.

Each of these hard-to-talk-about poems is medicine.[4] Merely writing them down, which is what Laboucan (1995) also discovers, is healing. Sharing them soothes a similar pain in others. It re-assures us that we are not alone. No single group (age, class, gender, or race) has the copyright on abuse, powerlessness, ignorance, stereotyping, misconceptions, discomfort, sexism, racism, poor judgment, or uncertainty. The part I play in that list of faults is in those poems as well. Institutions such as government, church, school,

---

[4]"What to do?" I answer the question from the previous footnote. In traditional healing, health, and medicine, protection against painful or hard-to-talk-about events is common. Healers make medicine for use on psychic, emotional, spiritual, and physical levels (Rothenberg, 1968). They require rituals that locally are ordinary. P. A. Twumasi (1975) says about Ghanaian healers that they sometimes call into being supernatural agents "in response to the hopes and needs of their clients" (p. 41). Psychiatry, a branch of scientific medicine, knows this and institutionalises traditional healing techniques. Some are the same techniques that Agnes uses when she wants people to "talk about it."

Hint—like local knowledge, local bush medicine does not generally require an explanation because it is not generally questioned.

universities, and Native organisations are made up of individuals, and I belong to some of them.

While reviewing my writing yet again, I sway in a hammock in my Edmonton backyard. My eyes soft-focus on my garden filled with brilliant sunflowers that also move gently in the heat. I am almost aware of being about to make a new knowledge connection. The connection-in-progress has to do with Agnes' quest for healing. ("So far so good," Nelly Nanooch might say.) But at this moment I can't quite seem to fit together what I read in the transcripts that Agnes is telling me and not telling me about healing and *bush medicine.* Bush medicine is JDP herbal medicine. The easy pattern of home-to-school connections that is serving this dissertation well suddenly stops working. At this point and in this timespace things get complicated. In my attempt to understand the relationship between healing and bush medicine and in my search for a home-to-school connection, I suddenly feel I'm north in JDP and see how in John D'or healing, bush medicine, home, and school fit together. In the here of JDP (underlined to connect it to other heres on this page and the next), school, school teachers, and school curriculum lose relevance or at least shift shape. As on The Day Of The Moosehead Photo, I see where home and school are one. Here as I use the word describes an attitude and a feeling rather than a place. The feeling is comfort and esteem between friends, and this promotes healthy ties to individuals. Memories of stories from two different situations come up. I shift in time to two different heres to understand how to keep our One Bunch loved and healthy.

In the one here I am sitting in a trendy café on Vancouver's Denman Street with Woody Morrisson. Woody is reading my "Hard-To-Talk-About Poems" aloud. He is helping me try on words to express the painful parts of research I don't like to face. I do the same for him. He answers my questions.

I do the same for him. Every few lines he pauses to share another story or joke from our shared or separate past. "This reminds me . . . ," he begins. I do the same. "Why not talk about 'coming to knowledge'?" my Haida friend offers (personal communication, 95-08-10). We sit together for three hours. Yes. Coming to knowledge fits. The words fit especially well with narrative research. We try out where it leads me. I tell Woody how, when Agnes tells me a story, I go away and think about her words from this angle, that angle, this perspective, and that. I do this until I reach some insight and can make a new connection. He tells me what he hears when I re-tell Agnes' story in my own words and what he feels when I notice how I come to new knowledge. Yes. Somethings are hard to talk about. But doing so is healing. I read aloud from Howard Norman (1976) the words of the Swampy Cree storyteller, Nibènegenesabe, who knows that also:

> Out of the [shared] talk came something. . . . You should know this thing. Maybe it won't be easy to hear inside the story, but it's there. Too easy to find, you might think it too easy to do. (p. 172)

In the second here Agnes and I are walking through a misty campground. Twice she stops in front of a small evergreen and without introduction brings up an old conversation we had about the pain in my spine.

> "That's the tree they use for backaches," she told me. "But you can't just take it. It has to be given to you. Or it won't work. You give tobacco." The next day she added more: "You have to give tobacco and some other things too. They use other things and mix it. I don't know which part of the tree they use. . . . But you can't just do it yourself.
>
> [The same day] Agnes wanted to know where to dump the oginee sediments left over from my rosehip tea. That's how I came to understand that if you're given something as medicine, you dispose of it with reverence. Like with tobacco—if you don't smoke, you can give it to a tree. You can put it under a tree away from dogs.
>
> "But I guess it's all right to just throw it away; it's just tea." (I remembered a conversation last year with Jane Ash Poitras, an internationally known Cree artist, where she said a similar thing. The thing itself isn't sacred. It's the relationship we have with it and with the rituals that make it so.)

> The third day, the last day of our camping trip . . . Agnes pointed it out [the evergreen] a final time, repeating, "This is the tree they use for backaches" and "It isn't simple." (*Diaries,* 1982-1996, 94-06-18)

It seems that making medicine might be an ordinary event, but it is neither simple nor easy. Before I can help my readers come to new local knowledge about bush medicine and healing, before I can tie it all together for myself as well, I need to show one further thing. I do not have anything written down about it, but I can remember. I can remember my several attempts at getting Agnes to soak her viciously swollen and infected finger in camomile tea or salt water. Even when camping I have both. She likes my suggestions but does not act on them. I also hurt each time she cries out when she accidentally bangs her hand against things. In desperation I re-kindle the fire, boil up some rainwater, and pour in salt. I use salt because it seems more familiar. Once the temperature is just right, I hand it to her in my coffee cup. "Oh yeah!" she says and sticks her finger in it. She keeps it there until I say, "It's all right now." Every three or four hours we repeat the ritual. We comment on how her finger is responding. Yes. For whatever reason, medicine that heals has to be given to you. You can't just take it. Might my newfound local bush medicine knowledge fit other places too? The idea of healing being given away easily tucks into ideas behind comfort foods.[5] From hot chocolate to chicken soup, whatever people take to get better emotionally, spiritually, physically, or mentally—the healing is connected to the giving-of-it by someone else. I now believe that I/you/we heal-together-"with" in a circle. Local knowledge teaches that healing is not done alone. It is complemented by protection.

---

[5]Comfort foods are foods that I associate with restful moments and loving situations: Myrtle Philip's Alta Lake blueberry muffins, Dad's hazelnut torte, Mom's Denver omelette; cooking pea soup for my daughter each time she visits. She likes to rekindle her memories of growing up with pea soup.

I'm not too bad at working with some medicines, especially that one about helping gender "fit" or moving along skin infections—if others let me, that is. Sometimes they don't want my gifts. A companion part to what Agnes says is what I now say: You can't just heal. Healing has to be asked for, "paid" for with tobacco or love or time. Healing is given away and accepted. Although Agnes doesn't speak about it, it is quite ordinary local knowledge. As a member of the John D'or Health Board, she lives this cycle as one link in the Giving Circle. My experience now tells me that health and healing work best whenever there is no separation between the medicine, the healing, the healer, and the one being healed. Native people from all over North America make Lac Ste. Anne near Edmonton the destination of a healing journey. Many go there every year to be one with the healing powers of the water and with each other.



"Lac Ste. Anne Ceremony"

Although I sometimes read this information in books—for example, in *Medical Systems in Ghana* (Twumasi, 1975) and *The Four Winds* (Villoldo & Jendresen, 1990)—or see it in videos such as *Behind the Veil: Nuns* (NFB,

1990), I come to this knowledge by being in a relationship in a face-to-face way.

Local Knowledge in Agnes' Stories

One day Agnes and I are walking in the hall of her school. I ask, "Who are your stories for? Who would you like to read them?" Agnes considers for a moment and says, "I haven't really thought about it. Whatever you think" (*Diaries*, 1982-1996, 94-06-04). And later she echoes Marie: "I tell the story and then just leave it. We're just talking, and I don't think about it any more" (*Diaries*, 1982-1996, 94-06-04). But I think about it. My two questions pre-occupy me each time I study her stories or remember Cow Moose. I risk an answer. To do so I re-connect with Cow Moose and women who hold John D'or together. For 20 years Agnes has been one of them—educating John D'or pre-schoolers. She says, "I call them my 'little ones'" (Moberly, transcript, 94-05-13). This is the answer that I risk: Agnes carries the culture in her "gut" for and with the little ones. She calls this "learning the ways of life. Driving a dogteam and stuff like that" (Moberly, transcript, 93-11-02). I sense that the audience for our writing is the caretakers of the little ones in school. The audience will be those who protect, nurture, and love small people like the tiny sample group I belonged to very briefly The Day Of Being All One Bunch. If the protectors are John D'or Prairie community members, they will almost certainly have once been Agnes' little ones and will once have called her "my teacher" (Moberly, transcript, 94-05-13). By 1995 her first group of little ones are grown and have children themselves. Agnes also calls them "my little ones," and they too call her "my teacher." Tenderness seeps from her voice and into that cycle where it touches the very participants who give the process shape.

Like their parents they come to school knowing that polite little ones call older people by their relationship and not their name. "Auntie," "Teacher," "Cousin," "Grandfather" all show respect. In the same tradition, the older one will use the young one's name. I come by this information indirectly when my landlady asks for help in teaching her grandson to call me "*Kohkom* Christina," Grandmother Christina (*Reflections,* 1994-1996, 94-06-21). She is combining protocol from two cultures. She adds the local title of respect as I might add "Ms." She uses the mainstream custom of addressing young and old close friends by their first names.

Because Agnes works independently of certified teachers (in a moment I will say more about how this came to be), she is not overseen by them. Although this has not always been the case, Agnes currently does the work of a pre-school teacher. She may not be regarded as a teacher by her certified colleagues, and she may not be paid on their salary scale, but she carries their workload—report cards, meetings, supervision, attendance records, lesson preparation, and so on. This makes Agnes' experiences with certified teachers different from the experiences of Marie Nanooch, who works as teacher aide (T.A.). Agnes Moberly's involvements with certified teachers are in marked contrast to those of another Bush Cree T.A., who blurts out confidentially, "I don't tell them anything that I think. I just try to figure out what they want" (*Diaries,* 1982-1996, 93-11-05). "They" are certified teachers from the outside. Had I not been prepared for that survival comment with dozens of stories from the trenches by Native classroom aides working with me in mainstream schools, I might have missed that comment. (The potential contributions of T.A.s to school come from their local knowledge. Unfortunately, it is seldom asked for and rarely volunteered.) Moments later I watch this particular T.A. withhold local knowledge from a first-year teacher

who says to a small student (though not at all unkindly), "For the one-hundredth time, don't call me 'Teacher.' I have a name. It's Ms. _____. Use it!" The T.A. and I exchange meaningful looks, and the moment passes. To this day I do not know why *I* do not tell her what I know. Probably because, like the T.A., I never feel comfortable enough around that first-year teacher to offer the correction.

Had I not been on full alert I might have missed that point about T.A.s not telling, just like I might have missed the most significant of Agnes' many casual hints. She makes it with earth-shattering simplicity the day after we first meet. She makes it after the tape-recorder is unplugged and our exploratory interview is over. It is a comment that prompts me to realise, This woman will tell me what she thinks; she trusts her own sense. She will be good as a research consultant precisely because she will not try to figure out what I want. What Agnes does is murmur almost under her breath, "I didn't really tell you any stories. I just answered your questions." It's a good thing I catch that hint! No. Yes. It's true, she hadn't really told me any stories. She just answered my questions. That moment of embarrassment, it stretches me to eternity and back. But most important, that moment is a constant reminder to let the structure of this research study evolve. My diary records the turmoil which twists my heart long after her remarks have passed.

> Trinh's words haunted me because I knew that as much as I tried not to, I still controlled the interview! "Rare are those who can let structure come to them instead of hunting it down." But . . . , but . . . , I thought defensively, how can I get my questions answered? How can I know I'm on the right track? I'm leaving JDP tomorrow, and there's no one to ask in Edmonton. A little later when I asked if I could take her photo she said no. . . . It felt like she was not happy with me. (*Diaries,* 1982-1996, 93-11-05)

But I am grateful for that lesson, harsh as it is. In the three years since, I have come to know other ways of knowing I'm on the right track—besides being told in words. Instead of saying, "This is what I think is important

knowledge around here, and this is how I learned it," Agnes simply tells her story in similar words a second time a season or two later. For me that is enough of a hint that I am on the right track. It lets me know that I am not structure hunting like I might be hunting moose for food. Face-to-face repetition without explanation becomes a home-to-school connection. Here is what Agnes tells me twice. Her words are edited for how Agnes would like to be seen. I use the same approach as in Marie's story. Agnes chooses ordinary English paragraphs to tell her story.

Important For People To Know Around Here[6]

I remember when I was first going to school. We used to go by boat. From way back. And then they came and pick us up when it was time to go. And we all got into a big boat. They took us up to Red River. From there we went with the wagons, horses. Up to the landing. *Landing* they call it. You've seen it? You must have seen it when you [were] going by air.

And the sisters and the priests and the brothers, they met us from Fort Vermilion with some more boats. So we all went by boat to Fort Vermilion. That's where we went to. We didn't see our parents. It was hard the first year. 'Cause I was young. We were only eight years old. And to be away from you parents like that at an early age! For some it was kind of a shock, but for me it wasn't too bad, 'cause I used to be away from my parents now and then [when] we were going out with my aunties or my uncles, or my grandmother and grandfather. But for some, for the ones that were out the first time without their parents, it was hard. Being away from them for ten months and not seeing them. And then you see them only in the summertime for only two months. And then they have to go back out.

We were taught like . . . when we first started school, we were not supposed to speak Cree. And that's all we spoke, was Cree!

And it was hard for us.

Slowly we began to pick up English. From the sisters. 'Cause the sisters were the ones that taught us. I stayed there for about eight years. Ten years. Eight years I think I went to school. During those years when I was in the boarding school the experience I had was, you had to obey rules. They made rules, and you had to obey them. And you had to work. Go out picking

[6]I add underlined titles to Agnes' stories in the same way that I did with Marie's. On tape her stories follow one another in the order that I present them here. They are written as she and I choose to edit our taped conversation in the John D'or school cafeteria, May 1994.

wood, and go out picking potatoes and going to work in a farm. And cleaning the kitchen. And cleaning the wall. Everybody had their own chores that they had to do every day. But the rules were strict, and you had to follow them. And if you didn't, well, there was some kind of punishment and that you were given.

But for me, life wasn't that bad. So I, I didn't get any of all the things that some of the children were getting. Like strap, and things like that. So I would say it wasn't too bad for me. And for my sisters. I think Gloria got it different. Gloria and Mary were the ones that were going the later years. It was different altogether. It wasn't something like when I went to school. Although when Marie went to school it was different too.

And there was some stories that we heard. The ones that went to school before us. But those things didn't happen to us when I was there. At least, I didn't think they did. Not that I seen anything.

So when I quit school and went to the bush, that was another experience. 'Cause I didn't know anything about the bush. All I knew was what the sisters taught me in school.

I had to start right from the beginning. And at 16 years old everything you did was wrong in the bush. You had to be taught all over again how to do things in the bush. And that was kind of hard. 'Cause sometimes you do things you're not supposed to do. And you find out they're wrong. Although you didn't get scolded by your parents, 'cause parents, Native parents, don't really scold their kids.[7] They just set them down and talk to them. Yeah. There was quite a few things that I shouldn't have done. I know that now that I'm older! [laugh] (Moberly, transcript, 94-05-13)

At this point in our taped conversation my Cree research consultant and I are talking about how she has learned and what knowledge she would like to see passed on to the next generation. She mentions learning from mistakes and offers examples. I love the first one very much. It is winding its way into my being as the story I call "Letting Pups Learn, By Agnes Moberly." It begins with the same laugh that ends the previous story.

♦ ♦ Letting Pups Learn, By Agnes Moberly

[laugh] Sometimes you do things you're not supposed to do. And you find out they're wrong. . . . There was quite a few things that I shouldn't have done. I know that now that I'm older. [laugh] . . . And, you know, one time [laugh] there was this little pups. My dad was raising some dogs. Dogteam . . . That's how we used to travel, with dogteam. . . . One day my dad wasn't

---

[7]Not scolding kids is an ideal that Native parents work towards. In practice, I have witnessed a fair bit of hollering by frustrated parents.

> home. . . . I figured, Well, I'll give the little dogs some experience. But I didn't. I did it wrong. 'Cause I was hitting them. I shouldn't have hit them. I should just talk to them.
>
> [Dad found out. And he talked to me.] So he said, "You shouldn't! Don't touch those little dogs again! 'Cause you were doing it wrong. You're supposed to show them how to do it. And talk to them. And you teach them with the other dogs in between! Not just by themselves."
>
> Yeah. 'Cause the main leader has to be there. And the little dogs have to be in between. In between the dogs that were already pulling so they know that. That's how you teach the little dogs. With the other dogs doing it. But the way I did it was, I just put them on the harness and I [was] just pulling them. So that was wrong. . . . But that was only once. I didn't touch them again after. I stick to my old dogs.

This story about traditional educating grows from a belief that students are competent and deserve reverence rather than the view that they are failures and deserve punishment. It is now part of my philosophy of education. It illustrates my belief in several levels of teachings that may be found in every experience. There is the pups' learning; there is Agnes' learning; there is my learning. And there is your learning about me—how I like to facilitate Native people in speaking their own stories, preferably in their own language. All my teaching and workshops are built around this idea that for me Native Studies is not a subject area. It is an instructional methodology or a way of relating. Presenting Native Studies as a traditional educative way of teaching is one of the original research contributions I make. "Letting Pups Learn, By Agnes Moberly" illustrates a belief in lifelong learning, in learning through experience, in learning from mistakes, in learning from practice, in learning from meaningful activities, in learning from peers and puppies and nature, in learning by following the examples of respected others, in learning with laughter, and in not always being certain if or when a student "gets" the message. Agnes Moberly's story also illustrates my belief in teaching through storytelling, in the importance of reverence and face-to-face relationships. At the level of the still

curriculum it shows the importance of making time to be with older people. These are all ways that I believe we[8] learn best. ♦ ♦

The section between the double diamonds (♦ ♦) is now a treasured piece of my career portfolio. Listening to Agnes' stories prompts me to clarify my philosophy of education. Her words become a part of my job search.

Eight years, 10 years of boarding school, and what Agnes remembers is the travelling, the heartaches, the chores, the rules, the negative consequences—all for the purpose of learning English. And once she learns it, what happens? She must start all over again at 16 to learn how to do things in the bush. Suddenly she must make decisions and solve problems. Yes. That must be kind of hard when school has given her only one tool for problem solving. The single tool is to ask an expert.

In my mind I re-tell her story like this: I fantasise a tool kit with only a hammer. One size fits all; one answer for every problem. This tool kit is a metaphor for going to experts, asking them what to do, and following their advice. A little girl grows up never getting a chance to solve her own problems. An inability to solve problems was given to her by mainstream society. It becomes part of her school-education identity. The little girl soon believes that only outside experts have answers. Her shortcomings[9] form the basis for a modern model of solving problems. It says that only experts have answers. The deficit model continues to this day. To this day, successful doctors, lawyers, Indian chiefs who believe in this deficit model tell others what to do. But this model as a problem-solving tool is useless to a Bush Indian

---

[8]I can't stop myself. I succumb to old habits and use the generalisable *we*. The editorial *we* includes all children and adults in Canada.

[9]Shortcomings are also know as deficits. This way of viewing people assumes that a person naturally will do things wrong unless directed by an outside expert. Students who graduate from such a system may feel that there is something wrong with them. Contrast this with solving problems from within a Giving Circle. From within it, everyone contributes to the discussion of what might be done, based on their experience.

learning the ways of life. Or to a "Safeway Hunter"[10] in a city. What it does well is perpetuate the "Behind Bars" statistics presented in Chapter 1.

I return to Agnes, who gives a second example of how what she has learned in boarding school does not fit in John D'or.

Learning From Mistakes #2

> And this one time, I remember, my mom told me, "Well, your turn. You go and get wood now." 'Cause she wasn't feeling good. So I went out, and I figured, Well, I'll be able to find wood. It was winter, and I couldn't. Didn't really know how. So there was some logs there. And I chopped one. 'Cause they said when you chop one, those little things, the chips, will just fall out; that means the wood is dry. So I chopped one. Usually the chips just flew. I figured, Well, this is wood. So I started sawing it. I took it home. My mom came out to look at my wood. And said, "This thing is frozen. It's not even dry!" [laugh] So she had [laugh] to [laugh] come with me [laugh] to go and show me what kind of wood [laugh] to get. Frozen wood! [laugh] So that's one of the things I shouldn't have done. [laugh] (Moberly, transcript, 94-05-13)

Without mission schools Agnes would have had a lot of practice sawing wood. But because school holidays were mainly in the summer, there was little chance for her to experience sawing frozen logs. Yet Agnes' laughter carries no bitterness. Our talks rarely elaborate unhappy experiences. With Marie they never even came up. Ross (1992) mentions that practice. He says it is custom among Plains Cree not to remember unpleasantness. (In part that is what makes Laboucan's [1995] writing so remarkable—her willingness to go public with the hard-to-talk-about in a society where the personal is traditionally private.) About what *is* remembered, he says that old people fondly recall olden days. I know that from Marie, who once said that she likes that part of our conversations—remembering how good it felt to come home after checking

---

[10]The phrase Safeway Hunter comes to me from Woody Morrisson. He yells, "It's what we urban Indians call ourselves here!" He must yell to be heard above the din of emergency sirens and rush-hour vehicles in the downtown streets of Vancouver. I laugh and laugh and laugh. He joins me, and for a long time we have fun with what we think is funny about this Denman Street sidewalk café and our part in it. "Out of the [shared] talk came something. . . . You should know this thing. Maybe it won't be easy to hear inside the story, but it's there. Too easy to find, you might think it too easy to do."

traps. It was nice and warm, and her mom had a meal ready. Agnes *does* mention unpleasantness. Will she laugh when she reads my explanation of why I think *she* does? Agnes is "not that old yet"—is not yet as old as the old people that Ross talks about.

Here I pause briefly to introduce an important place for making home-to-school connections that many teachers know about. In my teaching I work hard not to focus on the awful—*ugly* is the local term. One mention is enough. (In this research it is limited to parts of two chapters.) I still blush in discomfort when I remember how a student taught me that. "Gee, Christina, I heard you the first time," my Shuswap Grade 10 pupil said in response to my second or third correction. His low adult voice was filled with indignation. "Do you want everybody to know what I did wrong?" No.

And so it is with Agnes. She uses a hard-to-talk-about story from another place to construct a healing story for John D'or. What then does Agnes do with her local schooling and education? Eight years of school learning followed by 17 years of combined bush learning and learning the ways of life appear to prepare Agnes for a job in John D'or School. Beginning in 1975, for four years she is a T.A. to certified teachers. A simple switch to kindergarten puts her in charge. The move makes her boss of her own classroom. She can be boss because the board of her band-controlled school believes that Agnes' knowledge and experience count as much as an academic degree. I like to think that, although guided by public school regulations, the local board of education does not feel bound by them. I like it how the Little Red River Cree Board of Education shows continued wisdom in keeping Agnes as their pre-school teacher year after year.

I applaud and cheer their wisdom! It lets local pre-schoolers begin school and in many cases learn English without culture shock. In Agnes the little ones

have a teacher with a familiar brown face who may even be a relative! Agnes teachers the importance of new school routines in the familiar manner of the old people, but she also teachers pre-academic skills that help her pupils succeed in a modern world. Like Marie, Agnes uses old strategies (my home-to-school connections draw attention to them here) to help her students experience a unity between community life and school. By making those connections visible, I show the unity in traditional education where knowledge is wholistic. Oneness is inclusive. There is no natural separation between mind and body, thought and practice. Learner-knowledge-skills-attitude-teacher are one concept. I show this more than once with examples of how things must fit on several levels. The Moosehead Photo, Navajo baskets, or speaking about "coming to knowledge" are some examples. When Agnes "teaches," she does not stuff information into little ones' heads. She helps them learn on their own or learn from each other. She repeats her dad's way of teaching. She steps back when the children practice how to pick up on ordinary hints from each other. They learn to make connections from their friends' stories to their own. They learn to do what I as narrative researcher am doing in this dissertation—telling stories rather than passing along facts and information. When you the reader says, "This reminds me . . . ," I have helped you make a connection. Saying "This reminds me . . ." is a hint that new insights could be close and new knowledge is being integrated.

Here I go back to our taped interview and Agnes' remarks on learning the ways of life. Agnes continues:

<u>When They Tell The Kids Something</u>

> Nowadays when they tell the kids, "That's gonna happen" or "That's dangerous," they don't know! 'Cause they have to experience things to know! And they don't really believe you when you tell them something." . . . The older people have experienced things. And they know. When they tell the kids something that's because they have the experience. That

> happened to them before! And the kids, sometimes they say, "Well, that's long time ago." But long time ago things happened a lot, and then they can happen again this year. Or even next year. Or any time in your life it can happen. A lot of things like my dad has told me I remember now. Now that, well, he was trying to teach us things. And we were too busy trying to have fun to really pay attention to what he was saying.
>
> But when you think back, the things that you have done, and mistakes you have made, you learn from them! Even though you were told before about them. But you didn't listen. Didn't pay attention. 'Cause it's through experience that people learn. Through experience by watching. Or by doing things. [silence] (Moberly, transcript, 94-05-13)

The more Agnes and I reciprocate as storytellers, the more freely our stories flow and the more we learn about each other and ourselves. I grow more and more curious about my own learning. Inspired by this segment of Agnes' life story, I fit together unrelated chunks of ordinary knowledge. I pull several bits apart, number them (1), (2), and (3) and ever so carefully think them through. To each piece I add my own thoughts in quotation marks. This creates a slight distance from which I can watch myself research. This helps me gain a different perspective. I sense that I am getting close to my own hard-to-talk-about stories. Will I need to get as close as Laboucan (1995) did for my dissertation to be balanced?

Bit (1) There is what Agnes is saying about how kids nowadays don't listen.

I think: "What she says is similar to what I say about my own daughter."

Bit (2) There are my earlier insights on local child-rearing practices.

I think: "In spite of 'back-to-basics' movements in schools (Balcom, 1996, p. A1) where the teachers are 'experts' and students 'incompetent,' some parents in every culture raise their youngsters to be independent decision makers."

Bit (3) There are my own experiences with these local customs in (a) JDP, and (b) elsewhere.

I think: "This is what I think about (a) JDP: There is the time on a recent hunting trip when I hear two mothers utter 'Bedtime' and wonder how their three young children will respond. For a while we continue to sit quietly around the campfire. Then Agnes goes inside her family's tent, and I hear her move things and arrange bedding. Finally I hear how she says to her daughter, who has followed her, 'Just crawl in. I made it nice for you' (*Diaries,* 1982-1996, 95-09-19). And Shawna does. Five minutes later her six-year-old cousin also gets up from our campfire circle. Without a word from anyone, he sings and chants to himself, 'I'm going to bed! I'm going to bed!' and does so (*Diaries,* 1982-1996, 95-09-19). An older brother joins him so silently that I don't even notice when he leaves. After a while their mother (Agnes' sister-in-law) does too. I hear the three of them speak quietly inside their tent. Bedtime is not a call to war."

I think: "This is what I think about (b) elsewhere: In Kitwanga in the early 1970s I recall exasperated parents saying to me over and over again, 'I try to make my children get up in the morning.' When I ask, 'How?' they say, '! talk to them.' Their voice and body language very clearly convey that within their customs there is not anything else that they can do (Ross, 1992). They have reached the boundaries of their local knowledge. They might ask relatives or Elders also to speak to the youngsters, but once they explain the situation to their children, the parents then withdraw. Getting up is not a battle."

Spreading out on paper what I think, makes me shudder at the times that I, as well-meaning teacher, have said to Native parents that they have to make sure that their kids go to bed early on school nights. Although I still believe that that would improve school attendance, the more I share in local knowledge, the more cautious I feel about suggesting how Native parents might do that. In Kitwanga what I did was begin to take on that middle-class parent's function. I let getting-my-Native-kids-out-of-bed seep over into my responsibilities. Twenty years later I still help my pupils want to be present, if not alert, for the first class activity of each day. I find this home-to-school connection fits in many places.

I now move onto the second of my thoughts on "When They Tell The Kids Something." I re-connect with earlier insights on local child-rearing practices and give other ordinary illustrations from past experiences. You will recall what I have already mentioned in Marie's story, that children are raised to make their own decisions without a great deal of discussion. Notice also how Laboucan's (1995) essay illustrates how that particular custom may have consequences that are hard to talk about—when alcohol is introduced and abuse enters the picture. And I remind you to re-visit what I have already mentioned in Agnes' story, that a six-year-old would decide her or his own school attendance.

There are several other child-rearing practices that I take away from John D'or as gifts for friends who say that they want to raise independent children. They are (a) showing by example, (b) talking with children as equals, (c) letting children choose their own learning experiences, and (d) letting children develop their own relationships. In the Primary Readiness room such self-directed learning is the norm. Here is how Louis Moberly lets his grandson introduce himself to my dog. The boy is scared, but Louis lets him be.



"Letting A Relationship Develop"

This picture illustrates an ideal in the spirit of John D'or relations.[11] Reverence develops comfortably within and between generations and species on all levels. All are considered necessary for a balanced growth. I remember just in time that I'm the photographer and I'm there too! I gain support for this insight when I listen to ordinary phrases that express relationships, again without control or ownership.Common enough sayings in John D'or are statements such as "Your water is boiling," "Your papers are getting wet," "Stick to your own dogs," and so on. They drive home to me that it is my relationship with the water, the papers, the dogs that requires me to act and that no one else will step in on my behalf. I remind myself that "your" refers to my relation, not my possessions. When I say "I love my old people" or describe how "my toe hurts," I am speaking about relationship, not ownership.

---

[11]Here I spell out how the word relation is both a verb and a noun. As verb, it connects relationships to each other within boundaries defined by who or what the parties are who stand in relationship. As noun, relation implies relative; for example, by blood (Real Parents), by practice (parents), by marriage (in-laws), or in spirit (spirit-to-spirit connections among and between species).

The home-to-school connection I want to make on this page is clearly illustrated by re-telling a delightful moment from within a friendship with seven-year-old Jenny. Several years ago she and I decide to go some place together after school. I suggest that she phone her mother and let her know this and ask for permission. To reach the wall phone, Jenny goes to the staff room, climbs onto a chair, and dials. She can do all this without my help or direction. This is what I remember hearing: "Hello, Mom? It's me. I won't be home for a while." I imagine the mom asking a question to which Jenny replies, "Because I'm busy." This is followed by another silence at our end. Then Jenny says impatiently, "Christina. I've got to go now," and hangs up. I'm stunned. As the child's teacher-consultant friend, I have to work hard to match Jenny's mother's ability to let her child practice wise decision making. We treasured our time together, and the mom, who has five other children, did as well. What would I do as the mother of someone aged seven if I were to receive such a call? In John D'or what Ross (1992) names "non-interference" (p. 12) I am interpreting as quiet respect mingled with affection. It is given to little and big people alike. *Letting* is the verb I use.

In my experience, non-interference in the dominant society is not part of *respecting* children. Instead, older people interfere in the lives of children as part of *protecting* them. *Not-protecting,* then, is a variation of neglect. I am showing how the same experience is named quite differently. It therefore takes on a different value.

Shape shifting through re-naming is difficult to put into English words without using the oppositional good/bad language that I mention earlier—black/white, respect/interfere, protect/neglect, and so on. What thinking together on Agnes' and my story makes clear is that we both suffer from our good/bad Christian training. Everything is viewed as a me/them battle—life/death,

god/man, up/down. Never has it been this obvious to me before *why* modern schooling does not work for Native children and why it might not be good for mainstream children either. Schools tend to emphasize pain, suffering, and hurt without balancing doses of health, joy, fun, and so forth. I have often wondered why, with all the many loving, healing, and upbeat stories in Jesus' life to choose from, does Christianity focus on His humiliation and His death? Why raise the cross, the symbol of an execution, to the highest place of honour in a religion? Weren't those painful days shorter than even the brief joyous time that Jesus spent once He had risen again from the dead? Why not choose a symbol from those exuberant times?

I show the paragraph above to Sr. Bernadette, and we discuss it at great length (personal communication, 96-02-03). She tells me about a monk from the Middle Ages who enshrined pain and suffering in Christian doctrines. She reads aloud from her dictionary:

> *JANSENISM. Cornelius Jansen 1638 theologian. 1: a theological doctrine maintaining that freedom of the will is nonexistent and that the redemption of mankind through the death of Jesus Christ is limited to only a part of mankind. 2: a negative rigoristic moral attitude.*

In a letter which she faxes some time after our talk, she repeats the above and continues the conversation:

> *UNFORTUNATELY, we Catholics are still living under the influence of Jansenism in many areas of our teachings and doctrines. Even after more than 300 years there are still vestiges of it hanging on, especially in the male-dominated hierarchy of the Church. FORTUNATELY, since the Council of Vatican II, the Holy Spirit is renewing the Church through the many enlightened people who are now teaching, preaching, and living the true message of Jesus. (That's my little sermon for the day!) (Gautreau, fax, 96-03-13)*

I envy Agnes her 17 years of being with relatives who dwell on the positive. The legacy from my forefathers is the belief that hardship strengthens one's character.

I hear what Agnes is saying about how kids nowadays don't listen and note how it is no different than what I say about my own daughter. This makes me wonder if perhaps our common roots in Christian good/evil doctrines are at work here. I remember vague stories as a child about my European forefathers. Told mostly by my dad's best friend, Alexander Pfeiffer, the chilling stories of male plundering, their ways of gaining power and holding control, were what overpowered my Black Forest ancestors. They pushed underground our very old traditions. These have to do with seasonal ceremonies, herbs, roots, masks, and spirits (Schwendt, Schwendt, & Blümke, 1984). I wonder: Centuries later, didn't the relatives and tactics of those same men overpower Agnes' relations and traditions?

As well, I wonder, Do I know what Agnes means by kids not listening? No. Do I know what I mean when I say kids nowadays don't listen. No. Again I approach the question from my prior knowledge. In my mind I take my experiences to John D'or and connect them with what I think Agnes knows.

<u>My Daughter And Me</u>

When I look at what I mean when I say kids don't listen, two things become clear. First, by "kids" I mean my own; and second, by "listening" I mean the way my only child listens. I also note that my daughter listened differently after age 11. Before that listening was not an issue—except once. What stands out happened at bedtime. My daughter was five when I forced her to go to bed at 11:00 p.m. It outraged her that there was still daylight in our northern skies, yet I wouldn't let her play. Instead of singing like my small camping friend, she howled and protested her way to sleep. I don't think I dictated like that again, and I don't remember other disputes of such magnitude.

But come puberty and my daughter confronts, interprets, and judges every move of mine as though I were the enemy.

With the calming influence that fifteen years bring, I have some hindsights. My girl listens if my opinion matches hers. Working from memory (my diaries of those years are all in storage), and in no particular order, here are two incomplete lists which spawn this hindsight-insight.

Listens List	Ignores Me List
career	chores
respecting others	respecting mother
role play to solve problems	polite language
travelling	vulgar language
participative sports	telling lies
health foods	male/female equality
racial tolerance	volunteering
photography	

As adult, my daughter continues to hear me about things that are important to her. She still does not respond to the rest. Having raised her to be independent, that ought not surprise me.

What is striking about Agnes' and my stories is our focus on the painful. In our heads we both know that boarding school and teenagehood were "not all bad." My lists are nearly balanced, for example. Why then do we instinctively remember those times as dark times filled with tensions? Is it because our schools model life as a struggle? To cope with life that was experienced as a fight between good and evil, Agnes in her school days and I in mine were taught to go to experts. They would highlight hardships and say, "It's hard being a student [or parent or teacher]." In our respective classrooms no one showed us how to make medicine from roots and how to heal. Shaped by punishment, we both learned the same mainstream lesson: Criticise everything, even the good things. Perhaps that's why nowadays Agnes and I both choose to remember episodes where kids don't listen and forget those where they do. My own mother is a further example. "Tell me something I did right," I sometimes tease, hoping to turn her away from criticising. Her answer is always a dismissive, "Ach! Don't be like that!"

At the next opportunity I will ask Agnes, "What do you think of this idea of why parents nowadays don't think that their children listen?" (This is a different question from the more popular one that asks, "Why don't kids listen?" I don't ask that one.) The important home-to-school connection for

me here is highly personal. I think surviving modern times with a rebellious youngster and the undermining effects of television is a matter of luck. I have no answers. My best strategy is to offer, "Tell me what you need to heal." But it does not always work.

Understanding John D'or child-rearing customs helps me better understand my own. Desperate to learn from each other, I remember parents around kitchen tables, on trains and ships, or around campfires asking, "How do *you* raise your kids?"

When my daughter and I were young, I used to participate actively in such discussions. When she was very small, and especially so before she was born, I had answers. Now that we are grown and wiser, all that I do with certainty is shrug. No. I shrug; she now participates and has the answers.

At the next opportunity I will show Agnes how "My Daughter And Me" presents my daughter as an ordinary kid who sometimes listens and sometimes doesn't. The story shows me how Western mainstream parents focus on the negative. What will be her response?

Having put this idea on paper, I am very conscious of generalising against my better judgment—there are, after all, memories like the first 11 years with my daughter and selected moments afterwards which are pure joy. Still, I find that generalising helps me pull together scattered bits of information and make sensible stories from them. I am helped to do this by Hazel Henderson (cited in Mader, 1980). Her influence goes back to my master's project.

> When societies or individuals face rapidly changing conditions, the two most likely responses are (1) to rigidify and redouble their efforts or (2) to reconceptualize their situation and redefine their problems. (p. 7)

As I visualise Henderson's first response, I am aware of how mainstream institutions are re-doubling their grip over workers in a move to the right. I need only to open today's newspaper. It carries Edmonton municipal election

results (Editorial, 1995). A new mayor and council are voted into office who in their first interview promise to try harder than ever to play by what I see as outdated modern rules. Columnists and editorial writers analyse the mood in their headlines: "What's good for business is good for everyone," "Competition & elitism in education and health care," "Tax breaks for the wealthy." I worry. The same month, in an Edmonton Public Schools newsletter, an editorial by Emery Dosdall (1995), Superintendent of Schools, begins with "Students are our stock in trade." As a social activist I worry about a leader who trades kids like bonds on the stock market or cattle in a stockyard.

Henderson's (cited in Mader, 1980) second possible response offers hope. Her words envision for me institutions which share power and control and work co-operatively. Evidence of this is found in sentencing circles around the country.[12] Personally, I think the new way that I propose to re-conceptualise education in my research is also very old. I propose that certified teachers share power with their students and their students' relatives. I propose that educators work together with all stakeholders in youth education. Recommended in 1967, it is beginning to happen in local justice (Aubrey, 1996; Moon, 1995). It is time that education catches up.

Local knowledge coming from John D'or Prairie offers new insights into relationships not only in John D'or, but also elsewhere. Why was living with a young person who rebels at home and only at home so difficult? Why could I not accept my daughter's foul language and her physically violent temper? After all, she did neither of these things with others. Experts said, "Be grateful for that." A decade later I am able to re-conceptualise my situation and re-define my problems. I continue to feel that the clear choice that I gave my

---

[12]In sentencing circles local community elders use their traditional family-based system of justice to deal with offenders and victims in co-operation with the courts. Despite its name, the focus is on healing rather than punishment ("Interview," 1996).

16-year-old (show respect or move out) was wise. But now I see how her choice was wise as well. She needed to spend time experimenting with alternative living arrangements. Only then could she settle down and let peace return between us.

Last year brought a surprise discovery in our relationship; otherwise, things have remained peaceful as of old. Quite by accident I found out what I had once suspected and subsequently buried. Someone let slip that for 20 years my mother spoke ill of me to her granddaughter. No wonder I had this nagging sense of being undermined as a single parent! I cried when I heard that. But not for long. Somewhere prior to that time I stopped striving for my mom's approval. This means that what might have been a bombshell once was merely a surprise.

When I look up from studying memories, it is with optimism and the knowledge that things are pleasant between me and my mother and between me and my daughter. Is this because I have been vindicated as an okay parent by what my daughter *has*—a university degree, an interesting career, a long-term relationship with her boyfriend, a car? Is it because of her sudden awareness of power inequalities in mainstream institutions, her gradual awareness of environmental issues, or her beginning awareness about the need for diversity, whether in plants or attitudes or peoples? Is it because of what she *does*—among others, she plays baseball, eats healthy foods, climbs mountains, canoes, reads, listens to music, travels, and regularly visits her grandmother in a nursing home? Or is it because of what she *is*—smart; warm hearted; beautiful; popular with peers, supervisors, and colleagues? Clearly, it is all of the above. Once again I trust her judgment. Exactly as I did when she was little.

The Joy-to-Talk-About

In addition to memories of The Day Of Being All One Bunch, my re-claimed faith is built on the sum of the two paragraphs above, plus the whole of both of them together. This creative adding comes from a modern Cree story.

$$\underline{1+1=3}$$

> Walter Lightning says he heard it from an elder who was there when a small Hobbema youngster explained how 1 + 1 = 3. In my re-telling of the story, the child says, "There is this one and that one," pointing to two pebbles, "and then there is the whole of all of them together." (Mader, 1994, p. 23)

The winter that my daughter turned four, a delighted day-care teacher told this 1 + 1 story: Santa Claus asked the children one at a time what they wanted for Christmas. Every boy and girl gave fantastic t.v.-inspired wishes. My daughter asked for a candy cane. "You should buy her the biggest one you can find," the teacher enthused. "Did Santa give her one?" I asked. The answer was yes. "Then she got her wish—exactly as she asked for," I said. Like the child from Hobbema, my daughter brought untold joy into the day of many others by simply being herself. From all accounts, including mine, at 27 she is like that again.

Two Native friends sometimes ask, "How did you raise your daughter to graduate from university?" Carefully, I tell them about reading 400 books to her before she entered kindergarten. I tell them how hard she saw me study. But I also tell them what that means in terms of other things she and I then "didn't have time" for. I tell them about the guidance I could give her because of my own interests and experience. I show them how we could role play what to do with boys in her Grade 8 computer class who hurt her. They hurt her with dumb-blonde jokes. I remember we discussed how young boys practice early to become abusers.

To my friends I say this: "I can tell you exactly how and through what I guided her. But don't ask me for advice. As your friend I would not want you to pay the price—especially for a single parent; it is fierce. I would never do it again except with extended-family support."

Will insults and rudeness remain an integral part of my daughter's behaviour towards me?

"I didn't say that," she will insist when I wonder about our past. But she did—and still does speak rudely on occasion. It happens less and less frequently, however. To this day she can make snide comments followed by patronising lectures on what I am doing wrong and what a "normal" parent does. She has been known to shatter my silent listening with brutal words: "Why are you so intense? Hello? . . . Are you still there? It's no big deal." Despair that I failed as a mother stares me in the face. Respect mingled with affection is all-important, and yet I raised a young person who thinks—from her to me, that doesn't count. As I write, despair is so strong that for a moment it pushes aside the dissertation law that says that each statement in this work has to be tied to local knowledge and teacher education. Later; I'll do that later.[13,14]

---

[13]*It is now later. My draft dissertation is done. Reviewers have asked why I include my own hard-to-talk-about story. There are four reasons. The first is that it lets me show how a research story (Agnes' as well as Laboucan's [1995]) triggers new ways of seeing things. The second is that most JDP hard-to-talk-about stories are confidential and off limits. The third is that to use my own example, I do not need more permission. But most important, it is to avoid what I term* Afghanistanisation.

[14]Afghanistanisation *is to talk about far away places and remote issues to keep from looking at those close to home. I have been to Afghanistan. Like Paris or Toronto, it is only a plane ride away. Though that was 30 years ago, I still remember how much I loved Afghanistan and how easy it was for me to dress as local women do. Having been raised to wear what men in the fashion industry tell Canadian women to wear, I had no trouble wearing a long-sleeved dress and pantaloons. With regard to connections to local knowledge, and the fourth point that I am making, I have steadfastly maintained throughout this work that my dissertation must be balanced. I cannot give away hard-to-talk-about stories from Afghanistan or JDP or Laboucan (1995) unless I also give away those from my own experience which are genuinely hard for me to talk about. I cannot expect others to share their stories and their lives if I am unwilling to share mine. If I did that, we would not have a reciprocal relationship.*

Breathing space! Right now I need breathing space! I clip and duplicate some from my work with Agnes (Moberly, transcript, 94-05-13):

[silence]
[silence]

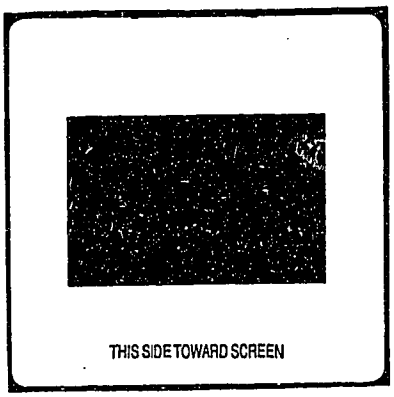
In John D'or when conversations get this intense, this close to one's spirit that every breath feels like inhaled ice fog, when everyone present feels the need for breathing space, someone cracks a joke. Laughter spills out and melts the cold. Joke after joke evaporates the pain like sun does frost on a windshield. Joking and teasing are breathing spaces for hurt and embarrassment. They often connect home-to-school. "Just kidding," young and old alike will grin after a wisecrack or a joke.

Don't Go Till The White Man Says Go

> Imagine a dark and stormy night. Picture a downtown and deserted Kamloops. Me and Verna Billy, a Secwepmc friend who used to stay with me when she was working on her B.A. in the city, she and I are there at a main-street intersection during a winter blizzard.
>
> I didn't see any cars or even other pedestrians—Kamloops is like that in the winter sometimes—and so I stepped off the sidewalk and onto the street. Verna grabs me by the arm and pulls me back. "Hey!" she bellows in an exaggerated voice. "What kind of an Indian are you? You don't go till the White man says 'Go'!"
>
> My eyes widen and I laugh at having been given a new dimension in something so ordinary. Since that night every strident White man in his business suit, followed by a flashing red hand, they make me stop and smile. At each pedestrian crosswalk I remember Verna's voice and words from that dark and stormy night.
>
> "Just kidding!" She squeezes my hand between gasps of laughter and icy wind. We look around to all four corners and watch the White man and the red hand before we finally cross the street.

In a story like this, the teller, the listener, the third party are all fair targets for the joke. That's what provides breathing room and makes comfortable cross-cultural or cross-generational connections.

And so humour helps me skip ahead in the Moberly transcripts and skip over Agnes' and my confidential stories and jokes. I also skip over photographs I choose not to include. Hard-to-talk-about is different from untold.



"An Untold Picture Story"

In my John D'or Prairie research untold stories full of local knowledge are common. I have many opportunities to see how women carry them and pass them on to the next generation by word of mouth. Face-to-face we discuss those stories and jokes and give each other laughter as medicine. Connections I make with Laboucan's (1995) essay help me to heal like Agnes and her neighbours heal. Hard-to-talk-about stories are just that—hard to talk about. Hard-to-talk-about stories from the Laboucan family in southern Alberta and hard-to-talk-about stories from the Mader family in southern BC balance and touch each other. I worry a great deal about balance in this dissertation. Might what is hard to talk about on-reserve be balanced with what is hard to talk about on-campus? If that balance is missing, can we be rightly accused of producing yet another spy story on an Indian community?

Hard-To-Talk-About On-Campus

Silko's (cited in Trinh, 1989) storyteller says that the story must be told. There cannot not be any lies. It is a difficult thing to do given the still curriculum of an academic institution—to protect the status quo. To continue the metaphor begun in Chapter 1, many a ship captain and his crew want things to continue the way they are. Many a ship captain and her sailors work hard to uphold traditions that suppress knowledge coming from marginalised canoes. Meanwhile, local knowledge in the canoe is wound around the silent certainty that abuse exists on board ships as well. It is found as readily in academia as on reserves.

Determined to find a way to include at least some on-campus hard-to-talk-about stories, I search the literature. Campus Security Services (1996, p. 2) states that there were 12 assaults (including sexual) from January to May of this year. I find a 1992 study called *A Survey of Unwanted Sexual Experiences Among University of Alberta Students* (Elliot, Odyna, & Krahn). I notice that the study is a survey. In any survey research participants are never friends, just numbers. And numbers elegantly summarise Laboucan's (1995) powerful images of abuse as "unwanted sexual advances." Numbers leave our words like *brothers, cousins, grandmothers,* or *neighbours.*

> A total of 78 students in this study (approximately 8% of the total sample), most of them women, reported an unwanted sexual experience while enrolled at the University of Alberta. Over half of these individuals reported more than one incident. In 55% of these incidents, sexual intercourse had taken place. (Elliot et al., 1992, p. 1)

Investigative reporting gives the specific case of Maurice Sychuk, a local law professor who murdered his wife, Claudia. His students reported that he verbally abused them (Barrett, 1995). "Sychuk was also an alcoholic with a fiery temper whom students dubbed 'Screaming Mo'" (p. B3). And from the

same article: "Parole documents show Sychuk had admitted beating his wife as their marriage deteriorated in the years before the murder" (p. B3).

Less visible than murder, bel hooks (1994) describes a type of abuse based on social class which I see on my campus too. I see how those in positions of authority are usually men. I see how authority figures are sometimes women who act the same as men. And like hooks, I see how our academic system relentlessly reinforces White middle-class values.

> During my college years it was tacitly assumed that we all agreed that class should not be talked about, that there would be no critique of the bourgeois class biases shaping and informing pedagogical process (as well as social etiquette) in the classroom. Although no one ever directly stated the rules that would govern our conduct, it was taught by example and reinforced by a system of rewards. As silence and obedience to authority were most rewarded, students learned that this was the appropriate demeanour in the classroom. (p. 178)

What to do? For ethical reasons I cannot report my personal stories connected to class silencing. I cannot do this because two years ago I did not anticipate that I might want to do so. You will remember that my work hinges on my decision to let the structure unfold (Trinh, 1989). This work is not a test of a pre-determined hypothesis. Therefore I do not have informed consent from those involved. However, hooks (1994) makes for me the point eloquently enough. I pray that there are the equivalents of JDP Health Boards and that there are other Agnes Moberlys who sit on those boards. I do hope that they will look after the well-being of my academic community in a similar way. Agnes works hard to keep the people of John D'or healthy.

In the meantime I practice to sit in silence and be obedient to local authority. It is a bitter, bitter pill to swallow and keep down. Like hooks (1994), I notice how those *who have* (power, wealth, fame, status) get more (power, wealth, fame, status), and those *who do not have* do not get it except at great cost.

> There is little or no discussion of the way in which the attitudes and values of those from materially privileged classes are imposed upon everyone via biased pedagogical strategies. Reflected in choice of subject matter and the manner in which these ideas are shared, these biases need never be overtly stated. (p. 180)

I repeat a point from the beginning of this chapter: On-campus or on-reserve, local knowledge does not generally require an explanation because it is not generally questioned. Might there also be hope in this? Yes. In my own career, hope lies in applying to my career what hook (1994) says about her own:

> It was up to me to create ways within my professional power constructively, precisely because I was teaching in institutional structures that affirm it is fine to use power to reinforce and maintain coercive hierarchies. (p. 188)

Tucked in the folds of mainstream structures are places of open secrets where I am invited to share what I know. I do so in a way that simulates and models what I am trying to convey. Sometimes a very small moment gives hope for a very much longer time. A Native student who communicates honestly and courageously about our relationship blesses me with one such moment. It happens as I am trying to get a feel for my class of adult students to whom I would momentarily give a guest lecture. I watch the one Native student in the class read my few notes on the board, then turn and walk out. She comes back at the last possible moment before the bell. With evident care she places her drink on the table. The way she sits down and squarely faces me projects a body message that is unmistakable: She is prepared. What she is prepared for is yet another White person "who will tell me all about us." Three hours later, when everyone has left, she shakes my hand, and quietly thanks me. I believe that I will always remember her brief words and confident smile: "I am so glad you came today! It was good. You gave me a real gift. And an idea. Usually people get so defensive about the things you said. But everybody in the class liked what you did!"

What I had done was simulate traditional educative techniques. What I had done was involve the group in how John D'or people learn by participating and taking mental notes of what is going on around them. I lectured very little. The class and their instructor participated in all activities and laughed a lot.

That is how I am able to heal and give away hope. This technique of giving away healing without the need to talk about healing is the gift of medicine from Agnes. I received it in the John D'or Giving Circle. In return, I offer ways to change existing social relations based on unequal relationships. For my part in the Giving Circle, I make visible the problems in our own backyard. I know that they are not only in "Afghanistan" and do not only belong to others.

Hope and Confidence

I now return to my review of Agnes' transcripts. I skip the Not-To-Be-Talked-About Stories and stop when I reach my friend's final words. Hooked to the edges of new knowledge about remembering the negative, it fits how Agnes closes our formal taped conversation.

With a quiet smile she remembers her lifetime of satisfying work with little ones. Her reflections reflect Marie's. They hold a clear hint for home-to-school connections through "bush learning." Bush Cree learning is about ordinary relationships. *How* to learn and *from whom* is as important as *what* to learn. This is Agnes' closing story. It looks to the past with satisfaction, enjoys the now, and generates hope and confidence in the future.

I'll Probably Stay

> I like it. I like the little ones.
> They're more easier to handle than the bigger kids. [silence] Sometimes I think I should be a teacher aide again. But when I think of leaving my little ones—I call them my "little ones"; I can't do that. 'Cause all the little ones, even the two-year-olds, the three-year-olds, [say], "My teacher, my teacher."

> So it makes you feel good when all the little ones look up to you. Maybe the little ones don't pay attention too much. But they all went through my class. All of these ones here [the K-9 students drifting into the cafeteria for lunch] all went through my class. They seem to have the respect for me. The bigger ones. 'Cause they knew I was their teacher when they first came to school. [silence] I don't think I'll ever go away. The only time I'll probably ever go away is when I die. I don't think I'll ever leave. Maybe just for the summer, I'll go on holidays and stuff like that. Sometimes I think of going to look for a job somewhere else. But when I think of leaving the little ones I think, Who's gonna look after them when I'm not here? [silence] So I think I'll probably stay. Until I retire. And then maybe go somewhere else. I'll be going onto my 19 years. Nineteen in September. [silence]
>
> [silence]
>
> [silence]
>
> It is true, I have a lot of stories. (Moberly, transcript, 94-05-13)

Silko (1977) says that stories are set in motion centuries before. My friend (Woody Morrisson, personal communication, 95-09-10) says that what storytellers do is catch a ride on those stories and travel along with them. If the stories are lived stories, storytellers' lives could attach themselves on all levels—physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional. Storytellers always live their stories. Traditional educators do the same. Distinctions between the two get blurred because both use stories, and traditional stories are meant to overflow Western timespace boundaries. This is what local knowledge connected from home-to-school is all about, set in motion centuries ago.

Agnes Moberly makes similar connections in another way: "Maybe the little ones don't pay attention too much. But they all went through my class." By *not paying attention* I believe that she means the schooled-mainstream definition of paying attention by measurable, observable behaviour (Mager, 1975)—hands folded, mouth closed, eyes locked onto the eyes of the teacher. Her little ones rarely do that. Agnes believes that they are paying attention even while they whisper, even when they are seemingly pre-occupied with t.v., colouring, or conversation. When Agnes says that they all went through her class, she knows that her students gained knowledge from a relationship with

her, from activities that they did together, and from how they worked/played with each other. For her, work and play are one. This kind of single-concept learning happens in many of their students' homes as well. It happens at community gatherings and JDP feasts like the one already described.

On the other hand, if the knowledge which local people have is discounted, Hard-to-talk-about stories emerge. An all-Canadian hard-to-talk-about story by Vancouver lawyer Leslie Hall Pinder (1991) tells about the aftermath of a famous court case. With utter despair she recites a story in which the only hope is hope that the reader brings to the story. I bring the hope that the next generation of judges and lawyers whom we teachers educate *will not* think like this. I do not want my students to thrive on "no." Lawyers are not alone when they "search for the guilty."[15] All of mainstream society supports them in that quest. At every university there are professors who teach no.

In a speech entitled *The Carriers of No,* Pinder talks about the 1991 watershed court case where Chief Justice Allan McEachern of the Supreme Court of British Columbia "ruled that the rights of the Gitksan-Wet'suwet'en—and indeed the rights of all aboriginal people in BC—had been extinguished by the colonial government intending to bring settlers into their territory" (p. 3). What she describes is a worst-case scenario in which understanding has no connections to local knowledge.

---

[15]Search for the guilty is a phrase that was given to me by Dr. Don Richards (personal communication, June 1995). When I congratulated him on his recent promotion to department chair of Educational Policy Studies, I asked, "What would you like to achieve with your staff?" He answered that he is interested in creating a problem-solving community. He wants to replace any attitudes of searching for the guilty with co-operative problem solving. He doesn't care who caused the problem—only that it gets resolved. He credits Margaret Stewart, a secretary, with the idea. She used to say, "I don't have time to search for the guilty. Let's just fix it." The idea of a no-fault management policy appeals to me. At Christmas I asked him how far along he was. He laughed and told me a story. It showed that there was a little room yet for improvement (personal communication, December 1995).

> As lawyers we don't have to take any responsibility to construct a world. We only have to destroy another's construction. We say no. We are the civilized, well-heeled, comfortable carriers of no. We thrive on it. Other races die. (p. 12)

For Agnes, and indeed for all other traditional educators in this study, what follows could just as easily have happened in my relationship with them:

> In the face of others' disbelief, in the face of others discounting them, not accepting what they have to say, some aboriginal people go into themselves with their information and their knowledge. They withdraw; they take back their stories. They move to higher ground. They don't tell their stories. They are careful who receives the wisdom. (Pinder, 1991, p. 9)

Instead, Agnes gives hope. We don't talk to them any more, Agnes says and then goes on to tell me indirectly (indirectly through stories and by what she does) what is important for people to know around here. She shows me how little ones, like the ones I was one bunch with, receive[16] her wisdom directly. Agnes gives them her local knowledge. She passes it on, knowing that unhurried reflections and experiences let people think and act with wisdom. I and others who read Agnes' words or read my connections in these pages to her words may come to understand these things—these somethings.

When I re-tell experiences shared with Agnes, I notice that what is important is the unity of knowing information in the context of ordinary living plus trusting one's own sense about it all. In John D'or Prairie, local knowledge is information passed on as a connected part of believing, experiencing, reflecting, listening, relating, and belonging to a certain spot on earth. Local knowledge is part and parcel of relationships within and between species. If knowledge is centred within relationships, surface differences such as the colour of one's hide disappear. No. They don't disappear. What happens to

---

[16]Received knowledge is a phrase made popular by Belenky et al. (1986). It means knowledge passed on in a hierarchy from a member of an elite group who knows, to someone uninformed and outside that group. That is not how I use the word. In my work receiving is the companion to the act of giving, where giving and receiving occur between two people who respect each other as equals.

surface differences is what happens in my next story: They are put into proper perspective.

Re-enter Cow Moose.

Good Enough Moosehide

> It is nearly dark. The day of knowing about moosehide is nearly over. Nelly gets up and stretches. "I've had enough," she says. The moosehide is a rich deep brown. What I like best is the way it smells. She lifts the soft skin from the smoke rack and nods at me to cut off the outside black edges one more time. I remember how 11 hours ago it was slippery and white. Nelly throws rotten spruce bark onto the fire and watches the smoke go out. I sense "enough" has more to do with our tired bodies than the colour of the tanned hide. (In any case, the colour is now good enough. Good enough becomes a colour.) The longer we sat and watched the hide "smoke," the darker it got.
>
> I concentrate on cutting hide with a knife. I keep a piece of that scrap for my diary. Nelly comes back from the house and drops beside me a paper and pencil. "You trace your foot. I'll make you some moccasins." Moments later her partner comes out and looks at the hide with approval. He grins. "Now here's my vest!" Soon her son comes out and says, "That's for my high-top boots!" Nelly looks pleased but scowls at them anyway. "We were out here all day; where were you?"
>
> The day is over. We'd done enough. Her last words are "Thanks for helping me. Take your pictures [photographs]. And close the shed door!"
>
> The parts I liked best were when I felt that I was useful and good company. (based on *Diaries,* 1982-1996, 94-06-15)

Twelve hours later Agnes adds her own practical insight to my excited re-telling of that remarkably ordinary day. Agnes smiles at me. "Nelly had nobody to help her. She couldn't have done it without you." How quickly the day has shifted shape to become a walk around the Giving Circle!

The following week Nelly says that she has other hides that she wants me to help her with. "I'd like to . . . ," I tell her, but do not promise. Learning about making moosehide by helping Nelly make a moosehide is a good way for me to gain local knowledge. I paid for one experience by doing the other. Remember? Remember that that is why days earlier I gave Nelly tobacco—to teach me what she thinks is important for people to know around here? I would have to consider carefully whether I could honour a new commitment.

Could I keep a promise to help Nelly with a second hide? What if, for whatever reasons, it might not happen?[17]

As this chapter draws to a close, I review my effort to follow Agnes to local knowledge. Did I succeed in not filling up her local knowledge with my own marks and markings? I'll never be told in words—I know that much! The best that I can do is re-think the common ground that she and I have travelled and trust my judgment. It is late September and another Indian summer. I chop down my sunflowers and put them in the furnace room to dry for winter bird food. I leave some in the garden to look at and some for the sparrows to peck. The radio predicts frost. My own long-range forecast is winter. I say that with an M.Sc. in Study of the Future and smile warmly at my own joke. Then spring. Then summer and fall again. The robins have left. Do seeds eat birds? Yes. If I wait long enough. A sense of reverence for my wilting sunflowers seeps into me from them. It all fits (Silko, 1977). Even in my furnace room it all fits. I'm trying to teach you how we think. The thing itself isn't holy; it's the relationship we have with it that makes it sacred. I don't

---

[17]The phrase Let's see what happens is a local way to show interest and hope without commitment. In the above story I say to Nelly that for whatever reasons I might not be able to help her tan again. I echo what Nelly communicates about making moccasins with her body language. We both say that we have an idea, but nonetheless it—making moccasins or tanning hide—"might not happen." Her words "I'll make you some moccasins" are a way of letting me know that she likes me. She likes me enough to consider a gift but that other things might take precedence. What this footnote means for home-to-school connections is that someone's body language lets me know that we are exchanging good feelings. What I am taking some moments to explain is like the mainstream phrase "Let's get together sometime." Said with sincerity but on an impulse, both parties know that it is unlikely to happen. This paragraph makes a social home-to-school connection. The next paragraph makes a political one.

Not understanding such unspoken hints is often at the bottom of stereotyping. Members of the dominant culture like it when people say what they mean while at the same time they do not reveal true inner feelings. Members of the dominant culture like it when people do what they say, especially on superficial issues which support the status quo. But there is this other layer which is sometimes added. The "sometimes" is what makes cross-cultural and cross-gender communications tricky. That custom says, "Tell people what they want to hear so that they know that you understand the relationship. At the same time, make it clear by other means that the words are not a promise."

My experience shows the [illegible] worldwide interest by indigenous peoples to learn the still curriculum and language of t[illegible] dominant society. My experience also shows that there is little evidence that dominant societies reciprocate. I take that as the clearest indirect message of colonising attitudes in 1996. Minorities learn the innuendoes of their oppressors' language, but not the reverse. What I am saying here is extremely important local knowledge. It relates to the Chapter 1 footnote on mainstream and dominant culture.

know; I never think about it. The carriers of no. The carriers of culture. What I wanted you to learn was about making moosehide. This woman will tell me what she thinks; she trusts her own sense.

In dominant society people compete hard to be anything but ordinary. In a world arranged by hierarchies the scramble for recognition casts the ordinary aside. At university my narrative-research colleagues take special care to find the extra-ordinary in the everyday. Why? Because the everyday has come to be devalued. It is even built into the software that I use in my computer—the thesaurus[18] in my ClarisWorks 2.0 confirms this. "Ordinary" comes up alongside "common, dull, uneventful, pedestrian, prosaic, unexceptional." Cow moose whispers, "Smelled the dull in your life lately? Tasted the common prepared by women? Shared the uneventful in a child's day?" Ordinary are not things which count in Canada's gross national product. But ordinary brings pleasure—and makes possible what is important for people to know: Newly tanned moosehide. Oginee tea.

Being with Agnes teaches a high regard for ordinary. I come to understand that in John D'or, ordinary carries with it a reverence. It shines through the work that the women do. (I don't know about the men; I didn't spend much time with them.) No one says this. But I can see that the relationships that people have with everyday experiences are valued. Not all the time and not by everybody. Yes, the hard-to-talk-about exists. But a sense of good enough and feeling good endures. Quietly and without being talked about. Agnes teaches this to her little ones. Their story closes this chapter on a most optimistic note.

---

[18]A thesaurus is a dictionary of words with similar meanings.

What Counts?

About her classroom Agnes says, "They play just like a family." I look to see if I can see that. I notice how gingerly five-year-old Barbara rolls plasticine snakes and softly talks with them. I hear how little Bobby enters the conversation with respect and affection. He matter-of-factly corrects her English: "It's not a 'basket baseball.' It's a 'basketball.'" I see Barbara nod quietly and use the new word without breaking up her story. Bobby is satisfied, and together they construct a complicated scene involving snakes and doors and basketball hoops. Other children join and leave again. One of them is Dianne. The children play and talk, but also take turns looking on in silence. I watch, fascinated by the pride that they take in contributing to the whole event and to the part emerging on the little plasticine board.

Eventually, the children drift away. Barbara gently takes the board and puts the sculpture in a safe place. Forty minutes later I am still at the same low round table taking notes. I record what is continuing to unfold:

Barbara comes up and asks, "What are you doing, Christina?" She answers herself: "Something?" I nod. She picks up my page and studies it closely. Dianne brings over the board with the plasticine that Barbara had so carefully put away. She smushes up the doors and snakes and hoops. I gasp in silence.

Not so the children. Barbara looks on as the smushing happens and talks with Dianne quietly in Cree. I understand only the odd "Christina." Then Barbara turns to me. "I can write my name! Have you got some more plasticine?" I shake my head. I keep still. I wait.

"Teacher, Christina wants some plasticine!" Agnes is busy at her desk. She looks up but does not respond. She is letting Barbara figure out the larger context that teacher is busy. The small girl sees this and does not ask again. Absolutely nothing out of the ordinary happens. We continue playing together with what we have. It is a good way. We are embracing an open agenda. Children are learning to interpret the environment for themselves and figure out things without adult help. It is definitely good enough. (based on field notes, 94-06-02)

Agnes may not mention the Oneness in thought and practice which she models. Agnes may not tell a lot of stories about the ordinary.

But Sr. Bernadette does--in the next chapter. Like Agnes, she models unity of thought and practice as one concept. After 30 years of living with people from the Little Red River Cree Nation, she knows that local people rarely criticise out loud. Doing so is a mainstream custom. Sr. Bernadette is someone I go to when I need to hear me question my local knowledge. Or my on-campus Ph.D. experience. I can go to her because she not only listens, but

also laughs and freely gives away a lot of stories from her own adventures. What results are conversations high in trust and reciprocity.

Chapter 8

Local Knowledge From Sister Bernadette Gautreau

Local Knowledge in Sister Bernadette's Stories

For three decades Sr. Bernadette Gautreau has shared her time with northern Cree people. To this day she continues to live, work, learn, and teach in John D'or. We talk about her love for education and schooling on many occasions, although I tape-record only the first. She is eager to pass on what she knows. In a letter to me she writes about the transcript of our recorded conversation:

> As far as the interview goes, I "highlined" what I felt should stay in, but I trust you to use whatever in the best way possible. . . . There is probably still too much for what you intend to do, . . . so feel free to edit however you wish. (Gautreau, personal communication, 94-07-24)

I interpret those instructions to mean that the words she chooses to highlight are words by which she wishes to be known. An example is Sr. Bernadette's summary of our lively first meeting:

> If you knew how many people have come in here and have interviewed me in 30 years you'd be amazed. . . . My advice for reserve teachers is to get to know the people. If they do, they'll learn as much as they teach. This story is for reserve teachers. (Gautreau, transcript, 93-11-01)

This is the same woman who would keep me on track with her 90-day wonder story. She too unites learning and teaching. We talk in her home, a trailer she shares with an older nun. The two women live as sisters in one family. Both speak French, English, and Cree. Sr. Jeanette Berger, who has been with the Little Red River Cree Nation for 36 years, speaks more with her body language than with her other languages. With it she often affirms what the younger nun is telling. During the summer of 1995 when I do the bulk of my research with Sr. Bernadette, Sr. Jeanette is on vacation in her native

Quebec. But she is present the previous fall, the day I come with a tape recorder. Although all three of us explore my research question, "What do you think is important for people to know around here?" I do focus on Sr. Bernadette. In plain language and full of passion, both Sisters give away what they feel would help local teachers.

Sr. Bernadette's advice to newcomers is familiar to me. Get-to-know-the-people. Make friends. Teach/learn with community members without being patronising.

In that original conversation, taped during my exploratory field visit to John D'or, Sr. Bernadette embodies what would become the research results. Although I notice it only much later, her day-to-day relationships are an unfolding life/story of what is most important local knowledge. Like the other traditional educators, she too keeps *doing* and not so much *saying* that. Quietly, she lives out her long-term commitment to an entire community. Her trailer is far from the American east coast home of her youth.

Sr. Bernadette starts her story for reserve teachers with some history about Acadians and her Cajun ancestors in Maine, US.

Acadian Ancestry & Timeline

In the early 1900s some Acadians voluntarily migrated to the US. Before that many Acadians were forced to re-settle in Louisiana by the British. Today those people are known as Cajuns. But my maternal grandfather and grandmother went to Maine on their own. They kept their culture and their own language. Acadians are different from the Francophone in Quebec. I still speak Acadian French. My mother, Margaret, was born in Prince Edward Island; and my father, Peter, in New Brunswick. At age 19 he stayed at my grandmother's boarding house, and that's how he met my mother.

May 7, 1934	Born youngest of three brothers and three sisters.
1952	Graduated from high school.
1952-1958	Worked as paper inspector in a paper mill.
1958-1960	Sr. of Ste. Chrétienne Convent in Quebec City. Entered as novice. Graduate as Sr. Ann, wearing a traditional black and white habit.
1960-1962	Teacher education in Normal School.

1962-1965	Teacher in Fox Lake.
1965-1973	Moved to JDP to become principal of a one-room school. Later taught Grades 4-9.
1969-1970	Dress code changed to allow regular clothes.
1973-1975	Edmonton. University of Alberta. Master's degree.
1975-1982	Teacher educator in 25 schools of Northlands School Division. Developed *I Can* curriculum.
1983-1984	Grade 1 teacher in JDP. Taught new *I Can* (1984) curriculum.
1985-now	Teaching Pastoral Ministry—educating community members to be lay Catholic ministers in JDP. (field notes, 95-01-22)

Sr. Bernadette knows her family history and is proud of her ancestry. The word *friends* comes up often. What does friendship mean to a Catholic sister and retired teacher-educator in a remote Cree village? I search the unedited transcript for clues:

J (Jeanette) The friends were the ones who you know; they'd go by and say "Hi," you know.
B (Bernadette) And come in.
J Stop for coffee and leave; it was just ordinary.
B Yet I think that has evolved now to the point of the kind of friendships that you're talking about, people who come and talk about real personal things.
J *Now,* yeah, but not at that time!
C (Christina) Not at that time.
B No. But now, all the time. I mean, I would say that 75% of my time is spent in counselling.
C Hmm.
J *Uhuh* [pronounced *un* as in the French *un, deux, trois*].
B That's what I do most now.
(Gautreau, transcript, 93-11-01)

I notice the emphasis on *now*. *Now* people drop in for coffee. *Now* people share personal stories, happy and sad. *Now* people look for advice. *Now* people include the Sisters in their ordinary lives. *Now,* uhuh, but not at first. In those first years friends are other teachers, all nuns. Friendships with local people gradually happens because visiting, then and now, is an important activity. It is a way to signal tentative steps towards acceptance and friendship. As Sr. Bernadette puts it, "It's not going out for coffee together or going out to movies together or whatever"; it's going into each other's homes

and joking[1] together. In John D'or work-home separation is an uncommon concept. Business and/or leisure happen while people visit. Here are two examples 30 years apart. In the 1960s Sr. Bernadette sought out people to practice her Cree with. Cree women reciprocated in order to learn to knit, sew, crochet, and meet new people. Some of those women who visited worked for the school. A 1990s example would be the chief who tells me to call him at home. On several occasions when I do, he has already left his fly-in community. His wife offers to "phone around for you and find out where he is."

I suspect that when the dominant society began to bring its values to John D'or, people incorporated new ways which fit easily into their existing routines. By being flexible in their daily habits, people were able to hold down jobs without creating a home-work split. The Sisters also would need to be flexible. They would do this in areas of friendship, employees, and punctuality. Sr. Jeanette's comments about one friend and classroom helper:

J Like my teacher aide, who never come before 9:30. She considered me like her good friend!
C Yeah. Oh yeah.
J And I liked her too! But she was awful about being on time. [laugh] Oh yeah, she talked to me about her deep concerns.
B *Uhuh.* (Gautreau, transcript, 93-11-01)

---

[1]The following small story illustrates the importance of visiting and joking:

Only When I'm Home, Of Course

"Oh yeah," Agnes says to me casually the second week we know each other. "I talked to my husband. You can come visit any time." My amazement must have shown at the fact that I would need his permission. But also that she would make such a statement when she has just mercilessly teased me in an off-coloured way. She must have known I'd interpret her words as a challenge and would retaliate! Her teasing took the suggestion that instead of staying where I was with five other people in a small three-bedroom duplex, I move in with a certain old man who had a house all to himself. I take a deep breath and grab the opportunity "to give back." I lip-point in the direction of the old man's house and grin. Agnes blushes but doesn't miss a beat. She adds, "Only when I'm home, of course." *"Uhuh!"* I say with exaggerated understanding. The other women laugh and grin along. (*Diaries,* 1982-1996, 94-05-11).

With mutual give and take, friendships would develop around "just ordinary" activities. In this way Bush Cree people extended friendship to all newcomers for many years. And then that stopped. People had noticed that teachers leave after two years, as soon as they receive their permanent teaching certificates. In 1995 friendship is no longer freely given away.

> But I think too, you know, with Native people—and I've been told this—you know, they will not put in effort to cultivate friendships with people who are not here for the long haul. It's just too much work for them. They're typically a shy people. And for them it takes a great effort to cultivate a real friendship. Oh, they'll be nice, you know, cordial, the whole bit. To really say they're gonna confide in you, you have to prove yourself. (Gautreau, transcript, 93-11-01)

Yes. She says that for Native people it's not all that complicated to be friends. It's not going out to public places to be entertained. In a community where the ordinary is cherished, it's a feeling connected to visiting, to simply being together. Sr. Jeanette nods.

> J Like Eva Nanooch. They say she was my friend. Okay, I call her [my friend]. And when I see her, she calls me her friend.
> C *Uhuh.*
> J But we didn't really do really anything special.
> B No.
> J Like her daughter, Mary Louise. I would go to Fox Lake. One time I went to the school. I hadn't seen her for years. "Hey, my friend!" [shouted]. Just that. Why was I her friend? I never knew. I listened to her sometimes. (Gautreau, transcript, 93-11-01)

I wonder, Deep inside her heart, does Sr. Jeanette really not know? Or is she not used to intellectualising[2] friendship? When she reads a draft of these pages, she says simply, "I never ask 'why.' That would be impolite" (personal communication, 95-11-10). Instead, she understands local knowledge through her relationships. She spends time with people and takes part in their ordinary activities.

---

[2]Intellectualising used in the way I use it means to apply one's mind and intellect to a certain topic.

Sr. Bernadette, on the other hand, readily verbalises what she thinks friendship means:

Local Friendship

> It's this feeling, . . . and it's coming more from the Native person than from the White person. It's something that you are giving off vis-à-vis the Native person that tells them, "I'm safe with this person. It's okay. If I want to talk with this person, it's okay. She's going to understand. She's going to sympathise. She's not going to laugh at me or tell me, 'That's a bunch of superstition or a bunch of baloney.'"
>
> The quickest way to shut people out in these communities is to kind of laugh at what they're telling you, in the sense of, "Well, Sister, you know, we saw a bogey man!" You know: "Hahahaha! Whoever heard of a bogeyman in the 1990s?"
>
> You know? So this is probably something that cements a friendship. Just by not necessarily saying anything. Just listening. And saying, "Oh yeah?" Not more than that. (Gautreau, transcript, 93-11-01)

Sr. Bernadette is so talkative that it is hard to imagine her not saying anything. But I think I have been there when she has just said Uhuh or Oh yeah? In any case, I understand her point about making a conscious effort to stay silent. I do it often enough on camping trips or in a local home. It gives me a chance to observe how family members visit and sit together without talking. In John D'or there are many spaces and lots of times without words. As Sr. Bernadette say, it's this feeling; and people hook into this feeling more than they hook into conversations.

A discussion on friendship is a good place to bring in a home-to-school "class-management" connection. I recall how, if all else fails, what might motivate my Native students is an appeal to friendship: "Do it" or "Come," ". . . because you are my friend. Because it will make me happy." The technique requires a prior friendship and a later—reciprocity. For example, such a strategy might mean that a volleyball game can go ahead because someone will play with no advance notice. It might mean that students will do their homework, participate in field trips, or come to school with a toddler instead

of staying home to babysit. These are just some occasions where I remember pleading with the student *in private,* and it worked. This technique, however, does not stand isolated. It is hooked tightly to my willingness as teacher to go along with being teased and to tease[3] back. Doing something just to please me gives students permission to make jokes at my expense. These jokes often carry important information, and that's what I like about them. In the case of my Chilcotin friend of the footnote story, she was showing me how to be included. Humour is a popular tool to get even a most serious message across. "Don't let him beat on you," I may say to young girls whose classmates are punching them in "play." To the boys I grin, "Aren't you too young to practice being an abusive husband?" I deflect their guffaws with "Give her a kiss if you want to show you like her!"

Sometimes I overhear John D'or children and adults tell each other that they like it that they can "joke around" with me and I joke back. The fondness in their voices comes through.

How else do I see John D'or people express friendship? Here are a few. Sr. Bernadette confirms my observations. People give nicknames that grow from insider jokes. They hug and touch[4]—children and teens, animals, plants,

---

[3]Tease, as used here, means to joke and jostle or to banter verbally. Meant to make people laugh, it does not mean to bully or embarrass, which is another local meaning for the word. See Keith H. Basso (1979) for a provocative discussion on Western Apache Indian/Whiteman humour. He says, for example, that although "Apaches respond to jokes about themselves with easy equanimity, they [have] serious doubts that Whitemen are comparably good-natured" (p. 31).

Here is how I first learned just how reciprocal and ordinary is this expectation to tease. It happened in the bush at an annual gathering of Carrier people in BC in 1991. The Carrier friend whose family invited me wondered why I wasn't teasing her younger brother about his new girlfriend Annie. Annie had come in a small plane to join us. "Believe me," my friend said, "if a man flew in to our camp and you shared your tent with him, my brother would tease *you.*"

Notice how joking keeps re-appearing throughout these pages. This is intended to replicate how jokes keep coming up in ordinary Native relationships.

[4]Touch, as used here, means to touch physically, mentally, spiritually, and emotionally. Nelly speaks sadly about her allergy to flowering grasses: "I don't get too close to them any more" (*Reflections,* 1994-1996, 94-05-28). Nelly also grows several houseplants in one pot "so they don't get lonely."

the earth, or rocks. "Christina, feel these stones. They're *soft!* Take a picture of them." Shawna speaks with wonder in her eyes and voice (*Diaries,* 1982-1996, 94-06-18). To show friendship, local people share their homes, their vehicles, their hunt, their time, their money, their groceries. Sometimes they use the word *borrow* to mean "return eventually," and sometimes they use the word borrow to mean "keep." They share their skills. They put their friend's name on tickets for a draw at a dance. Louis Moberly wins a fringed lady's leather jacket that way. "I put your name on one too. And Shawna's. But I guess the jacket was meant for him," Agnes grins at me (personal communication, 95-11-05). Sometimes friends and relatives take what they need without asking. This custom is undergoing changes, and although it is not always appreciated, it is always tolerated. Friends let each other know about their tragedies. I see it as an extension of the Giving Circle, where everyone helps heal the community. When Marie's granddaughter passes away in an Edmonton hospital, Marie phones to say so. That allows me to offer the use of my car. It is accepted, and I am very happy to drive her around. And finally, friends attend each other's gatherings as spectators, dancers, or singers.

Sr. Bernadette says to say more about this last example because in John D'or going to gatherings is such an easy way for outsiders to show interest in making friends. I re-construct one of our many conversations on that topic.

Who Is "Everyone"?

> If I can make *just one* contribution and home-to-school connection in my dissertation, I want it to be this one: Friends attend each other's gatherings. "Why is it that White teachers don't go?" "They're invited," the nun says. "But they don't believe that they are," I answer. "Round dances are for everyone," she says firmly. "But mainstream teachers don't know that," I say. "They can read," she alleges. "The notice at the store says 'Everyone Welcome.'" "Yes," I tell her, "but White teachers think 'everyone' means local Crees." "I even invite them myself," she says. "Yes, but," I say, "remember what it feels like

to walk into a hall where you are visibly different *and* an outsider *and* unsure of yourself? *And* you think everybody is looking at you?"

Sister nods thoughtfully. She goes on to tell me how Agnes made an announcement over the school intercom about her daughter's wedding. White teachers still stayed away. I remind her that in mainstream society there are very strict rules about going to wedding banquets or receptions. You must have a written invitation from the bride and groom with your name on it. "But this isn't some big city," she says. "No," I tell her, "but I've had this conversation with teachers in Kamloops. They have the same problem. White people there tell me they exclude themselves from one of the biggest pow-wows in BC. They feel the invitation is for Indians only," I say.

"Oh," she says. "But," she asks me, "how do you think Indian people feel if a wedding's announced in school and no White teacher shows up?" I don't answer, so she continues. "It's as if they come to the church part of the ceremony because the church is clean, but that they don't come to the hall and don't eat the food because they wonder about how the food has been prepared. They aren't sure it's clean. They worry about salmonella." I am stunned. I have not heard that argument before. I need time to think about it.

We talk about my attempt to have a John D'or teacher come with me to the Memorial Dance described in Chapter 6. The first-year teacher I camped[5] with that weekend told me that she couldn't come to the feast or to the dance; she hadn't finished her lesson plans. I tell Sr. Bernadette that I had said all these things to that teacher, and still she wouldn't come. I confided in the teacher how I too needed to ask someone in John D'or whether what I believed to have been an invitation to a feast really was an invitation. "What did he say to you?" the man I turned to wanted to know. "He said that there was going to be a feast in Fox Lake to honour his mother. He said he wasn't sure about the date. That was all." "If he mentioned the feast to you, then you're invited," the man I asked replied. That's how I talked to my host-teacher too. I spoke about a unique opportunity to see how local students learn. As lifelong learner, she could learn some things herself. I explained how it is a wonderful roundabout way of gaining bits of local knowledge, and then I explained *that* (local knowledge) too. But in the end I went to the dance alone. My host-teacher stuck with what she learned at university. Lesson plans come first.

All these things I said to the teacher and to Sr. Bernadette and to a few other people as well. Friends get to hear it more than once. It is a subject I feel passionate about.

I would like to unhook that sort of thinking. I would like to share my research and to tell our story so that certified teachers can risk for themselves

---

[5]Camped, as used here, is a local expression meaning "stayed with" as visitor. To say "camp over" is also common in other parts of Indian country.

what traditional education in someone else's community is like. Typically, traditional educators are comfortable with local knowledge from any side of institution walls—walls that were built by institutions like academia and the church.

I will use illustrations from a church committee meeting to show how Sr. Bernadette works on the inside of two well-entrenched mainstream institutions—church and school. It is a meeting billed as "Everyone Welcome." The meeting is called to discuss ways of preparing Catholic lay ministers. In the room are adults who are thinking about teaching religion to others in their community. Odours of sweetgrass and bumblebee sounds fill the room. Some people are quietly sipping my oginee tea. Others are talking in low voices. I use all my senses to learn what is important around here. Unlike a landscape which is appreciated from a distance, scents, sounds, and taste can be had only in face-to-face relationships (Porteous, 1990). Nothing is rushed. Waiting for the meeting to begin is an ordinary part of the meeting. I am happy to be where I am. I am a visible outsider, but I do not feel unwelcomed or uncomfortable. People look at me unobtrusively. I sense that they are wondering why I have come. No one asks, and I have the space to do whatever I might need to do. I need to answer their unspoken question, so I think about why I have come. I decide that it is to learn from watching Sr. Bernadette. I let my body communicate that so that people will know. The meeting begins.

It is organised and run consensus fashion by two women who use flip-charts and a blackboard. First is a Cree ceremony, followed immediately by a Catholic one. Then lots of discussion in Cree and English. Near the end of the evening Sr. Bernadette agrees to offer a course but stresses that Catholicism isn't filling out worksheets of Jesus and his followers. "Even colouring all

twelve apostles doesn't help you understand the Eucharist,"[6] she cautions (field notes, 94-05-24). She looks at me when she speaks, and I smile because I know that many of the people in the room work as T.A.s in the school, and a large part of their job is devoted to preparing just such busy work. With her glance, Sr. Bernadette is reminding me of our taped conversation from the previous autumn:

> What I find is detrimental to the school system are all the photocopiers and all the workbooks. . . . It's a paper blizzard. They [teachers] use teacher aides and their time in the staff room running off reams and reams and reams of paper. And the kids, they never do any hands-on. There's nothing to manipulate. There's nothing to see, feel, touch. It's just straight out of the book and straight off the paper. So you colour this and cross out that. . . . It's like you never have enough worksheets and never have enough workbooks. . . . This is this year. Last year. This is what I've seen. I've never seen kids working with blocks.
>
> Teachers are under an awful lot of pressure today to cover this material. And if they don't have it covered, then they tend to slough off and to just give the work, just to say that they've given it. And so that it's "covered." But has the child learned? is another question. (Gautreau, transcript, 93-11-01)

The following week in school I notice several abandoned and partially coloured papers of Last Supper reproductions. Who handed them out? Did they come from the people who attended the lay ministry meeting?

During the lay ministry meeting questions are raised, then slowly and methodically discussed. People want to know how much time they need to commit to the training sessions. I sense that they want to learn about and teach just one specific area in which they have an interest. They look to Sr. Bernadette for answers, but she dodges that function. I squirm and wiggle in sympathy because I see myself in her. She is trying to understand what her students know before she will talk about what they might "need to know" (it

---

[6]The Eucharist, from the Greek for "thanksgiving," refers to the Christian custom of blessing wine and bread in the manner that Christ did at the last feast he had with his 12 students called *apostles*. Soon after that he was tortured and murdered.

becomes obvious that there are so many things that people want to know). They try several different ways, but she is not giving them what they want—a mandated curriculum, an outline of someone else's presentations and topics that they can memorise. She says, "I won't stand and lecture! I'd like questions." I am curious about lecture and questions, because she has told me something of the local attitude towards them:

> Native kids are not taught that way [lectures]. They're not taught to ask questions. . . . If you say, "Now, did you understand that?" everybody's going to say "Yes" because to say "No" would be to lose face. Or "Do you have any questions?" No, they're not going to have any questions, because to ask a question is going to admit to ignorance. So you don't do that. One of the parents here told me once, "We tell our children not to ask questions because it makes you look as if you're stupid." (Gautreau, transcript, 93-11-01)

Until 11:00 p.m. members of the group give-and-take each other their questions. Sr. Bernadette and everyone else tries their best to answer them. I can see that she welcomes this opportunity to re-teach Catholic words and concepts—over and over, exactly as she believes must happen for understanding to take place.

> You see, the whole idea behind teaching is to impart knowledge to the child, but in a way that the child is going to be receptive to it. . . . And we have gotten totally away from that, because we set year plans. We set unit plans. We have to have so much, so much knowledge taught in such a time frame, so we don't repeat over and over and over and over. You're lucky if you can even review your previous lesson before you take some new information. The child is being bombarded with new information all the time. Without actually ever having assimilated what he has already been taught. (Gautreau, transcript, 93-11-01)

There is plenty of supportive chatting about other topics, some of it quite irreverent and spiced with laughter. I wonder, Is that a way of cushioning questions without feeling stupid? I also notice that instead of answering every question, Sr. Bernadette looks down or looks towards the two leaders of the meeting. Only when they re-direct a question to her does she take it up. It is a home-to-school connection that I also like to make with my students—

through body language I pass the question on. It is a way of sharing power. It makes asking questions easier. Questioning becomes an ordinary exchange between equals.

Eleven women sign up for the lay ministry course. It is decided that Sr. Bernadette can teach it. The next meeting will firm up the curriculum. By the end of spring all 11 have completed the six-week session. No one drops out. Community women have clearly become used to some of the newcomers' ways of doing things. And vice versa. The mainstream question-answer strategy, so important to school success (Heath, 1982) has been adapted to fit a local context. In the lay ministry meeting Sr. Bernadette makes asking questions safe.

She is acutely aware of the part that White people have played and continue to play in the assault on the Bush Cree people of John D'or Prairie. There is outrage and hurt in her voice as she speaks about her own role in that destruction. She calls it "replacing the Elders as the educators" and says, "We bumped the Elders out of their spot."

Replacing The Elders As Educators

> They talk about "Elders, elders, Elders, elders." Well, the elders . . . We have eradicated the Elders. [silence]
>
> Okay—the Elders. An Elder for me is not a man of 60 or 70 years old. An Elder for me is someone who is wise and who knows the ways of the people and who is willing to impart those ways to the younger people.
>
> When the school systems came into these reserves, the Elders kind of got bumped out of their spot. And we are the professionals now. So what did the kids have to do with Elders who didn't even know how to read? I mean, we did not do these people a service by coming in and replacing the Elders as the educators! Because the Elders were telling the children, "Well, the northern lights are the spirits of out ancestors dancing in the sky." And the kid would come to school, and the teacher would say, "Well, that's a lot of baloney, you know. The northern lights—well, I'll give you a scientific explanation about the northern lights!" [laugh] So the kids started to think, Well, my mom and my grandma and grandpa, or whatever, they don't know very much. So we really did, we bumped the Elders out of their spot! And then they had nothing to do . . . in its place. So the Elder has

to be brought back into this whole system! But how do you do it? (Gautreau, transcript, 93-11-01)

I answer that question when two years later Marie makes a toy dogsled team for her primary students from a cornflakes box. She used to do that for her own children. Her mother did it for her. I asked Marie if she would make a dogteam the afternoon that she describes such a toy to me in a casual conversation. The project is such a success that we take it to the Grade 3 and 9 classes as well. It has been 28 years since she made the last one. She let me keep it.



"Kohkom Makes A Long-Ago Toy"

Sr. Bernadette makes some valuable home-to-school connections as she recalls her local teaching career.

We have some 30- and 40-year-old people here whom I would categorise as being Elders in that sense. But . . . a lot of teachers feel very threatened by going out to a local person. . . .

Do you know how many of the teachers here said to me, "Well, we tried to get an Elder to come into the classroom, and they won't come"? Well, no, because this is not the traditional way of doing things. We used to take our kids out to them. And then present them with the tobacco and the whole bit so that the Elder will feel, you know, that he is respected and he has something valuable to give. [silence] So if you expect the Elder to come to your house or to come to your class, you might wait an awful long time. And some teachers even take that as being a lack of respect for the school because the Elder won't come. [silence] Teachers are wrong when they think that the Elder does not respect the school or respect the system.

> [sigh] I have a feeling that I am painting a very negative picture here . . . [as] . . . I look back over the past 20 years. The kids are not any more knowledgeable today, except for maybe computers that we didn't have in our time. But the kids don't read any better, . . . [and] . . . they're not any better in math. (Gautreau, transcript, 93-11-01)

But they can be. One of my memories 20 years old includes sending my Tsimshian Grades 4 to 7 village students into the White town school. The on-reserve Indian Day School had closed. Within weeks their new principal was telling me that every one of my ex-students was in the top 10% in math class. He wanted to know why. Back then I didn't have the simple answer that I do now. I probably described to him in detail "how" we learned. Now I would say that I taught somethings about learning math: I made learning math fun, relevant, challenging, supportive, and balanced. Balance happens through mixing mind and body, work and play. My class of Grades 4 to 7 students memorised the 0 to 12 times tables. They arranged bottle caps or pine cones ("blocks are for babies") to understand concepts such as 1/5 of 1/2. Balance also happens through a mix of group and solitary drill. Our drill games were very competitive—but always group to group. Individual drill was never a contest; it was highly supportive and could even be done with a friend. My Kitwanga kids helped me a long way towards understanding traditional education and making home-to-school connections. It is a pleasure to pass on those five links above. They were pure joy to figure out.

To explain Sr. Bernadette's story "Replacing The Elders As Educators," I add some remarks about elders in John D'or. I add that her view of Elders is supported by research (Knudtson & Suzuki, 1992; Meili, 1991; Wilson, 1995). It is verified by my own experiences with John D'or traditional educators: They have a lot to offer and like doing so but rarely volunteer. They prefer to show rather than tell. What Sr. Bernadette says fits with how the elders in our study act out their beliefs—by doing what they ordinarily do. Each woman's story,

each woman's living underscores the words and the life of every other one. And mine as well. It is a tragedy that Sr. Bernadette's experience in this community is not supported by the school. It is a tragedy that in the school, lip service only is paid to what Marie Nanooch, Agnes Moberly, Sr. Bernadette, and other elders from the community believe is important local knowledge.

In contrast is this story which catches me one day in church. I admire the skill with which Sr. Bernadette shares her spiritual podium with community members. I notice how pretty my bunches of mixed wild flowers are in their shiny re-cycled tin can on the altar. "Put them wherever you think they fit," she tells me before the service. So I put one arrangement next to an original painting of Mary cuddling Baby Jesus. I put the second bunch next to another work of art, a little teepee which holds sacramental bread. The entire tone of the church—an indirect credit to both nuns—is one of respect for local knowledge and the carriers of that knowledge. There is the elder who painted the striking Mother and Child that I placed the flowers by. He painted Mary and her Baby amidst dancing northern lights. By displaying that piece, the nuns support the artist as well as his way of showing reverence for ancestors in the sky. What is also honoured is a balanced view of Catholicism and traditional spirituality.

A second example of how the tone of the church is shared is expressed in a small ritual that happens every Sunday. Half an hour before the service a little girl and boy knock at the Sisters' trailer. "We've come to help," they say. Those youngsters feel proud that they complete whatever tasks they are given. Later in church I see them sit in the front row. Each week I notice them—their small bodies, eyes, hair, and enthusiasm; sparkling, bright, and shiny. I do not know what they contribute to anyone else's quality of life; I can only speak for what they give to me. Just to see "them kids," as the local phrase goes,

makes me feel happy and makes me smile. Perhaps, along with the ones I was one bunch with, they can grow up and evoke that same reaction as adults.

But I need to complete the lament on local knowledge not acknowledged. That certain Sunday a few paragraphs back I hear with astonishment what one well-known teacher says about this disturbing refusal to honour local talent:

Mark 6:1-6

> Jesus came to His hometown, and His disciples followed Him. On the Sabbath He began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard Him were astounded. They said, "Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to Him? What deeds of power are being done by His hands! Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joseph and Judas and Simon, and are not His sisters here with us?" And they took offence at Him.
>
> Then Jesus said to them, "Prophets are not without honour, except in their hometown, and among their own kind, and in their own house." (*Diaries,* 1982-1996, 94-07-03)

When I question Sr. Bernadette about it, she is resigned. The passage I hear, as if for the very first time, is read very slowly by a young woman from the congregation. When she struggles with a word, others offer help. Those suggestions are received without embarrassment. As the examples of northern lights, Mary and Jesus, small children, and a lay reader show, this church is a place of mutual respect. And even if I have not mentioned it before, the affection part of reverence for the ordinary is strongly present.

There are many elders in the church that day listening to this young woman read her teaching story from a faraway land. I wish she could also read my thoughts to them! I am thinking that those elders have indeed been pushed aside by modern teachers. So we really did: "We bumped the Elders out of their spot!" Long ago, in their own way, they might have made that same point using local knowledge and local examples from local experiences instead of from symbols on a page. They might have told a story about a local prairie or a beaver or a child. They might have told a joke or organised an event. Learning and teaching based on the alphabet have pushed aside the traditional

experience-based learning and teaching. I support Sr. Bernadette's belief that we might do well to re-instate it. What else she has to say on the subject is a story that I'll call "That's How It Was Done, You See."

That's How It Was Done, You See

> In the old traditional way the boy or the girl was taken out . . . to the trapline or wherever. He was never told, "Okay, now you watch me, how I'm gonna do this, because you're gonna have a test after." The boy would just stand there and watch his dad. Time and time and time again. As many times . . . as he had to watch. Until the day came when the dad would either say, "Here, now you do it," or the boy would say, "Let me do it." (Gautreau, transcript, 93-11-01)

Yes, I do. I see.

But what I also see are community members who still learn and teach like this. It takes place outside school. I see how it was done when Sr. Bernadette makes home-to-church connections when she once again explains the Catholic faith in the lay ministry meeting. I see how it was done in the unassuming clothes she wears. That bit of local knowledge comes from a hint that Agnes dropped when we were discussing someone's outward appearance: "Some of the teachers don't fit in, not really. You can see it in the kind of clothes they wear. Not ordinary like you and me do." I see how it was done when I hear Nelly Nanooch speak with plants. I see how it was done when I feel The Woman Who Passed Away dance beside me. I see how it was done when Nora Nanooch confirms for me what Agnes Moberly calls "Those long-time-ago-laws that Bear has," or Rabbit or Moose. I learn the Moose law directly from Cow Moose. How I learn directly from Cow Moose is about listening to Nature and having trust in what is communicated. I give it away in a story as a possible home-to-school connection that links traditional education across time.

The Law That Moose Has

I had followed my curiosity, and now the hair stood up on the back of my neck. I stared at the strangeness of what was in the bushes, a short way off the trail through a poplar grove. What I saw was bathed in sunlight. A long strip of hide, hair still on it, hung looped around branches of an old poplar. Many seasons ago someone had put it there to rot in peace. It swayed in the breeze. To avoid touching it, I peered with care. At regular intervals the strip, about the width of two fingers, had stretched holes. Adrenalin surged through my body. I wondered, Good medicine or bad? The question that it was medicine had already been transmitted.

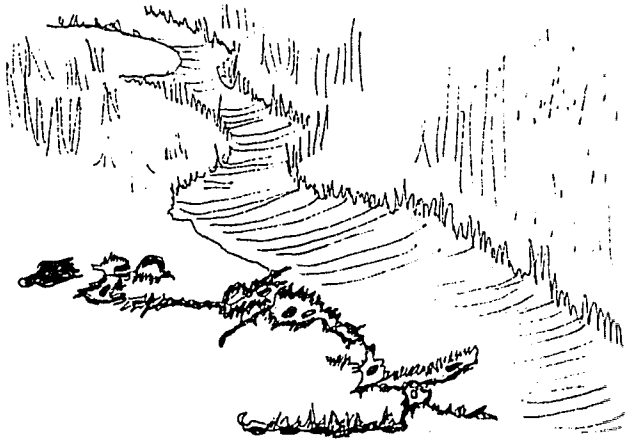
I stood very still and breathed deeply as I called up related words, experiences, pictures, smells, and sounds that might help me understand. Very slowly, very slowly all goose bumps went away. I relaxed. I took my sneakers off so that I could walk barefoot back and forth to look for a good spot. When I found it I sat with my back against the deep ridges of an old poplar. I smelled its sticky leaves. It was a hot May day with just a few mosquitoes. In my diary I sketched what I saw and dated it 94-05-17. I noticed how close we were to an old homestead—had it been bad medicine, someone would surely have had the hide strip removed. I couldn't think of any words to say, so I wrote nothing and wandered around in search of clues. I was certain that the hide strips held no evil. I trusted my intuition about such matters, and the hide strip felt as though it added to the place and things around it, not took away.

Two other times I sat in relation with this spot. When the time felt right, I took some photographs. I showed my sketch to people and began to ask what it might be. No one knew. But someone said, "Ask Marie. She knows those things." Marie looked at the sketch. She asked me to say more about what I was learning from the hide and the place. So I told her something of what I have written here. She smiled and said, "It's the scrap from scraping where the hide has been tied [and stretched to a frame]. It's what's cut off after the strings are taken out. Then it's hung up to show respect for the kill. The hide's just left up there so the dogs don't get it and drag it around." Apparently, a few people still follow the old way and hang the scraps in trees. Many have forgotten that local knowledge. Maybe seeing Marie's words in print will help them remember again.



"Following The Law That Moose Has"

Several days after our conversation I walked through a footpath in the village. There, lying on the ground, next to discarded glass, was a similar strip of hide. It was easy to see how dogs had gotten it and dragged it around. I took companion pictures and had a short conversation with Cow Moose, looking for guidance. The two moosehide strips would be my metaphor for respect recovered. I felt that it might be the kind of custom that people would carry on again once they remembered its significance.



"Re-Discovering The Law That Moose Has"

> That same week while visiting with The Woman Who Passed Away, I would note a bundle tied in a garbage bag high up in trees behind her house. "Hides?" I asked and pantomimed the skin of kill. She nodded.
>
> Elders pass on the culture in their ordinary living. That's how it was done, you see. That's how it is done. (*Diaries,* 1982-1996, 94-05-17)

As for me, for how I help Sr. Bernadette ensure that the Elder has to kind of be brought back into this whole system—that's how I do it. That's it, my gift, my story. That's how I answer Sr. Bernadette's question, "But how do you do it?" I write "it" out and photograph it, and when the time is right and when I know enough to feel with confidence that my local knowledge will be accepted, then, then, at a special moment, I will give it away. I like that process: research-study-celebrate. That way of working came to me, as Marie would say, while I worked with elders and teachers and parents and students and politicians in Kamloops a number of years ago. I connect that process to this research and John D'or in Chapter 9.

Throughout this study what Sr. Bernadette does is, she puts triangles[7] around my newfound local knowledge. She says things that stir my understanding. As she talks, her stories connect to experience from my past and remind me of related anecdotes. This allows me to put my new understandings into a familiar context. I am telling you many of those understandings. I do this for the following reasons: One, because it is a way of doing things which fits how local knowledge is acquired. Two, as an outsider, it allows me to demonstrate how local knowledge is passed on without arrogance. Three, it makes visible how Sr. Bernadette, who did not grow up in this community but spent her adult life here, became skilled at understanding local knowledge. Some 30 years ago she started. She describes

---

[7]I mean that she offers another perspective on what is being studied. Triangulate is the term for it from ethnography—the study of culture (Carl Urion, personal communication, 93-01-02).

her first year as learning the hard way. Intuitively, she makes connections for and with her pupils. Her teaching is based on activities familiar to all—local stories and local respect mingled with affection and fun. She explains how her home-to-school connections come about:

Teaching From Within Local Knowledge

> I started teaching in Fox Lake . . . in 1962. I walked in. I had 45 students in Grade 1 and 2, none of which spoke a word of English, and I didn't know any Cree at that time. I had arrived like on Sunday, and Monday morning I was in my class. Never taught a day in my life. I'd done a lot of student teaching, but that was all. I asked for the curriculum guide. There was none, I was told. I looked for things that could help me to organise my teaching, and I was told, "Well, just do the best you can."
>
> All the books were from the United States. And being an American, I was familiar with these books. . . . These were books that the States had ditched because they were no good. So Canada bought them. Okay. So you open your math book, and you would be faced with pictures of clowns and pictures of all kinds of things that the children had never seen. Everybody lived in log cabins. Well, about the first week or second week, I just didn't know what to do any more. Because my teaching was not getting across to these kids. So I picked up all the books, put them all on the shelf, and decided that we were going to do our own thing. So we went with stories, legends, whatever I could get out of the kids, pull out of the kids for materials. . . . We illustrated our own storybooks. We had big chart papers hanging all over the place. . . .
>
> If I had gotten into a panic state, which I felt like, I could have just dumped the whole thing right there and gotten out of education and never looked back, because I used to get up in the morning, and I used to hate thinking I'd have to go spend six or six-and-a-half hours in that building with these kids who didn't know a word of English, and who didn't know anything about the outside world. Fox Lake was even more isolated at that time than it is today. And here we were supposed to be teaching them how to read and write in English? And math? The whole bit? So we did. But we did it a little bit in the setting in which they were living. . . . I had given it as an assignment: "You have to go and have Grandma and Grandpa tell you stories, . . . and then you'll come back and you'll write it out." And that's the way my first year of teaching went.
>
> Now, what happened here was, we would get maybe . . . one story out of the group; . . . one story would come back. But that story was material enough for me to work [on] for a month, because what we would do is read the story in Cree—we'd have the group work together and translate that story into English. By the time we had exhausted that one story, somebody else had usually come along with another story, and we'd just work on

> that. By then the stories were illustrated. We had actually made books.
>
> I don't know where it came from. All I know is that it seemed to come from somewhere within me. And I tried to put myself in their seats, you know. . . . Here is this foreigner coming from another country trying to tell me that her language is better, her religion is better, her manner of dress is better, everything that she has is better. And I have to completely change my ways, okay? I have to change my language. I have to change the colour of my skin if I can and the whole bit.
>
> And when the superintendent used to come, he'd give me hell because my kids were speaking Cree in the classroom, and he [even] wanted me to be out in the playground and disciplining them because they're speaking Cree while they're playing. I said, "Well, I am sorry, but I cannot do that." Because when you tell a child that his language is not to be spoken, you're imparting in that child's head, "Your language is inferior, your way is inferior, your culture is inferior, and you have to just chuck that out of your head and take on what I'm telling you, 'cause I've got the best." I said, "I will not do that. A lot of times they're explaining to each other." I mean, I'm giving a lesson, I'm supposed to be the mastermind here, I can't even get this across, but some little kid is going to explain to this other little kid, "Well, this is what she's saying," you know. [laugh]
>
> There was always one kid who spoke a bit of English in every class. So I said [to the superintendent], "You know, for me, for me this child is my teacher aide. He's telling him what I said so that he can understand it. So why should I stop that child?" . . . It was ridiculous what we were having to put up with. Thank God they only came in once a year. Sometimes once every two years. (Gautreau, transcript, 93-11-01)

Sr. Bernadette made friends with her children, and they helped her do her job. She taught them a second language, reading, writing, arithmetic, and to be proud of their heritage. In return they shared with her local knowledge about how things are done in Fox Lake and later John D'or Prairie. Every year her continued relationship with them helped her become a better teacher.

Back then, she tells me, students entered school at age seven. They generally spent two years in every grade because they were also learning English. Boys would leave school to trap when they turned 16. Because the trapping economy was still very strong, they could easily earn $20,000 or $30,000 a year. It was their dream. And the girls' dream was to have babies. In those days Grade 4 was like Grade 12 today. Sixteen-year-olds would lead

adult lives like Marie and Agnes did at that age, without ever feeling the need for more school-based education. Sr. Bernadette says her students would leave school after having had "a good four years in the sense that by the time they got to Grade 4 they knew the Grade 4 material." But the outside world in 1995 is putting demands on John D'or Prairie students that are very different from those of the 1960s and the earlier fur-trading world.

> So what happens now: These are . . . the parents of our students today. They know that education is good. They're not quite sure what it's good for. They know that there are only so many jobs, good jobs—with Community Health Resource, teacher aides, working at band administration. But for the rest of the kids there is nothing. (Gautreau, transcript, 93-11-01)

In 1995 the outside world's continued preoccupation with change is putting immense pressure on John D'or to produce educated people in the modern sense of *schooling.* Even if they choose not to live in the dominant society, educated Cree people are the ones expected to interact with it—and expected to do so entirely on the outsiders' terms. If they figure out the mainstream system and end up as successful entrepreneurs on a playing field they've levelled, their competitors look for legal loopholes to shift the balance of power and make it uneven again. The headline "Native wins fight to open first reserve liquor store" is a case in point (Danylchuk, 1996). Since 1994, when Alberta liquor stores were privatised, 617 licences were issued to competing private citizens. "A year after Peter Paul Willier first applied for a licence, the [Alberta Liquor Control] board created a policy that blocked anyone from opening a liquor store on a reserve" (p. A1). Willier fought back. He competed in court and won. "This policy is contrary to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and discriminates against Indians on reserves," the appeal council said in its ruling (p. A10).

On the topic of teaching competitive values, Sr. Bernadette says:

> For a lot of our people their only mainstay has been welfare ever since the fur economy has collapsed. So you've got first of all parents who are not very interested in education because they don't know what it's good for. There is no, let's say, goal that they could aim for. And if you're gonna use a carrot—you know, "You can get a job, a good job"—they know that it's not true any more. And so why bother getting interested in the education of their children? And they don't. They don't. If you talk to the school board, if you talk to the chairman, this is one of his biggest problems now. . . . It's very difficult to get parents out for any kind of a meeting at all. Except if it's a crisis. Or if the teachers get themselves in trouble with the community. (Gautreau, transcript, 93-11-01)

How did she do it? How did she communicate with the parents? We laugh and exchange stories about our attempts to visit homes when we knew someone was inside, but the door remained shut. Only later do we learn that there was no one in the house who spoke English. We both have stories of families who had been conditioned to discuss only misbehaviour. I tell a story which shows how I learn that the mainstream custom of inviting everyone inside who knocks does not necessarily apply in a Native community. I tell how a Shuswap colleague once explained that she is comfortable discussing "business" on the porch. I've never done that. But I have spent hours talking in a car. And I often stand and "visit" with people who are sitting in their vehicles. Sr. Bernadette shares other insights. What her words connect is underlined.

More Local Knowledge And More Insights

> Work-play-home-school-unity: I used to put bingos on, okay? For parent-teacher night. And I would get people who didn't even have kids in school, but I didn't care; as long as they came to the parent-teacher meeting. They'd get the report cards, and I'd explain to them what some of the problems were in school and have their input.
>
> Respect is not to suffer loss of face: Now as far as the teacher aides are concerned, they're still very much of the mentality that "the teacher is the boss, and I can't tell the teacher how to teach—they will suffer." I've had teacher aides tell me that "you know, this is ridiculous what the teacher is doing here." But too polite to say to the teacher, "This is really not what you should be doing" [always yelling—suffering the children], because

that would be making that teacher lose face. You see, the thing of losing face is very, very, very important. . . . For example, it's not a good idea for a teacher to scold a child in front of a class. Never. This should always be done in private. And teachers are scolding the kids all the time. . . . Walk down the hallway, and you'll hear them screaming.

School education and local knowledge—group work and historic competitions: Teachers today want to try some of these neat methods that they've learned at university, okay? They soon find out that when they try to do things like that—[for example,] put kids into small groups—that the discipline falls apart. . . . I had teacher after teacher come back and say to me, "But, you know, when I try that, the first thing I know, they're fighting, they're teasing." Teasing is one of the biggest things that we have in our school, okay? Because there is a whole bunch of other stuff going on there that's not school related. It's community related, okay? There are certain things going on within families, so if you put these kids together in a small-group setting, you're not gonna have any learning going on. You're gonna have fighting going on, okay? But teachers are not aware of that because they don't go out and visit the community. They don't. Most of the teachers go from their classroom to the teacherage and the teacherage to their classroom. They don't know where their kids live. They don't know who the parents of their kids are. They're not interested in knowing what else is in the community except the school. . . .

The fights started . . . generations in the past, you know. . . . The teachers of course are not aware of this. [And] teacher aides are not gonna tell them. (Gautreau, transcript, 93-11-01)

School education and informal education: You know, people here never had a formal educational system within their own culture. And so everything was done very informally when it was needed, and the children learned those things that were needed for survival. . . .

So now, all of a sudden, you have a formalised education system whereby you have to "control" 30-odd children in your class, . . . and your only system of discipline is not to interfere in the other person's life. If Johnny wants to act up all day long, he acts up all day long. I find that some of the teachers who have the least discipline are the Native teachers, 'cause they don't know how to handle this. Yet we had a Native teacher aide who was excellent, excellent. He could have taken over a class and taught. [Sr. Jeanette reminded her that this man did so from Christmas to Easter.]

Letting Johnny act out is okay if you've got three or four or five kids, but doesn't often work with an entire class. (Gautreau, transcript, 93-11-01)

A challenge indeed. And an administrator from John D'or includes me in that challenge. He says, "Well, what would *you* do?" My immediate reaction

is to act in a locally appropriate way—to go away and think about it.[8] I think. I read. Several days of both leave me excited about Basso's (1979) metaphor of interpersonal relationships. He views relationships as a process similar to tanning hides.[9] Cow Moose comes to my mind, and I search for my photograph of The Woman Who Passed Away. When I find it, I study how she is posing very formally beside four stiff moosehides (see photograph #10 in Chapter 9). The moosehides are slowly drying over little smouldering fires. The woman is looking at a dark grey sky and clouds that smell of rain. Within the hour howling winds, lightning, and rolling thunder would bear down on the reserve. Within a week she would be gone—passed over into the spirit world. But at that moment, the *now* of the photograph (94-05-19), she is about to take me on a quick tour of tanning centres in her backyard. I try my best to imagine the procedure of turning those four stiff hides into soft moccasins. The sister-in-law visiting from next door occasionally translates, but I do not truly understand what The Woman Who Passed Away is showing me. It is only after I go through the entire process myself with Nelly Nanooch that I understand. As I type these words one-and-a-half years later, I am able to make connections from that dry moosehide parchment not only to moccasins, but also to Basso's writing, to relationships, to joking, and eventually to classroom discipline. Local learning is not linear. Not in time. Not in space. I will let Basso explain the metaphor part of those connections:

> The basic premise is as follows: interpersonal relationships, like untanned hides, are initially 'stiff' . . . and therefore of little practical value; consequently, they must be gradually worked through successive stages of increasing pliability until, having become fully 'soft,' . . . they become useful as well and can be counted on, given proper care and attention, to soften even further and become more

---

[8]To think about it is what local protocol suggests. Careful thought is preferred to quick answers—a powerful place for a home-to-school connection.

[9]Europeans have a related expression: "He/she tanned my hide." However, it uses violence to soften someone's backside; that is, their "hide."

> useful still. Persons with 'stiff' relationships are typically those who have met only recently and, being anxious not to offend each other, behave with cautious formality and studied respect. This is as it should be, Apaches point out, because 'stiff' relationships, like untanned hides, can be easily 'cracked' . . . and are frequently difficult to mend. At the other extreme, individuals who enjoy 'soft' relationships are those who have known each other for long periods of time, who have established sound bonds of mutual confidence and affection, and who, knowing this, feel free to take certain liberties which, in the context of less mature relationships, would be presumptuous and discourteous. This, too, is fitting, for although 'soft' relationships, like supple buckskin, are vulnerable to 'tears,' they can usually be mended without excessive effort. In short, softness imparts resiliency and strength. And so it has been for quite some time. (p. 68)

From Nelly I learn exactly how much work it is, how much patience it takes, and how rewarding making-moosehide-soft is. What, then, would I do with 30 students in John D'or? Could I treat them as Basso (1979) suggests—behave with "cautious formality and studied respect"? I do know that I would show affection. I do know that I would try not to jump all over them and show who's boss. I think that I would give instructions softly so that people who walk down the hallway would not need to witness my loss of face. I would remember Sister's advice about small groupings. What would Agnes and Marie do with a class of 30?

Reading Basso (1979) reminds me of how Nelly and I alternately would pull and push at the tanning pole between us. It is the usual way Bush Cree people twist the water out of moosehide and part of the hard "work" that Basso is talking about. With the moosehide wound around the pole and a standing-tree as fulcrum, I would push and Nelly would pull at the pole. Then we would alternate. I would reach across the moosehide, which soon becomes all twisted and knotted around the pole and tree. I would push on the half of the pole that Nelly had pulled. At the same time she would pull on the half that I had pushed. That's how the moosehide is twisted dry (see photograph #1 in

Chapter 9). If either one of us had let go, the pole would have snapped unwound and sent us flying. It happened to Marie, remember.

Now that I've been challenged and supported in that challenge, I'd like to live out such a hide-softening analogy in a classroom. I am all the more interested in doing so after the following encounter.

While visiting with Sr. Bernadette in her kitchen one day, the phone rings. I overhear one half of a most amazing segment of/in life. I get to witness a child-adult relationship such as I have never encountered before. It is entirely positive, and the child is leader. As I listen to the words again, this time in my mind's ear, I can almost see Sister and the child softening the organic connections between them as one might moosehide:

Moosehide Relationship

B (Bernadette)	You want to come over tonight and roast marshmallows in my [teepee] fireplace?
8 (8-year-old-boy)	. . .
B	But I won't be here; I'm going to a meeting!
8	. . .
B	You'll come too and wait?
8	. . .
B	Who am I speaking to?
8	. . .
B	[Name], does your mom know you're speaking to me?
8	. . .
B	Go get your mom. Let me talk to her.
8	. . .
B	Oh, she's lying down.
8	. . .
B	Well, how would you get here? Who would bring you?
8	. . .
B	Okay. Now go get your mom. Tell her Sister needs to talk to her.
8	. . .
M (8's mom)	. . .
B	Hi. Your son just phoned me. He says he's coming over to roast marshmallow in the teepee. He says he doesn't know yet how he's getting here. But he's coming anyway, for sure. [laugh]
M	. . .

B I won't be home tonight, but he said he'd wait. Would he walk?

I didn't hear the rest of the conversation. But I did hear a little boy making a decision about how he was going to spend his evening—exactly as he had done a couple of nights ago, but this time he didn't need his mother. He'd do in on his own. He knew the local protocol for visiting—a phone call immediately before coming over. It wasn't necessary to give a lot of advance notice. If the person was out, well, so be it; it was okay to wait. In John D'or children often come along and wait while their adults hold meetings. (*Reflections,* 1994-1996, 94-06-27)

Nothing in the conversation implies that the child's idea is wrong. Nothing I hear puts down his judgment. I am conscious only of reciprocal respect. Sr. Bernadette has modelled for me what is important local knowledge. Her give and take, like two people tanning moosehide, is an approach I'd surely try with 30 students. One youngster at a time; given what I now know about working with one moosehide, I'd follow Sr. Bernadette's example with that one boy. I'd blend it with Basso's (1979) advice about cautious respect. I'd mingle in attitudes of genuine affection and fun.

This morning I wake up and last night's fog is gone. Like other Edmontonians, I am utterly silent and attentive to the beauty of sparkling ice crystals everywhere. They drift through the air as crystals. They poise on chain-link fences. They remind me of last year, nearly to the day, when I still lived in the woods outside the city. There I had imagined that under cover of darkness fog knits or sometimes embroiders the entire forest with her breathing. An incredible feat for anyone but God. "No wonder she's called 'Creator,'" I had written in my diary. That day I also made a note to speak with Sr. Bernadette about a gendered Creator (94-12-14). Maybe I will yet!

I read on in my diary and pause at a quotation by Annie Dillard (cited in Boice, 1992):

> There are seven or eight categories of phenomena in the world that are worth talking about, and one of them is weather. Any time you care to get in your car and drive across the country and over the mountains, come into our valley, . . . drive up the road to the house, walk across the yard, knock on the door and ask to come in and talk about the weather, you'd be welcome. (p. 124)

What that connection brings to mind is the memory of a farewell party at the Sisters'. Sr. Jeanette, who would go to Quebec; a teacher who would leave John D'or after her first year; and a young woman who was here to teach a three-week college course were all leaving. Around the Sisters' picnic table I become conscious that the way Dillard (cited in Boice, 1992) would welcome strangers into her home is what Sr. Bernadette has done for 30 years. People have sat at her table or in her teepee, and not only has she talked with them about the weather, but she has also cooked for them and put them up for the night. "We do that for people around here," she once said, and added, "There's no hotel in John D'or." That, surely, is important for people to know around here.



"We Do That For People Around Here"

What is also important is that, whereas everyone talks about the weather, people rarely talk about their environment. I quickly add that I know better than to believe that local people do not appreciate their environment—the sights, the sounds, the smells, the textures. Local people are drawn to the same out-of-door places that I am—Shawna's soft stones, for example. They too love the poplar grove in Sister's backyard; love roasting marshmallows; smelling the fire, the wind, the underbrush; admiring the many shades of green; hearing the Cessna aircraft come in to land, the birds sing, the dogs bark, the children call; I know that Bush Cree people love those things. It's why they live here! But they do not often talk about them. However, the college instructor, Sisters Bernadette and Jeannette, and I, we tell each other about the various shades of green and the shouts of the children. "You know," Sr. Bernadette grins at me when I ask why that might be so, "White people love to talk, period!" Instead of elaborating, she shares a multi-edged joke. "You remember my friend who was visiting from California when you were here the last time? This is what she said about me: 'Ask Bernadette what time it is, and she'll tell you how to build a clock!'" We all laugh with her. I laugh because her joke pokes fun at White people as a group, and I belong to that group. I laugh because she sees that trait in herself and makes fun of it. I laugh because she is a nun, and the stereotype is of someone with a long and sour face who doesn't laugh. I laugh, and yet I sense a larger connection.

I turn the thought around and wonder, Why *not* talk about the fat white clouds?

The question stays with me. "I don't know," a local friend says when I ask why I keep talking about the beauty of the countryside and she does not. We are on our way into town. The day is hot. We use her vehicle because it has air conditioning. "I guess we're just used to it," she offers after a while.

I roll down the window. Scents from blooming rapeseed fields rush in. I can do that because it rained last night and the road is not yet dusty. I want to say, "It is too beautiful for words, but I'll use words anyhow." But I don't. I keep quiet and think my thoughts instead. I think, I know that for my daughter nothing exists until it is spoken. That has been the case since she was tiny. Speaking makes things real for many—for White people, my daughter, poets, or creation stories:

> Thought-Woman, the spider,
> named things and
> as she named them
> they appear.
> (Silko, 1977, p. 1)

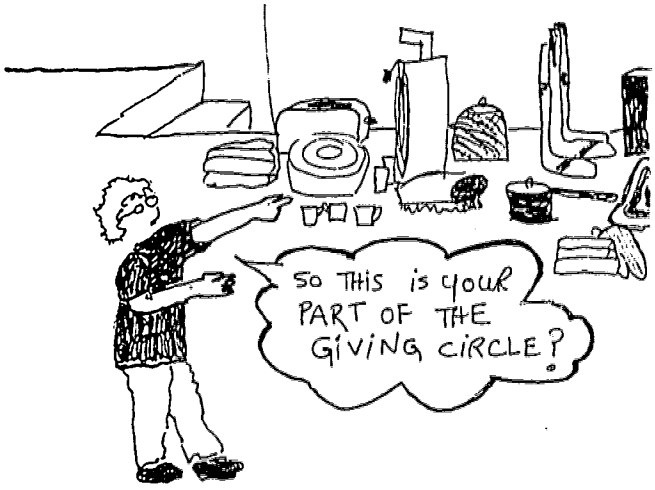
The question stays current for a long time; months, in fact. When I figure it out, it is thanks to a home-to-school connection that Basso (1979) makes for me. He compels me to realise how some people don't see it that way:

> According to Western Apaches, it is a peculiar habit of Anglo-Americans that they discourse at length on the patently obvious, . . . an inclination that finds one of its purest expressions in the excited gushings of tourists and other visitors to the Fort Apache Reservation. Unfortunately, when these spasms of enthusiasm are directed at Apaches, they may take offence, for what is implied, they claim, is that they have been judged insensitive to the beauty of their own homeland (e.g., *Look at sun, look at clouds, look at stars)* and need to be *told* that it is a region of unsurpassing natural splendour. . . . Apaches regard it as yet another form of Anglo-American condescension. (pp. 87-88)

Expressions of enjoyment certainly vary from one culture to the next. I keep meaning to ask Sr. Bernadette what the Bush Cree custom is. And I keep forgetting. *Eventually, I call her from Edmonton and ask directly. She says that how I phrase it in my work is right. People don't often talk about what everybody knows. She also says that she can't comment on what goes on in other people's heads. After 30 years she has absorbed much of the local knowledge and won't speak for anybody else. She says, "I do not know what Bush Cree people think when they don't say anything. I don't know what goes on inside their head. Do they think we're trying to teach them*

something about beauty? I don't know. But I agree with the Apache on the gushing" (personal communication, 96-02-20).

I re-read my computer *Reflections,* my diary, my transcripts, all pages that I have long ago marked with tags. Green tags are my way of marking important thoughts about Sr. Bernadette. The blue tags are for Nelly, the purple for Marie, the yellow for Agnes. I remove them if I have "covered" the story or decide not to include it. I never get them all, but enough to feel satisfied. The final marker that I remove identifies a sketch in my diary. It shows a pile of goods heaped on the floor at the top of a staircase in my empty fourplex. The annual JDP June Teacher Exodus is over. Even my landlady has left. I am about to pass on to Sr. Bernadette the last items that those teachers have given to me. While I wait, I sketch them. After she has picked them up, I add her words (*Diaries,* 1982-1996, 94-07-07).



"From Within The Giving Circle"

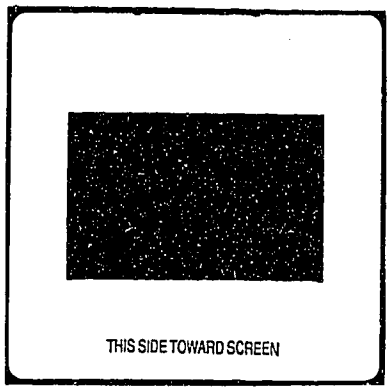
There are no notes. Yet I remember very well how she says what she does when she comes by to pick the stuff up. She says:

> I didn't really want your things. I don't need them. But then I remembered what you said about the Giving Circle. I remembered how you thought I might want to keep those things and give them away when someone's house burns down or help a young couple just starting out. So here I am, including you in our Giving Circle.

She grins in that broad smile of hers which says it even clearer than her words.

I will always remember that moment as one where my intuition is confirmed about local knowledge as a Giving Circle. An idea that I had tentatively put out and acted on is accepted, adapted, and given back to me from someone else. When I give away what is important to me and others give to me what is important to them—or even their version of my reality—what we do is build trust between us.

How different that is from spilling my beliefs into a black hole and having them sucked up and disappear without a gurgle! It feels so terrible when that happens. If I ask, "What do you think about what I just did?" and the answer is an indifferent one, communication between me and the speaker shrivels up and dries away. Even if someone says, "That's interesting!" it is simply not enough evidence of trust between us, and I quit telling my story or stop showing my pictures. I shut down. Not totally, as in the suicide reference in Chapter 1. But enough so that I don't feel shipwrecked. Quietly, I close the lid on my treasures. To people straining to see them in the darkness of the hold, it will appear empty. As I get older I get more and more careful about who I give my stories to. I read once, "If I give you my truth and you don't give me yours, there can be no truth between us." Can all truths in Silko's (cited in Trinh, 1989) storyteller's truth be told? There *are* lies. And books tell truths as well as lies. In this study there are many spaces for photographs that I did not take. They are my untold stories.



"An Untold Picture Story"

On the other hand, Sr. Bernadette's gift of genuine thoughtfulness and probing dialogue lets me risk outwards and inwards. I reach out further to others and then question myself deeper because of our relationship.

Both Sr. Bernadette and I are White. We come from a society where the ultimate validation for knowledge is someone else's words. I put Sr. Bernadette's chapter last because I wanted to be able to go to her for help with unanswered questions. In our question/answer sessions I am often reminded of my mainstream society's birthday gift to me: an "invisible package of unearned assets that I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was 'meant' to remain oblivious" (McIntosh, 1992, p. 33). When all is said and done and much honesty has been built up between us, Sister's "yes" at the end of my work is a form of approval for my understanding about traditional education. I am awed by how much local knowledge Sr. Bernadette has accumulated in 30 years and how freely she gives it away. Because she says "yes" in the ordinary language of my culture and because she is my friend, I accept her yes and know that she gives me her truth. All my life I have received (or had withheld) such verbal judgment. It is comforting because it is familiar.

To the Bush Cree people in John D'or the familiar is also comforting and trustworthy. Outside validation is irrelevant. Local knowledge has always been historical, social, orderly, dynamic, and indirect. People lived like this long before Dewey (1859-1952) was born or wrote about those ideas in his books and essays. Indirect expressions of approval or correction may not be what Sr. Bernadette and I grew up with, but they are as solid as a straightforward "yes" or "no."

Here are some examples: Agnes' invitation to come for Christmas dinner; Nelly's suggestion, "The next time you're up, come visit me too"; Marie's wordless acceptance of tobacco; the presence of The Woman Who Passed Away; seeing Cow Moose release her spirit into blood-stained earth. Also recall the statement "If he mentioned it, you're invited."

Visitors to JDP may find these to be uncommon ways of confirming local knowledge, but in John D'or they are ordinary. On the side of "no," there is the meeting where no one shows up, the glazed look on people's faces, the silence followed by an unmistakable change of subject, the poor quality photographs (an elder once gave me this question: "Ask yourself why you weren't meant to take them"), the mechanic who won't fix my tire. Samples of approval or correction are also when animals run or fly away compared to when they study me up close. Lived, heard, remembered, or dreamed, each of the above experiences adds to my understanding of what is important to know around here. In addition, there are yes/no expressions I surely missed because I do not yet recognise them. One event at a time, slowly, properly, the message is in the medium. It is so even for a newcomer. It is not what Sr. Bernadette says that is important; it is how she lives her life that is important. What counts is her ordinary being:

> Native peoples have been studied upside down, inside out, in all ways by the people who haven't got a clue what everyday life on the reserve is all about. They interview a few people and go out and write a book! [laugh] (Gautreau, transcript, 93-11-01)

Sr. Bernadette, even if I did what you would never do—interview a few people and then write a book—nevertheless, I hope my message is the medium. Did you notice that there are no sub-sections to your local-knowledge story? By the time I came to write your chapter I stopped reinforcing divisions that separate life/stories. I hope my book reflects your fragments of/in life and in the life of our friends and your neighbours. And not only my words; my pictures too. And what's in between the lines and outside the frames!

PART III

I LOVE MY CEREMONIES

Chapter 9

Giveaway

Pictures as Companions to Research Stories, Words as Companions to Research Pictures

One message in the pages of this book tells me to acknowledge my responsibility and take care of what I now own. When I wrote Step 7 in Chapter 3, the way that I hoped to show that care was to interpret what I now own through photography. I wanted to take pictures that would show our research findings and also stand alone as works of art. My goal was to give the photographs away at a single-concept event—a traditional celebration. My spoken and written words at that dance would act as companions to the feast, the pictures, the drumming, the dancing, the ceremonies. They would accompany a night that is a lived enactment of Rothenberg's (1968) dedication. To balance the dissertation which would become a gift to my university community, the art exhibit and postcards would become a gift to my Bush Cree community. (A brief reminder that *my* implies relationship, not ownership.) It is a gesture that I want to make as a way to enrich and be enriched by all my relations.[1]

One February day, when the temperature is well below minus 37°C and school had been closed for several days, it happens that way! One night when it is so cold that my nostrils stick together and snow squeaks underfoot, we

---

[1] All my relations is a Plains Indian phrase that ends prayers or spiritual talks at gatherings. Those who use it mean that they are related as well as stand in a relationship with everything on earth. Can my readers participate in a relationship with this, my text? Can you stand in an imagined face-to-face relationship with text (and through its paper, to a tree) as you would with a person?

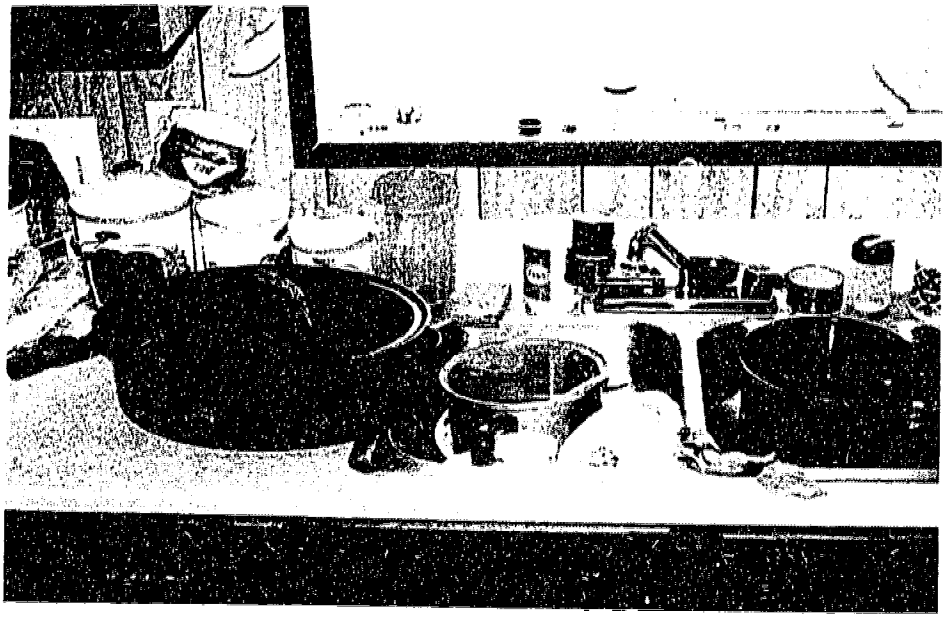
help sponsor a traditional feast, round dance, Memorial Dance, and Giveaway Ceremony. We buy food. We cook moosemeat. We hang framed enlargements of the best of 900 photographs around the John D'or Community Hall where the event takes place. I watch people come. They respond to our pictures with quiet surprise and delight. I notice how they tell each other to be sure and read the joke. And I know deep in my heart and with absolute certainty that their faces mirror their spirit-to-spirit connection with our work. They are relating with our photography exhibit. They are letting me know without words that they like it.

I notice how the chief does this. He leaves his place in the buffet line to examine two of the pictures up close. Later he nods at me, smiles, and reaches across a smorgasbord piled high with donated food. He warmly shakes my hand.

Three of the half dozen White people present write on my feedback sheet, "The pictures are lovely!! They really depict life in this community and what is important to people here." I casually note that it is the end of this study, and I still don't know what is truly "really" (see Chapter 5).

No one else writes anything. They show what is in their hearts in other ways. Marie passes up bingo to come. My old landlady is here. So are Nelly, Sr. Jeanette, Sr. Bernadette, and the spirit of The Woman Who Passed Away. Cow Moose is present. I hear how, when Agnes and Louis went hunting moose for the feast, they see 23 of them. They shoot the two that give themselves to the Memorial Dance and Giveaway Feast. Others help cook that meat and bring it to the hall. Agnes' sister-in-law didn't come but told her how to make moosenose soup over the phone. Agnes has never made it before. Both she and the sister-in-law want to do that for me. I am deeply moved. Oops, four whole sentences of saying what is self-evident. Shawna watches

as I slowly lift the moosenose from a piece of cardboard into a pan. Gently, I stroke her nostrils. "Thank you, Cow Moose, for feeding us. Thank you for feeding us." I say it twice for power.



"Moosenose"

Just before midnight I briefly explain our research findings to the 150 or so people present. An old man translates them into Cree for me. At midnight I again join the Memorial Dance as I did the year before. But this night, 96-02-03, there are two blankets on the floor. One is piled high with bowls, hand-knit mittens, and so on. The second is piled high with our framed picture dissertation. There is also a large carrying case. It holds a smaller display of pictures which show scenes that will interest prospective teachers from somewhere else. It is my gift to the replacements of the JDP teachers who are no longer here. Before they left, they told me how they would have loved some prior idea of what their lifestyle might be like in John D'or. The portfolio is for the Director of Education to take to interviews in Edmonton. I direct the women who have been appointed in a traditional manner to disperse the goods;

I tell them which pictures belong to whom. There is a box of 15,000 postcards.



"Picture Giveaway"

I sense that I make some mistakes but know that I will never be told how. After the ceremony of the Giveaway is over, we dance till early morning. Six hours later a JDP friend and I drive back to Edmonton. We have left behind a blanketful of gifts plus the framed enlargement of a northern muskeg. It is to be raffled off. Will Agnes take it to the store to be displayed? It was Agnes' idea, and she will handle it. She suggested that I make 500 raffle tickets and sell them for $1 each. The winning number gets the picture; I receive the

money from the ticket sales. "That should help to cover some of the expenses," Agnes says. The receptionist for the Little Red River Cree Nation types the tickets. The band manager donates the photocopies. But will people buy them? How often will the time be right for Agnes even to *ask* people to sell tickets, as she is planning. They say her daughter is selling tickets door to door for me. The thought that keeps making me grin is that the time might be right to do other things as well! The winning number will be drawn on Easter Sunday or maybe Mother's Day. If only a few tickets are sold, which questions does that create for saving face? Whose face? I discuss this with the chief. When I do, he offers that it may also be a question of people not wanting to ask where the money will go and not wanting to buy tickets because they don't know—but are reluctant to ask. It may be another story that I will never know. In any event, I will not be around. I will be at a conference in the States, demonstrating our research, showing pictures, and working hard to make local knowledge come alive for teacher-educators. Will any of them be familiar with distinctions between raffle and 50:50 ticket protocol?

As we drive south, on-reserve life moves on. But not for me.

I stand still, suspended in the past. I have yet to deal with the final chapter of our research story. As we drive south, memories flit by . . . of the way we did our research, . . . of the many months I worked to prepare for this Memorial Dance and Giveaway. Twice the date was changed. How long will it take to shapeshift this part of our research into writing? Should the entire research story ever be complete in itself, it will indeed be a story without a beginning or an ending—there are so many loose ends. I know this from Trinh (1989):

> Sometimes it [story/life] just drifts along; it may go on year after year without development, without climax, without definite beginnings or endings. Or it may accumulate climax upon climax, and if one chooses to mark it with beginnings and endings, then

> everything has a beginning and an ending. . . . In life, we usually don't know when an event is occurring; we think it is starting when it is already ending; and we don't see its in/significance. The present, which saturates the total field of our environment, is often invisible to us. The structural activity does not carry on the cleavage between form and content but emphasises the interrelation of the material, and the intelligible is an activity in which structure should remain an unending question: one that speaks him/her as s/he speaks it, brings it to intelligibility. . . .
>
> A story [is] a living thing, an organic process, a way of life. What is taken for stories, only stories, are fragments of/in life, fragments that never stop interacting while being complete in themselves. (p. 143)

Trinh beautifully summarises for my university community what I have come to understand about local knowledge. Especially fitting is the part about emphasising the intelligible (what makes sense) as an activity. Our research structure remains an unending question which says me as I say it. Would Nelly grin, "Good enough for now"?

The Giving Circle doesn't stop when the Round Dance is over. This Chapter 9 will give away the fragments of that circle which never stop interacting while being complete in themselves. I am giving them to you the reader, in the same way that I gave them to the Bush Cree community—in a few printed pages. In a dozen pictures.

It took me months to choose those picture stories. I picked them in unity with what Sr. Bernadette once showed me in her book *Photography for the Joy of It* (Patterson, 1986):

> Photographs are what happens when you and the subject matter meet, and you use a camera to describe a meeting. A photograph is a visual description of the relationship between the subject and the photographer; and a good photograph is one which clearly shows the character of the subject while revealing the photographer's response to it. (p. 10)

Here are some of the photographs and all of the words as I put them up on February 3rd, 1996, for people to re-view and make corrections. I taped each page of words beside its picture in the community hall. When all changes had been made, I laminated these words and mounted them as companion to

our photographs now hanging in the band office, church, adult education centre, health office, and school. In this dissertation I substitute sketches for pictures where I did not ask written permission to publish the photographs. Sometimes to do so would have been too disruptive to what else was going on.

The ultimate seal of approval rests with the Little Red River Cree Nation's Board of Education. I consider that board my local dissertation-review committee. I asked for their help, and the members agreed to take on this function the first time we met. It is an interesting aside that that happened in August 1994—at the very place where events photographed in pictures #2 and #3 below took place.

In the next section we include our research as presented to the Bush Cree community of John D'or Prairie. It is another way of telling the research story. I wonder how the old man who translated my brief speech said it in Cree.

Reverence for the Ordinary: A Photography Exhibit

In the community hall, on the wall next to each framed picture, we put a brief summary. The Oneness of the photograph and the description summarises this dissertation as a visual companion to the written work. The two (picture and words) make similar points about our research. On-reserve, people focus almost entirely on the visual dissertation. (On-campus, at a later date, people focus almost entirely on the written dissertation.)

WHAT IS IMPORTANT FOR PEOPLE TO KNOW AROUND HERE?

Christina Mader © 1996



"#1—Making Moosehide"

The picture shows two women working together. One came to John D'or to learn what is important for people to know around here. She asked, "What is important for people to know around here?" The other one answered, "Making moosehide." And so it happened. One person is me, Christina Mader; the other, Nelly Nanooch. Here I'm learning about moosehide by making one. That's not the same as reading about it. I helped Nelly wash and stretch and swing and twist and scrape until I thought my hands would freeze up. Or my arms rip out. Or my eyes roll away from the smoke. But I learned lots. How could this local knowledge help classroom teachers? After all, that's why I did this study—to find out how to better prepare teachers. Sometime soon I will share what I now know about that with the school staff. It will be a slide show, and you are all invited! Please come.

These are the things that you showed me are important. Working as a group is important. Tobacco is important. Patience is important. Joking is *really* important. Taking care of tools is important. So is water without chemicals. Watching in silence is important. And trading stories about the past. **What is very important is that people around here love and respect the ordinary things that happen.** That is what reverence means.

And in those everyday things it is the relationships that count. Let's look at some of what's ordinary in this photograph. The bush. The shade. The sunshine. The knotted moosehide. The lawn mower. The dog. The work being done. The expression on our faces. Can you sense our relationships with the physical world? The emotional world? The spiritual world, the thinking world? Maybe my words are pretty obvious, and you probably

wonder, Why does she talk about what everyone knows? For sure it's not to tell you what I know you know.

No! This is the reason: When I work with teachers (sometimes at university, sometimes in schools), I want to pass on these messages about Bush Cree culture. I want them to be right. You'd be amazed at how interested teachers are in the smallest things that make up your day. Knowing what you think is important to teachers. We want to connect what goes on at home to what goes on at school. It will help us do a better job in classrooms.

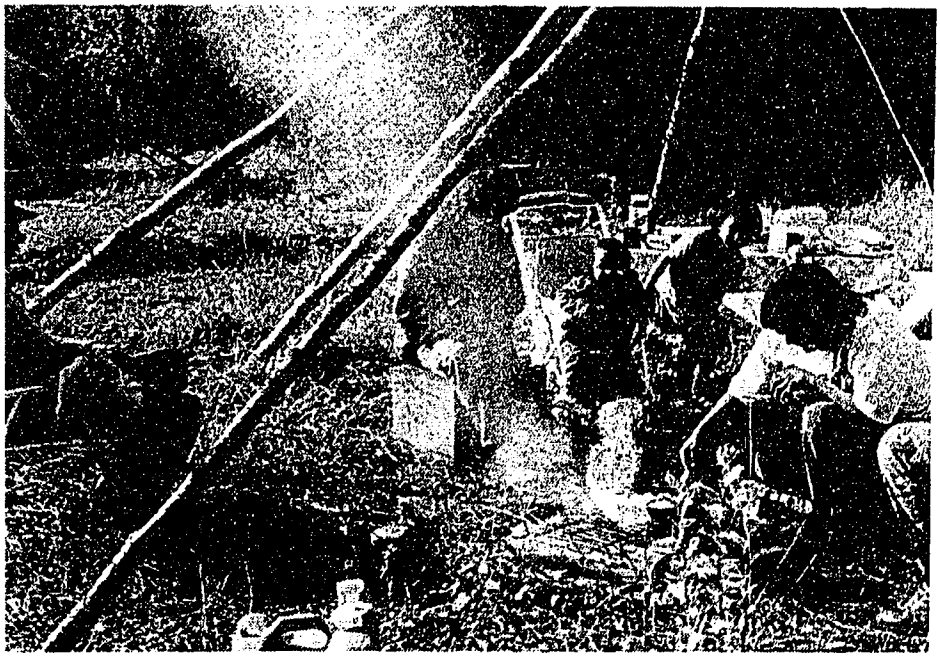
Elders know this too. They believe how children learn and what children learn *in school* should fit with how children learn and what children learn *at home*. Then those children will remember their lessons! Children know that too. If a lesson has meaning, students remember it.

These photographs are for those children. Will you help teachers understand what they show? Agnes, Marie, Nelly, Sr. Bernadette, and the spirits-in-things around here are who helped me understand. Your local knowledge has important lessons for all of us.

WHAT IS IMPORTANT FOR PEOPLE TO KNOW AROUND HERE?

Christina Mader © 1996





"#2, #3—Gatherings At Little Red River"

These two pictures were taken 40 years apart. Both show families camping at Little Red River. Nowadays the moss bag is still a precious gift for new mothers even if they have strollers. People still put up teepee poles, even if they no longer cover them with hides.

These pictures show your way of life that changes and your way of life that stays the same. The important activities that people do survive. The things you do them with—they change. That's how it is with gathering in family groups. With cooking out-of-doors. With visiting. That's how it is with lawn chairs. With frying pans. Or teepee covers.

Nancy Metsikassus is an old lady now. She is still beautiful. We met at Lac Ste. Anne last summer in her teepee. We spoke through an interpreter. I asked if I can make this picture into postcards for the Church Committee as fund raiser. She said yes.

WHAT IS IMPORTANT FOR PEOPLE TO KNOW AROUND HERE?

Christina Mader © 1996



"#4—St. Joseph's Catholic Church"

The important thing about this picture is that the church was built by this community. You look after it. It is yours. Many people in John D'or Prairie volunteer their time to carry on spiritual traditions. To those of you who go to church, that means you do things like lead the rosary, pray at wakes, clean the building, or take care of the cemetery.

The two Catholic Sisters who have spent most of their lives with The Little Red River Cree Nation are not in this picture. They work behind the scene. It is a peaceful scene. And having peace is close to the spirits of local people. Traditional ways encourage peace. Traditional ways avoid confrontation. If peace is broken, traditional ways help healing. The size of the teepee shows that those traditional ways are important. Beside it, the outside world carries on. It is represented by the thorny wild rose symbol of Alberta. Contemporary ways are important in this scene also. The modest house in the background shows that. It shelters people without becoming a symbol of how rich the owner is.

See how half the picture is sky? That much sky is meant to show a Creator who connects everything with weather. Soft clouds, strong winds, loud thunder, warm sunshine are all the Creator's way of having us touch each other. We breathe in what the Creator touches us with and pass it on when we breathe out. These things came to me from Nature directly.

WHAT IS IMPORTANT FOR PEOPLE TO KNOW AROUND HERE?

Christina Mader © 1996



"#5—Travelling From School To Home"

In this photograph I won't say much about what everybody knows is important—the wagon, the child holding the reins, the bus, modern education, and the kids leaving their school to travel home. Instead, I'll tell a lesson from this picture in a joke. I want to show how important joking is to people around here.

There was this newcomer on a reserve much like John D'or. Now, because this is a story about education, let's make him a teacher. Every day on his way to school let's have this teacher pass by horses. They belong to a Cree. Because our study focuses on women, let's make her a woman. Always the teacher looks at a certain horse he wants to buy. But whenever the teacher asks the owner if he can buy it, the old lady shakes her head and says, "Horse don't look too good." The teacher always argues with her. He points out the smooth coat, the strong legs, the healthy teeth that the horse has. "You're wrong," he'd say. "It's a beautiful horse." He'd say that. But the old woman is stubborn.

One day the teacher comes with money in his hand. "I'll give you $100 for this here horse." Still she shakes her head. She says, "Horse don't look too good." He comes back the next day with $125. Again the old woman shakes her head and says, "Horse don't look too good." This goes on for a while. When the teacher holds out $300, she finally nods. The teacher is very happy and takes his horse. But the next day he is back.

He is mad. "Hey!" he shouts, "your horse is blind. What are you doing selling me a blind horse?" The old lady shakes her head again. She says, "I told you, this horse don't look too good!"

WHAT IS IMPORTANT FOR PEOPLE TO KNOW AROUND HERE?

Christina Mader © 1996



"#6—1994 Primary Readiness Class"

This picture of little ones is to show the respect and affection that Agnes Moberly and Marie Nanooch are showing and teaching those kids. They are helping them begin to feel at home in school. Sometimes school can feel just like the jungle gym that they're climbing.

Here is how both women teach. Even though this is Agnes' story, both women teach like this. It shows an ordinary and important way of doing things.

Letting Pups Learn

> Sometimes you do things you're not supposed to do. And you find out they're wrong. . . . There was quite a few things that I shouldn't have done. I know that now that I'm older. [laugh] . . . And you know, one time [laugh] there was this little pups. My dad was raising some dogs. Dogteam . . . That's how we used to travel, with dogteam. . . . One day my dad wasn't home. . . . I figured, Well, I'll give the little dogs some experience. But I did it wrong. 'Cause I was hitting them. I shouldn't have hit them. I should just talk to them.

Dad said, "You shouldn't! Don't touch those little dogs again! 'Cause you were doing it wrong. You're supposed to show them how to do it. And talk to them. And you teach them with the other dogs in between! Not just by themselves."

Some people might not know this, but besides learning to get along, kids on a jungle gym are learning pre-reading skills and pre-counting skills. All just through play. If anyone can get little ones ready for school it's the two women in charge of this Primary Readiness class.

Like pups, kids need a lot of slow to grow! They need free time to play alone and teach each other. For 20 years Marie and Agnes have been letting kids learn what's important to know around here.

WHAT IS IMPORTANT FOR PEOPLE TO KNOW AROUND HERE?

Christina Mader © 1996



"#7—Oneness: Past, Present, And Future Relations"

These two cousins keep getting better at doing things they were allowed to do as little ones. See the love they have? How bright and happy they are? The beautiful bush around them? The girls grow up learning how to take care of each other and the world around them. They learn how to do that by copying relatives and friends. They learn that it is important to make sure that children and old people are well looked after. That's how the culture continues. Sometimes a new mother's mom might raise the baby. Little ones raised like that know that they are an important part of a close family circle. They know exactly where they belong. These two girls each have a "real mom and dad." And a second mom and dad who are also a *kohkom* and *mosom* [grandmother and grandfather]. From them they learn continued reverence for their ordinary way of life. They learn this with confidence and laughter. Here is what Marie Nanooch tells them about that. She gives an example using newborns:

Mothers Share Babies, Children Share Families

> Well, it was like this long ago. . . . "As long as you have somebody," they said. As long as you always have a woman ready that has had a baby and that can breastfeed, you're fine. That's so that the woman would take over the baby and breastfeed the newborn when the mother doesn't have enough milk. . . . The other lady used to come and fill her up! Breastfeed the newborn. So that's how I think our ancestors and great-grandmothers used to do.
>
> You know the cousins will pass it on!

WHAT IS IMPORTANT FOR PEOPLE TO KNOW AROUND HERE?

Christina Mader © 1996



"#8—Muskeg"

Altogether, four photographs from this exhibit have become postcards. You can buy them from the Church Committee. They make up a series that tells what people think is important to know around here. The cards and messages could end up all over the world. You'd be surprised how many people don't know what a boreal forest or a muskeg looks like.

Here is what the back of this postcard says:

LOCAL KNOWLEDGE SERIES:
WE VALUE OUR HOMELAND

Boreal forests (poplar, fir, spruce) and muskeg swamps filled with bulrushes or moss are common in northern Canada. They are an important part of the local way of life for our Little Red River Cree Nation. This spring landscape is near our community of John D'or Prairie, Alberta, Canada.

WHAT IS IMPORTANT FOR PEOPLE TO KNOW AROUND HERE?

Christina Mader © 1996



"#9—Round Dance"

What is important in this picture is that people are getting together to honour those who went before. It is a memorial gathering, and some of the ancestors came and danced with us here in this hall. Their spirits danced with those people who held their photographs. Many more spirits were outside. Remember how the northern lights danced that night?

Another thing in this picture that is important is how everyone is equal and connected. The singers stand in the middle and drum. People dance around them. The dancers hold hands and go around and around the circle of drummers. They're not off dancing alone. With every step they take, the group gets stronger. This vision belongs to everybody in John D'or Prairie. Every single person in this hall has an important part in it. People come together and enjoy themselves. Look at their faces! Are the drummers happy that people are dancing? Are the dancers happy that people are drumming? One part of happiness is in giving pleasure to others. Another part is in the pleasure of dancing and drumming and singing for yourself.

I need to tell you something else about this picture. People from my culture don't like it very much. They say it doesn't show the faces, just backs, they say. "You should stand right in the middle of the singers to take your photograph," they say. That's when I talk about the things I've learned in John D'or. Like how people around here find pleasure in belonging to a group. And how local people do this without a need to prove it. Participating as a visitor is more important than going home with a photograph of faces. That's what I say to people who don't like this picture.

WHAT IS IMPORTANT FOR PEOPLE TO KNOW AROUND HERE?

Christina Mader © 1996



"#10—The Woman Who Passed Away"

The important thing in this picture is how this Elder is choosing to carry on the old ways. And how she's passing on those ways to the younger generation. She carries on the culture by living it. Sure, she has modern tools like a chainsaw, Sunlight soap, a washing machine, and a dryer. Still, she likes the smell of sun-dried clothes. Sure, she has propane. It saves firewood. That doesn't make her any less a Cree than earlier ancestors!

In this picture you'll notice the crocheted blankets, the pole that holds up the laundry, the moosehides. But it's what's just off the edges of this picture that I want to talk about.

It's her hide scraps. Those long, thin ribbons of scraps that she put high up in a tree! That's so that the dogs don't get them. That's according to the law that Moose has. It's a way of showing respect to the kill. She took the piece that's cut away when the hide is fleshed and the hair is scraped off. She put it away safely. Some people don't do that, but maybe they will again. Out of respect to Moose. Out of reverence to this Elder.

She lived in a way that showed what is important for people to know around here. I asked if I could take her picture for you. She said yes.

WHAT IS IMPORTANT FOR PEOPLE TO KNOW AROUND HERE?

Christina Mader © 1996

These words replace the missing photograph of rosehips on a snowy bush. The picture that ought to be here evokes the strongest emotional response of any of the 12. Colours, tone, and textures appear the way the North does to those who love her. They show the beauty of winter while they call up memories of summer. But the photograph does not translate well into black and white. Some things are like that, so I left it out.

"#11—Ogineebush In Winter"

I am thrilled with all the rosehips around her. Some stay on the bushes until spring! On the coast where I'm from, they fall off in the winter rains. The reason that I am so happy with all these oginiak is that I pick them every year after the first frost. I lay them out to dry. Now and then I stir them. When they are very hard—as hard as little stones—I put them in the blender and grind them up. The blender part I invented myself. The rest I learned from my mother, from my aunt, from my granny. For generations the women in my family have done this. They go out into the woods and into the fields in the Black Forest in Germany. They pick rosehips. I grew up learning to make them into tea. Each fall I do that. And all year long I drink some.

Oginiak grow all over the world, and I've made them into tea in many countries. They are almost 100% vitamin C. And vitamin C keeps away colds.

When I go visiting in John D'or, I sometimes take a thermos of it with me. I like to offer it to people. It tastes good. And it's good medicine.

Marie Nanooch says that she knows that tea. A long time ago they used to do that, make tea from those berries. She says that oginee has another name. She chuckles with love and mischief whenever she gives it to me. The name is not entirely flattering, but it sure bursts with laughter. It is entirely accurate. It stays stuck there in my teacups and on me.

WHAT IS IMPORTANT FOR PEOPLE TO KNOW AROUND HERE?

Christina Mader © 1996



"#12—1995 JDP Community Feast"

This is an Elder's birthday party. The important thing to know about this picture is that young and old came to surprise her. More than a hundred people feasted and danced for her!

And while they were doing that, they were showing the younger ones what to do. Maybe the kids don't look like they're paying attention. But they'll remember. Here's why. Number one, it is an important event. Number two, they know that! Number three, they will get other chances to pick up what they may have missed. Again and again relatives will take them to gatherings where they can learn by doing. By being. By watching. By listening. And if some kids become a nuisance, the M.C. will correct them in public. "You kids dance! Don't run around!" he'll holler.

Sure, babies are just sleeping. But right there in public, older ones learn to make a fuss over them. Little ones might play on the floor with paper plates. A year later they'll get coffee for their *kohkom.* Or tea for a visitor. When they're bigger, they'll stack chairs. Sell 50:50 tickets. A few teenagers will come back the next day to clean up. A few will join the drum group.

It's things like these that children learn at feasts. Oh, I know, not *all* children learn these things. And not every time. But all in all it will be good enough to pass on what's needed. That's just one other way that what is important for people to know around here will be kept going.

It is time to stop writing research. Trinh's (1989) fragments of/in life that I touched in this traditional Bush Cree reserve are now as complete as we will make them. By letting me move in their Giving Circle, the community has shared with me their appreciation for local knowledge and the ordinary. Their gift is casual, and it is understated. My relations with Sr. Bernadette, Nelly Nanooch, The Woman Who Passed Away, Cow Moose, Marie Nanooch, and Agnes Moberly let me understand reverence for the ordinary. It's such a casual way of holding the world in a grain of sand and eternity in an hour. Reverence for the ordinary lets me feel it in another culture. But why talk about what everybody knows? I did put what everybody in John D'or knows on a hand-out for the school staff. I'd hoped it would entice newcomers to come to the Memorial Dance and Giveaway. A handful did. Two of them were directed to do so by the Education Board. They came to accept our pictures on the Board's behalf. Remember, we were competing with a hockey tournament and bingo. The entire board went there to play or watch. I'll explain this point in a moment.

REVERENCE FOR THE ORDINARY: HANDOUT

TITLE: What Is Important for People to Know Around Here? Reverence for the Ordinary.

PHOTOGRAPHY & RESEARCH: Christina Mader, Edmonton.

JOHN D'OR PRAIRIE RESEARCHERS: Agnes Moberly, Sister Bernadette, Marie Nanooch, Nelly Nanooch. The Woman Who Passed Away did so last summer. From her I learn about the spirit world. Cow Moose represents learning from nature directly. She gave herself as food to the feast.

QUESTIONS: What is important for people to know around here? How can that knowledge help the ongoing education of classroom teachers?

FINDINGS: In John D'or community, members believe that the ordinary things that happen every day are very important. That is what I mean by *local knowledge.* It is important to you that your children graduate from school and get a modern education. But you value the ordinary things that people did a long time ago too. You want young people to learn from those times and remember those stories and those customs. Some change; some stay the same. I pay close attention to those ordinary things. I participate in some of the events in your community. To get a university degree, I write a book about them. That helps me understand what you think is important. And knowing those things will help improve teacher education programs. They will help teachers connect what happens in local homes to what happens in John D'or School.

SLIDE SHOW: Sometime soon we will share what we learned with the school staff. It will be a slide show, and you are all invited. Please come!

GIVEAWAY: The 12 photographs that we are giving away tonight belong to the whole community. They show in pictures what I am writing about in my book. We are asking the people who get them to hang them up in your public buildings. Please don't take them home!

Band Office—Chief
School—School Board chair
Nursing Station—Health Board chair
Church—Sister
Kayas Centre—Director

We also made postcards that show what is important to know around here. Tonight everybody will get one each. The chair of the Church Committee will get the rest to use as fund-raiser.

50:50 & RAFFLE: Five photographs will be available tonight to help pay for some of our expenses. Please buy lots of tickets! 50% of the money is for the drummers. The muskeg picture will be raffled off in two or three months. All of those proceeds will help pay for some of my book expenses.

MERCI:[2] I love working with you. Thank you for giving me my new degree. Thank you to everyone who helped me learn. And Cow Moose too.

---

[2]There is no Cree word for *thank you.* People speaking Cree use the French word merci.

Helping to sponsor a celebration scheduled at the same time as a hockey tournament and bingo lets me generate new connections.

Even if we "claimed" February 3rd before the tournament organisers claimed it (I don't know if we were first or not, because being first in John D'or Prairie is not attached to any privilege), when God dropped the puck, it bounced to the skaters. That meant that two drum groups—whose members are also with the health centre and the school board—re-named themselves a hockey team. So you see, there never was a contest after all.

Those of us who came to the Memorial Dance feasted, prayed, and danced. We took part in ceremonies so that on-reserve living could unfold as it traditionally had. "Those ceremonies," they said, "could not have been postponed again." There were some which took place outside the building that I heard about and others that I did not hear about. Everybody knew that the hockey tournament could not be postponed either. The hockey players chose hockey. By skating hard, they added to the health of John D'or Prairie. The weekend was not a contest between realms. Physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional needs were met in different ways. What this incident points out is that in a small community the same people perform many different public tasks. It is always hard to figure out what events to support when they overlap.

To touch another insight, I remember first one and then another story that I hadn't noticed before. The first from two years ago shows just how long it sometimes takes to make connections.

Can I Smoke Your Tobacco Now?

> Nelly and I had stopped our work at midday. My arms ached from the moosehide yanking and scraping. We heated my chili. Nelly was going to make bannock but hadn't. "Toast?" she asked. I nodded. We talked about this and that. Without warning, she dropped a hint so large I couldn't swallow it all in one gulp. Nelly was standing at her sink and had her back to me, so I couldn't even read her face for clues. She casually asked, "Can I smoke your tobacco now?" She might have said it twice. Her first

words didn't register. I didn't know what to say, so I said nothing. I was so surprised. I looked at my questions. Why was Nelly asking me? What was Nelly asking me? Surely she didn't think that I knew the protocol for what she had to do with the tobacco I gave her? I barely knew enough to do what elders told me to do. They said, "Offer it when you ask for her help." Didn't Nelly know? Why was she asking *me?* I was very busy being worried and wondering about an answer. It must have shown on my face. That's when Nelly added, "My mother told me you're not supposed to smoke the tobacco until you did what you got it for."

Oh. (N. Nanooch, personal communication, 94-06-17)

She had assumed that I knew that. The "Oh" didn't reach me until a year and a half after Nelly said what her mother told her. The *oh* didn't reach me until a year after Sr. Bernadette commented on my confusion. I don't know how I could have missed Nelly's words. But I did. The conversation stayed with me, though, until I'd read about Heath's (1982) school questions. However, mine was not a school question. At the start of our work I had asked Nelly to tell me an important story. Even at the time I knew her story would unwind in the doing of it—in this case, making moosehide. I just needed time to figure out the meaning of what we did together. I am glad that that day Cow Moose offered me the wisdom in her gut. She nudged me to say, "Yes, it's all right to smoke it." Now I'm not so sure.

I had no idea it would take me another six months to figure out that it isn't the "good enough" moosehide that is important; it is what the moosehide *does.* The moosehide, as Basso (1979) says, lets people soften it. It is while people make moosehide that they connect with traditions which started before time. It is also what the moosehide *is* that is important. The moosehide is local knowledge that gets skinned and washed and twisted and smoked into all the ordinary pores that a moosehide has. And in all that pulling and scraping and so on that the people do, they pick up local knowledge directly from Moose through the pores of their own skin. One thing I learned through my pores is that pleasure and work are one and the same. Pleasure/work. Work/play.

I like this. This slowly putting a dissertation together.

I knew that! Just testing! And now that I am done, I can't resist joking with Nelly: Would the insight in this story have come faster had I done those seven other hides that Nelly talked about? In that case, would Nelly have needed to give me tobacco to help her? Or should I have given her some more tobacco? And what about Sr. Bernadette? Her comment to me as Elder quoted in the Seven-Day Wonder story and in the title of this story is what brought this Giving Circle to this round. Like the hockey players and board members, Sister too wears many hats besides that of a nun. Elder is one of them. As soon as I write these words, I know what I want to do. I want to honour Sr. Bernadette with tobacco in the manner of the Bush Cree culture where her home is. I know the Creator would approve.

> Why? Because when everyone gets pulled over to the other side, skin colour is one of the things that's left behind. It's not important.

In this second of my stories regarding the length of time that it takes to make connections, the insight hits me after less than a week of thinking. The insight touches me face-to-face when I review all the home-to-school connections in my dissertation. (It is "our research," but "my dissertation.") With computer edit commands, it is easy to move all insights into one document, and I do so. It is 23 pages long—104 different connections. My mind boggles. I begin to edit. Starting at connection #1, I take out what parts I can and still have sensible points. It is a drudge job. I quit at connection #74, worn out and in a foul mood. The document is shorter by one page. I have to think about this with creativity. A day or two later I abandon the project. I am very sure why. What I have done is removed the stories and left crisp, sensible points. I've taken away the context. Does the world need another handbook for how to work with Native children? Good lists like that already exist (Brant, 1990; More, 1987). They are the distillation of their authors' years of experience with First Nations students. But the uninitiated find them of questionable value. Why? Because the stories are not there.

Full of excitement, I give this insight to the professor who gave me the idea for the list in the first place. Dr. Stan Wilson nods thoughtfully at what we have both learned. Readers who have their own on-reserve stories will find such lists meaningful. Those who don't, well, they don't find them much help. As an example I offer the insightful work of Clare Brant (1990), who says:

> The individual and group survival of this continent's aboriginal Plains, Bush, and Woodlands people required harmonious interpersonal relationships and cooperation among members of a group. It was not possible for an individual to survive alone in the harsh natural environment but, in order to survive as a group, individuals, living cheek by jowl throughout their lives, had to be continuously cooperative and friendly. (p. 535)

Brant goes on to offer eight ethical principals and traditional Native rules of behaviour which facilitate friendly relations. He says, when taken together, they result in suppressing conflict. The eight are:

Non-interference
Non-competitiveness
Emotional restraint
Native concept of time
Native attitude toward gratitude and approval
Native protocol
Teaching by modelling instead of behaviour modification

When I read his list, I remember what my friend told me about Safeway Hunters: Hunters who know about safe and successful hunting know these rules because they know their stories. Agnes lives hunting without much talk about it. Marie says her stories are for mothers who have hunters—and both men and women hunt. The Woman Who Passed Away dances her hunter stories in spirit and in northern lights. Sr. Bernadette shares her hunting stories in words. And me, I translate what I now own about making moosehide into this dissertation and apply what I now own to prepare for a life after graduation. I create simulation workshops where I show students and teachers what I now know about re-connecting with long ago educative traditions.

This coming winter Agnes will be at one of those workshops. She says that she's coming for sure. She'll bring some people with her. She thinks that she'll like my way of sharing research with the teachers. She will be co-facilitator. We are booked to do three half-day sessions at a conference that she annually attends. Here is what will happen:

Experiential Education From A Traditional Cree Reserve (Workshop Proposal)

> This is an interactive workshop. Through mini-lectures, arranging and re-arranging furniture, storytelling, photography, dancing, and drumming, we will examine the "still curriculum." The still curriculum is the curriculum which quietly influences all educators and students, whether we attend mainstream school or work in on-reserve communities. The classroom where we meet, a

simulated Bush Cree round dance, and a giveaway will form the basis of this experiential educative event.

Participants will wish to contribute stories from their own experiences. In addition, our group will practice ways of making personal connections. These connections will highlight traditional ways of educating that can be found in many on-reserve homes. Those same connections will be tied to contemporary teaching strategies found in schools and university teacher-education programs.

Everyone who comes will be exposed to a strong sense of reverence for ordinary practices of northern Bush Cree people. We will see how the culture is passed on through casual, day-to-day activities.

I also begin writing about a Giving Circle as a guiding image for administrators. It is my way of uniting what has become important for me as mainstream educator. It is another way of taking care of what I now own. That I am doing so okay and properly, is validated when (a) someone hires me to teach education undergraduate students what I am so passionate about, and (b) I receive the following letter on university stationery just prior to my move back to BC. There, I will be living in a small house in a quiet apple orchard.

Dear Christina:

I am writing to thank you, formally, for your presentation to my class in the Sociology of the Family at our university earlier this month. It was a delightful as well as thought-provoking workshop, and I am really sorry that you are moving to British Columbia. It is a real loss for Alberta!

The students referred to that class, especially the dance and the music, in their mid-term examination and raised it in discussions on socialisation and on ethnicity and its impacts. It broadened their perspective and challenged their ideas about what and how we learn, and I don't think they will forget you for a long while! As well, I was overjoyed to see the impact that your workshop had on the two Native students in the class. Their confidence increased enormously, and one scored over 90% on her term paper. These are benefits that we don't often get to tie so directly to a class event.

Once again, my thanks and appreciation for the considerable amount of time and energy which you must have put into your preparation for this workshop.

Yours sincerely,

(signed)

Instructor

Yes. What emerges as significant is that on any ordinary day, local knowledge lets every storyteller understand in her own way how she means for the medium to become the message in each generation. The medium, of course, is she herself. The message too.

This book is filled with examples that show exactly how Native students such as the two mentioned in the letter learn. Do you "get it" if I take away the letter and the story? Did my Shuswap student? Do I? Is that why so much prescriptive work sits on a shelf? Because it doesn't engage the learner the way a story does? Is that it?

Marie's life on the trapline asks non-verbally, Without stories, are daily tasks not simply chores? Agnes' life story as T.A. lives the question, Are stories from work not a source of satisfaction and pleasure?

"We want to get to know you too" was how Agnes first hinted at reciprocity. This research study shows that here is reverence for the ordinary when people freely give and take fragments of/in each other's lives.

In his *Dancing With a Ghost*, Ross (1992) credits Brant (1990). But what makes Ross' book memorable is that Ross adds stories that expand Brant's eight compact principles. The principles come alive through story. *Ceremony* and *Woman Native Other* also illustrate Brant's compact principles. So no. No prescriptive 104 connections! No mainstream self-help medicine given to you for how to work with Native students. Instead, I repeat my invitation to educators to set up your own face-to-face relationships. But I do give with it this one straightforward hint. It came to me casually tucked amidst hundreds of experiences with friends who traditionally travel by canoe: Allow plenty of unstructured time and open space in your new relationships. Organic things grow slowly. Deep respect mingled with affection for other ways of doing things takes time to unfold. I know that my spirits don't like to be rushed into

noticing heaven in wild flowers. I can only slowly learn how Lawrence Creek can swallow pain. Our research shows that going slowly enough to let the right timespace happen works. Marie knows from her annual "Fall Walk To The Cabin" that the pleasure is in the doing.

Not that the doing is always easy! Making up a research story in which the researcher, the one researched, *and* researching are a single concept *as well as* letting such a story unfold is not easy. Yes. No! It certainly isn't very easy to *tell* a story in a way that also *is* the story and at the same time lets it *become* the storyteller.

But then, I'm in charge of celebrations! And I like this. This being open to hints coming from a canoe. And the reciprocity I like as well. I like this inquiry into the very still curriculum of local knowledge. I like the sparkles of reverence that let our work become one ordinary story.



"Letting Knowledge Come"

References

It is important in my work to know whether an author is male or female. I therefore deviate from APA convention, which uses initials only, and write out first names.

Akan, Linda. (1992). Walking and talking: A Salteaux Elder's view of Native education. *Canadian Journal of Native Education, 19*(2), 191-214.

Allen, Paula Gunn. (1986). *The sacred hoop: Recovering the feminine in American Indian traditions* (rev. ed.). Boston: Beacon Press.

Aoki, Ted. (1993). Legitimating lived curriculum: Towards a curricular landscape of multiplicity. *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision, 8*(3), 255-268.

Appiah, Kwame Anthony. (1992). *In my father's house.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Armstrong, Scott J. (1978). *Long-range forecasting: From crystal ball to computer.* Toronto: Wiley.

Aubry, Jack. (1996, February 2). Native justice system proposed. *Edmonton Journal,* p. A1.

Axelrod, Robert. (1984). *The evolution of cooperation.* New York: Basic Books.

Balcom, Susan. (1996, January 13). Back-to-basics high school sought in Surrey. *Vancouver Sun,* pp. A1, A14.

Barlow, Maude; & Robertson, Heather-Jane. (1994). *Class warfare: The assault on Canada's schools.* Toronto: Key Porter.

Barone, Thomas. (1989). Ways of being at risk: The case of Billy Charles Barnett. *Phi Delta Kappan, 71*(2), 147-151.

Barrett, Tom. (1995, January 21). No parole for law prof who murdered his wife. *Edmonton Journal,* p. B3.

Basso, Keith H. (1979). *Portraits of "The Whiteman": Linguistic play and cultural symbols among the Western Apache.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Baylor, Byrd; & Parnall, Peter. (1986). *I'm in charge of celebrations.* New York: Scribner's Sons.

Becker, Howard. (1979). Preface. In John Wagner (Ed.), *Images of information: Still photography in the social sciences* (pp. 7-8). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Belenky, Mary F.; Clinchy, Blythe M.; Goldberger, Nancy R.; & Tarule, Jill M. (1986). *Women's ways of knowing: The development of self, voice, and mind.* New York: Basic Books.

Boice, Judith. (1992). *Mother Earth: Through the eyes of women photographers and writers.* San Francisco: Sierra Club.

Brant, Clare C. (1990). Native ethics and rules of behaviour. *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry, 35*(6), 534-539.

Bry, Adelaide, & Bair, Marjorie. (1976). *Visualization: Directing the movies of your mind.* New York: Barnes & Noble.

Bull, Linda. (1991). Indian residential schooling: The Native perspective. *Canadian Journal of Native Education, 18*(1; supplement), 1-63.

Campus Security Services. (1996, July/August). Monthly statistics. *Campus Watch.* Edmonton, AB: University of Alberta, Campus Security Services.

Carter, Kathy. (1993). The place of story in the study of teaching and teacher education. *Educational Researcher, 22*(2), 5-12.

Castaneda, Carlos. (1968). *The teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui way of knowledge.* New York: Pocket Book.

Chamberlin, Chuck (Ed.). (1994). *Don't tell us it can't be done: Alternative classrooms in Canada and abroad* (Monograph Series, No. 15). Toronto: Our schools/our selves.

Chumak, Sebastian (Ed.). (1983). *The Stonies of Alberta.* Calgary: Alberta Foundation.

Clandinin, D. Jean; & Connelly, Michael F. (1994). Personal experience method. In Norman Denzin & Yvonna Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research methods* (pp. 413-427). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Connelly, Michael F.; & Clandinin, D. Jean. (1990). Stories of experience and narrative inquiry. *Educational Researcher, 19*(5), 2-14.

Couture, Joseph. (1991). The role of Native Elders: Emergent issues. In John W. Friesen (Ed.), *The cultural maze: Complex questions on Native destiny in western Canada* (pp. 201-217). Calgary, AB: Detselig Enterprise.

Cruikshank, Julie. (1988). Myth and tradition as narrative framework: Oral histories from northern Canada. *International Journal of Oral History, 9*(3), 198-214.

Cruikshank, Julie. (1990). *Life lived like a story: Life stories of three Yukon Native Elders.* Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press.

Danylchuk, Jack. (1996, January 13). Native wins fight to open first reserve liquor store. *Edmonton Journal,* pp. A1, A10.

Deloria, Ella Cara. (1988). *Waterlily.* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Dewey, John. (1938). *Experience & education.* New York: Macmillan.

Diaries. (1982-1996). Unpublished diaries of Christina Mader.

Dosdall, Emery. (1995, October). A+ for student achievement! *Edmonton Public Schools District Report,* p. 1.

Eaton, Evelyn. (1978). *I send a voice.* Wheaton, IL: Quest.

Editorial. (1995, October 17). *Edmonton Journal,* p. A10.

Eisner, Elliot W. (1988). The primacy of experience and the politics of method. *Educational Researcher, 20,* 15-20.

Elliot, Susan; Odynak, Dave; & Krahn, Harvey. (1992). *A survey of unwanted sexual experiences among University of Alberta students.* Edmonton: University of Alberta Council on Student Life.

Ellis, Julia. (1995). Critical pedagogy in elementary classrooms: Approaches from creative problem solving. *Analytic Teaching, 16*(1), 27-38.

Erickson, Frederick, & Mohatt, Gerald. (1982). Cultural organization of participation structures in two classrooms of Indian students. In George Spindler (Ed.), *Doing the ethnography of schooling* (pp. 132-174). Toronto: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston.

Fine, Michelle. (1987). Silencing in public schools. *Language Arts, 64*(2), 157-174.

Freire, Paulo. (1993). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (rev. ed.). New York: Continuum.

Freire, Paulo; & Macedo, Donaldo P. (1995). A dialogue: Culture, language, and race. *Harvard Educational Review, 65*(3), 377-402.

Gautreau, Bernadette; Coderre, Madeline; & Allison, Patricia. (1976). *I can: Integrated curriculum adapted for the North.* Peace River, AB: Northlands School Division.

Geertz, Clifford. (1983). *Local knowledge: Further essays in interpretive anthropology.* New York: Basic Books.

Giroux, Henry A.; Penna, Anthony N.; & Pinar, William F. (1981). Introduction and overview of the curriculum field. In Henry A. Giroux, Anthony N. Penna, & William F. Pinar (Eds.), *Curriculum and instruction* (pp. 1-9). Berkeley, CA: McCutchan.

Gleik, James. (1987). *Chaos.* New York: Penguin.

Griffin, David. (1992). Introduction to SUNY series in constructive postmodern thought. In David W. Orr (Ed.), *Ecological literacy: Education and the transition to a postmodern world* (pp. iii-xiii). Albany: State University of New York Press.

Hampton, Eber. (1993). Toward a redefinition of American Indian/Alaska Native education. *Canadian Journal of Native Education, 20*(2), 261-311.

Heath, Shirley Brice. (1982). Questioning at home and at school: A comparative study. In George Spindler (Ed.), *Doing the ethnography of schooling* (pp. 102-131). San Francisco: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.

Heilbrun, Carolyn G. (1988). *Writing a woman's life.* New York: Ballantine.

Heshusius, Lous. (1994). Freeing ourselves from subjectivity: Managing subjectivity or turning toward a participatory mode of consciousness? *Educational Researcher, 23*(3), 15-22.

Hollingsworth, Sandra; Dybdahl, Mary; & Minarik, Leslie Turner. (1993). The importance of relational knowing in learning to teach. *Curriculum Inquiry, 23*(1), 5-35.

hooks, bell. (1994). *Teaching to transgress: Education as the practice of freedom.* New York: Routledge.

Interview with Assistant Professor D. McCormick. (1996, February). *Kahtou,* pp. 10-11.

Isozaki, Arata. ([1979?]). *MA space-time in Japan.* New York: Cooper-Hewitt Museum of Decorative Arts and Design, Smithsonian Institution.

Kalweit, Holger. (1992). *Shamans, healers, and medicine men* (Michael H. Kohn, Trans.). Boston: Shambala.

Kaniel, Shlomo; & Feuerstein, Reuven. (1989). Special needs of children with learning difficulties. *Oxford Review of Education, 15*(2), 165-179.

Kayper-Mensah, Albert. (1976). *Sank)fa: Adinkra poems.* Tema, Ghana: Ghana Publishing.

Keller, Evelyn Fox. (1983). *A feeling for the organism: The life and work of Barbara McClintock.* New York: W. H. Freeman.

Kellerman, Dana F. (Ed.). (1975). *New Webster's dictionary of the English language* (college ed.). New York: Consolidated Book.

Kirby, Sandra; & McKenna, Kate. (1989). *Experience, research, social change: Methods from the margins.* Toronto: Garamond Press.

Knudtson, Peter; & Suzuki, David. (1992). *Wisdom of the Elders.* Toronto: Stoddart.

Laboucan, Charity. (1995, March). Abuse. *Womanspace News,* pp. 4-5.

Leavitt, Robert M. (1991). Language and cultural content in Native education. *The Canadian Modern Language Review, 47*(2), 266-279.

Le Guin, Ursula K. (1989). *Dancing at the edge of the world.* New York: Harper & Row.

Lightning, Walter. (1992). *Compassionate mind: Implications of a text written by Elder Louis Sunchild.* Unpublished master's thesis, University of Alberta, Edmonton.

Mader, Christina. (1980). *Internship at Exxon Company USA.* Unpublished master's project, Houston, TX: University of Houston.

Mader, Christina. (1993, June). *Delighting in the ordinary: A slide show.* Presented at Maskwachees Cultural College, Hobbema, AB.

Mader, Christina. (1994). *Local knowledge from the stories of traditional educators.* Unpublished dissertation proposal, Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, University of Alberta, Edmonton.

Mager, Robert F. (1975). *Preparing instructional objectives* (2nd ed.). Belmont, CA: Fearon Pitman.

Maracle, Lee. (1990). *Bobbi Lee: Indian rebel.* Toronto: Women's Press.

Markley, O. Walter. (1974). *Changing images of man* (Policy Research Report 4) (rev. ed.). Dayton, OH: Charles Kettering Foundation.

McIntosh, Peggy. (1992, January/February). White privilege: Unpacking the invisible knapsack. *Creation Spirituality,* pp. 33-35, 53.

McLuhan, Marshall; & Fiore, Quentin. (1967). *The medium is the massage: An inventory of effects.* Toronto: Bantam.

McMaster, Gerald; & Martin, Lee-Ann (Eds.). (1992). *Indigena: Contemporary Native perspectives.* Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre.

Meili, Diane. (1991). *Those who know: Profile of Alberta's Native Elders.* Edmonton: NeWest.

Moon, Peter. (1995, July 20). Natives find renewal in Manitoba prison. *Globe and Mail,* pp. A1, A4.

More, Arthur J. (1987). Native Indian learning styles: A review for researchers and teachers. *Journal of American Indian Education, 27*(1), 17-29.

Mussell, Bill. (1993). First Nations Elders as resource persons/educators. Unpublished paper, Salishan Institute, Chilliwack, BC.

National Film Board of Canada. (1990). *Behind the veil: Nuns.* Montreal, PQ.

Naylor, Gloria. (1988). *Mama Day.* New York: Tickner & Fields.

Noddings, Nel. (1984). *Caring.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Noddings, Nel. (1986). Fidelity in teaching, teacher education, and research for teaching. *Harvard Educational Review, 56*(4), 496-510.

Norman, Howard A. (1976). *The wishing bone cycle: Narrative poems from the Swampy Cree Indians.* New York: Stonehill.

O'Brien, William E.; & Flora, Cornelia Butler. (1992). *Agriculture and human values, 9*(2), 97-101.

Ornstein, Robert E. (1977). *The psychology of consciousness* (rev. ed.). Chicago: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Patterson, Freeman. (1986). *Photography for the joy of it.* Toronto: Key Porter Books.

Penner, Keith. (1983, October). *Indian self-government: Report of the Special Committee, House of Commons.* Ottawa, ON: Supply and Services.

Philips, Susan Urmston. (1983). *The invisible culture: Communication in classroom and community on the Warm Springs Indian Reservation.* London, UK: Longman.

Pillwax, Cora Weber. (1992). *Native education: Whose vision, whose reality.* Unpublished master's thesis, University of Alberta, Edmonton.

Pinder, Leslie Hall. (1991). *The carriers of no: After the land claims trial.* Vancouver: Lazara Press.

Polanyi, Michael. (1958). *Personal knowledge: Towards a post-critical philosophy.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Porteous, Douglas J. (1990). *Landscapes of the mind: Worlds of sense and metaphor.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Raffan, James. (1992). *Frontier, homeland, and sacred space: A collaborative investigation into cross-cultural perceptions of place in the Thelon Game Sanctuary, Northwest Territories.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Queen's University, Kingston, ON.

Reflections. (1994-1996). Unpublished journals of Christina Mader [computer entries].

Ridington, Robin. (1990). *Little bit know something: Stories in a language of anthropology.* Iowa City: University of Iowa Press.

Rius. (1970). *Cuba for beginners.* London, UK: Expression.

Rosen, Harold. (1986). The importance of story. *Language Arts, 63*(3), 226-237.

Ross, Rupert. (1992). *Dancing with a ghost: Exploring Indian reality.* Markham, ON: Reed Books.

Rothenberg, Jerome. (1968). *Technicians of the sacred* (rev. ed.). Berkeley: University of California Press.

Schroeder, Debra. (1996). *Reclaiming our teaching lives: The curriculum of middle space.* Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Alberta, Edmonton.

Schwendt, Herbert; Schwendt, Elke; & Blümke, Martin. (1984). *Masken und maskenschnitzer der Schwäbischen-alemannischen Fasnacht [Masks and mask carvers in the Swabian-alemanic Fasnacht].* Stuttgart: Kommissionsverlag Konrad Theiss.

Sewall, Ian (Ed.). (1981). *Kayas: The people.* Edmonton, AB: Little Red River Reading Society.

Sheppard, Janice R. (1983). *The history and values of a northern Athapaskan Indian village.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Ann Arbor, MI.

Shkilnyk, Anastasia M. (1985). *A poison stronger than love.* London: Yale University Press.

Silko, Leslie Marmon. (1977). *Ceremony.* Markham, ON: Penguin.

Simon, Steve. (1995). *Healing waters: The pilgrimage to Lac Ste. Anne.* Edmonton: University of Alberta Press.

Sneath, Paul. (1995, July 20). Penitentiary ceremonies help aboriginals. *The Globe and Mail,* p. A4.

Snyder, Gary. (1990). *The practice of the wild: Essays by Gary Snyder.* Berkeley, CA: North Point Press.

Spradley, James. (1980). *Participant observation.* New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston.

Statistics Canada. (1991). *Aboriginal People's survey: Community profile: John D'Or Prairie 145 Reserve,* pp. 1.1-1.3

Storm, Hyemayohsts. (1972). *Seven arrows.* New York: Harper and Row.

Toelken, Barre. (1979). *The dynamics of folklore.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Trinh, T. Minh-ha. (1989). *Woman Native other.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Trinh, T. Minh-ha. (1991). *When the moon waxes red: Representation, gender, and cultural politics.* New York: Routledge.

Trinh, T. Minh-ha. (1992). *Framer framed.* New York: Routledge.

Twumasi, P. A. (1975). *Medical systems in Ghana: A study in medical sociology.* Legon: Ghana.

Urion, Carl. (1991). Changing academic discourse about Native education: Using two pairs of eyes. *Canadian Journal of Native Education, 18*(1), 1-9.

Villoldo, Alberto; & Jendresen, Erik. (1990). *The four winds: A shaman's odyssey into the Amazon.* San Francisco: Harper.

Wilson, Shawn. (1995). *Gwich'in Native Elders: Not just knowledge, but a way of looking at the world.* Fairbanks: Alaska Native Knowledge Network.

Young, David; Ingram, Grant; & Swartz, Lise. (1989). *Cry of the eagle: Encounters with a Cree healer.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

94-05-29 JOHN D'OR PRAIRIE

Dear parents

The school board and the band council has given their support to myself, Christina Mader to do research in your community and school. Three times I have made visits to the area and took photographs. But I need your permission *in writing* to use these pictures in my studies. Please say whether or not you are willing to do this. And return this page to me at the school. If you have any questions, please call me at 759-2016.

Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely

Christina Mader

and aunt

This will certify that I give permission for Christina Mader to use my photograph. And/or to use those of my children in her research study. Her study is about contemporary teacher education and traditional education. She is investigating local knowledge that is found in the stories that traditional educators tell about their experiences.

I understand that the pictures that she takes will be used in her thesis, in slide shows and possibly published articles related to that work.

I understand that the community of John D'Or Prairie will have an opportunity to see that slide show. If she can get funding, she will leave copies of the prints and a copy of her slide show with the board of education.

Name: NELLY NANOOCH
Signature: Nelly Nanooch
Date: 94-07-01 Relationship to child or children: MOTHER

Names of children & their signatures
DOYLE NANOOCH
Doyle Nanooch
DECEASED AUNT VERONIQUE NATSIKASSUS

I do not wish my picture to be used
I do not wish my child's or children's picture to be used

94-06-15

John D'Or Prairie

Signing my name below means that I am an informed and voluntary participant in Christina Mader's research study. It is about contemporary teacher education and traditional Native education. We will be looking at the local knowledge found in the stories that traditional educators tell about their experiences. I will tell her things that I believe are important for our young people to know. And for their parents and for their teachers.

The study has been explained to me and I understand it. I agree/do not agree to taped conversations and I agree to written responses to them. I understand that I can withdraw at any time. I also understand that a public document, a thesis, and possibly published articles will result from the work. I want my true name to be used in this study.

The final thesis will be available to me through the local school board.

Name: Nelly Nanooch
Signature: Nelly Nanooch
Date: June 15th 1994

94-06-15

John D'Or Prairie

Signing my name below means that I am an informed and voluntary participant in Christina Mader's research study. It is about contemporary teacher education and traditional Native education. We will be looking at the local knowledge found in the stories that traditional educators tell about their experiences. I will tell her things that I believe are important for our young people to know. And for their parents and for their teachers.

The study has been explained to me and I understand it. I agree/do not agree to taped conversations and I agree to written responses to them. I understand that I can withdraw at any time. I also understand that a public document, a thesis, and possibly published articles will result from the work. I want my true name to be used in this study.

The final thesis will be available to me through the local school board.

Name: J Bernadette Hautecoeur csch
Signature:
Date: June 17, 1994

Box 608
Ft. Vermilion Ab
T0H 1N0

94-06-15

John D'Or Prairie

Signing my name below means that I am an informed and voluntary participant in Christina Mader's research study. It is about contemporary teacher education and traditional Native education. We will be looking at the local knowledge found in the stories that traditional educators tell about their experiences. I will tell her things that I believe are important for our young people to know. And for their parents and for their teachers.

The study has been explained to me and I understand it. I agree/~~do not agree to taped~~ conversations and I agree to written responses to them. I understand that I can withdraw at any time. I also understand that a public document, a thesis, and possibly published articles will result from the work. I want my true name to be used in this study.

The final thesis will be available to me through the local school board.

Name:
Signature: Kelly Navarro
Date: 94-07-01

Box 745
Ft. Vermilion Ab
T0H 1N0

94-06-15

John D'Or Prairie

Signing my name below means that I am an informed and voluntary participant in Christina Mader's research study. It is about contemporary teacher education and traditional Native education. We will be looking at the local knowledge found in the stories that traditional educators tell about their experiences. I will tell her things that I believe are important for our young people to know. And for their parents and for their teachers.

The study has been explained to me and I understand it. I agree/do not agree to taped conversations and I agree to written responses to them. I understand that I can withdraw at any time. I also understand that a public document, a thesis, and possibly published articles will result from the work. I want my true name to be used in this study.

The final thesis will be available to me through the local school board.

Name: Agnes Mobarly
Signature: Agnes Mobarly
Date: June 16 1994

Box 1246
High Level Alb
T0H 1Z0

94-06-15

John D'Or Prairie

Signing my name below means that I am an informed and voluntary participant in Christina Mader's research study. It is about contemporary teacher education and traditional Native education. We will be looking at the local knowledge found in the stories that traditional educators tell about their experiences. I will tell her things that I believe are important for our young people to know. And for their parents and for their teachers.

The study has been explained to me and I understand it. I agree/do not agree to taped conversations and I agree to written responses to them. I understand that I can withdraw at any time. I also understand that a public document, a thesis, and possibly published articles will result from the work. I want my true name to be used in this study.

USE MARIE, my middle name.

The final thesis will be available to me through the local school board.

Name: Nora Marie Nanooch
Signature: Nora Marie Nanooch
Date: June 16 1994.

Box 1595
High Level Alb
T0H 1Z0

94-06-03 JOHN D'OR PRAIRIE

Dear parents

The school board and the band council has given their support to mysell, Christina Mader to do research in your community and school. Three times I have made visits to the area and took photographs. But I need your permission *in writing* to use these pictures in my studies. Please say whether or not you are willing to do this. And return this page to me at the school. If you have any questions, please call me at 759-2016.

Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely

Christina Mader

This will certify that I give permission for Christina Mader to use my photograph. And/or to use those of my children in her research study. Her study is about contemporary teacher education and traditional education. She is investigating local knowledge that is found in the stories that traditional educators tell about their experiences.

I understand that the pictures that she takes will be used in her thesis, in slide shows and possibly published articles related to that work. or postcards A.M.

I understand that the community of John D'Or Prairie will have an opportunity to see that slide show. If she can get funding, she will leave copies of the prints and a copy of her slide show with the board of education.

Name: AGNES MOBERLY
Signature: Agnes Moberly
Date: 95-05-25 Relationship to child or children: mother

Names of children & their signatures: Shawna Moberly
Shawna moberly

~~I do not wish my picture to be used.~~
~~I do not wish my child's or children's picture to be used.~~

PERMISSION TO USE PHOTOGRAPH

When I sign below it will certify that I give permission for Christina Mader to use my photograph in her research study. Her study is about contemporary teacher education and traditional education. She is investigating local knowledge that is found in the stories that traditional educators tell about their experiences.

I understand that the pictures that she takes will be used in her thesis, in slide shows and possibly published articles related to that work.

I understand that the community of John D'Or Prairie will have an opportunity to see that slide show. If she can get funding, she will leave copies of the prints and a copy of her slide show with the board of education.

Name (please print)_____

Address & Phone Number_____

_____

Date_____ Signature_____

==========

PERMISSION TO USE PHOTOGRAPH

When I sign below it will certify that I give permission for Christina Mader to use my photograph in her research study. Her study is about contemporary teacher education and traditional education. She is investigating local knowledge that is found in the stories that traditional educators tell about their experiences.

I understand that the pictures that she takes will be used in her thesis, in slide shows and possibly published articles related to that work and postcard N.N.

I understand that the community of John D'Or Prairie will have an opportunity to see that slide show. If she can get funding, she will leave copies of the prints and a copy of her slide show with the board of education.

Name (please print) MELISSA NANOOCH (daughter)

Address & Phone Number_____

Nora Nanooch

Date 95-05-20 Signature Nora Nanooch

NORA NANOOCH

94-06-03 JOHN D'OR PRAIRIE

Dear parents

The school board and the band council has given their support to myself, Christina Mader to do research in your community and school. Three times I have made visits to the area and took photographs. But I need your permission *in writing* to use these pictures in my studies. Please say whether or not you are willing to do this. And return this page to me at the school. If you have any questions, please call me at 759-2016.

Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely

Christina Mader

This will certify that I give permission for Christina Mader to use my photograph. And/or to use those of my children in her research study. Her study is about contemporary teacher education and traditional education. She is investigating local knowledge that is found in the stories that traditional educators tell about their experiences.

I understand that the pictures that she takes will be used in her thesis, in slide shows and possibly published articles related to that work.

I understand that the community of John D'Or Prairie will have an opportunity to see that slide show. If she can get funding, she will leave copies of the prints and a copy of her slide show with the board of education.

Name: Sr. Bernadette Gautreau sch.
Signature:.....
Date: June 17, 1994 Relationship to child or children:.....

Names of children & their signatures.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
I do not wish my picture to be used.....
I do not wish my child's or children's picture to be used.....

PERMISSION TO USE PHOTOGRAPH

When I sign below it will certify that I give permission for Christina Mader to use my photograph in her research study. Her study is about contemporary teacher education and traditional education. She is investigating local knowledge that is found in the stories that traditional educators tell about their experiences.

I understand that the pictures that she takes will be used in her thesis, in slide shows and possibly published articles related to that work.

I understand that the community of John D'Or Prairie will have an opportunity to see that slide show. If she can get funding, she will leave copies of the prints and a copy of her slide show with the board of education.

Name (please print) Agnes Moberly

Address & Phone Number Box 1246 High Level – 759-3836
T0H 1Z0 AB

Date June 13 1994 Signature Agnes Moberly

==========

PERMISSION TO USE PHOTOGRAPH

When I sign below it will certify that I give permission for Christina Mader to use my photograph in her research study. Her study is about contemporary teacher education and traditional education. She is investigating local knowledge that is found in the stories that traditional educators tell about their experiences.

I understand that the pictures that she takes will be used in her thesis, in slide shows and possibly published articles related to that work.

I understand that the community of John D'Or Prairie will have an opportunity to see that slide show. If she can get funding, she will leave copies of the prints and a copy of her slide show with the board of education.

Name (please print) Nelly Nanooch

Address & Phone Number Box 745 Ft. Vermilion 759-2139
T0H-1N0

Date June 15 1994 Signature Nelly Nanooch

95-02-03

John D'Or Prairie

Signing my name below means that I am an informed and voluntary participant in Christina Mader's research study. It is about contemporary teacher education and traditional Native education. We will be looking at the local knowledge found in the stories that traditional educators tell about their experiences. I will tell her things that I believe are important for our young people to know. And for their parents and for their teachers.

The study has been explained to me and I understand it. I agree/do not agree to taped conversations and I agree to written responses to them. I understand that I can withdraw at any time. I also understand that a public document, a dissertation, and possibly published articles will result from the work. I want my true name to be used in this study.

The final dissertation will be available to me through the local school board.

Name: Agnes Mabely & daughter Shaina
Signature: Agnes Mabely
Date: 95-02-25

95-02-03

John D'Or Prairie

Signing my name below means that I am an informed and voluntary participant in Christina Mader's research study. It is about contemporary teacher education and traditional Native education. We will be looking at the local knowledge found in the stories that traditional educators tell about their experiences. I will tell her things that I believe are important for our young people to know. And for their parents and for their teachers.

The study has been explained to me and I understand it. I agree/do not agree to taped conversations and I agree to written responses to them. I understand that I can withdraw at any time. I also understand that a public document, a dissertation, and possibly published articles will result from the work. I want my true name to be used in this study.

The final dissertation will be available to me through the local school board.

Name:
Signature:
Date:



PERMISSION TO USE PHOTOGRAPH

When I sign below it will certify that I give permission for Christina Mader to use my photograph and/or that of my children in her research study. Her study is about what is important to people in John D'or. She listened to women's stories and spent time participating in our community.

I understand that the pictures that she took will be used in her dissertation, art exhibits, in slide shows and possibly published articles related to that work. An example is the picture above.

Name of parent, name of children Louisa Narooch

address, phone Box 914 Ft. Vermilion 759-3897

date, signature Louisa Narooch May 8/96

Name of parent, name of children Tricia Narooch

address, phone

date, signature

Name of parent, name of children _____

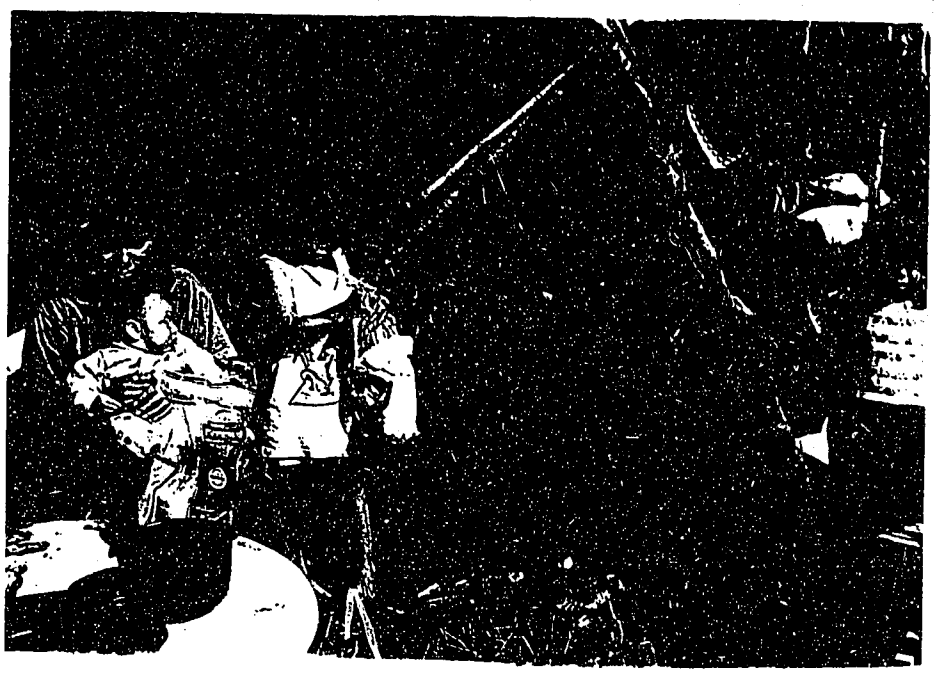
address, phone

date, signature

Name of parent, name of children _____

address, phone

date, signature



PERMISSION TO USE PHOTOGRAPH

When I sign below it will certify that I give permission for Christina Mader to use my photograph and/or that of my children in her research study. Her study is about what is important to people in John D'or. She listened to women's stories and spent time participating in our community.

I understand that the pictures that she took will be used in her dissertation, art exhibits, in slide shows and possibly published articles related to that work. An example is the picture above.

Name of parent, name of children Louisa Nanooch

address, phone Box 914 Ft. Vermilion 759-3897

date, signature Louisa Nanooch May 8 / 96

Name of parent, name of children Donna, Tricia Rebecca CarrieAnne Shania

address, phone

date, signature

Name of parent, name of children _____

address, phone

date, signature

Name of parent, name of children _____

address, phone

date, signature



PERMISSION TO USE PHOTOGRAPH

When I sign below it will certify that I give permission for Christina Mader to use my photograph and/or that of my children in her research study. Her study is about what is important to people in John D'or. She listened to women's stories and spent time participating in our community.

I understand that the pictures that she took will be used in her dissertation, art exhibits, in slide shows and possibly published articles related to that work. An example is the picture above.

Name of parent, name of children Louis Moberly Box 1246
759-3836 High Level Alb.
address, phone TOH 1Z0
date, signature Louis Moberly

Name of parent, name of children Damian Patinas May - 8 1996
address, phone
date, signature Shirley Patinas

Name of parent, name of children Box 1246 May - 8 - 1996
759-2157 High Level Alb,
address, phone TOH 1Z0
date, signature

Name of parent, name of children _____
address, phone
date, signature



PERMISSION TO USE PHOTOGRAPH

When I sign below it will certify that I give permission for Christina Mader to use my photograph and/or that of my children in her research study. Her study is about what is important to people in John D'or. She listened to women's stories and spent time participating in our community.

I understand that the pictures that she took will be used in her dissertation, art exhibits, in slide shows and possibly published articles related to that work. An example is the picture above.

Name of parent, name of children John Seeseewatum

address, phone 403 - 759 - 3767

date, signature John Seeseewat

Name of parent, name of children Florence Seeseewatum

address, phone

date, signature Florence Seeseewatum

Name of parent, name of children Juliette Seeseewatum

address, phone

date, signature

Name of parent, name of children Mary - Jo Seeseewatum

address, phone

date, signature

Brendan Loonskin (adopted)



PERMISSION TO USE PHOTOGRAPH

When I sign below it will certify that I give permission for Christina Mader to use my photograph and/or that of my children in her research study. Her study is about what is important to people in John D'or. She listened to women's stories and spent time participating in our community.

I understand that the pictures that she took will be used in her dissertation, art exhibits, in slide shows and possibly published articles related to that work. An example is the picture above.

Name of parent, name of children [illegible] (SEWEPAGAHM)

[redacted] address, phone (dad) [illegible] ALEXIS

759-2013 - Gen. Del Fort Vermilion

date, signature

[redacted] ame of parent, name of children [illegible]

759-2030

address, phone RITA LOONSKIN

Gen Del F. Vermilion

date, signature

Name of parent, name of children [illegible]

address, phone (mom) Therese Veldhuis Sewepagaham 759-3740

Box 397.

F. Vermilion

date, signature

Name of parent, name of children Kaye D'or

address, phone (mom) Kaye D'or - Box 365

Lucy F. Vermilion

date, signature

[redacted] June 24/96

Name of parent, name of children Vincent Celine Wapeose

address, phone Gen Del. Hermitage 759-3863

date, signature Celine Wapeose

Name of parent, name of children [illegible]

address, phone (mom) Maria Gonzalez 459-3951

date, signature Gen. Del H. Vermilion

Name of parent, name of children Dawson Cook

address, phone (mom) Robin Cook 759 2213

date, signature Gen Del H. Vermilion TOH INO

Name of parent, name of children [illegible]

address, phone (mom) No. Phone Christine Dumar

date, signature Gen. Del. H. Vermilion

Name of parent, name of children _____

address, phone

date, signature June 24/96

Name of parent, name of children _____

address, phone

date, signature

Name of parent, name of children _____

address, phone

date, signature

Name of parent, name of children _____

address, phone

date, signature

Name of parent, name of children _____

address, phone

date, signature

Name of parent, name of children _____

address, phone

date, signature



PERMISSION TO USE PHOTOGRAPH

When I sign below it will certify that I give permission for Christina Mader to use my photograph and/or that of my children in her research study. Her study is about what is important to people in John D'or. She listened to women's stories and spent time participating in our community.

I understand that the pictures that she took will be used in her dissertation, art exhibits, in slide shows and possibly published articles related to that work. An example is the picture above.

Name of parent, name of children Kayla Tallcree

address, phone 759-3758 Louise Tallcree (mom)

date, signature Gen Del T. Vermilion

Name of parent, name of children Erica Tallcree

address, phone Louise Tallcree 759-3758 Louise Tallcree (mom)

date, signature Gen Del T. Vermilion

Name of parent, name of children Lynette Dumas

address, phone (mom) Marilyn Dumas. 759-2039

date, signature Gen. Del T. Vermilion

Name of parent, name of children Debra Loonstin

address, phone (mom) Maria Loonstin 759-3951

date, signature Gen. Del. T. Vermilion

June 16/96



PERMISSION TO USE PHOTOGRAPH

When I sign below it will certify that I give permission for Christina Mader to use my photograph and or that of my children in her research study. Her study is about what is important to people in John D'or. She listened to women's stories and spent time participating in our community.

I understand that the pictures that she took will be used in her dissertation, art exhibits, in slide shows and possibly published articles related to that work. An example is the picture above.

Name of parent, name of children Nancy Metsikassus

address, phone

date, signature + her mark witness (daughter) Florence Sewelestalaino

Name of parent, name of children Florence Metsikassus (Mrs)

address, phone

date, signature

Name of parent, name of children Stella Metsikassus address

address, phone Stella D'or

date, signature

Name of parent, name of children Victoria Metsikassus

address, phone Victoria Dor-ken

date, signature

Date June 1996



PERMISSION TO USE PHOTOGRAPH

When I sign below it will certify that I give permission for Christina Mader to use my photograph and/or that of my children in her research study. Her study is about what is important to people in John D'or. She listened to women's stories and spent time participating in our community.

I understand that the pictures that she took will be used in her dissertation, art exhibits, in slide shows and possibly published articles related to that work. An example is the picture above.

Name of parent, name of children Brandon ~~Hinton~~ Winsor

address, phone 759. 3912

date, signature (mom) Brenda St. Arnault Fort Vermilion

Name of parent, name of children Allison Marcelin

address, phone Kim Morneau

date, signature for Del Fort Vermilion

Name of parent, name of children Lonni Auger

address, phone (mom) Sherry Auger

date, signature

Name of parent, name of children Jeanelle Dumas

address, phone

date, signature (mom) Katy Dumas

[redacted] June 24/96

Name of parent, name of children Greg Tallcree

address, phone 759-3758

date, signature

Name of parent, name of children Louise Tallcree

address, phone

date, signature Louise Tallcree

Name of parent, name of children _____

address, phone

date, signature

Name of parent, name of children _____

address, phone

date, signature

Name of parent, name of children _____

address, phone

date, signature

Name of parent, name of children _____

address, phone

date, signature

Name of parent, name of children _____

address, phone

date, signature

Name of parent, name of children _____

address, phone

date, signature

Name of parent, name of children _____

address, phone

date, signature

Name of parent, name of children _____

address, phone

date, signature



PERMISSION TO USE PHOTOGRAPH

When I sign below it will certify that I give permission for Christina Mader to use my photograph and/or that of my children in her research study. Her study is about what is important to people in John D'or. She listened to women's stories and spent time participating in our community.

I understand that the pictures that she took will be used in her dissertation, art exhibits, in slide shows and possibly published articles related to that work. An example is the picture above.

Name of parent, ~~name of children~~ Alice Seesequasis

address, phone Box 397, Fort Vermilion Alb. 759-2083

date, signature her Alice X Seesequasis mark May - 8 1996

Name of parent, name of children

address, no phone

date, signature her Lily X Loonskin mark May - 8 1996

Name of parent, name of children gen. del. Fort Vermilion Alb.

address, 759-2132 phone

date, signature her Mary Louise X Blesse mark May - 8 1996

Name of parent, name of children Wit - Agnes Maberly

address, phone gen. del. Fort Vermilion Alb.

date, signature

403 - 492 - 7622

TO: MARY SEESEEWATUM, FROM: CHRISTINA MADER, 96-06-18

Hello Mary, Here's the list of people who **already signed permission** to use their photographs. But I also need their address and phone numbers. That part was left out on the papers Agnes took around for me. Are you able to fill them in for me & fax the page back? Maybe Agnes can get them on any people who haven't yet signed too.

Brenda St. Arnault 759-2081 Gem Del.

Sherry Auger 759-2069

Katy Dumas 759-2353

Louise Tallcree 759-3758

Marilyn Dumas 759-2048

Maria Loonskin 759-3951

Florence Seeseewatum 759-3767

Nancy Metsikassus 759-2085 June 24/96

Then I still need the names, address, phone number and signed permission from the parents of the 3 children whose faces you can see at the back of the feast in the photo I gave your mom (Alice, Lily, Mary Louise). Maybe they've already signed--Agnes would know. I need the names of the kids too.

Many thanks for your help Mary. I am really worried now about my timeline. The extra month that it took to get the book read and back to me really hurt. As you know, I still haven't got it back.

When are you coming back? Hello to your mom! Love Christina.

Kids behind mom are: no. P-hone

Victor Blesse jr. Marie Stella Blesse

Linda Blesse

Leon Alook 759-3735

Sally Alook. Gen Del

F. Vermilion

Pat June 24/96 Stella Alook



PERMISSION TO USE PHOTOGRAPH

When I sign below it will certify that I give permission for Christina Mader to use my photograph and/or that of my children in her research study. Her study is about what is important to people in John D'or. She listened to women's stories and spent time participating in our community.

I understand that the pictures that she took will be used in her dissertation, art exhibits, in slide shows and possibly published articles related to that work. An example is the picture above.

Name of parent, name of children [illegible]

address, phone

date, signature

Name of parent, name of children Andrea Dumas

address, phone Christina Dumas 759-2217
Gen Del T. Vernilion

date, signature

Name of parent, name of children [illegible] Chasine Hanoch

address, phone 759-02046

date, signature Gel Del T. Vernilion

Name of parent, name of children June 1996

address, phone

date, signature

PERMISSION TO USE PHOTOGRAPH

When I sign below it will certify that I give permission for Christina Mader to use my photograph and/or that of my children in her research study. Her study is about what is important to people in John D'or. She listened to women's stories and spent time participating in our community.

I understand that the pictures that she took will be used in her dissertation, art exhibits, in slide shows and possibly published articles related to that work. An example is the picture above.

Name of parent, name of children Allan Laboucan [illegible]

address, phone Darlene Nanooch, Simone Nanooch, Peggy Nanooch

date, signature Dusty Laboucan, Lance Laboucan

Name of parent, name of children Bronson Laboucan, Alison Laboucan

address, phone Box 391 Fort Vermilion, Alta T0H 1N0

date, signature (403) 759-3961 or (403) 759-3912

Name of parent, name of children Edmonton 96-06-27

address, phone

date, signature

Name of parent, name of children _____

address, phone

date, signature

93-11-04

JOHN D'OR PRAIRIE

This is to certify that I am an informed and voluntary participant in Christina Mader's research study on Continuing Teacher Education and Traditional Native Education.

The study has been explained to me and I understand it. I agree to taped conversation and to written responses to them. I understand that I can withdraw at any time. I also understand that a public document, a thesis, and possibly published articles will result from the work.

I also understand that every effort will be made to protect the identity & location of all participants & the communities. The final thesis will be available to me through the local school board.

Name: Agnes Moberly
Signature: Agnes Moberly
Date:

I have a copy of this page.

93-11-04

JOHN D'OR PRAIRIE

This is to certify that I am an informed and voluntary participant in Christina Mader's research study on Continuing Teacher Education and Traditional Native Education.

The study has been explained to me and I understand it. I agree to taped conversations and to written responses to them. I understand that I can withdraw at any time. I also understand that a public document, a thesis, and possibly published articles will result from the work.

I also understand that every effort will be made to protect the identity & location of all participants & the communities. The final thesis will be available to me through the local school board.

Name: Nora Nanook
Signature:
Date: Nov. 5th.

I have a copy of this page.

93-11-04

JOHN D'OR PRAIRIE

This is to certify that I am an informed and voluntary participant in Christina Mader's research study on Continuing Teacher Education and Traditional Native Education.

The study has been explained to me and I understand it. I agree to taped conversation and to written responses to them. I understand that I can withdraw at any time. I also understand that a public document, a thesis, and possibly published articles will result from the work.

I also understand that every effort will be made to protect the identity & location of all participants & the communities. The final thesis will be available to me through the local school board.

Name: AUDREY POWAPISCONIAS
Signature: [signature]
Date: Nov 4/93.

I have a copy of this page.

93-11-04

JOHN D'OR PRAIRIE

This is to certify that I am an informed and voluntary participant in Christina Mader's research study on Continuing Teacher Education and Traditional Native Education.

The study has been explained to me and I understand it. I agree to taped conversation and to written responses to them. I understand that I can withdraw at any time. I also understand that a public document, a thesis, and possibly published articles will result from the work.

I also understand that every effort will be made to protect the identity & location of all participants & the communities. The final thesis will be available to me through the local school board.

Name: Dennis Labouscan
Signature: Dennis Labouscan
Date: Nov 4/93

I have a copy of this page.

93-11-04

JOHN D'OR PRAIRIE

This is to certify that I am an informed and voluntary participant in Christina Mader's research study on Continuing Teacher Education and Traditional Native Education.

The study has been explained to me and I understand it. I agree to taped conversation and to written responses to them. I understand that I can withdraw at any time. I also understand that a public document, a thesis, and possibly published articles will result from the work.

I also understand that every effort will be made to protect the identity & location of all participants & the communities. The final thesis will be available to me through the local school board.

Name: Marla Dunn
Signature: [signature]
Date: 4/Nov 9/93

I have a copy of this page.

93-11-04

JOHN D'OR PRAIRIE

This is to certify that I am an informed and voluntary participant in Christina Mader's research study on Continuing Teacher Education and Traditional Native Education.

The study has been explained to me and I understand it. I agree to taped conversations and to written responses to them. I understand that I can withdraw at any time. I also understand that a public document, a thesis, and possibly published articles will result from the work.

I also understand that every effort will be made to protect the identity & location of all participants & the communities. The final thesis will be available to me through the local school board.

Name: Stella C. Caskey
Signature: S. C. Caskey
Date: Nov. 4, 1993.

I have a copy of this page.