Fostering a Sense of Community among Middle-Years Students

Through Song and Dance Practices

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of Music

University of Alberta

Abstract

The arts force us out of our comfort zones, they open our minds to discovery, and allow us to confront assumptions and prejudices. Alongside defined music, sound intertwines us with our surroundings, both consciously and unconsciously, serving as the soundtrack to our lives. But what happens when we actively engage with our surroundings and use the world around us as inspiration for art? Embracing the teachings of the Circle of Courage along with an innovative approach to the elementary Fine Arts and Practical Applied Arts curricular areas, this ethnographic field project looks to encourage a sense of community and group cohesion among middle-years youth within a Regina, Saskatchewan context. Conducted within a community school, many student participants in this project exemplified characteristics of at-risk youth, including emotional or behavioral problems, low academic performance, truancy, and a disconnection from the school environment.

By participating in an inquiry-based learning project, students explored an interdisciplinary course engaging in all four fine arts strands, as well as speaking to the themes of orality. At the beginning of the course, the students were given the metaphor to think of themselves as a stars within the night sky, reflecting on their communities as an individual constellation. These sentiments were translated to a visual art piece which initiated our experience together. Inspired by positive points of contact students created compositions through found sounds, body percussion, and polyrhythms, actively engaging with sounds of communities and thinking critically of places of belonging. Visual art mapping strategies allowed a means to monitor student growth, documented the intangibility of relationships, and transformed as the students developed a sense of cohesion. Music served as the reason for students to work together and collaborate, placing aside their differences or interpersonal concerns. Dance and drama

allowed students to explore their oral narrative, expressing themselves where words often fall short. Finally, the percussive nature of the human breath served as a link, unifying the compositions together and reminding us of our commonalities.

This project has allowed at-risk youth a means of empowerment by providing students with the tools for self-expression. Guiding the students through exercises in deep listening and mindfulness has encouraged individuals to aurally recognize their environments being aware of their surroundings with the potential for empathy and belonging. Through understanding the value of their oral narrative students were able to recognize the power of their voice. Within the Prairie provinces there is much work that needs to be done addressing the social dynamics found within our school systems as well as our social and personal situations. This project has allowed participants to focus on similarities rather than differences and is a successful example of using arts-based methods to foster a sense of community.

Preface

This thesis is an original work by Daya Kaur Madhur. The research project, of which this thesis is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, Project Name “Fostering Communities and Celebrating Cultural Diversity”, No. Pro00044201, on 2014-01-15. In addition, the Deputy Director of School Services, Mike Walter, on behalf of the Regina Public School Board, granted permission to the research project “Fostering Communities among Middle-Years Students through Song and Dance Practices”, on 2013-12-03.

Dedication

To the nineteen amazing youths who have taught me so many lessons about life, sound, and the fluidity of community walls. I carry you in my constellation.

Acknowledgements

The Regina Public School Board for opening the door to my field work and providing mentorship and support.

> Thank you: Mike Walter, Luc Lerminiaux, Calvin Racette, Tracy Brooks, Erin Betson, Marlene Hinz, and Joni Darke.

My teaching partner, community members, and artists who supported this project through their artistic endeavors and embraced my spontaneity.

> Thank you: Luke Braun, Theresa MacPhail, Elder Hazel Dixon, and Dayle Schroeder-Hillier.

Student participants and their parents for welcoming this field project and providing valuable feedback on our classroom experience.

School staff and classroom teachers for their anecdotal observations, interviews, and support.

My University of Alberta supervisor and committee members for their guidance throughout this journey.

> Thank you: Dr. Michael Frishkopf, Dr. Marko Zivkovic, Dr. Julia Byl

Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research (FGSR), Graduate Students Association (GSA), and the Department of Music for their generous grants and funding opportunities throughout my experience as a graduate student.

My family and friends who were a continual support system, cheerleading squad, late night editors, and sounding board.

> Thank you: Aaron Coons, David Barnard, Gursh Barnard, Hardy Madhur, and Rasna Madhur.

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

Music is an invisible force evoking our auditory sense and sometimes produces a strong emotional reaction. Alongside music—defined as the organization of sound and silence—our surroundings serve as the soundtrack to our lives, both consciously and unconsciously. But what happens when we actively engage with our sonic surroundings and use the world around us as inspiration for art? Inspired by my time working in the Regina Public School Board, my thesis research explores the influence of both performance practices, as seen through the process of creating a productive work, and cultural practices, such as orality, symbolism, and the protocol of a Talking Circle, on fostering a sense of community and enhancing group dynamics in middle-years students. I explore how the middle-years fine arts curricular subjects—music, dance, drama, and visual art—as well as experiences shared among classmates can serve to create and encourage community-building inspired by interpersonal relationships, and allow us to collaboratively work together to produce new works of art. My recent field study shows that, when focusing on points of contact among at-risk youth, the fine arts are able to facilitate the cultivation of friendships and strengthen group dynamics.

At the beginning of the semester the students were given the metaphor that they were a star within the vast night sky. As individuals we have various points of contact to communities and places where we feel that we belong, just as a single star can be translated into countless constellations. Each student was asked to create a constellation based on the communities to which they feel connected and represent these sentiments in a visual art piece; this initial art piece served as the impetus for our journey together. By welcoming artists, Elders, and community members into the classroom, and by teaching through the Circle of Courage philosophy that has been adopted by the Regina Public School Board[1], the students in this project engaged in a multidisciplinary course. Dance and drama served to fuel the students' oral narratives, visual art created a space for the intangibility of interpersonal relationships to be documented, and the complexities of polyrhythms, found sounds, and body percussion encouraged the class to think on the role that sound plays in our world.

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[1] Regina School Division No. 4 of Saskatchewan. 2012. "Bullying Prevention and Intervention at Regina Public Schools." Accessed June 10, 2015. http://www.rbe.sk.ca/parents/resources/bullying-prevention-and-intervention-regina-public-schools

A classroom performance piece was created that served as a reminder of the lessons found within the Circle of Courage and its application to community as a whole. Oral history, which fueled much of the students' artistic expressions, is a part of us and is carried in our individual constellation through this journey of life. To complement the students' experience, a classroom "Star Board" was created, a living art piece that symbolized the growth of each student's interpersonal relationships. As friendships and connections were made, the "Star Board" morphed and grew throughout the course, echoing the development of the students' interpersonal relationships.

The principal contribution of my project is bridging the gap between practical situations and academic literature. On the practical side, my work produced a foundational model that can be used by other educators in diverse contexts, as well as recorded evidence of one instance of the formation of a cross-cultural group. This project has allowed at-risk youth a means of empowerment by using the fine arts for self-expression. Acknowledging the strength of one's voice has been key in allowing these students the tools to make interpersonal connections both inside and outside the classroom. However, this research also addresses a larger issue found within Canada, a statement evidenced by a CBC News survey published in November of 2014[2]. Of significant concern was a considerable difference between attitudes held amongst the Prairies and the rest of Canada, especially regarding issues of racism, interracial relationships, and community relations. The application of this project also provides an opportunity to support a positive transition to high school, teach students how to find connections in extracurricular activities as well as on the playground, and address issues such as bullying or the pre-existing binary between French and English students. By using the fine arts to address some of these larger concerns, we have an opportunity to encourage a younger generation to think critically about Canada and the relationships our nation is built upon.

Research Aim

I wish to explore the influence of performance and cultural practices on at-risk, middle-years youth by having the students participate in an inquiry-based learning project. Although

[2] Research House. 2014. "CBC News Poll on Discrimination: November 2014." Accessed December 2014. https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/1362391-cbc-discrimination-poll-november-2014.html

inquiry-based learning projects are undertaken regularly, I believe that the application of arts-based interventions for working with youth in Saskatchewan is an area which needs to be pursued more. My experiences in the classroom working with at-risk youth and their communities, as well as teaching in a community school environment alongside a school board which has embraced the Circle of Courage philosophy, have all fueled many of my research questions.

A number of years ago the Regina Public School Board adopted the Circle of Courage philosophy, which in this project has served as a guiding force for classroom discussion around community development by supporting the needs of the whole child. These perspectives will serve as a case study examining the understanding that youth have of their community involvement and the role of performance practices in strengthening interpersonal relationships. Of these areas of interest, I look specifically to the role that the performing arts play in promoting a cross-cultural world view. This question arose due to discussions amongst educators addressing the needs to support at-risk youth with interpersonal relationships, bullying, issues of racism, and students' need to find a place of belonging. By creating a course entitled "Community Soundscapes", student participants were given an environment where they could recognize and embrace diversity and use this to fuel artistic expression.

The basis for my field project involved working with participants (age 10 to 13) from the Regina Public School division selected from a community school chosen for its innovative Practical and Applied Arts course structure. Looking to communities found in and around the City of Regina for inspiration, the course was taught through the lens of the Circle of Courage philosophy and engaged a multidisciplinary experience focusing upon the four strands of the fine arts. The focus of this project was to encourage an awakening in middle-years students to have a better understanding of who they are and where they come from, as well as promoting an awareness of these same aspects amongst their peers and classmates. In this course students would explore on an abstract level the role that music plays in our lives, awakening our senses to the sounds of the environment, before finally undertaking a guided experience to an internal reflection of one's oral history. Additionally, the aims and goals of this project align well with the middle-years Social Studies curricula, placing an emphasis on "analyz[ing] the dynamic relationships of people with land, environment, and ideas as they have affected the past, shape

the present and influence the future and examin[ing] the local, indigenous, and global interactions and interdependenc[ies] of individuals, societies, cultures, and nations"[3]. The observations that follow are the result of formal and informal interviews, anecdotal observations from classroom teachers, visual art mapping exercises, and the support of community members and artists.

Area and Scope

From 2009 to 2013 I worked as a French Immersion Arts Educator, teaching music, dance, drama, and visual arts to kindergarten through grade 8 students. After stepping down from this position, I commenced graduate studies in ethnomusicology. The school for my field work was one at which I had previously been employed, however the participants in this study were students who I had not previously had a chance to teach. One of the reasons for working with this school and its surrounding community was that it had received a "community school" designation, meaning that a large portion of the student population came from the nearby reserves or from a core neighborhood, and most families were of low socio-economic means. An additional factor for selecting this particular community school was its innovative Practical and Applied Arts programming; for one half-day each week this elementary school emulated a high school setting, allowing grade 5 to 8 students the opportunity to select fine arts and practical applied arts courses, as well as connect with students from other classrooms, grades, and those enrolled in the English or French Immersion program. Ultimately the goal for this type of classroom structure is to serve as support to these at-risk students to ease the anxiety regarding transitioning to high school, empower youth with the opportunity to select courses based on personal interests, and be exposed to the practical and applied arts, a curricular subject traditionally introduced at the high school level.

In March 2014, the students began the Spring Semester for the Practical and Applied Arts courses. Collaboratively with my teaching partner, Mr. Luke Braun, we created a course as an option titled "Community Soundscapes". The semester was 13 weeks long, and classes were

[3] Government of Saskatchewan, Ministry of Education. 2009. "Social Studies 8: Curriculum." Accessed October 27, 2015. https://www.edonline.sk.ca/bbcswebdav/library/curricula/English/Social_Studies/Social_Studies_Education_8_2009.pdf

offered for 60 minutes once a week. Following the course selection process, 19 students began their experience together.

Paradigm

My central research question was to understand how the arts, taught through the Circle of Courage philosophy, can support at-risk youth by giving them the tools to create and support relationships and recognize positive points of contact amongst each other. By engaging with our communities sonically, students were encouraged to think critically about their environment and the role that sound, music, and movement plays in these spaces and places. Through an interdisciplinary course, students were introduced to all four fine arts strands as well as given artistic tools for self-expression—and by extension realizing the importance of their oral narrative. Finally, by embracing an open-door policy, artists, Elders, and community members were welcomed into the classroom to serve as culture-bearers, supporting the lessons found within the course.

Prior to entering the field, my initial research project was to teach the students how to be field reporters and explore the sounds of their environments through audio recordings. Unfortunately, limitations were presented upon entering the field and the project required a new direction. Through adaptations the essence of the project remained the same, but students were instead asked to think critically on the role of sound in these spaces and use this as inspiration for their group composition. This turned out to be a successful project resulting in the students creating a class performance piece, internalizing the lessons and project objectives, and conducting a deep self-reflection.

An additional problem was lack of support from the school administration and school arts educators to allow these middle-years students an opportunity to showcase their work. Since the reasons for excluding these students from the Circle of Courage assemblies and the school's Celebration of Learning assembly were unclear, I created a class DVD for the students to encapsulate this experience. During this time, the students' narratives were disheartening, as they longed for an opportunity to share their work. As a means of allowing the course experience to come to closure, giving the students the class DVD proved significant as it possessed the ability to live longer than a live performance and travel across physical space and time.

An additional problem which surfaced was an existing binary between the English and French immersion students. Students in the project noted a need for the school community to function as a collective and longed for a space where bullying, interpersonal relationships, and the classroom language divide were no longer a concern. Though this divide existed on a school front, its themes echoed into the classroom. This field project addressed some of these concerns head-on, encouraging students to work together and focus on similarity rather than difference.

Applied Ethnomusicology

One of the ways in which I have chosen to address some of these social concerns is through the application of ethnomusicological theory and field work methods. The role of an ethnomusicologist includes to preserve, to teach, and to connect people through the arts, and to develop an understanding between individuals and cultural groups. In looking to the future, we "want to create a world for our students and children where global music is commonplace, native artists and researchers can sustain themselves, technology has preserved all music and oral tradition, and people celebrate and respect the cultures and differences of one another" (Alviso 2003, 91). In order for this to be achieved, there requires a fundamental shift in the mindset of ethnomusicologists, recognizing the equal worth of our research participants serving as collaborators (Alviso 2003, 92).

Scholars have argued about a distinction between so-called "pure" and "applied" ethnomusicology. Klisala Harrison references Anthony Seeger's work, stating that "the dichotomy of 'theoretical' and … 'applied' ethnomusicology is false. The most abstract research can have practical benefits and the most practical projects can stimulate abstract thinking" (Harrison 2012, 508). Daniel Sheehy defines the applied aspects of ethnomusicology as a purpose; it is a purpose that extends further than the advancements of the music of the world's people but rather an action-based strategy that uses music to see a better life for others (Sheehy 1992, 323-324). Sheehy recognizes that the impact of the applied aspects of ethnomusicology is great and can support positive social change. Amongst these views, the common thread remains that applied ethnomusicology is guided by the principles of purpose as observed and vocalized by our participants, therefore allowing the researcher and community to collaborate while working to address and solve concrete problems through the arts.

Analyzing people's motivations for interacting with one another and with their environment is imperative to understanding music's role within the social, cultural, and political sphere, extending to applied ethnomusicology. The academic disciplines which have influenced applied ethnomusicology are applied anthropology and folklore (Harrison 2012, 506). Sheehy describes four strategies: "[1] developing new performance frames, [2] feeding back musical models to the communities that created them, [3] empowering community members to become musical activists, and [4] developing broad structural solutions" (Harrison 2012, 517-518; Titon 1992, 317). He then states that strategies that are aimed at affecting the communities of origin of a given music are viewed as having at least one of these qualities (Sheehy 1992, 330). Within the scope of these proposed strategies, there are many challenges for ethnomusicologists, as:

> It challenges us to communicate to a diversity of other people in ways they can understand about diverse musics, the system of value that support them, and the people who make them. It calls for intensive research in areas that are critical to these strategies, such as the dynamics of culture change… It challenges us to see beyond the "institutional blinders" that limit our view of important issues for research and that close our minds to ways of applying our special knowledge. It challenges us to think bigger and better about our reciprocity with the people we study…It challenges us to work cooperatively with specialists in areas such as folklore, theatrical presentation, media production, and political action… It challenges us to consider the larger importance and consequences of each and every ethnomusicological task, be it research, teaching, fieldwork, publishing, producing films, mounting festivals, or whatever. [Sheehy 1992, 334-335]

From this perspective on the discipline, Sheehy suggests a means to minimize the difference between the academic and applied aspects of ethnomusicology: fundamentally, both are striving towards a similar goal (Sheehy 1992, 335). Equally, they both constitute one's passion for "knowledge, love, and commitment to music" (Davis 1992, 364).

Through collaborating with community members and research participants, applied ethnomusicologists offer a benefit to humanity in means such as recordings, festivals, and the curation of exhibits (Sheehy 1992, 323). Regardless of the medium, the essence of the discipline remains the same; I believe it is best defined by Smithsonian Folkways, the record label for the Smithsonian Institute and preeminent applied ethnomusicology organization, with its mission of being "dedicated to supporting cultural diversity and increased understanding among peoples through the documentation, preservation and dissemination of sound….

Through the dissemination of audio recordings, and educational materials we seek to strengthen people's engagement with their own cultural heritage and enhance their awareness and appreciation of the cultural heritage of others".[4]

An interesting analogy provided by Davis is that public-sector folklorists or ethnomusicologists serve as a "culture broker", an intermediary between the "'power structure' and the bearers of certain traditions" (Davis 1992, 362). From this perspective, culture-bearers can view ethnomusicologists as a "facilitator, cultural interpreter, arbitrator, advisor, and advocate" (Davis 1992, 362). This intermediary position allows for a platform for these voices, oral traditions and narratives to be heard. Throughout this process, we as culture broker transition into a "catalyst" position, inspiring other projects and research to organically grow. "We have helped the informant develop the perspective of the outsider at the same time that the informant has helped us develop the perspectives of the insider… if we can provide sensitive understanding, impart a sense of appreciation, treat people with dignity, and offer some insight, we can help folks help themselves and realize the excellence which often resides within them" (Davis 1992, 382-383).

Ethnomusicologists have the additional ability to address multiculturalism, "an affirmative action policy issue[d] in public programming. Multiculturalism in music means recognizing the integrity of the musical expressions of all people. Ethnomusicologists who present themselves as experts in this area can affect public policy" (Titon 1992, 315). By working closely with our participants through extensive collaboration and planning, we have the ability to address policy through arts-based intervention. Within recent decades the connections between "activist-musicians" in ethnomusicology and education have resulted in changes in both the public education and university curricula as well as in community venues. School districts around the world are looking to integrate multicultural songs, instrumental pieces, dances, and audio samples, many of which can be attributed to the work of ethnomusicologists (Campbell and Higgins 2015, 639).

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[4] Smithsonian Folkways. 2015. "Out Mission and History." Accessed November 13, 2015. http://www.folkways.si.edu/mission-history/smithsonian

Methods

Throughout this field project I used a number of strategies to collect data, including voice and video recorders as well as cameras for still images. By employing an inquiry-based learning strategy (Bacon and Matthews 2013) a series of lessons and objectives were created, allowing myself and my teaching partner the flexibility to pivot around the students' interests, curricular objectives, and central themes. This teaching strategy provided me the opportunity to navigate conversations while allowing my participants to be involved at their comfort level. A number of structured and unstructured interviews were conducted with students, classroom teachers, community members, and guest artists, in addition to documenting anecdotal observations from my participants, teaching partner, and myself. Many of these observations were made during the students' noon hour sessions where they guided the conversation topics. Journal responses and classroom questionnaires allowed me the opportunity to collect student quotations from specific responses to classroom themes. With the support of Theresa MacPhail, the school community coordinator, the students were taught the cultural significance of a Talking Circle and Talking Stick while being guided through the appropriate protocols. Likewise, in welcoming Elder Hazel Dixon into the classroom we were provided with a series of oral narratives to spark critical thought and self-reflection. A series of visual art activities served as a twofold exercise in this class, both exploring this creative medium as well as documenting students' growth and development throughout the course. In recognizing the vulnerability of speaking one's oral narrative, dance and drama exercises were used in-class as a means of expression where words might serve as an emotional barrier. Finally, musical composition exercises encouraged students to work together and invited discussions amongst classmates to focus on positive points of contact.

Chapter 2 – Background

The overall narrative of culture-bearers, educators, and community members provide background information for the field in which this project is situated.

At-Risk Youth

As an educator much of my teaching experience has been working with at-risk youth, particularly in a "community school" environment. When reflecting back on the classes that I taught, I often referred to these students as children who needed an extra hug or ears to listen. I found that some students would come to class carrying with them the stresses of their personal lives and I tried to make their arts education courses a time where they could explore the arts and create in an exciting, engaging environment. When looking to academic literature, "characteristics of at-risk students include emotional or behavioral problems, truancy, low academic performance, showing a lack of interest for academics, and expressing a disconnection from the school environment" (Richardson 2008). All careers present obstacles and limitations, but overall I found working with at-risk students to be exceptionally rewarding. Observing their personal development, supporting their needs, and watching them grow and shine in the classroom and on stage serves to fuel many of my research questions and artistic expressions. In the article "Failing, but Not Failures: Assisting At-Risk Students in the English Classroom", April Howard, an educator in the province of Saskatchewan, provides an analogy to teaching in an at-risk environment, sentiments which I too have experienced:

> One of the aspects of teaching that first drew me to the profession was being able to help others, witnessing their moments of connection and revelation, and sharing the joy of their accomplishments. I felt that I could make a difference in the world, and do so through work in the school systems. While that vision has not changed, I have come to realize that it is a much more challenging task than I had first imagined. Working in the classroom, I soon learned that I was not basking in the glow of a cavern full of polished jewels, but instead I found myself in a mine where many hidden treasures lay deep within the students. Much time was spent encouraging students that there was something worth looking for, and polishing. The task requires time, effort, and commitment, and is one that seems to grow more daunting as the problems facing youth, and how to educate them, grows. [Howard 2003]

There are many youth who are considered to be at-risk of failure in school and in life, with factors varying from personal, social, academic, or family-related issues. Research indicates

that many at-risk youth have average to above-average intelligence levels, but it is the pressures placed on these students that cause many of them to struggle. “Within the government of Saskatchewan it is estimated that 30 to 40 percent of children are at risk. We are facing a multifaceted problem, and we need to be addressing the issue of why so many children are being put at risk in our province” (Hamblin 2000, 3). When working with these students in a proactive manner, we need to examine closely all components of the individuals’ lives, “not just their academics and the school environment but also the source of issues relating to their social and emotional growth, which would include family, community, and self” (Hamblin 2000, 3).

The term “at-risk” refers to various behaviors exhibited by students possessing the following characteristics as defined within the Saskatchewan context: adolescent pregnancy or being a teen parent, petty crimes, suicide, dropping out of school, entering adulthood as illiterate, dependency on drugs or alcohol, parental unemployment or underemployment, poverty or residing in the inner city, English as a foreign language, a reliance on welfare, or being associated with the criminal justice system (Johnson 1997, 445). Catherine Hamblin’s teaching and learning resource, titled “At Risk Youth: Developing an Alternative Learning Environment to Help Build Success” is centered on the Prairie regions, specifically Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, a town located forty-five minutes outside of Regina. Hamblin defines four distinct factors that contribute to at-risk youth behaviour: school, student, family, and community-related factors. Within a school environment, poor academic achievement surfaces as the initial reason for students to drop out of school. These individuals are feeling a lack of success, engagement, and struggle to keep up with the class pace (Hamblin 2000, 4). Teachers genuinely wish and try to support these students but, due to a lack of training, resources, and time, many struggle with doing do. Hamblin suggests that “it is in a non-traditional school environment that success might happen… In a non-traditional environment we can provide the supports to students that make them feel safe, secure, and accepted” (Hamblin 2000. 5).

Expanding from the school environment, student-related factors serve as Hamblin’s second definition of being at-risk, characterized by issues such as mental health, substance abuse, having adolescent parent responsibilities, or legal problems (Hamblin 2000, 5). “As a result [students] develop poor self-esteem, which affects their physical, emotional, social, and academic wellbeing” (Hamblin 2000, 5). Through collaboration with the school and community

organizations, such as justice workers, Planned Parenthood, or social services, teachers and parents can be given tools to better support the individual. If the academic institution does not support these means of intervention then an alternative learning environment is needed (Hamblin 2000, 6).

For many at-risk youth, a lack of parental involvement is apparent in both their academic and personal lives. In certain situations family members have given up on the individual due to the student's life choices, are unable to support these children as a result of their personal hurdles, or are uneducated on how to be a support system. "Family support for children is crucial so that they do not become at risk… 'the most important factor in the education of children is not the school, the teacher or the curriculum; it is the parent' (Barr and Parrett 1995, 68). However, many of these youth not only do not have parental support, they do not want their parents to be involved with their lives" (Hamblin 2000, 7). Through a *positive* support system, students are able to locate a place of belonging and feel emotionally supported.

Hamblin's fourth and final point for defining youth at-risk is community related factors, especially poverty. Through "not having" some students are involved in a life of crime, while others work multiple jobs to support themselves and/or their families. Due to these time constraints these individuals struggle with completing their academic commitments. "People who live in poverty and are unemployed are also at greater risk for developing physical and mental health problems caused by poor nutrition, inadequate health care and substandard living conditions" (Hamblin 2000, 8). In looking at these four distinct sections of our individual lives, it is apparent that a holistic view that addresses the needs of the whole child could be employed to support the way in which at-risk youth navigate their lives.

Within a Regina context, amongst the students in an at-risk environment 25% of students coming to school are facing some type of dysfunction (Howard 2003). "They experience violence in the home and on the streets, lack some social skills, and/or are in trouble with the law. A majority of these students live in poverty, and many experience changes in family dynamics, living arrangements, and frequently change schools. There has also been an increase in the number of special needs children integrated into regular classrooms (Howard 2003). In 2003 when Howard's thesis was conducted, the statistics in Regina stated that 25% of students were at risk of not completing school with an estimated trajectory moving towards 40%,

"possibly coinciding with the growth of the Aboriginal student population, which is expected to reach a level of one-third of the school make-up" (Howard 2003). Unfortunately, the reality for Aboriginal students living in the Prairies is that they struggle with being marginalized and discriminated against, resulting in poverty and diminished opportunities (Howard 2003).

Genevieve Johnson provides a list of Canadian strategies that school administrators believe may support at-risk youth. She conducted interviews with twenty-eight inner-city school administrators. Their narratives included a need for "early, intense, and coordinated intervention efforts" and suggested broadening the intervention programming to beyond the classroom to predict within communities areas of high need" (Johnson 1997, 445). The data include four kinds of interventions: at school-based, home-based, community-based and societal. On a school front some of the intervention strategies include offering sex education and substance abuse/crime-prevention programming, inviting a dialogue between educators, parents, and students. Home-based interventions for at-risk students and families include having subsidized housing, nutrition programs, and parent education courses to better support students and their needs. Extending from the home context, community-based interventions include providing community centres and health clinics. Additionally, communities are encouraged to welcome conversations around school and policing strategies, such as a neighborhood watch or creating interventions directed towards enhancing the health and services of the community. Finally, as a society we must initiate conversations around modifying public attitudes and government policies associated with public-spending priorities and service-delivery models (Johnson 1997, 445).

Reflecting on these four distinct areas, as well as proposed at-risk innovations and interventions, I believe Saskatchewan is making strides towards supporting at-risk students. Within the Saskatchewan curriculum, the term "adaptive dimension" is a teaching strategy and tool for educators to use in the classroom. "This term refers to an aspect of the Saskatchewan Curriculum which allows for adaptations in course material and evaluation to best assist learning at all abilities" (Howard 2003). By teaching through this strategy, teachers are provided with the flexibility to meet students' needs, integrate relevant content into classroom learning, and build off of students' knowledge, highlighting student success (Howard 2003). Evaluation strategies and questions regarding when to adapt classroom content arise, and by looking at the curriculum outcomes and indicators these concerns may be addressed.

An example of an at-risk intervention occurred in Moose Jaw with the development of an alternative school for students between the ages of 14 and 22 who encountered frustrations in high school, dropped out, or moved from school to school (Hamblin 2000, 18). “An alternative school is based on the idea of diversity in the needs and abilities of both student and teacher, and it involves using multiple teaching and learning styles that allow all students to learn to the best of their abilities” (Hamblin 2000, 20). The Moose Jaw Interagency Alternative Learning Program is a program for at-risk young adults where the staff includes educators, social workers, healthcare support and city police, with a mission statement emphasizing that “we believe that it takes a whole community to educate a child” (Hamblin 2000, 23). School adaptations include hours from 10:00 am to 8:30 pm, smaller classroom environments, allowing students to work at their own pace, one-on-one learning, hot lunches, recreational activities through the YMCA, the option to complete course work through technology, a chance to connect with a social worker, anger/stress management courses, and the education of students in healthy lifestyle choices (Hamblin 2000, 39-40). By recognizing the needs of these individuals and supporting them through programming, physical buildings, teaching approaches, and meeting their academic and personal needs, we are able to support the needs of our students and communities in the province of Saskatchewan.

At-Risk Arts-Based Interventions

Various examples around the world show that integrating the fine arts into programming has proven to support interpersonal relationships, classroom dynamics, workplace environments, and community relations. Huet’s (2015) article is a recent literature review of various arts therapy-based methods to help people with general and mental health issues, stress and anxiety in the workplace, as well as those struggling with life-threatening illnesses through such interventions as oncology and palliative care. A particular case study conducted within an executive leadership environment used arts-based methods to address the needs of the organization. The project divided willing participants into two groups, those in a traditional leadership workshop environment and others in an arts-based intervention. Prior to this experience the organization demonstrated poor leadership behaviours and struggled with coping within a stressful environment. The participants were an average age of 48 years old, of mixed genders, and were initially skeptical of the arts process. The article states that “to our knowledge

previous research has not attempted a comparison between an arts-based intervention and a more conventional approach. Compared to the conventional training, the arts-based approach seems to be more effective in stimulating beneficial changes in leaders…. For the leaders who received the art-based intervention, our findings show an enhanced self-awareness and humility and reduced poor performance" (Romanowska et al. 2014, 105). Art has the ability to tackle some of these larger social problems with cognitive and rational methods; it "shows unexpected sides of our existence without 'explaining it into pieces' through theoretical systems and makes us understand the self and the world in the new way" (Ricoeur 1991 in Romanowska et al. 2014, 98).

An example of an arts-based intervention program which has obtained international recognition is the El Sistema program initiated in Venezuela. Specifically supporting at-risk youth, this program has used Western classical music as a means of having a dialogue around community engagement and student empowerment, as well as a way to address interpersonal behavior and academic concerns. Through music lessons, El Sistema has created a safe space for students to make interpersonal relationships and have a dialogue around community needs. Programs around the world have adopted the El Sistema mission as inspiration to address social change. An example found within the Canadian Prairies is the YONA-Sistema program, located in Edmonton, Alberta. "'From the very beginning, the Sistema has been dedicated to realizing the simple but radical idea of its founder—that music can save lives, can rescue children, and can in fact be a potent vehicle for social reform and the fight against the perils of childhood poverty'" (Tunstall 2012 in Baker 2014, 164). Many scholars have written about El Sistema's performances, mission and outcomes, taking both critical and supportive stances. Nevertheless, the principal and lasting value that El Sistema has created is giving the world the idea that "music as social action" can work internationally (Baker 2014, 321). However, to the best of my knowledge arts-based approaches have not been specifically discussed within a Saskatchewan context. These projects have inspired me to further explore the power of the arts to support student development.

Community School

I proposed my research project to the Regina Public School Board and was provided the opportunity to work with the staff and students at École Elsie Mironuck Community School in

Regina, Saskatchewan. Theresa MacPhail, the School Community Coordinator, described the school's demographics as well as the typical composition of schools which have obtained a community school designation. "I think it has to be said first of all that all community schools are different, very different from each other", and that École Elsie Mironuck Community School was one of the last schools to receive a community school designation (Theresa MacPhail, personal communication 2014). She explained that there are approximately 570 students, from kindergarten to grade 8, who participate in a dual-track education program, with classes being offered in both English and French Immersion. The school demographics are diverse, welcoming new families and children, many who speak English as a second language. École Elsie Mironuck Community School is one of the largest community schools in the Regina Public School Board, high schools included.

Student Needs

Community schools were originally created to meet the needs of Métis, Non-Status[5], and First Nations children, stated MacPhail. She explained that in Regina in 1980 the community school designation was given to schools with over 25% of the student population being First Nations and Métis students. She notes that the current demographics of École Elsie Mironuck Community School includes 34% First Nations and Métis students. In a reflexive tone, MacPhail speaks to the objectives to meet specific student needs:

> I was actually part of the original education initiative that formed the community school program from the SUNTEP program, the Gabriel Dumont Institute here in Regina. From that it started out that the needs of Aboriginal students were not being met but they would fall through the cracks and a big hole had opened up in grade 9 and they would just be swallowed up. They just wouldn't move on from there and I think that it has been well over 30 years that not only the Regina Board of Education (sic) but the Government of Saskatchewan really saw that something was seriously missing. Even though it is over 30 years since these strategies have been in place, our children and students of Aboriginal ancestry are still struggling to this day. [Theresa MacPhail, personal communication 2014]

[5] "'Non-Status Indians' commonly refers to people who identify themselves as Indians but who are not entitled to registration on the Indian Register pursuant to the *Indian Act.* Some of them may be members of a First Nation."
Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada. 2012. "Non-Status Indians." Accessed December 17, 2015. https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100014433/1100100014437

The workload demands on educators are consistently being increased through academic, behavior management, and extra-curricular needs. MacPhail acknowledged the demands placed on teachers and stressed the importance of a school community coordinator to serve as support. To her, "you have to have someone to implement, and if you don't it's not going to happen." Calvin Racette, the Aboriginal Education Coordinator for Regina Public Schools, stated to me during an interview that he believes that students need to feel a sense a belonging. The Regina Public School Board provides resources to support learning, hires educators that are connectors for students, and offers inclusive programming within each community school and division.

Resources

Community schools offer a number of resources that typically would not be present in other schools. MacPhail comments on her position at École Elsie Mironuck Community School and of the resources in place to support student needs:

> We meet need as it presents itself all the way from finding shoes and socks, if that is necessary, to providing food and we have a nutrition program that is a flagship component of a community school. Here we have a lot of targeted programs…ours is more because of our numbers, we have to be more targeted in terms of meeting the needs of the students [that] are presented to us by the teachers who identify need and we meet those needs. If they need equipment, if they need, you know school supplies we'll do our level best to meet those and also shoes for gym and different kind of things that would stand as a barrier to children's full participation in the program then we will try to fill those gaps in. [Theresa MacPhail, personal communication 2014]

While assisting the individual students at school, MacPhail offers support to their families as well. In partnership with the school counsellor and resource officer, services include ensuring students are in attendance and finding strategies to support them coming to school. When a health concern is identified, students are taken to see a physician and families are notified. Home visits assist in ensuring a safe environment for students and offering strategies to support learning and social needs. Two Elders have been assigned to École Elsie Mironuck Community School to serve the role of educators as well as to support classrooms and individuals. Elder Fourhorns teaches classes in Cree and acts as a support to classroom learning in Social Studies and Aboriginal Education. Elder Dixon is classified as a contemporary Elder, meaning she was not raised on a reserve, and performs through her storytelling that engages youth with storyboards. She speaks to issues of bullying, a concept of self, and interpersonal relationships,

in addition to telling legends and oral histories (Theresa MacPhail, personal communication 2014).

As previously mentioned, students who are in a Community School environment have proven to struggle with transitions, either on a personal or an academic front. These transitions include moving between classrooms or different schools, transitioning from elementary to high school, or situations of a personal nature. As a means to support these students, École Elsie Mironuck Community School has served as a pilot site for innovative approaches to delivering courses to middle-years students within the Fine Arts and Practical and Applied Arts curricular strands. Each week for 3 hours or one full afternoon the school would emulate a high school setting. In this context classroom teachers would teach various option blocks, allowing students in grades 5 through 8 to select courses. Each course is comprised of students from different grade and age levels, connecting the students by their common interest in the topic at hand. Classes are taught in and around the school, extending to the neighbouring high school for woodshop or construction courses. By starting to prepare students for the transition to high school as early as grade 5, the hope is that students are eased into the process of selecting courses, attending classes in different parts of the school, and having different teachers and classmates. From an administrative perspective this model has proven to be successful in supporting these students' needs.

Regina Public School Board – Circle of Courage Philosophy

Development

In order to address the growing needs of community school children, the Regina Public School Board has embraced the teachings of the Circle of Courage. MacPhail comments that this philosophy has been adopted from a South Dakota model of reclaiming youth at-risk (Figure 1). By addressing what this philosophy conceives to be four foundational vocabulary words (Mastery, Belonging, Independence and Generosity) staff and students use this holistic view to teach behavior strategies and interpersonal relationships (Theresa MacPhail, personal communication 2014).

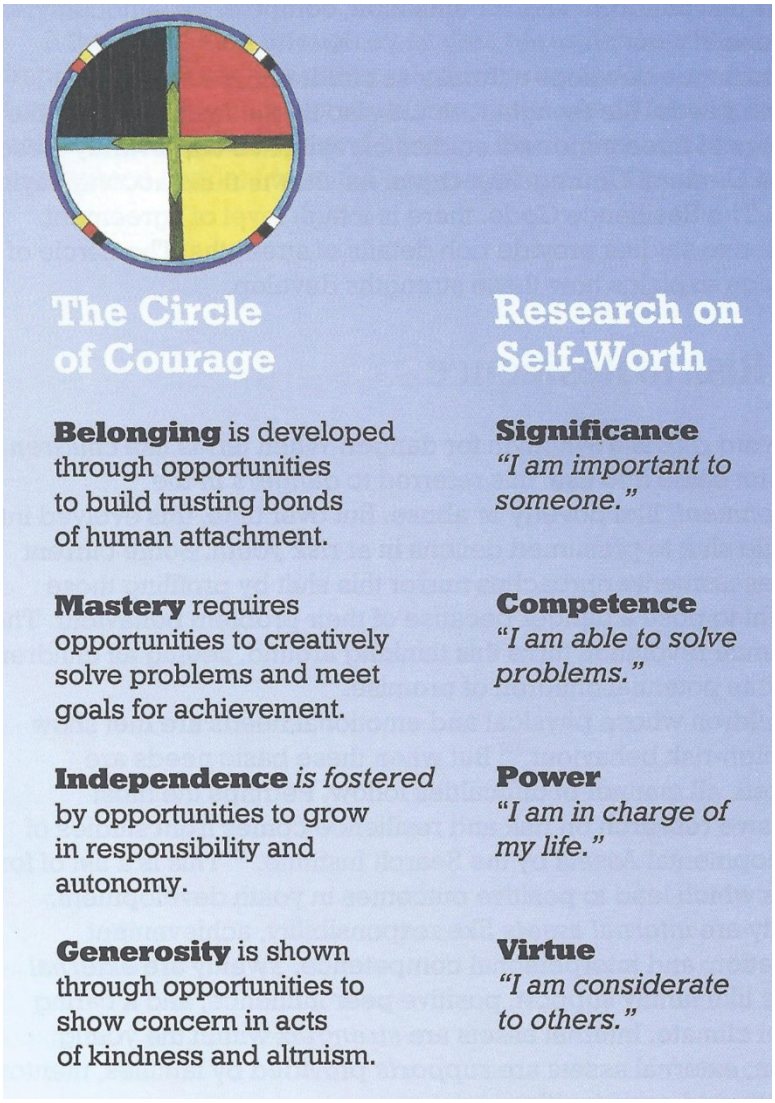

Figure 1

The Circle of Courage philosophy, as noted in the Response Ability Pathways (R.A.P.) training and adopted by the Regina Public School Board

(Adapted from Brendtro and du Toit 2005, 43)

Racette reflects on the development of the Regina Public School Board adopting this philosophy and maintains that it is not strictly an Aboriginal perspective, but rather a model aimed at reclaiming at-risk youth:

> I think about several years ago that the school division got involved with it mostly because they thought it was an Aboriginal model and were sold that and they trained several hundred teachers in the Circle of Courage… I had an opportunity to go down to the Black Hills, to South Dakota to meet with those fellas… and there is one school in the whole entire country that is doing something to do with the Circle of Courage in the States, so mostly it is a theoretical model. So it is a theoretical model over a practical model. You know, there is nothing wrong with the foundations of it and the theory of it but then they try to market it as Aboriginal content and it's not really, it's not an Aboriginal model but it has some similarities so you can make those connections, right. [Calvin Racette, personal communication 2014]

It appears as though many educators and schools seem to believe that if they are teaching through the Circle of Courage, they have completed the Aboriginal Educational grade-specific requirement, when in reality this is false. As Racette states, "it is a model all about reclaiming youth at risk… it is all about the virtues and all the different cultural components that form that holistic model" (Personal communication 2014).

In a reflexive tone, Racette shares a story of meeting the men who had marketed the Circle of Courage strategy and book titled *RAP Response Ability Pathways: Restoring Bonds of Respect,* Larry Brendtro and Lesley du Toit (2005), which the Regina Public School Board had bought. He recalls spending the day with them, playing golf and participating in a sweat lodge. At the end of their time together he was disappointed with the way these men had chosen to conduct themselves as their image did not represent their character. He believes the school board was sold a "bill of goods" and is disappointed with the men who are "being paid an astronomical amount of money for pretending they were something that they weren't." Regardless of how the Circle of Courage philosophy was "sold" or presented to the school division, Racette notes that "every school that works with it creates better teachers, and creates a more harmonious place, and creates a welcoming environment for kids" (Calvin Racette, personal communication 2014).

Outlook

RAP Response Ability Pathways: Restoring Bonds of Respect (Brendtro and du Toit 2005) is a book which outlines a philosophy committed to providing tools for educators,

community members, and parents working to support at-risk youth. The RAP philosophy teaches the skills to connect with people by responding to their needs, problem-solving, and restoring relationships based on the four fundamental tenets of the Circle of Courage—Mastery, Belonging, Independence, and Generosity (Brendtro and du Toit 2005, xi). The book states that "the Circle of Courage philosophy is universal, although we initially used Lakota images and stories to express the ideas. Because these values are universal, we have found broad acceptance from those who care deeply about children and youth in many parts of the world" (Brendtro and du Toit 2005, ix).

Children who are in distress cope in different ways, having these sentiments surface in an array of emotions. From being in a hostile state or creating physical altercations, to demonstrating a withdrawn personality or a reclusive manner, these individuals are demonstrating pain. RAP encourages a holistic view by addressing the needs of a whole child, since pain-based behaviors are seen as indicators that the individual's demands are not being met. Through positive development, children may have their physical and emotional essentials supported "turning risk into resilience" (Brendtro and du Toit 2005, 13).

Implementation

I believe MacPhail says it best: it is challenging to call someone an absolute authority on the Circle of Courage since the "Circle of Courage is something that to me you have to live every day and you have to keep trying it to see what kind of payoff it will have" (Theresa MacPhail, personal communication 2014). She explains how each month at École Elsie Mironuck Community School the staff and students celebrate these virtues by recognizing students in a school-wide assembly. The assembly highlights individuals who have exemplified the four values of the Circle of Courage and are recognized for their contributions to the school community. In addition to a behavior model, the Circle of Courage encourages students to reflect on their contributions to society and the larger communities to which they feel connected. "It is not only about behavior but also about recognizing differences and the same time as understanding that our needs are so similar" (Theresa MacPhail, personal communication 2014).

Joni Darke, an educator with the Regina Public School Board who most recently retired from her position as the Coordinator of the Practical and Applied Arts Program for the Division, participated in the Circle of Courage training in South Dakota a number of years ago. When

asked to synthesize the philosophy of the Circle of Courage she explained "it is all about not being so involved about yourself but being able to look at the person across from you, who is putting a story out there for you. We are all so busy that we do not see it. We miss the bids" (Joni Darke, personal communication 2014). She shared with me a situation that had happened that day of how a young man who was placing a bid was reaching out for someone to respond:

> I was over at [School X] and I am doing something with the grade eights there and I see this young guy sitting there on the side and I walk by and say "Hi how are you doing, look forward to see you later." Then later I look and he has moved down a bench, I said "Oh are you on a road show here?" And he said "No." I said "Are you okay?" and he said "No." I said "Do you want to talk?" And he said "Well… I got kicked out of my home." And I said "Do you have some place to stay? Tonight?" "Yeah they have a spot for me with the Ranch. Ranch Ehrlo"… I don't know his whole story but he was really upset and so he couldn't function in school. And he was one of those kids that you would have had in your classroom and you would say get to work, work, work, and they turn around and say, "F' you" and someone will get all upset about it and instead of saying "You know what brought that all? What is the problem? Would you like to talk? Step outside the door for a second." [Joni Darke, personal communication 2014]

The lesson to be taken from this situation is that educators and individuals moving though society are often reaching out for assistance, but these "bids" are missed or neglected. In these instances, someone's Circle has been broken and therefore they are reaching out for help to mend the missing quadrant(s). The manner in which we respond to these "bids" is pivotal as it not only is an indication of the interpersonal relationships but also of how the recipient is going to react from this interaction. Darke raises a key point by showcasing an interaction where her questioning technique diffused the potential for an outburst. She acknowledged the "bids" being made by the young man and responded in a caring and concerned manner. Being unaware of the full complexity of the situation, Darke notes that when a Circle has been broken it is challenging to focus on the task at hand or show academic success in the classroom. It is interesting that Darke had not worked with the young man before this interaction, yet by asking thoughtful questions and responding to his body language she was able to have him open up and share his story. Darke notes, "behavior is a language. They are talking to you. They are making bids constantly by their behavior. If they are acting out there is a story and if you get to know the story, that is half of it" (Joni Darke, personal communication 2014).

When looking to the virtues of the Circle of Courage it becomes clear that the lessons taught are greater than a behavioral model, but also can be seen cross-culturally. Darke comments, "you see it isn't an Aboriginal philosophy, it is in every culture, they branded it just like we brand many other things, they put a stamp on it and this is what they call it. It is a philosophy on how to live and how do be a good person, and a generous person, and how to share and everything around that" (Joni Darke, personal communication 2014).

Within a school system there is much diversity found within each school and classroom. Since the cultural demographics of École Elsie Mironuck Community School are diversifying I asked if there had been any negative feedback from families or cultural groups regarding the outlook of the Circle of Courage; to my surprise and excitement the response received was no. "I think it is a real testament to these truths are universal and that these concepts that we are supporting are really not at odds" comments MacPhail. "You know belonging, and being generous, and being loved, and all these things are universal needs and wants" (Theresa MacPhail, personal communication 2014).

The inclusion of Elders in the classroom offers a means of support to classroom teachers, as the Saskatchewan government has mandated Treaty Education be taught to all grade levels[6]. The Regina Public School Board has developed a series of Aboriginal Education kits which come complete with learning resources, lesson plans and books. In addition, MacPhail notes the importance of internal support systems found within the schools "that shows the accountability of at least speaking the same language when it comes to talking about Treaties and talking about culture. But in the same way what is running parallel to all of this is that to look at the other children that are coming from all over the world and with their backgrounds and cultures, and trying to apply those kinds of strategies to validating them. Because umm... some of these little guys when they come in here, you just have no idea where they are coming from but if you watch them and listen to them, you will get a little glimpse of it. So they also have to find a place of belonging and a place where they fit" (Theresa MacPhail, personal communication 2014).

[6] Government of Saskatchewan, Ministry of Education. 2012. "Treaty Education." Accessed January 5, 2016. http://www.education.gov.sk.ca/treaty-education/

Comparisons to the Medicine Wheel

The colours of the Medicine Wheel vary depending on the location and the associated tribal group; however, fundamentally the four quadrants remain the same, and therefore a comparison can be made to the Circle of Courage. From the initial glance both symbols—Circle of Courage and Medicine Wheel—appear to mirror the other, yet upon analysis of these structures they are related but not duplicates:

> The Medicine Wheel in its four directions, and its four colours, and its *four*, is actually a multi-leveled philosophy that goes on... I don't think you we can necessarily mix up the Medicine Wheel and the Circle of Courage. The Circle of Courage is a specific philosophy that works with children who are at-risk, whereas the Medicine Wheel is an ancient worldview manifestation that First Nations people have since time. Have used that as a way of explaining how the human population and the animal and the plant and the mineral and everything that makes up our world interacts together in harmony. How each of those sections have to be honored and made significant in your life. [Theresa MacPhail, personal communication 2014]

Therefore these two symbols are not interchangeable, although they may appear to be the same. The four colours—red, yellow, black, and white—represent the Plains First Nations since this model has been adopted from the South Dakota representation (Theresa MacPhail, personal communication 2014). The fundamental difference between these two symbols is that the Circle of Courage maintains the stance of a behavior model that is cross-cultural with four foundational vocabulary words addressing the needs of the whole child, and the Medicine Wheel is an ancient worldview with seven points (Joni Darke, personal communication 2014).

Critique

The advantages and results of the Circle of Courage are many and likewise so are the concerns surrounding it, and suggesting a whole school division adopt this philosophy, teaching outlook, and mindset is daunting. These concerns can appear in the form of racism, ignorance, or a difference in priorities. When asked about resistance faced regarding the Circle of Courage, Darke reflects on a situation at a school at which she had taught. Darke recalls experiencing a situation of racism as educators often believe that the Circle of Courage is a First Nations model. Unfortunately, some educators view these teachings in a racist light and struggle to see the positive effects it can have. By educators participating in the sessions and having a better

understanding of the philosophy I believe some of these attitudes can be eliminated, yet racism is a larger societal concern.

An arts educator in the City of Regina, working at an elementary school in a more affluent neighborhood in the city, told me of how the Circle of Courage is implemented in her school community. She states that since the school has a low number of Aboriginal and First Nations students "there isn't that need to connect to that culture, because it isn't their culture" (personal communication 2014). Statistically this is correct, as a community school designation is given to schools with a large number of First Nations, Non-Status, and Métis students, yet the Circle of Courage philosophy and outlook maintain their status throughout the division. This educator recalls that in her school the teachings are used on an individual front, looking to the student's personal and social growth, but are not celebrated within the school community. Later in the conversation we spoke about how the students' "Circles" and needs are different. She believes that many of the concerns faced by community school students are "non-issues" in her school, such as personal well-being, nutrition, and clothing, and that the parent community focuses more on test scores and academic performance. While on the surface academic excellence is important, Racette comments that there is more to life: "Life is all about relationships, if you build relationships with kids, if kids believe in you and trust you, and respect you, kids will do anything for you but they have to know that you care about them" (Calvin Racette, personal communication 2014). All students need to know that someone cares and teaching through the Circle of Courage attempts to address all these needs.

Finally, MacPhail raises a concern found within the community school. She questions if the vocabulary and messages are making their way to the Aboriginal families, as in the means to support their children's academic experience:

> It is still about poverty, it is still about not feeling part of society and while it is still about not having participation fully in the society and being marginalized, and it's still about surviving by whatever methodology you can hold on to. Although I think the schools have and the government has done some things to make things a little more, hospitable if you will for Aboriginal students in the school system. Still I don't know if the message has really completely come to parents and grandparents because when you are living on the edge and you are living on the margins of society sometimes it's not about being child-centered it's about playing out your dynamics with the other adults and the children are peripheral. [Theresa MacPhail, personal communication 2014]

As a community coordinator in conjunction with the school resource officer, school councillor, and administration, efforts are continually being made to connect the home and school lives of the students and attempting to level the playing field.

Performance Practices

When asked about the role of performance practices in relation to the teachings of the Circle of Courage, the stories I obtained were examples of cross-cultural group cohesion and individuals finding a place of belonging. Joanne Crawford, a Regina drum facilitator, performer, and owner of Boomtown Drums, a local music store in Regina, Saskatchewan, acknowledged that the values taught by the Circle of Courage are qualities of human need. "We are human and there are a lot of commonality [sic]. Most of the differences come from what I would say is artificial construct, and you have an opportunity when constructing a performance group to construct the values, behaviors and attitudes that you want those youth to carry forward and provide leadership on the group that they are involved in" (Joanne Crawford, personal communication 2014). The success of the ensemble can be attributed to more than the students demonstrating proficiency in their skills. As a collective, attitudes of respect and positive behaviours are emphasised and celebrated, all of which culminate in a team atmosphere. The vocabulary words used in this content vary slightly from those of the Circle of Courage, yet the fundamental values are the same, building upon Crawford's comment that commonalities exist among human needs.

One of the many strengths the fine arts possess is their ability to speak to the intangible, states Marlene Hinz, a Regina arts educator: "It has been proven time and time again that at-risk kids find that the arts are a means of expression, and a means of belonging, and a means for all the things we are trying to teach. I believe that within the four strands of the Fine Arts—Music, Dance, Drama, and Visual Art—there is an energy which is able to speak to the mind, body, and soul of participants and audience members alike" (Marlene Hinz, personal communication 2014). Students participating in a Community School or through the mainstream education program are able to connect with the abstract lessons taught in arts education classes because it speaks to the academic, social and interpersonal growth of a child:

> Performance is a creative opportunity where people can really express themselves through movement, through song, through dance, through

> drumming, through whatever instrument your school can afford… There is a huge opportunity in performance for teaching leadership, creativity, imagination, independence, learning to think for yourself, to have ideas, to take those ideas forward to work on them and complete them and show them to others…. The arts communicates not only content, but also emotion, communicates history, it communicates and your cultural perspectives. [Joanne Crawford, personal communication 2014]

When interviewing these educators, they all noted that a sense of belonging was imperative to a group's overall success and the individual's development. "I think it is the heart of a community school really. It is the heart of a community to provide these opportunities for all students" (Theresa MacPhail, personal communication 2014). Through MacPhail's experiences as a School Community Coordinator, she has seen the positive effect the Fine Arts have on student development as well as to the culture of the school. "I have always been of the mind that children have to feel part, and this is why I love the performances that we did every year. In the end when they are standing on stage there, and they have got their little headdress on, and their parents are out there waving at them and smiling they are feeling part of something wonderful" (Theresa MacPhail, personal communication 2014). Performances conducted through the school have not only served as opportunities to showcase individual growth but also to foster a larger community. In creating inclusive opportunities for the students' parents and support systems to embrace their children's learning, the home and school aspects of a child's life are connected.

Darke reflects on the process of creating a performance and remembers fondly how every child had a role. "It was amazing that every single kid was part of the performance. Every single one of them had a part, maybe they didn't want to be the guys on stage, or weren't chosen to be the guys on stage but they sure did all the support for it cause if you didn't have this guy doing this they looked foolish or sounded bad, you know whatever it was. I think it was just wonderful" (Joni Darke, personal communication 2014). In order for a performance to be a success, all elements—from those on stage to the behind-the-scenes crew—needed to be in place. The overall success of the event is dependent upon the group working in a cohesive manner towards a common goal. Darke's reflective tone was positive because in these instances there was a team atmosphere allowing everyone to celebrate their accomplishments.

Teaching Strategies

Throughout the course of this field project, I employed two specific teaching strategies which provided a means for students to explore course content. Both inquiry-based learning and the use of a Talking Circle allowed the students to be active participants in the class and lesson-planning process. Unlike a lecture format, these strategies are unique because they welcome the students' perspectives and voices in the course decision-making process, ultimately impacting the trajectory of the semester.

Inquiry-Based Learning

Inquiry-based learning is a teaching model designed to increase student participation in their learning process. "It suggests a model of curriculum development and practice that moves educational debate beyond the teacher and student-based approach towards a model of teaching and learning in which the endeavor is shared" (Bacon and Matthews 2013, 351). As a whole, this strategy recognizes the importance of allowing students an active role in their educational experience and encourages curiosity, imagination, and inquiry. While teaching through this model, teachers "use questions that 'launch groups of children on their own co-operative quests for answers. They can be guided and steered, helped over difficulties and offered hints in the right direction or suggestive leading questions. In these ways each inquiry that has been set in motion can… become an immensely educative experience for all the children who have shared in it'" (Harlen 2013, 10-11).

The term "inquiry" by nature is the search for knowledge and developing a sense of curiosity; in education, the term inquiry has typically been associated with scientific knowledge as seen through formal quantitative research and methodologies. However, inquiry in a more general sense "includes an overarching set of principles, process skills and a knowledge base that is relevant across all areas of the curriculum" (Bacon and Matthews 2013, 352). In using an inquiry-based teaching model in the classroom, educators can inspire students of all age levels and disciplines to further explore the content at hand through their own interests. It is argued that when inquiry-based learning is "backed by a sound epistemological frame [it] offers a richer encounter with knowledge…IBL (Inquiry-based learning) is understood as the ways in which curious learners actively and seriously engage with the social and physical environment in a questioning and critical effort to make sense of the world, and the consequent reflection, in

community, on the connections between the experiences encountered and the information gathered, leading to thoughtful action" (Bacon and Matthews 2013, 352).

Teaching through an inquiry-based learning model has proven to compel students not only to further their understanding of the content at hand, but also to establish critical thinking skills. Students are given tools to "[expand their] understanding about the world around [them] as well as stimulating and satisfying curiosity… it enables them to develop the understanding, powers of reasoning and attitudes that help them to lead physically and emotionally healthy and rewarding lives" (Harlen 2013, 11), ultimately having wider implications on their lives as well as the well-being of their communities. In relation to the fine arts, inquiry-based learning allows students both a means to understand the arts themselves, such as techniques and concepts, as well as use these mediums to make sense of the world around them. By acknowledging that schools cannot provide all the tools an individual needs to be successful, inquiry-based projects allow students to become independent learners, to overcome learning difficulties, and develop an inquisitive nature (Harlen 2013, 11; Magnussen 2000, 360).

In order to facilitate an inquiry-based learning process preplanning is essential to the success of the activity, as a thoughtful reflection of all perspectives needs to be addressed prior to introducing the content to the students (Alberta Learning 2004, 23). Finding an overarching theme which addresses cross-curricular links provides an opportunity for students to make broader implications and connect the lessons to other areas of study. "The most successful curriculum inquiry projects emerge from topics that are of personal interest to the students" (Alberta Learning 2004, 15). In these instances, the teacher provides the fundamentals and an explanation of complex ideas that cannot be achieved through inquiry alone, taking on a facilitation role (Harlen 2013, 12). Throughout the process, educators are consistently assessing how effectively students have engaged in the process, building on these experiences in a manner similar to a scaffolding form of instruction. "However, the inquiry process is not linear or lock step. It is highly individual, flexible and more recursive than might be suggested in traditional models of the research process" (Alberta Learning 2004, 9) (Figure 2).

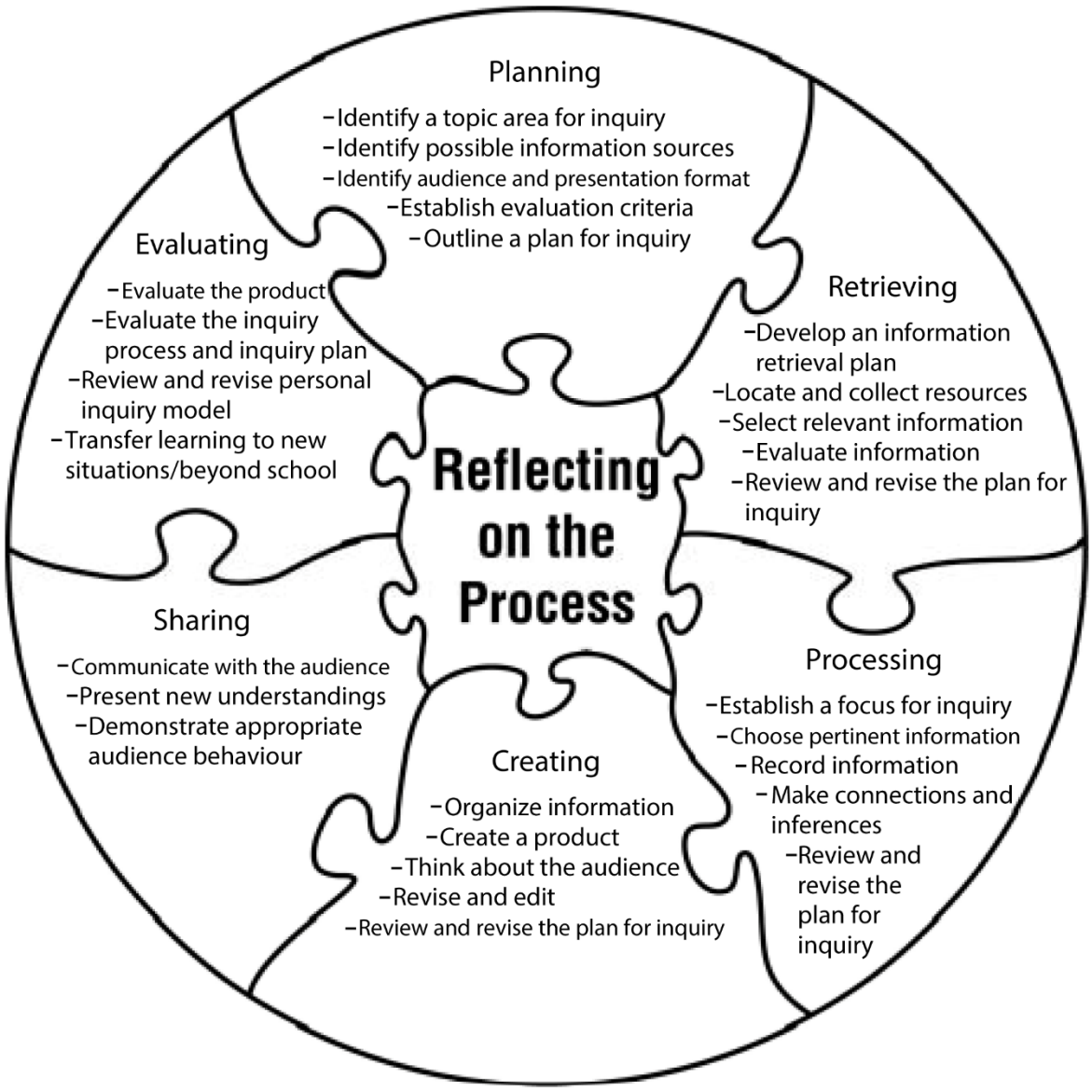

Figure 2

Breakdown of an Inquiry-Based Learning model

(Adapted from Alberta Learning 2004, 10)

Talking Circle

"Talking Circles", "Peacemaking Circles", or "Healing Circles" are cultural practices used by a number of Indigenous people of North America (Mehl-Madrona and Mainguy 2014, 4). As oral narrative is the preferred method of communication, the Talking Circle is an ancient customary technique used to teach culture and traditions, through which knowledge is passed down to future generations (Granillo et al. 2010, 629). "The Talking Circle is an intertribal method of sharing information important to the community, and is a familiar method of facilitating group discussion, highlighting cooperation versus competition" (Haozous et al. 2010, 379). There exists a variety of forms but typically members sit in a circle to reflect, respond, and consider a question or problem posed to the group (Mehl-Madrona and Mainguy 2014, 4). In order for the session to start, an Elder or a facilitator will begin with either a story or a prayer, introducing the topic of discussion. Following this introduction the floor is opened for discussion, and a talking stick or token is used to signal who is speaking and where attention is to be focused—these items may include a feather, rock, stick, arrow, or personal item of importance. While holding the talking stick or token, an individual has an opportunity to speak his or her mind, share ideas, stories, or comment on the area of discussion, while others are silent. Once that person has finished, the talking stick is passed to the left, in a clockwise motion. The circle is complete once everyone has had an opportunity to receive the talking stick. (Granillo et al. 2010, 629; Mehl-Madrona and Mainguy 2014, 4).

Theresa MacPhail also provided an explanation of how Talking Circles were implemented at École Elsie Mironuck Community School, stating:

> A Talking Circle is really, it is a democratic way of having everyone heard and the way you do that is by either the use of a Talking Stick, which is a decorated stick with ribbons and feathers and beads and some are really, really long like six feet long and highly decorated and come down through families and are only brought out in ceremonial situations or if there is a big meeting to decide political or economic or social decision. What we used was an example made by Elder John Watson who was our elder here at the school a couple of years ago. So that is what we utilized in our Talking Circle the other day… if you do not have a Talking Stick, let's say you are a teacher who wants to hold a Talking Circle but does not have a stick that anyone has made for you, you can use a Token and we have an example of a Token that is something significant. Like in the case of the heart-shaped rock that my son found in Rocky Boy, Montana, which is a highly spiritual place, and he came running to me and said

> "Mommy look, here is a heart" and this colored stone is exactly the same size as the adult palm and exactly the same size as a human heart. So I sometimes use that as a Token to use clockwise around the circle. Everyone gets a chance to speak and if you do not want to speak you can just pass it and the next person can either speak or just pass it. It is something that provides for everyone's voice to be heard and there is no interruptions at all while the person has the Talking Stick or the Token in their hand. It is a way of orderly sharing thoughts and positions on what is the current topic. You can use it for a lot of different things, let's say you have a group of students that are in conflict you can use it in that context or use it to decide things. Why the Talking Circle is so important is because in the end the outcome should be a consensus and a decision and sometimes First Nations people want to speak for a long time on things and great orators were among the First Nations people who would talk for a long time depending on how important the topic was. Often times with the group of children you will encourage them to say what they want to say and not to be interrupted but to stick to the topic at hand. I just am not sure how one creates a Token. I don't really know. I think it would have to come to you as something significant just like how this rock came to me given by my son from his homeland. I'm not sure you could use a marble as long as it is something they can put in their hand and hold and pass.
>
> It is more about the symbolism and you know rocks are deemed as grandfathers and that is what the First Nations people believe. Rocks are alive in their language they are not inanimate they are animate. So, almost everything in the Cree language is animate, like a watch because it has a heartbeat. [Theresa MacPhail, personal communication, 2014]

By nature the Talking Circle technique is used to prevent a reactive form of communication and instead fosters deep-listening and reflection. Additionally, it allows those who may otherwise be prohibited or uncomfortable in presenting their views an outlet to speak and be heard (Mehl-Madrona and Mainguy 2014, 4). "The circle process establishes a very different style of communication than most from European traditions are used to. Rather than aggressive debate and challenging each other… the circle process establishes a safe non-hierarchical place in which all present have the opportunity to speak without interruptions. Rather than active verbal facilitation, communication is regulated through the passing of a talking stick" (Walsh 2015, 60-61). In respecting and recognizing the importance of the Talking Stick or Token, this item mediates the discussion allowing for a sense of equality amongst all participants. Additionally, the Talking Stick or Token prevents any one-on-one debates or attacks, allowing all parties to discuss the problem and potential solutions (Mehl-Madrona and Mainguy 2014, 5; Walsh 2015, 61). Every time the Talking Circle strategy is used, it varies in

length and time. Recognizing the importance of allowing everyone the opportunity to be heard, culturally there are no specific time constraints placed upon this process, however in a classroom setting this process is mediated.

In a school context, Talking Circles allow students to build connections, strengthen relationships, learn to take turns speaking, and develop active-listening skills. MacPhail comments that "In conflict resolution, it is a good way of having everyone heard and what is the impact of whatever has happened. How does that make you feel? Sometimes you have to ask some leading questions and hope for an answer" (Theresa MacPhail, personal communication 2014). When used in a study addressing the Talking Circle technique for disciplinary purposes, the results were such that the Talking Circle helps to:

> proactively manage classroom behavior, facilitate difficult conversations and resolve problems… which provide an opportunity to improve school culture by addressing behavior standards and creates a peaceful forum for dealing with conflicts and behavior problems… Data from participant observation and semi-structured interviews highlighted relational themes of being together, feeling safe, expressing genuine emotions, and cultivating empathy. Another theme that emerged was emotional literacy skills, including learning to listen, managing anger, and developing interpersonal sensitivity. [Walsh 2015, 60]

In looking to the results of this study, Talking Circles have the potential to evoke personal growth and develop interpersonal skills that can be transferable to other aspects of life. While the strategy may be rooted in a traditional model and worldview the lesson applications are cross-cultural.

Defining Community

Communities are diverse and defining them is complicated, as communities often overlap, and a person can belong to many communities at the same time, whether based on geographical location, emotional connections, reflections on a memory, or defined through landmarks (Feld and Basso 1996). Prior to commencing my fieldwork in the classroom, I needed to establish an understanding of what defines a community for myself as well as for the students in order to support this inquiry-based learning project. Our personal and professional interactions assist to define who we are and contribute to where we feel a sense of belonging. Communities can be based on many attributes including ethnicity, religion, gender, class, or political views. Settings such as towns, villages, houses or even cyberspace can offer a location for people to

meet. There are no parameters placed on the size of a community as the "'warmly persuasive word' has at its heart the search for human belonging" (Higgins 2012, 142). Music is a common aspect of our social and cultural associations. Martin Stokes (1994) acknowledges Anthony Seeger's comments, stating that "music is not just a thing which happens 'in' society. A society, Seeger argues, might also be usefully conceived as something that happens 'in music' (Seeger, 2006)". The presence of music is evident in our modern lives as we interpret our understanding of ourselves in relation to the world around us (McKay 2012, 96).

The following are various examples of how communities are defined; each context is important because it displays the fluid nature by which communities can be organized. Rooted within ethnomusicological and anthropological theory, these cultural examples of communities serve as the foundation for this field project. The nature of defining these communities provides a resource for future iterations of this project, support throughout the experience, as well as allowing me a framework for my analysis.

Place

There is much depth to a sense of place, as it could refer to the geographical location in which the social activity is situated but also the social influences such as hierarchies and status. Music enables these social boundaries, allowing people to aurally locate themselves (Stokes 1994, 3). Stokes argues that "music is socially meaningful" in allowing individuals an outlet to recognize their identities but also to become aware of the boundaries that separate them from others. Social performances, such as song and dance practices, provide the means by which ethnicities and identities can be mobilized (Stokes 1994, 5). Place is not a stage upon which culture happens but one in which institutions and practices are engrained. These institutions and practices form the basis for our sense of self, guide our understanding, and help form our sense of identity (Casey 1996, 46).

Karen Blu (1996) explores the manner in which communities are located for the individual, and how their significances are socially and culturally constructed. The imagery of a place, which we create, is at times evident but also can disappear from our consciousness, thereby altering our interpretation of meaning (Blu 1996, 199). Blu recognizes a number of points when defining a community among the Native American Lumbee people: the first observation was a lack of clarity in defining community boundaries in an attempt to evade

political control of locating "Indian people" and their land. The Lumbee seemed to avoid placing physical boundaries on their space in an attempt to avoid political authority (Blu 1996, 198). The manner in which land is designated and used is through negotiations and therefore controlled by a political regime. Being *placed* communicates much about your identity and social life (Blu 1996, 201).

To the Lumbee people, the term "community" meant multiple references, including location and a term for people (Blu 1996, 198), yet Blu notes the distinction that different cultural groups can make: "Whites tended to focus on visible aspects of the landscape… [whereas] Indians and Blacks concentrated on social aspects" (Blu 1996, 218). When asked about the landscape, a young Lumbee Indian man mentions landmarks such as swamps, branches, creeks, and built features, yet in reference to his community states: "Little Black Ankle. You know it when you hit it, but you can't see it. It's like courage, you can't see it but you know what it is" (Blu 1996, 200). Similarly, a Lumbee Elder notes that the creation of a name is fictitious, stating "Indians have communities where Whites sometimes do not recognize them" (Blu 1996, 205).

Virtual Communities

Cyberspace facilitates the formation of groups of people who possess similar interests, play games, share information, conduct business, and collaborate. These virtual groups vary in size from large well-developed organizations to small independent circles. Online communities are subject to much critique, as their validity in society is questioned (Smith and Kollock 1999, 16). Online communities certainly differ from "face-to-face" communities, yet they still have the potential to support individuals and foster a sense of belonging. A common criticism of online communities is that participants are isolated, whereas a physical group of people is seen as required to structure a community. To counter this argument, there is a great deal of loneliness and depression in the lives of many even in a physical context (Smith and Kollock 1999, 16). "Community is now conceptualized not in terms of physical proximity but in terms of social networks" (Smith and Kollock 1999, 17).

Through advancements in technology cyber-communities connect to the "real" world, and vice versa (Smith and Kollock 1999, 19). For instance, in situations of social protest, members of virtual groups are able to present knowledge and information to a larger crowd. This

mutual overlap enables participation to occur in both settings simultaneously. Through daily interactions our physical bodies provide a stabilized anchor for who we are, yet online these identities are based on information rather than physical matter (Donath 1999, 29). In cyberspace a person can create multiple online identities and maintain these facades through an invisible world (Donath 1999, 29-30). The masks worn may explore multiple facets of an individual while maintaining a foundational core. In this context, cyberspace offers the opportunity to serve as a virtual space for people to come together with like-minded interests offering a similar support system to physical communities through feedback, collaborative opportunities, and interactions. The tangible community cannot be felt, yet the abstract sense of support exists (Waldron 2009, 105).

Metalanguage

Metalanguage has been defined as the language used to describe a metaphor. One of the values of metaphors is that a single object can adopt various mediums to navigate an interpretation (Feld 1981, 24). Feld reflects on his experience with the Kaluli people of Papua New Guinea and the manner in which they use metaphors to describe their music and surroundings: "Places may come into presence through the experience of bodily sensation, but it is through expression that they reach heightened emotional and aesthetic dimensions of sensual inspiration" (Feld 1996, 134). He explains that the physical and emotional presence of the human body is located in the voice. The Kaluli sing with and about water and envision songs flowing like the voice through their body. The poetics of place and the landscape merge with the peoples' singing voices, producing an additional interpretation to the musical work (Feld 1996, 134). The Kaluli people use metalanguage to describe place and through their music offer an alternative view for defining the musical characteristics of a group of individuals. Metaphors also manifest in the manner in which we view ourselves and the world around us. We create these various interpretations to represent an aspect of our character or portray meaning.

Diaspora

Another way to think about the formation of communities is through *diaspora,* a term referring to a group of people living outside of their homeland who maintain a connection to their roots. Focusing on the dislocation from "home", we can explore how cultural practices and ethnic identities intersect with a new location (Habib 2013). Gross, McMurray, and Swedenburg

(1996) describe a case study of the distribution of *rai* music among immigrants in France and the formation of rap music among younger generations of French-Maghrebi. Within migrant communities who relocate, identities can be negotiated or can coexist with the new dominant culture. The process of *diffusion* enables material objects or cultural practices to be spread, encompassing the idea of multiple identities (Bonvillain 2006, 41). New generations have an understanding of *multiethnic* societies where hybridity allows for new contexts to emerge by incorporating original identities into living culture, ultimately contributing to new perspectives of identity and celebrating multiculturalism (Gross *et al*. 1996).

Canada is often viewed as a multicultural nation, yet some immigrants do not view the country this way. “Invisible minorities”, a term which I interpret as referring to a cultural group who do not feel fairly represented, have a fundamental sense of being uneasy with how difference is constructed, specifically how “otherness” is projected by the state (Bannerji 2000, 90). In the book *On the Dark Side of a Nation* Bannerji suggests that a “multicultural mosaic” is painted through exclusion; she writes that if Canada is truly multicultural, the nation would be a singular entity of cultural and political hegemony.

In looking to our Canadian classrooms, the cultural makeup is such that the composition of the students will differ in every context. Likewise, as our political environment continues to shift and we further open our doors to immigrants and refugees, the concept of diaspora will serve to affect our interpersonal relationships. Finally, diaspora also impacts the manner in which we perceive ourselves and our concept of “home”, because our internal and external representations do not necessarily align.

Group Cohesion

Associating gross motor movements to large group settings is called muscular bonding, allowing for the basics of social cohesion among any group that keeps time together (McNeil 1995, 3). McNeil explores how rhythmical muscular movements can be used as a technique for group cohesion as seen in military behavior. World history includes many accounts when moving and singing collectively have allowed tasks to become more efficient (McNeil 1995, 4). In the present day we experience examples such as football crowds, parades, religious rituals, and festivals that draw on the emotional effects of rhythmical movement and gestures (McNeil 1995, 5). A reflective soldier speaks to his experiences in battle and believes it to be a highlight

of his life, stating "there 'I' passes insensibly into a 'we,' 'my' becomes 'our,' and individual fate loses its central importance" (McNeil 1995, 10).

Turino (2008) in his book *Music as Social Life* mentions that participatory performances are an opportunity to develop a sense of community amongst participants. In musical settings when audience members are encouraged to participate, the distinction between artist and audience is non-existent, allowing the emphasis to be placed on the sonic and kinesthetic interactions (Turino 2008, 28). In participatory music settings, attention is placed on the act of doing rather than judging the performance. The quality of a piece is seen by how audience members feel, encouraging participants to focus inwardly (Turino 2008, 29). "This heightened concentration on the other participants is one reason that participatory music-dance is such a strong force for social bonding. It also leads to diminished self-consciousness, because (ideally) everyone present is similarly engaged" (Turino 2008, 29).

Applied Ethnomusicology in Education

Given the various applications for applied ethnomusicology, when contextualized within the field of education and music education it may be seen as the "collaboration to create educational programs, and events or pedagogical tools and frameworks" (Herrick 2015, 573). It seems as though a type of "border-crossing" exists between music education and ethnomusicology, collaboratively working together to address similar goals. In recent years, ethnomusicologists have "shifted their lenses from the music alone to the music-makers, [and] have developed a participant-observation process that has had a way of turning scholars into beginning students of a musical system, and by this very nature, they have drawn into question the music's pedagogy, training, and educational system" (Campbell 2003, 17).

Applied ethnomusicologists working in the field of education "reflect a theoretical orientation to ethnomusicology centered on the social processes of musical practices, and constructive philosophies of education" (Herrick 2015, 554). "Community music", as a concept, is gaining in popularity amongst the profession of music education, extending informal learning and cultural diversity to the classroom. Both applied ethnomusicologists and community musicians "share a common heritage and thus have overlapping interest in the social and cultural importance of music and music-making (and thus music learning) within an educational context" (Campbell and Higgins 2015, 654). As an overview, community music

strives to empower individuals to create, produce, and enjoy their own musical styles and expressions. Emphasis is placed on an open-door policy welcoming the perspectives of different individuals, and while working through this process there is an acknowledgement of both the individual and the group collective music-making experience (Campbell and Higgins 2015, 654). An early leader in the field, John Blacking—a British ethnomusicologist and social anthropologist—predicted over forty years ago that "ethnomusicology has the power to create a revolution in the world of music and music education" (Campbell and Higgins 2015, 663). From this prediction we are experiencing social change in our academic fields, research methods, and performance practices. Overlapping of music education, ethnomusicology and the emerging field of community music allow us to embrace a "sense of people and place, to [honor] the local, and to understand that music is situated within the lives of those who choose to make it… [and] is a point at which the means for understanding music, education, and culture may be found" (Campbell and Higgins 2015, 664).

Chapter 3 – Field Experience and Methodology

From March 21st to June 26th, 2014 my field project was conducted at École Elsie Mironuck Community School. Mr. Luke Braun, the grade 7/8 French Immersion classroom teacher, member of the Practical and Applied Arts teaching staff and stand-in administrator, was my teaching partner. As a colleague and graduate student his research interests include finding innovative approaches to delivering curricular content and developing his skills as an administrator. When creating the course Braun and I had decided to take on an inquiry-based learning model, allowing the students to be in the driver's seat of their learning experience. This educational strategy has proven to be particularly successful in engaging students as the emphasis is placed on the individual and their personal interests and experiences. In the classroom, the dynamics are such that the teacher takes on more of a facilitation role. While teaching through this model, I found myself having to be particularly adaptable as the course was navigated by the students' interests. Prior to each class I created lesson plans, which consisted primarily of learning objectives, yet Braun and I made certain to allow ourselves the flexibility to pivot around the central focus, calling upon our past experiences and knowledge allowing us to grow as educators.

Although the students' Spring semester began in March I needed to complete my commitments at the University of Alberta, and therefore for the first three class sessions I led the class via Skype with Braun being in attendance in the classroom. During the introductory period, it was very clear that this group of students had never worked together as a collective since they were visibly nervous and didn't know each other's names. One student commented that in the beginning "we were all shy and only talking to the people we knew and shy to dance and do anything in front of each other, we did it cause we had to" (Anonymous student, personal communication 2014). Due to the nature of this innovative Practical and Applied Arts programming a few students from each homeroom classroom are placed together in a class, but these numbers do not exceed two or three individuals. Early in the class, I asked the question "Is it safe to say that we are a bunch of people that have come and have never had a chance to previously work together?", to which the students collectively responded "Yes". During these introductory questions I asked the class to define a community; responses included "a society of people", "follow the same rules", "live in the same area", "organization", and "no size limit, can

grow and change". When asked to look around the room and make mention of the communities which connect us, the students acknowledged the school and some commented on being teammates on the basketball team, or were members of the Regina Air Cadets, undoubtedly surface-level responses. I asked students to think of the role that sound or music plays in their communities and many students struggled with finding a response other than Western classical concert band instruments or the human voice. As the Circle of Courage is a guiding principle, defined by the Regina Public School Board, I asked the students to explain its meaning and many students stated a variation of it being "a circle with four traits"—having Belonging, Mastery, Independence, and Generosity in its quadrants.

Prior to this experience I had never taught a class over Skype or at a distance, and while the situation was undoubtedly not ideal it allowed me an opportunity to still be present and to observe classroom interactions. At times I felt as though I was handicapped, having to depend on someone to guide my vision, adjust the audio so I could hear the discussion, and ensure that we had a proper connection so I could be *present*. In these first few class sessions the students responded in a respectful manner with only minor disruptions, a feat that I believe could be attributed to Braun's classroom management skills. At times the students required some coaching to answer questions but this may have been due to the fact that the group had never worked together, were of mixed grade levels, or were experiencing the growing pains of the project.

Even though I had yet to set foot in the classroom and work with the students in my physical form, I still felt as though I was a part of the classroom community. The strangest feeling was turning off the Skype button and returning to my reality. I felt as though I needed to take a moment for a mental adjustment as I gained my bearings from being *in the class* with the students before returning to my physical location. I questioned if a sense of community could be an emotional state in addition to being a physical location, one which could be supported through technology and media. As seen in Chapter 2, the concepts of cyberspace can facilitate an emotional sense of group cohesion. The beginning of the course allowed me to reflect on my concept of place; in this instance I was mentally and emotionally with the class in Saskatchewan through having a virtual representation portrayed on the board, yet my corporeal body was in Alberta. In this sense, I was with the students for these first few classes yet at a handicap, one

which requires support and accommodations to be successful. My ability to engage in a conversation was high as there were no pauses or lapses in the technology; cognitively I could interact with the class, contribute to the conversations, encourage participants to think about the content at hand, respond to questions, even at times address misbehavior and discipline the students as though I was there in my physical form. While having to be in Alberta for the first three classes initially seemed to be a set-back, upon reflection this hurdle served as a valuable learning experience on defining community walls as well as the life of this project. Through the use of technology and the assistance of a teaching partner, I am brought to question if a comparative project could be conducted in another location, and in acknowledging the importance of a supportive teaching partner I question if a similar outcome would be achieved if the whole project was via Skype or a similar technology. Could artistic expression, composition, or choreography be conveyed over the internet? These are all ideas to explore at a future date and in future projects.

The first class served as an introduction, providing students with ethics documents[7] and explicit directions to have these documents signed and returned. Reading through the document, I placed an emphasis on the section explaining connections to other curricular areas and project outcomes. Specifically, this project connects with multiple school curricular subjects and outcomes as outlined by the Ministry of Education curricula—including Arts Education, Social Studies, Health and Identity, Humanities, and Aboriginal Education—therefore complementing the students' classroom learning. In addition, the inquiry-based research project provides students with the knowledge and skills to serve as researchers and culture-bearers while exploring their identity. The remainder of the first class served as an introduction to each other, providing us a benchmark for gauging the students' understanding of community, the depth of the Circle of Courage philosophy, and the role that music plays in society. Following this discussion, Braun led the students through a series of improvisation and drama exercises, encouraging the group to move together and to become better acquainted.

While Braun and I were the primary instructors for the course, we also looked to experts within our community to support the project mission. Through these collaborative efforts the

[7] Copies of the Informant Letter and Student Consent Form can be found in Appendix D

students were exposed to cultural experiences, as well as performance practices which could not have been achieved without a group effort. Through the support of the Regina Public School Board Aboriginal Education Coordinator and our School Administrators, a number of guests including Elder Hazel Dixon, the school community coordinator Mrs. Theresa MacPhail, and Regina Folk Festival Site Coordinator Dayle Schroeder-Hillier were welcomed into the "Community Soundscapes" course. Additionally, since I was still in Alberta these community members were able to support our classroom learning while I could not physically be there.

Elder Hazel Dixon is a contemporary storyteller who introduced the students to the world of orality. She emphasized that each one of us holds a story which has a life and a voice. Through her expressive nature and presence the class was captivated by the stories she shared, cultural experiences she depicted, and lessons taught. In Elder Dixon's own words

> I am going to talk about oral history and talk about stories. You all have stories within you and sometimes you don't realize you have those stories within you. Some of the stories that you hear someone else tell or read about are stories, things that have happened in your family. Like a family history and there are always stories and I find later in years that you might be telling your children things that have happened in your journey and they are stories that will get passed down.
>
> A brief history about oral storytelling. First Nations people and not only First Nations people but people all over the world, at one time there was no written language and for First Nations people we did not have a written language for quite a long time, and there is no written language and everything was told orally. This is how we learn how things came to be, all those things, why we exist, and there it was very important for the Elders it was usually their job to pass down the history. Storytellers are very important people in their tribe and they are well-respected, sometimes we tell stories for days and that doesn't mean that they are telling stories by themselves but they are gathered around a tipi and they will be telling a story that may take several hours—they might have a break, a rest, and then that story will be carried on the next day. Now, the stories usually were told that we don't tell stories summer months. We usually only tell stories in the winter and why I don't tell stories in the summer is because the snakes and lizards are going to come visit me at my house so I have to be careful not to do that. For us it was a time, you had more time on your hands and usually in the spring, summer and the fall were a time we had to get everything together. There wasn't enough time to have the fun times because as spring the winter is just over you are looking for roots, and plants that you can eat, go fishing then come the buffalo, you are going to follow the buffalo and follow the circle, and you are going to be hunting for the buffalo and stay here for a while. Cause you are hunting then and get the meat ready

> for the winter, you are feasting as well, it is time to prepare the hides, getting things ready for clothing, getting your pemmican ready and then comes the fall and you move more up on the circle and that is a time when you are going to be gathering berries and nuts and all those kinds of things and drying things so you can have them for the winter also all the things to make your pemmican. So you know what pemmican is right. So they will be taking the dried meat and put it on racks so when it comes to the winter time and hunting will not be the same as it was in the summer time. You still will be able to hunt moose and snare rabbits and this is a time where everyone can be in their tipis and being comfortable and this is a time for teaching. They will tell you things like stories, for entertainment but stories can be about how things began.
>
> I just want to refer to this back page here. Story telling is very important to the First Nations people, it is part of the culture, they have survived, survived settlers coming, residential schools, it is a very important part. Like I said we did not have a written language so everything we did was told through stories. It came, the people came to know the how and the why things came to be, for example how the earth began. [Elder Hazel Dixon, personal communication 2014]

For the remainder of the class, Elder Dixon shared with the students creation stories which personified animals and encouraged students to reflect on life lessons and their interpersonal relationships. Some of the broader themes which she addressed were loyalty, courage, empathy, and compassion to one another. Being a contemporary storyteller, Elder Dixon engaged with storyboards, photographs, and even sang and acted in character, commanding the attention of the room.

As a homework assignment designed to build off the lessons from Elder Dixon on oral narrative, the students were each assigned a visual art piece. The class was given the metaphor that they were "a star within the vast night sky"; as individuals we have various points of contact to communities and places to which we feel as though we belong, similar to how a single star can be translated into countless constellations. Each student was asked to create a constellation based on the communities to which they feel connected and represent these sentiments in a visual art piece (Plates 1 – 3). This initial art piece served as the impetus for documenting our journey together.

For the final week during which I participated via Skype, we welcomed Dayle Schroeder-Hillier, the Site Coordinator for the Regina Folk Festival, to come and work with the students. Through her work with the Folk Festival she collaborates with community members,

Plate 1

Student's personal constellation,
Sample #1

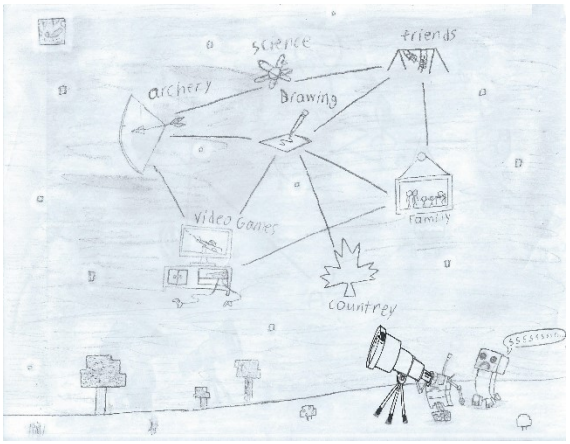

Plate 2

Student's personal constellation,
Sample #2

Plate 3

Student's personal constellation,
Sample #3

visiting artists, and local residents to transform Regina's historic Victoria Park into an arts-based community event for the week of the summer festival. In her work, creating a sense of community is essential to the success of the festival and therefore she was able to speak from firsthand experience. In addition to working with the Regina Folk Festival, Schroeder-Hillier is an accomplished dancer, choreographer, teacher, and artist who worked with the students to explore their space and the sounds found within:

> This exercise, I know we have been talking about the importance of community and the importance of the people around you. So this exercise, in dancing we like to think of dancing as movement and sometimes you'll see dancers as moving their limbs and doing high kicks and all these things. Who has seen *So You Think You Can Dance?* or *Dancing With the Stars* or any of those kinds of shows? You see lots of things like splits and people kicking their legs up to the roof. This is not a super important part of dance. The most important part is that it comes from inside of you. Dancing is an art form just like a painter would paint their emotions or things they want to express on a canvas, we as dancers are using our bodies to express our emotions and our experiences when we are on the stage. Instead of using a canvas in art, we are using a stage as our canvas to express ourselves. So our bodies are very important.
>
> Now I know a lot of you don't know each other, or you may only know a couple people in the room but we all have something in common and we all have something that is going to connect each other with every single other person in the room and that is our breathing. Every single one of us can breathe. I hope you can breathe otherwise we wouldn't be here. Breathing is super, super important in dancing and not only so you don't pass out on stage, you always have to breathe when you are dancing and what it does is that helps us connect the other dancers on stage. [Dayle Schroeder-Hillier, personal communication 2014]

In this class period the students explored dynamic movements through the range of their bodies and throughout the classroom space, uniting the group by breathing in unison. In reflecting on my past experiences as an educator at this Community School many students have never experienced modern dance, therefore this class session was undoubtedly a unique experience for them and was truly beautiful to observe. At one point I found myself becoming emotional as I knew many of these students were pushing themselves outside of their comfort zone and into a vulnerable state. From observing the class session over Skype, I found myself breathing with the students and following their movements almost as though I was there.

On the first class where I was physically present in Regina, I had the students complete a "Getting to Know You" questionnaire which provided me with some concrete information, serving as a foundation for this course. When creating these questions I targeted three specific areas: the first section hoping to obtain more information about the individual and their interests; the second addressing their knowledge on course content such as their understanding of community, the Circle of Courage, or the role that sound and music plays in these spaces, and; the third to reflect on the lessons learned from our guest teaching artists. In these questions students shared what they liked to do in their spare time, their favourite subject at school, and something at which they feel particularly successful. Prior to this course, my only interaction with these middle-year students was through the large-scale productions which exceeded approximately 200 students; these circumstances did not allow me to get to know these students on a personal level, therefore these questions served to fill that void.

Two questions which I found to be particularly interesting were when I asked the students to describe their friends or what they liked to do at recess time, allowing me insight into their world. Responses varied from having friends on Xbox Live to "my friends are crazy, witty and full of different opinions. I don't have very many friends but the ones I have are awesome", with recess being spent "walking around and talking to my friends", "playing tag" or playing specific sports like "basketball or football". The responses from these nineteen students in this class seemed to fit within this spectrum. When asked to define a community, it was clear that some of the more senior students were able to call upon their previous social studies courses, as answers included "a group of people or settlement" or "a group of people working as one or with a common interest". As this project aligns with other curricular subject areas, some students were able to make inferences and arrive at a logical conclusion, while others maintained a preliminary understanding. As a class, the students seemed to understand that the Circle of Courage contains four values in its quadrants—including Mastery, Belonging, Generosity, and Independence—which most students could define, but many struggled with outlining their applications or use. Additionally, students stated that oral history is "a story that is passed down through generations" or "telling stories with your mouth" and had not yet made the connection that they carry their own oral narratives. In looking at the students' comments, they seemed to have enjoyed their time with Elder Dixon and Dayle Schroeder-Hillier, resonating the fact that they are united in breath.

The theme of the next class period was “Filling up Our Tool Kits”, and our initial plan was to teach the students how to be field reporters by bringing to class an ethnographic recording from a community to which they feel connected. Leading by example, Braun and I demonstrated to the students sounds from a location found on our “Constellation” art piece which we felt to be particularly significant. Following the data collection of this assignment, the intent was for students to use audio technology by editing the tracks into a composition. In this demonstration we explained the tools and equipment used, how to ethically conduct research, and the difference between a private and public space. Curricular music vocabulary was also introduced such as: performance space, instruments, melody, harmony, lyrics, dynamics, beat, and texture. While describing the assignment we ensured everyone had a recording device such as an iPod and accommodations were made to those who did not, requesting the assignment be handed in within the following weeks.

The 2007 film *August Rush* served as support material to this lesson as we introduced the students to an abstract concept of sound. The film is about an orphaned child, approximately the same age as the students in the class, who is exceptionally gifted and is able to hear music in everyday events. Through the use of found sounds, personal encounters, and a desire to find his parents, August composes a symphonic work. The film opens with a significant quote which is echoed throughout the theme of the film, encouraging the viewer to be mindful of their environment and the world around them. August states, “Listen! Can you hear it? The music. I can hear it everywhere. In the wind… in the air… in the light. It’s all around us. All you have to do is open yourself up. All you have to do… is listen” (*August Rush* 2007). Video clips from the August Rush soundtrack inspired insightful class discussions, inviting students to be open with their interpretations of music and sound.

At the end of class Braun and I reviewed the students’ surveys and determined that the group’s interpersonal relationships are not strong because they have not spent enough time together. When I reflect back on the communities to which I feel connected, many have the theme of time associated with them—either intense concentrated time or a long duration of it. I think finding a common interest between individuals is key, and from there future conversations and potential friendships can be made. As this grouping of students are from different homeroom classrooms, age levels, or French and English designation, finding some initial common ground

appeared to be a challenge given the limited, one hour per week duration of the course. After speaking with the school administrator and gaining her permission, I was able to offer the students a noon hour to eat lunch together and become better acquainted on a personal front. My prediction was that providing students an additional space and time for them to find links amongst themselves would allow for future conversations and the making of potential friends or connections.

Follow-up conversations with the school administrator informed me of some of the challenges students were facing on a personal front that barred them from completing the recording assignment, and as a result my project required a new direction as we realized that using recording technology was not feasible. Additionally, I learned that the senior students had a camping trip planned, and therefore the completion date of our course was accelerated to the beginning of June—ultimately losing three weeks. Finally, every month the school holds a Circle of Courage assembly celebrating individual student accomplishments and group work; I had requested an opportunity for the students in the Community Soundscapes class to present their work but unfortunately the school Arts Educator was unsupportive, stating that the presence of the students and their parents would exceed the space's fire capacity. Finally, I asked if parents could come into the school for an evening presentation but was denied parent entrance into the school after-hours. As a compromise I was allowed to invite parents or community members to the last class session, which unfortunately was midday, but I accepted nonetheless. Following this meeting I felt frustrated and concerned for the outcome of this project. The goals of trying to strengthen group cohesion among at-risk youth by engaging in performance practices through the lens of the Circle of Courage philosophy seemed to become more challenging than expected. However, I remained optimistic that everything would work out as I refocused my creative energy; in looking at the calendar I now had seven class and noon sessions to complete this project.

By maintaining the essence of the project, I had decided to use visual art as a strategy to document the intangibility of relationships being made. In using a visual art piece that grows and adapts with the class, I hoped to map a visual representation of the class working together and strengthen their relationships. Building upon the lessons from our guest teaching artists, my goal was to use music, dance, and dramatic activities as a means of allowing the students the space to

create and explore their interconnections. While maintaining the essence of an inquiry-based learning project, myself and Braun wished to serve the role of facilitators and guide students through their own artistic endeavors.

The following class session was April 28, 2014. At the beginning of class, Braun and I returned the students' surveys and decided to address some of the fundamental themes of the course such as what defines a community, or their understanding of the depth of the Circle of Courage. Students also commented on the connections and friendship that they have within the classroom. This information was translated to a mapping exercise, serving as a benchmark for our experience. This exercise was to be repeated by the students at the halfway point and at the end of the semester to monitor the students' growth (Plates 4 – 6). In class, we introduced the idea of noon sessions and the class seemed interested in spending time together to become better acquainted with one another. We explained that as this is over the noon hour, attendance was optional. To initiate conversations we placed each student with a learning partner, being particularly mindful of mixing age, grade, and homeroom classrooms.

As a means of translating the mapping exercise and making the students' interconnections more tangible I decided to create a class art piece, which we referred to as the "Star Board" (Plates 7 – 9). The vision for this art piece was to serve as a visual representation of the class's growth by illustrating the relationships and connections made among classmates. Throughout the course of the semester this art piece evolved with the students and could be seen as the class's journey of fostering a sense of community. A large piece of plywood was painted like a night sky with the Circle of Courage image in the center, as the values found within this metaphor served to guide interpersonal relationships. Each student's constellation was placed on the board along with a nail and colored string, which served as a means to visually represent the relationships and connections the students made.

The following day was our first noon session, and to my surprise the majority of the students were in attendance. Each student was placed with a partner in the hopes of initiating a conversation in or outside the classroom. I led the conversations to further expand on lessons taught in class. The structure for these sessions were informal, allowing students the opportunity to eat together and form their own conversations. I initially encouraged students to sit with their partners, as some organic conversations appeared to be a little more challenging. I appreciated

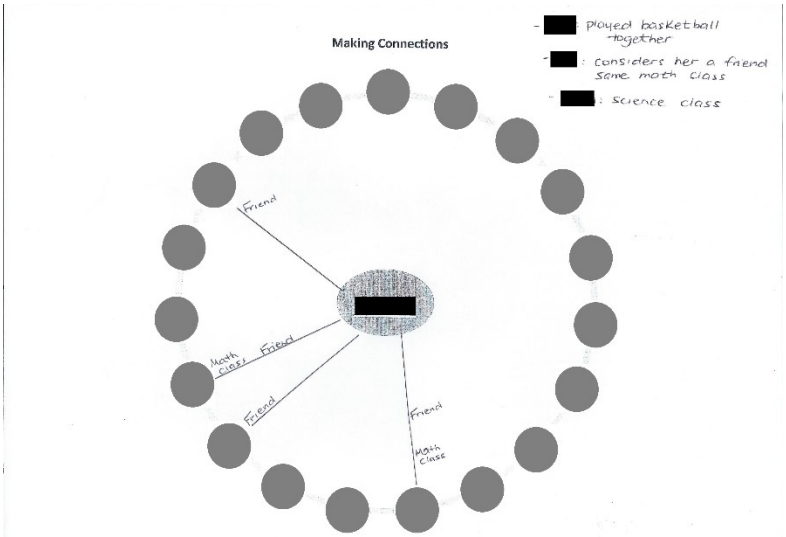

Plate 4

Student X's first Making Connections mapping exercise, conducted April 28, 2014

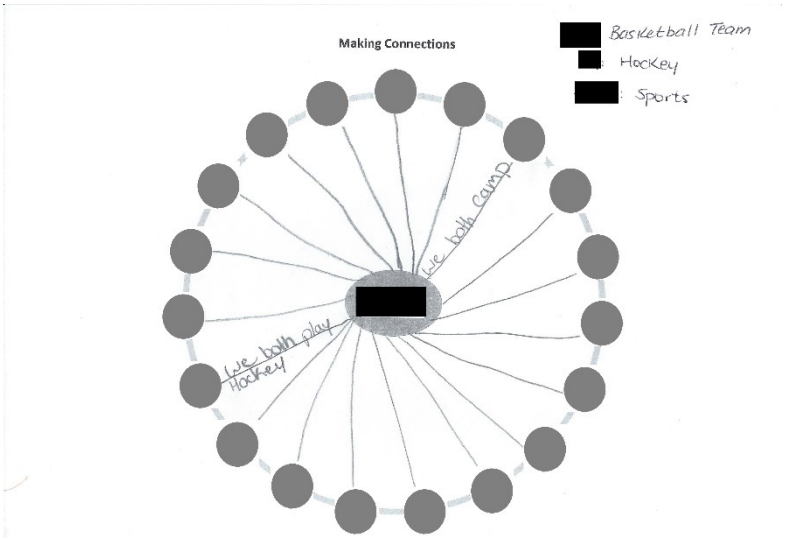

Plate 5

Student X's second Making Connections mapping exercise, conducted May 5, 2014

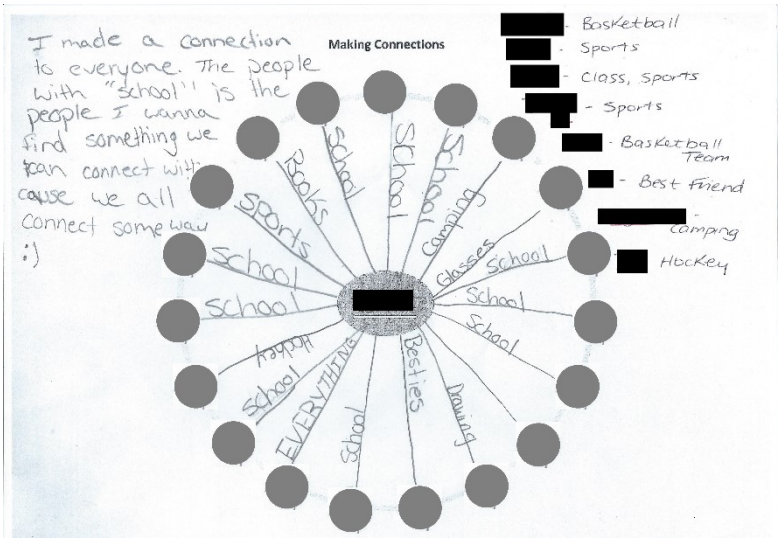

Plate 6

Student X's final Making Connections mapping exercise, conducted May 28, 2014

"I made a connection to everyone. The people with 'School' is the people I wanna find something we can connect with cause we all connect someway."

- Student X

Plate 7

"Star Board" connections, April 28, 2014

Plate 8

"Star Board" connections, May 5, 2014

Plate 9

"Star Board" connections, May 28, 2014

how this time allowed us as a collective to discuss themes found within the week's class session or allow students to comment openly and freely in a space where they could be heard. In preparation for the students' upcoming recording project I brainstormed with the students on what role sound plays in their communities. The following is a conversation between four students in response to this question:

> Student 1 - "It [the community] would probably be boring because there would be no sound. If there was no sound life would be boring because sound makes life more interesting."
>
> Student 2 - "It has something to do with sound is different to different people, like one thing can lead to the next like let's say there is a car door slamming you might not feel safe when you are home alone and it might catch you off guard**.**"
>
> Student 3 - "So for you music is like emotions."
>
> Student 4 - "And in different places is could be completely different. Like if you hear someone crying of happiness it is good but if someone is crying, it may sound the same but means something different." [Anonymous students, personal communication 2014]

In this conversation the students are starting to think of sound and their environments differently and are able to vocalize their sentiments. What I found exciting about this discussion topic was that the students were able to debate and converse with each other without leading or prompting questions.

The students were presented the first Star Board on May 5th, which was the halfway point in the semester. Many of the students were surprised with the preliminary connections and were eager to analyse their classmates' "constellations" to find additional connections. During this class session the students were given time to make connections, review the artwork found within the Star Board, and complete the second mapping exercise. The remainder of the class period allowed students a chance to review the movement exercises, reflect on their oral narratives, but specifically think back to a "Big Moment" that is carried deep within our constellations. These sentiments would later fuel our artistic endeavors. Braun explains:

> Let's maybe review before we move on, when Elder Dixon was here she shared a few oral stories and we talked about how each person has a story to share and shaped by our past experiences. Each story had a moral and sort of a lesson that goes along with it. Lots of cultures around the world use history and

> stories to teach young people but everyone as well important life lessons. I guess what we want to talk about today is that each one of you has a personal story, like a back story that not everyone knows about. It is almost like if you think about superheroes and how they have a life story that explains—usually the first issues of the comic books—it explains how they got their super powers, something happened to them. They have a back story.
>
> For you guys, all of your past experiences play a role in shaping who the person is today and we call this your personal story. This is linked to the same idea of oral history. Let me share a personal example for myself. On my community I have the outline of Africa because I don't know if I shared this last time but between the ages of 3 to 16 I lived in a country called Mali. The person that I am today is really shaped by having grown up in another culture. When we came back to Canada it was really hard to fit back in, I was in grade 11 and obviously the cultures are very different, they call that culture shock when you switch back from a really different culture. Having grown up in a society that is not really consumerist and is very simple and has to do with a lot of hard work, it is very different to come back to Canadian society when they want everything to be done super-fast and you have to be on time all the time. That is a big piece of my past and who I am today. I am sure everyone can think of some key moments in their past story that have shaped who you are as individuals – could be something good could be something bad. We are sometimes shaped by the bad experiences as well. We wanted to talk about that and get you guys thinking about that a bit—what are your big things in your personal story that have shaped who you are. Are there people in the same room who have gone through experiences like that? Sometimes for whatever reason, our moms and dads get split up and that is something that has shaped some of our pasts and might be something you have in common with someone that you didn't know about. That is a hard experience to live through, especially for someone your age. Maybe you have had to deal with the loss of a loved one, that is another tough one. That is part of the connections as humans is that we are all going to have to say goodbye to someone important in our lives at some point. So maybe just take a few moments and think about big moments in your personal story. [Luke Braun, personal communication 2014]

In this dialogue, Braun provided an example of oral narrative that students could relate to. Providing the analogies of comic book characters is one which resonates well with youth ages 10 to 13. The examples given, of experiencing a familiar divorce or coping with death, are heavy narratives that students who are at-risk often struggle with. Braun provides support by recognizing these similarities and hopes that it may springboard into a conversation of commonalities. At the end of this class, when the students were leaving the room, I was nervous as to what emotional state some of the students may be in. In working with at-risk youth, occasionally a trigger may be something such as a memory. Both Braun and I have encountered

instances of students lashing out—physically and emotionally—therefore after class we brainstormed on how to proactively safeguard the students and we decided that it would be best if the students engaged with oral narrative on an abstract level, one which does not involve words but rather movement and music.

After completing the second mapping exercise, the student data was translated to Star Board 2, demonstrating that the art piece and students were growing and changing. While this art piece served to map the class's growth and relationships, it also guided conversations and individual discussions. Following the presentation of the art piece to the class, I had an opportunity to speak with one of the more reserved students in the class. This student had yet to speak up in a noon session or a class period but had shown an interest in sharing with me privately their observations from the second Star Board. Upon tracing the string associated with the constellation this individual noted:

> more connections as I follow my line. There were a few people, I can't remember who exactly but a lot of people who were connected to me… it means that we have more in common than we thought. With the English kids I thought they hated me cause what they heard about all the French kids and it made me feel bad cause I don't want them to feel that, and now I have all these connections that I didn't even know I had. It's a good feeling that maybe there is a chance that there won't be this feud between us… There are probably a lot of people that are connected to us at a time and we don't know it, like sometimes when we look at people's appearances and think that we don't have anything in common with them until you have to work with them and realize that you actually do. [Anonymous student, personal communication 2014]

This conversation was particularly significant for this student on a personal front, as they had started to realize their impact within the school community as well as expressing their internal sentiments of the pre-existing binary between English and French Immersion students. Through the class assignments, this student shared with me an example of how they were able to make a new friend:

> Before the class we knew each other, and like last year we never really used to be friends 'cause she thought I would be rude by the way I looked and dressed and everything. I thought she was going to be really girly and dramatic because she is a real girly girl, until we started hanging out then she even said that we had more in common that we thought we would, and it was like we started talking and we realized we had more in common than we thought. She actually said that she changed for the better cause she got pushed around a lot and I

> kinda helped her and we found music together and dance and TV shows and anime. I never knew she was like that. Now her parents ask if I am coming home. We are going to have a sleepover. [Anonymous student, personal communication 2014]

This narrative is an indication that the lessons learned within the classroom have sparked conversations which students have carried to the playground and into their personal lives. While all relationships are made on their own accord, the format for our assignments have encouraged students of cross-grade and English and French Immersions classes to work together. This student made reference to a "feud" between English and French, a divide which has been present for years and acknowledged by educators. It is encouraging to note that this project encourages students to actively work together, addressing the preconceived notion of difference.

After speaking with classroom teachers, school administrators, school counselors, and with individual students, additional project obstacles were determined. School administration noted that historically in this community school, band instruments and technology were signed out to students and in some cases were not returned back to school. Some of these items disappeared once they reached home or were found in pawn shops and for this reason the school struggled with signing out equipment. As mentioned, noon-hour sessions were available for students to complete the assignment, but an increase in behavior altercations were present due to students being inappropriate with the equipment and requiring constant supervision. In speaking with classroom teachers, they shared with me their frustrations in requesting homework assignments be completed and submitted on-time and stated that this was a constant struggle in the classroom.

Through all these problems and limitations, it became clear that the project required a new direction. As a class we held a democratic discussion and collectively came to the conclusion that we needed to complete an assignment during class time that did not require external material or support, and could be completed within the hour-a-week class session. While many students were disappointed with the fact that they would not use technology or create edited compositions, they understood our limitations and were willing to participate in the creative endeavor. For those students wishing to use sound and technology, we were still hopeful we would be able to utilize their skills on an additional project. In reflecting back on the assignment, students were able to verbally comment on the sounds of a place of belonging and,

with a few students demonstrating their ability to complete the task, this indicates that the assignment was grade-appropriate and of interest to middle-year students. If provided a different set of circumstances, I am hopeful that this project could be completed; Braun and I agreed that there is life within this assignment and by potentially creating a recording kit for the Regina Public School Board's Practical and Applied Arts database this project could be disseminated to other elementary schools.

Upon reaching the halfway point, we decided that the remainder of our class periods needed to take a new direction. Since discovering that my initial field project had to be modified, I transitioned the project to fit the allotted time, location, flexibility of student attendance, and the hurdles faced with technology while maintaining the original learning outcomes. Instead of using a recording device, students were taught to critically think about sound and the world around them. Guiding them through exercises in mindfulness and deep listening, students were introduced to an alternate perspective on defining music, such as sounds of the environment which often would go unnoticed. Prior to this experience students were able to recognize Western classical band instruments and at a stretch classified the human voice as an instrument, therefore these exercises welcomed a more abstract notion of an aural interpretation of the world.

In looking to curricular vocabulary words the class was encouraged to verbally express the significance of their community, acknowledging the sounds found by developing active listening skills[8]. This was particularly challenging as Braun and I needed to develop a means to teach the music vocabulary terms in a way that would support both a concrete and abstract notion of sound. In doing so, we grasped the definition of the term and applied it to a practical situation. For instance, the definition of harmony we adopted was "what do you hear in the background?", a definition which could be applied to a previously composed work or a live community context. Throughout the remainder of the semester, students were strongly encouraged to use music vocabulary words in classroom interactions.

Embracing the inquiry-based learning model, students were asked to reflect on a community of importance and welcome the class into their space. During class time students were placed in groups of varying size, grade level and age, with the goal to explore points of

[8] An example of the students' assignment can be found in Appendix B

contact among their classmates and create a composition inspired by this link. This assignment encouraged students to reflect on the role that sound plays within these spaces, using their past experiences and commonalities as inspiration for their compositions. A "Beat Organization" form was given to each group to help with the process.[9] On these forms students wrote out the name of a mutual community, the sounds found in the space, and sketched out in the grid their presentation plan. An example of the data found on a group's form was that they recognized football as something the group had in common. In the space asking to describe sound, they noted: catching, throwing, getting hit, guys yelling, crowd cheer, and running. Below they created a composition where they noted feet and hand movement on all four beats, a "catch" on all off beats and on the downbeat of three they would yell "down, ready, set".

The nature of the inquiry-based learning model allowed myself and Braun the ability to designate class periods for improvisation. As we were not bound to a specific class learning objective, we had the flexibility to grant the students time to engage with their objects, to explore the depth of their sounds, have conversations encouraging participants to discuss personal interests, and spend time together, a factor which later proved essential in fostering a sense of community. For the subsequent class periods, students were given time to produce a group composition by using physical objects as musical instruments. During a later interview a student commented on the experience, stating that "it guided us to get to know [our classmates], like say we were connected with sports and then you want to know more about them, and other common interests that you have, and then you get to know them better and be their friend" (Anonymous student, personal communication 2014). Here the student is describing the process they undertook to make connections with their classmates.

At the beginning of each class period students were given additional tools to support their compositions. Scenes from the 1997 film *Stomp Out Loud* showed students an example of how movement and music can intertwine and that found sounds can be used as musical instruments. Reflecting back on the film *August Rush*, students were reminded that sound and music are defined by one's personal experiences, aesthetic preferences, and creative outlook. Warm up exercises found within the book *Slap Happy* by Alan Dworsky and Betsy Sansby (2011)

[9] An example of this form can be found in Appendix C.

introduced students to the concept of polyrhythms as seen through body percussion. The manner in which this book is written breaks down the concept of polyrhythms into segments. Through a series of notated rhythms the book is accompanied by a CD to support the learning process. First the CD vocalizes the rhythm by using vocabulary words such as heart, thighs, chest, or clap. The rhythm is then played on a percussion instrument, allowing the listener to hear the rhythm in context. Gradually, accompanying rhythms and additional musical lines are introduced. The rhythms in this book helped to support group compositions and lessons on rhythm, polyrhythms, time signatures, and notation. Around the world, cultural groups use polyrhythms as a means of music performance that by nature allow everyone an opportunity to contribute to the larger performance piece. Polyrhythms recognize the communal nature of making music and therefore for this reason I chose to include it in the class composition. As the students' compositions evolved, a larger classroom performance piece was created. Between the students' works a polyrhythmic "transitional link" was taught to the class serving to both signify the cessation of one composition and the beginning of another as well as embracing the cultural significance of unifying the group in music.

To help guide student relationships, groups often made reference back to the Star Board to help students find connections. In class we spoke to the guiding principles found within the Circle of Courage philosophy, ensuring each group was mindful to create a sense of belonging among their classmates. We discussed in detail the meaning of each quadrant and what it would look like if someone's Circle was incomplete. We discussed ways to support our classmates but also how these lessons apply outside the classroom and into practical contexts. Following reflective conversations these actions have translated to a performance piece, resulting in a shift in mindset and interpersonal relationships.

It was at this time that I informed the students that we would not be able to perform in the final Circle of Courage assembly or Celebration of Learning assembly, and that we would not be provided a platform to present their work. During the following noon session the students were visibly upset and wanted to speak their thoughts on the matter. What was interesting was that for this noon session there were students present who had never previously participated in the session yet felt as though they needed to voice their thoughts. Students' comments included why they valued the performing arts and its significance in their development. One student noted,

"performances are really important to me because when I was younger I never got a chance to show my parents what I worked on and really put hard work on and I just, when I perform things I love the feeling that I can actually be proud of what I was working on in the term instead of just telling my parents" (Anonymous student, personal communication 2014). Other students commented on the lack of performance opportunities for the senior students and how they long for a chance to showcase their work: "everyone else gets to do a performance, we should have our time to shine too. It is almost like they neglect the older students, like with the arts programs and things" (Anonymous student, personal communication 2014). For another, "it is like there are very little teachers who actually want to do something in the school and people in the educational board don't care and don't want us to do these presentations and it is very frustrating for us because now that we want to and are finding our own way to express ourselves and want to express ourselves they cut the cord and tell us no you can't" (Anonymous student, personal communication 2014). While many of these students were emotionally charged, the following is a response from a grade eight student: "it's not like we were doing anything bad, we were basically helping the kids that were shy in our class, we are working together as a group, there was nothing negative about it but going to the gym for 10 minutes to do it. I think it was a great idea and I don't think it was a wise choice to not let it happen 'cause even the kids that were watching could learn that you could make a beat of anything. I was kinda upset but I have been in big performances before so it wasn't completely new to me, but I wanted to perform it, it was going to be really cool and it was a great project but I guess that is what happens sometimes" (Anonymous student, personal communication 2014).

Many students were upset with the lack of performance opportunities for the senior students and wished for a chance to celebrate their accomplishments. Their narratives included that the fine arts are a space for them to feel important and share with their family members something that they worked hard on. By acknowledging the students' needs and listening to them struggle with the response given by the school, I created a class DVD in the hopes of filling this void. While it is discouraging that a live performance was not able to be performed, the DVD serves as a representation of the community which we created and can be shared across borders and through time. This symbolic token is a reminder of the lessons found within the Circle of Courage and its application to community as a whole, therefore while collecting ethnographic data such as audio recordings, pictures, and video I created a commemorative memento for the

students. Prior to this experience I had never worked with editing or audio software, therefore it was a learning experience for me as well.

The final piece produced by the Community Soundscapes class was student-composed and inspired by their interpersonal relationships. Building off lessons taught in the class period and from our guest teaching artists, this composition reflects the students' interpersonal relations in and outside the classroom as they actively engage with the sounds of their communities. The piece began by including the whole class in a polyrhythmic beat; therefore, in this context body percussion became the unifying link found in everyone. The students' small group compositions were featured within the larger whole, consisting of three to five individuals participating in a composition which they had written, each piece inspired by a communal link including: riding their bicycles, playing sports, the school community, attending a basketball event, and a love for reading. In the performance, the students then transitioned to present their compositions which included half the class, a previous class assignment. The creation process of these two pieces created a few challenges, as there were approximately ten students in each group, but a community was found nonetheless. The first group came to the conclusion that they were all a part of the school community and decided to create a new Skyhawk chant, one that could be presented at school sporting events. However, the students in the second group found it more challenging to find a community that embraced everyone. After exploring the option of television programming, music, and consulting the Star Board they realized that they all could breathe and had a heartbeat. Expanding on the lessons taught by Schroeder-Hiller earlier in the semester, the students composed a piece inspired by the unifying breath. This segment seamlessly connected to the final composition which used breath as the link connecting all members of the class. The conclusion to our performance piece allowed those willing to use movement to tell their personal narrative. The unison breath was the music to this segment of the performance, recognizing the vulnerability of this final portion yet serving as strength and a support system. Students moved around the room in a manner that represented their "Big Moment", ending in a tableau, a dramatic strategy used to construct a scene with their body in a still position. The piece ended with everyone in a pose that represented them and their oral history. The lessons found in this performance spoke to the fluidity of community walls as well as the intricacies of how we as individuals belong to a number of groups (Figure 3).

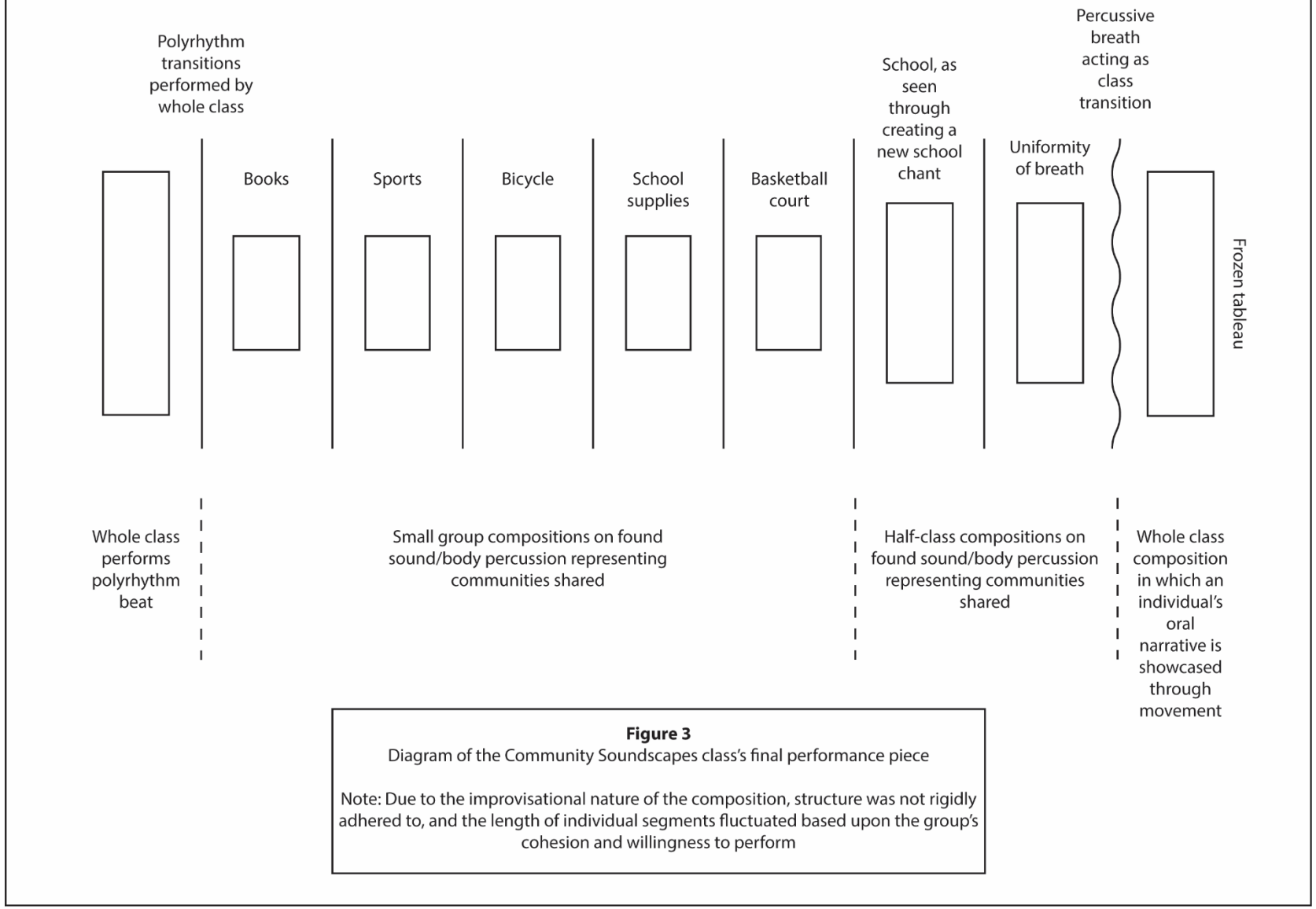

Figure 3
Diagram of the Community Soundscapes class's final performance piece

Note: Due to the improvisational nature of the composition, structure was not rigidly adhered to, and the length of individual segments fluctuated based upon the group's cohesion and willingness to perform

On May 28th, 2014, a month after the students' initial "Making Connections" mapping exercises, the assignment was completed for a third time, recognizing the inclusion of sound into the class experience. For this final class we welcomed parents, community members, guest teaching artists, administration, and anyone who had supported our classroom journey to actively participate in this class. Because the class was scheduled in the middle of the day attendance was challenging for many, yet six parents and community members were present. I began the class with an introduction to my project, outlining the ethics documents and my methodology on data collection. I then shared with the class the DVD, alongside photos, video, and audio recording from our class sessions together. Recognizing that this piece was not done professionally but rather served as a commemorative token to the students, the class responded with much laughter and remembrance. The students eagerly wanted to present their compositions to their parents and did so in the classroom. While this piece was not completely polished, and did not occur in costume or in a concert hall, the message behind the students' work was most significant. Of all the performance pieces I have produced, directed and choreographed this was one of my favorite pieces because it was student-led and guided by their interests. I served the role of a facilitator, allowing them the space to create and explore their narratives and relationships. The reaction from the parents was well-received, as they recognized the personal hurdles of their children as well as the ability for group cohesion to be exemplified through the performing arts. Following the students' performance piece everyone in the room participated in a Talking Circle, speaking to the experience. As not all voices wished to participate, or felt comfortable speaking in the Talking Circle, a series of questions was created allowing everyone the opportunity to speak to their journey. The following few days served as an opportunity to return data and artwork to students, conduct small group follow-up interviews and connect with classroom teachers to discuss their observations (Plate 10).

The manner in which an Inquiry-Based Learning model is evaluated is different than a traditional rubric, which outlines targeted skills and competencies along a four- or five-point scale. The following bullet points have been outlined by the handbook *Focus on Inquiry: A Teacher's Guide to Implementing Inquiry-Based Learning* (Alberta Learning 2004, 30):

- Assessment strategies match the learning outcomes and are aligned to instruction
- Assessment is integrated with instruction (unit and lesson planning)
- Assessment relates new concepts to previous learning

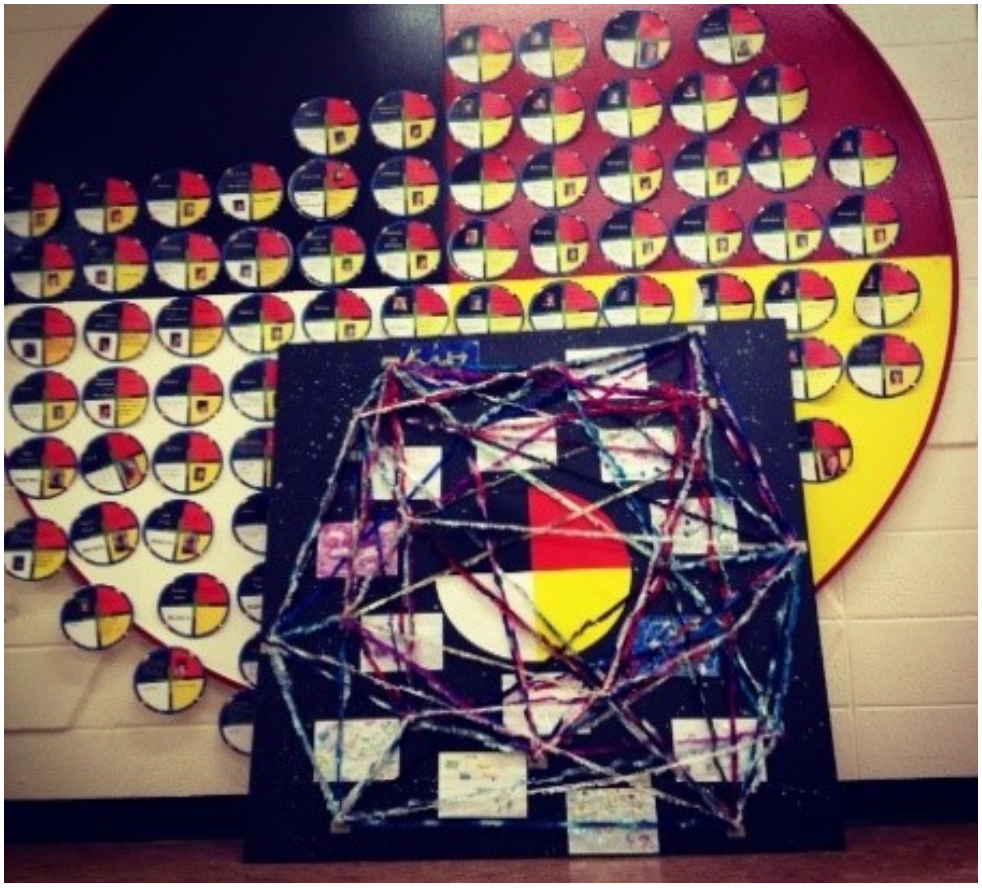

Plate 10

Final “Star Board” within the Circle of Courage context

- Students are involved with their own assessment
- Students get immediate, meaningful feedback
- Students of all abilities are able to demonstrate what they know and what they can do
- Assessment engages and motivates students

Prior to leading students through an Inquiry-Based Learning project, there is a fair amount of pre-planning that needs to be worked through such as: learning outcomes, course objectives, and indicators of an acquired skill. Allowing the students consistent feedback opens the lines of communication and supports student growth. Additionally, student involvement in the evaluation process ensures that no one is surprised with final course grades. As a result of this planning I created a five-point list of project outcomes, course objectives, and indicators to better guide our class experience. I shared these points with Braun and in moving forward we both strived to address these goals:

1) Students will feel comfortable in the classroom environment and are able to create new artistic work;
2) Students will gain a friend from this experience, either within or across grade levels or from English or French Immersion status;
3) We will see a visible increased level of participation from reserved or English as a Second Language students
4) Students will obtain an in-depth understanding of the Circle of Courage which extends further than four vocabulary words, with an application to communities at large
5) For students to recognize that they have an oral narrative and a voice and can use these experiences to fuel artistic endeavors

A common theme that has become apparent when preparing for an Inquiry-Based Learning project is the importance placed on communication. From an education perspective it is important to allow students the space to revisit work, let them comment on their progress and then guide them further in the direction of the learning objectives; this allows students to have an opportunity to showcase their successes and work towards self-improvement (Alberta Ministry of Education 2004, 31).

Chapter 4 – Critical Analysis

Theoretical Paradigms

Through theoretical paradigms presented within the disciplines of anthropology, ethnomusicology, and education, I will unpack my field experience as well as the artistic creations made within the classroom through the lenses of Michel de Certeau, Janet Hoskins, and Paulo Freire. Each of these theorists offers a perspective through their established theories, and together they have allowed me to reconsider my project as a multifaceted piece. Some initial themes that became apparent including how objects can serve as inspiration for artistic endeavors, objects acting as an extension of the self, and the ability for the fine arts to mediate community-building.

Michel de Certeau

The work of Michel de Certeau challenges the preconceived notion of structuralism, providing a new perspective on how we view ourselves and our actions within society. De Certeau offers the theory of "strategies" and "tactics" as a means of explaining how one moves through the world. In his work "On the Oppositional Practice of Everyday Life" (1980), de Certeau addresses themes of power with respect to the way space and place are used. Main themes in his work concern power dynamics between those who prescribe the use of space and those who challenge these limitations.

De Certeau views a strategy as "the calculus of relations of force which becomes possible whenever a subject of will and power can be isolated" (de Certeau 1980, 5). Strategies are seen as places that become the base where relationships can be administered, with such places including businesses, the army, a city, or academic institution, to name a few. Strategies are the ways that those in power over a space deem it appropriate to use; tactics, on the other hand, serve as the action that is determined through the absence of place. Found within the other, "[tactics] must play within the terrain imposed on it, organized by the law of a strange force" (de Certeau 1980, 6). In this way "tactics are thus essentially determined by the absence of power fully as much as strategy is organized by power as a precondition" (de Certeau 1980, 7).

Turino expands on the concepts of strategies and tactics and defines them as follows: strategies are seen as an "institution, place, and power-based course of action, whereas tactics are

the noninstitutionalized resources of the weak, depending on timing and not power" (Turino 1990, 402). For instance, roads are meant to be driven on by vehicles and a crosswalk is where pedestrians are meant to cross the road; this is the strategic definition of these spaces. However, a tactical use of the road is a pedestrian jaywalking or a concert being held in the street. In this example the rules of the space are being challenged by an outside force, resulting in a power imbalance. These power imbalances are context-dependent and can range in severity from minor annoyances to actions resulting in legal recourse.

De Certeau also mentions that while power dynamics can be challenged, they can also be changed. In such cases that a tactical use of space becomes prevalent, those in power will strive to subvert that tactical use of space by publically codifying it as a strategy. The tactical use of space would then become the new strategic use and be adopted into common practice. In referring back to our previous example, a situation where a tactic is adopted to be a strategy would be the transformation of a vehicular road into a pedestrian street due to rampant jaywalking. These streets are found in many downtown areas and can be seen as the city's acceptance of these previously illicit practices.

Janet Hoskins

Offering a perspective to the discipline of orality, Janet Hoskins describes how lives can be entangled with physical objects (Hoskins 1998). She explains that the distinction between people and objects is culturally variable and differentiated between societies. In certain contexts "persons can seem to take on the attributes of things and things can seem to act as persons… Within this framework, things can be said to have 'biographies' as they go through a series of transformations from gift to commodity to inalienable possessions, and persons can also be said to invest aspects of their own biographies in things" (Hoskins 2005, 74). While these objects may not be animate, the manner in which we approach them animates the debate regarding our understanding of these societal groups, cultures, and individuals (Hoskins 2005, 82).

Every person has an oral narrative and the manner in which this story is told reveals how one fashions one's identity and their vision of self. Recent ethnographic writing has demonstrated that these narratives are not so easily discovered. Through a series of complex dialogues between the listener's questions and the individual, we start to formulate an image of how one interprets *their* life story (Hoskins 1998, 1). Hoskins notes that through her fieldwork

with the Kodi people of Indonesia, she could not collect the histories of the people separately from the histories of objects: “People and the things they valued were so intertwined they could not be disentangled” (Hoskins 1998, 2). Reflecting on her field techniques and methodologies, she notes that she “obtained more introspective, intimate, and ‘personal’ accounts of many peoples’ lives when I asked them about objects and traced the path of many objects in interviews supposedly focused on persons” (Hoskins 1998, 2). Being bashful and tongue-tied were characteristics of the Kodi people when asked to speak about themselves, yet the participants had an innate ability to speak about their possessions and the importance they held. From these interviews, Hoskins observes that the objects spoken about by the participants serve as a metaphor for an indirect account of personal experiences (Hoskins 1998, 2).

Through her book, Hoskins focuses on ordinary objects and their entanglement in people’s lives; therefore the role of these items in society are to serve as vehicles for a sense of selfhood. Placing objects in this light allows the individual an opportunity to distance themselves yet maintain a reflective tone on their life experiences. Rooted in a society that as Hoskins notes has not been “psychologized,” these identities and biographies are formed around objects found within the participants’ societies and based on their world views (Hoskins 1998, 2). By applying the lessons learned in the field to a Western perspective, Hoskins recognizes similarities in the manner in which inanimate objects are perceived. For example, “instead of a betel bag as a sign of the tie to the ancestors, we decorate our homes with portraits or photographs of our grandparents. Instead of a spindle as the idealized bridegroom, we may have a poster of a pop singer” (Hoskins 1998, 190). Emphasizing the duality of an icon as common across the cultural divide, in Western cultures it seems that these tokens are typically represented visually first.

The use of personal or found items as a metaphor brings to light the relationship that people have with objects as they provide “a language for representing parts of the self” (Hoskins 1998, 183). These items receive their significance by their place within the story. In looking to modern industrial societies, possessions are given agency as seen through one’s personal identity, such as clothing or household decorations (Hoskins 1998, 194). However, while these possessions may be granted agency these “possessions do not exist on their own, nor can they be detached from their underpinning, [as] a person’s conduct is related to his possessions” (Hoskins 1998, 195). The objects used to represent oneself are indicative of how the individual

experiences and engages with the material world. “An object can thus become more than simply a ‘metaphor for the self.’ It becomes a pivot for reflexivity and introspection, a tool of autobiographic self-discovery, a way of knowing oneself through things” (Hoskins 1998, 198).

The manner in which these oral narratives are related challenges our preconceived notion of “life histories,” yet these are present in other cultural aspects. Through the reinterpretations of these objects in folktales or songs, the presence of these objects serves not only as an extension of the self but of the community as a whole. Hoskins notes Kopytoff’s conception of biographical objects in that “one could speak of the ‘cultural biographies of things’ because each object is a ‘culturally constructed entity endowed with culturally specific meanings and classified and reclassified into culturally constructed categories,’” offering insight into a different world view (Hoskins 1998, 196-197).

Paulo Freire

Paulo Freire was born in 1921 in Recife, Brazil, and over the course of his life worked as a union lawyer and later a professor of educational philosophy (Morris 2008, 56). Being a pedagogue he found that growing up through the Great Depression, experiencing poverty, and being held-behind academically had impacted his life negatively, a concept he refers back to in his theories of “participatory people-centered approaches in community practice.” To Freire, these approaches centered around “the beliefs that ‘people are able to think critically about their situation, can be trusted to take control of their lives, and collectively transform their views of the world and how they relate to it’” (Schenck et al. 2010, 86 in Nel 2014, 193). Alongside developing his philosophies and writing the book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, he started the “Adult Education Program of the Popular Culture Movement” to teach low-literacy adults, and developed popular festivals, performances, and arts programs around Recife’s rural and ghetto areas. “The movement’s objectives were to raise class-consciousness and increase the popular vote through the arts and literacy education programs” (Morris 2008, 56).

Freire’s approaches are both a methodology for teaching and learning, as well as a people-centered community practice. From Freire’s perspective, arts and culture are languages. If people adapt themselves to situations and to the world they become “passive”, whereas if they have a relationship with the world they become “dynamic” and able to initiate change—in turn creating culture. “According to Freire, students should experience this process in education by

experiencing art, expressing ideas through their cultural arts, integrating subjects, integrating one to the world, developing a critical consciousness and encouraging dialogue" (Morris 2008, 62). Freire states that everything we know is through a mediated representation of meaning "and our meanings are our way of making further meaning" (Berthoff 1990, 364). The knowledge we hold is created from our experiences of the world which Freire represents as language (Berthoff 1990, 364).

Freire's book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* "demystifies reality precisely by removing this imaginary veil and exposing students and teachers to the underlying material reality of oppression" (Lewis 2009, 291). Through his work he is able to critique traditional educational outlook of "banking" and reconfigure pedagogy so as to be respectful of cultural identity and expressions (Lewis 2009, 292). Freire refers to traditional pedagogy as a "banking" model where knowledge is "deposited" into the individual and people are seen as an empty vessel (Nel 2014, 196). His outlook states that educators are coordinators, and "to be a good coordinator, it is necessary to have faith in people, to be creative, and believe in the possibility of change" (Morris 2008, 60). He challenges the previous notion of education and believes that all learning is collaborative and it is the teacher's role, as co-learner, to foster student ownership and social action (Morris 2008, 60). A classroom environment should be based on "the power of collective action" and invites a respectful and collaborative dialogue. In doing so, people are more likely to retain and learn content rather than it being told to them by experts (Nel 2014, 196). Therefore, the learning experience is seen as a "short circuiting, opening up of a space wherein every teacher is a student and every student a teacher" (Lewis 2009, 294). Through this relationship both the teacher and student come to recognize each other as collaborators, partners and equal.

For Freire it was not enough for people to come together in collaboration, he encourages a dialogue around social realities, emphasizing the need for "praxis" in referring to the *action* and *reflection* of a situation. He believed that people "must act together upon their environment in order critically to reflect upon their realities and so transform it through further action and critical reflection".[10] Freire encouraged teachers to create a space for the students to feel safe to speak, participate and learn while being able to "read the word and the world" (Ricci 2002). This

[10] Freire Institute. 2015. "Concepts Used by Paolo Freire: Praxis (Action/Reflection)." Accessed November 19. http://www.freire.org/paulo-freire/concepts-used-by-paulo-freire

term refers to the ability to understand a *status quo* situation and being able to challenge it, which he believes has the ability to transform society. His goal is to strive towards eliminating discrimination towards the oppressed—as seen through "class, race, sexual orientation, sex, globalization, and so on" (Ricci 2002). Through the reflections of one's actions, Freire refers to "conscientization" as the process where we change the reality, a process of reflection *followed by* action. "Paulo Freire says that we all acquire social myths which have a dominant tendency, and so learning is a critical process which depends upon uncovering real problems and actual needs".[11] In this process one discovers that the self is the subject allowing for the "'consciousness of consciousness [to be one's] intent upon the world'" (Berthoff 1990, 365).

Findings and Analysis

I believe this research warrants analysis from two perspectives: that during the field experience, and; looking back reflexively at the project as a whole. The work of Michel de Certeau, Janet Hoskins, and Paulo Freire has provided lenses for me to look at this field project and reflect further. While this analysis relies largely upon my own perspectives, I also wish to synthesise the opinions of others such as the student participants, classroom teachers, and my teaching partner Luke Braun. These opinions were gathered as a result of the informal noon sessions with students, post-conference meetings with Braun, and follow-up interviews with classroom teachers. Finally, I wish to showcase project outcomes, strategies used to evaluate the course, and additional trajectories to support future iterations of this model.

I developed this course with an awareness of community and students' needs. Prior to conducting this field project, I had not been introduced to Freire's teaching philosophies, projects, or theories, but since reflecting on the experience and using his perspectives as a guiding point, I have found many similarities. Much like in my own research, Freire believes that "literacy implies discussion of the whole education field in society… this kind of education has to reach everyone, should be revealing and critical, with learners and teachers conscious of their own role and be interdisciplinary" (Morris 2008, 62). Our class focus was to encourage an awakening in students and through the support of Elders, community members, and artists, they

[11] Freire Institute. 2015. "Concepts Used by Paolo Freire: Conscientization." Accessed November 19. http://www.freire.org/paulo-freire/concepts-used-by-paulo-freire

were able to expand on our classroom lessons and provide a different perspective. In looking at the class structure and our inclusion of community members, I believe Freire's term "conscientization" could be applied to this field experience. Conscientization is conducted through a process of *reflection* and *action* pertaining to one's social reality. Through the process of giving students different arts-based tools, strategies, and scenarios, they were able to use them as a base to reflect on their personal narratives and apply it as an artistic expression in the Community Soundscapes course.

Looking to the experiences revealed in my field project and engaging with de Certeau's theory of strategies and tactics, I can find a number of instances where this perspective is a helpful model for analyzing my work. These instances are examples of a tactical use of a strategy that has been structured by the governing body—let that be a school board, school administration, or by the classroom educator. I believe these accounts are not acts of defiance but rather innovative approaches to the education system, and ones that are supported by the governing powers.

Janet Hoskins's perspectives of biographical objects was utilized in the classroom as a way of allowing students a means for communicating their oral narrative, as seen through the extension of objects, as well as engaging with them physically. For the students, these metaphors serve to represent their lives, relationships, and points of contact, and are the basis for the development of group cohesion. Hoskins's work provided an additional viewpoint for the intricacies of relationships and how objects can serve to mediate them.

Having been assigned to a community school, I believe the manner in which the school delivers their fine arts and practical and applied arts course content to the middle-years students is a tactical use of an educational strategy. In the majority of elementary schools found within the province, students are exposed to fine arts courses through a single arts educator. Classes are given approximately 3 hours of content delivery each week, 45 minutes per discipline, and are taught the fundamentals of music, dance, drama, and visual art. Typically the content taught is guided by the provincial curricula and adapted by the educator to meet the needs of the classroom students. In the school where my field project was conducted, students have multiple teachers, classrooms are spread around the school, and contain students from various grade levels. The content delivered is guided by the classroom teacher's interests and abilities in the

practical, applied, and fine arts courses. Additionally, this school is offering this unique structure to students in grades 5 and 6 who typically would not be included in this programming, in the hopes that these additional years will support the students' transition to high school, encourage them to take charge of their learning experiences, and allow them to meet students in other grade levels with similar interests.

In looking to de Certeau's theory of strategies and tactics, inquiry-based learning was likely once a tactical use of the classroom space which has now been adopted as strategy by a number of school boards. In relation to the classroom environment, allowing students the opportunity to lead their educational experience and sharing the teaching space with fellow educators and community members is an example of a tactical use of this shared space. In this elementary school, the half-day that has been transformed to a high school setting is a clear example of a tactical use of another institution's educational strategy. Through this approach the school has been able to find the means to support the students and their needs within the community, in addition to engaging youth in classroom learning while adhering to the rules governed by the school board. This tactic has proven to be so successful that the school board has adopted this teaching method to be a structure in other community schools found within the city, transitioning this tactic to a community school-wide strategy.

Reflecting on teaching through an inquiry-based learning model from Freire's perspectives, I believe his outlooks would have supported this methodology as it challenges a "banking" model. As opposed to lecturing students, we welcomed their perspectives, dialogues, and creative input throughout the course. In using the inquiry-based teaching strategy, I and my teaching partner served as facilitators, a key factor for Freire's outlook. One of his foundational principles is that learning is "relational and knowledge is produced through interaction[s] with each other and with the world (Bartlett, 2005). People learn, remember and apply more aspects they discover in dialogue than aspects they are told by experts' (Schenck et al., 2010)" (Nel 2014, 196). He believed that if teaching was done in an authoritative manner, the experience would be problematic (Ricci 2002). As educators, both myself and my teaching partner believe in a collaborative learning environment, and therefore conducted the project accordingly.

During the first few weeks of the project, students were assigned the constellation art piece requesting them to reflect and visually represent their personal constellation. As a class we

spoke to how these places of belonging have helped us come to where we are today and will serve as a springboard as our constellations propel further. Each *star* on the visual art piece was a drawn image of an inanimate object to which students felt a sense of belonging. Janet Hoskins's research looks at objects as biographical. Similar to Hoskins's field reflections, each one of these inanimate items represented the student as an individual and contributed to their personal journey. Drawing parallels to her work with the Kodi people of Indonesia and the students in the Community Soundscapes course, both exhibited characteristics of being shy or struggled with speaking about themselves and their communities. Objects, in these instances, serve as a means to address ourselves through a series of metaphors, undoubtedly speaking to the complexities of our character. At this point in the project the students have not physically engaged with inanimate objects, but rather recalled these items through images represented visually in their constellation drawings. In the students' minds eye they have selected an item, symbol, or object to represent a certain aspect of their lives, which in turn serves as impetus for them to speak of their narratives. At this point in the course the students did not understand the concept of orality or recognize that they possessed an oral narrative, and thus at times felt as though their voice was not heard. Through the visual representation of these places and inanimate objects, I was given a deeper insight into their character and what was important to them as individuals. As the course progressed we addressed the larger themes of oral narratives and, by the end of the term, students embraced and performed aspects of their stories.

Referring to Freire's concepts, a Talking Circle is a teaching strategy which encourages a "conscientization" moment, building off a "praxis" assignment. "Man does not live simply by instinct: his world is built of meaning. And meanings are our way of making further meaning. Just as all learning is necessarily collaborative, so all knowledge is necessarily mediated by our experience of the world which for Freire is always an experience formed and represented in language" (Berthoff 1990, 364). For students, the visual art images drawn were a language which they used to tell their oral narrative, a guiding point for conversation and insight into their world. For some at-risk youth, their literacy levels were quite low, and assigning this project through an arts-based method—such as visual art—allowed for all participants to be successful.

A secondary defining aspect of the constellation art piece is located in the bottom right-hand corner, next to the telescope. Along with drawing an image of the communities to which

they felt a particular connection, students were also asked to draw themselves looking through the telescope. By incorporating this element in this assignment I was interested in seeing how students perceive themselves. In analyzing the images drawn by students, there exist varying degrees of detail on the basic image of a stick man/woman or person. I found three images to be particularly interesting because the classroom Star Board serves as a visual representation of the evolution of the class, and these three students drew themselves as a robot, turtle, and a teddy bear (Plates 7 and 8). Undoubtedly these are metaphors for their characters and how they perceive themselves in the world; these items serve a purpose within their lives and therefore have been woven to be included as part of their identity.

Through assigning this visual art piece the term "praxis" could be applied to this assignment, as students are *acting* upon a *reflection* regarding their social realities. The level with which we act upon our social situations varies, and encouraging students to reflect on the communities to which they feel associated is a personal reflection translated to a visual art image. Pulling from the conscientization, as seen through Freire's framework, and the tools provided in class and through Elder Dixon's narrative, each student created a personal constellation which was foundational to the future of our experience together.

The first formal assignment the students were requested to complete was the constellation visual art piece. In using the Talking Circle strategy, the focus was to ensure that everyone felt that this was a safe space to present their work and collaborate together. In the hopes of breaking down the teacher-student binary, Braun and I presented the communities we felt a part of. This was something I had never done before with students, but I felt it was important that the class realized that we too were a part of this journey. The following are some of the student's narratives as they passed around the Talking Stick:

> Student 1 - "So I put family in the middle because [that] makes my community, music is a big part of my life. I play the drums and was in band and that is a big part of my life. I like art and paint a lot and then at [school]. I drew myself as sleeping because I do that a lot."
>
> Student 2 - "I didn't make one but am going to present. My biggest community is my religion and sometimes it is kinda hard because you get judged for it but it doesn't bother me even if people try to bring me down. Then there is my family, not sure what I would do without them. Then there is my friends."

> Student 3 - "I drew books and connected music to friends. I connected friends to family because friends are like family. I put woof in a heart because dogs, they are like family. I put cadets cause my dad was in 41 Hercules and he put me in as part of his legacy, which is pretty cool. I drew a boot, cadets to bass clarinet because I do the band and bass clarinet." [Anonymous students, personal communication 2014]

Following the class session, a student came up to me and wanted to present his constellation privately. He had completed the assignment for class and was particularly proud of his art skills. When asked why he did not want to present in the Talking Circle he provided an insightful analogy; he explained "you know, it's like bungee jumping, when you get to the edge you want to jump off but you get scared". The conversation further expanded to him saying that he did not know the students in the class or feel comfortable enough to talk in front of them. These words resonated with me and I recall leaving the class session feeling heavy and nervous as this project had the potential to impact people's lives.

I recognized that while it was still early in the semester, it was significant that some students may not have felt comfortable with one another or as a class collective. It made me wonder if the key to any group cohesion is time; either time spent together, creating memories, finding common points of interest, or getting to know each other better. When I reflect on the communities I feel connected with, they all are rooted in time spent together, as in *intense concentrated* time or over *long periods* of time. By observing the students' "Getting to Know You" questionnaires, when asked why they wanted to be a part of this class the majority of the students said that they were interested in the class topic, therefore we have an initial investment based on communal interest. At this point the students were not feeling like a group because collectively they had not spent enough time together to get to know each other on a personal front. Within the class there existed a number of divides and I believe this can account for some of these sentiments. These divides include grade levels, age, the distinction between English and French Immersion students, as well as a few English as a Second Language students. On a school front, approximately four years ago one of the neighboring community schools closed down and these students were then bused to this elementary school. The ripple effect from this transition seems to still be present, with students labeling each other by their initial elementary school name. Further, since the students have not spent time together they have not had an opportunity to create connections or find shared points of contact. I shared my observations with Braun and

together we approached the school administration to request additional time for the students to work together, create a culture of trust, and find connections to build group cohesion. While we experienced some minor setbacks regarding noon-hour scheduling I was allowed one additional noon hour per week, ensuring the sessions were offered to students on a volunteer basis. The focus of this time was to serve as an opportunity for classmates to spend time together, eat their lunch, and discuss course content.

The initial field project was to have students serve as field reporters and record a sound in their community. One student in particular showed extreme difficulties in completing the recording assignment. While presenting their constellation assignment this student noted that being on the Reserve with his sibling was an important community to him. For the recording assignment he wished to return back to the Reserve and record sounds found in this environment. Over the weekend a few of his family members had traveled back but did not include him on this visit. Upon speaking with the school administration, they recognized that this student was struggling and had noted his situation. They shared with me that his family had consciously chosen to keep him away from the Reserve as it was not a supportive, safe environment for him. At this point, the student's Circle was clearly broken as his needs were not being met. This student's school attendance was more infrequent than normal and he also presented additional behavior concerns to the classroom teacher. After a noon-hour class session I had an opportunity to sit and brainstorm with this young man on additional communities that he felt a part of. He noted playing football on the Reserve was a community he felt connected to and wished for additional opportunities to play. Following this conversation I reached out to the North Central Community Organization who put me in touch with the community football coach, as well as the names of funding agencies to allow this student an opportunity to play football. In speaking with the coach he mentioned that "his team is a brotherhood" and emphasized the importance of working together and supporting one another. At the beginning of my next class session I presented this information to the school administrator, yet she seemed unreceptive. She noted that the student's legal guardians would not be in a position to sign the permission forms, nor the school to take on this responsibility. At this point I recognized this student's needs and attempted to find strategies to fulfil his Circle; however I acknowledge that the school administration may have additional insight into the students' personal lives which may not be present to classroom teachers or outside researchers.

Shortly after this experience, I had a meeting with the school administration and was told that the students in the Community Soundscapes course were not allowed to participate in the end of term school assemblies. In interviewing classroom educators, the sentiments were such that the school was not functioning as a cohesive collective:

> I think as far as students there are a lot of individual communities, but I hate to use the word clique but that is what it is like, lots of small groups. From a student's perspective I think there are many who feel as though they are not a part of the entire student body and part of that is we don't do a lot together, it is either grade 1 to 4 and grade 5 to 8 but those events are very few, few assemblies, we don't even sing "Oh Canada" in the morning together. There really isn't a lot that we do in unison as a community. As a staff, pretty much the same thing. There are some smaller communities which have developed through friendships and stuff like that but don't do a lot. It's supportive if you are seeking help but not a strong community feel compared to other schools that I have worked at. [Anonymous teacher, personal communication 2014]

It is unfortunate that the students were not given a full experience or an opportunity to celebrate their accomplishments, but in changing the class project and in creating a reflective DVD we were able to offer the students some closure to this experience.

From de Certeau's perspective in recognizing the situation we were in, I believe the creation of the DVD was a tactic meant to support student learning which otherwise was not present. As a means of celebrating the students' efforts a DVD was created to commemorate our journey together. The learning curve for many of these students culminated in them finally feeling that they had an outlet for expression. In the DVD the students do not perform on a main stage or appear in costume, but the essence remains that it serves as a capsule that is preserved in time and has the adaptability to be brought to different spaces. By subverting the strategy of including these students in a live performance, the tactic of creating a class DVD fulfilled this void. The tactical DVD may not appear as aesthetically pleasing to some, but the message remains that the emphasis is placed on the journey, and this was an opportunity to witness student empowerment as well as a chance to preserve their work longer than one live performance would allow.

Throughout the course of the semester, I decided to use visual art as a means of documenting the interpersonal relationships which were beginning to develop. Reflecting upon Janet Hoskins's perspective, the Star Board is an inanimate art piece that has been personified.

This aspect of the Community Soundscapes course was influential throughout the life of this project. Though it appeared as a physical board with string and student art, the message it carried was much greater—a social comment on interpersonal and community relationships, addressing themes such as bullying and racism. This art piece evolved alongside the class and transformed, representing their growth and development. For the duration of the course, the Star Board had a life that echoed all the students' interpersonal connections as well as visually demonstrating gaps which needed to be filled. The spaces between the strings served as guiding points, and for some students prompted them to have further conversations with their classmates. Additionally, the Star Board art piece acted as a springboard for conversation of a practical nature, applying what was visible to everyday interactions. As a class we noted that these connections and gaps were happening on a regular basis, but this art piece allowed us to see it. Collectively we gave life to this board, which then mirrored our relationships and served as a teacher or facilitator to reflect further.

Although my introduction to Freire happened after this field experience, I was amazed to learn of his engagement with education, literature and visual art. At one point in Freire's career he approached Francisco Brennand, a sculptor whose work invokes cultural metaphors. Brennand stated "Freire approached me to make art that symbolized culture, reformation, literacy, and self… Freire's goal was for the viewer to understand the relationship of self to the world and that people can make change for the good" (Morris 2008, 58). Freire was very pleased with the work that he produced; unfortunately, the political system in Recife became unsteady "and we began to realize that the elite and others targeted the literacy program and the connection to culture and the arts of the people… My art was seen by the dictatorship as dangerous and it was destroyed. There are no remainders of that work, no photographs" (Morris 2008, 58-59). Reading this narrative encourages me to reflect on my visual art piece, and the mission and message associated with it. I feel fortunate to be living in a time where I can produce work around social issues and document the development of interpersonal relationships—to individuals and the world, as well as invite conversations around community engagement without a fear of it being destroyed. It was not until afterwards that I realized the strength of each one of the threads.

Looking at the data found within the Making Connections documents, every student had noted new connections with classmates and had been able to outline what those links are. From class projects encouraging classmates to talk about positive communities and work together creating compositions, informal noon sessions, and even interactions on the playground, each student had noted at least two to five new links which were not noted on the first assignment. Overall the French Immersion student participants seemed to have more of a willingness to get to know their classmates, as they had made more connections across grade levels and between English and French students. At this point in the course the more reserved students in the class did not demonstrate such a dramatic leap in their progress, but many noted their learning buddy and people in their assignment groups. Much like the last assignment, on the right-hand side I included the names of classmates who recognized the individual in the center on their sheet. This number however has increased significantly, demonstrating that an individual's impact is larger than they may anticipate. One student's worksheet was particularly significant as they had noted two detailed reasons on having connections with their classmates and chose to draw a line to everyone else. Following the class session I interviewed the student, inquiring about their logic; this student had recognized that on some level we all contain a point of contact, and as we progress in the semester this individual was eager to find that connection with each student. "I was going to make a link to everyone because I know we all have at least one community that is connected us in a way, and I want to find that connection… well, if I see someone who doesn't feel like they belong I will go and talk to them and make them feel like they belong. Everyone belongs in this world, and stuff and I know people got put on this earth for a reason and have a reason to live" (Anonymous student, personal communication 2014). This student expanded that communication is the key to establishing relationships and looked forward to finding those common links with their classmates, explaining that the values of the Circle of Courage are emphasized at home: "well like, through my family we do a lot of things with other people, we are friendly people and for the Circle of Courage I don't find it as four words I find there is a lot of meaning towards those four words. And like, my life revolves around the Circle of Courage and like doing generous things. I find people all around us deserve generosity, belonging and all that stuff" (Anonymous student, personal communication 2014). Prior to this class, I had never worked with this student before but had seen them get in many physical altercations—varying from denting hallway lockers or swearing at teachers, to being physically violent with other

students. It had become apparent that this student is receiving coaching through the Circle of Courage philosophy as a means of addressing behavioral concerns. One classroom educator spoke to their use of the Circle of Courage in the classroom as a means to supporting the students' personal development: "It's tied within the academic Circle of Courage and personal Circle of Courage to make it whole. We try and teach the kids that it is more than being good at something or putting your hand up and participating, or helping out a friend. The four vocabulary words are great, they dig a bit deeper into what that means to them" (Anonymous teacher, personal communication 2014). I must admit that initially I was nervous to have this student in my class, but through their insights and continual rehabilitation it was a pleasure to work with this individual.

The values found within the Circle of Courage served as the keystone to the class Star Board art piece. Prior to this class the students were taught the four vocabulary words—Mastery, Generosity, Independence, and Belonging—yet they struggled to understand them in context. Throughout the semester we emphasized this holistic view and embraced these lessons into our classroom community as well as school and personal interactions. Most students commented that before our explicit explanation of the Circle of Courage their understanding consisted of memorizing four vocabulary words and participating in the school-wide assembly. "I know there are four parts, and every month we have an award ceremony for the four things and get awarded for showing one or more things and go in front of the whole school and get a paper, it is kinda cool" (Anonymous student, personal communication 2014). Throughout our class sessions, by making references to the Regina Public School Board's values and drawing parallels to our day-to-day lives, students began to internalize this value structure. "When I was working in my group you could see the person on the side that didn't have a group or anything, and what I think they feel like is that they don't belong there 'cause they are sitting alone. So I saw someone's Circle needed help so I would invite them." (Anonymous student, personal communication 2014). "[The Circle of Courage is] connected to our class because it is like a circle and circles never end, kinda like a community. There are four things you need, like if everyone has belonging then we all are working together and if everyone is being independent we could have a successful class without yelling or drama" (Anonymous student, personal communication 2014).

As we began the last half of the class, I noted a change in the classroom environment and student behavior; a senior student agreed with my observations and noted "well, we all are kind of used to each other and working with each other. Well some people are still shy but not as many as before like the odd person. We all know each other and our interests" (Anonymous student, personal communication 2014). The emphasis of this portion of the class was to put all of our group projects together and establish a capstone performance piece. While weaving the students' compositions together, Braun and I used dramatic and dance strategies and exercises to support the creative collective. Watching video clips of established performing groups such as Stomp! inspired students to include levels, pathways and transitions into their pieces. The book *Slap Happy* by Alan Dworsky and Betsy Sansby (2011) served as an additional resource, providing polyrhythmic beats and body percussion to help the students' group projects. Following the introduction of these resources I noted students actively engaging with the themes of music and movement in their projects, as well as trying to make their pieces consistent.

An additional example of de Certeau's theory within my field project is the manner in which the students created their compositions and perceived sound. In looking to our communities, social relations, and emotional attachments to space, the assignment was to create a musical composition inspired by a sense of belonging shared by all members of the group. Throughout the creation process we used the classroom, found objects, and even our bodies in a tactical manner. Items for their compositions included books, school supplies, or their breath, to name a few tokens that are representative of specific communities. While welcoming these abstract concepts of sound, it was interesting to note that within the structure that my teaching partner and I had created, some students (three groups specifically) used objects in a tactical manner. For these groups, students recognized a community outside the school grounds and wanted to use additional objects, typically not found within the classroom, for their compositions. These items included sports equipment, basketballs, soccer balls, tools, and a bicycle. The presence of these objects in a classroom is atypical, and it is especially unusual to use them as percussive instruments. My teaching partner however welcomed the idea of having a bicycle, tools, and sports equipment in his classroom and transitioned these tactical items into the strategy of the classroom and musical composition.

Throughout the course of the student's compositions, they engaged with inanimate objects physically, musically, in a reflexive tone, and through visual interpretations. By applying Hoskins's view of biographical objects to my field project, I am given a deeper insight into the student's character, values, interests, and what they recognize as part of their identity. It was clear that certain groups of students valued spaces such as the library or the basketball court as important parts of their community. These locations say much about the activities that happen in these spaces and the neighborhood. We can then make inferences to their personal lives and extracurricular activities. Some of these reflections include that students see their school as a communal point of contact, let that be the classroom setting or the playground; or a number of students enjoy spending time at the library which is near the YMCA and other public programming options. In looking at the class as a whole I am also given insight into attitudes and beliefs of middle-years students in the neighbouring community.

Throughout the term the students' group compositions were slowly transitioned into a performance piece that they prepared to present to their parents and community members on the last day of class. In this context, it became clear that music served as a tool for the students to work together and find common ground. By thinking critically about the sounds found within these communities the students organically transitioned to conversations related to interests and places of belonging. One student commented that "music made us feel less nervous. I feel like we are all connected through music and may not be the same type but everyone hears music, everyone hears sounds on a daily basis, and I think all sounds are music. Like even the simple beat can be turned into something bigger and bigger as long as the people are willing to cooperate and work together" (Anonymous student, personal communication 2014).

During a class period where the students were including movement into their pieces, I recall an interpersonal altercation which served as an eye-opening experience that the classroom was starting to work as a collective. When working with at-risk youth I am often mindful of students who demonstrate signs of pain. As outlined in *RAP Response Ability Pathways: Restoring Bonds of Respect*—a resource guide to teaching the Circle of Courage—the book recognizes three main headings for pain, as seen through physical (punishment, deprivation, restraint), emotional (threat, hostility, blame), or social (exclusion, frustration, unconcern, dominance) coercion (Brendtro and du Toit 2005, 20). In class a group of students had

recognized that sports was a community which connected them; through the presence of sports equipment, the students created a composition using basketballs, soccer balls, and footballs. While rehearsing their piece and trying to include movement, one student, completely unprovoked, threw a ball at another student's crotch, forcing him to fall to the ground in pain. Reflecting back to my experiences in the classroom, this type of action would typically call for students to laugh or belittle the individual or potentially result in a larger classroom physical altercation. In this context, I recall looking to Braun and bracing myself for the students' reactions; fortunately, only a few students snickered at the situation while most of the class reprimanded the bully. This situation served as an example that the class was starting to work and support each other and internalizing the values of a community.

While the class progressed and the students developed their interpersonal relationships by showing evidence of working as a collective, Braun and I wanted to ensure that the students also recognized the importance of their voice. As the students choreographed the class performance piece, we felt it would be significant to end the composition by speaking to a "Big Moment" as defined in our oral narrative. While a community is filled with multiple connections and groups, the conclusion to our class performance allowed each individual the space to dance their moment as supported by the unison breath of the group, providing strength in this vulnerable state. During the preparatory class sessions and noon-hour discussions, Braun and I were particularly mindful of the students' emotional states so as to safeguard them from transitioning to a state of pain; therefore we decided that dance would be the most appropriate art form to use, one where emotions can be showcased without the presence of words. Observing the students during this process was an incredible experience, especially with the understanding of their *origin stories*. While no words were spoken, their movement captured the narrative. It was clear that while some students addressed successes such as scoring the final touchdown, playing hockey, or participating in Cadet events, other narratives were of a heavier tone, and I vividly recall the journey of one particular student. Earlier in the term while presenting the constellation art pieces, one student missed the Talking Circle session with Theresa MacPhail yet wanted to present their artwork, and did so in a private interview. This individual spoke of the hospital as being a significant part of their constellation as their father had been sick and recently passed away. Forwarding to the oral narrative portion of the class, this student danced out sporting events or attending camping trips, clearly avoiding being in an emotional state. I recall during the last class

session, as we were recording the final version of the class's piece, this student very clearly danced attending a funeral. Holding back tears, the individual walked a few paces with their hands in a prayer position, placed an imaginary item on the ground and bowed their head until the piece was over. These movements were powerful and I feel fortunate to have observed this student begin to heal and feel safe enough to be in such an emotional state.

Throughout the term, the noon sessions served as a space where students could connect on an informal basis. Nearing the end of the term when the spring weather was nicer and students were allowed to eat their lunches outside, the attendance to these sessions decreased to approximately a half to a quarter, weather-dependent. For these final sessions the attendance was mostly grade seven and eight female students. Expanding further from class discussion, the students wished to address issues found within the school, such as the existing binary between the English and French Immersion students. By listening, many students have offered constructive ideas on how to eliminate this divide.

> Student 1 - "Why don't the staff mingle so it might bring the two [English and French Immersion classes] together so they can learn things from each other and the classes can work together?"
>
> Student 2 – "Say you are having a hard time in math and the English kids are there and let's say they have a text in English and can help, you can learn and help each other better."
>
> Student 3 – "Like our classes have a gym period together but we never have had a chance to play games with them."
>
> Student 4 – "The English and French don't really talk to each other but PAA is supposed to bring us together, but this class did, and I guess now we kinda talk more like these kids but not all French and English. So my other PAA classes we just stay with the people we know and our friends, and the French kids stay together and the English kids stay together and we don't talk to one another. That's what I don't really like about PAA is that it is supposed to be about meeting new people and trying new things but no one is doing that cause they aren't leaving their comfort zone to try new things and talk to anyone new, but this class is the only class that I have been in that actually helped you do that and helped you get to know everyone in the class. It might just be my opinion but some of the stuff isn't really learning, like some of the stuff the kids just goof off in and the teachers don't really care enough to want them to learn new abilities, they will just give them a bad grade in the class." [Anonymous students, personal communication 2014]

On another occasion, students came to the noon session eager to tell me how initial classroom connections have played out in a classroom setting. In this context, the students are in the same homeroom but had never worked together on a project.

> Student 1 – "They are in my class but I don't talk to them. I talk to them about bringing Lunchables to high school."
>
> Madhur – "You don't talk to them in class but you talk to them here?"
>
> Student 1 – "I am starting to talk to them now."
>
> Madhur – "So what changed?"
>
> Student 1 – "I stuck up for them in math."
>
> Student 2 – "We bonded over hating math."
>
> Student 3 – "Us three are doing a science project together."
>
> Madhur – "Did you pick the groups?"
>
> Students 2 and 3 – "Yeah."
>
> Student 2 – "He just kinda walked over and said I am going to be in a group with you two."
>
> Madhur – "So would you normally be in a group with these guys?"
>
> Students 2 and 3 – "No!"
>
> Student 4 – "Even I can tell that!"
>
> Student 1 – "It doesn't matter to me, I am comfortable with everybody."
>
> Madhur – "And why do you think that is?"
>
> Student 4 – "You kinda sit close."
>
> Student 1 – "Me?! No. We formed a triangle of trust."
>
> [Anonymous student, personal communication 2014]

Through this light-hearted conversation, it is apparent that the students are able to stretch out of their comfort zone in an attempt to foster new friendships. It is endearing that they were so eager to share with me thee news of their group dynamics and were able to build off the connections made in class.

A month after the first Making Connections worksheet, the students completed their final mapping assignment. The data from this assignment shows that the greatest increase occurred between the second and third assignment. Our time together as a class allowed us to have regularly scheduled formal and informal meetings, class sessions using music and sound as a guide to acknowledge points of contact, collaboratively work in different group dynamics to produce a composition welcoming all members' input, explore the depths of one's oral narrative,

and include dance and dramatic strategies as a means of group cohesion. Across the board all students had increased their number of connections to classmates, as well as starting to note their own impact on other individuals. Focusing on the terms of connections, this assignment had shown a visible increase in students acknowledging others as "Friends". This information was once again translated to Star Board 3, visibly demonstrating the complexities and intangibility of relationships. At the end of the semester, the students were asked to comment on the class experience and one student in particular recognized the Star Board as a significant learning experience. "What I learned in this class was by looking at the Star Board and how many people have connections to me. I don't even know how we got all these connections, and I don't know and I guess they found something that I am interested in and they are interested in and some of them I don't know. I am glad they find me a connectable person and I think it is pretty awesome that we get to connect with people that we never knew before" (Anonymous student, personal communication 2014). This student was surprised by the data collected in such a short time period and internalized her growth as well as their impact on her classmates. Through this art piece, the relationships made in this short period were monitored and mapped, encouraging all participants to actively reflect on their interpersonal relationships and societal contributions.

Referring back to the student who eagerly wanted to find a connection to all classmates, this individual made a valiant effort in this worksheet. This student had drawn a line to every student in the class and wrote a word describing their relationship, at minimum acknowledging "school" as a common thread. In the left-hand corner of their assignment the student wrote me a note, which reads: "I made a connection to everyone. The people with 'school' is the people I wanna find something we can connect with 'cause we all connect someway" (Anonymous student, "Making Connections Worksheet 3" 2014). In a follow-up interview I asked the student to expand on this thought, at which time she noted:

> Well, I connected a line to everyone because I really think there is at least one thing that we have in common and it might not come up now but it might come up in the future where we might meet up again and have a connection. I feel like everyone belongs here for a reason and we all connect in some way. It is really cool cause I want to get to know them better, that's why I put school cause those are the people that I haven't really talked to but would like to start and maybe connect a little more. [Anonymous student, personal communication 2014]

In this interview the student was fairly emotional when reflecting on the class experience, stating that "this is the first time I have ever connected with a lot of people, I thought I never connected with anyone and then I open up and saw" (Anonymous student, personal communication 2014). In looking to other students' work sheets, many have also almost completely filled in their graphs, demonstrating a conscious effort to get to know their classmates.

During the final Talking Circle, the students remembered the protocol and sat respectfully on the floor, allowing everyone who wanted the opportunity to speak their mind and listen attentively. As we passed the classroom Token around the room, I asked the class to speak to their experiences together—a significant moment, something they learned, a favorite lesson, or something that they will carry with them as they move forward from this experience. The following are some of the narratives given by students reflecting back on the project experience:

> Student 1 - "One thing I learned from this class is that even if you don't talk to someone you can still have a connection with them in some way."
>
> Student 2 - "I learned in this class that you can make a beat out of anything and it doesn't necessarily have to be an instrument."
>
> Student 3 - "One thing I learned is that I did not know anyone in this room, like had never seen that person before. Like I've never seen you before, or you, or I didn't even know you went to this school before. But through this project I learned that of all the connections to others."
>
> Student 4 - "I learned that I could connect with people that I didn't even know and I have made so many different friends in this class because, like I didn't even know their names before but since I found a connection to them I figured why not get to know them a little more and now we are friends and maybe best friends."
>
> Student 5 - "One thing I learned in this class is that you can definitely become friends with people who you didn't think you could become friends with. There are so many times when you walk past a person in the hallway and think that they are a completely different person than you thought they were but if you actually took the time to get to know the person you actually realize that you have something in common that you could really get along over. It was really nice to see all these really shy people start to come out of their shells a bit more and talk about they have an opinion even if they don't speak up all the time and a lot of people have come out of their shells, a lot more since they got to know people and maybe you could be like best friends with them and this was… nice." [Anonymous students, personal communication 2014]

Six family and community members were in attendance, and we welcomed their opinions and thoughts in the Talking Circle. Through their voices they offered a different perspective to the experience, one which was not seen within the classroom walls:

> Parent 1 – "I am happy to have had the opportunity to come here today and see what you guys get to do and how you get to interpret your life and support each other in a very engaging way with very engaging instructors."
>
> Parent 2 – "I am so glad that she has a class that she is so excited to get out of bed for. It kept her engaged and interested and looked forward to this class." [Anonymous parents, personal communication 2014]

Some parents commented on student growth on the manner in which their children have started to interpret sound, as seen through an awakening of their senses. One parent noticed that her child had been able to translate classroom lessons to various contexts: "I remember thinking back that [Student Y] would comment and hear things differently, or maybe didn't hear things differently but paid attention to her environment a lot more. I agree, she looked forward to PAA days and was super excited. Days that she had to miss PAA were sad" (Anonymous parent, personal communication 2014). In a follow-up discussion, I shared with the parents some of our preliminary research findings, in addition to struggles and successes of the program. From previous experiences parents were aware of the binary between the English and French Immersion students and noted that this class experience actively worked to break down that barrier. One parent in particular made an observation of how the fine arts can address this divide: "I was thinking about the English and French kids together and realizing that although they are learning a different language and speak in different languages, they all hear in the same way. Sound is all in the same language" (Anonymous parent, personal communication 2014). Finally, our discussion brought us to comment on many of the behavioural concerns that some at-risk youth exemplify. Through the lens of the Circle of Courage we supported the School Board's framework of values to address some of these concerns. In this class we welcomed all four fine arts disciplines and guided the students to explore their personal narrative by giving them skills which can be used outside the classroom. One parent concluded the conversation by saying "now they get to see that as people we are all like a patchwork blanket where everyone plays their own individual role and shines in the spot and brings to the blanket something important. It was great that you gave them these tools" (Anonymous parent, personal communication 2014).

Throughout this journey Luke Braun was my collaborator and teaching partner, and during the Talking Circle format he shared the following with the collective:

> As a teacher it has been really neat to see some of the ways you guys have gotten to know each other a bit more. When I first came here it wasn't too long after [neighbouring school] school had come over and of course after that [neighbouring school] students came along and joined us. In the past few years there has been a lot of changes with new students and teachers coming and going. In an online class that I am doing, we were talking about how in these classes we build community and it is almost like a pyramid or wave up and then all of a sudden the class ends, so these PAA classes end and then you move on to the next one and the community gets broken. I guess what I want to say is that I hope beyond this class some of you are going to graduate and go on to grade 9 and high school and some are staying here for grade 7 or 8, but I hope that we can keep the same values and same truths that we have talked about here and move forward to making new communities. It is really neat to see the French and English come together a bit more, it is something that I have noticed as a teacher that we don't always have the most connections between these two groups but I think it is so valuable to get to know people from both groups. [Luke Braun, personal communication 2014).

A valuable lesson that he noted is our hope that the students had internalized the values and lessons found within the course and were able to apply this knowledge to other aspects of life. He noted the divide between the student body in our school, and encouraged students to maintain these relationships:

> I think that there were so many connections fostered which I had never seen before and its sad but tends to be quite divided in the school—because we are a dual track school, so English hang out with each other and same with the French and as much as we try with admin and staff to foster events where kids can work together, I think this class is one of the best examples I've seen in my five years here for those kids to get together. [Luke Braun, personal communication 2014]

Throughout the semester, we recognized that not all students were comfortable sharing their thoughts through the Talking Circle format, therefore I created a closing questionnaire encouraging the students to think back to our journey together. In this questionnaire I asked students to reflect on the role that sound plays in their lives, their communities, the Circle of Courage values, and this overall experience. Below are some of the students' reflections:

1) "At the beginning we were all individuals and now we're a whole."

2) “A community is a group of people who have something in common, whether it’s what they do, their religion/beliefs, or anything else. Communities are very important, they literally make the entire world.”
3) Question: Tell me about the communities at your school? “There aren’t many. I mean we have a French community and an English one. No in-between… till now. This class has brought them together to create one big community called Elsie.”
4) “The Circle of Courage is amazing it is used for so many things. For our class is was to show kindness and belonging, mastery and independence. A lot of kids think that it’s worthless but truly it’s not. Circle of Courage is a support to help bullying but in our class it had a meaning we could be ourselves and not worry about getting picked on. We treated everyone equal. It felt really good to be my true self in our community a.k.a. our class.”
5) “I learned not be afraid, to speak and be heard.”

[Anonymous students, personal communication 2014]

As a post-conference to this experience, I had an opportunity to meet with the students in a group interview to return all artwork and data collected. This was the students’ first opportunity to see the three Making Connections mapping exercises and observe their growth over the course of the month. I also sent home a letter with the students outlining my preliminary research findings to their parents and a means of connecting with me, should they have any questions. The students’ reactions to being returned their assignments was shocking, as many had not realized their growth or the impact they had on their classmates.

June 5th, 2014, was my final session at École Elsie Mironuck Community School and meeting with students in small groups allowed me the opportunity to return their data and speak to them about this experience. As a general observation, once the three mapping exercises were returned to the students many of them were speechless and shocked on their progress and their personal growth. What was most interesting was that the graphs were completed in their penmanship and they were surprised with the increased connections to their classmates. As previously outlined, the right-hand side notes showed the students others who had made a connection to the individual in the center. It was clear that this observation carried the most weight with the students as they were unaware of many of the outside connections made to them.

One student noted “it’s kinda weird cause when I look at this and when I look at the last one, I’m like a lot of people made connections to me but I didn’t even really know we had connections, which is crazy”. Another student’s observation was how quickly relations and communal points of contact can be made: “it is really interesting how they connected to us, it is cool to know that you don’t have to physically know the person, like I have never really talked to any of the French kids, I never really knew them, and then I come in this class and I did know that we did that together. It is just crazy and happens so fast when you get to know someone” (Anonymous student, personal communication 2014). These observations led organically to conversations around one’s impact in society, for example in looking to a central place such as a community center, I asked the students to think about who would be impacted and what would happen if they defaced the building or picked up garbage. This conversation led to a clear realization that our actions and words have larger implications to others and society at large.

A number of students commented that the life of this project extends further than this experience and these classroom walls. Many suggested an adapted version to be conducted for the whole school, and jokingly noted that a much larger Star Board would be needed. A primary concern was the divide placed between English and French Immersion students, and moving forward the participants wished to eliminate and dismantle this rivalry and are now able to recognize “friends” in other classrooms. At the end of the session, students were asked if they had any closing remarks; the following are their comments to conclude our time together:

1) “You can’t really get through life by yourself because there are so many ups and downs, so you have to do it with a friend. So don’t stick to yourself and go out there and try, do something new.”
2) “Like I said, I think it would be cool that the whole school did the whole project, set an example for the little kids. The example that was set for us was that we have to fight all the time with the English kids, but if we set a better example, I’m sure the school would be a lot closer”.
3) “It feels good to be walking down the hallway and you see someone who you know, even just a little bit and waves and smiles at you and says ‘Hi’”.
4) “The classrooms are a community because they are forced to. There is a lot of friend groups and changes each day, maybe I feel I will remember this class not because I

have a video, which is a visual aide… but I can remember each class from this one cause we actually did stuff cause it was more engaging and seen a lot of people and myself took a lot of chances to get to know other people".

5) "I feel like this is something that we will take with us forever, really, just remembering one time where the Elsie kids all clicked and talked where as being distant. I think that this class was an example of everyone talking". [Anonymous students, personal communication 2014]

I also had an opportunity to conduct follow-up interviews with the classroom teachers who work with the students on a regular basis. Many of them noted positive changes in their students, from speaking up in class, a willingness to go outside at recess or over the noon hour, or having the confidence to sit in class without hiding under a hood—apparently a year-long struggle. I shared with the classroom teachers their students' art work and mapping exercises, and they were proud to hear of their interpersonal growth:

> Before this term started and this PAA class, [redacted] was kinda withdrawn from the class a bit. He has some other things in his life going on and I know with friends he was having a real difficulty connecting with friends and since this has started and since you have been working with him, I've seen that he is not so shut down when it comes to class, he doesn't hide behind his hood anymore as much as he did and is willing to converse more or reach out to other students that he wouldn't normally reach out to. [Anonymous teacher, personal communication 2014]

I shared with another classroom teacher one of their student's growth and progress, and in knowing the individual on a personal level they were able to better comment on her growth:

> That is huge for her, that diagram might not look as huge visually compared to everyone else but for her that is huge. Just knowing the kind of girl that she is, she is very, very shy and to herself. That is great! Because, it is not that she is an unfriendly student at all she is just very quiet. She is okay with having one friend in her comfort zone, she isn't someone who would go out and make connections but maybe for her to go out and see the connections coming to her it might encourage her as there are more people around than I thought would be a good fit with me. So, I mean she is only in grade 6 so by grade 7, 8, she'll be prepared for high school where there is a huge community. [Anonymous teacher, personal communication 2014]

While reflecting on their students' progress and observing the successes of the project, one classroom teacher drew a parallel to the school environment and suggested that a similar project may have a larger application within a staff context:

> I think personally that I have a lot more in common with people in this building but have never had the opportunity to get to know them for whatever reason. I know that is always comes back to time, I don't have time to just sit and visit but we are dedicated to our own classroom communities, I spend my time and energy building that community but I think I often forget that there is another classroom, a community next door, all over the school. I think if we had the resources or a project that we all did, as simple as talking of each other's connections, we would find connections all over. [Anonymous teacher, personal communication 2014]

This educator notes the concern of "time" and suggests that if a conscious effort was made, relationships may be fostered. This observation was one which we had noted in the project during the second stage of the Star Board. Through the inclusion of noon-hour sessions and unstructured time together, we noted a peak in the relationships made that the students consciously and unconsciously acknowledged. Through my follow-up interviews, a few educators noted the use of professional development days and suggested unstructured collaboration time, allowing for coworkers to get to know each other on a personal front. One teacher suggested "We all need to make the time. Even if it was just 15 minutes at the beginning of the staff meeting, where it's like an ice-breaker or breakout team game, even a fun literature activity you could do in your classroom but try it out with the staff first" (Anonymous teacher, personal communication 2014). These small suggestions have the potential to nurture a positive, collaborative work environment:

> I think a program like this would be beneficial because the more you get to know a person, on a personal level and make these connections you have empathy and you want to collaborate and work with people and make positive connections. Whereas if you don't do that it everyone is focused on their own classroom and has a different agenda, it seems like we all are spinning our wheels but if we all worked together we would be supported. Like "Oh Canada", like we all aren't in the same room but you know that at that exact moment the whole school, everyone is singing together. It is empowering to know that if we were silent right now we could hear our entire school sing, like no interruptions. And I mean you don't need to visually see that sense of community but you feel it and know we all are doing this one thing together. [Anonymous teacher, personal communication 2014]

Course Evaluations

Following the end of the semester, the students required a course grade. Typically, the process of evaluating a Practical and Applied Arts course is challenging as there are no set Saskatchewan curricula for this academic strand and at this school there are mixed-grade students in a classroom. In past experiences I would recognize an Arts Education root—such as Music, Dance, Drama, and Visual Art—and then abide by the grade-appropriate outcomes indicated by the Ministry of Education. While still having mixed-age and -ability students in the same classroom, the additional challenge that presented itself was that throughout the course we addressed all four fine arts disciplines. In looking to the new curricula, each grade is given a series of outcomes that are to be addressed throughout the year by all disciplines; therefore, to evaluate the students in the Community Soundscapes course I pulled the list of grade-specific Arts Education outcomes and evaluated the student on a five-point scale. While I appreciate the simplicity of having a collective Arts Education list of outcomes, I question if students are given technical skills for each discipline.

Another challenge that I faced when evaluating the students was gauging their abilities. This project solidified for me the complexities of relationships and interconnectedness. Even students that I did not think participated much in the course proved to have made connections outside the class with respect to building relationships with their classmates. This is an indication that my perspective on the class might not have been the full view. Even having gone through the project with an emic/etic perspective there are things that I missed and have undoubtedly influenced the way in which I evaluate the individual.

Future Work

Considering the struggles and successes of this project, I believe the essence of this piece has a larger application. In speaking with the students, they too agree that this type of project could be successful at the beginning of the school year and then referred back to at various stages. One student commented that "I think it would be a good idea to do at the start of the year 'cause at the start, especially if the kids are just meeting each other and if you have new kids it's a good way to get to know each other and get used to each other for the year. I think it is all possible because it is a good idea and brings everyone together in to the same community and talk about things in common" (Anonymous student, personal communication 2014). If a

classroom teacher was to use this model in their classroom, my suggestion would be to start this activity at the beginning of the year, speak to the school-wide values throughout the semester, and conduct the Making Connections exercise around report-card season. These exercises can serve as a springboard for conversations with parents during conferences regarding their child's interpersonal relationships, as well as allow for four distinct instances in the school year for the mapping exercise/class art piece to evolve.

At the beginning of the semester, I taught the first few lessons through Skype. In speaking with the students, they too agreed that this method was not ideal but allowed us to continue with the project: "it would work through Skype but not as well if you weren't there in-person. It would work way better if you were there in-person cause then you are there to guide us. There are certain things that we didn't really know what to do when, and Mr. Braun didn't really know. So we needed someone to guide us and give a general idea on what to do. I think that you should be there, it works better" (Anonymous student, personal communication 2014). While the flexibility of Skype would allow this project the potential to be conducted in multiple locations simultaneously, I agree that the essence of relationships are built through time together and the ability to interact in-person, something that this iteration's Skype format was unable to support, but I do believe that this project has the future potential to integrate virtual environments.

The initial project that I had envisioned and proposed was for students to engage with recording technology and serve as field reporters, thinking critically about the world around them and engaging with sounds in a different medium. Through the adaptations made, the project still retained that focus yet we needed to creatively bring our communities to the classroom. Moving forward, I believe a recording project could be conducted in the classroom if a Practical and Applied Arts recording kit was created for the school board which could be signed out by classroom teachers. Over the last few years, the Regina Public School Board has actively created these kits to support teachers in various contexts and I believe this project model could be adapted to fit within these parameters.

When focusing on an academic context, this project could support students transitioning to a new school, school mergers, support the existing binary already found in dual-track schools such as between the English and French Immersion students, function as a school-wide project

reinforcing the values of the School Division's Circle of Courage philosophy or potentially allow the Public and Catholic School Boards to work together. In a university context, many of the transitions or belonging concerns are also faced by new or international students. Maintaining the essence of this project and using the fine arts to fuel the relationships may serve as support for future adaptations of this project.

This project was centered on working with at-risk youth as a means of supporting their interpersonal relationships, senses of belonging, supporting positive transitions, and exploring their oral narratives through the lens of the fine arts. Based on students' understanding and abilities, I believe that grade 6 is the youngest age demographic that could work with this project. Through adapting lesson and project expectations, I am confident that middle-years, high school, and post-secondary students could benefit from this type of intervention.

Looking to accompanying literature, the application of this work can be seen in a leadership environment implemented within organizations. The versatility of these root lessons can serve as team-building exercises or the basis for a staff retreat or workshop. Romanowska et al. 2014 conducted a case study where they used arts-based interventions within an executive leadership environment and noted that they were the first to conduct this type of workshop. Additionally, as noted by the classroom educators who saw the positive effects on their students, a teaching staff or workplace may also benefit from this experience. Classroom educators recognized the application for this project within a staff environment as it would allow for them to work together and create a culture for collaboration. Monthly staff meetings and professional development days, as existing time set aside in the school calendar, can serve as a time for future communities to be fostered.

In order for this project to be self-sustaining, I believe the values and lessons could be implemented with the assistance of a larger platform, such as within a university setting or a school division. This project serves to outline some of the social concerns found within the Prairie provinces, is placed within a context that demonstrates that arts-based interventions can be a successful strategy for working with youth at-risk, and I believe can serve as a model for future work. In creating a workshop for pre-service teachers or educators within a school system, providing them with arts-based tools to use in their classroom can be a means to address the complexity of interpersonal relationships.

As an interdisciplinary project, the utilization of the four curricular fine arts strands allowed us to approach a unified goal from multiple perspectives. Students engaged with these disciplines at different points and in doing so allowed the class to focus on the disciplines and project rather than class, race, ethnicity, or social status. The arts-based methods found in this project allowed for all students to be supported and therefore I believe that these approaches could allow not just at-risk youth the tools to be successful, but all students. In this field project the Circle of Courage served as the vehicle to address the values found within a community as well as the tenets for the individual to feel whole. The Circle of Courage did not define the classroom relationships but rather provided a model around which conversations around community relationships could occur. In future applications of this project, I believe focusing on using arts-based methods allows for the flexibility to pivot around different value systems, religious teachings, cultural models, and contexts, therefore arts-based methods and interventions can be perceived as a universal model.

Awakening our aural senses was critical to this project as it encouraged students to actively listen to their environment. In future iterations of this project, the work of Pauline Oliveros and her theories of sonic meditation may serve as a resource. Oliveros is a composer who works in experimental music, specifically post-war electronic art music. Her work engages both trained and untrained musicians to participate in the art of listening as well as responding to the environment[12]. Her improvisatory compositions in deep listening may be an interesting approach to encouraging future participants to conceptualize the sounds found within their environment as well as collaboratively work together to explore an abstract notion of sound. Coining the term "sonic awareness", her compositions appear in the form of a paragraph serving as a set of instruction for all participants, and from this note allowing each performance of the piece to be a work unique to that environment.

Documenting the intangibility of relationships is a challenging task, and its validity is often called into question. In this field project I used visual art as a strategy for mapping relationships and documenting students' development. This strategy was successful as the Star Board morphed and grew with the students, allowing for conversations around interpersonal

[12] Viacom International, Inc. 2016. "About Pauline Oliveros." Accessed January 7, 2016. http://www.mtv.com/artists/pauline-oliveros/biography/

relationships and encouraging the individual to reflect on their behavior. The visual art piece mapped out the positive relationships that were being made, but in acknowledging the blank spaces between we are able to visually recognize connections that have not been forged. In applying this mapping strategy to other contexts or social situations, it is the spaces between where we as a society should focus our efforts.

During this field project's reflective state, I am honoured to note that it has been recognized on a provincial and national platform. During February of 2015, Heritage Saskatchewan invited me to speak of how this field project has fostered a sense of community among middle-years students through performance practices as a member of the *Emerging Young Professionals Panel*. This opportunity highlighted this project and recognized its positive impact on Saskatchewan communities, noting a need for future work and research in this area. Additionally, in September of 2015 I competed in the Falling Walls Lab, an international competition for scholars and entrepreneurs under thirty-five demonstrating breakthroughs in science and society. Serving as the only fine arts and humanities representative, I successfully competed in the Canadian final round, an event hosted at the University of Alberta. In looking to the future of this project, I am energized by its potential future trajectories.

Conclusion

When reflecting on the connectedness and complexity of the culture of this particular case study, I believe we have successfully met the outcomes set within the scope of this course. Reflecting on the data obtained through class assignments, student and teacher comments, and anecdotal observations, I believe we have addressed the course objectives that Braun and I set out at the beginning of the term. While at times I was presented with instances of doubt, I am thrilled that we creatively overcame any mid-project speedbumps and were able to support students inside the classroom as well as lay the foundation for skills that these students can carry with them through other aspects of life.

By increasing the amount of time together, specifically on an informal noon-hour basis, the students felt more comfortable with each other and were willing to take risks and be vulnerable. By creating an environment of mutual respect the students were able to speak to their oral narratives comfortably and use the sounds in those spaces to inspire new age- and grade-appropriate artistic works. The support received from community members, Elders, artists, and fellow educators proved invaluable. Their experiences and personal reflections have provided this project an additional framework for me to expand on, as well as another lens for the students to perceive the project. In looking at the three Making Connections worksheets, there is a clear growth in the students' interpersonal relationships which exists across grade level and English or French Immersion status. Students have acknowledged friendships and an understanding that one's appearance does not dictate their character. Communities possess various personalities and stories; while some may be vocal and open to sharing their piece, those with a shy personality are not necessarily disengaged. By allowing each student the appropriate space to be successful, be that via group or individual interviews, I learned that when given the opportunity those quiet voices can have the loudest messages.

The Circle of Courage served as a basis for the class Star Board, in addition to a series of guiding principles on how to address the needs of the "whole child". By applying practical situations to the fundamental vocabulary words, the students were able to internalize its meaning and obtain an in-depth understanding which extended further than the four vocabulary words we began with. As seen in the students' closing comments, they noted how the Circle of Courage can help guide the manner in which they communicate with one another and recognize when

someone is in need. While the students recognize that it is not their responsibility to take on other's burdens, they can recognize instances of pain.

Additionally, a significant lesson I believe the students learned was the realization of their own oral narratives. Reflecting on my time as an educator, at-risk youth often feel as though they are not being heard or create altercations since they are unable to express their inner sentiments. In this course the students were given strategies in music, dance, drama, and visual art, clearly demonstrating that the fine arts have the ability to speak on an emotional level and can pass along messages which so often words or actions cannot. Similar to our oral narrative, sound and music is a part of us and is carried in our individual constellation throughout this journey of life. Through an awakening to the people, relationships, and sound around us we become conscious to our surroundings with the potential for empathy, belonging and a collaborative, supportive work environment.

By analyzing this field project through the perspectives of Michel de Certeau, Janet Hoskins, and Paulo Freire I have been given deeper insight into the experiences found within the classroom. In addition, by looking at this analysis with a critical eye I have experienced a self-reflective journey with respect to how I facilitated these art pieces. These theorists have provided various perspectives on this work. Collectively they address the central themes of how objects can serve as inspiration for pieces of art, the perception of one's identity extended through objects, and how artistic endeavors can mediate community building and social change.

From de Certeau's work I am given two strong definitions for the manner in which we used and define spaces and places. Strategies and tactics are theories suggesting a means to subvert power within the larger governing body in order to challenge limitations. Working within these guidelines allows for innovative approaches to be presented, and if accepted a project can transform its traditional strategic use into a modernized version. I believe this field project confirms this theory and offers a new approach to arts education, inquiry-based learning, community engagement, and the notion of the Circle of Courage as mandated by the Regina Public School Board. Ultimately, through the narrative of this project and the ongoing growth to the education system, time will tell if new strategies begin to surface.

Hoskins's work offers a series of narratives where individuals are able to speak to their oral histories through the extension of objects. These metaphors serve to represent their lives and

are the basis for conversation. In this project students used objects found within their communities as starting points for interpersonal relations and musical compositions, ultimately coming to be seen as an extension of themselves. These tokens represent a certain aspect of their character that collaboratively is shared among other members within the group. Throughout the project a memorable moment for me was being able to observe students working together on a project that piqued their interest, was meaningful for them, allowed them to learn lessons that were transferable to other areas of their lives, and provided an opportunity to explore music in a non-traditional manner.

In reading Freire's work I found myself connecting to his theories, educational outlook, and methodologies on both a personal and professional front. Though I had not been introduced to his work prior to my field experience, it was validating to read his accomplishments and project trajectories. In his time, he heavily critiques the education system and aspired to create a learning environment where students were active leaners, rather than passive "deposit" recipients. As school systems move towards an inquiry-based learning model, I believe his legacy is passed onward. His themes of "conscientization" and "praxis" have inspired me to think and rethink, the manner in which I structured the class and the methodology used in this field project. The circular cycle of *action* and *reflection* leads to the individual looking deeply within their experiences to how they carry themselves through life, ultimately addressing social change.

This experience has allowed me to observe how art has the ability to communicate the conventions of the social group, by allowing the individual to connect on a cultural and emotional level. Within the Prairie provinces there is much work that needs to be done addressing the social dynamics found within our school systems as well as our social and personal situations. In creating new classroom communities' students were able to make connections with future friends as they focused on similarities rather than differences. Connecting with the fine arts at different stages, each student found a means to express their intangible emotions by being in an environment that was supportive and conducive to honesty and vulnerability. Throughout the semester, the class underwent a shift in mindset by transforming four vocabulary words from static entities into an internalized definition of

community. This was a positive example of how we can engage students in fostering groups dynamics and a sense of community through the fine arts.

Though this project has ended, the life of the Star Board is far from over. The strings will permanently speak of the journeys of 19 students and how their stories are entangled. This project serves as an artistic expression of the conventions of a social group, but it will live on within the individual students as they have been given tools to share their voices and contribute to the communities to which they feel connected. The constellation images serve to capture this moment in time, and finally this board will serve as a representation of one positive example of a cross-cultural collaborative effort, empowering at-risk youth to engage with the fine arts in creating a sense of community.

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Appendix A – Participant Biographies

Luke Braun

Luke Braun grew up in Mali, West Africa where he developed a love for African art and culture. He enjoys working with students from various cultural backgrounds and fostering belonging among student populations. He has worked diligently to develop practical and applied arts opportunities in Regina Public Schools. Luke often serves as stand-in administrator and is currently working towards his Masters of Education at the University of Regina.

Joanne Crawford

Joanne promotes the positive effects of drumming on the development of music, language, healing, personal development and community building. As the founder of the Cathedral Village Drum Circle Joanne co-facilitates The Regina Drum Circle, offers workshops with the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region Caring Heats Camp, works with at-risk youth through the Ranch Ehrlo program and is the owner of Boomtown Drums.

Joni Darke

No interviewee biography was provided.

Elder Hazel Dixon

Elder Hazel Dixon is an oral storyteller of Ojibwa/Mohawk ancestry from Ontario and taught preschool at the Come & Learn Head Start program in Regina. Many of Hazel's stories are First Nations' legends. She is a member of the First Nations theatre troupe "The Tipi Peepers". Hazel has presented at schools, children's festivals, exhibitions, and libraries.

Marlene Hinz

Since graduating from the University of Saskatchewan with a Bachelor of Music in Music Education Marlene has worked as an Arts Education Specialist teacher for twenty-seven years in two different school divisions. Her background is in Orff Schulwerk as well as world drumming and has served as a sessional instructor at the University of Regina. Performing, facilitating drum circles and teaching serve as Marlene's inspiration for her limitless enthusiasm, boundless energy and love of learning.

Theresa (Terri) MacPhail

In 1980 Theresa was accepted into the Saskatchewan Urban Native Education Program (SUNTEP) and then worked for the AMNSIS (Association of Métis Non Status Indians of Saskatchewan) in various administrative positions for the Saskatchewan Native Employment Center, the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, and finally for the Gabriel Dumont Institute as the Director of the Saskatchewan Training for Employment Program for five years. Terri began her new working career with The Regina Public School Board in the fall of l996. She is presently the Community School Coordinator for Elsie Mironuck Community School. Teaching Indian and Métis content and using the vehicle of cooking with students, she is able to convey historical information. She has Circle of Courage training and has attended many workshops on Reclaiming Youth at Risk and Response Abilities Pathways.

Calvin Racette

Calvin has worked in the area of First Nations and Métis education for over 30 years as a teacher, administrator, and on committees that support Aboriginal curriculum and community-based initiatives. Currently working with the Regina Public School Board as the Aboriginal Education Coordinator, he is recognized as a local Métis historian and writer. Active in the education process to support Aboriginal communities, his goal is to level the playing field for Aboriginal people focusing on identity and belonging.

Dayle Schroeder-Hillier

Born and raised in Regina, Saskatchewan, Dayle is proud to be a part of a close-knit community in both her work and personal lives. While pursuing a career in dance, Dayle's international travels resulted in a shift from a passion for the stage to an interest in "behind-the-scenes" work. This newfound interest opened her up to the world of event and project management. After moving back to Regina, she has enjoyed working with local non-for-profit and arts organizations like New Dance Horizons and the University of Regina Students' Union. Upon graduating in 2010 from the University of Regina with a degree in Business Administration, she started working for the Regina Folk Festival as the Production Manager. Through this work, Dayle finds the perfect balance of combining her enthusiasm for the arts with the busy world of event management. Dayle also continues to teach dance classes to all ages at Applause Dance Academy, and is currently enjoying many new adventures with her husband, Devin, and 14-month old daughter, Emmery.

Appendix B – Recording Project Assignment

D Madhur Making Connections – Part 2 2014

Constellation Project PART II

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Location Description: _____

Private or Public Space? _____

DO YOU HAVE PERMISSION TO RECORD? _____

Performer(s): (Who is performing?)

_____

Instruments: (What do you hear/see?)

_____

Melody: (Describe what you hear)

_____

Harmony: (What do you hear in the background?)

_____

Lyrics: (What are the words?)

_____

Dynamics: (What volume are the sounds?)

_____

Beat: (What is the beat, 1+2+3+4+? Or is it free form?)

_____

Texture: (Thick – lots of people, Thin – solo sounds)

_____

- What is the community that you are recording?

- Why is this sound significant to you?

Constellation Project PART II

After completing the visual art assignment - of creating your personal constellation, we are ready for part II! Now, you are being asked to look at the sounds found within the communities you feel connected with.

For this assignment you will assume the role of a field researcher. Are you ready to go exploring?!
In your tool kit you will need: a recording device. Anything really will work, as long as we will be able to upload the sounds to a school computer. In the instance you do not have access to a recording device, additional times will be set aside for students to complete this assignment.

The goal of this project is to bring us into your world. Share with us something that you are proud of and connected with. Allow music and sound to be used as your sounding board to present another side to you that sometimes people don't get to see.

When you are deciding on what sounds to record, find something that is particularly meaningful. It can be a piece of music or more abstract like sound of the environment, it is up to you. When creating a recording a small samping is all you need, **at maximum 30 seconds**.

This sheet is followed by a series of **vocabulary words** that you will use to analyze your musical example as well as help you when you are doing your **class presentation on** _____
For your presentation you are **welcome to bring props or people** to accompany your sound and serve as support to your project.

Once everyone in the class has presented their sounds, we are going create a collective piece of art. The life of this project is guided by you and your interests, therefore the SKY IS OUR LIMIT!

Appendix C – Beat Organization Form Sample

D Madhur May 12, 2014

Group 1 – Beat Organization Form

Who is in your group? [redacted] [redacted]

What is the community you all have in common?

Foot ball

What sounds are found in this space?

catching, throwing, getting [illegible], guys yelling, crowds cheer, Running

Creating a Beat

and Repeat

1	+	2	+	3	+	4	+	
	catch		catch	down Ready set and start running	catch		catch	Instrument: Running, catching, [illegible]
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Movement: feet hands

Appendix D – Student Ethics Documents

Information Letter and Student Consent Form

Fostering Communities among Middle-Years Students through Song and Dance Practices

Research Investigator:
Daya Madhur
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Supervisor:
Dr. Michael Frishkopf
Professor, Department of Music
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Dear Parents or Legal Guardians,

Your son/daughter has been invited to participate in a research project exploring song and dance practices found within communities to which they associate. He/she has been asked to participate in this study as this project connects with their social sciences, humanities, health and identity, arts education curriculums, and aboriginal education curriculum. The Regina Public School Board has approved my work with this school and student group and have found this project relevant to the students' current studies. The results from this research will be used in support of my thesis as I work towards my Masters of Arts in Ethnomusicology.

Purpose

The purpose of this research is to explore the influence of song and dance practices on fostering a sense of community and enhancing group dynamics in middle-years students. The principle contribution of my project is bridging the gap between academic literature and practical situations. On the practical side, my work will produce a foundational model that can be repeated by other educators in diverse contexts, as well as recorded evidence of one instance of the formation of a cross-cultural group.

Project Outline

This inquiry-based project will explore how music and dance, as well as experiences shared among middle-years classmates, serve to create and encourage community-building. The material for my research will be drawn from students' reflections on the different communities they are associated with and their sense of belonging among these groups. The traditional medicine wheel of First Nations and the unity symbol of the Métis Nation have been adopted by the Regina Public School Board into the standard curricula, and will therefore serve as reference for my work.

Your son/daughter has been invited to participate in this study and explore the importance of music and dance within a community. Students will be given the tools to serve as culture-bearers and taught the vocabulary to analyze musical examples, document their performance environment, and record audio. Students will be provided with a semi-structured questionnaire, and will record an audio sample from a community to which they feel connected, sharing with

the group the context and significance of the piece. The final stage of my research will involve assessing the students' work by looking for commonalities among their research findings. I will gauge the students' interrelationships and their understanding of song and dance amongst their communities.

Procedures

This study will occur over approximately an eleven week period at École Elsie Mironuck Community School during the term 3 Practical and Applied Arts Program. Mr. Luke Braun will serve as the liaison between this research project and the school community at École Elsie Mironuck Community School. The types of data collection will include:

- Formal and informal interviews conducted by myself or the classroom teacher
- Audio and video recordings of our sessions for data collection and research purposes
- Large group discussions and classroom observations during our sessions
- Semi-structured assignments, journal entries, and anecdotal notes in class and as homework assignments
- Audio recording through loaned materials

Benefits

This project connects with multiple school curricular subjects and outcomes as outlined by the Ministry of Education curricula, and therefore complements the students' classroom learning. In addition, the inquiry-based research project empowers students with the knowledge and skills to serve as researchers and culture bearers while exploring their identity and belonging. Yet the intangible results hold the most importance: allowing students to feel as if they belong, are valued, and that relationships can be built on respect. Through this research, I aspire that students have a better understanding of the community groups they are associated with, learn the importance of song and dance within our society, and strengthen relationships among classmates.

Cost

There are no costs involved in being involved in this research.

Risk

There are no risks involved in being involved in this research.

Voluntary Participation

Participants in this study are under no obligation to participate in this study as participation is completely voluntary. While participating in this study, participants are not obligated to answer any specific questions. At any point a participant can opt-out without penalty, yet work produced

will remain with the project for the duration of the research. In the instance an individual decides to opt-out halfway through the project, the data collected will remain part of the study, and anonymity will be preserved in any published works. Data can be modified while the individual is involved in the project, and destroyed at the discretion of the individual until six months after the cessation of their involvement in the project.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

The materials collected may be used for scholarly, educational, and documentary non-profit purposes, including but not limited to books, articles, conference presentations, documentary films, or audio recordings. All data will be kept confidential under a key-pass protected program, for the sole purpose of this research, only allowing myself access to these materials. Students will be given full anonymity in transcriptions of conversations and interviews, as well as in any published materials. Upon completion of this project, my final MA thesis will be available for public access through the Regina Public School Board or University of Alberta archives, and via e-mail request individuals involved in the project can obtain a copy of my final MA thesis.

In the instance an individual reveals reportable activities, such as abuse or inappropriate behaviour, the classroom teacher and school principal will be notified.

Moving forward, in the instance that this data will be used for future research projects, consultation with the REB Research Ethics Board will occur.

"The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidance by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at (780) 492-2615."

Signature of Participant: _____

Signature of Parent or Legal Guardian: _____

Signature of School Principal: _____

Signature of Partnering Teacher: _____

Should you have any future questions, you may reach me at dmadhur@ualberta.ca

Daya Madhur