

**Teachers' Experiences of/with Trauma and Trauma Sensitivity:  
A Narrative Inquiry into Trauma Stories and Stories of Trauma**

by  
Nathalie Reid

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Department of Elementary Education  
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## Abstract

May 5th, 2016, during conversation with a former colleague who had been evacuated from Fort McMurray, Alberta due to a devastating forest fire, I began to wonder more deeply about teachers' experiences in the midst of trauma and trauma sensitivity, particularly as I sensed trauma sensitivity was increasingly becoming an added expectation that many teachers were experiencing. Following the fire and this conversation with a former colleague, I awakened to how frequently I was hearing the terms *trauma* and *trauma sensitivity* in multiple and diverse contexts, and yet I could not answer the question: What does it *mean to be* trauma sensitive? I thus engaged in a 2-year narrative inquiry alongside three teachers as coinquirers through which we inquired into a research puzzle focused on how teachers' personal and professional contexts, knowledge, and identities (conceptualized narratively in this dissertation as *stories to live by*) are shaped by and shape their experiences of/with trauma. The coinquirers and I engaged in living, telling, retelling, and reliving stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998b) alongside each other through multiple face-to-face conversations and via digital communication. Through this dialogue we co-composed and inquired into diverse field texts that included the transcripts of our conversations, drawings, and memory box artifacts (Clandinin, 2013). Three narrative accounts, one for each co-inquirer, were co-composed, from which reverberating resonant threads emerged. As coinquirers, we came to understand that we compose our lives in the midst of experience. Slowly attending to the wholeness of lives, rather than trauma as an experience in isolation, surfaced tensions with the more dominant stories that homogenize

and pathologize trauma as a single and defining story (Adichie, 2009). This wide-awakeness (Greene, 1995) also drew us to wonder with the more dominant institutional narratives of the categorization of behaviours as identity markers (i.e. the practice of assessing and assigning codes to children and youth). We also wondered with the professional pressures to *be* often resulting from one-time professional development that travels to teachers through the metaphorical conduit (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995; Craig, 2001). We wondered if and how programs of trauma sensitivity bump against, smooth out, and/or silence the multilayered and complex experiences that are shaped by and shaping teachers' making of their lives in and outside of schools. By 'world'-travelling to others' worlds with a loving perception (Lugones, 1987), through living, telling, retelling and reliving our stories, we came to a narrative understanding of trauma as shaping, but also as being shaped by, our knowledge, contexts, and identities, that is, our stories to live by (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999). Together, we called attention to how we were continually composing our lives as searches for, or as struggles with, narrative coherence (Carr, 1986). We saw this understanding as opening possibilities for more narrative conceptualizations of trauma, trauma stories, and stories of trauma as we, as teachers, continue to come alongside each other, children and youth, colleagues, families, curriculum makers, policy developers, and others on school landscapes.

*Keywords:* trauma, trauma sensitivity, teachers' experiences, contexts, knowledge, identity, stories to live by, narrative coherence, narrative inquiry

## **Preface**

This thesis is an original work by Nathalie Reid. The research project, of which this thesis is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, Project Name “Teachers’ Experiences of/with Trauma and Trauma sensitivity: A Narrative Inquiry.” No. Pro00076831, 17/10/2017.

## Dedication

“I would ask you to remember only this one thing,” said Badger.

“The stories people tell have a way of taking care of them.

If stories come to you,  
care for them.

And learn to give them away where they are needed.

Sometimes a person needs a story more than food to stay alive.

That is why we put these stories in each other’s memories.

This is how people care for themselves.”

(Barry Lopez, 1990, p. 60)

*To all who have shown me, over the past 4 years, how to care for and with stories,*

*and to all those who we now invite to care for and with our stories,*

*I thank you.*

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Being alongside you as coinquirers who became friends has been one of the most profound experiences of my life. Thank you for your time, care, understanding, friendship, and for trusting me with your stories.

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### **I would also like to acknowledge the Centre for Research for Teacher Education and Development**

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## Prologue:

### Beginning, Again.

In many ways, this inquiry found me. When I applied to the doctoral program, I did so with a different inquiry interest. Similarly to when I was completing my Master’s thesis, a tragedy occurred that interrupted what was I thinking about and drew my attention to what ultimately would become my inquiry. While this puzzle of teachers’ experiences of/with trauma and trauma sensitivity came to me in ways that I felt, in the moment, were powerful and interruptive, I came to understand this inquiry as having been shaped with/in<sup>1</sup> and across my life in the making<sup>2</sup>. It was through living alongside the coinquirers—Tobias, Beth, and Marie<sup>3</sup>—for more than 2 years, and attending to our living, telling, retelling, and reliving, that I gradually awakened to the potential of narrative inquiry in understanding teachers’ experiences of/with trauma and trauma sensitivity.

As our inquiry unfolded, I came to better understand King’s (2003) belief “that the truth about stories is that that’s all we are” (p. 153). This belief has come to ground my personal and the practical and social/theoretical justifications<sup>4</sup> (Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) for engaging in narrative inquiry into stories of experience in relation

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this dissertation, I often use constructions such as: with/in, in/between, be/coming, etc. I do so to attend relationally to our experiences as coinquirers through showing that all three words were lived in experience. For example, I use with/in to show that with, in, and within were all part of the experience. Be/coming shows that there was a shift from be-ing, to coming, to becoming. It was my sense that in constructing these kinds of words in this way, I come closer to the experience.

<sup>2</sup> My understanding of life in the making/ life making was shaped by my understanding of experience as life making, and from my understanding that knowledge “is acquired and negotiated in relationships” (Estefan, Caine, & Clandinin, 2016, p. 27)

<sup>3</sup> All names are pseudonyms chosen by each co-inquirer.

<sup>4</sup> Please see Chapter 2

with trauma.

I was inspired, in part, by Bateson's (1989) statement:

It started from a disgruntled reflection on my own life as a sort of desperate improvisation in which I was constantly trying to make something coherent from conflicting elements . . . and to explore different ways of thinking about my own life. (pp. 3, 10)

As such, in Chapter 1 I share my narrative beginnings, my reflections on my own life which Clandinin and Caine (2013) describe as:

attend[ing] through the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space to our own experiences. This may mean that we reach as far back as our childhoods to understand, and, at times, to name our research puzzle; it also means that we attend to the places in which our stories have unfolded; and we make evident the social and political contexts that shaped our understandings. (p. 171)

In writing these narrative beginnings and thinking with them, I was able to "explore different ways of thinking about my own life" (Bateson, 1989, p. 10).

In Chapter 2, I continue to attend to my personal justifications as I create "a kind of conversation between theory and life or, at least, between theory and the stories of [my] life contained in the inquiry" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 41) to show the practical and social/theoretical justifications for this inquiry.

Chapter 3 shows how narrative inquiry and its commitments shaped my and Tobias', Beth's, and Marie's living of our inquiry. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 are the narrative accounts co-composed with Tobias, Beth, and Marie to share a sense of the wholeness of

their lives in the making<sup>5</sup> as we co-inquired into experiences of/with. In Chapter 7, I share the resonant reverberating threads of experience that surfaced as I lingered in what I imagined as a conversation between and across the coinquirers' and my lived and told stories. In Chapter 8, I return to the social/theoretical, practical, and personal justifications for this work and share forward-looking wonders and possibilities.

While inviting you, the reader, into our inquiry, I do so with excitement, but also with care and caution. There are stories in this dissertation that might draw on and draw out some of your difficult stories. I want to foreground this possibility not to distance you from what you are about to engage with, but rather as an acknowledgement of the possibility and as an honest and open invitation to you to lay your stories alongside ours in the hopes of furthering conversations about teachers' experiences of/with trauma and trauma sensitivity in order to begin to imagine how "things . . . could be otherwise" (Greene, 2001, p. 98).

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<sup>5</sup> Estefan, Caine, and Clandinin (2016) shaped my awakening to attending to the wholeness of lives: We frequently feel tension as we bump against a dominant narrative in professional education, one in which professional education does not involve the personal. . . . Thinking within a narrative inquiry perspective, we see that the separation of the personal from the professional is not possible, as it does not allow us to account for the wholeness of lives, for the unfolding of lives within contexts. (p. 27)

## Chapter 1:

### Gradually Coming to the Inquiry as it Came to Me

*It is<sup>6</sup> May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2016. I am driving, with my husband and kids, in an over-packed rental car on Vancouver Island when I get the news. As cellphone reception returns, my phone starts vibrating and chiming. My Twitter account explodes and text messages announce their arrival, while my husband's phone also starts ringing and vibrating non-stop. Then, as quickly as we regain reception, we lose it again. Heavy silence floods the car for a tension-filled hour before we can again connect with the outside world. What then floods our phones are images of horror—a fire is tearing through our former community<sup>7</sup> of Fort McMurray, and lines of cars filled with people and possessions are trying to escape. We cannot reach any of our loved ones by phone.*

*We arrive at our destination and my husband disappears to make the necessary phone calls. I sit, alternating between the images on the television and those scrolling on my phone, incapable of making sense of what is happening. My husband re-enters the room and we discuss how he must leave immediately to return to Edmonton as he works in the facility that has been designated as the evacuation centre. He throws his clothing in a suitcase and lets us know he will book a flight while driving to the airport. There are moments of rapid and chaotic activity and then the eerie quiet once he is gone—a quiet permeated only with the*

---

<sup>6</sup> I wrote this fragment in present tense to invite the reader into the embodied immediacy and urgency I always experience in the living, telling, and retelling of the story.

<sup>7</sup> For context regarding the fire, please visit the following links:

CBC News coverage of the fire: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/fort-mcmurray-wildfire-remains-out-of-control-after-city-evacuated-1.3563977>

*voices of news anchors showing pictures and sharing stories that are filled with progressively more alarming accounts of the situation.*

*The next day my sons and I take our scheduled flight back to Edmonton. For 24 hours I have lived scrolling through social media, watching the news, and trying to connect people with accommodations. By the time we arrive home our first guests are already at our house. There are heart-breaking moments of hugs and tears and then an almost desperate need to tell and hear stories of what happened, how it happened, what these people's experiences were, and speculation as to what might yet still happen. We all sit, in my perfectly intact living room in Edmonton, searching our phones for information. More videos, more damage, more destruction, more disbelief, while we are a mere 500 kms away.*

*The next morning we (those staying at our house and I) travel to the evacuation centre so they can begin their insurance process. While they wait in line, I sit in the bleachers looking around, trying to absorb the sight I am beholding. I become powerfully reminded of other similar news stories of natural disasters that I have watched over the years with casual, albeit grateful, detachment. The visuals are the same: the rows upon rows of cots covered with Red Cross blankets, the myriad of line-ups for different amenities. But this time I am not, and cannot be, detached; these people are my friends, family, colleagues, community, youth, and the youth's families. The quiet is shocking. The glazed eyes with which people are viewing the situation are painful to behold. Tears and hugs and handshakes pepper the visual scene, as do the emergency personnel who are working to ensure basic comfort, hydration, and sustenance for everyone.*



### **(Retelling)<sup>8</sup> Beginnings: Awakening to the *Back To***

Over the next couple of weeks our Edmonton home became a gathering place for friends. Our back deck became a place of tears and of laughter, a place of telling and retelling stories. We sat with our friends through various moments of attempted sense-making and awakening to their understanding that this event was probably never going to make sense as their lives were irrevocably changed. We were there as they struggled with finding accommodations, with finding new schools for their kids, with boredom, with fear, with relief, with anxiety, and with the desperate wish to just go home.

Very quickly both school boards in Fort McMurray issued statements that school would not resume until the Fall, that the teachers would be receiving trauma sensitivity training, and that when the schools reopened they would be trauma-informed. Soon thereafter I received an email from a colleague wondering what it meant to *be* trauma-informed/trauma sensitive. The quick move by the school boards toward trauma sensitivity and trauma-informed practice gave me pause as I wondered what these terms would look like in the day-to-day life in classrooms and schools. Around the same time I found myself sitting with a friend who was a teacher in Fort McMurray, talking about how difficult it was going to be for the youth to return to their homes (if they still existed) and to their schools come the fall.

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<sup>8</sup> I wish to foreground that these narrative beginnings are a retelling in the sense that when I first thought with these stories, I did so in the context of my candidacy proposal. While many aspects of this earlier autobiographical narrative inquiry are similar to what I now share in this dissertation, living the inquiry alongside Tobias, Beth, and Marie has shaped this return as a retelling, which is shown in each of the subsection titles.

We imagined the challenges and barriers facing the youth. Some of my friends were among the last to leave their respective schools, waiting and terrified, with terrified youth, watching as the wall of fire grew ever closer. As my friend shared her memories and worries, we pondered the upcoming fall term. While this conversation focussed heavily on children and youth, I found myself slowly being drawn to also wonder about the teachers and who and how they would be and become, and who and how they would be expected to be and become, on their school landscapes. The teachers whom I had spoken with were traumatized and grappling themselves. Yet these same people, suffering themselves, were seemingly already being positioned or planted in a story (Okri, 1997) to be the front-line providers of trauma-informed practice to and for children and youth. I wondered how teachers would experience living up to and in (Carr, 1986) what was beginning to feel like an institutional script grounded in programming and professional development with the aim of being trauma sensitive for children and youth.

My friend also wondered how she was ever going to go *back to* being *a teacher*. This wonder drew out a strong and surprising tension for me. I was uncomfortable with this statement. I remember her statement bringing me to puzzle with what she might have meant: was she suggesting that she was having a hard time imaging herself as a teacher anymore, or was she suggesting that she could not imagine having the ability to go *back to* the way it was before? As I heard statements of *back to* normal, and going *back to* a previous way of being, I began to wonder why a person might feel such a return was necessary. In response to my felt tension, I began to wonder with my own stories of

experience in order to understand why the words *back to* were so uncomfortable to me.

### **Lingering With the Back to and Beginning to Wonder About Cover Stories**

Trying to think with and understand my tension with my friend's *back to* statement drew me inward and backward to experiences in which I had lived other *back to* moments, particularly on my professional landscapes:

"I have something to tell you.  
 I am not sure how to tell you,  
 and I am not even really sure what I just saw.  
 But it was terrible.  
 Something has happened in New York.  
 Two planes have run into the World Trade Centre.  
 No one really knows why or who or what.  
 It seriously just happened as I walked into Mr. N's room".  
 Silence.  
 Panicky crying.  
 A student near hysterics -  
 "My mom is in downtown New York today" she says.  
 Our need to sense-make shifts.  
 She is our focus.  
 There is no internet connection in my classroom.  
 No, her mom does not have a cell phone.  
 We try to call her mom's hotel -  
 The unnerving echo of a busy signal.  
  
 I take my radio and tune it to the CBC<sup>9</sup>.  
 32 Grade 10 students  
 sit,  
 on the 4th day of school,  
 in silence  
 staring  
 at my radio.

---

<sup>9</sup> CBC – stands for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation which is a national broadcaster for both radio and television.

At 11am,  
 a knock.  
 The vice principal's face  
 in the window of my door.  
 No one moves. No one shifts. No one looks.  
 I step out  
 so as not to intrude  
 on the students' private thoughts.

I angle the door shut  
 to prevent our sounds  
 from changing the landscape.  
 The vice principal  
 says:  
 "Ok Nathalie.  
 Business as usual now.  
 Back to  
 teaching the curriculum."

I experience  
 a long moment of shocked silence.  
 I respond  
 "Mme. T.<sup>10</sup> look into my room."  
 She looks.  
 No movement.  
 "There is no way I am teaching literary terms right now.  
 These kids need time.  
 They need to process what is happening in their world.  
 Look at them.  
 They have not moved a muscle, even with me out of the room,  
 on the 4th day of the school year.  
 It would be wrong."

(long pause)

---

<sup>10</sup> This, and all names in this dissertation, are pseudonyms.

“Ok Nathalie.  
But the second this becomes a waste of time, go  
back to  
teaching ok?”

Inwardly, I wonder,  
what more powerful “teaching” could be done than  
living together with students in this moment.  
What powerful force is at play  
that values Shakespeare  
over  
students’ sense-making of their world,  
that, all of a sudden,  
does not make sense?  
(Interim research text, January 2015)<sup>11</sup>

“*Back to teaching*”. Those words echo through all of the life I have lived between and foreground some dominant institutional narratives I have encountered as a teacher. Thinking with my 9/11 experience as it surfaced alongside my Fort McMurray colleague’s words, I wondered about the desire to go *back to*—about when this particular construction is used, by whom, and for what purpose. I have often heard this phrase being used following a death or following a difficult experience in phrases such as *it’s time to get back to normal*; these are moments when I have continued to wonder if, for a life that has experienced such profound interruption, there can be any possibility of a return to what

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<sup>11</sup> Clandinin and Connelly (2000) provide understandings of life experience as field text. For this and all upcoming poems, I drew upon journal entries I wrote at the time of my experience. I have now drawn on these journal entries to create found poems as a way to share my experience, thus moving the journal entry from field text to interim research text. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) define interim research texts as “situated in the spaces between field texts and final, published research texts” (p. 133). This aspect is further discussed in Chapter 3.

was before. As I sought literature to support my wonders, I came across Zembylas' (2003) conceptualization of *restorative nostalgia* which "seeks to rebuild the ruins of an imagined past. This refuge to an idealized past can have debilitating consequences, because it discourages a critical examination of and engagement with the present" (p. 8). In reading Zembylas I felt that I was beginning to understand at least one of the threads that was weaving my tension.

Another possibility I encountered came from Bateson (n.d.): "because our society has preferred continuous versions of stories, discontinuities seem to indicate that something is wrong with you. A discontinuous story becomes a very difficult story to claim" (para. 10). Thinking with her assertion alongside my *back to* tensions, I also found myself wondering if and how some of my former colleagues might be experiencing incoherence and discontinuity in their lives. I began wondering if perhaps my Fort McMurray friend's statement resonated so profoundly with me because my 9/11 experience still lives so powerfully in me. At that time did I too experience the institutional pressure of shifting myself into living out a more safe and smooth story of what happens at school? And was that safer, smoother story a more typical story of "teacher/teaching"?

In beginning to wonder with how unsettling I found my friend's words, I began to surface wonders about dis/continuity and in/coherence and how our life making, our identities, and our becoming are shaped in and by these experiences. My understanding of life making grew from Heilbrun (1988) who suggested people are all actively writing or authoring their lives. Huber, Murphy, and Clandinin (2011) also wrote about wanting to

“make central teachers’ and children’s identities, their stories to live by, being composed in classrooms and schools” (p. 5). I take up life making with the understanding that we compose, co-compose, and recompose our stories to live by in the many places, situations, and relationships in which we find ourselves. As Bateson (2010) says, “we compose our lives in time, improvising and responding to context, yet weaving threads of continuity and connecting the whole as we move back and forth in memory” (p. 181).

Thinking about the ways in which we compose our lives, I was then drawn to Clandinin and Connelly’s (1995, 1996) conceptualization of *cover stories*, and I wondered if *back to* became a kind of preparation to compose and live out the cover stories teachers might feel necessary for their survival in schools. Clandinin and Connelly (1995, 1996) conceptualized *cover stories* as the stories teachers tell in which they portray themselves as experts when outside their classrooms to fit the acceptable/accepted dominant stories of school<sup>12</sup> being lived on their professional knowledge landscapes. Olson and Craig (2005) later took up the concept of cover stories as follows:

These multiple stories [personal and professional] give rise to tensions and entailments that emerge at the intersections where teachers’ personal knowledge—constructed and reconstructed from experience—meets knowledge constructed by others, whether funnelled into schools in the form of tasks and attributes, or constructed by others within their school contexts . . . individuals, to varying degrees, live and tell particular narratives in order to fit in with the perceived canonical version of “how things should be”. (pp. 163–164)

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<sup>12</sup> Later in this chapter I attend to Clandinin and Connelly’s (1996) conceptualizations of *school stories*, *stories of school*, *teachers’ stories*, and *stories of teacher*.

I wondered about the cover stories being lived out both by youth and by teachers (and staff and administrators) as they experienced tensions at the intersection of what they might know/feel they wish to do, and what they know/feel they *should be* doing, particularly in relation with trauma. In thinking with the possibility of cover stories alongside many of my experiences, I also began to wonder about my in/between feelings in those moments in which I felt positioned between myself as a person and my learned and felt expectations attached to the word *teacher*<sup>13</sup>.

**(Retelling) Comfortably Smooth(ed) Stories of *Teacher* I Lived By, With, and In**

Thinking with my tension of *back to* alongside my experiences of feeling like I had to *be a teacher* drew me to wonder about the stories of teacher I was living *by, with, and in* (Clandinin, 2013), and how those stories were shaping and had been shaped by my life making. Clandinin (2013) drew me to understand that we live *by* countless stories; the term stories to live by was developed by Connelly and Clandinin (1999) to refer to a narrative conception of knowledge(s), contexts, and identities (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995; Connelly & Clandinin, 1988). Clandinin (2013) also wrote how living *with* stories is an ongoing process of living in relation (Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Huber, 2000) to the countless narratives people are always in the midst of. Drawing upon Okri (1997), Clandinin (2013) additionally discussed living *in* stories as living in the midst of

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<sup>13</sup> I chose to italicize *teacher* and *student* when I draw on more dominant, typical, and hierarchical understandings of the expected roles that have come to shape the understandings and living of these words. I italicize *student* in this dissertation when I am using the word to represent my growing understanding of how I want to honour youth as people rather than only as *students*. I use *student* in instances wherein I can imagine a particular story of *student* being enacted.



personal, familial, intergenerational, institutional, social, cultural, temporal, linguistic, school, and other narratives. Thinking with these conceptions supported me to wonder about the stories of *teacher* I had lived by, with, and in.

At the age of ten,  
I received a  
spectacular  
Cabbage Patch Kid<sup>14</sup> teaching kit,  
in a large, yellow box that included  
highly-organized components of a  
teaching world.  
Divided  
into core curriculum outcomes.  
Chalk board, lesson plans, question cards, stickers, assessment pages.  
Report Cards.  
Teacher-dom neatly packaged.  
Beautiful in my eyes.

It reflected and allowed me to practice  
what I imagined myself being someday.  
In doing what was in that box, I was in control.  
I planned, instructed, marked, and rewarded.  
Or, took away “recess” as necessary punishment.  
I was a teacher.  
(Interim research text, January 2015)

As a child, I identified myself as a *teacher* before I identified most other aspects of who I wanted to be. I carried an embodied notion, acquired through my own school experiences, of what *teacher* meant and it lived in me, all through school, as a goal, as an end point, as something to *be*. What I sensed as I thought with my Cabbage Patch Kit experience and as I

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<sup>14</sup> Cabbage Patch Kids were toy dolls popular in the 1980s in Canada and in the United States.

remembered backward across my life making, is that schooling in the formal sense can often silence the idea of *becoming*, replacing it with a notion of finality, of being something fixed and boxable, achievable, much like my Cabbage Patch Kid Teaching Kit. The more I wondered about the differences between being and becoming, the more I felt the significance of this awakening contrasting with the fixed stories of being a teacher that I had lived by, with, and in. I realized that as a *student* imagining myself as a *teacher*, my understandings were based on my school experiences which, at that time in my life and until slowing down to think with them, I had lived, told, and retold<sup>15</sup> as smooth stories.

Clandinin, Murphy, Huber, and Orr (2010) define smooth stories as being part of many people's experiences:

For many teachers, and indeed for many people, tensions are thought to have a negative valence, that is, tensions are something to be avoided or smoothed over. If there are tensions evident in a school it is usually seen as a problem. As we deepened our understandings around tensions we began to engage in self-facing, knowing how deeply we had learned to deny or cover over the tensions we ourselves had experienced as we lived on school landscapes. (p. 82)

Later they stated: "Thinking metaphorically, tensions could be seen as marking the cracks or fissures in what might, at first glance, be a smooth story. Beginning to attend to the cracks creates the possible spaces for inquiry" (p. 84). As I began retelling some of my

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<sup>15</sup> Clandinin (2013) conceptualizes the *living, telling, retelling, and reliving* of stories in narrative inquiries as: We understand that people *live* out stories and *tell* stories of their living. . . . We call this process of coming alongside participants and then inquiring into the lived and told stories *retelling* stories. Because we see that we are changed as we retell our lived and told stories, we may begin to *relive* our stories. (p. 34)

I say more about living, telling, retelling, and reliving in Chapter 3.

stories of being *a student*, I realized that what I had thought was a fairly peaceful part of my life was, in fact, filled with difficult and painful moments, experiences I had smoothed over. I found myself wanting to revisit those moments in order to draw from the tensions as “possible spaces for inquiry” (Clandinin, Downey, & Huber, 2009, p. 84).

My smooth/ed stories were indeed “the dominant stories of school as places where lives meet in smooth, happy, successful, caring school environments” (Clandinin, Murphy, Huber, & Orr, 2009, p. 83) that frosted over particular cracks and tensions. When I thought with how deeply embodied my idea of what it meant to be *a teacher* was at such a young age, I became aware of two things: a) how much and for how long I imagined myself as a (particular kind of) teacher and b) how powerfully I silenced the many tensions I was living throughout my time as *a student*, probably as a way to sustain smooth stories of school and of teachers in order to fulfill my dream of eventual membership in this world.

As I thought with this awakening, I was reminded of Clandinin and Connelly’s (1996) conceptualization of *school stories* and *stories of school* as both shaping and shaped by teachers’ lived and told stories. Both the stories held of the school by the various communities in which it is nested and the stories the school holds of itself shape and are shaped by teachers’ experiences. This conceptualization of school stories and stories of school is similar to their conceptualization of *teacher stories* and *stories of teachers* where teacher stories are those stories teachers live and tell of themselves, whereas stories of teachers are stories ascribed to teachers by more distant sources. In thinking narratively<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> While I attend more to the commonplaces of thinking narratively in Chapter 3, here I share Clandinin et al.’s (2010) conceptualization:

with my experience on 9/11, I came to sense that before then my *teacher stories* had been virtually synonymous with the *stories of teacher* I had learned through the years of being a *student* in schools and in my preservice teacher education program.

In thinking with my experiences, I realized that I had never encountered Lugones' (1987) sense of "world-travelling' with a loving perception" as a student in relation with my teachers or professors. Lugones (1987) conceptualized "world'-travel" as the means by which we continuously navigate the worlds we inhabit, are invited into, or are constructed in. She wrote: "travelling to someone's 'world' is a way of identifying with them . . . because by travelling to their 'world' we can understand *what it is to be them and what it is to be ourselves in their eyes*" (p. 17). Through this retelling, I began travelling to my teachers' "worlds" with a different perception and wondering about *them* and about their lives in these moments. Were they struggling with enacting expected, cover, and smooth/ed stories of teachers that were shaping who and what they felt they were supposed to be and do as *teachers*?

Wondering with my memories of my childhood school teachers drew me forward toward my preservice teacher education program. What I remembered being taught as "good practice" in my preservice teacher education program was: don't smile until October and don't mess up, coupled with the importance of content knowledge and satisfying the outcomes of the "curriculum."<sup>17</sup> This was the checklist by which *good teachers* could assess

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Thinking narratively, we attend to the commonplaces of narrative inquiry: temporality (past, present, future), sociality (the dialectic between inner and outer, the personal and social), and place (the concrete physicality of the place or places in which experiences are lived out and told). (p. 82)

<sup>17</sup> In my preservice teacher education program, the word 'curriculum' was synonymous with the

themselves and was continuous with the stories of teacher I had been living.

Coming to understand myself as living by, with, and in a continuous story of a particular kind of teacher/ing, and thinking with the experience that interrupted this continuous story gradually drew me toward wonders about teachers' experience they story as traumatic—their trauma stories. I have conceptualized these experiences narratively throughout this dissertation as *trauma stories* (the stories the teachers are living and telling of their experience) and *stories of trauma* (the stories being told institutionally in relation with how trauma should be “dealt with” in schools).

### **(Retelling) My Earlier Lingering With/In My Stories of Trauma and Trauma Stories<sup>18</sup>**

Retelling experiences of my youth, of my preservice teacher education program, 9/11, and the Fort McMurray fire opened up many wonders for me about my experience of/with trauma and teaching. How had I come to know what I thought I knew or what I felt was expected of me in the midst of experience I storied as traumatic? How did this *knowing* develop over the course of my life and express itself in my teacher stories? In

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government-defined outcomes published in a document as a checklist for teachers to follow. As I have inquired more deeply into notions and theories of curriculum, I have grown to understand other ideas of curriculum such as Aoki's (1993) understanding of the “lived curriculum” (p. 258) alongside the “curriculum-as-plan” (p. 257). Most closely, I now draw upon Clandinin and Connelly (1992) who suggest that curriculum “might be viewed as an account of teachers' and children's lives together in schools and classrooms. . . [where] the teacher is seen as an integral part of the curricular process in which teacher, learners, subject matter and milieu are in dynamic interaction” (p. 392), which supports me in my understanding of their understanding of curriculum as “a course of life” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1992, p. 393).

<sup>18</sup> While this conceptualization will be further explored in the section entitled: *(Retelling and Reliving) A Story of Trauma as a Trauma Story*, briefly, as this inquiry unfolded, I began to draw on Clandinin and Connelly's (1996) conceptualizations of stories of teachers and teacher stories to frame my growing narrative understanding of trauma as being shaped by, with, and in trauma stories and stories of trauma, which are also shaped by and shaping teachers' experiences of the personal and the professional on their professional knowledge landscapes, all of which is discussed in more detail in this and in the following chapters.

lingering with these wonders, I remembered reading Olson and Craig's (2005) work which supported me to puzzle about my ways of knowing:

Our frame also shows how what teachers know becomes entangled with what they are "supposed to know." Schön (1983) aptly invokes the iceberg metaphor to distinguish paradigmatic knowledge (Bruner, 1986)—representational knowledge abstracted from experience—from the part of the iceberg that is submerged (i.e., narrative knowledge—the storied reflections, based in and on action, that contribute to deep understandings of self, others, and educational practice). Our examples illuminate how cover stories are initiated and perpetuated by silence, compliance, moral imperatives, power structures, and subtly normalizing forces . . . that ensure their continued acceptance as authorized versions of knowledge. (p. 163)

These understandings supported me to consider the ways of knowing I had privileged in the various places of my life making. I came to sense that what I *knew* in one context, I seemed not to draw upon in others.

After being hired, but before beginning my first teaching job, I remember imagining myself as the teacher I wanted to be—calm, cool, collected, and in control—the Cabbage Patch Kid Kit teacher in an adult body. I wanted to be exigent but fair and I felt that if I planned appropriately I could know that the youth leaving my classroom would have learned the required content. But as Bateson (1994) wisely stated, "sometimes a dissonance will break through and pull you into intense involvement in an experience you had distanced by thinking of yourself as coolly looking on" (p. 5). My dissonance walked into my second block class on my first day and first year of teaching. Her name was Michelle.

When I used to imagine teaching,  
     I could see it clearly.  
     I was going to be methodical.  
 I would start in the Program of Studies,  
     Create units. From those units  
         I would create  
         lesson plans.  
 I would teach those plans, then  
     assess, then report,  
     then Reflect for the next year  
 when I taught the same lesson.  
     I was confident.  
     I knew how to be a teacher.  
         ~  
         I had NO idea  
         teaching would mean this . . .  
         I had no idea  
 there would be Michelles in my classes.  
         I have NO IDEA  
         What to do . . .  
 Shouldn't someone have taught me about this at some point?  
 (Interim research text, July 2016)

Michelle was the kind of person who changed any environment in which she found herself—changed it for the better. And I soon learned that her cancer, diagnosed a year earlier, was in remission. She, her friends, and many of our staff were celebrating her life. There was such joy in and among her group of friends. Then exactly a year to the day of the remission diagnosis, and a few months into my being her teacher, she was re-diagnosed with terminal cancer. The news shook the very foundations of our school and created much tension in me. Having grown up in a military family in which death was an ever-present possibility, and a sometimes reality, I was now facing it in a way that drew me in

both personally and professionally—as a *teacher*. I felt I had no idea what to do. I felt I had no idea what to say, how to act, how to be alongside Michelle as her *teacher* on a school landscape. Nor did I have any idea how to live alongside her friends and my colleagues while still having to *teach content*. This was not something I had learned about in my B.Ed. or in any professional development, and I struggled.

We all found out today that Michelle’s cancer is back.

Back in the most horrific of ways.  
There is a deafening silence of disbelief  
suffocating our school.

Walking down the hall on supervision at lunch today,

I saw many teachers,  
alone in their classrooms,  
taking private moments to themselves,  
some staring off with  
deadeney eyes,  
some sobbing silently.

I wondered then,  
as I am wondering tonight,  
what did they do third block after lunch?

I wished I could have walked down the hall again  
to see if and how they were teaching.

I assume they were.  
I wish someone could teach me  
how to pull it all together  
so I can do that too.

I know I am supposed to teach,  
no matter what,

but I feel like it is somehow wrong.

Teaching is getting through the curriculum, right?

That’s my professional responsibility, right?

(Interim research text, November 2017)



As I thought with this experience many years later, I understood more about the struggle I remembered experiencing alongside Michelle. She unknowingly forced me to question what I was doing, what I wanted to do, and who I wanted to be/become on school landscapes. She brought me to question knowledge and what kinds of knowledge I valued. She also problematized the stories of *teacher* I had been imagining and living since childhood. She brought me to wonder about what it meant to be *a teacher* and to inwardly wrestle with why I felt pressure to *be professional* and *just teach* or to *go back to* teaching, despite this news. Additionally, I started to wonder about my colleagues' experiences and knowing, and what knowledge they felt was valued on school landscapes. Why did my colleagues, in the light of Michelle's news, appear to feel the need to retreat solitarily into their own empty classroom spaces? Were they feeling a need to shore up their courage in order to *teach* their third block classes? Were they fast grabbing at a cover story or a smooth/ed story in order to face the afternoon? Were those quiet moments ones in which they were trying to silence the personal and the emotional so as to *go back to* the professional and teaching after lunch? Were their trauma stories being shaped by more dominant stories of teaching and stories of trauma in schools?

### **Returning to My Earlier Experience of Knowing in Places**

Lingering with my experience of Michelle's cancer diagnosis drew me to wonder about the stories of places in my life making. For me, school had *not* been a place to talk about this kind of "stuff." And yet I did *know* in other places, in outside-of-school places, how to be alongside others in difficult times. In places I had lived before, when I had lived

on military bases, there existed ways of knowing that allowed us to navigate the difficult and painful situations with which we were often confronted. The bases, often in remote locations or in foreign countries, were like little islands and the isolation, for me, created a sense of community I have not experienced elsewhere. While we never really discussed the horrific potential of why we were living on a base, in moments of necessity people seemed to instinctively *know* how to respond in caring, relational, and community-minded ways. In drawing forward my thinking with this experience alongside Michelle and how, as *a teacher* on a school landscape I felt I did not *know* how to behave, what to say, or how to be, I experienced surprise when I came to understand that as a *person*, in outside-of-school places, I had some sense of knowing. I had learned what community meant, what caring looked and felt like, and how to support others. Through having watched those around me I knew how to respond in difficult times and I carried this knowing in me; yet I did not feel its place on school landscapes.

In thinking with this tension as I wrestled with my response(s) to Michelle, I was drawn backward to remembering when, as a young person living on an air force base, a close family friend died in a plane crash. I vividly remembered going to their house after the crash and seeing and knowing that what was unfolding was community. In that front room of the widow's house I lived in the midst of community, with all of its jagged and sharp rawness, with all of its care, with all of its storying and laughter and tears, with all of its honesty. Thinking with this story I came to understand that despite the countless functions and celebrations I experienced on a multitude of military bases, it was through

tragedy that I lived and felt this understanding of connection, community, and relational responsibility. In this outside-of-school place I learned, through experience, to live this knowing of how to be present, attentive, and caring in difficult moments.

The day of the funeral, my classmates and I happened to be outside at recess when the ceremonial fly-past took place. As the church was next to the school, I witnessed the fly-past in which three planes flew over the funeral ceremony. I was transfixed, moved by the sight; but I was also about to re-enter an in-school place. The bell rang and my peers and I responded like cattle on a path moving toward the door. We lined up, entered the school, went to our lockers, got our books, and did math. In retelling this story, I now wonder why my teachers, who must also have heard the planes, did not speak about it with us after recess. I wondered about the instructions they might have received and pressures they might have felt being military base school teachers, few, if any, having had any military experience themselves. I wondered if they experienced *business as usual* or *back to normal* stories of school or stories of teacher as ways to keep things *under control*. Or perhaps they felt that school was not a place for discussions of this nature. In those moments of profound incoherence it was my parents, outside of school, who helped me to live a forward-looking story (Lindemann Nelson, 1995), a story in which the importance of relationship and care was central, a story not touched, nor even approached, in my school.

### **Returning to My Earlier Lingering in the Interactions of the Personal and Professional**

As I moved forward in my life making to think with this experience and my

experience alongside Michelle, I realized that I, too, experienced the pressure of what I felt was *permissible* and *professional*, and yet I also sensed my experience with her was drawing forward a *counterstory*. Lindemann Nelson (1995) defined *counterstory* as “a story that contributes to the moral self-definition of its teller by undermining a dominant story, undoing it and retelling it in such a way as to invite new interpretations and conclusions” (p. 23). Acting on my tension, however, was difficult in the midst of what I was beginning to recognize as a story of teacher/ing, not only in the school in which I was teaching, but also as deeply rooted in my life making.

It was in and through thinking with these stories that I returned to Clandinin and Connelly’s (1996) conceptualization of school stories—stories of school, and teacher stories/stories of teacher in relation with *trauma stories—stories of trauma*. In thinking with my experiences in schools, I came to sense that often stories of trauma on school landscapes were and are shaped by, with, and in stories of school and stories of teacher/ing. As well, these understandings shaped and increasingly were shaping how teachers were supposed to experience and live trauma on school landscapes. In spending time looking at various school and district strategic plans across Canada, I was surprised and encouraged by the number of districts who stated their commitment to staff and student wellness, as well as to evidence-based programs of trauma sensitivity. Yet much of the literature I read as to how to satisfy this commitment still seemed focussed on how teachers could *be* trauma sensitive *for* students.

While I was in this midst of lingering with these wonders, I was drawn inward and

backward to recent experiences at a few different social functions at which I was meeting new people, some of whom happened to be teachers. On several different occasions as we learned more about each other and as I shared some of what I was puzzling over, the other people shared how their experiences at schools (each at different schools, different academic grades/levels) were beginning to be shaped by stories of trauma that included trauma sensitivity as a program to be adopted by teachers, for students. In more than one of these conversations, I remember the teachers expressed concern and/or fear of not knowing what it meant or how to *be* trauma sensitive in schools and frustration at how they were experiencing the new expectation as being imposed top-down on their identity-making. These teachers' tensions shaped my thinking and drew me to wonder how stories of trauma in schools might be shaping and shaped by teachers' stories to live by<sup>19</sup> which are shaped by their trauma stories. I sensed this was what I experienced all those years earlier alongside Michelle.

What I had learned to *know* and embody as a *teacher* was *the* way to *be* a teacher—a fixed, definitional, categorical goal, with visual/visible markers amassed over years. Being alongside Michelle began my awakening to a tension I was experiencing between my embodied personal knowing of being in relation with others and my brain-knowing of what I thought was expected of me as a professional *teacher*. I also gradually came to understand that my trauma stories, in relation with many experiences over the years, were being shaped by dominant and institutional stories of trauma in schools (such as *business*

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<sup>19</sup> Please see Chapter 3 for a more detailed explanation of teachers' stories to live by.

*as usual or back to normal*) and that this shaping created significant tension. This awakening drew me to wonder if and how stories of trauma were being shaped by and shaping teachers' (trauma) stories and their professional knowledge landscapes. I was drawn to retell the story of John—a painful story.

**(Retelling and Reliving) a Story of Trauma as a Trauma Story**

It is 8:40.  
 Block 1 - Grade 12 English.  
 A knock.  
 A colleague.  
 A piece of paper.  
 An offer:  
 Step out and read the paper  
 I'll watch the class.  
 Letterhead and instructions:  
 Please read this letter 5 minutes before the end of the period.  
 Please read the words, exactly as they are written, to your class.  
 Do not deviate from the script.  
 We want every student to get the exact same messaging  
 At the same time.

The letter:  
 "This morning at 8:15am, the RCMP were called to a house in town, where they found Grade 12 student, John Smith, deceased. Very few details are known at this time. The police are investigating. There is evidence that this death was not accidental. Grief counsellors are immediately available for anyone who needs to speak with one. Students are permitted to leave the school only with parental consent."

I start to shake  
 as I realize I hold knowledge  
 that is going to forever shape youths' lives  
 but which I am not allowed to share for another 36 minutes.  
 I feel sick.

But I have to go back to teaching.  
 The 36 minutes.  
 A weird paradoxical sense  
 of moving slowly and  
 bringing the dreaded moment  
 too close way too fast.

I stand in front of the young people,  
 in front of his best friend,  
 and read.  
 I read the letter word for word,  
 trapped by those words and  
 trapped by what I have been told to do.  
 I am reading a paper  
 About lives.  
 Destroying lives.

Blur.

(Interim research text, no date for anonymity)

I have long felt the repercussions of how I shared this news of John with the class. Immediately, in the days following, I watched his closest friends wrestle with their own puzzles and anger and sadness and grief. I wondered what I could “do” as a *teacher* who had brought the devastating news to them and who had shared it shaped by a story of school, by stories of teaching, and by stories of trauma rather than as shaped by my teaching stories and my trauma stories. As I shared the letter from a place of professional distance, out of shock and fear, and out of the professional pressure of not having a permanent contract, I went *back to* being a different kind of teacher; I enacted an institutionally driven directive, created with good intentions but woven by, with, and in a

story of trauma in schools. Rather than being attentive to the personal and relational ethics and to the lives that I wished I had attended to in that moment, I had acted out of discomfort and uncertainty in my in-school place.

In retelling this story, I felt deeply bothered by my growing understanding that outside of school I would never have shared such personal and painful information with anyone through reading a written letter. Part of what shaped this experience as a trauma story in my life making was both my experiencing of John's death and, too, the ways in which I felt I was expected to interact with the youth, as a young *teacher*, and as a *teacher* without a permanent contract.

### **Dis/covering a Cover Story<sup>20</sup> I Lived for Many Years**

As I was writing my proposal for this inquiry, I searched for some of the documents that had informed my Masters' thesis that I remembered having written in the months following John's death many years ago. I could not, however, remember the name of the document and began searching files and folders on my computer. As I was doing so, a personal document, of which I had no recollection, titled: *The Days After the News Came*, caught my attention. As I opened it I had a few moments of uncertainty as its content gradually came into focus. I was reading the very words I had written during class-time in the days following John's death. Until the moment I opened and read this document I had

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<sup>20</sup> I attended to the conceptualization of cover stories both earlier in this chapter and in Chapter 2. The conceptualization of cover story worked for me here, even though I extended the understanding to include my in-classroom places, because I sensed the story I chose to live in my outside of classroom places (as being competent, in control, unemotional), was also a cover story that I lived in my in-classroom places. I sense now, that at that time I did not draw on my personal knowledge anywhere at school and lived the cover story of competent teacher in all places on the school landscape.



not remembered I had written it. Nor had I remembered that in those days following John's suicide my classroom was a place of extreme tension, not only for the youth, but also for me. In reading I began to remember, in an embodied way, how I had felt completely lost, completely in turmoil, and completely ineffective. I read how I felt I had no idea what to do and felt I had no one with whom to speak.

Prior to reading the document I had storied myself and those days very differently; for example, I had told and retold stories of myself as being calm and available, as being a kind teacher creating safe spaces for youth who were suffering. Thinking narratively with my stories in these narrative beginnings drew me to understand that I had been living and telling a *public story* (King, 2003, p. 154)<sup>21</sup>, a smooth/ed story of teaching that smoothed my trauma stories in order survive in those days. I sense I wanted to present myself as a "competent" teacher, as I was seeking a permanent contract. I wondered if the smooth/ed story emerged so I could retell myself as a professional in those days.

For whatever reason(s), I lived and told this smooth/ed story as *the* story of my experience until the moment I opened and read this found document; a document that told me my trauma stories in relation with John's suicide. It was only with the distance of time and experience that I could wonder about the complex interactions of the teacher stories and stories of teacher, trauma stories and stories of trauma I was experiencing in this moment. I was a person suffering from the trauma of a horrific new reality and planted in a

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<sup>21</sup> King (2003) says, "I think of oral stories as public stories and written stories as private stories... Oral stories. Written stories. Public stories. Private stories. Stories I can tell out loud. Stories I cannot" (p. 154).

story of *teacher* as the holder and giver of that news to *students*. At the same time I felt expected to teach and live out institutional stories of trauma which positioned me as needing to be strong for students.

As I thought with these long-ago journal entries, they drew me toward wonders of if and how stories of trauma become shaped by stories of school such as *business as usual* like I experienced on 9/11 or *back to teaching curriculum*. I also began to wonder about school as a place in relation with how stories of trauma/trauma stories are lived, told, retold, and relived. I have come to understand that in the days after John's suicide I lived a story of trauma wherein I tried to live up to and in the script of being a *good teacher for students*. But as I wrote these narrative beginnings, I came to understand that I could retell and relive this story. I could retell it attentive to the narrative threads that wove my experience and my silencing of that experience; but I could not have done this before finding the document and thinking with it narratively.

### **(Retelling and Reliving) With Inquiry Wonders**

Beginning my inquiry journey with autobiographical narrative beginnings supported me to inquire into and with the stories of teacher I embodied and enacted. I began understanding how powerfully these stories shaped and continue to shape my becoming. I wondered about the stories of teacher and teacher stories that shape (and/or interrupt) a sense of becoming, and the tension I felt with what seemed like a quick move toward *being* trauma sensitive for the teachers in Fort McMurray. I also began to wonder about how stories of trauma and trauma sensitivity as a programmatic orientation might

shape professional development experiences that possibly could feel distant and incoherent with trauma stories.

Thinking narratively across my life making drew me to wonder how trauma and trauma sensitivity were being conceptualized in and for schools, in school divisions, and by government departments and community agencies. I wondered with the readily-available, checklist-oriented “solutions” to trauma that seemed increasingly prevalent. I wondered how teachers might experience their trauma stories and their teacher stories being directed from the outside, by stories of teacher/ing, and stories of trauma, aspects I sensed were becoming central in my inquiry.

## Chapter 2:

### **Continuing to Shape the Inquiry Personally, Practically, Socially, and Theoretically**

Thinking narratively with my stories across my life making opened new possibilities through which to wonder about my past and present experience with a sense of wholeness and continuity in my life. I began this journey by thinking with my lived and told stories<sup>22</sup> (Clandinin, 2013) through which I gradually came to understand that I am not Nathalie-student separate from Nathalie-teacher separate from Nathalie-person; I am Nathalie. The experience I have lived continues to live in me, as Crites (1971) suggests:

only the present exists, but it exists only in these tensed modalities. They are inseparably joined in the present itself. Only from the standpoint of present experience could one speak of past and future. The three modalities are correlative to one another, in every moment of experience. (p. 301)

As I thought deeply about how I have composed my life (Bateson, 1989), I began by situating my “inquiry in the context of [my] own life experiences, tensions, and personal inquiry puzzles” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 36). These personal retellings, however, were beginnings and only partial justification for my inquiry. I gradually came to understand that trauma is and has been a silenced aspect of my life making. I did not, until this doctoral inquiry, feel the agency to name this phenomenon of experience in my life making. It was in thinking narratively that I started to attend to some of the silent/silenced stories in my experience—these became my personal justifications for this inquiry. Thinking with

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<sup>22</sup> My autobiographical narrative beginnings in Chapter 1 outline and support the personal justifications for this work.

my stories, not as separate road markers but as temporally part of my present, supported me to want to think more with trauma stories and stories of trauma in order to situate this inquiry practically and theoretically.

### **Coming to Situate this Inquiry Practically**

Trauma sensitivity is a contemporarily relevant term that I began hearing often in relation with schools. My retelling of my stories supported me to wonder about the personal-theory-practice-professional tensions that might arise as schools might increasingly decide to *be* trauma sensitive. A search of trauma sensitivity and schools on the University of Alberta Libraries site suggested that while there was a strong theoretical sense of the term trauma, the practical application of trauma sensitivity in schools remained predominantly programmatic. When I thought about my classroom space after John's death and then imagined someone coming in with a checklist for me to make sure I was good *for* the youth, I experienced a mixture of feelings. I might have felt relief because someone else would have been telling me what to do when I was feeling like I was drowning. But I might also have felt anger because an "outsider" would presume to know anything of what I, or what the youth, were feeling/experiencing. I wondered if these ideas and checklists were taking on the quality of *sacred stories* that might be ignoring or silencing teachers' experiences, knowledge, and identities.

Crites (1971) explained *sacred stories* as: "stories that orient the life of people through time, their life-time, their individual and corporate experience and their sense of style, to the great powers that establish the reality of their world" (p. 295). Clandinin and

Connelly (1996) described the theory-driven view of practice as a potential “sacred story . . . shared by practitioners, policymakers, and theoreticians” (p. 25). While I sensed the literature regarding trauma sensitivity in schools was created with good intentions of making sure schools best support children and youth, I continued to wonder if the programmatic, formal professional development-driven approaches might not fully embrace the complexities, multiplicities, experiences, and wholeness of all of the lives meeting and interacting on school landscapes. As Spear (2014) argued: “when the focus remains on students alone, a sort of one-dimensional, product-focused pedagogy unfolds” (p. 59).

I began to sense that a narrative conceptualization of trauma might bump with some stories of trauma in schools as well as stories of school and stories of teachers regarding being and becoming. I wondered how my sense of stories of trauma and stories of teacher/ing (*back to normal, business as usual*) might smooth or silence teachers’ trauma stories. Without teachers’ voices and experiences, I wondered if trauma sensitivity might become a program transferred onto teachers as a “rhetoric of conclusions” (Schwab, 1962, p. 24) wherein we as a people who teach:

have no access to the inquiry that produced them [the conclusions]. . . . Yet I am expected to embrace mandates, even conflicting ones, and enact them as if they did not conflict, and as if they were my own. But they are not my own; I have experienced no agency in their production. Rather, I have been an instrument being used to do someone else’s bidding. (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, p. 23)

In listening and re-listening to my writing after John’s death, I heard my younger self

wishing for conversation, for voice, for puzzling. And in composing my candidacy proposal, I found profound meaning in inquiring narratively into my experience, in honouring, perhaps for the first time, my knowledge and experience as important ways of telling, retelling, and hopefully reliving<sup>23</sup> my trauma stories.

In order to continue to think narratively with my experiences and to situate this inquiry practically, I then moved to metaphorically lay my wonders and justifications alongside the breadth of trauma research already shaping the landscape.

### **Lingering With the Literatures of Trauma and Trauma sensitivity**

When my friend asked me how she could *be* trauma sensitive, I realized that I felt tension with the idea of presenting her with an already established checklist for trauma sensitivity, or one of the many other available solutions-based programs, as an “answer” to her question. I therefore began inquiring more attentively into the words and concepts surrounding trauma and trauma sensitivity in education and in other fields such as social work, nursing, and the research being done with first responders to start shaping and conceptualizing my understandings of how these terms might be interpreted and enacted in schools<sup>24</sup>. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) described this conversation between my

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<sup>23</sup> Clandinin and Connelly (1995) understand teacher knowledge as narratively constructed and reconstructed. They state: “In this view of teachers’ knowledge, teachers know their lives in terms of stories. They live stories, tell stories of those lives, retell stories with changed possibilities, and relive the changed stories” (p. 12).

<sup>24</sup> I began broadly looking at the historical definitions of trauma, and then moved to contemporary understandings. I then searched understandings of trauma-informed practice, trauma sensitivity, compassion fatigue, and secondary/vicarious trauma. I then moved to read conceptually and theoretically, reading about trauma theory and trauma pedagogy. I read about constructivist self-development theory, feminist and disabilities studies pedagogy, and the ethic of care in relation with trauma. I then moved to narrow these broader categories to focus on education, focussing predominantly on academic articles and books from 2000 and on.

experiences and the literature as a “tension [in] the place of theory” in narrative inquiry.

They wrote that:

committee members frequently wish for theory to appear as a separate chapter designed to structure the inquiry, identify gaps in the literature, outline principal theoretical lines of thought, and generate potential research possibilities. Our own narrative inquiry students, on the other hand, frequently write dissertations without a specific literature review chapter. They weave the literature throughout the dissertation from beginning to end in an attempt to create a seamless link between the theory and the practice embodied in the inquiry. (p. 41)

Drawing on Clandinin and Connelly (2000), I have drawn on the literature in a kind of conversation that has come to support and sustain this inquiry.

**A brief history of trauma.** Trauma originates from the Greek word, *τραύμα*, meaning *wound*. In its original usage the word pertained to physical wounds, but over time it has come to include the psychological and emotional realities associated with difficult and painful experiences, whether or not those experiences are physical in nature (merriam-webster.com). Sharpe, Noonan, and Freddi (2007) argue, “the term ‘trauma’ came to psychoanalysis, and thereby to European philosophy, from the medical sciences” (p. 2). The evolution of trauma research is often credited to Sigmund Freud in the late 19th century and his work regarding hysteria (Sharpe et al., 2007). It again gained prominence after World War One when researchers began considering the psychological impact of the war on soldiers, and continued through the 20th century as postmodern and post-structuralist philosophers wrote about living in an age of total war and of total destruction (Sharpe et al., 2007). Much of this research connected trauma with weakness. As such,



historically, trauma seems connected with medical notions of mental illness, weakness, the inability to cope, being less than able, and a lack of control over one's self and one's emotions (e.g., Friedman, n.d; Lasiuk & Hegadoren, 2006; Sharpe et al., 2007).

This history supported me to think with the pressures I have felt in various circumstances to keep my experiences of/with trauma hidden, to not show “weakness”, to not show a struggle to cope, to go *back to* teaching. Understanding its medical and historical origins as a diagnosis was, for me, important in conceptualizing stories of trauma. I sensed that this historical medical grounding might lead to assumptions about trauma, shaping deficit stories that require professional intervention to be assessed, coded,<sup>25</sup> treated, fixed, and overcome. I began to feel great tension when I imagined trauma being taken up by governments, policy-makers, and program developers, and being disseminated to schools only in these ways.

Evolving conceptions of trauma have emerged since the mid-20th century. For example, Hodas (2006) and Wiseman and Wissman (2012) acknowledged that while traditionally trauma has been associated with significant and often catastrophic events, there now exists recognition that trauma can also be individual and experienced by anyone at any time. These understandings shaped my thinking as they opened the possibility for understanding everyone as potentially carrying and living trauma stories, rather than

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<sup>25</sup> Coding in schools refers to the often-numeric designation ascribed to youth in schools who require additional or supplemental support and assistance. Please visit the following link for the 2016-2017 Special Education Coding Criteria as published by Alberta Education: <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/ee2ccea8-97fe-41a1-aa11-ed9f21421364/resource/cfea4303-a9d0-4abc-b9ca-1bb0101e9b28/download/2016-Special-Education-Coding-Criteria-2016-2017.pdf>

reserving the term for particular kinds of event-specific suffering that I sense had shaped more dominant stories of trauma. A gap that became visible, however, was that the literature in relation with trauma in schools predominantly focussed on youth or on ways to avoid vicarious or secondary trauma (as discussed later in this section). Very little research focused on teachers' experiences of/with trauma, which drew me to the literatures about trauma-informed practice and trauma sensitivity.

**Coming to understand trauma-informed practice and trauma sensitivity.**

Trauma-informed practice and trauma sensitivity are terms that have become more common in many contexts in recent years. In the context of mental health services, Harris and Falot (2001) define trauma-informed practice: "to be trauma-informed means to understand the role that violence and victimization play in the lives of most consumers . . . and to use that understanding to design service systems" (p. 4). In *The Essentials of . . . Series: Trauma-informed Care*, the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse (2014) defined trauma-informed service as: "tak[ing] into account an understanding of trauma in all aspects of service delivery and place priority on trauma survivors' safety, choice and control" (p. 2). This definition is echoed by Alberta Health Services (2019) and British Columbia's Provincial Mental Health and Substance Abuse Planning Council (2013), among others. These definitions supported me to understand the seeming focus on youth in much of the research regarding trauma in schools and the relative positioning of teachers in stories of trauma in schools as providers of care.

A joint venture between Harvard Law School and the Massachusetts Advocates for

Children has established a trauma policy initiative named Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative (TLPI) which presents their work as a solution to the “problem” of helping traumatized children learn. Their work was informed by the foundational *Adverse Childhood Experiences Study* (Felitti et al., 1998) that has formed the basis for almost all subsequent studies regarding trauma and that began moving the research in education to investigate how trauma affects students’ abilities to learn. TLPI (2013a) published *Creating and Advocating for Trauma sensitive Schools* in which they posit specific attributes of a trauma sensitive school that includes a school-wide approach; supporting all students to feel safe physically, socially, emotionally, and academically; and adaptation to the needs of the students.

The Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative (TLPI) (2013b)’s website *Helping Traumatized Children Learn* identifies the difference between trauma-informed and trauma sensitive:

The term “trauma-informed” arose in the behavioral health field. According to SAMHSA [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration], “trauma-informed” refers to the delivery of behavioral health services in a way that “includes an understanding of trauma and an awareness of the impact it can have across settings, services, and population.”

TLPI believes it is important to distinguish between the terms “trauma sensitive” and “trauma-informed” in order to recognize the different roles of schools and behavioral health providers. The term “trauma sensitive” helps emphasize that educators are not expected to take on the role of therapists. It also helps emphasize that, while behavioral health services will be an important part of the effort, helping traumatized children learn at school requires more—it also requires a school-wide

culture that helps children feel safe and supported in all parts of the school. (para. 5-6)

When I metaphorically laid this definition alongside my experience, thinking with them together, another gap became visible; something was missing that would connect my personal experience with my desire to learn how to become (or how I might have been) more trauma sensitive to, with, and for myself alongside youth in schools.

Continuing to linger with/in the literature, I came across the Lesley University and TLPI's (2012) *Trauma sensitive School Checklist*.<sup>26</sup> This checklist is quick, simple, clear, and efficient. However, the checklist and TLPI's work again highlighted for me how programmatic approaches to trauma sensitivity in schools seem to shape a story of trauma as part of a story *of* teacher, rather than attending to teachers' trauma stories. I began to wonder if schools/institutions believed in the importance of trauma sensitivity for children and youth, should it not then hold true that the same sensitivities be inclusive of staff and of teachers?

While researchers such as Craig and Stevens (2016) used the terms trauma-informed and trauma-sensitive/ity interchangeably, my preference became to orient my thinking toward trauma sensitivity. For me this term was more experiential, less clinical, and opened the possibility of trauma sensitivity as moving away from a diagnostic, definable, categorizable entity, and moving toward openness to the multiplicity and

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<sup>26</sup> To see the Checklist, please visit:  
[http://www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/general/trauma%20sensitive%20school%20checklist%20\(1\).pdf](http://www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/general/trauma%20sensitive%20school%20checklist%20(1).pdf)

complexity of experience.

**Trauma sensitivity research in other fields.** Much of the trauma sensitivity research that exists in professional fields such as nursing, psychiatry, policing, and firefighting (e.g., Beshai et al., 2016; Chachula, 2014; Epstein, 2013; Hodas, 2006; Wiklund-Gustin, Wagner, & Mälardalens, 2013) attempts to establish and define what trauma sensitivity is, what it looks like, and why and how programs should be adopted. There seems to exist a strong resonance between Education and Nursing. In her Master of Nursing thesis, Chachula (2014) studied the high rates of attrition in nursing within the first 5 years of nursing and argued that “nurses are at risk of developing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) relating to increasing complexities, demands of the workplace, and exposure to traumatic incidents” (p. 90). She called for more relational support for new nurses as well as increased focus on nurses’ well-being. Similar calls are found in the literatures across many professional contexts, through calls for increased attention to mental health and wellness.

**Compassion fatigue, secondary, and/or vicarious trauma.** As I thought more with the gap I sensed in the literature in relation with teachers’ experiences, I then moved to research into compassion fatigue, secondary, and vicarious trauma.

Health Canada’s publication, *Guidebook on Vicarious Trauma: Recommended Solutions for Anti-Violence Workers* (2001)<sup>27</sup>, summarizes *vicarious trauma* as: “refer[ing] to

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<sup>27</sup> The guidebook acknowledges the many names used in the literature for this subset: “Compassion fatigue, vicarious traumatization, secondary traumatization, secondary stress disorder, insidious trauma and vicarious trauma are all terms that are used in an attempt to label and define what happens” (p. 3) to a front-line worker when working with those who are traumatized.

the cumulative transformative effect on the helper working with the survivors of traumatic life events” (p. 6). British Columbia’s Mental Health and Substance Use Planning Council (2013) posits, “when it comes to experiences of trauma, the distinction between practitioner (or anyone providing some level of support or service) and those accessing care can become blurred. Many practitioners have experienced and/or witnessed varying degrees of trauma themselves” (p. 19). Figley (1995) defined *secondary trauma* as experiencing a traumatic event through the relationship with the individual who experienced it first-hand. An internet search of teachers and vicarious trauma/compassion fatigue issued thousands of results. Many of these, such as the document from the Lesley Institute for Trauma Sensitivity (n.d.) entitled: *Six Ways for Educators to Avoid Compassion Fatigue*, provided lists of suggestions that included self-care, authenticity, and mindfulness, often with a subtext suggestion that the *teacher* needs to remain strong or healthy in order to best serve *students* or in order to create a trauma sensitive classroom *for* students.

While understandings of secondary trauma and compassion fatigue came closer to inquiring into teachers’ experiences with trauma, I still wondered about the experiences of teachers living trauma stories alongside children and youth who might be living similar or different trauma stories, all the while being shaped by stories of trauma on school landscapes.

Despite the acknowledgement in the research that secondary or vicarious trauma is a possible outcome of being alongside students who are living trauma stories, Hydon, Wong, Langley, Stein, and Kataoka (2015) and Craig and Stevens (2016) argued that, to

date, very little attention in the education-related trauma literature has turned toward school staff (teachers, principals, and support staff). Craig and Stevens (2016) stated:

to date, very few studies are available that examine whether teachers' work with traumatized children puts them at risk for the mental health issues observed among others in the helping professions. What is known, however, is that in comparison to other trauma professionals, teachers get little training in recognizing symptoms of primary trauma in their students and virtually no training in the self-care needed to prevent secondary traumatic stress. (p. 90)

Many others (e.g., Cerney, 1995; Lucas, 2007; Valent, 1995) have also investigated teacher compassion fatigue and secondary stress. Even though related to education, much of this work seemed to have a more clinical subtext of assessing, diagnosing, fixing, and preventing. I sensed that while being attentive to these understandings was important, this was not how I hoped to engage in this inquiry.

**Coming to My Emerging/Emergent Experiential Understanding of Trauma.** Craig and Stevens' (2016) opened for me a possible understanding of trauma that sat comfortably and contributed to the grounding of this inquiry:

The word "traumatic" is often used to describe extraordinary events, such as the September 11, 2001 attack or the Boston Marathon bombing in 2013. This usage is imprecise, however. Events are not traumatic in and of themselves; they become traumatic when they exceed a person's capacity to cope. (p. 16)

This understanding of trauma drew me back to Dewey's (1938) conceptualization of experience as continuous. He drew attention to the experiential continuum of a person's life in which continuity and interaction are the mainstays of experience. For Dewey,

continuity meant that “every experience both takes up something from those which have gone before and modifies in some way the quality of those which come after” (p. 35). He described that interaction “assigns equal rights to both factors in experience—objective and internal conditions” (p. 42) and that “taken together, or in their interaction, they form what we call a *situation*” (p. 42). In this way:

the two principles of continuity and interaction are not separate from each other. They intercept and unite. They are, so to speak, the longitudinal and lateral aspects of experience. Different situations succeed one another. But because of the principle of continuity something is carried over from the earlier to the later ones. As an individual passes from one situation to another, his [*sic*] world, his [*sic*] environment, expands or contracts. He [*sic*] does not find himself living in another world but in a different part or aspect of one and the same world. What he [*sic*] has learned in the way of knowledge and skill in one situation becomes an instrument of understanding and dealing effectively with the situations which follow. The process goes on as long as life and learning continue. (p. 44)

What Dewey (1938) called for is an ontological commitment to experience as knowledge. Shifting the focus from the traumatic event to experience freed me from the feeling that I might have to choose a “type” of trauma on which to focus in order to narrow the scope of this inquiry and from the mounting tension I was experiencing regarding distinguishing between certain kinds of trauma as more or less traumatic than others. Feeling that I did not have to focus on one type of trauma, but rather that I could inquire with/in experience opened the possibility to inquire into many different, and sometimes less acknowledged, ways that trauma shapes and is shaped by lives in the making.

Thinking with the relationships between trauma and experience then drew me to



Hirsch (2008) who explained that trauma can also be grounded in *postmemories* which describe “the relationship of the second generation to powerful, often traumatic experiences that preceded their birth but were nevertheless transmitted to them so deeply as to seem to constitute memories in their own right” (p. 103). Thinking with this understanding drew me to think with other understandings of trauma, including experiences storied as historical trauma<sup>28</sup> and as intergenerational trauma. For example, Young et al. (2012) argued:

one harmful legacy of the lingering narrative of colonization in the unfolding lives of Aboriginal people in Canada is the intergenerational narrative reverberations continuing to shape successive generations. These intergenerational narrative reverberations include the loss of language, traditional cultural knowledge, and spiritual and relational practices, particularly family relationships. (p. 49)

Understanding that experience can shape and is shaped by intergenerational trauma moves the understanding of the experience of trauma beyond being tied to a specific event by showing that trauma can be experienced in and through legacies of colonization in successive generations. This understanding shifts the focus away from stories of trauma and focuses on trauma stories.

In wanting to think more broadly and deeply about trauma stories and intergenerational trauma, I was gradually drawn to Richard Wagamese’s writing. I was unfamiliar with Wagamese, but I slowly came to know and understand him as a person

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<sup>28</sup> While not the immediate focus of this work, I felt it was important to always be attentive to the historical narratives of trauma locally, in situations around the world, and across time, and the impact these narratives had in the lives people were and are composing.

having lived trauma stories who wrote about his sense-making of his and others' trauma stories. As I found myself being drawn to read more of Wagamese's life stories, his writing gifted me with an understanding that has since shaped my life making. He wrote: "I don't want to simply bounce back from things that hurt me or cause me pain. Bouncing back means returning to where I stood before. Instead, I want to go beyond the hurt and the darkness" (Wagamese, 2016, p. 108). This sense troubled and deepened my own puzzling with the *back to* and pushed me to think with other possibilities. From reading his writing I came to understand, in ways that were different than what I had learned reading research literatures, that there are multiple, different, jagged, painful, hopeful, and complex ways of knowing, experiencing, and living trauma. I sensed an opening for a different process of knowledge for this inquiry and the profound importance of stories as knowledge. He wrote:

ALL THAT WE ARE IS STORY. From the moment we are born to the time we continue on our spirit journey, we are involved in the creation of the story of our time here. It is what we arrive with. It is all we leave behind. We are not the things we accumulate. We are not the things we deem important. We are story. All of us. What comes to matter then is the creation of the best possible story we can while we're here; you, me, us, together. When we can do that and we take the time to share those stories with each other, we get bigger inside, we see each other, we recognize our kinship—we change the world one story at a time. (as cited in Janssens, 2017)

Across this dissertation I have drawn from Wagamese's writing (both fiction and autobiographical) as literature centrally present and continuously supporting and

sustaining my inquiry.

Significant and rich bodies of literature exist and are developing regarding intergenerational trauma. I was drawn to consider these threads and complexities, specifically in teachers' experiences as they compose their lives in and outside of schools alongside children and youth composing their lives in and outside of schools.

It was through this process of metaphorically bringing my trauma stories and the wonders I came to in Chapter 1 alongside these various conceptualizations of trauma, trauma sensitivity, and story that I was gradually able to develop a narrative understanding of the phenomenon of trauma. I came to experience how this understanding was/is grounded in experience across time, places, relationships, and situations, and was/is shaped by and shapes familial, cultural, institutional, social, linguistic, etc. narratives. I also came to understand, through my inquiry that is shown in my autobiographical narrative beginnings, my trauma stories as having been woven in and through my life making as a student, as a teacher, as a mother, as a daughter, as a researcher, as a *whole* person, in my relationships and in my interactions. Situating my inquiry in a narrative experiential understanding of trauma that drew on a Deweyan (1938) understanding of the continuous nature of experience and on Wagamese's sense that stories are all that we are, supported me to feel resonance with the experiential and narrative ways I was coming to understand trauma.

### **Weaving Practical Threads Through This Inquiry**

As shown earlier, this inquiry grew from a practical question (What does it mean to

*be* trauma sensitive?) asked by a teacher imagining herself returning to an in-school place while being in the midst of living trauma stories and being shaped by stories of trauma. This initial question drew out many other questions such as: how is trauma and trauma sensitivity understood in/by schools? What supports are available to/for teachers? What might a narrative conceptualization of trauma entail and what additional possibilities for understanding experience might it support?

In thinking narratively with the various trauma stories that have shaped my life I came to realize that I was not being trauma sensitive to/with myself. These wonders supported me to situate my personal and practical justifications, as well as the social and theoretical justifications, for this inquiry.

### **Coming to Situate this Inquiry Socially and Theoretically**

My personal, practical, and social/theoretical justifications are as inseparable from each other as I am from my experience. Yet I wanted to make visible the: “theoretical justifications [that] come from justifying the work in terms of new methodological . . . and disciplinary knowledge” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 37). Over time, I decided to situate my social and theoretical wonders with and in conversations of teacher knowledge, through the theoretical conceptualizations of: *narrative (in)coherence*, *professional knowledge landscapes (PKL)*, *personal practical knowledge (PPK)*, *the conduit*, and *stories to live by*.

### **Coming to Understand In/Coherence and Experience**

It was Bateson (1994) who awakened me to the importance of narrative (in)coherence. She wrote: “learning to savor the vertigo of doing without answers or

making shift and making do with fragmentary ones opens up the pleasures of recognizing and playing with pattern, finding coherence within complexity, sharing within multiplicity” (p. 9), and that “*insight*, I believe, refers to that depth of understanding that comes by setting experiences, yours and mine, familiar and exotic, new and old, side by side, learning by letting them speak to one another” (p. 14). I began to draw a connection between coherence and my trauma stories much in the same way as Kerby (1991) did who stated that self-identity depended on “the coherence and continuity of one’s personal narrative” (p. 6). As a teacher beginning<sup>29</sup>, I lived by, with, and in stories of (a particular kind of) teacher. The generative incoherence for me came from moments of interruption, moments in which I was confronted with a self I wanted to become but that I felt was no longer continuous with the stories of teacher I had been living and telling. This awakening opened the possibility for me to begin reliving my teacher stories and my stories of teacher.

Carr (1986) conceptualized coherence as follows:

Our lives admit of sometimes more, sometimes less coherence; they hang together reasonably well, but they occasionally tend to fall apart. Coherence seems to be a need imposed on us whether we seek it or not. Things need to make sense. We feel the lack of sense when it goes missing. The unity of self, not as an underlying identity but as a life that hangs together, is not a pre-given condition but an achievement. Some of us succeed, it seems, better than others. None of us succeed totally. We keep at it. What we are doing is telling and retelling, to ourselves and to others, the story of what we are about and what we are. (p. 97)

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<sup>29</sup> I chose here, and through this dissertation, to show my sense that often when teachers are referred to as beginning teachers, they are storied with and by stories of inexperience, of naiveté, and of a lack of knowing. By switching the order, I feel much more comfortable with the sense of a teacher, in a whole way, who happens to be beginning their classroom/teaching experiences.

As I metaphorically brought Carr's sense of the struggle for coherence in our life making alongside my experience with Michelle, I sensed that in those moments I was experiencing the threads of my life as not "hanging together" in a continuous way, which brought me back to Dewey (1938) and the experiential continuum. I sense, now, that in the midst of this long ago experience I was beginning to feel both the educative and mis-educative<sup>30</sup> potentials of incoherent experience.

In her dissertation regarding teachers' experiences of student death due to firearms, Wolf-Prusan (2014) noted a limitation in her research design. While her study was a phenomenological mixed-methods study with one set of anecdotal interviews, she stated:

this was the first opportunity that some teachers had to develop coherent narratives about their experiences. Moreover, it is quite possible that due to time limitations and emotional regulation, some teachers were only able to share surface level reflections on their experiences. (p. 127)

She then called for more work in this area, giving teachers more opportunities to explore their stories and voices in context. Similarly, I came to understand, through the reflexive process of writing and reading, that I could not, nor did I want to learn *about* trauma sensitivity from teachers, as I had already been "touched emotionally" (Florio-Ruane & DeTar, 2001, p. 7) by trauma stories and stories of trauma. Rather, I wanted to learn *with* and *in* experiences of/with trauma and trauma sensitivity shaping and shaped by a struggle for coherence and continuity.

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<sup>30</sup> Dewey (1938) defined mis-educative experiences as: "The belief that all genuine education comes about through experience does not mean that all experiences are genuinely or equally educative. Experience and education cannot be directly equated to each other. For some experiences are mis-educative. Any experience is mis-educative that has the effect of arresting or distorting the growth of further experience" (p. 12).

In reading Wolf-Prusan (2014), I again wondered about the experiences of in/coherence shaping my life making. Imagining myself either during my experience with John's death, or if I were to return to teaching in Fort McMurray, supported me to wonder about the complexities and tensions that arise when coherence is imagined or shaped as a return to (or a back to) a technical-rational conception of teacher knowledge and identity.

### **Coming to Understand Some Dominant Theories of Teacher Knowledge**

Thinking with ideas of narrative in/coherence in my autobiographical narrative beginnings opened possibilities for retelling and reliving my stories. One retelling that profoundly shaped my inquiry came from retelling my stories with a curiosity about teacher knowledge. What I gradually came to see from my retellings was a dominant plotline of teacher knowledge in my schools and universities that privileged technical-rational knowledge transmission and that celebrated the separation of the personal and professional. Schön (1987) argued: "the language we use to talk about student teaching . . . is the scientific language of preparation, application, evaluation, standards, success and failure," (as cited in Clandinin, Davies, Hogan, & Kennard, 1993, p. 147). Schön (1983), however, believed that teachers often "exhibit a kind of knowing in practice" (p. vii) which is often not valued in the same way as scientific knowledge. Furthermore, Schön (1987) argued that the curriculum of teacher education most often progresses from "the relevant basic science, then the relevant applied science, and finally a practicum in which students are presumed to learn to apply research-based knowledge to the problems of everyday practice" (p. 8). As earlier shown, this story of teacher and of coming to *be* a teacher

shaped my early teaching stories.

Shifting toward understandings of *becoming* teacher drew me to Clandinin et al.'s (1993) book *Learning to Teach, Teaching to Learn* which documents the emergence of a counterstory teacher education program privileging the lived experiences of cooperating teachers, preservice teachers, and university professors. This book foregrounded how deeply embedded the dominant plotline of paradigmatic knowledge and technical-rationalism is in the experiences of many teachers. One preservice teacher was quoted as saying:

As a student teacher, I believed I knew nothing and would have to learn everything. The only way for me to learn would be to do as I was told, to listen to the advice of my cooperating teacher and to internalize the proper methods of teaching proposed by my university professors. (Clandinin, 1993, p. 24)

I connected with this preservice teacher's feelings; over time I came to better understand what kinds of knowledge have been and continued to be privileged in my experience and how I came to embody this privileging through powerful conceptions of expert in which I felt scripted as deficit. Looking backward and inward, my preservice teacher education program created a comfortable sense of continuity and coherence in the kind of knowledge that was privileged in my 18 years of being a student in schools.

### **Coming to Understand Narrative Theories of Teacher Knowledge**

Wondering about dominant theories of teacher knowledge also drew me to Clandinin and Connelly's (1995) and Clandinin, Schaefer, and Downey's (2014) conceptualizations of *personal practical knowledge*, of the *professional knowledge*



*landscape*, and of teachers' *stories to live by* as narrative ways to understand the connections across my stories, my knowledge, and my identity, as shaped by and in my personal and professional contexts. Clandinin and Connelly (1986) conceptualized teacher knowledge as:

neither theoretical, in the sense of theories of learning, teaching, and curriculum, nor merely practical, in the sense of knowing children. If either of these were the essential ingredient of what teachers know, then it would be easy to see that others have a better knowledge of both; academics with better knowledge of the theoretical and parents and others with better knowledge of the practical. A teacher's special knowledge is composed of both kinds of knowledge, blended by the personal background and characteristics of the teacher, and expressed by her in particular situations. (p. 377)

They named their conceptualization of teacher knowledge as *personal practical knowledge*, which has been taken up over the years as:

the experiential knowledge that was embodied in us as persons and was enacted in our classroom practices and in our lives. It was a knowing that came out of our pasts and found expression in the present situations in which we found ourselves. For many of us it was an acknowledgement that had been missing as we lived out our lives in the prescriptive environments of schools where our stories as teachers had not been valued and the kind of knowledge we possessed had not been given voice. (Clandinin et al., 1993, p. 1)

Clandinin (2013) included an additional explanation of personal practical knowledge as: "knowledge which is imbued with all the experiences that make up a person's being. Its meaning is derived from, and understood in terms of, a person's experiential history, both professional and personal" (p. 68).

As this inquiry unfolded, my understanding of personal practical knowledge grew to become “a term designed to capture the idea of experience in a way that allows us to talk about teachers as knowledgeable and knowing persons” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, p. 25). This simple and yet profound understanding supported me to come to a retelling of some of my earlier stories of “not knowing what to do.” Rather than not knowing, as I carried many experiences outside of school that shaped powerful knowing, I had felt pressure to silence this knowledge on my professional landscapes.

### **Coming to Understand Storied Landscapes**

Clandinin and Connelly (1995, 1996, 1998b) foregrounded tensions and moments of interruption as shaping teachers’ experiences when their personal practical knowledge was not in line with a school’s stories or the stories of that school. Clandinin and Connelly (1996) conceptualized the *professional knowledge landscape* as a metaphor which:

allowed us to talk about space, place, and time. Furthermore, it had a sense of expansiveness and the possibility of being filled with diverse people, things, and events in different relationships. Because we saw the professional knowledge landscape as composed of relationships among people, places, and things, we saw it as both an intellectual and a moral landscape. (p. 25)

The professional knowledge landscape comprises teachers’ in-classroom spaces that are largely private places where teachers are relatively free to live out their stories of practice, and out-of-classroom places in which teachers can find themselves living and often bumping against expected stories of teachers.

Clandinin and Connelly (1996) narratively conceptualized the way teachers

navigate travelling in and between these places on the professional knowledge landscape as spaces shaping and shaped by differing stories of experience: sacred (stories that are theory driven, that come from policy makers and administrators, and that represent other people's views as to what is "right" for youth), secret (the stories of practice lived by teachers in their own classrooms), and cover (stories in which teachers portray themselves and their practice in ways that allow them to "survive" in out-of-classroom places). Cover stories "enable teachers whose teacher stories are marginalized by whatever the current story of school is to continue to practice and to sustain their teacher stories" (p. 25).

As I came to understand my self and school contexts through these narrative conceptualizations of teachers' knowledge, I awakened to the cover stories I had lived, and I began to wonder what kind(s) of stories of trauma might have been shaping my professional knowledge landscapes. I came to sense that early in my career I experienced profound discontinuity between my personal and my practical knowledge on my school landscape as I worried often that my desired way of being in my in-school places would have negative professional consequences.

More recently, Clandinin et al. (2014) provided me with a way to retell my early teaching stories and to regain some narrative coherence through their conceptualization of the interaction teachers experience between their personal and their professional knowledge landscapes:

When a person becomes a teacher s/he [*sic*] enters a professional knowledge landscape and lives in that knowledge landscape but without leaving the personal knowledge landscape. In time we came to imagine the professional knowledge

landscape as layered over the personal knowledge landscape. Living in the professional knowledge landscape shapes a person becoming a teacher, yet s/he [sic] continues to live in a personal knowledge landscape even while teaching. Experiences in both knowledge landscapes shape the personal practical knowledge of the person. . . . Personal practical knowledge embodied in the person, as shaped and lived within the two layered knowledge landscapes, allows a person to create narrative coherence through, and across, the layers of personal and professional knowledge landscapes. Thinking of personal practical knowledge as spanning both knowledge landscapes, the personal and the professional, we also see this knowledge as “personalizing” the professional knowledge landscape. (p. 202)

As I gradually came to understand the importance of coherence in and across my personal and professional knowledge landscapes, I came to wonder about the interaction of trauma stories and stories of trauma in schools in the midst of this layering of knowledge and knowledge landscapes. I began to wonder: if I had honoured my personal knowing in my professional knowledge landscape alongside Michelle and John’s friends, might I have experienced less incoherence? I also began to wonder: how might this interaction have differently shaped the trauma stories I have lived and told.

### **Coming to Understand the Metaphorical Conduit**

Wondering with my early understandings of teacher knowledge drew me back to Clandinin and Connelly’s (1995) conceptualization of the *conduit* (p. 9) which they explained as a metaphor for the unidirectional transmission of knowledge from expert to student, from expert to district to school, from district to teacher, etc. Clandinin and Connelly (1995) argued that the kind of knowledge transmitted through the conduit is often “prepositional, relational among concepts, impersonal, situation-independent,

objective, nontemporal, ahistoric, and generic” (p. 15) and that “nothing comes through the conduit as merely theoretical knowledge to be known and understood; it always comes as an implied prescription for teachers' actions” (p. 14).

As I thought with my experience as a teacher in relation with the conduit, I was drawn back to Clandinin et al. (2014) in which Clandinin wrote about her early experiences thinking about and inquiring into teacher knowledge and how she understood how prolifically teachers were seen as lacking and in need of being taught *how* to teach:

Teachers were seen as the weak link whenever new programs or policies were implemented . . . this deficit view puzzled me. I saw it as a strength that teachers would not implement programs and policies simply because others wanted them to . . . They would, I knew, have thought about the children and families with whom they worked and their own intentions and decided, based on their knowledge, what to do. (p. 15)

Clandinin, in Clandinin et al. (2014), admired teachers who were troubled by or who questioned what came to them from the conduit. I came to understand that my identity, for a long time, had been to enact prescribed stories of student—good student, high achiever, good regurgitator of information, obedient—and I was successful in living out those stories. Inquiring into my experience also supported me to uncover how steeped I had been in conduited stories of being a *good student* and therefore *good teacher*. Up until my experience of both 9/11 and with Michelle, I would have implemented what I was told how I was told. When I wondered why, I once again moved backward in my life and came to understand that as a child in a military family, I learned the military's version of the conduit very quickly and powerfully—there was a chain of command and you did not break it.

This, too, was a sacred story that I lived which I sensed also had a profound effect on my time as a student and on my early experience as a person who teaches.

Zembylas (2003) called for connecting personal knowledge (which he called emotions) with and in the more paradigmatic and conduited forms of teacher knowledge:

It is important that teachers identify how their emotions inform the ways that their emotions expand or limit possibilities in their teaching, and how these emotions enable them to think and act differently. Obviously, reflecting on one's emotions represents a considerable risk of vulnerability, yet teachers are constantly challenged in their professional lives to deal with visible and invisible pain and powerlessness . . . Moreover, if the emotions are so important in teaching, and I believe they are so, then they in particular would seem worthy of consideration for the construction of a more educative approach in the professional development of pre-service and inservice teachers. (p. 232)

Drawing together Zembylas' (2003) thoughts alongside Clandinin and Connelly's (1995) and Craig's (2001) conceptualizations of the conduit supported me to more deeply understand a tension I awakened to in relation with teacher knowledge, teacher identity, and teacher education. I began to wonder at the possibility of shaping professional knowledge landscapes to also include vulnerability as part of teachers' experiences.

Coming to understand the conduit opened the possibility for me to think with the *how* aspect of trauma sensitivity in schools. Often, in my experience, I felt a move toward programmatic implementation as funnelled through the conduit as a way to ensure best practices, marketed as evidence-based professional development, to *help* teachers be *better teachers*. I began to wonder with the conduit, and what it was delivering, in relation with

trauma stories and stories of trauma in schools.

### **Coming to Understand Stories to Live By**

Though my autobiographical narrative beginnings, I came to understand how I have been shaped in, with, and by conduited stories of school that focussed on mandated outcomes, assessment, and behaviour control, and how I can retell and relive those stories with a “new sense of [my]self as [a] knowing [person]” (Clandinin, et al., 1993, p. 2).

Wondering about my personal practical knowledge supported my understanding of why, for example, despite all of my teacher-training to the contrary and despite the pressures from other teachers to the contrary, I set my desks up in community pods for the first day of school. Somehow it seemed I was already weaving in my personal knowledge, even when I was teased for being naive or idealistic. Clandinin et al. (2014) supported my developing understanding that rather than trying to find balance between my lives and rather than trying to leave one life at the door of the school, coherence and wholeness was possible when I considered my personal and practical knowledge as inextricably woven into who I was and who I am becoming as a person who teaches.

Connelly and Clandinin’s (1999) conceptualization of *stories to live by* carried with it attention to identity and enabled them to conceptually bring together personal practical knowledge, professional knowledge landscapes, and teacher identity as a way to “understand how knowledge, context, and identity are linked and can be understood narratively” (p. 4). Clandinin et al. (2006) took up *stories to live by*:

Teacher identity is understood as a unique embodiment of each teacher’s stories to live by, stories shaped by knowledge composed on landscapes past and present in

which a teacher lives and works. Stories to live by are multiple, fluid, and shifting, continuously composed and recomposed in the moment-to-moment living alongside children, families, administrators, and others, both on and off the school landscape. . . . Teachers' stories to live by offer possibilities for change through retelling and reliving stories. This retelling and reliving is a restorying that changes their stories to live by. (p. 9)

My autobiographical narrative inquiry, in Chapter 1, supported me to begin to understand my *stories to live by* and uncover some of the ways my experience has shaped and reshaped my stories to live by. I first lived a story of school and of teacher/ing very much shaped by the dominant narratives shaping the professional knowledge landscapes of the schools I attended as a child and youth. I was then trained to reproduce those stories in my preservice teacher education program. Early in my career, I enacted those stories of school and of teacher/ing and then struggled with an embodied feeling that something was not coherent. I have struggled with feeling that my personal knowledge was not valued knowledge, nor was it considered professional knowledge. I grew to understand that I wanted to value the complexity of the lives youths carried into school with them each day alongside the complexities of my life in the interactions that were shaping and shaped by the meeting of our lives, and this became a story I live by.

Through inquiring narratively into my experience and through situating this inquiry practically, socially, and theoretically, I have gradually awakened to my sense that attending to teachers' experience and the stories they live by might open spaces to think with trauma stories and stories of trauma narratively as woven in the wholeness of a life in the making.



## **Lingering with My Wonders and Personal, Practical, and Social/Theoretical Justifications to Shape a Research Puzzle**

Throughout this inquiry, I held tightly to Bateson's (1989) understanding:

When there is a rent in the canvas, a discord in the harmony, a betrayal, it is important not only to recover but to discover a new and inclusive pattern of meaning. Part of the task of composing a life is the artist's need to take what is simply ugly and, instead of trying to deny it, to use it in the broader design. (p. 211)

Thinking with my stories to live by across my life making supported me to “discover a new and inclusive pattern of meaning” (Bateson, 1989, p. 211) which came to inspire the research puzzle for this inquiry. When I use the term *research puzzle*<sup>31</sup> I do so in Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) narrative “sense of a search, a ‘re-search,’ a searching again . . . a sense of continual reformulation” (p. 124) that “begins in the midst, and ends in the midst of experience” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 43). As such, the inquiry that shaped my autobiographical narrative beginnings not only supported me to think with my stories to live by but also “shape[d] [my] research puzzle as well as highlight[ed] the personal, practical, and social justifications that appear through the research puzzle” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 43). Throughout my justifications, I wove the wonders that surfaced as this autobiographical inquiry journey unfolded.

As I thought narratively with my experiences, alongside and woven through my wonders and justifications, I shaped and reshaped the puzzle to which I came, or more

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<sup>31</sup> I experienced some tension with my understanding of a puzzle as a broken entity with only one correct way to be assembled. In no way is this inquiry looking to find one right answer or one right way, but rather is an invitation to others to wonder with its complexities. The term, research puzzle, is how Clandinin and Connelly (2000) describe situating the central wonders of the inquiry and will be used in this spirit here.

accurately that came to me. I inquired narratively alongside three teachers—Tobias, Beth, and Marie—into our stories to live by in the midst of trauma stories and stories of trauma.

### **Chapter 3: Coming to Understanding Narrative Inquiry<sup>32</sup>**

As my research puzzle began to take shape, I was once again drawn to Connelly and Clandinin's (2006) understanding of stories:

People shape their daily lives by stories of who they and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories. Story, in the current idiom, is a portal through which their experience of the world enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful. Viewed this way, narrative is the phenomenon studied in inquiry. Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. Narrative inquiry as a methodology entails a view of the phenomenon. To use narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular narrative view of experience as phenomena under study. (p. 477)

This understanding foregrounds experience as knowledge which is one of narrative inquiry's central ontological and epistemological commitments. Furthermore, this knowledge is narratively constructed and reconstructed:

with narrative as our vantage point, we have a point of reference, a life and a ground to stand on for imagining what experience is and for imagining how it might be studied and represented in researchers' texts. In this view, experience is the stories people live. People live stories, and in the telling of these stories, reaffirm them, modify them, and create new ones. Stories lived and told educate the self and others. (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. xxvi)

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<sup>32</sup> In my experience, it takes time to think narratively and to practice narrative inquiry not in smooth or linear steps, but rather as a way of being. I encourage readers to connect with the ways and the language of narrative inquiry (e.g. Clandinin (2013), Clandinin and Rosiek (2007), and the many authors cited in this chapter and throughout this dissertation), as I sense it is well-suited to the study of the experience and specifically of trauma.

For Clandinin and Connelly (2000), and for this inquiry, narrative inquiry is a way to study experience that draws heavily on Dewey's (1938) philosophy of experience, which connects the principles of continuity and interaction in situations. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) state: "narrative inquiry is a way of understanding experience. It is a collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interactions with milieus" (p. 20). Clandinin (2013) argues that this methodology is a "fluid inquiry, not a set of procedures or linear steps to be followed but a relational inquiry methodology that is open to where the stories of participants' experiences take each researcher" (p. 33). While narrative inquiries foreground experience, the focus for the researcher in narrative inquiry is not to take coinquirers'<sup>33</sup> stories as fixed objects to be studied, labelled, and thematically characterized. Clandinin, Huber, Steeves, and Li (2011) echoed my understanding that narrative inquiry is "much more than telling or analyzing stories" (p. 34). They drew on Morris (2002) to distinguish between thinking *about* stories and thinking *with* stories:

The concept of thinking with stories is meant to oppose and modify (not replace) the institutionalized Western practice of thinking about stories. Thinking about stories conceives of narrative as an object. Thinking with stories is a process in which we as thinkers do not so much work on narrative . . . [but allow] narrative to work on us. (p. 196)

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<sup>33</sup> As I grew in my understanding of narrative inquiry, I became increasingly uncomfortable with the term *participants* as I experienced the term as distant from the ethical and relational commitments of the inquiry. Then, as our inquiry unfolded, I more deeply sensed my relationships with Tobias, Beth, and Marie as shaping the inquiry as they became coinquirers. As such, in this dissertation, I use coinquirers in relation with Tobias, Beth, and Marie as I sense this is how we came to understand ourselves.

To think narratively is to think *with* stories, and to do so narrative inquirers work within the metaphorical conceptualization of the relational “*three-dimensional narrative inquiry space* and with the directions this space allows our inquiries to travel - *inward, outward, backward, forward, and situated within place*” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 49).

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) conceptualized the relational three-dimensional narrative inquiry space as a way to situate inquiring into experience as “*personal and social* (interaction); *past, present, and future* (continuity); combined with the notion of *place* (situation) . . . with temporality along one dimension, the personal and the social along a second dimension, and place along the third” (p. 50). The directions are understood as follows:

by inward, we mean toward the internal conditions, such as feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions, and moral dispositions. By outward, we mean toward the existential conditions, that is, the environment. By backward and forward, we refer to temporality - past, present and future. (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 50)

Grounding myself in this multi-dimensionality of experience supported me to remain attentive to the multiple and complex narratives that thread experience. So, too, did Clandinin and Rosiek’s (2007) understanding that “narrative inquiry . . . begins with an ontology of experience. From this conception of reality as relational, temporal, and continuous, it arrives at a conception of how that reality can be known” (p. 11). This view of experience as knowledge positions knowledge not as transcendental, not as something “out there” to be found, but rather as ontologically transactional, as something created, recreated, and negotiated. Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) stated:

It implies that the regulative ideal for inquiry is not to generate an exclusively faithful representation of a reality independent of the knower. The regulative ideal for inquiry is to generate a new relation between a human being and her environment—her life, community, world— . . . In this pragmatic view of knowledge, our representations arise from experience and must return to that experience for their validation. (p. 6).

Thus, narrative inquiry is an experiential, transactional, relational ontology that foregrounds the ethical considerations of the coinquirers in the co-constructed inquiry and thus in the co-creation of knowledge where each inquirer is knower, is teacher, and is learner. My stories, inquired into alongside Tobias', Beth's, and Marie's stories in the relational three-dimensional narrative inquiry spaces we co-created, opened the possibility for our retelling and reliving of our stories, and specifically of our trauma stories.

In seeking to think with our experiences as continuously weaving our lives in the making we remained attentive to how our experiences were and are continuously shaped and reshaped in the complexity of the personal, cultural, familial, social, political, professional, economic, and institutional narratives in our daily experiences in and outside of schools. In these ways we sought to remain attentive to Clandinin and Rosiek's (2007) assertion:

Following Dewey, the narrative inquirer takes the sphere of immediate human experiences as the first and most fundamental reality we have . . . and focuses on the way the relational, temporal, and continuous features of a pragmatic ontology of experience can manifest in narrative form. . . . Following from this ontology, the narrative inquirer arrives at a conception of knowledge . . . of human experience that remains within the stream of human lives. (p. 12)

As such, a narrative inquiry attends to the experiences of how we live, tell, retell, and relive our stories, in time, in place, and in relation:

as we negotiate entry into the field our ontological commitment makes possible a relational means of researching, of being able to “work out” what to do in the field, how to work with participants, and decide together what we want to achieve as our inquiry unfolds. This ontological stance underpins a central epistemological commitment of narrative inquirers, that experience is knowledge for living. (Caine, Estefan, & Clandinin, 2013, p. 576)

I was drawn to and by narrative inquiry because inquiring narratively into my experience supported me to come to understand that I was/am a “holder and maker” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999, p. 1) of knowledge that I did not experience as valued on diverse professional knowledge landscapes. It was the tension created in the bumping of valued and not-valued knowledge that supported my awakening to how teacher knowledge and trauma stories are interwoven in my experience.

### **Awakening to Living and Inquiring in Relationally Ethical Ways**

The ontological commitment to experience as knowledge is a relational commitment. For Tobias, Beth, Marie, and I, it slowly and with a few bumps became a commitment to a “form of togetherness in research that seeks to explore how we are living in the midst of our stories” (Caine, Estefan, & Clandinin, 2013, p. 576). As Clandinin, Caine, and Lessard (2018) shared:

We also realized that relational ethics is most visible in the living of lives, in the doing of narrative inquiry, in what we are asked to do as narrative inquirers.

Relational ethics call us to live, call us to take action with ourselves and with

participants. (p. 10)

This commitment supported every step of Tobias', Marie's, Beth's, and my inquiry spaces, as we attended to our stories of experience, while I also attended to our becoming in the unfolding of the inquiry. As Clandinin and Murphy (2009) stated:

our representations arise from the relational experience that is co-constructed by researcher and participant, [and] they must return to that experience for validation. Our ontological commitments as narrative researchers keep us alongside our participants, attending to their, and our, experience in the research. (p. 600)

When living narrative inquiry foregrounding experience as central:

The challenge for the narrative inquirer, therefore, is less one of achieving the highest possible grade of epistemic clarity and is instead how to integrate ethical and epistemic concerns—how to put knowledge in the service of enhancing human experience. (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 14)

In remaining attentive<sup>34</sup> to the relational ethical commitments, concerns, and vulnerabilities in this inquiry, I was often reminded that "narrative inquiry is first and foremost a relational research methodology, and, while it is research, it is also a transaction between people, which makes ethical issues and concerns about living well with others central to the inquiry" (Caine, Estefan, & Clandinin, 2013, p. 578).

As narrative inquiry is grounded in relational commitments, the values and responsibilities of relationships are central and carry "short-and long-term responsibilities" (Clandinin & Caine, 2013, p. 69). The first responsibility of narrative inquirers is always to the coinquirers. As such, I found myself not only in continuous

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<sup>34</sup> I discuss the ways in which we remained attentive to these commitments later in this chapter.



conversation and negotiation with Tobias, Beth, and Marie, but also with myself, to remain grounded in the relational ethical commitments of narrative inquiry, including the writing of this final research text.<sup>35</sup> As we grew relationships and trust, our facility with co-negotiating also grew as Tobias, Beth, and Marie gradually took up my invitation to shape the unfolding of the inquiry, our conversations, the interim, and the final research texts.

The philosophical underpinning of negotiation in narrative inquiry seeks to dissolve research hierarchies of power and is grounded in an “ethic of care” (Noddings, 2013) in which attention is drawn to “social responsibilities, with attention to equities and social justice” (Clandinin & Caine, 2013, p. 167), and in which “the ethical stance of narrative inquirers is best characterized by a relational ethics” (Clandinin & Murphy, 2009, p. 600). While the journey to developing trust and care<sup>36</sup> with each coinquirer was different, I began by carefully explaining narrative inquiry and its commitments. I then gently began inviting their senses of how we might start and end each conversation, what they might want to think with, when, where, and how. Slowly, I was showing rather than telling, each coinquirer that the decisions were not mine; that they too were shaping and shaped by our relational narrative inquiry spaces. Through living the experiential and relational ontological and epistemological commitments of narrative inquiry, I came to sense the growing and evolving of the trust and care we were living for and with each other. As Caine, Estefan, and Clandinin (2013) explained:

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<sup>35</sup> Please see the explanation for these different texts in the upcoming sections in relation to the types of texts.

<sup>36</sup> Our relational becoming is attended to in more detail later in this chapter.

narrative inquiry is marked by its emphasis on relational engagement, whereby the understanding and social significance of experience grows out of a relational commitment to a research puzzle. For these reasons it is important that narrative inquirers carefully consider who they are, and who they are becoming, in the research puzzle. The researcher's presence and investment is an important feature of narrative inquiry research. In studying and understanding experience narratively, researchers recognize the centrality of relationships. (p. 577)

Care, reciprocity, mutual vulnerability, and continuously working to remain awake to the relational responsibilities of and in the inquiry were all understandings in which I continuously (re)grounded myself. I also continued to linger with Bourassa and Juschka's (2017) foregrounding of Elder Betty McKenna's teaching "that reflective and accountable researchers must understand that their actions rearrange the lives that they come into contact with, even as researchers are themselves rearranged by these lives" (p. 6). This teaching has become profoundly woven into my experience as a narrative inquirer and as a person. As our inquiry unfolded, I sensed we each experienced being re-arranged in relationship; I also sense there are ways this inquiry might, in the future, rearrange others' lives in broadening rippling circles. Remaining awake and attentive to this possibility, I continued to foreground mutual-vulnerability, reciprocity, and care as central aspects of my relational responsibilities in composing this dissertation.

Early in the unfolding of our inquiry, however, I experienced some bumping with my theoretical understanding of the relational ethics of a narrative inquiry. While I had thought I *knew* what I was supposed to be doing, what was actually happening in our living was very different. As I strove to be more wakeful to how we were co-composing

relationally ethical inquiry spaces, I came to better understand how being in a narrative inquiry alongside coinquirers is such a different way of being; it was in the doing of the inquiry that I awakened to the importance of attending to the living as part of the inquiry. In the midst of our inquiry, I came to understand that in attending to our co-making of our inquiry spaces, we had also been on a journey of learning and becoming as narrative inquirers in relation. And while Clandinin, Estefan, and Caine (2013) highlight the centrality of this aspect, I was not attentive enough to that aspect in other people's work and in the early living of our inquiry; awakening to this shaped important growth for me as a beginning narrative inquirer.

### **Becoming Together in the Midst**

Following institutional research ethics approval in mid-October 2017<sup>37</sup>, I contacted several friends and colleagues, and community members from my work as a community volunteer, to assist me in inviting coinquirers into narrative inquiry. I also put up information posters and shared information. I was somewhat surprised that I did not receive immediate response. As I sensed that this research puzzle was timely and important, I had (arrogantly) expected that others would be quick to engage in conversation with me. As I began to wonder with this silence, I realized that while I had come to understand narrative inquiry as a relationally ethical way of being in an inquiry relationship, others (possible coinquirers) might have different understandings of what

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<sup>37</sup> Please see Appendices A and B.

“research” might mean and that perhaps entering into such a vulnerable space might feel unsafe. As I continued to reach out to people I knew, I also shared my struggles at the Centre for Research for Teacher Education and Development’s weekly Research Issues table. Here, we wondered together as to other possibilities, and several colleagues offered to share my invitation with their networks.

Ultimately, Tobias responded to a presentation I gave at a luncheon; Beth came to the inquiry through an introduction by a mutual friend; and, Marie chose to participate after a conversation we had at a community event. When I started, I knew that thoughtfully and meaningfully engaging in this inquiry would grow from developing relationships and trust between myself and each coinquirer (e.g., Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Coles, 1990; Lugones, 1987; Lindemann, 2009; Noddings, 2013). From the outset, I wanted to remain deeply attentive to the vulnerability that coinquirers would experience, as I remembered my experience of awakening to and thinking with the tensions, familial narratives, silences, and dominant plotlines of my trauma stories. As such, I engaged in conversation with each potential coinquirer prior to their signing the consent form as I felt it was important for each person to imagine situating themselves in a mutually-vulnerable space, that was not meant to provide them with “answers” or a “path to recovery”. Following these conversations, Tobias, Beth, and Marie each signed the consent form.

While Tobias, Beth, and Marie each approached me to become coinquirers, and each chose to be involved, I was pleased as I came to understand and appreciate the diversity of teaching experience, cultural backgrounds, family compositions, life experiences, economic

situations, etc. that each coinquirer drew into our inquiry.

### **Beginning in the Midst of Tobias' and My Life Making.**

Tobias and I met quite by chance at a luncheon, and an account of our unfolding inquiry can be found in Chapter 4 of this dissertation. Tobias, at the time, was a teacher beginning, puzzling over some of his teaching experience, as well as with the interplay of a cliff-jumping accident in which he broke (and nearly lost) both of his legs. At the time of our first meeting he shared with me how he had been a hockey player whose entire life had been shaped with the goal of “making it” to the NHL; he storied how prior to his accident, he felt he was well on that track. As our inquiry unfolded, he also storied his tumultuous journey that gradually brought him back, in different ways, to hockey.

Tobias identified himself physically as a cultural minority but also storied that he felt his experience and economic situation shaped a life that was different from others who might describe themselves in this way. He also told stories of the shifts he experienced in his familial composition and in his relationships with his brothers and sister.

I sensed then, as we do now, that Tobias was already inquiring into teaching, into who he was as a teacher beginning, and into tensions he was experiencing in schools with regard to dominant institutional narratives around assessment and curriculum. Over the course of our inquiry Tobias shared his experience of feeling unsupported in a particular job assignment and the experience of his upcoming move to an assignment that he felt was much more coherent with his life making.

### **Beginning in the Midst of Beth's and My Life Making**

While Beth's narrative account is Chapter 5, here I share how within one week of reaching out to colleagues at the Research Issues table, I was approached by Beth. Beth introduced herself as an elementary teacher, mid-way through her career, teaching in a program with a strong student-centered and project-based focus. She also shared that she was a mother of two. She told me that she was drawn to the focus of our inquiry because her house had just burned down two months earlier, and it seemed timely.

As our inquiry unfolded, Beth storied growing up in an intellectual family and that prior to a shift in their family composition at the age of 13 they had loved to travel together. She storied both her parents as life-long teachers, and she lovingly told stories of the old home in which she had lived as a child.

### **Beginning in the Midst of Marie's and My Life Making**

Marie's narrative account is Chapter 6 in this dissertation. I had met Marie twice prior to her approaching me to become a coinquirer. When I met Marie, she was a preservice teacher, in practicum, in the last months of her education degree. Teaching was to be Marie's second career, as she had worked in governmental departments prior to choosing to return to school for teaching, which she storied as her life-long dream. Marie, at the time of our meeting, was actively involved in her community and in volunteering to support the lives of others through community activities. She later storied how she lived in the community where she was hoping to teach.

Marie storied too how she was drawn to this research because of experiences across her life making that she understood as traumatic; she felt it important to share her trauma

stories with others who might be living similar stories.

### **Living In, Living Out, and Entering Into the Midst of Our Stories**

**The ongoing autobiographical nature of relational narrative inquiry.** As Tobias, Beth, Marie, and I co-made and negotiated our inquiry, I often thought about the importance of *being in the midst*. Together we grew in understanding what Downey and Clandinin (2010) said about telling, retelling, and reliving stories in a narrative inquiry: “stories are not just about experience but experience itself; we live and learn in, and through, the living, telling, retelling, and reliving of our stories” (p. 387). As such, in living our relational narrative inquiry, I also “need[ed] to continually inquire into [my] experiences before, during, and after each inquiry” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 55). While my research puzzle emerged as I engaged in autobiographical narrative inquiry as shown in my narrative beginnings in Chapter 1, I strove to remind myself that I was always “in the phenomenon under study. . . over time . . . [I] too, [am] in the midst” (Clandinin, 2013, pp. 81–82). Clandinin (2013) continued:

What this means is that as we tell our stories and listen to participants tell their stories in the inquiry, we, as inquirers need to pay close attention to who we are in the inquiry and to understand that we, ourselves, are part of the storied landscapes we are studying. (p. 82)

Clandinin drew on Sarris (1993) who said:

In understanding another person and culture you must simultaneously understand yourself. The process is ongoing, an endeavour not aimed at a final and transparent understanding of the Other or of the self, but of continued communication, at an ever-widening understanding of both. (p. 6)

All through our relational inquiry, I remained attentive to the possibility that I might be drawn to focus exclusively on the coinquirers' experience, and I remained intentionally attentive to my experience of the experience. In this spirit, my experience, tensions, awakenings, and wonders continue to be woven through this dissertation in ways that resonated with Tobias, Beth, and Marie.

**Entering into, and living in, the midst of our relational inquiry.** Clandinin and Connelly (2000) stated that “[participants’] lives do not begin the day we arrive nor do they end as we leave . . . their institutions and their communities, their landscapes in the broadest sense, are also in the midst of stories” (p. 64). Further, Clandinin (2013) stated:

narrative inquirers always enter into research relationships in the midst . . . in the midst of researchers’ ongoing personal and professional lives; . . . in the midst of social, political, linguistic, and cultural narratives. Our participants are also always in the midst of their lives. When our lives come together in an inquiry relationship, we are in the midst. (p. 43)

I began this inquiry in the midst of my experience moving backward and forward, and inward and outward and attentive to place(s) as I inquired into tensions I was feeling with a powerful *back to* statement in the midst of an incoherent experience. In so doing, I gradually awakened to how my *back to* stories connected with my trauma stories, and how these stories were shaping and shaped by my stories to live by. It was in awakening to being in the midst of my lived experience and working from this understanding alongside Tobias, Beth, and Marie, that supported us in negotiating all aspects of our inquiry in relationally ethical ways.



### **Negotiating Places and Ways of Being in Relation**

All three coinquirers each shaped the decisions as to where and when we would meet. I hoped they would choose places where they would feel comfortable and safe. From my experience, I also understood that sometimes more public places are easier places to tell difficult stories. With Tobias, we always met in coffeeshop places—places negotiated in relation with convenience and proximity. Beth first invited me into her classroom. We met again at a coffee shop, then in the frame of her house that had been all but consumed in the fire, and then on the telephone (we could not connect in any other ways at that point due to the complexities in each of our lives). When I reflected with the places where Beth and I came alongside each other, I wondered if the physical locations in some ways mirrored the development of our relationship. For example, I think as we grew in trusting each other, I was invited into her home. Marie and I first met in an office space at the university, due to convenience for both of us, and then at my home which supported for me a deepening of our conversations in relation with homeplaces which is taken up in Chapter 6.

Additionally, and always with the sense of living in relationally ethical ways, I did share in our initial conversations that I had accessed a number of resources from external and confidential places to turn to for support should anything unfold during our conversations that might require us to access support, either for them or for me. In each of our first conversations we thought together, developed, and committed to a course of action that we would take if they felt I might need support, or if I felt they might need support. With each coinquirer, we also negotiated specific ways we might engage in this

possible conversation so that we each would experience feeling cared with<sup>38</sup>.

While our conversations were never “guided by predetermined questions, or with intentions of being therapeutic, resolving issues, or providing answers to questions” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 45), establishing these parameters was a relationally ethical way of engaging in our narrative inquiry. I knew from my experience that inquiring narratively into our trauma stories held the potential to surface both told and untold/silenced stories, and the potential for new tellings and retellings in which we might experience feelings of complicity, or anger, or fear. As such, I opened our first conversation wondering if we might try to shape our times together by starting and ending in a “good way”<sup>39</sup> (Young, 2005), also as a way to honour that our inquiry was taking place in the midst of busy lives. Each coinquirer suggested that starting in a good way for them meant starting with a children’s story, and ending with a check-in.

What I gradually came to understand was that living in relationally ethical ways alongside each coinquirer meant understanding that each person may need something different, at different times, for different reasons. Living in this way continuously shaped my being mindful of, and awake to, the lives I was coming alongside in the midst of living and in the midst of the rhythms of the school year (being attentive, for example, to “report

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<sup>38</sup> As I continued to grow in my living as a narrative inquirer, I began to bump with some understandings of being ‘cared for’ which seemed to position the care-er outside of the experience. In attending to and in shaping our relational three-dimensional narrative inquiry spaces, I came to sense how the shifting away from cared for and to cared with might support the shaping of a relational, mutually-vulnerable space in good ways.

<sup>39</sup> I have come to understand and live Dr. Mary Young’s teaching of ‘walking in a good way’ as being in relation in ways that are caring, respectful, reciprocal, and honouring of other places, times, situations, and relationships. In this inquiry, we felt starting in a good way was an important aspect of our coming together in a relational inquiry space, in which we often told and retold painful stories.

card time” or Fall Festival). I also came to understand that some conversations may be more difficult than others, and may require more time between, while at other times, there may be a desire to continue an unfinished conversation sooner and with little passage of time. In being mindful of all of these shaping rhythms, we shifted from my proposed one meeting per month, and rather, negotiated the possibility for each coinquirer to approach me when they felt they wanted to engage in the next face-to-face conversation. As we grew in our relationships, we sensed we wanted to meet more frequently with less elapsed time.

### **Negotiating Field Texts as Ways of Being in Relation**

In narrative inquiry, *field texts* refer to what is typically called “data”; the term field texts foregrounds “that the texts we compose in narrative inquiry are experiential, intersubjective texts rather than objective text. Field texts are co-compositions that are reflective of the experiences of researchers and participants” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 46). Further, Clandinin and Caine (2013) differentiate between field texts, interim research texts, and research texts:

Field texts refers to the record, including, for example, field notes, transcripts of conversations, and artifacts such as photographs and journal [sic] that are composed or co-composed by researchers and participants. We use the term field texts rather than data to signal that these texts are experiential,

Research texts can be either interim or final texts. Field texts are shaped into interim research texts, which are shared and negotiated with participants prior to being composed into final research texts. Final research texts are written with public audiences in mind. (pp. 166–167)

As the inquiry unfolded alongside each coinquirer, we negotiated decisions that lead to our

co-making of field texts in organic and emerging ways. For example, Beth mentioned she had some artifacts left after the fire and the next time we came together she brought a beautiful piece of women's weaving and some white ceramic. Alongside Marie, we sensed that place was a significant thread that wove both of our experiences, and together we decided to draw pictures to show each other the stories of place(s) in our lives. These pictures also became field texts. Alongside Tobias, we decided to continue our conversations digitally in the times in-between our face-to-face conversations and created a Google document in which we wrote to each other.

After each conversation, I composed reflective field notes that I shared with each respective coinquirer at the time of our next face-to-face conversation. Other field texts included recordings and transcriptions of multiple one-on-one conversations. From those conversations, we negotiated the creation of annals and chronicles, which Clandinin and Connelly (2000) described as a way for "participants begin to recollect their experiences and construct outlines of a personal narrative" (p. 112). Connelly, Clandinin, and He (1997) explained annals and chronicles in the following way:

Annals allow researchers and participants to get a sense of the whole of an individual's life from his or her point of view. Chronicles are narrated story lines that connect different sequences of events in people's lives. For instance, a teacher might write a chronicle of her teaching in elementary school. (p. 668)

We worked with and added to the annals and chronicles as our inquiries unfolded.

Regardless of what we decided, or how we co-composed field texts, each choice was both grounded in, and deepened, our developing relationship. For example, Beth

responded immediately to the first children's story I shared by imagining how she could "use that book" (Beth, research conversation) with the children she was alongside. Later, as our inquiry unfolded, the stories lived and told in the picture books drew us inward and outward, forward and backward, to stories of our lives. I experienced similar shifting with Tobias and Marie, where the children's stories we shared at the beginning of our conversations first drew on teaching stories, and as our inquiry unfolded, the stories drew us more deeply inward.

What I came to more deeply understand through this inquiry is that the negotiation of field texts continued to shape our living in relationally ethical ways. What I experienced as our inquiry unfolded was that as our trust and vulnerability grew, the more empowered each coinquirer felt to shape the inquiry spaces, our conversations, our field texts, and our interim (in this dissertation these are Chapters 4, 5, and 6) and final research texts (in this dissertation these are Chapters 7 and 8). Throughout our inquiry, my ongoing autobiographical narrative inquiry also continued and became field text as I learned that thinking narratively with the stories the coinquirers shared created openings for me to continue to think with aspects of my experience, wonders, puzzles, and tensions.

### **Negotiating Interim Research Texts in Relationally Ethical Ways**

Clandinin (2013) highlighted the move toward composing interim research texts as difficult and as a "time marked with tension and uncertainty" (p. 47). Her knowledge reminded me of my own journey of writing my narrative beginnings where I awakened to how deeply my academic journey had shaped me to dissect and categorize anything that I

encountered, and how easy I might be tempted to walk in such a way again. Clandinin (2013) also highlighted how the vastness of the field texts can often be daunting and therefore, “co-composing interim research texts allows narrative inquirers to continue to engage in relational ways with participants” (p. 47). I experienced this ongoing aspect of our living our inquiry as we co-shaped the interim research texts, which are the narrative accounts in this dissertation. Clandinin, Lessard, and Caine (2012) explained:

The term narrative account, or perhaps narrative accounting, allows us to give an account, an accounting, a representation, of the unfolding of lives, both participants and researchers, at least as they became visible in those times and places where our stories intersected and were shared. (p. 9)

In the narrative accounts we remained attentive to temporality, sociality, and place in order to “co-compose storied interpretations and to negotiate the multiplicity of possible meanings. Bringing back interim research texts to further engage in negotiation with participants around unfolding threads of experience is central to composing research texts” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 47).

As each co-inquirer and I moved toward and into co-composing their narrative account, I knew, at least theoretically, what was supposed to unfold. We spoke and agreed that due to the unfolding of our lives, I would draft a beginning, which we would then share, discuss, shape, etc. When I sat down at my computer, surrounded by overwhelming piles of field notes, transcriptions, artifacts, etc., however, I became unsure. I was feeling, in an embodied way, the significant relational responsibility of writing the narrative accounts, of re-presenting (Ely, 2007) lives on a flat, one-dimensional page. I also awakened to the

struggle I was experiencing at trying to move toward both attending to a whole life in the making, and to our experiences of engaging in narrative inquiry. I knew deep in my being that Tobias, Beth, and Marie were trusting me with their life making, and I wanted to honour their trust in me, in relationally ethical ways.

I came to understand that I needed to slow down and open this composing of the narrative accounts to our growing relationships. In trying to “decide” what form would be best, I was not drawing the writing into our relational inquiry space. I then reached out to Tobias, Beth, and Marie and we spoke of some ideas. For example, we negotiated the style and inclusions of the accounts. Tobias and I agreed that when the account was foregrounding his voice, we would do so in **This Font (Arial Rounded MT Bold)**. Beth and I agreed that when the account was foregrounding her voice, we would do so in *This font (Lucida Handwriting)*. Marie and I agreed that when her account was foregrounding her voice we would use *This Font (Tempus Sans ITC)*.

Over the course of negotiating the narrative accounts, Tobias, Beth, and Marie expressed that many of my senses resonated deeply with theirs, and where they did not, we shifted and continued to co-compose each account until each coinquirer felt resonance. We also thought with the form of re-presentation, and sometimes chose found poetry in order to foreground either a particular experience, or a particular understanding that grew out of experience. These choices are explained in footnotes in the narrative accounts. As a result, the narrative accounts shared in Chapters 4, 5, and 6 grew out of the wholeness of our time together and drew on and from our co-made field texts.

I did write and rewrite, shape and reshape fragments in each account before feeling confident (but still nervous) in negotiating them with each co-inquirer. However, as nervous as I was for the negotiations, each opened beautiful possibilities. For example, in co-composing Tobias' narrative account, we sensed that in writing letters, we were more closely re-presenting our experience on paper. While wondering with Tobias about this shaping, I shared what Davies (1996) had said about letters as representational forms:

The thing about letters is the fact that you can get in touch with your own thoughts and feelings, in your own time and space. It allows, I believe for a deeper level of reflection on the part of the writers ... Letter writing for me isn't the choice of a methodology ... but is a more complex response to the context that is particular to how I have been shaped and my desire to be in relationship with my participants. (p. 176).

Having agreed that letters sat well with each of us, we also agreed upon *how* to write the letters. We decided that I would compose the account as a series of letters *to* Tobias. I shared similar conversations with Beth and Marie that each shaped their narrative accounts to *show* their stories and our relational becoming rather than *telling* readers about them. Beth's narrative account begins with our experience of a conversation that occurred later in the inquiry as we sensed that beginning in this way would help to show the temporal unfolding of our inquiry. Marie's account contains a series of drawings we co-composed as field texts, as we sensed these pictures might draw others into aspects of our life making rather than telling readers *about* them.

I, too, remembered and often drew on Downey and Clandinin's (2010) warning that these moves from field text, to interim research text, to final research text are not moves to



smooth out stories, or to find stories to fit a particular desired outcome. Rather, “we must, in the composing, co-composing, and negotiation of interim and final research texts, make visible the multiplicity . . . of our lives, the lives of participants, and the lives we co-compose in the midst of our narrative inquiries” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 49). I held these words closely as we co-composed each narrative account remaining attentive to the wholeness of lives in the making, rather than using stories to try to “prove” any predetermined assumptions about trauma. Our conversation moved with, in, and across their whole lives in the making. Sometimes our trauma stories wove in, and other times they did not. For example, Beth noted (early in our inquiry relationship) with some surprise how our conversations did not solely focus on the impact of her trauma stories on her teaching. But as our inquiry continued to unfold, she awakened to how her trauma stories had been shaped by and have been shaping her whole life in the making. Each of the narrative accounts has been co-shaped to show readers this unfolding.

Sharing and negotiating these narrative accounts was a daunting and beautiful experience that further deepened our relational becoming. Tobias, Beth, and Marie each responded slowly, carefully, and thoughtfully, attentive to the possible reverberations of what the account was surfacing for them, and what it might surface for others. I did not deeply understand, until engaging in negotiating the narrative accounts, how important this aspect is in narrative inquiry. In this midst, we awakened to other stories we were living and telling. Together we shaped an interim research text of which we were proud, and that was grounded in our growing understanding of the wholeness of each of our lives

in the making.

### **Moving from Interim Research Texts to Research Texts in Relationally Ethical Ways**

The narrative accounts in Chapters 4, 5, and 6, grew in and from our co-inquiring alongside each other. I knew that the move from interim research texts to research texts would draw me to attend to, and think with, the narrative accounts, and I began to sense some “threads that echoed and reverberated across” (Clandinin, Lessard, & Caine, 2012, p. 14) the stories of being and becoming that we lived, told, retold, and relived as coinquirers (Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin & Caine, 2012; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). As I came to sense these threads emerging, I approached each coinquirer to see if they too saw themselves in those resonances. I did so to remain relationally and ethically grounded and to prevent the writing of smooth(ed) single stories of their experience; these resonant threads are foregrounded in Chapter 7. This chapter, too, was shared with each co-inquirer to ensure it felt resonant.

As I composed Chapter 8, I returned to the personal, practical, and social/theoretical justifications of the inquiry, and thought with them alongside Tobias’, Beth’s, and Marie’s stories, as I attended to the questions: “so what?” and “who cares?” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 35), while also remaining wide-awake (Greene, 1995) to my relationally ethical commitments in inquiring into the coinquirers’ and my experience. As I came to better know myself as a person, a mother, a teacher, a student, a narrative inquirer, and so on through this inquiry, I needed and wanted to remain wide-awake to the possibility that I might be drawn toward smooth stories. Knowing this possibility supported me to stay grounded in and by

Clandinin's (2013) statement: "Final research texts do not have final answers . . . These texts are intended to engage audiences to rethink and reimagine the ways in which they practice and the ways in which they relate to others" (p. 51).

I shared this final chapter with each co-inquirer with trepidation; I was somewhat surprised by how nervous I was, but as I slowed down to wonder why, I felt that this was a sort of finishing, of drawing together our lives in ways that shaped possible forward-looking wonders, and I hoped they would be proud of our accomplishment. Each co-inquirer read the chapter and responded in supportive ways, as they sensed resonance with both the possibilities, but also the for-nowness (Downey & Clandinin, 2010) of the final research text.

### **Always Becoming Care-full<sup>40</sup>**

Prior to my candidacy, in thinking with conceptualizations of care, I was drawn to theoretical understandings, such as, Gilligan (1982) who stated, "the ideal of care is thus an activity of relationship, of seeing and responding to need, taking care of the world by sustaining the web of connection so that no one is left alone" (p. 62). This understanding is what my parents and community taught me when our family friend died, and which I believe Noddings (2012) also drew on:

In talks with teachers about this approach, I am often asked how they can "do this"- establish a climate of care- "on top of all the other demands". My answer is that establishing such a climate is not "on top" of other things, it is *underneath* all we do

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<sup>40</sup> I choose this construction of care-full to show my understanding of being full of care, as an integral part of being careful, cautious, thoughtful, attentive, relational, and ethical.

as teachers. When that climate is established and maintained, everything else goes better. (emphasis in original, p. 777)

In order to be ethically care-full, I felt/feel the importance of stressing the necessity of being careful: careful of/for/with the coinquirers, careful of/for/with myself, careful of/for/with the situations in which we story and find ourselves, careful of/for/with the time and the busy-ness of the lives of teachers, and so on. To me there is a nuance - careful and care-full are not quite the same. To be care-full, I need to be careful, but the same does not always hold true in reverse. Careful, in my understanding, holds within it an element of apprehension, a sense that fight or flight might be necessary, and therefore one should prevent one's self from engaging or committing 100%. Care-full, in my understanding, is to embrace experience fully, being mindful, awake, attentive, full of care, and tentative. It is a fullness of experience, and as such is a way of becoming *in relation* (Huber, 2000; Huber & Keats Whelan, 2009; Whelan, 2000) that is present and attentive.

Bateson (1989) stated, "the problems of giving and receiving needed care force everyone to improvisation and patchwork" (p. 143). I grew to embrace this sense of improvisation as our inquiry unfolded. Bateson used the term *improvisation* to refer to periods of change and uncertainty during life compositions. Clandinin (2013) further explained how, among other theoretical concepts, the concepts of "continuity and improvisation as a response to the uncertainties in life and life contexts (Bateson, 1989, 1994) . . . also ground our understanding of experience as narratively composed" (p. 12). Care and improvisation became aspects woven in our inquiry as we lived in care-full and relationally ethical ways alongside each other.

Gilligan's (1982) understanding also drew me to think with the stories lived, told, retold, and relived as this inquiry unfolded and how institutional places like schools are and are not care-full with stories of trauma and trauma stories, or stories in relation to the vast literatures regarding teacher isolation (e.g., Dodor, Sira, & Hausafus, 2010; Frank, 2009; Wegwert, 2014), and teacher attrition (e.g., Hoaglund, Birkenfeld, & Box, 2014; Karsenti & Collin, 2013) that are, in part, shaped by teachers' composing of their lives on professional knowledge landscapes. I wondered how stories of trauma and trauma stories are shaped on, and could also shape, school landscapes. Experiencing this inquiry alongside Tobias, Beth, and Marie, has shown me time and again how being care-full and living in relationally ethical ways can support the telling, retelling, and reliving of trauma stories. Additionally, thinking with Noddings' (2013) suggestion that care underlies all we do, I wonder if being care-full in relation with teachers' trauma stories and stories of trauma might shape teachers' professional knowledge landscapes differently. As Huber et al. (2013) suggest:

As we attend to people's experiences through narrative inquiry, a new language, a language of landscapes, of stories to live by, of lives in the midst, develops. Perhaps, as we begin to speak and live different experiences we start to change the stories. (p. 164)

Inquiring narratively alongside Tobias, Beth, and Marie has brought us closer to these hopeful forward-looking possibilities in relation with stories of trauma and trauma stories.

## Chapter 4:

### Tobias's Narrative Account<sup>41</sup>

A life in the making  
 A sunshine  
 In the midst of struggle  
 A calculator  
 In the midst of emotion.  
 A brain, trying to tame  
 A sometimes untameable body.  
 Becoming with a sense of having been  
 And being again, and again.

A hockey player, on the path to "making it."  
 A hockey-dad-brother shaping a life for, in, and with hockey  
 Moving from place to place to place,  
 Putting up with it, to make it, to survive.

Identity making interrupted  
 a "career ending" accident.

A deep understanding of failure  
 And of how it shapes  
 And shifts, and lives  
 And breathes success.

A developing and enveloping sense of identity  
 Shifting to a "career starting" injury  
 Becoming teacher  
 To becoming teacher at a rink.  
 I was, I am, I want to be, I will be, I am.

Becoming  
 Like this might have always been your story.

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<sup>41</sup> Each narrative account begins with an introductory poem, showing the wholeness of experience across the lives in the making, reflecting methodological commitments as shared in Chapter 3.

## Complexities in Becoming: Awakening to Being and Becoming Stories You Live(d) By

**I am now a hockey player teacher.  
It has been a long, long, long journey  
I get to go to work  
As me.  
And how could I not do a good job  
If I'm me?**

**The rink is my place.  
My home has never really been  
my place  
But the rink is my place  
The rink is where I felt safe**

**It was predictable  
It was structured  
I could breathe  
And my next teaching job is  
Actually at a rink.**

**I can teach  
I can just be.  
I can be me.  
They can be them.  
We can learn<sup>42</sup>.**



<sup>42</sup> We were inspired by Butler-Kisber's (2002) practice of drawing on "the words of the participant(s) to create a poetic rendition of a story" (p. 232) from across transcripts and field notes. In this narrative account, we have chosen to use found poems (Butler-Kisber, 2002; Richardson, 1997), composed as a way to invite readers into Tobias' experience. As we co-composed, read, and reread, these found poems, Richardson's (1997) sense that they have the ability to "re-create lived experience and evoke emotional response" (p. 521),

January, 2019

Dear Tobias,

It has been a few months since our last face-to-face recorded conversation. I am sitting here, at my computer, having just re-read all the transcripts of our conversations, and I am thinking with the words, thoughts, feelings, and experiences we shared. These words, shared above as a found poem, drew me back in/to your life making. Many of the stories we shared as our inquiry unfolded wove in, across, and through this powerful storying of your becoming as a **hockey player teacher**.

We both experienced a deep sense of coherence across your life making, when, later in our inquiry, you were offered a new teaching position that would support you as a hockey player teacher—a possibility you shared as having grown from **a long, long, long journey**, which you storied as **the story I was supposed to live**. In thinking narratively with this hockey player teacher story to live by, we were drawn backward and inward to experience from across your life making which deepened our understanding of both *being* and *becoming* in relation with your experience and in relation with your contexts, knowledge, and identity—your stories to live by. As we gradually awakened to this thread in your life making I was reminded of Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) understanding:

Part of the narrative inquirer's doubts come from understanding that they need to write about people, places, and things as *becoming* rather than *being*. Their task is not so much to say that people, places, and things are this way or that way but that

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and Butler-Kisber's (2002) sense that found poems can "be a way of representing holistically what might otherwise go unnoticed" (p. 235) deeply resonated with us. When specific formatting choices were made, we included an explanatory footnote.



they have a narrative history and are moving forward. The narrative research text is fundamentally a temporal text – about what has been, what is now, and what is becoming. (pp. 145–146)

I thought I might compose this letter by weaving some of the stories you told and retold as our inquiry unfolded through which I learned of your cliff jumping accident and how it shaped your understanding of yourself as *being/no longer being* a hockey player, and continues to shape how you now story yourself as *becoming* a hockey player teacher. Thinking with these complex and iterative shifts in your life making drew us to attend to these (and other) stories you live by as we lived, told, retold, and relived stories that shaped your gradual awakening to *becoming*, rather than *being*, in composing our lives. Thinking with these powerful movements and shifts in your stories to live by drew me back to Clandinin et al.'s (2006) understanding that teachers' stories to live by are:

fluid, shifting, continuously composed and recomposed in the moment-to-moment living alongside children, families, administrators, and others, both on and off the school landscape . . . [and as] offer[ing] possibilities for change through retelling and reliving stories, . . . a restorying that changes their stories to live by. (p. 9)

I also remembered Clandinin and Connelly (1998a) saying that, “the promise of storytelling emerges when we move beyond regarding a story as a fixed entity and engage in conversations with our stories” (p. 251). In beginning to write this letter to you, I am deeply moved by my sense of how your becoming a hockey player teacher has become a reliving of your accident and a story you live by, in ways that have supported us to gradually think with your accident as part of the wholeness of your life, rather than as a pinpointable “end” of an identity. It was not, however, until attending to your stories and

inquiring into them in our relational three-dimensional narrative inquiry space, that we awakened, together, to how your stories were shaping and being shaped by the relationships, and situations, across time and place(s) in which you found yourself.

### **An Interruption to Your Being a Hockey Player: Your Accident**

As noted, as our inquiry unfolded, you began to retell and relive yourself as a hockey player teacher; but, when we first met, you shared with me how you lived the experience of a traumatic accident that dramatically shifted your identity and thus your life. Initially, you seemed to story your cliff jumping accident as the central marker in your life's timeline – before the accident you were a hockey player, as you said: **I was a competitive hockey player until I was 20**. After the accident, in your first telling of your story to me, you storied yourself as **no longer a competitive hockey player**.

The more we engaged in inquiry and in co-making a relational space in which we thought with our stories lived, told, retold and relived, the more I came to understand how powerfully your life making had been deeply shifted and shaped by your accident. As your accident was the experience that drew us into inquiry, and that drew us more deeply inward, outward, forward, and backward in our inquiry, I chose to foreground it here.

#### **My Jump<sup>43</sup>**

**So me and some friends were  
cliff jumping.**

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<sup>43</sup> We shaped this found poem to invite the reader to read the experience with the pace that it was told and retold, and to highlight particular moments.

**We found a nice spot,  
it was maybe 10 feet or so,  
and we  
jumped, and everything was fine,  
climbed back up, found a spot that was  
about 20 feet or so,  
jumped and everything was good and we swam**

**Around,  
and found ah we were like, ok,  
let's find a good spot to jump and  
kinda just spend some time.**

**So we found this 25, 35 foot cliff,  
went and jumped.**

**We made sure everything was safe,  
and went  
and jumped  
everything was fine.**

**So on that jump, I ended up swimming  
swimming swimming  
trying to get up over here, where there's some  
rocks and a little ledge  
but you would have to  
climb the mountain wall,  
so I got back into the water  
and swam around.**

**While that was  
happening my friend had jumped in the water,  
and I kind of found this  
staircase and climbed**

all the way up and I got back to here.  
And I was thinking I'm in the same  
spot,  
but because he swam  
over here to where I was trying to get up  
is where I was lined up to jump.  
And I'm yelling at him,  
'hey get out of the way,' 'here I come'.  
And he's yelling at me  
'Wait! Wait! Wait!'

My 22 year old brain is  
competitive  
and I'm thinking  
that he just wants me to wait  
so I'm not  
getting more jumps in  
than him,  
and so I'm like 'get out of the way',  
so I  
ran and jumped.

It wasn't until I put my foot on the ledge  
that I knew  
it wasn't the right spot.  
I could feel it as soon as my foot went on the  
ledge.

I jumped like this.

If I would have jumped like [hand motion to indicate a different direction]  
this I might have

**been ok.  
But I wasn't.  
I shattered both my legs.**

**So I've been back to  
the spot a handful of times,  
but it took me,  
actually I didn't realize how  
much it affected me  
to the point where I didn't go camping  
for like 7  
or 8 years  
because it was on a camping trip.**

**I love camping, and I love going,  
and because I loved camping before, and  
then broke my legs, and I didn't want to,  
and I didn't realize why I didn't  
want to go.**

Throughout our conversations and in your life, you shared how you have re-membered<sup>44</sup> this experience often, sometimes privately, and sometimes publicly when you

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<sup>44</sup> I slowly came to sense in your struggle to re-live your accident in forward-looking ways, that re-membering is a way to describe your weaving of your physical being into your awakening of becoming. As you struggled for coherence in your life making, we sensed you were actively re-membering, thinking, being, and doing in new ways, your stories from across your life making, in similar ways to how you had to re-member your body in the weeks, months, and years following your accident. We agreed that this re-membering is supported by your life making and that we would continue to use it in this account to conceptualize how in the telling and retelling of your stories attentive to the intervening time, relationships, situations, and places, you slowly came to see how you might relive your accident.

have been brought in to speak with groups of young people. What I have come to more deeply understand in the unfolding of our relational space is how profoundly your accident shifted your life making, and not only physically: it completely interrupted your sense of yourself as a person, rendered your life's goal of being an NHL hockey player impossible, and interrupted the stories you had been living of rinks as your place of **security, predictability, and survival**. You also storied how profoundly your accident shifted your social life as you shared:

**Everything was sports. So I had I had one friend we used to, I would run from my house to the YMCA meet him, we'd play squash for like two hours or an hour depending on the day and I would run home, and we're talking like 4-5 kms (N- each way) Each way and this wasn't like anything crazy. This was just like a Saturday, so like, let's go. And it went from that to hey do you want to come over and watch tv. Because even just getting up and, when I was in my wheelchair at the time. Even pushing that was exhausting. It's just sitting there. And so I I had to find new ways to do things and find new people to connect with. I still talk to some of the people from before, and there are still friends to me, but in a lot of ways, during that time, we drifted apart because I could only sit on the couch and watch tv for really a couple of years. And and it was tough.**

As you shared your trauma story with its profound reverberations across your life making, I came to learn how, at the time, you experienced it as an end to everything you had been shaped to be, and to who you imagined you were going to be.

As we continued to think with your accident and the time afterward, we wondered if, in those days and weeks following your accident, you had or were able to compose

forward-looking stories, and we both came to sense that no, you probably had been unable to do so at that time. While you storied those hard times in and after the hospital, as our inquiry unfolded, I was drawn to your ability to gradually, over time, restory/re-member your accident as an experience in your life making that has helped you navigate the multiple worlds in which you were and are composing your life. We wondered how your trauma story might shape how you come alongside children and youth in and outside of schools. But in moving closer to this wonder, we sensed we first had to move inward and backward to think with your stories of *being* a hockey player that had been shaped in your childhood.

With growing wakefulness,

Nathalie

### **Lingering With Early Stories of Being a Hockey Player**

January, 2019

Dear Tobias,

Thinking with your accident always draws me to remember our first conversation in which very early on, you storied yourself as: **a competitive hockey player until I was 20**. I was drawn in by the certainty with which you made this statement, as I later came to understand that you had continued playing hockey (both sledge and stand-up) competitively following your accident. We wondered with you how your early experience as a young child had come to shape this profound sense of *being/not being* a hockey player.

As we thought narratively moving forward, backward, inward, and outward, we began to understand how all-encompassing the hockey player story you were living by was in your early life making. You storied how your experience (prior to your accident) was totally imbued with your living of *being* a hockey player on his way to the NHL, and how this single story (Adiche, 2009) shaped all aspects of your life making.

As we thought with this early hockey player story to live by, we were drawn back into stories you told and retold of your childhood. You storied how **everything in my life was set up to ensure my success in hockey**, and how even your physical and mental health was woven into your hockey story to live by:

Nathalie: It made me wonder, I don't know if it's your mom or your dad or both, but they must have been really committed to your trajectory in hockey.

Tobias: **It was my older brother.**

Nathalie: Oh! Your brother was really committed to your -

Tobias: **So my oldest brother was our hockey dad. He was committed. And so he's the one who pushed for the apartment... it was my brother that pushed that agenda. . . So I had a hockey brother that was my hockey dad. I believe that if I would have done what he said, I would have played in the NHL because when I look at the people that made the NHL, they were doing everything. When I was in my developmental age from probably about 8-12, maybe even 13, I was doing what it took to play in the NHL. I was doing all the little things. Everything was hockey. We had a puck shooting**



**machine. They're 10,000 of dollars and our trade off was we had access to this goalie centre and they had access to our puck shooting machine. So at 6am and 11pm my brother and I were in this training centre. I was 11, 12.**

**We also had a brain machine to focus us and we would listen to it, and it would have strobe lights, and it would essentially guide us in meditation in how we were going to play well. A lot of mental health focus when I was, as far back as I can remember.**

Thinking with this story of your hockey-dad-brother<sup>45</sup>, drew our conversation even further back in time to other ways you knew hockey was central to the stories being planted in and by you as a young person. In response to my wonder, you storied how hockey was woven into your familial curriculum making<sup>46</sup> for as long as you could remember. You showed me your family's commitment by sharing the following story:

**When I was 11 or so my parents rented out an apartment for my brother so that he could play hockey in St. Albert. This was done because he couldn't just go to different parts of the city to play on whatever team he wanted.**

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<sup>45</sup> In Tobias' life, the role typically held by a 'hockey-dad' - the enthusiasm, support, encouragement to train, cheering from the stands, belief that you are going to 'make it' - was fulfilled by his older brother. Hence, his use of the term hockey-dad-brother.

<sup>46</sup> In brief, Huber, Murphy, and Clandinin (2011) conceptualize familial curriculum making as, "as an account of parents'/families' and children's lives together in homes and communities where the parents and families are an integral part of the curricular process in which families, children/learners, subject matter, and home and community milieux are in dynamic interaction" (pp. 7-8).

**The rules were you could only play for where you lived so when there was an issue with the coach or whoever, you had to make major changes. I remember visiting that ‘place’ and it being so cold and lonely. I often felt very sad for my brother that he had to live there. I didn’t really have the understanding of why he moved there but I knew that when he moved, that he would never move back ‘home’.**

As you moved backward and inward, and again forward, with/in this story, I remember being amazed by your family’s commitment to hockey. I also sensed this to be a difficult experience for you; one that reshaped your sense of home in uncomfortable ways. I found myself wondering how this decision continued to live in you and shape your experience in both your in and outside of school places, particularly as you storied sensing that your **family home would never be the same**. I wondered if you could sense this tension at the age of 11. As you said, **looking back now, it seems crazy to have a 15 year old live on his own**. And yet, you also storied how for you **being away** to play hockey, at the ages of 16/17, gave you an escape from the tensions that were happening at your home, between your parents.

### **Coming to Understand Places as Shaping and Shaped By Your Stories of Being a Hockey Player**

The tension you experienced in retelling this familial story of your brother’s apartment drew you to story some of your own tensions with place(s) you experienced, but

that you also storied as part of being a hockey player.

You said:

**Places for a long time were terrifying to me. I didn't ever know what to expect and typically thought: I know this [living in different billet homes] will suck but ... Just tough it out ... This is what life is ... Playing Jr. Hockey and bouncing around for 5 years reminded me of that apartment in St. Albert. Cold and lonely**

**I learned from an early age that change is inevitable. I would even argue that it is only very recently that I have come to be 'settled' in a place and all I want to do is move and keep that change happening. At 16 I moved away from home, from another school, another team, another family, another city, to live in Vancouver where I knew virtually no one and to live with a brand new family.**

**My first [billet] home I moved to I had a very loving family and to be honest it was very strange. It felt like I could know what to expect. It was unsettling. Looking back I have very fond memories of my time there. It was peaceful, things were exciting. I was in a lot of ways lucky because I was out of the house, I was playing hockey, so I was away.**

**But it was short lived, because I was sent home a few months later. I was sent "home" to a "home" that didn't exist anymore.**

**I was sent home to my parents getting a divorce. To my Mom and Dad splitting up the family. To my siblings all going different ways. Me and my older brother stuck together with my Dad. My sister and oldest brother left with my Mom. Oh and back to my old High School.**

As we thought narratively across your life making you showed me the connections you felt between doing what you felt was necessary to **make it** as a hockey player, which was to live in less-than-desirable billet homes. And yet these stories drew you to thinking

with place in your familial context, and added complexity as your familial contexts were shifting, first with your brother leaving, and then with your parents' divorce.

By contrast, as you moved backward and forward in your life making you often showed me how the hockey rink became a place of comfort and of escape for you—a constant when things at home were tumultuous, and then a place that you wanted and worked to return to when you were **sent “home” to a “home” that didn’t exist anymore**. You storied how you experienced “home” at the rink; that the rink became your place of connection, community, predictability, and comfort.

As you shared this story, you showed a shifting and an awakening to different familial stories and different ideas of “home” than those you had experienced in your “home.” I was particularly drawn to your sense that your first home in Vancouver was **unsettling** because it was **predictable and peaceful**. In our time together, you had not storied your young home life as unpredictable or unpeaceful, but this telling of your experience in this billet home, in contrast to the home in which you grew up, brought me to wonder about the narratives of home and family you were living in your childhood. We sensed in your living of a trauma story in relation with the shifting of places, that **predictability and safety** became important aspects that you drew on for comfort, and that you associated with the hockey rinks in which you played.

You also storied hockey rinks as the places in which you experienced success, achievement, and accomplishment. Thinking with this understanding of the rink as a place of success, drew us to want to think more with the stories of success and failure that

became inextricable from your being a hockey player story to live by and from the stories you have lived and told of your accident as interrupting.

### **Awakening to Early Stories of Success and of Failure Being Planted In/By You**

Ever so gradually as our inquiry unfolded, I grew in my understanding of how fundamental the stories of success and of failure that were planted in (Clandinin, 2017, p. 2) you shaped your life making, and shaped your experience of your cliff jumping accident.

Your stories of your life making drew me to remember Okri's (1997) thoughts:

We live by stories, we also live in them. One way or another we are living the stories planted in us early or along the way. Or we are also living the stories we planted - knowingly or unknowingly - in ourselves. We live stories that either give our lives meaning, or negate it with meaninglessness. If we change the stories we live by, quite possibly we change our lives. (p. 46)

When I thought with the stories that were planted in you early, stories of success and failure grounded in the identity of being an NHL hockey player, I began to wonder about your accident in relation with these stories. What became visible to me was that while your accident has indelibly shaped the trauma stories shaping who you are and are becoming, in the days, weeks, and months following the accident, you experienced the accident as additionally traumatic because you experienced it as a failure; you had **not made it** to the NHL and were no longer going to be capable of **making it**, and while some people might experience relief at the removal of this pressure, you storied the time immediately following your accident as **terrifying**.

Together, we continued to wonder with success and failure, and awaken to the stories you live(d) by, with, and in (Clandinin, 2013), that had shaped your goal of *being* an NHL hockey player. As we thought with your early stories that were shaped in a binary of rigid either/or stories of hockey success or failure, we found ourselves returning to the following fragments of your stories, re-presented here as a found poem, but that we came to understand more deeply as a song. The fragments supported us to think with your embodied knowing of success and failure as an experiential rhythm, with anthem-like qualities, always present and sustaining in your early life making. We sensed that it had become the soundtrack of your youth:

**I thought sports**  
**Was it.**  
**If you don't win**  
**If you don't play**  
**In the NHL**  
**YOU FAIL!**  
**Parents telling them**  
**Yeah Yeah!**  
**You're going to make it**  
**To the NHL**  
**Everything is set up for us to succeed**  
**So if you don't make it:**  
**You Fail!**

It was as our relationship and thinking narratively continued, that I grew in understanding how deeply this sense of potential, yet also a sense of perpetual impending failure, was planted in you and shaped who you were and who you were expected (and expected yourself) to *be*. So much so, that these stories shaped your leisure time, your school choices, your food choices, etc.—they shaped every aspect of your living. Over time, I came to understand the connection between your being a hockey player story to live by and the stories of failure you were living with/in, which so powerfully shaped your trauma story in the days, weeks, and months following your accident.

### **Re-memembering Early Shifts from Being to Becoming**

As our inquiry unfolded, you gradually awakened to how teaching had supported you to remember your accident not as a “failure” or as an “end” but as a **career starting injury**. To show me this re-memembering, you moved backward, to before your accident, to an awakening you experienced while at a farm house billet home. Moving backward and inward, you spoke of the farm house as a place of care and in which you experienced belonging. You said: **When I went to live on the farm, I thought, this is it, I don’t need to ‘tough it out’ I can make it what I want. With a bit of help.** When we thought with your sense of “toughing it out” you shared how, in your early experience of being a hockey player, you knew you had to put up with **bad billet homes** and bad experiences in the name of **making it** to the NHL, which you storied as **survival**. But your experience at the farm began your awakening that you could shape your *becoming* rather than more passively accepting one story of *being* a hockey player. We wondered if after

your accident you were able to draw on this awakening to begin to feel your agency in composing your life.

You responded that after some time, you felt you could retell experience after your accident, and how you have since been able to re-member your understandings of success and failure which has supported you to relive your accident in new ways. You said:

**And so when I look at my experience breaking my legs, instead of looking at it as a career ending injury, it's a career starting injury flipping it to what is this change going to bring, instead of what is it taking away.**

The career to which you were referring, was teaching, and here too I came to better understand how the threads of being and becoming were shaped by, and were shaping, your experience.

With wakefulness,

Nathalie

### **Always Becoming a Relational Teacher – A Story You Live By**

February, 2019

Dear Tobias,

As our inquiry unfolded I came to deeply sense how you experienced your accident as a break with your sense of being, and yet together, in the midst of our inquiry, we also came to understand your accident as shaped by and shaping your sense of becoming in the wholeness of your life in the making. One retelling of your accident was your naming it a



**career-starting injury.** You have been able to retell and relive your accident as shaping the interactions you have with children and youth as part of your becoming as a teacher.

You said:

**I have been fortunate in my hockey career to win, and to win at high levels. And I always match up my experiences of winning and that excitement when the clock is counting down and you realize like, we're going to win and this is a major achievement, to when I missed out on going to my first Paralympics and I was sitting in the classroom around the same time when they were getting ready to go, and I spent a lot of time getting Valentine's Day ready. I remember sitting back and watching the kids and how excited they were to hand out Valentine's and the work that I put in to help make that day special. I thought, on every sentiment, this is the exact same feeling. Seeing the excitement. It's such a special moment you get to share. So that's where I, whenever I've had upsets or things haven't gone quite as planned, I just look for that opportunity.**

You also storied how in many contexts you tell and retell the story of your accident both to children and youth in schools, and also in your interactions with other young, hopeful future NHL players. You draw on your trauma stories, and how in sharing them you hope to support their understandings that if they do not make it to the NHL it does not mean they failed. Furthermore, you hoped to support them to awaken to the stories of identity being planted in and by them, in order to **show them a different path is possible.** As we thought with your interactions with children and youth, you showed me how your trauma stories have shaped and are shaping the stories of becoming a relational teacher you live by.

### **Lingering With Becoming a Relational Teacher – A Story You Live By<sup>47</sup>**

As our inquiry unfolded, your stories showed me some of the teacher stories you were living by, and while we sensed that you were living stories that were in the midst of shifting and changing (which will be shared in upcoming sections of this chapter), here we wanted to foreground your sense of yourself as a relational teacher. You said:

**Like, I'm not sitting here telling you as like somebody who believes I'm a role model, and this is what you should do. It's in my experience. ... You can learn the material, you can be an expert on the knowledge, but it's not about reading a book. There's going to be 5 kids that I'm going to encounter maybe if in a high school maybe in a year, maybe in 3 years, that are going to be that driven, that focused. Everyone else is a regular ordinary person trying to get by.**

**But to just be that pure expert, it's not what I want.**

This understanding, that you so proudly and profoundly storied, grew our excitement as you contemplated the relational and experiential possibilities of the new teaching assignment that came your way as we were alongside each other,<sup>48</sup> in which you felt you would have the freedom to teach more as you had imagined teaching and learning should and could be. This excitement drew you forward to sharing your sense, which I drew upon to open this account, that: **I can teach. I can just be. I can be me. They can be them.**

**We can learn.** We sensed that the difference between what you had been living in the

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<sup>47</sup> In this section, we show that being relational is a teaching story Tobias lives by. Later in this account we will show how Tobias' trauma stories have been shaping and were shaped by this story to live by.

<sup>48</sup> Specific details about the teaching assignment have not been included so as to sustain Tobias' anonymity. The teaching assignment, however, was situated in a non-traditional location with access to a skating rink to which Tobias could bring the youth would be alongside.

school you were at for the majority of our inquiry and what you had been imagining for a long time shaped your hope and excitement that there might be more coherence with your imaginings as you contemplated the new teaching assignment at the rink.

As you thought in the midst of your then present teaching assignment and the possibility of your future teaching assignment you drew forward, inward, and outward to remember a recent tension you experienced in relation with academic assessment:

**I recently had meetings with my admin team telling me I had to give kids different grades because of attendance and because of different things that were going on because they were not performing in other areas and I thought, but they're my best. Like according to this this and this, they're 90%, so with the one boy - he was very obese. When he came to school, he had a very troubled upbringing, parents were split, like they did not make his life easy. When he would come to class, we would have a work out session, he would go to the point where physically he would drop to the ground. I have no doubt in my mind, if this was Wednesday, then on Thursday and even possibly on Friday, he couldn't get up out of bed, because he worked that hard. So I had him with an 85%, but his attendance because he would miss the other two days, my admin told me: you can't have him at this mark, because the attendance board is going to audit.**

This experience was still troubling you (as it did/does me), and it drew forward some of my stories of times when I have sustained directives from my administration even though they bumped powerfully against what I felt might be better for the youth I was alongside. We shared these difficult stories as strongly shaping our becoming, as shaping and shaped by our stories of living relationally. We also connected our tensions with these experiences

with understandings of stories of “failure” and of “success” in relation with school, as reflective of the pressures we feel, and have felt, at not having permanent contracts, and as grounded in our sense of the institutional dominant narratives of “playing the game” to “succeed” as teachers.

As we thought with your frustration with the recent assessment experience, we were drawn to think with these lived, told, and retold stories as connected with your trauma stories and with your reliving of stories of success and failure, and how that reliving was shaping your interactions with children and youth. As we continued to think narratively with this tension, we were drawn backward and inward to experience that had shaped another becoming teacher story you live by: *Ability is always possible if you fight like Matt.*

Until next time,

Nathalie

**Ability is Always Possible, If you Fight Like Matt - A Story You Live By**

February, 2019

Dear Tobias,

As we thought often with your stories of Matt, I came to know him as a person you who, over time, shifted some of your stories in ways that you now understand as life-saving. As I thought with your stories, I came to understand some of your shifting stories of yourself. While you had known Matt for many years, it was not until you were in the hospital, and at jeopardy of losing your legs after your cliff-jumping accident, that you once

again reached out to him as he had experienced a leg amputation as a result of his cancer.

You said:

**And after they found that contaminated bone fragment in my system and I was in the hospital with an IV for 6 weeks, fearing every moment that I was going to miss a dose of my antibiotics and die, I got to a much darker place. But that's when I'd reach out to him [Matt]. He was going through all of those struggles, and I would text and ask: "how do you not kill yourself? Because right now that's where I'm at. I'm battling a bone infection. You're fighting for your life. So like, what am I missing?" And just his words and his strength kept me going.**

It was Matt who began to encourage you to join sledge hockey; it was Matt, who in his living of trauma stories, gradually drew you to the possibility of forward-looking stories.

When invited to think with what you might say to Matt, today, if you could, you said:

**I know that I was too stubborn to play with you at the time, and that I was in the midst of figuring myself out, but your encouragement ultimately got me going. I regret not playing with you, but I now realize that I needed time to grieve what I thought then was loss of my legs and that takes time. Your playing, even after your amputation, and while undergoing treatment for cancer is something I admire and draw upon to this day. There were so many times I thought about how you had beat cancer, had lost your leg, then the cancer came back, and your leg further amputated, you had open heart surgery, 30-40 rounds of chemo; and yet, you were still smiling and happy. You were fighting for your life in a way I admired, and I thought ok if you can do it, I need to find a way.**

I sense your story to live by of Fight Like Matt grew over time. While he was there to support you after your accident, as his health declined you were there to support him, and

you ultimately chose to take his advice and to try playing sledge hockey as a way to reclaim some coherence in the midst of your trauma stories and his.

It was also Matt, in relation, as his and your experience interacted that you began to question your earlier lived understanding of dis/ability, which, by thinking narratively, we came to understand as deeply woven by, with, and in the threads of failure/success and being/becoming in your trauma stories.

### **Fighting Like Matt to Shift Dis/ability Stories**

**And so now I try to carry that message with me  
because as a hockey player  
before I broke my legs,  
with a clear direction  
as to where my life was headed,  
I was,  
I don't want to say selfish  
but I didn't value the world,  
I didn't value my friends,  
myself,  
the same way.  
I took a lot of stuff for granted.**

**And it's a hard lesson to really understand  
without having something,  
some big experience.  
And so, it's been very good  
to see things from the other side of things  
and realize that when you see someone in a wheelchair,  
that one there is a story behind it, and that they're just people just like I am<sup>49</sup>.**

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<sup>49</sup> We chose to re-present this fragment as a found poem, with a visual organization that would show the temporality in the shifting from Tobias' understanding of himself as being an abled person (before his accident) toward his understanding that all are abled. We also chose to center the fragments we sensed showed his reliving of dis/ability stories.

Often through our shared inquiry we were drawn to move backward and inward to sharing stories of ability and disability that were living with and in each of us. The experiences with which we thought narratively with your, my, and others' stories of dis/ability were woven, in part, from your experiences of that time in which you were lying in a hospital bed, and forced to confront your personal understandings of dis/ability as woven into your trauma story.

We sensed that for a long time in your life, you lived stories of ability as synonymous with physical performance and expertise, that equated the body with success. You storied how after your accident you worried that you were going to be storied and scripted as **“disabled,”** and that this possible scripting created a strong sense of incoherence for you. Gradually, you came to reject this scripting and moved toward composing your life as **more than abled.** While you initially storied this shift as **horrible** and tension-filled, you moved toward the possibility for ongoing retellings and reliving of your understandings of ability as part of your struggle for coherence or for **survival,** and that your stories of ability gradually began shifting toward the story you now live by of *ability is always possible, if you fight like Matt.* One way you showed me this shift was how you storied how you began to open yourself to other possibilities, particularly through Matt's mentorship, and through his encouragement to return to the ice to play sledge hockey.

You also storied how Matt navigated his life with humour, which drew you backward to remembering how Matt had parked in a handicapped parking spot at a Dairy Queen. A person from another car, thinking they were seeing an able-bodied teenage male

stealing a handicapped parking spot, started yelling at him and calling him out for taking the handicapped parking. You chuckled as you shared how, not knowing what else to do, he removed his leg and waved it out his car window at the person. This story drew you forward to your own, similar, experience of a lady yelling at you for taking a handicapped parking spot. As you retold this story, I awakened to your reliving as you shared that despite being angry at the time, you could now understand the moment as complimentary to your physical recovery; if she could not tell you had a limp, you were doing very well.

Storying these experiences drew you backward to experiences in which you bumped with dominant stories of disability alongside your sledge hockey teammates, whom you storied as **more able than most “abled” people you knew**. It was with a mixture of amusement and frustration that you shared the following story summarizing many experiences you had when out with your sledge hockey friends:

**They’d come up to us [and say], great job man!**

**We’d be like: ‘For what?’**

**‘Oh, you’re out, you’re doing it. Here let me buy you a drink.’**

**It’s like, I don’t need a drink. I could buy you a couple of drinks. I probably have more life experience. We’re just living our lives.**

**So the only time it’s really a disability is when others come up and say so.**

Over time we recognized that your shifting stories to live by in relation with dis/ability were woven with a significant retelling and reliving of your cliff-jumping accident. Where before your accident, you felt that being “disabled” would have been your worst nightmare, your experiences alongside Matt and your sledge hockey team drew you to different



experience.

As our inquiry unfolded, you additionally shared that you had been thinking more about how your accident was still shaping who you are and who you are becoming, particularly in relation with you were and who you were becoming alongside children in schools. You drew on many stories of supporting struggling children who were ready to **give up** with this sense of what you storied as, **fighting like Matt**, with hope, conviction and some fearlessness. You said:

**I keep an open mind especially from a teaching background now as I moved into my career I see so many kids, and that's what I urge them. It's just to give it a try so that when it comes to a new math concept that's hard, give it a try, because it might seem difficult now, but the more work you put in now, the easier it gets.**

You also drew on your *ability is always possible* story when you spoke of how you had, since being in university, imagined classroom spaces in which children and youth experienced the freedom to learn in ways that supported them to feel successful. You drew me in as you described that you felt like you had found another thread supporting coherence in your life. You could draw Matt not only into the reliving of your accident, but also into the daily interactions with those whom you are alongside.

With a desire to also fight like Matt,

Nathalie

**Thinking With When Your Identity as Hockey Player Interrupted Your Identity as  
*Teacher* in the Midst of Always Becoming Teacher**

February, 2019

Dear Tobias,

Soon, after our first conversation, the Humboldt bus crash<sup>50</sup> occurred, drawing you immediately, and in a very embodied way, inward and backward to your experience as a Western Hockey League player on his way to the NHL, and as a survivor of an accident that could have cost you your life, that nearly cost you your legs, and that you initially storied as ending your competitive hockey career. In the week following the Humboldt bus crash, you lived and told stories of your identity as *teacher* as completely and necessarily separate from, and as being powerfully interrupted by, your identity as *hockey player*. We sensed you were struggling to negotiate your becoming in between what you thought were conflicting and separate stories to live by. You storied your feeling that that you **could not be human**, you had **to do a job**, and that there was **so much to get through**.

**That's probably part of my struggle.**

**Here I am the hockey player  
who is hurting.**

**the hockey player,  
push him to the side, and say:**

**Here I am the teacher  
who is fighting to take over**

**You gotta just chill out.**

---

<sup>50</sup> The bus carrying the Humboldt Broncos hockey team crashed on April 6, 2018 killing 16 people. For more detailed information please visit: <https://globalnews.ca/news/4897902/humboldt-broncos-crash-statement-of-facts/>

**Because I got to do this job.**

**As opposed to  
letting**

**the hockey player** **come over;**

**letting**

**the hockey player teach the lesson<sup>51</sup>.**

Sitting across from you, I could see the tension in your body as you spoke of the days following the accident. We wondered what experience you were drawing on that was shaping these understandings of professionalism and curriculum, and wondered with how you came to know and live stories of dividing yourself in different contexts. These wonders drew us inward and backward to your early experiences in schools and at rinks. You said:

**In my school life, I had no sense of community.  
I didn't understand what that was like  
or what it was really.  
I went from a public school with all my friends  
to a private school in grade 3 with very few people.  
Grade 6 I was homeschooled  
and left in grade 8 to join a public Jr. High.  
Grade 10 I went to a Catholic High School...  
and while I was in High School playing hockey**

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<sup>51</sup> We chose to shape this found poem to visually show Tobias' tension with the personal and the professional in the midst of a terrible experience. Estefan, Caine, and Clandinin (2016) show the predominance of this separation and how it contrasts with a narrative inquiry perspective:

Professional identities are already determined by the profession and personal identities lie outside the purview of professional education and, subsequently, practice. This view of a dual identity leads, as we noted in the earlier section, to the need to demarcate the boundaries between the personal and professional. Thinking within a narrative inquiry perspective, we see that the separation of the personal from the professional is not possible, as it does not allow us to account for the wholeness of lives, for the unfolding of lives within contexts. (p. 27)

**I went to another 3 different High Schools in  
3 different cities.**

**School was just a building you went to learn.**

**The teachers were there to do a job,  
nothing more...  
at least not for me.**

**But one thing that gave me a place  
was the rink.**

**In all the years and  
all the school changes**

**I always had my hockey team  
surrounding me**

**and that was one of my favourite places to be.**

**I think I enjoyed the rink so much  
because it was  
consistent.**

**I knew what to expect.**

**And I was successful<sup>52</sup>.**

As you spoke, I was drawn to imagine this vast divide in your experience. One place, school, had been a place of disconnection, while rinks had been a place of community, consistency, clarity, and success. As we lingered with your early experiences, I gradually come to understand that even in your younger years, “school” was a function and a (mostly) annoying aspect of your working to *be* an NHL hockey player.

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<sup>52</sup> We chose to visually organize this found poem in this way to invite readers into the contrast of these two places in Tobias’ experience.

Sitting in front of me, you drew forward from your early years and storied your experience of the Humboldt bus crash as a **powerful trigger**; your body felt inexplicable pain, which you described as an embodied living of the tragedy alongside shaping a living-again of your own accident. You storied the tension as living between **my selves**, for example, the self you were expecting yourself to live as *teacher* in a school context, and your hockey self. You storied how you experienced not only the distance between your teacher self and your hockey self, but also the distance you experience between your now self and your then self. You said:

**I have grown so much from the time of my accident  
and I have learned so much from  
my experiences  
and how to handle  
my emotions.**

**Yet when there is a traumatic “Episode”  
I feel as though  
I am caught  
between two times.**

**One where I am young, inexperienced and afraid**

**and the other where I am Calm,  
Confident and Sad.**

**One that understands a little bit more about life**

**and the other**

**has no idea what the future holds.**

**As I am learning from my life experiences,  
I am learning to listen to how I am feeling  
and what my body and mind are telling me.**

**I do not have to understand everything that's going on but I have to  
work with myself**

**to find an applicable outcome.**

**The more I fight and resist, the worse off I am**

**The more I struggle.**

As I lingered with what you were sharing with me, I came to feel how you were living in the midst of a temporal tension that was drawing forward your trauma stories, and was foregrounding tension in relation with being and becoming, and of different selves. We sensed, after our first research conversation, you had been awakening to the wholeness of your life in the making, but then when confronted with what you story as a **traumatic episode**, you experienced being drawn, almost involuntarily, inward and backward to a time in which you were not living in this way.

We puzzled often, as our inquiry continued to unfold, in relation with the Humboldt bus crash and how it was drawing forward your trauma stories from your accident, but also how it was shaping your experiences with the children you were then alongside in school. Thinking with this horrible accident drew us to think with your stories and the cultural, institutional, and professional plotlines shaping, and shaped by, the unfolding of those days immediately following the crash in the meeting of your trauma stories and the

stories of trauma being enacted in the school in which you were teaching. Below, we show your living, telling, and a later retelling with a sense of reliving, that you storied in the weeks following the crash.

<p><b>Remembering (Telling)</b> (April 12, 2018)</p> <p>I remember sitting there on Monday morning just kinda getting ready and I was like, do I tell the kids? Do I not? Do I have the conversation, I mean it's spilled out anyways, but we haven't really had the conversation yet, and part of it, is me, because I don't really know what to say. . .</p> <p>I definitely could see how kids could, and actually thinking about it now too, how the kids, the kids have been horrible this week. And that kinda makes sense why, now that I think about it.</p> <p>Because they're, I've no doubt that in their own way, especially with the background of so many of these kids, they're experiencing their own, especially through their parents, they're experiencing this trauma, they just don't know how to comprehend, because they're little guys. And I don't know how to manage it, and my brain's fully formed.</p>	<p><b>Re-membering remembering</b> (Re-Telling) (May 2, 2018)</p> <p>As a teacher I was trained to do a job. As a hockey player I was trained to do a job. I almost feel like the hockey role, even though it's very 'Ra! Ra!' has trained me better to handle a traumatic experience.</p> <p>When I was 18 playing Jr. Hockey in Medicine Hat our mascot who was a friend of the team got into a car accident. People around him died and he was paralyzed from the impact. It was devastating for our team.</p> <p>Upon news of this tragedy our coach came into the room and told us if we needed a day or two we were welcome to it. No catches. If we were on the ice and something set us off we were welcome to leave the ice surface. Most of us practiced that day because we needed to "skate it off". But it hurt and knowing that I was welcome to</p>
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The whole way to school I was like K how do I not just like break down into tears in front of my kids because they're going to be like what's wrong, they won't know and and we especially we as teachers put up such a big front of, we're we aren't human in a lot of ways because it's our job. Yeah. It can be confusing at times and you just repress and repress. And push down and then you, at least I did this week.

It's actually giving me some ideas of what tomorrow is going to look like.

Because I think we get so focussed on school and so focussed on the curriculum and on what we need to do, and making sure every day counts, and sometimes it's not about that.

And when I look at my feelings and the kids' feelings it's like, we're all saying the same thing, but, and I'm trying to keep order, but that's not what I'm doing, I'm trying to keep order instead of letting us experience and feeling and using that to teach the lessons, and just having a little more relaxed day that's not so focussed on school.

leave made me feel very safe and comfortable.

When the news hit about the accident in Humboldt, I felt trapped, I didn't feel like it was acceptable to leave. Or to show emotion.

I felt like I had a job to do and my job was to teach these children. I was hurt from the news and hurt from the lack of support I felt at work. For my administration to not even recognize and ask if I was okay was a blow in itself. This is my family that was destroyed and they know so little about me, they didn't even think to walk 10 steps down the hallway and ask if I was okay. I recently shared how I was feeling with my VP, but it was a little too late for their support.

That created a very tricky situation. Here I am at work, angry, pissed off, mad, sad, confused and my thoughts were everywhere. I think I understood for a few moments what my severe ADD and ADHD children go through on a daily basis.

I think when it comes down to



<p>[N - do you think “school” or “learning” happened this week?]</p> <p><b>No... I was just a tyrant.</b></p>	<p><b>it, I didn’t feel secure enough in my position or like I had the support to speak up and say what I needed.</b></p> <p><b>I pushed past my feelings so I could “do a job” and I felt like I had to fight for 2-3 days with myself. I was very unsettled. There is such an emphasis on mental health in my profession yet when something happens there is no support.</b></p> <p><b>When I did take the time to acknowledge my feelings, and talk openly both to myself and to my class I felt much better because of it. Things have been way better since doing that.</b></p>
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*Table 4-1. Re-membering.*

By using the columns, I have tried to re-present your storying of the tension between your selves that you showed me. In the left column, I showed how you were awakening to this possibility as we puzzled together about your experience in school and alongside children following the Humboldt accident. We sensed in this conversation that you were experiencing an interruption of the dominant institutional narratives of curriculum and “good” behaviour that had been shaping some of your ways of being in in-classroom places, and that this interruption was foregrounding, almost involuntarily, how

strongly you were (and are) still shaped by your trauma stories, which you storied as struggling to keep separate from teaching. As we thought with your sense **of I got to do this job**, that you storied as having been shaped in your early experiences in school, we drew inward to wonders of what doing the job might mean, where and how these kinds of understandings get shaped, and how living this narrative shapes how we live alongside children and youth in classrooms.

### **Lingering With Many Understandings of Curriculum in Relation with Tobias' Trauma Stories and Stories of Trauma**

These wonders drew us to thinking with different understandings of curriculum that include but move beyond the mandated outcomes, and we wondered about the place of relationships. As you had already storied yourself as a relational teacher, together, we imagined a forward-looking story that we both felt could open possibilities for different ways of being in the classroom. When we next met, as we show in the column on the right side of the chart, you storied the shift that was gradually reshaping the classroom once you made yourself vulnerable and moved away, for a bit, from curriculum as mandated outcomes or plan (Aoki, 1993) and shared some of your personal stories with the children. While this retelling shifted your relationships with the children you were then alongside, it also shaped how you were imagining forward to your future teaching assignment which was to include children whose lives have been significantly shaped by trauma. We both sensed in the interaction of your trauma stories and your teaching stories—stories of teaching, a shaping and reshaping in your always becoming a relational teacher stories to

live by.

You storied how transformative the experience of slowing down and sharing some of your experience with the children had been following the Humboldt accident. I wondered with you if the tensions you were feeling were, in part, growing out of the bumping of your knowing in outside-of-school places (typically at rinks) of the safety, comfort, and expression that your hockey coach had shaped, and your living, on your professional knowledge landscape, of the institutional narratives of *teachers* needing to **get through the curriculum.**

As we wondered with how stories of trauma were being shaped on your professional knowledge landscape, you storied how once you shared with the children a bit about your life and why you felt the week had been weird, you felt more grounded and at ease and that you sensed the children too felt relieved:

**After you and I spoke, I decided to talk to my students. I said, there's so many things that impact our environment and I said how I've been reacting, I'm sure you guys have been feeding off me. I said sorry for not acknowledging it. I really tried to express that I was having a hard time and was so sorry for that for how I kind of treated them. I just really was not myself. And I thought it would be a good opportunity to show them that the adult can be human. I said a little bit of me being hockey player and I kind of shared that in trying to just do my job I was making it worse, and I needed to give them time, I needed to give me time. Things were much better after that.**

This storying drew us each to share moments of awakening that have and were supporting our imagining of reliving some of trauma stories, and how this reliving was and is shaping and shaped by and in our stories to live by. For example, we wondered together about wholeness and its importance. We wondered about dividing the personal from the professional, what that means, why that pressure seems to exist, where it comes from, and what impact it might have on children, youth, teachers, families, and communities. We wondered about classrooms and schools as places of belonging and safety for children (as the rink had been in your experience), and also for teachers. We also wondered about the pressures we have lived in situations when we did not have permanent contracts, and how this institutional narrative shaped, and continues to shape us by pulling us into institutional stories of *being* and of *success*. As we retold stories after the Humboldt bus crash I sense we were both awakening (again) to the importance of living with a sense of wholeness, and with a sense of always becoming as people who teach.

With a renewed sense of wholeness,

Nathalie

### **Re-Membering our Inquiry**

March, 2019

Dear Tobias,

As we close this narrative account, and as I continue to think deeply with our stories of experience and becoming, I am so profoundly grateful for what you opened to me. As

you embark in this new teaching position, I sense the coherence in your drawing hockey into your teaching and your teaching into the rink. I sense deeply that you are reliving your stories that: **School was just a building you went to learn. The teachers were there to do a job, nothing more...at least not for me** in how you were imagining coming alongside children whose lives, for the most part, had also been and were being shaped by trauma stories.

I was again reminded of Carr (1986)'s argument that "things need to make sense" (p. 97). We sensed that through the new job offer we were both feeling that "things," the stories, smooth or otherwise, were making more sense when thought with in relation. There was a deep sense of awe as we lingered with the feelings of coherence. We sensed, too, that there was a weaving together of the dividedness you had storied as experiencing after the Humboldt accident. You were no longer imagining keeping the hockey player and the teacher separate. You were imagining composing your life as a hockey player teacher living always becoming, relational, and ability is always possible stories to live by. You were imagining letting **the hockey player teach the lesson**. A moment that will stand out for me, from our inquiry, forever, which showed me how deeply you had begun weaving your becoming into your forward-looking stories, was when you said:

**I can teach them both sledge and stand-up hockey.**

I sense that in and through re-membering yourself as a **hockey player teacher**, you are reliving in the most beautiful ways. In these ways you have supported me to re-member so many aspects of our inquiry as we came to be grounded in mutual-vulnerability, trust, care,

in the ongoing-ness of our growing friendship. You have shown me, and will continue to show me, how our stories to live by are shaped by with and in, and are shaping, our trauma stories as woven into a whole live in the making.

Thank you, forever, for inviting me into your life making with such openness and trust,

Nathalie

## Chapter 5:

### Beth's Narrative Account

A collector  
 Of utility  
 Thoughts, objects, and deeds.  
 Woven.

Brought together, lost, found, cared for  
 through cancer and fire,  
 And part of your forward-looking stories.  
 You walk in the world  
 as a mother of two  
 As a daughter and then-wife  
 In the midst of shifting family compositions  
 As a teacher of many  
 for many years.  
 Thoughtfully, analytically  
 (outwardly) dually  
 And quietly (inwardly) multiply,  
 With strong fragility

Your craft is your passion,  
 your teaching your source.  
 Your experience your teachers/teachings.  
 Your communities, your strength.

Identity(ies) as solace and as becoming.

### **Composing a Life Weaving Threads of First-Born Responsibility**

As our inquiry unfolded, you invited me to your house. I say house, because five months earlier there had been a devastating fire in this place that had been your home. While the exterior walls remained, the interior had been gutted. As we walked through, you showed me where rugs, pictures, and furniture had been. You showed me where the fire had started, and moved, as it carved its way through your house and consumed your belongings. It was this fire that had initially drawn you into our inquiry, and yet standing in your empty house, I experienced in my body so much more of your life making. After a while, we moved to your backyard.

While sitting in the *back garden* together, you storied how immediately after the fire you did not share with anyone how you had run into the burning house looking for Max (your dog) three times. You storied how you did not want anyone to be upset with you for something you knew, at the time, you had to do. You did not want to hear anyone's opinions, or judgement. You also storied how you knew you had to go in to find Max and then the *shame* you felt at not being able to find him. You said:

*I knew people would be mad because I was in the fire in the house again, and I just didn't want to deal with that, and I also didn't want to cry in front of my family.*

You continued to remember that it was only later that you shared the specific details with others. In the period immediately after the fire, you storied yourself as trying to be stoic



and *as making sure all the details*, and *my children*, were taken care of, so life could feel in control and function for you and for your children.

This telling of your experience sat with me heavily. I wondered (to myself) often about your not wanting to cry in front of your family, and about how you felt you needed to be calm and in control, to make a plan, and to execute it. These wonders drew me backward to an earlier conversation in which you said: *so the funny thing is, before I was 35 I had never had a problem in my life, and then boom boom boom*. The “booms” to which you were referring were your trauma stories: your divorce, your daughter Sara’s cancer, and the fire, all of which you identified (at the time) quite persuasively and definitively as your *three traumas*.

I remember being a bit surprised when you said these were your only traumas because you had shared something our first time together, that I sense I would have experienced as extremely traumatic, that had happened to you before you were 35. You had shared: *my mother had an emotional breakdown and divorced my father and moved to the Yukon. She left when I was fifteen, fourteen*. I wondered (to myself) why you did not draw this experience forward when speaking of your *traumas*. As our inquiry unfolded, our told and retold stories drew me to wonder about the trauma stories we live, which we choose to tell, which we choose not to tell, how we choose to retell experience, when, why, to and with whom.

As we continued to think with the experience of your mother leaving, you shared with me your sense of your first-born stories to live by:

*Because mom and I didn't get along very well for a while there and I wasn't actually sure that it wasn't me that drove her to divorcing my dad, even though I hadn't been that difficult at all, I mean my brother was much more spectacularly difficult, but you know there is an arrogance in first-borns where we believe everything is our fault.*

In a later conversation, you again foregrounded this sense of first-born arrogance:

*But I felt shame attached to, [pause]*

*I felt shame attached to the events [the fire].*

*Like every one of them, there was shame associated with it.*

*It was an embarrassment,*

*a flaw,*

*like how*

*it felt for me with my first-bornness.*

*There is a deep ingrained arrogance that you have an influence, and so if these bad things happen, how did you, how are you part of, how were you in some way responsible.*

Thinking with your sense of your first-bornness drew me back to your sharing how you did not want to cry after the fire. As we told and retold stories, we sensed you were drawing forward your first-born stories to live by, and that this thread shaped your experience immediately after the fire, but also seemed to shape, and be shaped by, some of the feelings

of responsibility you carried as shaped by your sense of yourself as a first-born. I came to sense, as our inquiry unfolded, how your first-born stories to live by were shaping and shaped by the extremely high standards to which you hold yourself in every context, including in schools. As we attended to these threads in your life making, we wondered with a potential connection between your desire to not tell others the actual events of the fire, and your first-born stories you live by as a teacher, as a mother, and as a daughter—stories of responsibility, care, calmness, and being in control.

### **Retelling a Moment of Incoherence With/in the First-Born Stories You Live By**

Wondering with this sense of first-bornness and responsibility in your life making drew us to think with your trauma stories of Sara's cancer. As we started thinking with these stories, you moved further backward to story how at a young age your brother had been diagnosed, treated for, and survived the same kind of cancer, but that his treatment had been much more brutal than Sara's. You storied his treatment as *painful and archaic*.

Storying your experiences with your brother's and Sara's cancers then drew you forward to a recent awakening. You shared how you have come to know that there is an emerging awareness in research of the post-traumatic stress that parents experience as a result of children's illnesses. We wondered about your experience alongside Sara, which you said was:

*one day at a time, one step after another, and also the worry and the worry and then the relief and then the finding out the "no you*

*were right to be worried”, and then the fear of the relying, and then feeling optimistic, and then feeling “no you do have to have the chemotherapy.” It was a lot of stages, and ups and downs, and it was spread out.*

As we grew in our understanding of the first-born stories you live by, we awakened to your living of responsibility and care in your life making. Lingering with this narrative thread, drew us to a particularly tension-filled experience you shared when you drew us inward and backward to when Sara finished treatment:

*One<sup>53</sup> of the biggest moments for Sara in the cancer process wasn't the diagnosis or the treatment*

*It was the ceasing of treatment.*

*There's a strange kind of time after you stop going every day,  
where there's almost like a sense of for her,  
there was a sense of being  
abandoned a little bit.  
Because her definition had been  
so intensely illness,  
and then  
all of a sudden  
she is officially  
ok.*

---

<sup>53</sup> We decided to center this poetic fragment, but to write it in shorter, briefer statements, to show the reader the contrast between what was supposed to be a joyful experience, and the living of that same experience.

*And she's supposed to get  
back to  
normal.*

I wondered with you if it was only Sara experiencing these feelings of shifting and of discontinuity, or if you too experienced some of the same feelings. Your stories drew me to wonder if sometimes you struggled, while in the midst of difficult experience in your life, to sustain your calm, ordered, first-born way of being in the world. In these moments of incoherence in your and Sara's identity making, in which you felt the expectation was *to get back to normal*, you storied how you experienced tension because nothing felt normal, which we wondered with in relation with your first-born stories to live by.

It was in your remembering these important moments of shifting in Sara's and your identity making, that you drew backward and inward to a powerfully connected, interruptive experience:

*Actually, one of my most traumatic moments<sup>54</sup>  
was, the child life specialist  
who is a phenomenal woman  
asked us to  
come in and talk to  
a family who was just starting [the same treatment as] Sara.*

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<sup>54</sup> We decided to place this poetic fragment to the left of the page, with random indentation, to visually show Beth's tension and competing stories in this experience, as well as how this experience remains uncomfortable for her.

*Sara was a similar age to this girl,  
and she had been playing lots of soccer,  
and this girl was an athlete in Calgary,  
and so they had parallels  
and so they put us together.*

*We finished, and she was starting,  
and we were there to sort of reassure her  
it gets done; it's going to work well.*

*And I found that whole meeting totally traumatic.*

*I felt totally awkward,  
I couldn't say the right words,  
I felt um, damaging almost  
I felt the opposite of reassuring to this woman.*

*It's not that I didn't reassure her or pretend,  
but in my heart it was something totally  
traumatic about that moment  
with these people  
who were strangers.*

*I didn't feel like I could reassure her that everything would  
be alright*

*I think and I felt scared in that conversation.*

*It was very elegantly done, and  
the child life specialist is gorgeous and  
she's just making these wonderful connections  
because that's what she does and it's brilliant.*

*But I just didn't, I just was a total failure in that moment.*

In this telling, we sensed a profound drawing inward and backward to a complex experience that possibly interrupted your first-born stories to live by. You described this experience as incoherent as you were being given the responsibility of telling another mother and her daughter that it was all going to *work* and *be okay*. You said: *We were there to sort of reassure her it gets done; it's going to work well*, which left you feeling *clumsy, awkward, and like a failure*, which you foregrounded when you said:

*I couldn't.*

*It didn't feel ended for me,  
and I didn't feel like I could reassure her  
that everything would be alright.*

*I think and I felt scared in that conversation.*

Your expression of feeling scared as you lived this experience supported me to wonder what stories (if any) we can/do (or cannot/do not) draw upon in moments of incoherence or discontinuity, and what we experience when the narrative threads with which we

compose our lives seem interrupted, inaccessible, or impossible. Through your telling and retelling of this story, you showed me your struggle in these moments to find the groundedness that your first-born story to live by would typically have furnished you, and how in its absence, you could not shape that forward-looking story for someone else.

Lingering with these stories of interruption, and with the continued unease you still seemed to feel as you shared this story, drew me to wonder how these narrative threads of certainty in the midst of uncertainty, of being a first-born, of mothers, and of daughters wove in and through this and other experience in your life making. We wondered if you were experiencing a living again of your feelings that as a first-born you often feel: *if these bad things happen, how did you, how are you part of, how were you in some way responsible?* We wondered if that weight of that responsibility in relation to someone else's daughter was too difficult to bear in those moments. As you further retold this story, you shared how you experienced yourself as *clumsy and awkward* and as not finding the "*right*" words as compared to Sara, the other mother, and the other daughter, whom you storied as *gracious and beautiful*. Thinking with this experience surfaced for me wonders about how potential institutional narratives of linear and formulaic movements from illness to healing/recovery might bump with experience. I also wondered how stories of trauma (the treatment works; it worked for us, so it will work for you too) were shaping your trauma stories.

As our inquiry unfolded, however, I came to see that in many ways, despite other interruptions, over time you have been able to reclaim coherence in this first-born story to



live by both at home in relation with your children, and at school in relation with children and youth. You later storied this knowing as getting *your groove back*<sup>55</sup> after some time had elapsed after the fire.

### **Composing A Story to Live By of Always Becoming Teacher**

As our inquiry unfolded, we shared stories of our similarities regarding our passions for teaching. I too am very drawn to my experience teaching as grounded in joy, confidence, excitement, etc. We both love the profession, enjoy thinking deeply about it, and are thoughtful about best supporting the children and youth we are alongside. We also both shared moments in which our identity making as teachers was not quite continuous with whom we were imagining ourselves to be.<sup>56</sup>

Thinking with our lives as teachers drew together many of our told and retold stories. You shared your belief that it is of fundamental importance for teachers to always work toward becoming, toward improvement, toward attentiveness, and toward flexibility. You said the opposite of this perpetual sense of becoming is *stagnation*. As I later thought with this story you live by of *always becoming teacher*, I was drawn back to some of the earliest stories you shared in which you compared your and your brother's teachers at an international school you both attended. You contrasted your brother's teacher, whom you storied as *unfair, sporadic, unpredictable, inattentive to specific*

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<sup>55</sup> Beth's storying of her sense of getting her *groove back* will be further attended to later in this chapter.

<sup>56</sup> Beth asked that the stories that shaped this aspect of our inquiry remain untold in this final research text.

*situations*, with your teacher whom you storied as being *transparent, strict, and fair*. As you continued to share stories, and as we continued to think with stories of your teaching practice, this distinction between the emotional, unpredictable and unfair, and the rational, transparent, and fair surfaced as woven into your *always becoming* story to live by as a teacher, which drew us inward and backward to thinking narratively with some of your early teaching stories.

### **Beginning and Becoming: Tensions as a Teacher Beginning**

When you storied yourself as a *relational teacher*, I wondered, with you, what experiences shaped this sense of yourself. Moving inward, and backward, you storied your father, a university professor whose life was grounded in teaching, and your mother as always being a charismatic person and teacher. You shared how when you were young and your family traveled, your mother taught you and your brother through experience with museums and critical conversations. You storied these early familial experiences as *why that relationship model makes sense to me*.

In this retelling you showed me how you already carried a strong sense of your identity as a relational teacher as you began your teaching career alongside students who found the systems of school challenging, in a school you storied as *having a lot of change, social difficulties, and tension*. As you retold these stories, you shared how you started each day alongside your class of mainly boys, with a walk around *the Mountain*. When we wondered if your sense that this would be an important way to

start the day had been shaped in your B.Ed. program, you responded that it had not; rather, it had been shaped through your experience alongside your mother and her partner in the outdoors, which you then drew forward as you were alongside children whom you sensed would benefit from being outdoors.

You also retold your sense of who you were in relation with this community in your years as a beginning teacher:

*I don't think I was a very good teacher for those children, and I think the first 2 years I was barely adequate, and I wish I could go back and redo it, but I don't think any teacher is good if they are not coming at it with – I think you need to have an arrogant potency of an experienced teacher entering those kind of schools. Not a young one. You need honouring potent opinionated caring strength to defy and question things. ... And it was just that sort of surreal obliviousness that comes with youngness, so no I wasn't a good teacher back then. I was a loving teacher who tried my best, but I was no good.*

Retelling this experience drew you backward and inward to think with how professional pressures, your school's general lack of cultural understanding, and your teacher education program all shaped an idea of *being teacher* or of *good teacher* from which you have since moved away. As I thought with this story, I wondered if you did or could draw on your story to live by of *always becoming teacher* to shape a retelling and reliving of your early experience in ways that would honour that experience as part of your always

becoming. I came to this wonder, in part, as I returned to your storying and restorying your experience during your second teaching assignment:

*It was a Remembrance Day activity, and I asked how many of you have actually seen war. And I had 5 kids in my class that had seen war first-hand. . . . A child had been in some part of Yugoslavia when the war was going on and had been lying on the main floor underneath the bed mattress while the shooting was occurring. This is their direct experience and it was like this conflagration of story that came out of this question. I was so naive that I opened up these doors that we sometimes . . . we're oblivious.*

From thinking with this telling of yourself as a teacher beginning, you drew my attention toward your now-sense of who you were and who you were becoming as teacher, and how you live an always becoming story to live by. You continued to story this knowing when you connected this experience to your first days in your current teaching assignment:

*I was messing up desperately trying to figure it out. I had done project-based for eons and all through my career, I didn't know it was project really, but inquiry and project were always how I taught, and the relationship piece I nailed it. But the actual managing of projects and having it structured in a really valid academically rigorous way, I messed around that first year. I always feel sorry. That cohort is the same age as my son, and so whenever I see those kids around, I'm like man, I wish I had done better for you.*

In thinking with these three stories of your experience as a beginning teacher, we came to sense the temporal shaping of your *always becoming* story to live by. While you wove your telling and retelling of these early experiences as integral in supporting your sense of growing and becoming a relational and capable teacher, I still sensed some judgement of yourself in your suggestions that you had failed the children and youth you were alongside early in your career. In some ways, I wondered if you might have been gentler with yourself if you were to draw your stories of becoming into a retelling of your stories as a teacher beginning.

### **Lingering with Becoming - The Other Way(s) to Listen<sup>57</sup>**

*And I don't know, there's something powerful in the influence the teacher has. We can open accidental doors, and step on serious landmines, and no you're not a psychiatrist, and not a psychologist, and yet, as an authentic individual, especially when working with writing, you have to work from their place. When I work with poetry I am always cognizant of that. You know when they talk about where I'm from stories, critique pieces are etched there. You know, the sharp stories. I mean we're always stepping.*

When our inquiring moved to thinking with stories alongside children who are composing their lives in the midst of trauma stories as an aspect of always becoming teacher, you storied experiencing tension as you drew inward and backward and retold a story from early in your career alongside the child from Yugoslavia. Your storying of this

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<sup>57</sup> This section title refers to Byrd Baylor and Peter Parnall's (1997) story: *The Other Way to Listen*.

tension surfaced a bit of discomfort in relation with not being a psychologist but of feeling deeply responsible to and with the children whom you are alongside. We wondered if this discomfort drew on your understanding of yourself as a relational teacher, but also from learning what you might have needed and wanted from your experience:

*Somehow, as your career progresses if things happen to you, there is an awakening for some teachers, an awareness of how important it is to listen to children. I mean slow deep listening, not just of how they are and where they are as learners, but open to hearing their stories. And when you do that, you have to be incredibly cognizant of the cost that can be incurred and the lack of preparation you yourself have. For me, my sort of, I don't know what the right word is- whatever you do, you don't hurt students.*

As we thought narratively with this story, we wondered about the relational, familial, and institutional threads that were woven into how you were attending to the silent and difficult stories children and youth live and tell. We wondered about the tension that I sensed surfacing within you around having a lack of preparation, and how these feelings shaped, and were shaped by your trauma stories and stories of trauma, and your always becoming and first-born stories to live by. When I shared stories of my gradual learning how sharing more of myself with the youth I was alongside opened up the vulnerable relationality and seemed to support their life making, you responded by saying:

*The invasiveness of sympathy is aggressive and not<sup>58</sup>*

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<sup>58</sup> We shaped this fragment as a mixture of forms to represent both the stream of consciousness with which Beth spoke, as well as to visually emphasize (almost like staccato in music) what Beth emphasized as she

helpful and how just being warm and normal and-  
 At the same time if there is a space needed, the space is immediately  
 present and available, and if a listening ear is needed, a listening ear  
 that is gently curious and open, and non-emotional.

I think is the  
 biggest gift you can give.

Allowing the story to be shared without  
 amping up the emotions.

Allowing the emotions to be whatever they  
 are, and not allowing one's own story or one's own responses to  
 interfere with the children.

The child processing the grief.

I think  
 it's more important than people thinking:  
 this poor child is so distressed,  
 I have to be so distressed.

You know there's that whole sensationalism, that can come in these kinds  
 of moments, and in my opinion it's almost a

self-indulgence

---

spoke.

*that people need to be really cognizant of.*

*This trauma is theirs. It is not ours.*

*And our shared story, and the fact that I have had a similar trauma*

*It's not allowed in that child's story.*

*The only thing I've learned not to be,*

*I mean, I'll make open and safe and comforting spaces, and I'll make sure any little inconvenience is gone from that child's life. But if that child just wants to live normally,*

*That normalcy is totally given to them.*

*Just normalcy.*

*And deeply embedded listening*

*No agenda listening.*

*Just what do you need from me right now?*

*That is what you get.*

*I think it's so pivotal.*

Your storying of these ways you interact with children showed me how your desire to be present and responsible to and with them shapes how you interact with children living trauma stories. Your storying showed me your deep sense of responsibility and care in how you respond and support children to think with their stories and their life making, and



that it is not your practice to let similar experience in your life shape an emotionally-laden response to a child, thus additionally burdening them with your life making.

As I lingered with your understandings of the ways you listen, I was drawn to think with my own assumptions. I remembered reading Byrd Baylor and Peter Parnall's (1997) story *The Other Way to Listen* in which the young person telling the story asks an old man how he learned to listen. The old man teaches the young child to be attentive, to not force one way of listening onto another; I sensed this too was, in part, what your stories were teaching me. I grew more wakeful to the connections among vulnerability, openness, and being responsible to and with children when they share their trauma stories. Thinking with your way of listening, I gradually understood your sense of the importance of being and staying present to and with the child even if internally you are experiencing painful resonances in the meeting of your and their experiences. Over time you showed me how this other way to listen in your life making resists some of the more typical understandings of sympathetic listening, and how you and your brother consider sympathy a *weakening thing* as you felt it created a situation of *othering*, whereby the giver of sympathy inadvertently positioned themselves outside or above the experience. I had never, until our inquiry together, considered sympathy in this way— a way that might “other” the receiver and place the “giver” outside of the experience, thus preventing the “giver” from really hearing.

Lingered with this story brought me to wonder (again) about the relational ethics and reciprocity in listening, which drew me backward to a powerful belief you shared in

relation with Sara's cancer. Several times, we thought with your strong sense of not appropriating Sara's experiences as your own. At one point you admonished yourself for saying *We beat cancer* after which you said:

*It was Sara's and it was totally Sara's.  
And it is totally irresponsible to talk about WE beating cancer when she survived and it wasn't a beating and it wasn't a battle. It was HER story and I was a vicarious person through the process and it is a totally domineering behaviour to claim parts of it. I mean I'm very careful not to, but I'm very cognizant of the fact that that piece um, that piece dances in the whole ownership of someone else's tragedy. It was hers not mine.*

As I lingered with the surprise I experienced in my body as you shared the above fragment, I wondered (to myself) if you had experienced others trying to insert themselves into, or to appropriate your experiences, and in so doing storying themselves as part of your stories. Lingering with this wonder awakened me to both my ways and others' ways of listening to and telling stories through which, in part, I became wakeful to my storying of you as part of Sara's cancer story, as in my experience of your/her story you were alongside her in very profound ways. However, your telling of *domineering behaviour* awakened me to some of the assumptions I was carrying from across my life making<sup>59</sup>.

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<sup>59</sup> I have wondered since about the interactions of Sara's trauma stories and yours, and how they were shaping and shaped by a story of trauma as connected with stories of ownership and appropriation. I sense this wonder will shape future inquiry.

I also thought with additional threads in the stories you made visible about other ways to listen:

*You<sup>60</sup> know there's that  
awkwardness, and it's easier to be not awkward  
when you've already walked that path,  
when you're like oh this is something we've walked.*

*I think that's a gift traumatized people or teachers have.*

*They can just...*

*But who knows.*

*I think everybody would learn something different from the stories.*

*I'm not sure that's fair to say either.*

*I would not want to say that because you've dealt with trauma*

*You're better at dealing with trauma.*

*I think it's possible.*

*And I think it's true for some people.*

*But I wouldn't say it's true for everyone.*

*People who are traumatized*

*Are traumatized still,*

*And could be injured by it.*

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<sup>60</sup> We chose to center this found poem to show the messy and iterative thinking that shaped our wonders alongside each other. We did not feel that this fragment reflected some of the divisiveness or tension of some of the other fragments, but rather that it shows the unfolding of thinking and of coming to a for-now understanding.

Your wonders, that you shared with me as we thought with the awkwardness of speaking with and listening to trauma stories, as part of always becoming teacher, supported me to become more wakeful to the complexities and multiplicities of experience, and to attending much more closely to how children and youth might experience listening and sympathy. As you drew forward your sense that it is dangerous to homogenize the capabilities of a person whose life has been shaped by, with, and in trauma stories, we sensed this understanding was becoming (for me, more deeply) woven into our knowing and living of always becoming teacher.

### **Composing a Life in the Midst of Always Becoming**

You spoke with pride about being alongside children as they experience the joys of learning, and about the relationality and dynamic nature of your practice. When during one of our conversations you invited me to your classroom space and showed me some of the children's work, your face shone with affection and pride. In those moments we wondered if the ways you told stories of yourself early in your career as compliant, as making incorrect decisions, as fumbling, and as inadequate had gradually grown and shifted into the stories you more presently seemed to be living and telling of confidence, capability, and perpetual growth. As we talked in your classroom that day, you shared how now you feel that you do well; you understand the program, you love the age group you are alongside, and you feel you are *supporting them to new heights in their academic journeys*. Then and since, I often noted that when you spoke about your

current teaching, you exuded a sense of confidence and groundedness rooted, I came to sense, in your experiencing coherence in and across your first-born and your always becoming teacher stories to live by.

You also storied school as an important place for you; a place separate from your outside-of-school life. In these stories you connected your sense of the importance of the place of school with the importance of experiencing stability in school when you were in the midst of *drama at home*. You shared:

*I found that absolutely for me school is an oasis. You know I have great colleagues and my kids are just beautiful and there is something extremely productive and present. You have to be present with kids. You cannot be abstracted or thinking of other things. You've got to be with them and attentive to them, and so that takes you out of your head and out of your world, and so that's very fulfilling.*

I wondered with this sense of “oasis” as I have come to understand stories of schools and stories of teachers as often separating the personal from the professional. Yet, what you drew my attention to in the above fragment was that, for you, school was an *oasis* connected with your feelings of escape, presence, and confidence. We wondered if you experienced school in this way *because* it required you to be fully present, and *because* you could continue to become even in the midst of traumatic experience in your outside of school life.

**Retelling the Fire as Interrupting Your Always Becoming Teacher Story to Live By**

*I mean there is such a lens of shame  
 You know with everyone being fully informed,  
 there is still such a lens.  
 You're embarrassed.  
 I was embarrassed you know because the house burned down.  
 I felt it. I was mortified by it.  
 I had drawn attention to myself in this ludicrous way  
 after already going through other nonsensical things.*

As we inquired into the stories you lived and told from after the fire, I began to sense that this experience interrupted your story to live by of always becoming teacher. In your stories of the months following the fire, you showed me that, for a time, you experienced difficulty in separating your outside of school life, from your inside of school life, that school could not be *the oasis* it had once been. We sensed that you experienced this shift as an interruption to the narrative coherence of your always becoming teacher story to live by. You also often storied how you experienced this tension as a *failure*:

*All the time I think though when you are<sup>61</sup>  
 really seriously traumatized,  
 for those months when I couldn't sleep,  
 and I would wake up  
 with panic attacks  
 and I would doze off  
 and I would smell smoke  
 in the air,*

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<sup>61</sup> We chose to represent this found poem as fragmented, confused, dislocated, chaotic, and disorganized to visually re-present Beth's experience in the months after the fire. We chose very tight space to increase the pace of the reading, and possibly the reader's breathing to draw the reader's body into the reading.

*and I would think  
that the fire was happening.*

*Those moments.  
It's really hard*

*to be in control of it.*

*And that's when you lose your filter.*

As our inquiry unfolded, you told and retold stories of moments of losing *your filter* as possibly interrupting your abilities to attend as closely as you had been to the everyday-ness of your classroom, to the children you were alongside, and to your always becoming as a teacher:

*They (the children) were joking about the fact that*

*I absentmindedly*

*lost*

*my keys.*

*I realized it was a running joke,  
because I have lost my keys so many times in the last little while.*

*But you know, I never was presented by anyone*

*so casually*

*like it's fond, but it's playful,  
but it's also "oh Beth",  
and there's a layer that I've never had before.  
And it's because I was so raw for those two months.*

*There is a formality to teaching that has been un- ...  
that has been shaved off  
that shouldn't be.*

In thinking with your stories to live by of always becoming a teacher alongside your storying of the months following the fire, we wondered about how you experienced being presented ... *so casually*. Thinking with this story drew you inward to how you felt in that midst:

*I'm looking at it, going:      Oh No!*

*I have to  
reclaim authority  
a little bit here.*

*Like I love the tenderness and  
I love the confidence, and I love the ownership,  
but ownership is a delicate balance.  
And even if it was just about my keys,  
I'm going to have to watch this.  
This is a new dimension.*

Which drew you more deeply into your experience in those months:

*And it comes with surviving and getting discombobulated and losing your keys a lot*



*And that vulnerability.*

*Yeah. And stepping on, and making mistakes.*

*A lot of mistakes.*

*Steadily for months*

Lingering with this sense of *mistakes* drew our attention to the stories of *failure* we came to understand you were living and telling as your always becoming teacher story to live by was being interrupted. As our inquiry continued to unfold, you showed me that for you school had been an oasis that became interrupted as your body brought your outside of school experiences into this oasis and interrupted this story, and maybe also, your first-born and always becoming a teacher stories to live by:

*You know that time after having a baby when you're utterly ridiculous,  
and I was like that for a month and a half.*

*I was like,*

*I cannot,*

*my lesson plans.*

*You know how normally  
you've got 500 things in your toolkit  
and you just know the flow,  
and you can see the five-minute moment where ok,  
now switch from the instruction to the guided practice.  
And it just automatically comes to you,*

*there is an automaticity that comes to you and  
you don't even  
think about it.*

*And you just know  
when one kid needs your attention.*

*Significantly. Just my sense of timing was off,  
my sense of, like the little lists:  
I need to remind Jen of this,  
I want this to be a feedback piece.  
I've got to check on . . .*

*You know all of those things that you depend on to be an effective teacher.  
All of those things.*

*I had post it notes like this on my desk,  
and I couldn't even organize my post-it notes  
because I was so distracted.*

*When you're abstracted you just don't remember to do those things,  
so the kids get, are endangered by that.  
It was scary for me.*

*Because I depend on it,  
I'm very proud I suppose*

*of my teaching capacity  
and it matters to me  
because I'm really passionate  
about the empowerment that I give children.*

I remember how your body changed as you first told this story. You broke eye contact. I wondered then, as I do now, how the fire and your experience in the following months profoundly interrupted your always becoming teacher stories you live by in the classroom, particularly in relation with the pride you take in your relationality and presence with children. We wondered if this experience was scary and dislocating for you, in part, because of shifts you experienced in your relationship and your understanding of your classroom as an oasis of becoming despite what was happening in your outside of school worlds, all of which left you feeling *absent-mindedness and distracted*.

**When interruptions might further interrupt.** Hearing how scared and dislocated you felt in your classroom after the fire drew me to ask if you had taken any leave after the fire. Your thinking drew us inward as you foregrounded particular institutional narratives that were shaping your experience. You said:

*It [the fire] was Christmas day right, so there was no need to [take leave] because I had that week and a half to ah and it, yeah no, I know this sounds ridiculous but because Sara's cancer I needed that stress leave for that, and you haven't got a choice. It's stress leave or it's nothing. And it feels like a lie and I felt shame about the stress leave. But I went to the doctor and was*

*like listen I need to ask for a stress leave. I don't want you to give it to me unless I actually need it. I'm going to tell you what's going on right now, and she was like you're massively stressed, and you need to take these pills and you need to sleep and then it was ok. I couldn't handle the stress leave. I hated it.*

*But so there's no way in hell that I'm ever going to have another stress leave because I know what that looks like on your CV. There's no way.*

We wondered about the personal and institutional narratives shaping the pressures you felt regarding taking a stress leave to be alongside Sara, and subsequently your choice not to take a leave after the fire. We wondered about your tension with the naming of the leave as a “stress” leave, your storying of your feelings of *shame*, and what experiences these feelings were drawing forward. I also now wonder about how the professional diagnosis from the doctor seemed to release you from the feeling of shame and enabled you to embrace the leave.

I now wonder if you sensed the need to go on a stress leave as another possible interruption to the always becoming teacher and first-born stories you live by. I also wondered how if teachers were encouraged to compose their lives in relation with health and wellness if the idea of leaves might become woven with and in an always becoming teacher story to live by as opposed to being storied as an interruption.

## **Retelling and Reliving Trauma Stories Through Community, Forward-Looking Possibility, and Shifting**

As our inquiry unfolded, you shared your gradual retelling and reliving of your trauma stories of Sara's cancer and of the fire. These retellings seemed to open up possibilities for reliving your trauma stories – possibilities shaped through experiencing community, agency, and reconnecting with your knowing of yourself as always becoming.

### **Houses and Homes**

We began this inquiry only a few months after the fire in your home. As you shared how much you loved the location of your home, you moved backward to stories of your childhood home, as you told stories of you and the other children ran and biked and played on the paths to the river valley, while the mothers, *all professors' wives*, walked and *debated feminism*. Your descriptions were so vivid that I could imagine your home as a young person, that you storied as being very carefully picked out by your mom and dad. I could imagine your dining room table, a place you storied of lively debate where opinions were required to be supported with proof from the encyclopedia sitting on a shelf nearby. You storied other aspects of this home:

*I remember them looking for this house. And it had, it was a double lot, with a beautiful old apple tree in the back and oak trees, and it was just a gorgeous house, a 1909 house, and you know what we found in the attic? The 1909 newspapers filled, like every newspaper had filled the space in*

*the attic so we had all of these 1909 magazines and papers.*

This sense of the magic of discovery, and age, and the feelings of connection and permanence this home created wove through many of the stories you shared of your early life making in this place, and in other places. In one conversation, as we each storied our complex relationships with “stuff,” I was drawn back to this first conversation and the sense I had of the groundedness you felt in your familial home.

There was pride and a sense of connection that surfaced as you spoke of this old, familial house, which resonated with the ways you described the house you and your then-husband<sup>62</sup> later bought and renovated after moving to the city from the North. We wondered if this feeling of comfort, connection, and permanence drawn from *old* and *established* was part of your experience with, and love of, the house you built with your then-husband, feelings which we sensed were profoundly interrupted by the fire. Your descriptions, and the details you shared of your home prior to the fire, supported me to imagine a very warm, inviting, cozy space. Every time you spoke of your home prior to the fire it was with a sense of love. You shared the details, where the rugs had once hung, the tin roof, the beautiful clutter of artifacts. But I also sensed, from the shift I saw on your face with each retelling, that you were always drawn back to the night of the fire:

*Christmas this year, so this year, we had the fire. My daughter wasn't there. She and her brother were at their dad's place. So Christmas morning we did our whole little crepes and breakfast and it was an*

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<sup>62</sup> We decided to show the shift in the composition of Beth's relationship with her now ex-husband in this way, using “then-husband”, as a negotiated choice reflecting tension with the word ex-husband.

*enjoyable day, and then the kids went for the evening meal with their dad and grandparents and I went off for a walk with Max and came back and I was swooped up by my friends who did not want me to be alone Christmas Day so they brought me over for Christmas dinner and had this lovely Christmas dinner and I came home to the fire.*

While I gradually came to sense that your experience of the fire, in many ways, was shaped by the stories you lived and told before the fire, I also came to understand that as a thread in the wholeness of your life, your experience of the fire offers many possible retellings and relivings of the single story (Adiche, 2009) of a fire as trauma.

### **Retelling Stories of the Fire to Include Communities as Nourishing**

*It's<sup>63</sup> the people, the human beings who lift you up in those times who are so astounding. I think that's kept me completely sane through these 3 ludicrous life events. It can't be understated: I think that if you look at traumatized people, I would say that what stops people from trauma, long term damaged trauma, is the people around you.*

*It's the network.*

*And if you don't have that network, I don't think you'd have the same story.*

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<sup>63</sup> We chose this format for this fragment to visually create the image of a pedestal as symbolic of the support Beth storied as receiving from her communities.

As our inquiry unfolded over time, we continued to think with the communities, the networks, and the people around you whom you storied as supportive and nourishing. The communities you foregrounded were your family, your neighbours, and your school community.

**Astounding immediacy: Family as community.** As you spoke about the communities of support that encircled you after the fire, you drew my attention toward the sense of community you experienced also alongside your family in its aftermath. You storied how both of your parents flew in from different parts of the world, as did your brother, and your mother's partner: *we had family, we always have family, so when the fire happened, I had all of my family there and everything.* As you thought with this experience you moved inward and backward to remembering your experience alongside your family through Sara's cancer:

*When Sara got sick my mother-in-law took over and then when my mother-in-law left, then my father was there, and then when my father left, my mother was there, so there was this constant team of people helping us get through it. I'm also not an extrovert really, I'm not an introvert, but I'm you know right close, I'm always skirting introvert, and so for me talking to people about stuff is not comfortable. But I had family.*

You storied how in each situation your family members were there almost immediately, and that you found this support *astounding*. You also storied their support as



thoughtful and present; they took up the more mundane day-to-day tasks, which you shared as so important to you and to your children.

**Soft, gentle, deep ways, steadily: Neighbours in community.** *So I would say the reason I have recovered so well and so quickly is because I have my neighbours just across the way there. They are nourishing human beings who have been there for me in soft, gentle, deep ways, steadily. Like you know, shoveling my walk. I couldn't even get here in the time, and they already have it shoveled. Just picking up my mail or loving comments, just deep profound and innate generosity; that is just their automatic way.*

Often, you storied the importance of your neighbours. You storied how their care kept you *sane in those times*. You called this care the *soft stuff* and gave examples of others checking the mail for you, or giving you a chocolate bar, and you storied the *nourishment* this gave you. You said: *I'm surrounded with people like that.*

Your storying supported me to understand that after the fire your family and neighbours and others supported you in ways that were quiet, and that you appreciate(d) this quietness. We wondered what your stories might have been if their support had been offered differently or if it had been missing; but as you said, they became significant to your story. I felt this presence when I visited your community in May and we sat on your front steps looking around. As I earlier sat in my car for a few moments before you arrived, I had noticed your neighbours gathered in clusters, out front, talking to each other, and waving at

passers-by. As I experienced your neighbourhood community with all my senses, I slowly came to better understand its place in your retelling of your trauma stories.

**Kindness, generosity, and care - A school community.**

*My community at school has been incredible.*

*I had 14 families offered me their home.*

*And that was within two days, you know like before school had even started.*

*People had just heard and made sure and wanted to help,  
'I'm away for two weeks, come stay at our house, let us feed you.'*

You storied your current school as a *stable* contrast to the *drama at home*, as a *support network*, and as previously mentioned, as an *oasis*, both through Sara's cancer and after the fire. You also storied how *the people here [in the school] are so nourishing, and supportive, and joyful*, and I felt your deep gratitude as you storied how the children fueled you, how they were *exuberant nourishing human beings*, and how they were your *solace*. This community of people provided you with a sense of coherence in the midst of other experiences that were profoundly incoherent, but also with the ability to control when and how you attended to your difficult outside-of-school experience:

*It's private and so if you give it to other people, then they influence when you're allowed to process and how you're allowed to process,*

*and sometimes, it's easier not to have that feeling of shame that comes from perceived judgement.*

Thinking with these stories of your school and the children seemed to naturally draw you to think with stories of the colleagues you are and have been alongside. You spoke with such love in your voice about the colleagues who intuitively seemed to know what you needed, and when. You storied how wonderful you felt when a colleague gifted you with Tupperware without *making a big deal about it. She didn't say anything about it, she just sort of left a bag of Tupperware on my desk, you know. So it wasn't invasive.* However, thinking with the story of the colleague's generosity also drew us to other, more tension-filled stories.

**Complexities in a school community.** This story of the colleague who gave you Tupperware drew you toward a competing memory in which you were also gifted a basket of *things I didn't need.* What I remember is how you storied the gifting of the basket as *generous and loving*, but, in contrast to the Tupperware, it created a pressure you named as a *pressure of sympathy*, which drew me backward in our inquiry to how you storied the *weakening* aspects of sympathy. You explained that while the givers of the basket had not intended to create pressure, the overt sympathy you felt from needing to publicly receive and publicly acknowledge this gift was difficult to navigate. As you shared this story I wondered if perhaps the tension of this gift was connected with similar feelings you expressed when you storied feeling *embarrassed* by the fire and *mortified by it.* I

felt in my stomach the tension you experienced as you spoke of the public nature, and *the attention, the perceived judgement, and imposed sympathy* you felt in each situation.

### **Retelling and Reliving Stories of Your Divorce Through the Fire**

*All the renovations we did are gone. Oh well, the walls aren't and the high building, and the change in the floor plan still exists. It will be interesting to see, because now I'm recreating; it is just me.*

Later you said:

*It's been fun actually looking at collecting things and not rushing about it, and still thinking about because I can refill it, but with purpose and intention and not collaboration and not sacrifice. When my ex-husband and I, it was a battle. All of these things; he had an agenda and his aesthetic and mine were really totally opposed. So having the privilege of filling my home with what I want rather than being in this sort of weird pseudo-university style hand me down memorabilia-trapped lane. It will be nice. It will be rejuvenating to have that sort of sense of cohesion.*

I sense this forward-looking reliving of the fire, in which you storied yourself as living agentically in deciding the aesthetic of your home, is shaping a reliving of your divorce, and maybe even of the fire.

In a later conversation, you also storied your sense that your children's sense of home, while undeniably disrupted by the fire, was drawing them further backward into their experiences of the divorce:

*The rental house, where we are living until our home is rebuilt, is still hard for them. I think it's actually reminding them of the divorce. When their dad separated and moved, he moved to a rental for a while and it was nearby but it was a rental, and they would go there and I think that there's that sense of emptiness and absence of all belongings. Even though I gave a lot of the belongings, I offered everything, he just wanted to keep it simple and I think that piece is reflected, is being brought up by this whole thing.*

Through your storying of your children's experiences, you shared a sadness, mixed with some feelings of guilt, that they too had experienced and were living trauma stories, and that difficult experiences could draw forward other difficult experiences. Equally woven through your storying of their experiences was your extreme pride in their strength and kindness. I felt your admiration for them in and through these experiences, and how their life making was weaving into your retelling and reliving of the fire. The excitement and possibility of re-building, your continued relationship with your children, and the hope of moving back into that space, with new and forward-looking possibilities, supported your retelling of a single story of home fires as only tragedy.

### **Beauty in the Messiness**

Together, in and through our inquiry, we have co-created an unfolding of experience through which I sense we each experienced beauty in the messiness of life making. When we sat in the back garden of your home after the fire, I saw beauty and you apologized for

the messiness, while at the same time you saw the beauty of its past and of its future. There was beauty in your experience with and around Sara's cancer and in the admiration you have for her. There was beauty in the artifacts you still have and that you are slowly collecting to include in your home, and there was beauty in the communities of support that became even more visible after the fire. I hope that through co-composing our inquiry and the beauty that has surfaced, others will feel encouraged to attend to the wholeness of their life making, rather than focusing on single stories that shape stories of trauma. In your tellings and retellings you gift me, and others, with hope; hope that trauma stories do not become single stories that define a life, but are understood as part of the wholeness of a life in the making.

We chose to close this account with Beth's voice:

*You know,  
I guess I can sum up by saying,  
that the biggest gift to having these events  
happen is to learn that  
your worst fears  
aren't as horrifically impossible to deal with as you imagine.  
You know what would be the worst fear in my life before was:  
to be divorced, to lose a spouse, to be alone  
and I have found it to be actually liberating  
and  
freeing and positive,*

Then the worst thing I could image  
 was one of my children being ill,  
 and then one of my children had a  
 life threatening illness,  
 and it was terrifying but at the same time, my  
 daughter's strength from that process, was a gift so,  
 do I think the experience was a gift - no.  
 But um but it wasn't impossible.  
 I think the really important thing for people who might open  
 Your document in the future  
 And look for answers  
 Because they're dealing with horrific things  
 Is being grateful for those small moments  
 It's almost an insult  
 When the sun continues to rise  
 When your world has imploded,  
  
 But also, it is a profound and total gift that the sun continues to rise  
 And people continue to burble about their days,  
 That can help you  
 Make the next awful decision  
 And can anchor you at some fundamental level.  
 You can still feel beauty in the terrible times.  
 It was a wonderful woman who told me that  
 through it all the lotus blooms.  
 Feeling and paying attention to

*those things keeps you strong.  
I don't know if that's where this piece goes or what you  
do with it.  
That I think that is the key,  
For me, anyway.*



## Chapter 6:

### Marie's Narrative Account

Hope

Energy

Wonder

Openness of spirit

Thinking and questioning

What is teacher?

As you begin.

And how that lives in your body

Who is teacher? Who am I as teacher?

Whose voice(s)? Whose story(s) is of most worth?

Whose knowledge and how is it shown?

Bumps with some of your knowings

Of teacher

Becoming

From a young child, moving often,

Suffering when others did not,

Travel to

Your worlds.

Shifting family constellations

And years of struggle

To wrestling, as a preservice teacher,

With what you are drawn to, as it bumps

With what you are being told

Discerning

A willingness to hold

In all ways

Those who often get cast away

Safety

Is quintessential

In homes, In schools, For lives.

**Coming to Understand Classrooms as Possible Homeplaces—A Story You Live By Of  
Awakening to Homeplaces**

As our inquiry unfolded, and as people who have moved many times across their life making, we realized we introduced and located many of our stories in place. Around my familial table, family-stories often begin with “Remember when we were in (place name)?” and then the story begins. You showed me a similar resonance, as you shared:

We lived in my first old house<sup>64</sup>  
in what I call  
the good years.

There was this sense of being able  
to just go out and kind of wander  
and create my own little  
internal world.

It was interesting.

So what I kind of did first in my drawing was  
I recreated my first old house with the house I own now  
and drew together its meaning for me.

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<sup>64</sup> We chose to centre this fragment and shape it in poetic form to both highlight particular expressions and to represent the drawing together that Marie stories.

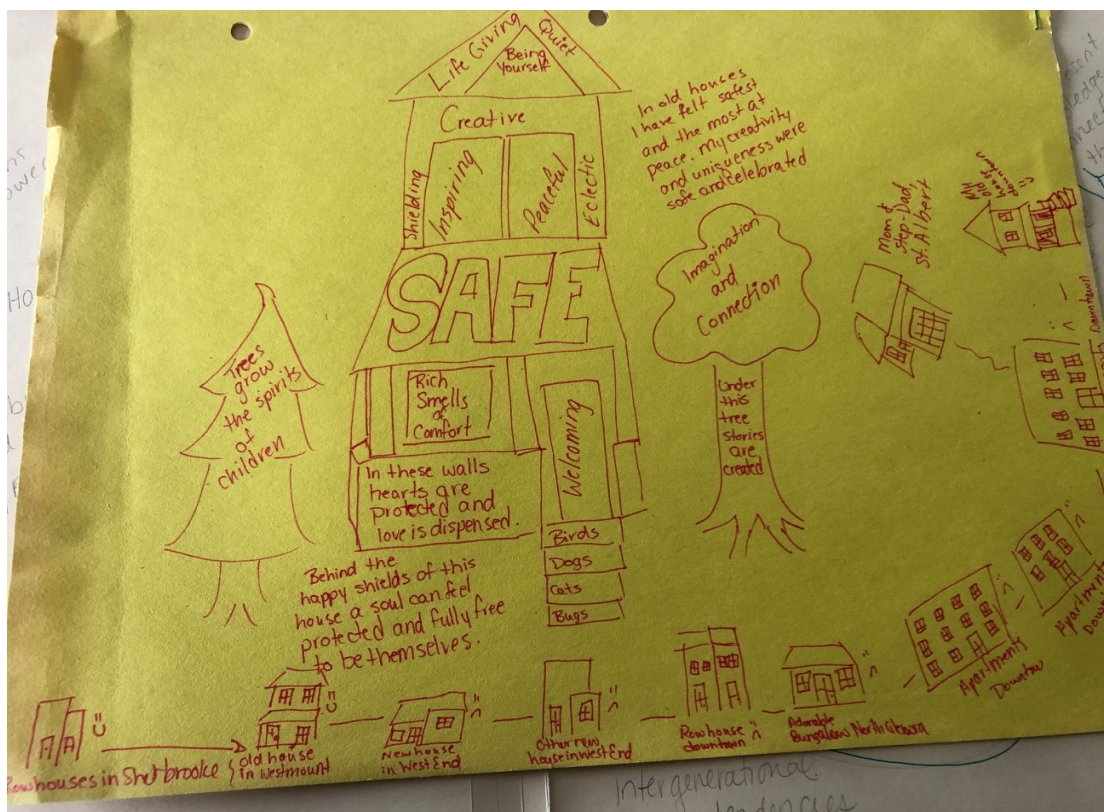


Figure 6-1. Picture of places drawn by Marie (shared with her permission).

The drawing to which you were referring grew out of our conversations and our shared sense that place in our life making was central to our experience. As such, we decided to illustrate our understandings of the place(s) that had shaped and been shaped by, with, in, and across our life making. I remember, as we were drawing, looking over at you, and realizing we were both smiling. I felt we were both drawn in by the *doing* of the drawing, and then by the telling and retelling that followed. In the midst of our thinking narratively with the stories that followed, we began to awaken to the places shaping, and shaped by, each of our lives in the making. We also awakened to the trauma stories we lived, told, and retold (and those we had not told/retold) with/in the stories in places, and

how the interweaving of experience was shaping how we were imagining coming alongside children in schools. We gradually came to sense the possibility of homeplace(s) as a story you live by in both your in and out-of-classroom places.

Over time as we lingered with our stories of places told, retold, and relived, I came to sense a deep resonance with hooks' (1990) conceptualization of *homeplace* as a place people could “strive to be subjects, not objects . . . [and] could be affirmed in our minds and hearts despite poverty, hardship, and deprivation, where we could restore ourselves the dignity denied to us on the outside in the public world” (p. 42). hooks additionally noted that homeplaces are the places “where we return for renewal and self-recovery, where we can heal our wounds and become whole” (p. 49). We sensed a resonance in your living, telling, retelling, and reliving your stories of your first home and your now-home. When I wondered with you about this resonance, you drew us backward and inward into the homeplaces, houses, and apartments that had shaped and were still shaping your story to live by of homeplace(s).

### Thinking Narratively with Stories of Homeplaces, Houses, and Apartments

**Homeplaces.** You first drew my attention to the home you now live in, that you experience as a homeplace, and its connections, both real and metaphorically represented in the picture you drew, to your understandings of homeplace. You began by storying the

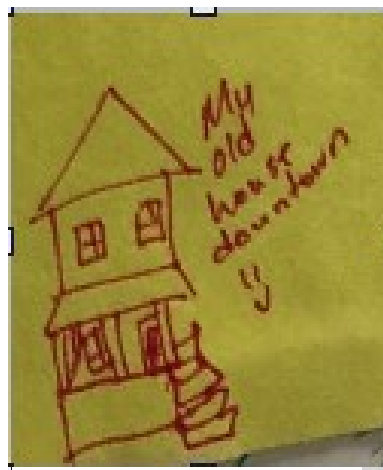


Figure 6-2. Old Home

first old house in which you lived as a child as wonderful, and you said it had a very community feel. You storied memories of playing outside, of inventing worlds, of being free, and safe. You also storied yourself in that place as creative and protected and feeling at home.

Thinking with your first home drew you forward to your now-home and in your description you showed me in your picture how you drew many connections. You used



Figure 6-3. Now Home

some of the same words: creative, safe, protected that you had used in your stories of your first old house. You then shared how in the midst of your trauma stories your now-home sustained you in life-giving ways:

It was really interesting, because sometimes I would see my home now as preventing me from going and doing other things, but then there was part of me, I had to have this house. I had to have this thing that grounded me through all of this other stuff that I went through,

and I'm really glad that I have [it] because every once in a while, I take a piece of the house and make it more mine. You know I change a colour, and I fix a wall, or I fix the flooring, or I do something, and it makes it a little bit more mine.

As you storied many moves across your life making as interrupting the narrative coherence of the threads that had woven your early life in that initial old home, you drew my attention

to how you had reestablished a sense of coherence in and through how you now shape and reshape your now-home/homeplace. You said:

I recreated my first old house<sup>65</sup>  
with the house I own now  
and drew together its meaning for me.

I realize now that I bought that house because that was a  
secure thing for me.

Where everything else was insecure,  
especially because of the assault<sup>66</sup>.

Less than a year after I bought the house,  
my fiancé and I broke up.

I'm still paying it off, but it was an easy decision back then.

So then over the past 11 years  
it's slowly claiming it as just mine.

This is a safe space.

This is mine.

I was drawn in as you foregrounded this now-home in your drawing. Its size, position, and the word SAFE, supported and surrounded by words such as life-giving,

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<sup>65</sup> We shaped this poem to show readers the profound sense of homeplace with which Marie stories her now-home. Everything else is moved to the left to show the jagged edges of her experience.

<sup>66</sup> Across Marie's life making she experienced two assaults; one when she was in kindergarten and one as an adult. I had read an article that Marie had written in which she had shared her trauma stories, and as such she never storied them in detail for me as our inquiry unfolded. They did, however, surface, as in this fragment, several times as our inquiry unfolded. Even though I never asked for Marie to share details of these trauma stories, and she never did, we grew in understanding how they were shaped by and shaping her stories to live by.

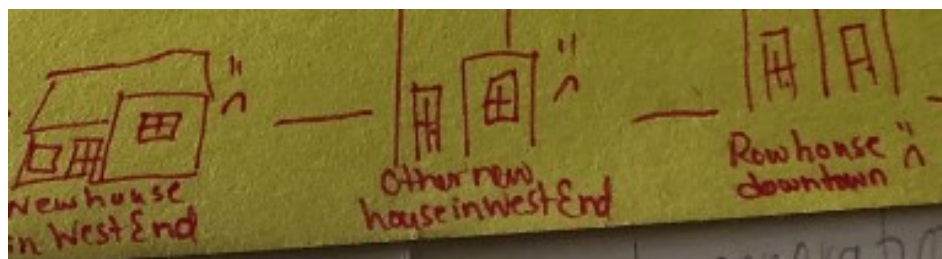
creative, love, and protected slowly began to shape our understanding of homeplace in relation with your experience across time, places, and through relationships. What we awakened to is that through attending to the places you lived, you were telling, retelling, and reliving “the story of what [you] are about and what [you] are” (Carr, 1986, p. 97). We also grew to understand that while you attached beautiful words to your homeplaces, they too were sites of struggle, of jagged stories, of successful and failed attempts to reestablish dignity—they were sites of survival.



*Figure 6-4. Safe.*

This gradual awakening drew you backward to share stories of places in which you had lived that had profoundly shaped your sense of homeplace, but that you experienced as profoundly contrasting with the experiences you storied in your first and your now-homes.

#### **Coming to understand homeplaces in the midst of their absence.**



*Figure 6-5. Houses.*

**Houses.** As we continued thinking with your picture, you then moved forward to contrasting your early and wonderful experiences with your stories of the next house to which you and your family moved. You storied the new community as a place where super

creativity was not really encouraged; it was more like just playing sports and tag, which was not bad. But I was "weird." We wondered if you were storying feelings of dislocation and of not-belonging as weird, and that possibly this might have been the first experience in your life making in which you felt you had to compose your life from a periphery.

Drawing from this memory, you quickly returned to your picture to continue to trace the story of your family's moving across time and places to houses in which some of your trauma stories were lived out:

And then we moved to the far west end. And then my family started, and the sense of my family breaking down in here? [Marie points to picture] Really. So I was about 7 here. And then we moved to another new house in the West end. The move didn't cure the family problems, so we went back downtown, row housing.

Then my parents temporarily bought a house in [a more affluent area] and it was a cute little old bungalow, really cute. Then they did separate and then it was apartments, apartments, apartments, apartments. And it's not that I didn't like being downtown, I did. But I think just because I hadn't had a chance to fully grieve any of the things I had experienced leaving my house.

That's just how we lived. My parents constantly moved, like every two years we just moved again, and it was very disconnecting for me.



Thinking more with this story drew us deeper into your sense of my family breaking down, and of how your experience in different places was shaping and was shaped by the shifting of your family's composition:

And then the fact that my dad and her [mom], their relationship wasn't working. They actually separated when I went to my first year of junior high, but because I was struggling so much, and my brother was struggling so much, they thought getting back together would save us. But it wasn't them breaking up that we were struggling with. We were struggling.

Later, we thought together with the trauma stories you were living in the various contexts in which you were finding yourself. You drew on stories of your relationships (or lack thereof) with your family members, stories from school, and stories of moving to show me your understanding of your struggling as traumatic experience. I began to understand the multiplicity and complexity of the narrative threads weaving these experiences when you shared:

We lived in an area where some of the other kids were not healthy and we didn't have family support at home, and there were a lot of changes. We were struggling. So it wasn't my parents splitting up, but they did their best. And so we bought the house, and then it was apartments, apartments, apartments.

While at the time you storied how you struggled in your life making in relation with the multiple and varied places to which you were being moved, retelling these experiences

drew us outward and made other threads visible, such as narratives of socioeconomic status, familial contexts, systemic neglect, etc. You said:

This one [Marie points to picture] was financial. When my parents separated, we actually went bankrupt. ... And I feel like some of it [the moving] is her [my mother] always trying to avoid the feelings from her childhood.

As we lingered with the multiplicities and complexities of your stories as woven in and by place(s), we also gradually awakened to how in these experiences, you storied the places in which you lived as houses and apartments, rather than as homes.

***Apartments, apartments, apartments.*** Following your parents' divorce, you storied the next places where you lived as apartments, apartments, apartments, apartments. While you storied there being many apartments, I did not hear you tell stories that would distinguish one apartment from another. As you told and retold stories of your experiences in the apartments, I noticed the contrast between how you had storied each individual house, and I began to wonder if you tell and retell stories of the apartments collectively more as a period of time in your life, rather than as the physical places where your experience took place.

I noted, for example, that while your stories did not include details of the physical spaces in your apartments, one story from across your time living in apartments, apartments, apartments, apartments was:

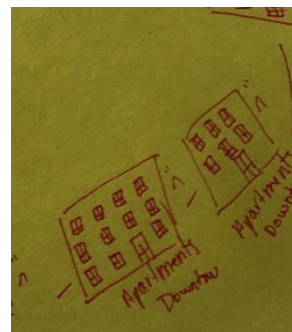


Figure 6-6. Apartments.

I just remember in every single apartment there never being food, like just not enough food. And I also can think yeah, my parents were actually quite poor at the time so yeah ok, yeah it makes sense that there wasn't enough food. So it was just like apartments all through my life, until I bought my house.

I now wonder if this story and possibly the shift I sensed of the apartments becoming a time in your life, drew forward and together your experience of safety (or lack therefore) and protection (or lack therefore) in the many apartments where you lived.

From something you storied of your now-homeplace, we sensed a contrast with the apartments that you were drawing forward that showed me how you did not experience apartments as homes. You said:

Right now, I have on this side, there's a duplex, and I love the people in the back section; they're really sweet. And it is a chain link fence and the property is built higher. So I don't have that sense of sacred space, and so eventually I am going to put in a 6 foot fence. And not because I want to keep them out but just because I want that sense of safeness. I really like the idea of me being sheltered and protected.

You storied your desire to be sheltered and protected, and to have a sacred space of your own, as having been shaped by, with, and in your frequent moves as well as by, with, and in the trauma stories you lived, told, and retold as woven in and by those places. This storying awakened us to understanding that it was not the place itself, but rather the experience with/in a particular place, and the continuity of experience, that shaped and

reshaped our understandings and living of homeplace, which became an important aspect as you drew us forward to imagining classroom places as homeplaces.

### **Imagining Classrooms as Homeplaces**

In my (Nathalie's) field notes, I wrote:

You have lived in worlds  
 Similar to the children you are alongside.  
 Filled with beautiful and jagged stories.  
 You are living, happily  
 Where you are going to teach.  
 You love hearing your name  
 Called by children  
 Out in public  
 As you walk in your community.  
 You understand because you have lived.  
 How many others can say the same?  
 Certainly not I.

I admire your courage  
 To return  
 To re-place yourself in those places.  
 (Field notes, May 13, 2018)

From your stories of place, you drew my attention to how you have become awake to the threads that have shifted your experience of houses and homeplaces (safety, creativity, nourishment, individuality, etc), and how you have also begun to imagine the possibility of shaping classrooms as homeplaces for and with all children:

When they [children in schools] are not quiet, they are these brilliant wonderful beings. They're just shining!  
 And they feel so safe.

Drawing on experience from across your life making, you imagined opening up spaces and places in schools that are safe, welcoming, creative, and energetic and in which children feel loved and protected. As you imagined returning to the community in which you, at least in part, grew up, you seemed drawn toward ways of being alongside children that honour their ways of being and becoming.

Thinking with your stories in relation with who you are becoming alongside children in schools, drew us to the story of *Crow Boy* (Yashima, 1983), in which a young boy, Chibi, attends school for many years, but does not seem to “learn” the content. It is a teacher, Mr. Isobe, through building relationship with Chibi, who comes to understand that Chibi knows much about the natural world, and represents what he knows with his body rather than with written text. It is when this knowing is invited that Chibi feels safe to share and show what he knows. When thinking with Chibi and Mr. Isobe, you drew on your understanding of Mr. Isobe as an example of a teacher who creates safe places for Chibi’s self to emerge and for Chibi to invite others into his worlds. You said:

I feel he just, he honours, the difference, and he does it in a really simple quiet way. And then so instead of not caring about the fact that this kid found the wild grapes, he really highlighted that, but also taking them out of the classroom. Taking them to natural landscape allowed that to happen. How amazing. That being outside of the physical space of school I think is really key. And then, I’ve read this a bunch, and that’s why this page jumped out at me today, Mr. Isobe often spent time talking with Chibi when no one else was

around, I think so that Chibi didn't have to fear the others around him who are so different from him.

Lingering with our stories in relation with safety, teachers, children, and schooling and the stories you told and retold, showed me how you are also drawn to the outdoors as part of your imagining of schools as homeplaces<sup>67</sup>. You storied often that you experienced the outdoors as places in which you felt your creative worlds come to life. In this way, I came to understand that you include the outdoors as part of the homeplace you hope to shape for and with children and youth in schools.

Thinking with Chibi's stories also brought you to share with me a recent conversation that you thought might support similar possibilities:

I was talking with a friend last night who homeschools and on Thursdays her son goes to what it is called Forest School. In the mornings they collect eggs and milk cows and goats, and usually the kids run out of focus halfway through and take off and play in the fields, which is fine too! So when she told me about that, I got very excited about the idea. I thought well maybe I can arrange a way to take my students out maybe even once a month, and they can just go.

While we later shared our growing understanding that 'world'-travelling (Lugones, 1987)<sup>68</sup> is a story you live by, we sensed it important here to foreground the connections you live and tell between homeplaces and safety, schools, and the outdoors. As we lingered with

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<sup>67</sup> Please see Marie's stories in relation with trees in the upcoming section of this narrative account entitled: *'World'-Travelling and Not As Coming to a Story You Live By*

<sup>68</sup> Please see the section entitled ***(Retelling) Comfortably Smooth(ed) Stories of Teacher I Lived By, With, and In*** in Chapter 1 for a more detailed explanation of Lugones' (1987) sense of 'world'-travelling.

our stories told and retold, I was drawn in by the connections you wove between how you experience and live your homeplaces in outside-of-school places, and what you imagine for classroom/learning spaces, and how your imaginings drew heavily on your experiences as a child whose worlds had and had not been travelled to in in- and outside-of-school places.

### **Awakening to 'World'-Travelling (and not) in Your Life Making**

#### **The Beautiful, Peaceful, and Special Worlds of Your Childhood**

In our first coming-together, we read a story entitled *Dear. Mr. Blueberry* (James, 1996), that unfolds as a series of letters between a young girl and her teacher, in which the young girl shares her imaginings of a whale in her backyard that she would like to keep as a pet, to which her teacher, Mr. Blueberry, shapes pragmatic and didactic responses. After we finished reading the story, each having taken a respective voice (You: Emily, Me: Mr. Blueberry), we lingered for while with our responses to the story. In those moments, we were surprised by the differences in our responses. You were drawn into Emily's worlds that were rich with imagination, with her tenacity, and with her creative ways of being. I was frustrated with Mr. Blueberry's refusal of Emily's invitation to travel to her worlds, and with his didactic "teacher-isms." Emily's story drew you inward and backward into your early experience, in which you storied yourself as being very much an Emily; Mr. Blueberry's responses drew me inward and backward to my earlier experiences alongside teachers whom I felt did not see me.

As we lingered with the story, I was reminded of Lugones' (1987) conceptualization of 'world'-travelling with a loving perception, which resonated with you because Emily's worlds were worlds in which you felt at "ease" (Lugones, 1987, p. 12), and because 'world'-travelling is part of who you know yourself as becoming alongside children. For example, as you drew on the stories Emily lived by, and moved inward and backward to your childhood, you remembered:



Figure 6-7. Tree One.

I was always talking to bugs, and I would have this little relationship with bugs and worms and everything. Bugs and worms everywhere. I would be with one of my dolls and going out, and being like "hi Mr. Ladybug" and we'd have these whole conversations. When I was a child, I thought I was feeding the trees by giving them rocks. I always felt safe, if I had umbrellas over me from the trees, and I felt more at peace.

As I lingered with this story while

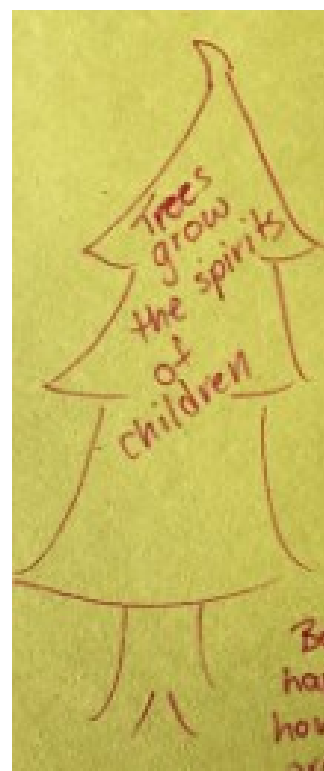


Figure 6-8. Tree Two.

composing the first draft of this narrative account, I was once again struck by how the picture of places you drew included two trees. In one tree you wrote: Trees grow the spirits of children. In the other tree you wrote: Imagination and Connection—Under



this tree stories are created. The trees seemed to act as a bridge, weaving past, present, and future, and thinking with them moved us inward and backward, and forward and outward, as you remembered and shared how trees across your life making have been umbrellas that protected you. As you storied these, and other, memories of your early childhood, I felt the fragments come to life. I felt your spirit, and your joy at being outside, creating, inventing, and living in worlds of your own creation. Your face transformed as you drew on these moments to invite me into the special worlds of your childhood. And yet, these stories also drew on and out harder and more jagged trauma stories from your childhood.

Why Can't You See Me!?!? **Familial Reverberations of "Button Up & Go to It"**

### **The Dreadful Doings of Jelly Belly**

Jelly Belly bit with a big fat bite.  
 Jelly Belly fought with a big fat fight  
 Jelly Belly scowled with a big fat frown  
 And Jelly Belly yelled until his house fell down<sup>69</sup>

Isn't it great? I just love this book [Jelly Belly].  
 I love it because my dad got it for us.  
 My dad was a very distant man,  
 And a very angry person.  
 I was terrified of him.  
 But he always read me bedtime stories.

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<sup>69</sup> Poem from the book Lee's (1983) *Jelly Belly*.

He used to read us this book.  
And I loved it.

While reveling in the metaphorical invitation you extended to me to travel into your childhood worlds, as you shared with me *Jelly Belly* (Lee, 1983) and your memories of your Dad sharing this story with you, I slowly and strongly came to understand that you lived and told complex stories in which your worlds were not only *not* travelled to by the people to whom you had extended invitations with an open heart, but experience that also interrupted (for a time) your own 'world'-travelling to your beautiful and creative worlds.

Lingering with these stories drew us to think with Huber, Murphy, and Clandinin's (2011) conceptualization of familial curriculum making as, "an account of parents'/families' and children's lives together in homes and communities" (pp. 7-8). As our inquiry unfolded, and as we thought with stories of houses and homes, your familial curriculum making became visible as a thread shaping and shaped by your story to live by of 'world'-travelling.

Thinking with these threads drew us backward into your sense of your parents' worlds. You storied both your mother and father's lives as having been, and as continuing to be, shaped by trauma stories. Thinking with your father's reading of *Jelly Belly*, and with how you storied fearing him, drew you backward into his life making:

His parents are northern English. There are 2 aspects. So they have a very very corporal punishment way of dealing with things. So he was hit a lot as a kid, which you know you just internalize and deal with it, but then he was in the military as a combat engineer, so he did a lot of mine clearing. They were

building a new bridge, and he was cutting sheet metal, and he had safety glasses on but the metal went right through and so he has no vision in his left eye and only 50% in his right eye. And he already had, certain setbacks from his emotional upbringing, but I think that, that was just it, I'm done.

In sharing fragments from your father's life making, we both thought with the complexities and multiplicities of experience shaping who he was and was becoming at that time.

Remembering your father's experiences also drew you to story the similarities in the complexities and multiplicities experienced by your mother:

My dad's parents had a heavy hand and believed in corporal punishment. And so did my mom's dad. But his was a, it was a snap brutality. ... Maybe him shutting off all of those things from his upbringing and from fighting in Korea are how he survived, and maybe this is what he perpetuated.

Lingering with your stories of your grandfather, mother, and father, supported your telling and retelling of your experience alongside them. In lingering with these stories, I awakened to the depth of your compassion, and your embodied sense that your parents too were shaped not only by, with, and in trauma stories across their life makings, but also by, with, and in intergenerational trauma stories.

Thinking with your grandfather's and parents' stories then moved us forward to thinking with your experience alongside your parents in your early life:

Our family dynamic was really complicated because my dad being who he was and he had PTSD and he just was very detached and was very angry. And he did want, at one moment he wanted to have a heavy hand with my brother and at

the next moment he just wanted to forget about it all. Whereas my mom was very protective of her son which I understand, even when he was very aggressive toward me, but she was also extremely permissive of some of the really bad behaviours. Because she wanted to protect him, which I understand.

With these stories, you drew me into intergenerational stories threaded by a lack of systemic and social attending, rooted in military structures, and importantly, with a deep sense of understanding of the multiplicity in their lives. I never sensed you storied your parents or ancestors with single stories that others might have, but that rather you sought to understand their complex life making in relation with your own.

I later wondered with you if you might have had an embodied sense that your parents and brother were not travelling to your worlds, but rather, for many reasons, were staying rooted in theirs. This wonder drew me to think with a fragment in which you had storied yourself in the midst of the many moves, schools, houses, and apartments:

Interestingly, I became a bully once I went into grade 7 and I became very aggressive, and I was cruel and mean. But it's because that's all I internalized, and I thought I would protect myself by being that way. I'm tough, and I finally will feel protected, but I didn't like the person I became. But I wasn't allowed to be the person I was, either.

We wondered if, after many experiences of being hurt by others not travelling to your worlds, you decided to live up to and in their scripts (Carr, 1986). Thinking with Carr's sense that there are multiple scripts we can author and co-author across a life in the making supported our sense that perhaps you travelled to your parents' and brother's

worlds as a way of possibly/hopefully protecting yourself, and we wondered if this dis-ease drew you into struggling for coherence in your identity making.

Thinking with stories of travelling to and being in their worlds, and not liking the person you were becoming, and yet not being allowed to be the person I was, either, drew forward other stories of familial curriculum making that seemed to deepen your sense of not being allowed to be whom you wished: I was told that you have to "button up and go to it". That was common, and coming from a military family as well, and everything was button up and do it.

You returned to this sense of not being allowed to be yourself as we drew outward to think with the narratives of chain of command and of military obedience that had shaped generations of your familial curriculum making. In lingering with this story, you brought me to understand how even today you wish they would have accepted your invitation to your worlds, your invitation for them to see you. You retell living in their worlds as shifting you away from the beautiful and imaginative worlds to which you hoped your parents and family would travel, and leaving you feeling *unseen*.

Thinking with this thread of *buttoning-up* drew you inward and backward to another trauma story in which your experience was shaped by this familial thread of *buttoning up*:

You know, I was never allowed to stand up for myself. So in daycare, when I was being sexually assaulted, I would stand up for myself and I would get

punished because I didn't have the ability to name what was happening. And then when my brother would do things to me, because he was older and he was very aggressive, and I would stand up for myself, I'd get punished by my dad, and sometimes very aggressively.

And then if things were happening elsewhere, and I would try to stand up for myself, my mom would yell at me because I was being disruptive, and she never really liked to step into things because they made her too uncomfortable. So I think I really needed that, and I think that that's where the source of my depression comes from, that sense of I can't really stand up for myself. I can't really be solid in myself, I'm not really allowed to be.

I needed to button-up.

You shared how, as a young person, you had wanted an adult in your life to distance themselves from what you storied as the defensive mode, and to travel into your worlds to be with and to comfort you. You storied that through experiences such as these, however, you learned to keep your opinions to yourself and did what was expected so as to avoid more trouble. We wondered if, in an embodied way, you sensed a resonance between your daycare's institutional curriculum worlds and your familial curriculum making worlds as in both worlds, the curriculum-making seemed focused on silence and obedience.

### **Why Can't You See Me?!? When Your Worlds Were/Not Travelled To By Teachers**

I had teachers who honoured my intelligence in elementary that was really fantastic for me,

so those teachers  
 I would just work harder for them,  
 and so all I had to do was do well  
 and then they would make an example  
 of how hard I was working and it was so easy to behave<sup>70</sup>.

As our inquiry unfolded you storied some of your early experience in schools as shaping who you are becoming as a person who teaches. I gradually awakened to your experience of and with ‘world’-travelling as not only shaped by your familial narratives, but as also shaped by your experience as a child in schools. Across our inquiry you wove in and between the educative experience you storied in a school in which your creativity and enthusiasm were honoured and encouraged, and the mis-educative experience you storied as silencing and as interruptive of your identity making.

But<sup>71</sup> then I had teachers in elementary who were angry at how much I wanted to participate.

And I just remember feeling, like, last year,  
 if I did this,  
 If I acted this way  
 I was successful.  
 But now, here,  
 In this new school,  
 if I put my hand up all the time,

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<sup>70</sup> We shaped this poem to visually re-present the wholeness you storied experiencing in relation with teachers who ‘world’-travelled to your worlds.

<sup>71</sup> We moved this poem to the left side of the page in order to show how Marie experienced this shift as marginalizing, and as incoherent with her experiences in a previous classroom.

I'm not successful, and  
I'm considered  
a problem.

Thinking with this story drew you deeper into memory and you storied how your young self was confused and shocked by the difference in how your creativity and enthusiasm were no longer encouraged. You said:

In grade 2 specifically I went into a new school, new culture. I was used to being the bright student who always followed the rules, and always put their hand up. This new teacher was so grumpy and I was always in trouble for putting my hand up, or writing too much. I was just in trouble. And I kept getting sent to the office, which was not a thing for me. Getting sent to the office and having to do my own work in the time-out room, which took 2.1 seconds because I wanted to impress. It was the same with the grade 4 teacher. I just did not, with her I just did not understand why she disliked me so much. It seemed strange to go from my marks were across the board excellent, and I had all of these happygrams, to all of that.

You storied how you experienced this situation as very puzzling and troubling as a young person. Not only had you moved to a new house in a community in which you storied yourself as feeling weird in relation with the outside of school community, but your stories showed me that you were also feeling weird in your in-school community. We sensed that through your enthusiasm to participate, and through your desire to complete your work quickly, you were inviting your new teacher into your beautiful, creative, and special



worlds because you were struggling for coherence with what had supported you to feel successful the year before; but, your teacher did not take up your invitation. You storied this contrast from the previous year's teacher as *confusing*.

Thinking with this story drew you forward to an experience you had in a high school English Language Arts class, in which you experienced feeling misunderstood and *unseen*. You had answered a particular question differently than your peers in the class, and you storied your teacher as reacting badly to your hopefulness that the characters in the story would learn from their mistakes and reconcile. You storied how this experience had occurred after your parents' divorce, and that you drew from your experience to hope and imagine that things could be different. And yet, you experienced no space for this hope in your classroom, shaping an already painful trauma story with another painful experience in which you felt forced to distance your life making from what you sensed your teacher deemed acceptable as a response to the literature. As you shared these stories your body showed me that you felt great tension at being told your opinion, grounded in your experience, was *wrong*.

You storied this experience as

making me feel  
small,  
and little,  
and unimportant.  
I felt like she didn't care  
about my humanity.

What I sense we began to draw on again was Lugones (1987) and her understanding that people can ‘world’-travel with a loving perception, as you experienced with your first teacher, and with an “arrogant perception” (Lugones, 1987, p. 4), which you experienced in high school. Lugones wrote, “that we learn to perceive others arrogantly or come to see them only as products of arrogant perception and continue to perceive them that way, we fail to identify with them-fail to love them” (p. 4). While your stories brought me to wonder if arrogance was part of what wove much of your experience in your school places, you retold these stories and relived them as shaping your knowing of whom you are becoming alongside children as someone who travels wakefully to children’s worlds with a loving perception.

**Living with/in someone else’s script: When teachers placed you in other worlds.** You also storied how, at that time, your older brother had developed a negative reputation in the school:

And I know that,  
especially when I went to junior high,  
my brother  
being a low achieving,  
getting into trouble  
kind of student,  
that preceded me.

You wondered at being pre-storied or scripted with and in your brother’s stories by teachers who had not yet met you, and you expressed anger and frustration at how teachers could create worlds for you into which you were planted, or by which you were

scripted, prior to the school year beginning. Lingered with this sense of worlds being created for you into which you were planted drew me to think with Okri (1997):

We live by stories, we also live in them. One way or another we are living the stories planted in us early or along the way. Or we are also living the stories we planted - knowingly or unknowingly - in ourselves. We live stories that either give our lives meaning, or negate it with meaninglessness. If we change the stories we live by, quite possibly we change our lives. (p. 46)

You storied the hopelessness you experienced at feeling, as a young person, that you could not change those stories that were planted in you and into which you felt planted, and how you had learned to survive your trauma stories—button up and go to it— shaped how you survived this planting. I had always read Okri (1997) in a hopeful and positive way.

However, in thinking with his ideas alongside your stories, I sensed I was coming to a fuller, more critical, and more complex understanding of what he was trying to say; you drew me to understand that at this time in your life you were changing the stories you were living by, and were living stories planted in you as a way to survive.

As we thought with this experience, you drew us forward to today, and into your sense of who you are becoming as a person who teaches. You said:

And that's actually why I also tend to have so much compassion for students that are bullies, angry students, students making mistakes, because I think they feel it's their only way to SURVIVE. So, I want them to know that it's quite different at school; I want them in school to just be kids.

As we lingered with these stories, we awakened to how you were drawing from your experience so as not to plant mis-educative silencing stories in the children you are alongside. I also sensed, as noted earlier, that you are imagining the possibilities of classrooms as homeplaces where children are invited, in the wholeness of themselves, to become.

### **'World'-Travelling to Children's Worlds with a Loving Perception**

#### **—A Story You Live By**

Well I think the secret worlds of children is,  
 one of the most beautiful things  
 that there is.  
 It's that place where  
 their incredible creativity helps  
 them learn and make sense of the world  
 and I feel like when we engage it  
 and we acknowledge it,  
 it makes learning more real and possible for children,  
 so that they become a little bit more safe  
 to take risks in terms of educating themselves  
 and learning about the world.

You often showed me how your trauma stories shaped and were shaped by your experience of having your worlds travelled to (and not), and how you drew on this understanding in how you now travel to children's worlds. In wondering together with

how 'world'-travelling and not 'world'-travelling were shaping who you were becoming alongside children in schools, you drew backward again and retold the sadness and anger you still feel in relation with the teachers who did not travel to your worlds. After wondering together with your stories of your high school teacher, what had shaped her ways of being and becoming, and what personal and institutional plotlines she might have been enacting, you shifted to a forward-looking reliving, one in which you wished to thank her for having so powerfully shaped who you are becoming alongside children in schools:

This is one of the things I'm hoping in life is that I can see her again, and to tell her that I have these 2 degrees. I have come through a lot of things; I've become a teacher. I want her to know that the things that she said and did to me that were so cruel, but I promised myself that I would never be like that. I don't ever want to be like that, and I thank her for that.

This imagined future conversation drew you backward and forward. You drew on her not-travelling to your worlds to contrast how you want, have, and hope to continue to travel to children's worlds. You wove together the two threads in saying:

Because even when my students now do things that they shouldn't do, I take five minutes to talk to them afterwards, or if they're on recess detention I take the time. I talk to them about why. And if she had taken five minutes to talk to me, about whatever her thinking was, I would have still BEEN HUMAN.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Emphasis added to reflect how this was said emphatically on the recording.

You storied this desire to celebrate the humanity of all people, by travelling to *their* worlds with loving perception, that has been shaped by, with, and in your life making, as nourishing the relationships you have with children.

Thinking with this understanding drew you to a recent experience in which you were trying to live your story of 'world'-travelling with a loving perception:

I have a student with autism, and I was amazed by the socks he tied to his feet. We were learning about muscles and bones and how they work together. He tied socks to his feet and started moving his legs and said: "I don't have any muscles". So, that was really interesting because he's connecting that if I don't have muscles in my body something else has to move my body.

So I'm trying to find ways to see that; that it is not just him being distracted in class, he's engaging in his own unique way. I really like that. Maybe he's not meeting all of the requirements we set out, but maybe that's because they don't speak to him.

I was drawn to your openness to travelling toward and into worlds shaped by different ways of knowing, representing, and being in ways you had and had not experienced as a young person. Your retelling and reliving are grounded in celebrating children, and travelling to their worlds with a loving perception, a story we both sense you have come to live by. You showed me this story to live by when you said:

I think what they're doing  
is that they're begging  
for security

and they're begging  
for the way they see the world  
to be acknowledged.

### **Attending To An Interruption to Your 'World'- Travelling Story to Live By**

Attending to your desire to travel to children's worlds, and to compose your life in this way as a person who teaches, drew you to a recent experience, that you storied as deeply troubling to who you are, and who you are imagining becoming, alongside children:

It was interesting because with my first practicum, planning was so fun, I didn't mind. I'm doing 3 hours of planning tonight, I don't care, I'm so excited, this is awesome. Give my lessons. First three weeks were fantastic. It was just crazy amount of engagement. I had kids sitting in front of the smartboard, some of them standing talking in the corner, most of the time engaged. It was great, and fun.

Then came the heavy hitter of classroom management.

I was told:

"You've got to make them quiet."

I thought to myself: Why? Because they're not quiet; they are these brilliant, wonderful, alive beings.

They're just shining! And they feel so safe.

And then I slowly am

increasing my classroom management  
and

I'm becoming the person I don't like.

That angry "shush! Be quiet, do this, do that."

I felt like I was leaning away from myself and it was exhausting.<sup>73</sup>

As you storied this tension-filled experience, we sensed your 'world'-travelling story to live by bumping with dominant institutional narratives of behaviour and control, as well as with dominant institutional narratives of your place on the landscape as a preservice teacher. This tension drew forward the threads of *right* and *wrong* ways of knowing, being, and doing that weave in and through your stories of your life making. I also sensed your understanding of time-measured experience and how that might shape something that felt uncomfortable to you as more *right* as you wondered: maybe they're right. They've been doing this for longer than I have. They have a better sense of the school and of the kids. As we continued thinking narratively, you drew deeper into how you were feeling: I struggled with being encouraged to take a much heavier hand in classroom management.

And I understood it because  
there were so many issues in the classroom,

but I also felt like it was taking  
that great joy out in many cases.

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<sup>73</sup> We chose to position the last part of this fragment to the right of the page to visually show the dislocation Marie was experiencing in relation with this directive.



And so, before I was encouraged to take a heavy hand, we'd all be in front of the smart board exploring together, and it was so fantastic.

But I was told: "Make sure you make them put their hands up"<sup>74</sup>.

We wondered at the shaping and reshaping of your stories to live by as you considered if you were supposed to live out this institutional script (Carr, 1986) of what teacher/ing, learning, and good classroom management should look like. I wondered with you how you experienced this idea of "putting their hands up". You responded:

I think that's a terrible idea. I think if they're talking amongst each other and they're calling out answers then we are on a journey together. But if they're constantly having to put their hands up, I'm now the one who is the gatekeeper to them expressing themselves or getting more information. And in fact, the percentage for whom it may work is probably much lower than the percentage for whom it doesn't work at all. Even me, I'd be like nope, and that's where my behaviour would start coming out. Whereas if I'm up and I'm going and I'm thinking and I'm moving and doing all that, then I stay in the moment.

The tensions you storied experiencing arose not only from being told to do something that bumped against a story you live by, but also became visible in how you were feeling planted in a story of being a preservice teacher, having to obey an order, which we sensed was possibly drawing forward tensions you experienced with this thread in your familial curriculum making—button up and go to it. Being told to enact plotlines different

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<sup>74</sup> We shaped this fragment to visually re-present the confusion and inner turmoil Marie was experiencing.

from what you sensed would be best for the children bumped against your story of travelling into children's worlds.

Thinking with this directive that came from an administrator drew you inward and backward into your early experience as a child in classrooms, and then drew you forward as you said:

Those classes I really picked up on things, and I didn't feel like my person was restricted. And I think when my personhood was restricted, I shut down. And I don't want to restrict the personhood of my students.

I don't want to be a soul-crusher.

As we continued thinking narratively with this experience, you shared how you were not only troubled by feeling like you *had* to comply, but also by knowing that complying was taking a physical toll on your body:

Because as soon as I start doing the heavy hand in classroom management, I found that I was exhausted. So exhausted! Before, when I wasn't focusing on management, I was so happy and in the zone and alive, and I felt free, and I had the emotional space to deal with the other things because the kids that I work with, they're all inner-city, they come with some crazy baggage. And I found that the emotional doesn't feel heavy when you're in the zone, but it feels heavy when you're constantly shutting everybody down.

I just remember that as soon as that happened, the more pressure, the more pressure. The first time it was a little tick in my stomach and I was like 'oh ok.' The second time, that's where the stress started to build, and I find it even more

now in my school. It's like when I'm in front of the classroom and I'm doing the super strict stuff, it's just too much because there's nothing authentic anymore, and the ways those students are connecting is not being honoured and it just doesn't feel right.

We sensed strongly how the pressure of the institutional narrative of learning as quiet alongside the pressures you felt to comply as a preservice teacher seeking a positive evaluation, shaped an interruption to the story of 'world'-travelling you were living and imagining living alongside children. Coming into your practicum, you storied yourself as having a strong sense of who you were and who you wanted to be alongside children (my firmness is not about discipline, it's about security and buy-in) and that this sense was being interrupted by institutional narratives that you felt bumped against your living by your story of 'world'-travelling.

### **Stories of Curriculum and Coding that Interrupt 'World'-Travelling With a Loving Perception**

As we awakened to your 'world'-travelling story to live by, as shaped by, with, and in your trauma stories of people not travelling to your worlds or travelling to your worlds with an arrogant perception, you began to tell and retell stories of curriculum, and stories of school as shaping significant tensions for you. We gradually came to sense that the generative tension you were experiencing grew from the bumping of how you imagined coming alongside children in schools, and the more dominant stories of school. We decided

to open our showing of this thread with three fragments that we sensed show your complex, emergent, and tension-filled understandings and living of curriculum. In this section, we begin with the fragments, and then we think narratively with them.

**Marie:** It's exhausting when the push is shut it down, go back to the curriculum. And I find that extremely exhausting. And I found that I have had actually to do that way more than I want to. Because there is so much drama around me with these little ones, and they just feel so, they have such a lack of security in their lives, and I want to be secure for them, but I also know I've got to make sure that they can read, write and do mathematics so that they've got their chance as well.

**Also Marie:** I think there are so many things that have to be in place for learning to become exciting. Like you have to feel safe, and you have to feel valued, and you have to feel all these things that if your little 7 year old body is battling against at home, at school, on the playground, I can understand that it's not something that would seem important when all that other noise is happening. But it's hard for the teacher person who is like yes, but, this can be your escape, this can be your out, but I still have to teach you math, and reading, and writing.

**Also Marie:** I might be able to teach the Behaviours class for two years. But I don't like not being able to teach very much curriculum. And I know that I can be a decent counsellor having been through the things I've been through, but I also really love learning. So there will be a point where I will really want to do curriculum now.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> We chose to indent two of these quotations to show how Marie felt these different stories she was living by

As we began wondering with stories of curriculum,<sup>76</sup> alongside your curriculum stories of ‘world’-travelling we came to understand that in many ways you were living many and bumping stories. You knew, from your experience, and in your body, whom you wanted to be alongside children, and you storied yourself as coming alive when you were in the zone. And yet, you also felt a powerful pull toward curriculum as mandated outcomes/ curriculum as plan. We sensed in this pull a resonance with your experience as a “good” student in your first school, who espoused a love of learning, as shared in the opening showing of this story to live by.

We sensed you were experiencing tension and puzzling as these competing stories continued to bump with your experience alongside children in classrooms during your preservice placement. You shared how you were struggling for some coherence in the midst of this tension as you storied how more institutional narratives were bumping against your sense of what might/might not be best for the children you were alongside:

I guess we don't have to be so hard. As long as they are doing some reading, some writing, and some arithmetic. It's not the end of the world. But I'm also worried because the new TQS<sup>77</sup> also says that numeracy better be up there, and literacy too. Well ok great, but I'm also trying to make sure they don't ever want to leave school.

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were living in different places in her body.

<sup>76</sup> Here I draw on stories of curriculum in similar ways to how Clandinin and Connelly (1996) conceptualized stories of school – as objective, conduited, and limited to mandated outcomes coming from outside of classroom places with the expectation of being enacted by teachers.

<sup>77</sup> TQS, refers to the Alberta Teaching Quality Standard. For more information regarding this standard, please visit: <https://education.alberta.ca/media/3739620/standardsdoc-tqs-fa-web-2018-01-17.pdf>

Lingering in the midst of these competing stories, your tension resonated with my, and many of my colleagues' tensions. What drew my attention, however, is how strongly you lived these competing stories, and how the tension that surfaced in this midst seemed to be shaping its own trauma story in the privileging of institutional understandings of knowledge, and of teaching quality, and of student performance. Also, we sensed what was being privileged was content knowledge and behavioural management rather than attending to the lives of the children and youth. We came to sense that a story of trauma (as shown in the following section in relation with the practice of coding students) was being shaped on your professional knowledge landscape that bumped with your 'world'-travelling stories to live by.

**Stories of coding as interruptions to 'world'-travelling.**

And I wonder also with diagnoses – if we're not taking the time to see that these diagnoses are actually trauma triggers. So maybe instead of them being these inherent disorders, maybe they should be considered maladaptive of managing the difficulties they're in. Because all of the students that I have who have ODD, I can see where it comes from. One of them, his dad tells him every day how stupid, and useless, and worthless he is. Another student, he has mild autism, and so things are frustrating him, and then his mom left him. So of course they're going to be really angry, and hate everybody.

You storied several experiences that positioned the institutional practice of “coding<sup>78</sup>” as an institutional story that bumps with the 'world'-travelling with a loving perception story you live by. I was drawn here back to your story of feeding the trees, but this time I lingered differently:

I thought I was feeding the trees  
by giving them rocks.  
I always felt safe if I had umbrellas over me  
from the trees,  
and I felt more at peace.  
But I would wonder  
if there was something wrong with me.

As you storied feeding the trees in your childhood, you remembered how you worried that there was something wrong with you. As we returned to thinking with this story, we wondered what had shaped and was shaping this sense of *wrong* or of doing something wrong in comparison to others. This was a story that you hoped to relive in coming alongside children in classrooms. As we moved forward to wondering with some of your

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<sup>78</sup> The government document that outlines special education in the province of this inquiry defines the practice of coding as:

The Special Education Coding Criteria, 2018/19 outlines criteria within specific categories to assist teachers and administrators in school authorities to identify those ECS children and Grades 1 – 12 students who require additional supports in their educational program. Each category is given a code for the purpose of reporting special education data to Alberta Education. The need for additional supports may be determined at any time during the school year.

(<https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/ee2ccea8-97fe-41a1-aa11-ed9f21421364/resource/4bfdefaa-009a-484d-96f9-92ea07c32276/download/special-education-coding-criteria.pdf>).

The codes are numeric, and most are titled as behavioural, emotional, or mental *disabilities* with the exception of the code for gifted students.

more recent experience with how children were being storied and scripted on school landscapes, you drew on, and felt tension with, this story of sensing something was *wrong* with you as shaping a story you live by that there never is anything *wrong* with children. You invited me to see how this story empowered and motivated you to create spaces and places in which the children you will come alongside will not question themselves in the same ways you did.

While you acknowledged that coding is done with the intention of better supporting children and youth in schools, you showed me how you experienced the practice as shaping a story of trauma for children in schools that was separating them from their life making by focusing on behavioural manifestations, thus making it more difficult for teachers to travel to all children's worlds lovingly. We also wondered if your tension with coding drew on experience that you storied from your outside-of-school life:

I've tried a lot of therapy, great therapy and terrible therapy.

There's a lot out there that's, you'll get these super detached therapists, and some are psychiatrists or psychologists and they see things so behavior-focused that they forget that there's a trigger, and they don't delve deeper, they just don't want to.

And because they're unwilling to see some of the prime movers, like what was the spark that created this situation. It can be very unhelpful.

And some will actually make things worse, because it really causes a sense of more hopelessness, helplessness, and shame.

We wondered if you were experiencing tension with coding as it drew upon your trauma stories in relation with your experience of impersonal, behaviour-focused therapy



that often you storied as making you feel worse rather than better, regardless of the intention of the doctor. I also wondered if you were experiencing tension at the distance you felt coding puts between a teacher, a child, and each of their lives in the making in relation with your early experience as a young person in schools, and later as an adult in therapy, in which your worlds were not travelled to, all of which left you feeling more helpless and hopeless. We have come to wonder how practices such as coding might be shaping and shaped by stories of trauma in schools as something that is categorizable, and as something that becomes foregrounded as a single story of a person.

As we thought with these interruptions to the 'world'-travelling story you live by, as shaped by the tension created by being told to use a heavier hand, you began to tell and retell your curriculum stories, your teacher stories, and your trauma stories in the hopes of reliving who you were becoming alongside children in schools. You said:

For a while there, I was thinking I had to  
unlearn my nurturing,  
and that I think is wrong. I actually think it's completely wrong.

I now think I have to re-embrace it  
because even though my administrations may have issues with it,  
I'm also a professional and I've also been through a lot,  
and I have spent a lot of money on therapy  
and I've spent a lot of money on courses,  
and I know nurturing is a really important part of people being healthy.

### Beauty in the Messiness - Reliving In 'World'-Travelling

I don't want to be a soul crusher

I just remember the phys ed teacher in my junior high just hating me for not being able to do gymnastics, and how painful that was. Whereas now I'm learning about physical education here where it's like, oh I'll give them a bench, a nice wide bench, and the turn does not have to be on one hand, the turn can be a turn, they can do it very slowly. It was so wonderful and it made me think of things in a much different way, that they could be different than what I experienced, and I was excited.

I don't like the idea of the omni-capable perfect teacher. It's really really cruel. On one hand we idolize teachers, and on the other hand we despise them. And I think that when teachers become really burnt out or really negative, it's because they don't have support. I really do. And I think there's an idea where you just buck up and you're supposed to be perfect.

I would say probably as ground for shaping who I want to be as a teacher, the institutional aspect is very important. Because I've seen what I love and I see what I don't love, and I've seen what I want, so that's very important. And I think everything else is very interwoven. I don't think anything could come out on its own, because I think my experiences have all had a deep interplay.

You know when people are human you have to give them a chance to breathe and learn and grow, and sometimes people will make mistakes not knowing otherwise.

I wouldn't want to tell other people, but there is there are incredible benefits to what I went through, because it's kind of like now I have a much bigger more sided prism to put life through. Because I can see certain things differently. I think I think it's a lot easier for me to forgive after the fact, because I get what it's like to do things just because you're hurting.

Figure 6-9. Collage.

These fragments show some of the beautiful and complex movements in our shared inquiry. We moved forward, and backward, and inward, and outward attentive to the complex and multiplicitous narrative threads, situations, people, and places that wove and continue to weave our experiences. Together we thought with our trauma stories and stories of trauma across our life making. The above fragments show, in part, the retelling in the hopes of reliving that you storied in the unfolding of our inquiry. I sense, for example, being able to retell your gym experiences alongside your experiences in your physical education course in your preservice teacher education program is powerfully shaping your reliving not only of what children might experience in a gym class, but also in all classes: the benches can be wider and not everyone has to do “it” in the same way.

Your tension with the expectation you feel exists on the landscape to be the perfect teacher drew forward your experiences with your familial thread of *buttoning-up*, as well as possibly drawing on a sense that the expectation prevents 'world'-travelling to teachers' worlds. You have brought me to understand your powerful retelling and reliving of your trauma stories and how you live alongside children with a *more-sided* prism that supports you to 'world'-travel to their worlds with understanding, and care and compassion.

In being and becoming awake to 'world'-travelling, we have shared retellings that gradually drew us to wonder with what we sensed you were imagining: classroom places as places of safety, creativity, beauty, where children's and teachers' worlds are travelled to with a loving perception—classrooms as homeplaces.

## Chapter 7:

### Moving into Borderlands—Resonant Reverberations

While thinking narratively and lingering with the stories told and retold as Tobias, Beth, Marie and I lived our inquiry and co-composed narrative accounts of our experiences, I often found myself imagining fictional conversations in which we were all sitting in a circle, sharing stories, thinking with the stories, with resonances (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), and with dissonances. In these moments of imagining, I experienced myself living and moving with and in a *borderland*, as conceptualized by Anzaldúa (1987) as “a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary” (p. 3). As I imagined these conversations, I felt both the “emotional residue” (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 3) of my individual relationships with Tobias, Beth, and Marie, and the physical boundary between the four of us (no one knows who the other coinquirers were) as “unnatural” (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 3) as I had come to hold them in relation in my mind and heart. In this imagined borderland space I experienced Bateson’s (2000) sense that “wisdom comes not by the accumulation of more and more experiences but through discerning patterns in the deeper mystery of what is already there . . . Wisdom, then, is born of the overlapping of lives, the resonance between stories” (p. 243).

Often, this chapter in a narrative inquiry dissertation is entitled *Resonant Threads*, where *threads* are understood as “particular plotlines that threaded or wove over time and place” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 132), and where “resonances or echoes that reverberated across accounts” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 132) are foregrounded. Further, Clandinin (2013) reminded

me that, “looking across the narrative accounts co-composed between researcher and participant . . . [we] hold onto storied lives and not... reduce them to themes or categories” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 137). As such, I attended to what resonated or reverberated with, in, between, and among Tobias’, Beth’s, Marie’s, and my stories as I continued to imagine myself standing in borderland spaces between our stories “as if we were parts of a single whole” (Bateson, 1994, pp. 292-293).

In this chapter I explore three reverberations in and across Tobias’, Beth’s, and Marie’s stories to live by as shaping and shaped by their trauma stories: *Reverberations in the Body; Reverberations of Houses, Homes, and Homeplaces; and, Reverberating Teacher/ing Stories, Stories of Teacher/ing*. I hope my sense of these reverberations will be invitational and engaging, welcoming readers to listen with, and to wonder how, their experiences resonate with/in these reverberations.

## **Reverberations in the Body**

### **The Body Remembers**

Throughout our narrative inquiry each co-inquirer experienced or shared embodied experiences as they lived, told, and retold their trauma stories. I first began attending to the body in relation with trauma stories as I thought with Tobias following the Humboldt bus crash. In my field notes, I wrote:

I will never forget how a few days after the Humboldt bus crash, I watched Tobias limp toward the table we were about to share, his face grey, his eyes weighed down by heaviness and sleeplessness. I remember the tension he carried in his shoulders and in

his voice as we talked around with pleasantries. (Field notes)

I sensed very strongly then, as I do now, that his body was interrupting. My sense of this deepened when he shared the story of his dream from two nights previous, in which the dream brought him to the moment of death, and how he awoke immediately prior to dying because, as he storied, he knew his brain would not be able to tell that it was not real. The Humboldt bus accident drew forward Tobias' cliff-jumping accident in ways over which he had very little to no control, including the pain he experienced:

**When I think about my leg and the pain in my knee and it just came out of nowhere, how it's like debilitated me where I can't even physically get up off my bed without help. I haven't done anything; nothing's happened.**

As I wondered with his story of his pain coming **out of nowhere**, my sense grew that his pain came directly out of experience and was living in his body. I wondered, however, if this telling of his pain also connected stories of trauma—"control it," "be strong," "move on," "deal with it," "get over it"—with a more Western understandings of a body-mind duality foregrounded here by Brison (1999):

Traumatic memory blurs the Cartesian mind-body distinction that continues to inform . . . [the dominant] cultural narrative about the nature of the self . . . The physiological traces of trauma give lie to the latent mind-body dualism that still informs . . . [the dominant] culture's most prevalent attitude to trauma, namely, that victims should "buck up," put the past behind them, and get on with their lives. My hypervigilance, heightened startle response, insomnia, and other PTSD symptoms were no more psychological, and no

more under my control, than were my heart rate and blood pressure.  
(p. 42)

Thinking with Tobias' sense of his pain gradually drew me back to Beth's experience and her storying of her inability to control her embodied experience in the months following the fire. She storied being in rooms that her body told her were filling up with smoke and that she could not control this experience; she could not stop her body from telling this story nor could her mind control whether or not or when this happened. She also storied not being in control of panic attacks or access to sleep. As our inquiry unfolded, I wondered if, in these moments, Beth's body was trying to bring her to a heightened wakefulness to the trauma her body had and was experiencing. As she did not take any leave from work following the fire, and as she storied herself as wanting to make everything "okay" for her children in the days immediately after the fire, I wondered if, perhaps, she was not attending closely enough to her whole self, and thus her body was calling for her attention.

As our inquiry unfolded, and while Beth storied an experience to show how she had *got[ten] her groove back*, I wondered with her about what had happened to support her to feel this way. Her response was deeply connected with her body:

*Not having panic attacks and not being disrupted in my sleep patterns was significant. And I think also, like I now touch Max's box, and I don't wake up processing the death moments, or the lack of being there. Like all of those regrets are, it's like, it happened. It is.*

Through Beth's and Tobias' stories I awakened to a counterstory to dominant Western narratives that argue that the mind can dominate/control the body (Mehta, 2011; Hamilton & Hamilton, 2015) and that this ability is a sign of strength.

Beth's sense that "*it happened. It is*," also drew me back to Tobias' storying of coming to understand his **accident as just that, an accident**. In her telling and retelling of her stories, Marie often foregrounded safety, particularly the physical safety that spaces and people can provide or hinder. In this way I sensed that as Marie's body remembered the traumas it suffered, it simultaneously drew forward the comforts, creativity, freedom, and safety she learned from the first old house where she lived. This foregrounding of safety in all contexts, drew heavily for Marie from places in which, and from her experience alongside people with whom, she felt unsafe. As her body remembered, it seemed to move her physically or through memory, toward trees and fences as protection.

Alongside Tobias', Beth's, and Marie's told and retold stories, I began to wonder with Brison's (1999) understanding of the mind-body distinction that is seemingly prevalent in Western ways of knowing and being, and how it functions to ascribe the responsibility for self-control and overcoming to the survivor. I gradually came to understand that their trauma stories profoundly live and will continue to live in their bodies. I now wonder how their experience might continue to move me toward understandings of composing lives shaped in, with, and by trauma stories as dissolving the mind-body dichotomy and its prescriptive assigning of responsibility. I wonder how dominant Western narratives that negate the body have shaped, and are shaping, stories of trauma, which in turn shape the



living, telling, retelling and reliving of a person's trauma stories. I wonder, as the body remembers, how might its negation (or at least its desirable submission to the mind in Western narratives) shape the lives of teachers and children and youth in schools. How might this negation, in turn, shape tensions as the body continues to remember?

### **The Body Tells Silent/Silenced Stories Sometimes Through Movement**

Thinking with Marie's stories of seeking therapy alongside her stories of the children in a class designated as "Behaviours," drew my attention to how institutional narratives and programs can silence the stories people live and tell in schools. She connected how she sensed that when many therapists did not want to delve deeper or understand the experience that had shaped the situation[s] in her life, that the focus became solely on the behaviours and not on the trigger. Marie drew my attention to not only silent stories of what institutional practices like coding might be hiding, but also, that the bodies and resulting behaviours of the children she was alongside might actually be telling their silent/silenced stories.

As I lingered with this understanding I wondered too, how the stories of trauma being enacted in schools might be silencing (or in the very least shaping) teachers', children's, and youth's trauma stories. For example, I wondered if stories of trauma, such as "you're lucky no one was hurt" that Beth experienced even though her dog died and she lost her beloved possessions in the fire, or "young people are so resilient" that has and continues to shape Marie's life making, or "what doesn't kill you makes you stronger" that has shaped Tobias' tellings and retellings of his trauma stories, limit the space for the hard,

jagged, painful particularities of trauma stories. I wonder, are these aspects then experienced as a silencing of the wholeness of a life in the making.

The first time I met Beth, I was drawn to what I sensed were the silent/silenced stories living in her body, and how they were at times distant from, and at other times enriching of, the stories shared from her mouth. For example, one memory I carry of Beth was shaped by a sequence of images and my trying to listen to the stories her body was telling. In my field notes I wrote:

I wonder with your body language.  
 Your strong voice and presence when  
     we talked about teaching.  
 And then, moving to a stool.  
 Hunched, shoulders forward,  
 Looking down, rubbing your leg  
 when you talked about the harder  
     experience that has woven  
     your life making.  
 You looked straight at me  
 When you shared your daughter's cancer story.  
     A story of overcoming.  
     And your hands shook  
     And you apologized  
 as you showed me pictures of Max  
     And the Cat  
     A story of loss.  
 When you spoke about the new TQS

You stood  
Strong, Central  
Commanding the room  
Your voice claiming your space.

I wonder about your body.  
And how/what it is living, telling, retelling, reliving.

(Field Notes)

As Beth invited me more deeply into her life making, I also came to know movement as part of her body's way of being in the world. Often, in the midst of conversation, she would stand up and move. I wondered at this embodied action, and its timing, but did not want to draw attention to it. I wonder if she chose to move when she experienced the conversation as difficult and this was her body's way of both showing what it was experiencing as well as experiencing some release. I came to wonder if movements, small and large, become part of many people's life making as they struggle for narrative coherence; these moments lived alongside Beth in which I sensed she was seeking ways of respecting that her body was remembering, deepened my understanding of experience as also continuously embodied.

Thinking with Beth's movement drew me to remember how Marie storied her family's constant moving from house to house, to apartment, to apartment, to apartment, and I wondered if these movements too were connected to what her parents' bodies were remembering, both the multigenerational and the more immediate trauma stories in their lives.

Tobias too profoundly connected his body with movement, as he storied the many billet homes to which he moved as **survival**, and which he experienced as shaping silent/silenced stories. As he moved forward in his life making and his becoming as a teacher, he was able to find some coherence in and across his life making through linking his experience in schools with his experience on the ice. But in the wake of the Humboldt bus accident, when his body was telling a silent/silenced story through the pain in his knee, he was struggling in his identity making as a *teacher*. He storied experiencing feelings of having to push [the hockey player] **to the side ... because I got to do this job**. I gradually understood that Tobias was experiencing hurt in many senses of the word: physically, but also through the experience of a professional pressure to silence a significant aspect of who he was and was becoming.

### **Forward-Looking Wonders With Bodies**

Shifting and movement in composing lives in relation with bodies reverberated across Tobias', Beth's, and Marie's lives in the making. I wondered with their experiences of feeling like they could not control their bodies and that their bodies controlled them in moments in which they were drawing on their minds to try to convince themselves that they were "**fine**," "*fine*," and "*fine*." Their experiences drew me to wonder how people story their, and others', bodies with/in dominant narratives of ability and normality as well as how people experience being scripted in stories of dis/ability particularly in relation with trauma. I wonder, too, if these cultural and institutional narratives shape stories of trauma on school landscapes which in turn may (attempt to) silence (some aspects of)

some peoples' trauma stories, and yet how even in this midst bodies continue to try to tell those stories.

The experiences of bodies remembering and telling silent/silenced stories drew me to wonder about remaining wakeful and attentive to bodies (ours and others') as I live, tell, retell, and relive stories of experience as I compose my life. The understandings of stories planted or identities given as *disabled* or *healed* or *recovered* or *coded* that scripted the bodies and lives of the coinquirers and those whom they have been alongside created tension for them, and for me. In awakening to how these understandings might be shaping the trauma stories and stories of trauma being lived on school landscapes, I came to more fully understand the profound influence of Western medical conceptualizations of trauma as deficit, as categorizable, as illness, and as lack of wholeness. I sense that understandings of trauma and its interactions with/in bodies, typically thought of in physiological or psychological ways, might be enriched by thinking narratively with stories of what bodies foreground as they live, tell, retell, and relive.

### **Reverberations of Houses, Homes, and Homeplaces**

The thread of place, and homeplaces, wove in and through Tobias', Beth's, Marie's, and my lived, told, retold, and relived stories. In the imagined conversation I described at the beginning of this chapter, the reverberations are profound; thinking with our place stories and stories of place(s) and the meeting of these stories drew my attention to the presence of place in each of our conversations. For example, initially, as I imagined myself standing in the borderland spaces between Tobias', Beth's, and Marie's stories of

experience, my attention was drawn to the reverberations of safety (or the lack thereof), of ownership and agency (or the lack thereof), of permanence (or the lack thereof), and of belonging (or the lack thereof) surfacing across our lives in the making, and to how these reverberations echoed with hooks (1991) sense of *homeplace*<sup>79</sup>. Continuing to think carefully and critically with what each co-inquirer storied in relation with homeplaces, and how their stories were reverberating, drew my attention to how, while perhaps they did not know hooks' conceptualization, they each composed their life with a profound sense of the importance of a homeplace(s).

### **Coming to Better Understand Homeplaces by Attending to Their Absences**

Listening as Tobias', Beth's, and Marie's place and homeplace stories reverberated with each other drew my attention to how they each experienced, at different times and in different ways feelings of not having a homeplace. For example, for Tobias, his gradual awakening to his understandings of home and homeplace grew out of his telling and retelling that when he was 11 his brother, who was 15, moved out of their family home and into an apartment. In retelling this story, he remembered that it was cold, grey, and lonely and that it made him **sad for my brother that he had to live there**. This experience awakened Tobias to the shifting in his familial story of home to be less predictable and stable than it had been before.

As Tobias' hockey career progressed, he embarked on a journey of moving through many different billet houses. Tobias did not experience most of his billet houses, nor the

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<sup>79</sup> Please see Marie's account for a detailed explanation of *homeplace*.

various schools he attended, as homeplaces. However, Tobias storied two experiences that were part of shaping his understanding of, and yearning for, a homeplace. The first experience was shaped in his billet home in Vancouver, which he storied as a place where he lived **knowing what to expect**. In time I came to understand that for him knowing what to expect became an important story he lived by prior to his accident.

In drawing upon his sense of **knowing what to expect**, and of having lacked that across the other billet situations apart from Vancouver, Tobias storied the final billet home as deepening his understanding of homeplace: **for the first time in a really long time, I felt like I belonged. Like I was finding a home**. Thinking with this place as “home” drew Tobias backward and inward to thinking across the many billet houses, and his father’s house after his parents’ divorce to which he **was parcelled off** with his brother. He said: **bouncing around for 5 years reminded me of that apartment in St. Albert. Cold and lonely**. From his various experiences with/out homeplaces Tobias foregrounded threads of knowing what to expect and belonging as central to his understanding of homeplace.

Marie also experienced an awakening to her desires and yearnings for a homeplace through experiencing many years of lacking such a place. For Marie *safety, creativity, and protection* were central. I sensed deep reverberations between Marie’s narrative construction of her experience of *apartments, apartments, apartments*, and Tobias’ storied most of the houses in which he was billeted. In part, Tobias’ and Marie’s telling and retelling of these experiences showed that they both shifted their narrative construction

from being stories of place(s) to stories of time spent in places. Both drew on senses of **toughing it out** (Tobias) or 'buttoning up' (Marie) as they storied how they each knew they just needed to survive in these places.

Beth's early childhood was shaped with a sense of homeplace. She storied her childhood home as having been lovingly searched for and secured, and how it provided her family with treasures in the form of antique newspapers and magazines. Beth experienced a profound sense of grounding in the community of this old home. The fire interrupted Beth's deep sense of her more recent home as the homeplace she had loved. She storied how prior to the fire she had never locked her home's door, and yet since the fire she always locks the door, even though there is nothing in the house. As I lingered with what she was sharing, Beth storied the house after the fire as *guttled* and as a *modern shell*, which grew my understanding that her present house was not coherent with the homeplace it had once been; it no longer felt safe, and as such, she felt the need to lock it.

Lingering in the midst of the reverberations of Tobias', Beth's, and Marie's stories supported my awakening to how Beth too was living a trauma story composed, in part, by a lack of safety. Beth's house (no longer a homeplace in the months after the fire) did not feel safe, protected, or predictable. I came to understand that while Beth had storied her homeplace as a place of grounding, warmth, beauty, and family, when she lost that homeplace to the fire, she sought a homeplace (its safety, protection, and predictability) in the physical place of her school. This lingering reminded me of Tobias who also storied a place other than his familial home as a homeplace—the rink, for it was in in this place that



he experienced knowing what to expect and belongingness.

My awakening to this resonant experience of seeking and shaping homeplaces led me to wonder with the absence of safety, predictability, protection, and belongingness that Tobias, Beth, and Marie each storied as foundational aspects to their homeplaces. I also wondered how the absence of homeplace(s) might have shaped or been shaped by their trauma stories.

### **Forward-Looking Wonders with Homeplaces**

What Tobias, Beth, and Marie drew my attention toward was how each had grown, in the midst of their trauma stories, to draw on experiences of presence and of absence of homeplace(s) to agentically seek and shape such a space. While I came to understand homeplace(s) as significant in Tobias', Beth's, and Marie's lives in the making, it is the coherence in finding, creating, reclaiming, or re/creating homeplaces that resonated across their stories. I came to wonder more deeply about this aspect in relation with trauma stories. I also began to wonder with these lived and told stories in relation with teacher education and with the lives of teachers and children in schools, which I attend to in Chapter 8.

### **Reverberating Teacher/ing Stories and Stories of Teacher/ing**

#### **The Bumping of Teacher/ing Stories to Live by and Stories of Teacher/ing<sup>80</sup>**

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<sup>80</sup> In this section, I draw again on Clandinin and Connelly's (1996) conceptualization of *teachers' stories* and *stories of teachers* (which I thought with in Chapter 1 of this dissertation), where teachers' stories are those teachers hold of themselves, and stories of teachers are those ascribed to teachers by more distant sources. While I am drawing on this conceptualization, here, however, I have deliberately dropped the 's' in teachers' stories/ stories of teachers to draw more closely to my experience of *teacher* as shown in my narrative

As Tobias, Beth, and Marie each told and retold stories of teacher/ing, they often shared their teacher/ing stories, and also, ways their stories bumped, both within themselves and with the stories of teacher/ing shaping their professional knowledge landscapes. For example, while Marie drew me into her ‘world’-travelling story to live by composed in and across her life making as foundational to how she lives alongside children in schools, she also drew me toward understanding how her living by this story bumped with the story of teaching she lived of curriculum as mandated outcomes, and as the central goal of teaching. Experiencing this inward bumping shaped tensions for Marie as she tried to retell and relive her stories of teachers by grounding her teaching stories in support, love, care, safety, and creativity. She also drew my attention to the tension she was experiencing when this story to live by bumped with dominant institutional narratives of classroom management and coding.

Tobias showed me how his body experienced tension when he sensed there was a story of teaching being expected of him to **just do the job**. And yet, as he noted, he could not fully separate himself from himself: **if my mind and body are fighting, if my identities are fighting with each other it causes turmoil**. As our inquiry unfolded Tobias awakened to not only the tension he was experiencing when he felt he **could not be human**, but also to other possible ways of being alongside children. Tobias storied his retelling and hopeful reliving of himself as becoming a teacher in ways that were coherent with his *ability is always possible if you fight like Matt* story to live by. Tobias came to

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beginnings.

understand how his story to live by was bumping with the stories of teacher/ing shaping his school landscape to just **do the job** and to **get through the curriculum**. Tobias drew on the possibility of the new teaching position at a rink with a sense of reclaiming coherence across his life making: **My next teaching job is actually at a rink. I can teach. I can just be. I can be me. They can be them. We can learn.**

Beth storied her awakening to her teacher/ing stories to live by as gradually grounding her sense of herself as *always becoming* as a teacher. Following the fire, Beth storied experience that drew my attention to the days and weeks in which her teaching stories - stories in which she was capable and confident and had the capacity to attend to the rhythms and moment-to-moment unfolding of classroom life - were interrupted. She said: *You know all of those things that you depend on to be an effective teacher? All those things. ... Like, I couldn't even organize my post it notes because I was so distracted.* As I drew together her stories of herself as an early teacher with her stories of herself after the fire, I gradually awakened to Beth's teaching story to live by of *always becoming teacher*, and the ways the fire interrupted that story and drew her backward into feelings she experienced as a teacher beginning when she felt she did not have the *tools in [her] toolbox*.

Beth's storying of experiencing tension with the idea of taking a leave after the fire also showed me how her *always becoming teacher* story to live by bumped with the dominant stories of teacher/ing ("good" teachers do not take leaves), as well as with the institutional stories that she felt could shape mis-educative perceptions of a person taking

a leave. I wondered if Beth's story of *always becoming teacher* might have felt more coherent to her if part of this becoming also included institutionally supported spaces for composing a life with wellness. I wondered how she might have experienced the interruption she lived following the fire differently, if she had felt that the institutional narratives of teachers who take leaves were attentive to the wholeness of her life making.

In continuing to stand in the borderlands of Tobias, Marie, Beth's, and my life experiences, I gradually awakened to how we each lived, told, retold, and relived stories of *teacher* and teaching; I saw too that they drew on these stories, as shaping and shaped by their trauma stories and stories of trauma, as they were shaping who they each were becoming as teachers.

### **Reliving Stories of "Failure"<sup>81</sup> Through Teaching**

Tobias initially storied his accident as an experience rooted in a sense of failure of **not making it** to the NHL. Thinking with these moments drew him to tell and retell how his life had been set up so he would be successful at hockey. He gradually told stories of his shifting sense of the scripts of dis/ability as connected with understandings of failure, that had shaped his experience and how these might plant people in stories not of their choosing. A transformational experience that Tobias storied as foundational in his post-accident stories to live by was his awakening to experiencing the same feelings he had on the ice, when he was alongside children in a school on Valentine's Day. Thinking with these

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<sup>81</sup> I use quotations around the word *failure* here to suggest that is a word that a) carries many meanings and supports many understandings; and, b) is a word spoken by Tobias, Beth, and Marie in storying their experiences, rather than a word I chose.

stories was central in Tobias' retelling of his earlier stories of his senses of success and failure: **I thought sports was it, and if you don't win, and if you don't play in the NHL you fail. ... It's taken me a long time to reshape my own idea and of who I am, and what success means because there's more than one definition of just winning and losing.** As Tobias began living this understanding of success that grew out of what he initially storied as **the end of** his hockey story to live by, he relived his stories of failure as a new story of success through teaching. In this way teaching became a powerful reliving for Tobias, bringing him to say: **Maybe this was the story I was supposed to live. ... Letting the hockey player teach the lesson.**

Over time, as Beth showed me the complex interweaving of her early stories of being an *unsuccessful teacher* and her more recent story to live by of *always becoming*, I wondered how she might have experienced her now-self saying to her then-self *you're enough*. How might Beth's coming to live by this story earlier in her life have reshaped her in-classroom and out-of-classroom experience alongside Sara and after the fire? Might she have been able to live her abstraction as both part of her *always becoming* while giving herself the gift of knowing she was *enough*?

Marie's reliving failure through teaching drew on experience that brought her joy and experience that brought her tension, both of which she relived in becoming a teacher. Over time Marie lived, told, and retold stories of fear of failing as a teacher:

I feel like a piece of paper that I crumple back into the whole, and then I talk to people about what I really feel is possible in teaching and really see, and then

the paper gets smoothed out again. But then I go and there's all these crumples and I'm like ahhhhhh I can't do it!!!

Marie relived this story of failure as she simultaneously relived her trauma stories from across her life making, through teaching:

There are incredible benefits to what I went through, because it's kind of like now I have a much bigger more sided prism to put life through. Because I can see certain things differently. I think ... it's a lot easier for me to forgive after the fact, because I get what it's like to do things just because you're hurting.

It was Marie's telling and retelling of this reliving that supported her to imagine and live her story of 'world'-travelling with a loving perception to children's beautiful and creative worlds.

I continue to wonder how living trauma stories shapes and is shaped by stories of (however one might define) failure. I also wonder how stories of trauma might plant those who live trauma stories in stories of failure (failure to "make it," failure to "cope," failure to be "strong enough and handle it," etc.). In future inquiries, I hope to further wonder narratively with understandings of resilience, recovery, failure, and success in relation with trauma stories/stories of trauma, and how these are shaping and shaped by stories of teacher/ing on teachers' professional knowledge landscapes.

### **Living and Struggling for Coherence With/In Institutional Scripts<sup>82</sup> of Teacher/ing**

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<sup>82</sup> Carr (1986) awakened me to the possibility that as we compose our lives, we live with/in multiple scripts, much in the same way Lugones (1987) awakened me to the possibility of composing our lives in multiple worlds, worlds we have created and not created, and worlds into which we are planted whether we choose to

Standing in the borderlands and slowly listening with the reverberations in Marie, Tobias, and Beth's stories awakened me to the multiple, and often bumping, scripts in which they were living.

As a preservice teacher, Marie drew my attention to the pressure she felt of living up to and in the scripts of what she felt she was expected to enact in order to garner a "good" practicum evaluation. Marie felt very much torn between the teacher/ing stories she imagined herself living by and the stories of teacher/ing she felt forced to live alongside cooperating teachers and administrators. She felt planted in a preservice world of measuring up to predetermined competencies, and while she felt tension, she still found herself wishing to receive positive evaluations so she could fulfill her dream of becoming teacher. She storied being in this tension-filled midst as not knowing what was "right" and "wrong" in the ways of being alongside children in schools. She sensed that the teachers with more years alongside children might have a "more right" understanding and, so, perhaps she should try to live in and up to their stories of "good" teacher/ing. Living with this tension drew her to wonder if the ways she imagined coming alongside children were naïve. Over time, I grew to understand that it was her felt tension that kept her from simply adopting others' scripts of teaching.

Tobias too, as a teacher early in his career, experienced pressure to live by institutional scripts because of how his lack of a continuous contract positioned him on his

professional knowledge landscape. He storied himself as: **a teacher without a contract, and you want to make sure you're doing all of these things, but you want to make sure that you do your job first.** In living in and with others' institutional scripts of what he should (should not) be doing, Tobias storied how his tension with this situation came forward in his body; his body let him know that doing the job in the ways he felt he was expected was bumping with his imagining of being himself. While Tobias storied his understanding of what taking a leave might look like at this time early in his career, he simultaneously understood that his upcoming surgery was his **body's way of taking that break without it being a nervous breakdown or a stress leave, or whatever.** As he moved further inward, he shared that rather than taking a stress leave that he felt he might have needed, he felt relief that the surgery would provide him with the time and spaces he felt he needed so as **to prevent a breakdown.**

Lingering with Tobias' sense of how taking a leave might shape stories of him drew me back to Beth's similar sense when she said: *so there's no way in hell that I'm ever going to have another stress leave, because I know what that looks like on your CV. There's no way.* Beth's tension in relation with taking a leave as a result of Sara's cancer drew my attention to the dominant institutional narratives that were shaping her (and other teachers') understandings of what the career consequences might be for those taking "leaves". Beth storied her experience of considering the need to take a leave for Sara's cancer as *shameful*. While she storied herself as not sleeping or eating and as feeling incapable of being present with and for the children she was alongside in school, Beth



knew, and felt the pressure of, the institutional story of teacher/ing that “*good teachers don’t take leaves—they can handle it*”.

### **Forward-Looking Wonders with Teacher/ing Stories and Stories of Teacher/ing**

I will continue to wonder more deeply with the tensions shaped in the interactions of teachers’ trauma stories and the stories of teacher/ing shaping, and shaped by, powerful scripts of “good teacher/ing.” I think more with this wonder in Chapter 8.

#### **Lingering Echoes of These Reverberations**

The stories Tobias, Marie, Beth and I live by, with, and in (Clandinin, 2013) reverberated across this inquiry. These stories are powerful and shaped by and shaping whom we are becoming but are not meant to be held up as representative of all (or any other) people whose lives have been shaped by trauma stories and stories of trauma. There are, however, resonant experiences, drawn on here as invitations for further thinking and further inquiry, as Tobias’, Beth’s, Marie’s, and my telling and retelling of our trauma stories shaped possibility for our trauma stories to be understood as continuous in our experience, and as shaped by and shaping the wholeness of our lives in the making. After Sara’s cancer, Beth heard and came to live the wisdom that *through it all, the lotus blooms*, not as a smoothing or covering over of her trauma stories, but as deep, narrative, temporal, experiential knowing. It is not an easy blooming. The lotus must withstand weather, nutrient depletion, human intervention, cycles, predators, etc. It is an act of courage, of struggle, and of defiance of the odds. It is not a passive act. Nor is the living, telling, and retelling of trauma stories. I sense this teaching, and all we have learned as our

inquiry unfolded, will continue to reverberate as we sit in an imaginary circle holding each other in our hearts, nodding, and appreciating this truth in our life making.

## Chapter 8:

### **How Our Storytelling and Retelling Shaped and Shifted the Theoretical, Practical, Social, and Personal Justifications of Our Inquiry**

As I lingered with our shared wish for our inquiry to shape ways of thinking with trauma stories and stories of trauma, I was drawn back to when I had read one of Wagamese's (2011) stories of his experience alongside Elder Lorraine:

As we paused by a pool in the river, Lorraine took up a pebble and tossed it in. In silence, we watched the ripples eddy outward in concentric rings and lap the stones at our feet. "That's the way you change the world," she said. "The smallest circles first." (p. 97)

I returned often to this teaching as it grew to shape how I hoped to compose this final chapter, not as proof of value, but as holding the possibility of rippling outward in the ways Clandinin (2013) stated that all researchers "need to be able to answer the questions of 'So What?' and 'Who Cares?' about our studies" (p. 35). These questions drew me to think with the justifications of our narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) as perhaps the pebbles being tossed into the water.

Clandinin (2013) explained that narrative inquiries must be justified "*socially and theoretically*" (p. 37) in terms of differences the research might open up or make visible in relation with theoretical understandings or in relation with "making situations more socially just" (p. 35). They must also be justified *practically* in relation with differences the research might make to practice, and, *personally*, in terms of why this narrative inquiry matters to Tobias, Beth, Marie, and me as individuals. The justifications foregrounded in

this chapter invite and support readers to imagine possible ripples from this inquiry in their own contexts as they enter into conversation with us and experience themselves, possibly becoming “rearranged by these lives” (Bourassa & Juschka, 2017, p. 6).

There are three main sections in this chapter: *Social/Theoretical Justifications: Moving Toward a Narrative Conceptualization of Trauma*; *Practical Justifications: Attending to Teachers' Trauma Stories and Stories of Trauma*; and, *Personal Justifications: All-ways Becoming Through Experience*.

### **Social/Theoretical Justifications: Moving Toward a Narrative Conceptualization of Trauma**

As our inquiry unfolded, I became increasingly awake to our living of the commitments of narrative inquiry. These awakenings were not smooth nor simple, yet they became profound as they drew my attention toward the potential of a narrative conceptualization of trauma, understood in particular through the conceptualization of trauma stories and stories of trauma. As a way to show this potential, this section attends to: *Thinking with Dominant Stories of Trauma*; *Beginning with Trauma Stories in a Narrative Conceptualization of Trauma*; *Lingering with Naming Trauma Experience*; and *Living, Telling, Retelling, and Reliving Trauma Stories Attentive to Temporality, Sociality, and Place*.

#### **Thinking with Dominant Stories of Trauma**

As I prepared to come alongside coinquirers, and as shown in Chapter 2, I read literature in relation with trauma. Having lived two years attending to the reverberations between our experiences and this literature, I continued to wonder why there existed very

little inquiry alongside teachers and trauma stories and stories of trauma. In the dominant stories of trauma, trauma is often diagnosed and treated through a Western lens as medical or psychological pathology (e.g. Fellner, in press), growing out of conceptualizations of illness and weakness. It is often shaped as something that needs to be “fixed” and overcome, with very little attention given to experiential elements such as “the transcultural aspects of traumatic stress” (Stamm & Friedman, 2000, p. 70). Borzaga (2012) supported my sense of the dominance of “Western theories of trauma” (p. 65), and its dominance in international contexts. His argument drew me to wonder about the possibility of ongoing colonization through these kinds of approaches. As Borzaga (2012) argued, often Western trauma theories are reductionist and “obfuscate . . . strength and resilience” (p. 67). In thinking with my experience across time and in different provincial and educational contexts, I came to sense that these were some of the dominant stories of trauma being taken up by the various systems, structures, and practices of education that seemed to position *teachers* as needing to be “strong” for *students*.

It was in living our relational inquiry that Tobias, Beth, and Marie awakened me to how a narrative conceptualization of trauma holds potential for moving beyond a pathologizing categorization, beyond words like “cure” (Borzaga, 2012, p. 87) and beyond single stories (Adiche, 2009) of a traumatized person, wherein the trauma becomes foregrounded as the sum total of their identity. As Borzaga (2012) argued, these ascriptions come to hold people in those particular identities, silencing the possibilities for “new configurations” (p. 90). This awakening continued to shape my thinking in relation

with understandings of the wholeness of a life shaped by, as well as shaping, trauma stories as emergent, multilayered, evolving, complex, lived in time, personal, and social. Tobias, Beth, and Marie grew my understanding that their trauma stories did not stop their lives in the making, but shaped and were shaped by the continuity of their experience. Their trauma stories were disparate from the dominant stories of trauma they were feeling expected to live on school landscapes.

In this midst, I returned to Morris' (2002) explanation of thinking *about* and thinking *with* stories—the difference between thinking *about* stories as objects and thinking *with* stories as shaping and shaped by our lives in the making. In suggesting the possibility of also thinking with trauma stories narratively, I do not mean, in any way, to oppose or replace medical and psychological trauma work. Rather, I imagine a narrative conceptualization of trauma might open these fields to ways of engaging with trauma stories and the people who live and tell them, not as (broken) objects, but as whole people drawing on, from, and across a whole life. The fundamental ontological commitment of narrative inquiry to experience as knowledge (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006) supports a narrative understanding of trauma which I both conceptualize and show in the following sections: *Beginning with Trauma Stories in a Narrative Conceptualization of Trauma*; *Lingering with Naming Trauma Experience: Moving From Shift to Interruption*; and, *Living, Telling, Retelling, and Reliving Trauma Stories and Stories of Trauma*.

### **Beginning with Trauma Stories in a Narrative Conceptualization of Trauma**

In thinking with the stories told and retold by Tobias, Beth, Marie, and me, I was

drawn toward letting our “narrative[s] . . . work on us” (Morris, 2002, p. 196). As we grew to honour experience as knowledge, we travelled to each other’s worlds, and together tried to make sense of our experience (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). Thinking with and across our experience, including our stories not focussed on our trauma, drew me toward narrative understandings such as: *stories to live by* (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998b), *living in and out others’ scripts* (Carr, 1986), *composing a life* (Bateson, 1989), *fixed stories* (Steeves, 2006), *single stories* (Adiche, 2009), *stories planted in us* and *planted by us* (Okri, 1997), stories of *homeplace(s)* (hooks, 1990), and stories of *life making* and *curriculum making* (Huber, Murphy, & Clandinin, 2011). These narrative conceptualizations in relation with trauma add complexity to dominant narratives that script people with trauma stories as deficit and/or as pathologized. In, with, through, and across attending to the wholeness of our lives, I came to understand trauma stories and stories of trauma as shaping important openings for narrative inquiry into the complexities and multiplicities of lives in the making. A narrative conceptualization of trauma that begins with inquiry into lived, told, retold, and relived stories of experience makes visible the ongoing struggle we experienced for narrative coherence (Carr, 1986) in our lives.

As narrative inquiry draws heavily from a Deweyan (1938) understanding of the continuous nature of experience, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) shared their understanding of continuity as:

the notion that experiences grow out of other experiences, and experiences lead to further experiences. Wherever one positions oneself in that continuum . . . each point has a past experiential base and leads to an experiential future. (p. 2)

Narrative inquiry holds onto this understanding of continuity as an epistemological and ontological commitment by positioning “inquiry . . . within a stream of experience that generates new relations that then becomes a part of future experience” (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 41). Understanding the continuous nature of experience in relation with trauma stories counters more dominant medical and psychological conceptualizations of trauma as resulting from a singular moment or event. For example, while Beth initially voiced her tension that our inquiry was more focussed on her life making and *not on how her traumas affected her teaching*, we came to experience the retelling and reliving of her trauma stories, not as sum-total, problem-solution, cause-and-effect stories, nor as breaks in her life, but as experience shaped by and shaping her ongoing life making.

This awakening shaped my desire to narratively understand something about why each co-inquirer initially storied their trauma stories as single stories of *failure, end, no going back, or shame*. In thinking with this wonder, two aspects I became attentive to were: 1) how to name the continuous nature of experience in Tobias’, Beth’s, and Marie’s trauma stories and 2) how to more deeply understand temporality, sociality, and place in relation with Tobias’, Beth’s, and Marie’s experience.

### **Lingering with Naming Trauma Experience: Moving from Shift to Interruption**

It was in the midst of co-composing Tobias’ narrative account that I was drawn toward wanting to linger with and more deeply understand the experience of the time immediately following his accident. While I understood that he had initially storied this time as a profound end to the hockey stories he was living by, I also knew his thoughts had



shifted as our inquiry unfolded. I thought first with the conceptualization of *shifting stories to live by* of which Clandinin and Huber (2005) write: “it is most often in moments of tension that the possibility of a shift in a story to live by is possible” (p. 57). At the time of his accident, Tobias was living a story shaped by and shaping his knowledge, contexts, and identity of being a competitive hockey player. In the time immediately after his accident, Tobias described how he felt he could no longer live that story and he contemplated ending his life. Yet as I lingered with Clandinin and Huber (2005), I sensed that the word “tension” did not resonate with Tobias’ stories of these moments. Nor did this term feel resonant with Beth’s or Marie’s stories nor did it quite re-present the experiences they were living, telling, and retelling.

I then moved to wondering with *discontinuity*, which Bateson (1989) referred to as periods of change and uncertainty as we compose our lives. But this understanding felt too gentle when I thought with the profoundly rearranging stories shared. I then moved to think with my understandings of *rupture* as a ripping or irreparable break. This, too, did not sit well as the irreparable and quasi-medical sense of rupture moved me further away from, rather than closer to, experience. I realized that in trying to name experiences of trauma narratively, I wanted to show the complexity of the experience as both total in the moment and as shaping and shaped by the wholeness of a life.

(For now) I came to choose *interruption*. Descriptors across etymological dictionaries referred to a “break in continuity” and “to break apart, break off,” “a breaking

in upon some action,” and “a pause, a temporary cessation.”<sup>83</sup> These descriptions resonated with my experience, as well as with my experience alongside Tobias, Beth, and Marie. Interruption carries both the severity of cessation, but recognizes its temporary nature and its temporality; it calls forward the understanding of a profound break but with a narrative sense of being able to struggle for, and possibly reclaim, a sense of coherence and continuity in a life in the making. For me *interruption* reminded me of Heilbrun’s explanation of liminality as “a state of necessary in-betweenness” (Heilbrun, 1999, p. 98). Heilbrun wrote about a place of liminality as “never designed for permanent occupation” but as a place “between destinies . . . the place where we write our own lines and eventually our own plays” (1999, pp. 101–02). Tobias, Beth, and Marie also felt these descriptions reverberated with their experiences and, too with/in the inquiries we shared.

### **Living, Telling, Retelling, and Reliving Trauma Stories Attentive to Temporality, Sociality, and Place**

As our inquiry unfolded, we experienced retellings of our trauma stories. In attending to the transcripts of our early conversations, I came to see that we each had foregrounded an almost rehearsed “product” of our experience—stories that felt more like scripts. However, as our growing relationships, trust, and inquiry increasingly drew us into co-making our relational three-dimensional narrative inquiry spaces, we became more drawn to thinking with our stories to live by, living, telling, retelling, and reliving our trauma stories. As Clandinin (2013) said:

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<sup>83</sup> Please see the References list for the sources of these definitions

The terms—*living, telling, retelling, and reliving*—have particular meanings in narrative inquiry. We understand that people *live* out stories and *tell* stories of their living . . . then inquiring into the lived and told stories [we understand as] *retelling* stories. Because we see that we are changed as we retell our lived and told stories, we may begin to relive our stories. Our fourth key term, then, is *reliving* stories. (Clandinin, 2013, p. 34)

In the following two sections, I briefly show threads connected with the living, telling, retelling, and reliving shared by Tobias, Beth, and Marie to demonstrate how we were beginning to understand our trauma stories narratively.

**Living and telling trauma stories.** Tobias, Beth, and Marie each storied accessing professional support in relation with their trauma stories. Tobias and Beth storied how, for each of them, *talk therapy* was a fundamental part of their post-traumatic experience which they described as a step-by-step telling of their living, with no filters, no interpretation, and no intervening experience—a bulleted and factual telling. They each storied this experience as cold and chronological, and yet a critical “step” in their “recovery” (words they both used). For example, Beth said, *Did you know that if you have a massive trauma, you need to go through it step-by-step, and just say it and it reduces your likelihood . . . of post-traumatic results?*

While neither Tobias, Beth, nor Marie yet carried the language of telling and retelling, each of their stories supported me to see that the telling process they experienced was important just as it is in narrative inquiry where telling our stories shapes openings for retellings and relivings. Alongside Tobias, Beth, and Marie, I slowly came to understand ways in which “telling” what we had lived might be foundational to a narrative

conceptualization of trauma. In many ways the telling began shaping the trust and care that supported us to begin shaping three-dimensional relational narrative inquiry spaces.

**Retelling and reliving trauma stories.** Tobias, Beth, and Marie each drew my attention to possibilities opened by retelling trauma stories. As we attended to the wholeness of our lives in the making, we learned more deeply and lived what Clandinin (2013) meant by retelling and reliving. While Tobias initially storied his accident as a **career-ending** and nearly life-ending injury, as our inquiry unfolded he retold and relived stories of the accident as a **career-starting** injury. He then gradually relived this as **the story I was meant to live** as he looked forward to beginning his new teaching position as a **hockey player teacher**.

Beth storied how she had survived what she feared most in life (divorce, illness of a child, and losing everything) and how, over time, she was able to relive her trauma stories with profound senses of liberation and appreciation for community. Marie, too, retold her trauma stories with the possibility of reliving. She said:

*Trauma gives you these new tools I think. I wouldn't want to speak for anyone else, but there are incredible benefits to what I went through, because it's kind of like now I have a much bigger more-sided prism to put life through.*

Through our attending to our lived, told, retold, and relived stories, I understood more deeply how a narrative conceptualization of trauma might support moving away from a single story of trauma as definitional or as “a life lesson,” or as “what doesn't kill us makes us stronger,” and toward a reliving that draws from and seeks to continue to grow forward the wholeness of a life in the making.

**Attending to temporality, sociality, and place as we lived, told, retold, and relived trauma stories.** Marie storied some of her therapy experience as being unsupportive and mak[ing] things worse because it really causes a sense of more hopelessness and helplessness and shame. Thinking with these stories drew my attention to the absence of attending to the continuity and movements—the temporal, social/personal, and place movements—in her experience. As I wondered with Marie’s stories of repeated telling and telling again her trauma stories, I came to see a gap that a narrative conceptualization of trauma might interrupt. Attending to this gap drew me to more closely consider temporality, sociality, and place in relation with the living, telling, retelling, and reliving of trauma stories.

***Temporality and trauma stories.*** Tobias, Beth, Marie, and I were “in the midst of a temporal flow” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 64) as we each retold our stories and our struggles for coherence. Tobias, most powerfully, showed me how interruptive his accident had been and how, in the time following his accident, he could not imagine a forward-looking story. Additionally, Tobias, Beth, and Marie each spoke of elapsed time since their trauma stories as part of their unfolding life making and as adding perspective to their respective experiences. While our inquiry was unfolding, however, they also were each confronted with an experience that they storied as collapsing the time between their pasts and presents in ways that they experienced as beyond their control, which they each storied as living their trauma again. For example, when the Humboldt bus crash occurred, Tobias said:

**When there is a traumatic “episode” I feel as though I am caught between two times. One where I am young, inexperienced, and afraid and the other where I am calm, confident, and sad. One that understands a little bit more about life and the other has no idea what the future holds.**

The temporality of experience brought an experiential time-tension to the surface that seemed to bump with dominant Western understandings of time as linear and of life as sequential. Being alongside Tobias, I saw how a more present trauma story drew on his cliff jumping trauma story in embodied and mentally uncontrollable ways. I began to wonder about time in relation with temporality in relation with stories of trauma (time heals all, it will take time to get back to normal, after some time they’ll be able to . . .) and how these stories of trauma might, in turn, shape the living and telling of trauma stories as something to “get over”. Additionally, I wondered how Western conceptions of time as linear can shape trauma stories in such a way that emphasized the incoherence of an experience that collapsed time (known more commonly as a trigger). It was in thinking with these moments alongside Tobias that I awakened to a need for a more temporal understanding of experience that a narrative conceptualization of trauma might offer.

Beth’s experience also added complexity to temporality and trauma stories. She storied how her focus immediately after the fire was solely on getting organized to ensure her children were looked after and okay. Beth’s stories showed me how, in the moments immediately after the fire, she was living her first-born stories of responsibility and care-taking that enabled her to engage in immediate (possibly short-term) forward-looking thinking. It was only as some time elapsed that she started experiencing the interruption of

panic attacks, sleeplessness, and the sensations that the rooms she was in were filling up with smoke. She storied her now-understanding that her body was alerting her that there was something she needed to *deal with*, and that it was after some elapsed time that she experienced the *trauma of the situation*.

Lingering in the gaps I was experiencing, I began to wonder with the experience that shapes trauma stories as interrupting, for a time, the “temporal flow” which could, for a time, interrupt the possibility for a person to compose forward-looking stories. I have come to sense that the temporal dimension of a narrative conceptualization of trauma is an area of inquiry with which I will continue to engage.

***Sociality and trauma stories.*** The interaction of the personal and the social attended to in our narrative inquiries also supported us to make visible the wholeness of our lives. Sociality, is understanding, in part, the “cultural, social, institutional, familial, and linguistic narratives” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 40) that interact with our personal narratives. While many dimensions of sociality became visible in our inquiry, the shaping power of a dominant Western conceptualization of trauma as illness to be treated with diagnosis, intervention, medication, remediation, and recovery was strongly foregrounded. It was also as we attended to sociality that we came to sense the many complex and varied narratives that were shaping and shaped by stories of trauma in schools. Tobias, for example, drew my attention to this when he said: **There is so much focus on mental health in this profession, yet when something happens there is no support.**

Not only did we come to think with the social dimensions of our lived and told

stories, but we also came to understand how the relational commitments of our inquiry supported us to co-make a relational space in which we felt safe and where we felt we could trust each other with the multiplicity of our stories. I came to sense sociality as foundational to a narrative conceptualization of trauma as it shaped not only the stories we were telling and retelling from across our life making, but also the stories of our experience we were co-composing as we were shaping our relational inquiry space.<sup>84</sup>

***Place and trauma stories.*** Basso (1996) reminded me that “wisdom sits in places” (p. 53) and Tobias, Beth, and Marie repeatedly drew my attention to the wisdom they had experienced, grown, and live(d) by through experience and relationships in particular places. Connelly and Clandinin (2006) described place as a dimension within narrative inquiry as: “the specific concrete, physical, and topological boundaries of place or sequences of places where the inquiry and events take place” (p. 480). Alongside Beth, and in addition to her story of her classroom as an *oasis* place, I saw the deepening of our relationship reflected in the places she chose for our conversations, moving from her classroom, to coffee shops, to being invited into her home. Lingering with what our conversation places were showing me drew me to think deeply not only with place(s) in our life making, inclusive of our trauma stories and stories of trauma, but also with places in composing our relational inquiry.

For Tobias, Beth, and Marie, homeplaces were places they sought, particularly when

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<sup>84</sup> More specific examples of sociality from our inquiry are woven into the section entitled *Practical Justifications* later in this chapter.



they did not experience their familial houses as safe sites of “renewal and self-recovery, where we can heal our wounds and become whole” (hooks, 1990, p. 49). For Tobias, the rink and one of his billet homes became his homeplaces; for Beth, her classroom became a possible homeplace; and for Marie, while her now-home had become her homeplace, she also imagined her classroom as a possible homeplace for and with children.

Through our inquiry I grew to understand that a narrative conceptualization of trauma is deeply connected with place and that experiences in/of place(s) shape and are shaped by the multiple and complex narrative threads weaving our life. For example, for many reasons school places are often the place of trauma stories, and yet these places are also being shaped by and continue to shape stories of trauma. I came to sense that in attending to place in a narrative conceptualization of trauma, I also needed to attend to the absence of place. I saw this as similar to thinking with the absence of forward-looking stories, in relation, for example, with forcible removal, with political turmoil, with poverty, with racism, with ongoing colonization, with institutionalized and systemized racisms, with intergenerational trauma, etc.

Place(s) seems to draw in the other two commonplaces of narrative inquiry: temporality and sociality. Attending to temporality, sociality, and place in our stories lived, told, retold, and relived as we moved forward and backward, inward and outward, in our life making, opened for me, through experiencing our inquiry, the profound possibilities of a narrative conceptualization of trauma.

### **Practical Justifications: Attending to Teachers' Trauma Stories and Stories of Trauma**

In this section, I traced some of the practical reverberations of this inquiry. It is my hope that those thinking with trauma and trauma sensitivity in schools will find resonances in relation with preservice and ongoing teacher education and development, trauma sensitivity program development, and dominant stories of practice that are shaping and shaped by stories of trauma/trauma stories on teachers' professional knowledge landscapes. This section includes the following sub-sections: *Thinking with Teacher Wellness; Thinking with Stories of Teacher/ing, Stories of Trauma, and the Conduit; Thinking with Teachers' Stories to Leave By (Attrition); and Thinking with Teacher Education and Development.*

#### **Thinking with Teacher Wellness**

As the December and March 2018–2019 breaks grew closer, I noticed an increase in posts on the social media sites to which I subscribe (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) both by teachers and by organizations empowered to support and advocate for teachers. These posts shared the message that teachers *were not ok*. In 2017, the Mental Health Commission of Canada reported that 50% of hospital beds in Canada were used as mental health services beds (Carrington, 2019). A newspaper article published in Ontario on March 26th, 2018 cited a 2017 Ontario Auditor General's report that revealed: "a survey that included the majority of the province's 72 school boards showed that the average number of [teacher] sick days increased by 29 percent in a five-year period" (Miller, 2018, para. 10). The article also cited Janet Fraser, the President of the Ottawa-Carleton

Elementary Teachers Federation, saying that half the teachers in her union who are on long-term disability have “mental nervous disorders” (para. 23). Fraser also suggested this statistic might underrepresent the actual numbers. A Google search of teachers’ mental health in Canada issued at minimum 85,000,000 results and yet, as Carrington (2018) argued:

Our kids are okay—more than okay. But ONLY if those of us holding them are okay. . . . Those [teachers] holding them [students], I’ve noticed, have little support for these hard things and are often disconnected from each other. We need to change that. (p. xix; p. 7)

What Carrington (2018) argued was that: “no one is talking about: whether or not our *educators* [emphasis added] are okay” (p. 85). Tobias, Beth, and Marie often showed me how difficult it is to be trauma sensitive for and with others while not being trauma sensitive for and with ourselves as people who are, in part, composing lives as teachers alongside children and youth. As I lingered with these thoughts, I again came to sense how often institutional stories of teacher/ing and of trauma seem to presume teacher wellness and student trauma.

### **Thinking with Stories of Teacher/ing, Stories of Trauma, and the Conduit**

As introduced in the first chapter, Clandinin and Connelly’s (1995) conceptualization of the *conduit*<sup>85</sup> (p. 9) is a metaphor for the unidirectional transmission

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<sup>85</sup> Clandinin and Connelly (1995) argued that the kind of knowledge that gets transmitted through the conduit is often “prepositional, relational among concepts, impersonal, situation-independent, objective, nontemporal, ahistoric, and generic” (p. 15) and that “nothing comes through the conduit as merely theoretical knowledge to be known and understood; it always comes as an implied prescription for teachers’ actions” (p. 14).

of (certain kinds of) knowledge from expert to student, from expert to district to school, from district to teacher, etc. The conduit is a powerful medium, allowing expert ideas to flow through teacher education, ongoing teacher professional development, government policies, and onward to teachers. As our inquiry unfolded, I often wondered about connections between these conduit transmissions of what it means to be *professional* and stories of trauma in schools. As Estefan, Caine, and Clandinin (2016) state, typically:

professional identities are already determined by the profession and personal identities lie outside the purview of professional education and, subsequently, practice. This view of a dual identity leads . . . to the need to demarcate the boundaries between the personal and professional. (p. 27)

Was it these stories of teacher/ing that had, at times, hindered Tobias', Beth's, Marie's, and my possibilities to retell and relive our trauma stories on our professional knowledge landscapes? For example, Tobias', Marie's, and my retelling of the tensions we felt about not being able to be human in our classrooms showed me that we had been made to feel that our personal knowledges, contexts, and identities, our stories to live by, were not privileged on school landscapes.

**Institutional single stories of “good” teacher/ing.** In attending to the transcripts of our recorded research conversations, I came to sense a resonant narrative thread: Tobias, Beth, and Marie all shared stories that drew my attention to the institutional stories of what makes a “good” teacher that they were living in, and, in some ways, bumping against.

Our inquiry showed that single stories of good teacher/ing shape and are shaped by

the professional knowledge landscapes of schools and that these stories can shape prolonged incoherence for teachers who are living trauma stories in the midst of teaching. Tobias, Beth, and Marie each had a sense of who they were becoming alongside children that was grounded in their motivations of always becoming relationally alongside children. But they also each storied experience in which they felt they were expected to live up to and in stories of “good” teacher/ing that were bumping with their own teacher/ing stories. For example, Marie wrestled with a script of “good teacher” she felt was being imposed on her that required a quiet classroom, which bumped with how she wished to ‘world’-travel with a loving perception to the children’s worlds, a reliving of some of her trauma stories. The stories Tobias lived by also bumped with the dominant idea of “good teacher as expert” and as getting through all the “stuff you have to get through.”

Tobias, Beth, and Marie shared with me other single stories of “good teacher/ing” they had encountered such as: a good teacher knows their stuff, a good teacher does extra-curricular activities, a good teacher can handle the stress, a good teacher teaches “the” curriculum (i.e., understood as the prescribed outcomes in the Programs of Study), a good teacher has good results on the provincial exams, a good teacher takes on extra responsibilities, and a good teacher does not take a leave. I wondered how their, my, and other teachers’ experiences were, and continue to be, shaped by, with, and in these stories of “good” teacher. I also wondered how teachers living trauma stories might experience resonance and dissonance with these institutional stories.

I gradually came to see how, in this midst, these stories could shape stories of

trauma on school landscapes in which trauma is understood as being something students *have* that teachers need to be aware of and to which they are expected to respond. I now wonder if and how these stories of good teacher/ing are shaping teachers' professional development in relation with trauma sensitivity coming down the conduit, enacted with good intentions, to *help* teachers be trauma sensitive *for* students. I wonder at the interaction of institutional stories of "good teachers" and teachers' trauma stories. Where are the spaces and places for teachers' trauma stories on teachers' professional knowledge landscapes? Are there ways that stories of "good teacher" might be opened to make space for trauma stories? Might attending narratively to teachers' trauma stories open spaces for retelling and reliving stories of leaves and of leaving?

**Institutional stories of leaves.** I have often wondered with Beth's stories, particularly her reluctance to take a leave after Sara's cancer diagnosis and Beth's sense of the impossibility of a leave due to professional consequences following the fire. I began to wonder with the institutional requirement for a leave to be qualified (maternity, medical, personal, stress, mental health, etc.) and if identifying certain kinds of leave might create a deficit single story of the person requesting the leave. I also began wondering if this single story shaped the story of the person as not living up to a story of "good teacher." Schafer (2018) devoted significant space in her thesis to the stigma she learned teachers experienced in taking stress or mental health leaves. She wrote of a double stigma—the stigma of taking the leave, but also the stigma of "If you're not stable, then why are you teaching kids?" (p. 77). Schafer's work drew me back to thinking with cover stories and if

teachers felt compelled to tell them about why they were leaving when they did take a leave. Thinking with Tobias', Beth's, Marie's, and my stories alongside Schafer's work, I came to more fully understand the institutional stories of teacher/ing shaping leaves.

I began to wonder about the ways in which a shifting could be shaped wherein taking leaves might come to be retold and relived as an agentic decision to compose a healthier whole life. This awakening drew me back to thinking with Nodding's (2012) ethic of care and her belief that caring was not something a teacher (or school district) did on top of everything; it needs to be *underneath* all we do. As Carrington (2018) argued, we need to attend to those responsible for caring for children. Caring for children might, in many ways, require opening spaces, places, and ways of caring for the carers. I wonder what might shift if deficit stories of teachers' leaves (as lack of capacity, and as human resources and financial burdens), were retold and relived by governments/ministries of education, teachers' unions, school divisions, school administrations, other teachers, etc. as opportunities for care – as opportunities to think with and attend to, teachers' trauma stories.

### **Thinking With Teachers' Stories to Leave By (Attrition)**

Research recent to the writing of this dissertation identified a relationship between teacher emotional exhaustion and student academic achievement and school satisfaction (e.g., Arens & Morin, 2016) and the guilt teachers experience if their students are not succeeding. Additionally, many Canadian school boards have positioned mental health, particularly student mental health, as a significant priority. Increasingly, teachers are

being positioned as first responders or frontline workers in supporting the mental health of the children and youth they are alongside (Kirby, 2013). Other research (e.g., Schafer, 2018) connects teacher stress with leaves and attrition. A document published by the Werklund School of Education at the University of Calgary (n.d.) identified that in the province of Alberta, 40% of teachers leave the profession in their first 5 five years. Others (e.g., Danielwitz, 2017; Karsenti & Collin, 2013; Schaefer, L. et al., 2012; Pickering, 2008; Dove, 2004) have also argued that many teachers leave the profession in the first 5 years of teaching.

I sensed there were significant connections as I thought across this literature. I wondered if a teacher experiencing emotional exhaustion (for a variety of reasons) additionally sensed that the children and youth they were alongside were suffering as a result. I considered that this compounded guilt (combined with the stigma associated with leaves) might then draw them to leave the profession rather than taking a leave. In part, Beth drew me to this wonder as she told and retold stories of not feeling like a “good” teacher in the days, weeks, and months after her house fire and the stigma she felt as she said: *so there’s no way in hell that I’m ever going to have another stress leave, because I know what that looks like on your CV. There’s no way.* Tobias also shared similar feelings in the week following the Humboldt bus crash.

Thinking with the 40% teacher attrition rate in a Canadian context drew me to wonder with the stories of experience that might be shaping teachers’ decisions to leave, which then drew me to Clandinin, Downey, and Huber (2009) and Schaeffer, Downey, and



Clandinin (2014). Clandinin et al. (2009) explained their conceptualization of teachers' stories to *leave* by:

Some stories to leave by follow what many people consider to be acceptable story plotlines to leave teaching: to pursue graduate study; to stay home and raise children; to take up government or teacher union positions; to move into higher status, higher paying positions both in school districts and in new professions. These stories follow what we consider as an upward trajectory toward a happy and known ending, one that makes these stories to leave by acceptable. Yet, because they have followed the plotlines of an upward trajectory, the reality that teachers are composing stories to leave by, has, for the most part, been little noticed. (p. 146)

What Clandinin et al. (2009) sensed was that for some teachers these stories to leave by were the stories of leaving they were living, while for others, these stories to leave by were cover stories, comfortable for both the tellers and the hearers, as they were "acceptable" stories for leaving, rather than stories that might position the leaving teacher as deficit or as incapable. Clandinin et al. (2009) said:

They sometimes cover over their stories of leaving by telling a story to leave by that follows the plotline of one of these acceptable stories. Teachers who leave teaching early . . . know that from within the dominant institutional narrative, they will be seen as "deficient", as having something wrong with them. Finding an acceptable cover story helps them "save face" by leaving, not because they could not hack it but rather because they had something better to do. (p. 146)

Therefore, as Schaeffer et al. (2014) argued: "The storied experiences of those who leave appear absent, for the most part, in the literature" (p. 9). Thinking with Beth's stories of leaves and her asking me, after I shared a trauma story, if I had quit teaching, I wondered

if, as teachers begin composing stories to leave by, they begin fearing the stigma associated with not living up to the stories of “good teacher.” Do they then compose and tell stories to leave by that smooth over the experience drawing them to leave? Schaeffer et al. (2014) stated, “We recognized two silences: one silence is the lack of attention to the storied experiences of teachers who leave teaching; other silences live within the stories that early career teachers tell of leaving” (p. 12). While Tobias, Beth, and Marie were not composing stories to leave by at the time of our inquiry, they drew me to think deeply about their and others’ silent/ced trauma stories as they moved in and out of classroom places on their professional knowledge landscapes. How might stories of school, stories of “good teacher/ing,” and stories of trauma interact with teachers’ stories to live by and with their trauma stories in ways that are drawing them to compose stories to leave by? As Clandinin et al. (2009) said:

Thinking about learning from teachers’ stories, those who leave and those who stay in teaching, is an important place to stop and think about our work as teacher educators. (p. 149)

What we are calling for is the need to listen closely to the stories of teachers who continue to teach on school landscapes but also to listen carefully to the stories of teachers who leave teaching, particularly to those teachers whose stories to live by could not be sustained. (p. 151)

Drawing these threads from across our inquiry together brought me to linger with Clandinin et al.’s (2009) sense of the “teachers whose stories to live by could not be sustained” (p. 151). I thought with Marie’s sense that the spaces where trauma stories meet, open the possibility for ‘world’-travelling with a loving perception, with Beth’s strong

sense of teachers' responsibility to prevent the interaction of these stories, and with Tobias' experience that the interaction of trauma stories in his in-classroom place opened up the possibility for curriculum-making. Both Tobias and Marie drew my attention to their experience on their professional knowledge landscapes as their trauma stories bumped with what they felt they were expected to do (classroom management, deliver "the" curriculum), and with what they felt they knew would be best for the children they were alongside. Attending to stories of wellness, leaves, and attrition, in relation with stories to live by and teachers' trauma stories drew me to another emerging practical justification for my work: thinking more deeply with professional knowledge landscapes in relation with teacher education and development.

### **Thinking with Teacher Education and Development**

Through this inquiry I awakened to the importance of listening to the hard, sharp, jagged, silent, and silenced stories, as well as to how these stories reverberate in and with each other across lives in the making. But I also began asking myself what this research was for, what it was going to support, and how it might be an instrument to shape more educative experiences for teachers living trauma stories. As I highlighted in Chapters 1 and 2, attending to teachers' personal practical knowledge on the professional knowledge landscapes of schools oriented me toward understanding:

teachers as knowledgeable and knowing persons . . . [Personal practical knowledge is found] in the person's past experience, in the person's present mind and body, and in the person's future plans and actions. Knowledge is not only "in the mind." It is "in the body." And it is seen and found "in our practices." (Connelly & Clandinin,

1988, p. 25)

I began wondering about the possible relationships between teachers' personal practical knowledge, trauma stories, and their stories to live/leave by. I began to think about teachers' professional knowledge landscapes. I thought about the landscapes of my preservice and ongoing teacher "training". These were not landscapes of possibility. I experienced them as landscapes in which I was beheld as deficit, as in need of being taught, as lacking in practical knowledge. I experienced myself, through the lens of my preservice teacher education program and through the lenses of the many professional development sessions I attended, as being incomplete, as not living a story of "good teacher" because I didn't know the latest strategy or technique. Content was imparted to me to fill/fix what I was lacking so I could be a good teacher. But no one asked me what I thought or if I thought a particular intervention would speak to the lives of the youth I was alongside.

It wasn't until I began doing my doctoral work and was invited to a weekly gathering at the Centre for Research for Teacher Education and Development (CRTED) that I experienced a different and much more, in my experience, educative professional knowledge landscape. I spent much of my early time at the CRTED telling stories with which I was puzzling. I was not yet open to or understanding of the importance of retelling in the hopes of reliving. I was telling for acknowledgement and for support. Listeners sympathized as I told my stories with flat and unchanging characters—myself included. I was, initially, telling the scripted versions of stories.

It was not until a person at the Centre asked me a profound question about my early

years and how that might have shaped the interactions that so troubled me in one of my stories, that I began to live narrative inquiry. It was not until I was asked a question that showed me how my experience had been shaped and was shaping my life making that I was able to move past 'the' story and think with my stories and retell and relive them with new possibilities. This experience was so profoundly different from any other I had on any other professional knowledge landscape that it was both liberating and frightening. For the first time, my personal knowledge had been honoured as important in its practical and professional application. The more time I spent on a professional knowledge landscape that honoured me as a whole person living a whole and complex life, the more I came to relive my stories with forward-looking possibilities.

As I thought with all of my experience since that awakening, I found myself drawn to think with professional knowledge landscapes in relation with teacher education and development. I imagined how different my experience as a teacher beginning would have been if I had lived on a professional knowledge landscape similar to the CRTED beginning in my preservice teacher education program. As I think with the practical justifications I hope this work will sustain, and as I think with stories of teacher trauma, stress, and attrition, I wonder about the possibilities that might open up in shaping professional knowledge landscapes attentive to narrative inquiry as pedagogy. As I continue to grow toward retelling and reliving my pre-service teacher education stories, I hope to shape spaces for storytelling, retelling and reliving in places of pre- and in-service teacher education.

**Narrative inquiry as relational pedagogy.** As I lingered with the differences in the stories I had experienced in relation with my professional knowledge landscapes, I was drawn to think with the ways in which narrative inquiry as pedagogy, attentive to a narrative conceptualization of trauma, might shape a retelling and a reliving of some of the dominant stories of “good teacher/ing.” Huber et al. (2013) stated:

It follows then, that in understanding pedagogy in education by thinking narratively we need to understand teachers, children, families, and community members, individually and socially, as composing storied lives, inside and outside of schools. We also need to understand teachers, children, families, and community members as continuously living out the moments of their days by stories of who they are and who they are becoming. These individual stories entangle with, become shaped by, and shape one another. Similarly, the stories lived and told by children, families, teachers, and community members entangle with and become shaped by, while at times also shape social, cultural, institutional, linguistic, and familial narratives. (Huber et al., 2013, p. 227)

Thinking with Tobias’, Beth’s, and Marie’s lived, told, retold, and relived stories brought me to wonder not only about a narrative conceptualization of trauma as foregrounding the wholeness of lives in the making, but also about how such a conceptualization might shift the ways in which teachers, children, families, and communities feel positioned on professional knowledge landscapes. For example, at the CRTED everyone sits in a circle. Wonders and puzzles are thought with narratively, and everyone is honoured as a holder and maker of important knowledge. There is no membership or exclusion; everyone is welcome and is welcome to participate in ways that feel comfortable. From scholars to students, all share the table and all wonder together. Steeves et al. (2009) wrote of the

Research Issues Table at the CRTED as a place where narrative inquiry as relational pedagogy shaped a chosen community. The co-authors wrote of how thinking with (not about) stories was central and that this thinking together often countered the more typical narratives of “fixing” the “problems” of education.

Through this inquiry I have often wondered about classrooms, both in teacher education and in schools, as places where thinking with stories, including trauma stories, is honoured and is not silenced in and by single stories of “good” teacher(s) or of “healthy” or of “happy” or of “strong”. I have come to wonder what might be shaped differently if preservice teacher education programs and classes and professional development opportunities grew out of living narrative inquiry as a relational pedagogy. I wonder how such a pedagogy, attentive to the lives of teachers, children, families, and communities in the making, and to how their interactions can shape a co-created curriculum of lives, might open up new possibilities for pre and in-service teacher education and development. I wonder if, in ways similar to what I experienced at the CRTED, such pedagogy might open spaces and places in which trauma stories are honoured alongside other stories as shaping and shaped by a life in the making.

In lingering with my experience on my professional knowledge landscapes, I gradually came to realize how, for me, the CRTED had become a kind of homeplace—a place of renewal, of healing, a place of safety and of care, a place very much shaped by and shaping what Tobias, Beth, and Marie had drawn my attention to in relation with homeplaces.

**Thinking with professional knowledge homeplaces.** Tobias, Beth, and Marie gradually drew me to understand that it was possible to experience homeplace in places other than a house/home. Marie initially awakened me to this reverberation and as I slowly listened with the stories Tobias and Beth told and retold, I came to understand more fully that it was what homeplaces sustained in and for a person, rather than their physicality, that shaped that person's experience.

When Beth's homeplace was destroyed by fire, she struggled for coherence and looked for the elements foundational to her (safety, security, renewal, and predictability) in other places. As Beth storied her school at that time as her *safe space* and as an *oasis*, she showed me that her classroom became a place where she could escape the chaos of her out-of-school life, a place in which she could *have a break from it*. Marie shaped her own house as homeplace, but also desired to create homeplaces in schools for and with the children and youth she was alongside. Her stories drew my attention to how she composed these spaces as places supporting experiences of safety, creativity, predictability, and care that she had experienced and shaped in her outside of school homeplaces.

In the midst of the tensions in his familial life, and his lack of experiencing homeplace at the many schools he attended, Tobias gradually showed me that he named one place as his homeplace: **the rink**. He storied the rink as: **one of my favourite places to be. I think I enjoyed the rink so much because it was consistent. I knew what to expect. And I was successful.** Predictability and consistency were also what I came to understand as foundational in Tobias' sense of homeplace, where he could feel **very**



**safe and comfortable, even when tragedies occurred.**

As I lingered with Tobias's experience at the rink, Beth's experience in school, and Marie's experience in her home and in classroom spaces, I awakened to how their experience was drawing out mine in relation with the CRTED. Their trauma stories drew them to seek homeplace; I somewhat inadvertently stumbled into a professional knowledge homeplace that opened up the possibility for me to retell and relive my trauma stories with forward looking possibility. I wonder now about the possibility that could be opened up if places of teacher education and development were shaped as, and shaped by, understandings of professional knowledge landscapes as homeplaces in hooks' (2015) sense of being "site(s) of resistance" (p. 41), and places of in-betweenness (Heilbrun, 1999), of liminality and complexity, that encourage inquiring into tension in careful, critical, and thoughtful ways. What if professional knowledge homeplaces drew on hooks' (2015) sense of homeplaces as spaces where "we learned dignity, integrity of being" (p. 41) and "subversive value" (p. 47)? I wonder what might shift if narrative inquiry as a relational pedagogy shaped teacher education in ways that honoured and sustained the complexities and multiplicities of lives and inquiry into tensions, shifting away from an often-dominant singular focus on the smooth and one-directional mechanics of teaching (subject, classroom management, assessment standards). I wonder how teachers might feel encouraged and sustained to live in these ways alongside children, youth, families, and communities in their in- and out-of-classroom places, if they felt supported and nurtured in professional knowledge homeplaces. I sense I will draw on these wonders to shape many

future inquiries as I continue to think with and live the complexities and possibilities of homeplaces and narrative inquiry as pedagogy in pre- and in-service teacher education.

### **Personal Justifications: All-ways Becoming Through Experience**

My personal justifications for this work brought me full circle. They drew me inward and backward to my experience as a young person, and forward and outward to how my early experience shaped, and continues to shape, who I am and whom I am becoming as a hopeful future teacher educator and as an always becoming (but still beginning) narrative inquirer. In this section I share my personal justifications in two subsections: *Being in the Midst of Always Becoming as a Narrative Inquirer*; and, *Lingering With Forward-Looking Wonders*.

#### **Being in the Midst of Always Becoming as a Narrative Inquirer**

Earlier in this chapter, I shared my emerging sense of the importance of a narrative conceptualization of trauma and of narrative inquiry as a relational process of inquiry suited to the study of trauma. This awakening grew slowly, over the course of more than four years, as I slowly awakened to and then inquired into stories of my experience. In part, I awakened to myself as a person whose life had been woven by dominant institutional narratives of *teacher* and of *student* that were interwoven with other institutional narratives, such as the military narrative of obedience to a chain of command.

Even as I engaged in inquiry alongside Tobias, Beth, and Marie, I found myself attending to how easy it was for me to (re)turn to or to be drawn toward less relational ways of being. I sense I found comfort in them even as I found this awakening scary as I

hoped that I was composing my life in different ways. As I inquired into my (re)turning to ways I thought I had long left behind, I came to sense the possibility of yet another retelling as I began shifting some of my stories I live by from becoming teacher to becoming teacher educator and narrative inquirer.

**Shifting from “being an ELA teacher” to becoming a narrative inquirer.** An example of this shift grew out of my attending to how I *used* stories. I recognized this aspect when I re-read first drafts of my writing and saw my use of language such as “book” and “reading stories” which pointed me toward seeing how I was situating stories only as objects or strategies or tools; in this way I situated our stories as resources supporting our inquiry, rather than as living, shifting, and continuous—as the inquiry. Wagamese’s knowledge of living of story as “all we are” (p. 63)<sup>86</sup> was what I wanted to live and show, however, I realized that I was not quite there yet. As I continued to think narratively, I drew inward and backward to wonder how my identity making had been powerfully shaped through many years of my composing a life as an English Language Arts teacher. In awakening to this aspect of my identity and life making, I sensed that perhaps this was a context in which I learned to see “story” only as a thing to be used, a tool.

It was through many bumps in the road and many moments of frustration with myself, of feeling like I had “done it wrong” that I came to experience myself as beginning, understanding that this was hard work, and that it was a radical departure from much of the “training” and professional development I had received before beginning to engage in

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<sup>86</sup> As shown in Chapter 2, Wagamese shared that “all we are is story” (as cited in Janssens, 2017, p. 63).

narrative inquiry. I began to experience and embrace my beginning as a narrative inquirer which, in turn, supported me to awaken to possibilities that can open in living a narrative understanding of trauma. While there were still some moments of tension, I sense I began moving in ways in which I was thinking with stories. The shift through this inquiry has been profound in me and I know I still have so much more to learn in doing and living.

### **Lingering with Forward-Looking Wonders**

I often imagined myself returning to the classroom where I taught in Fort McMurray. These imaginings are always woven with my stories of returning to the classroom where I taught after John's death. At the beginning of this inquiry, before engaging in my autobiographical narrative beginnings, I believe I would have tried to live again in Fort McMurray the smooth(ed) story I lived in and of the days after John's death. I would have imagined myself as in control, calm, thoughtful, and open to co-making a curriculum with the youth who would be in "my" room. As this inquiry unfolded, however, I sensed my imagining shifting. As I found and began to inquire into my writing from the days after John's death alongside Tobias's stories of being a tyrant after the Humboldt crash, alongside Beth's stories of being distracted and abstracted, and alongside Marie's stories of feeling like she was becoming a person she did not like in the classroom, my imagining grew to be much more complex, much more layered, liminal, tensioned, and relational.

I continue to linger with the stories shared of *having to check myself at the door*, of *my humanity was ignored*, of *I couldn't be human*, alongside statements of *school was my*

*oasis, it gave me a break from my chaotic life*, and wonder, again, how these complexities shape and are shaped by our experiences, our trauma stories, and the stories of trauma we encounter on our professional knowledge landscapes. I wonder how a narrative conceptualization of trauma, and the possibilities of professional knowledge homeplaces, might shape the stories of trauma being lived in and out by teachers, by administrators, by school divisions, by Ministries of Education, and by program developers.

I will continue to wonder how, in relation with (and as possibly interrupting) the dominant stories of teachers and of trauma, teachers might come to feel supported to feel that we can compose our lives in whole and healthy ways. A significant personal justification of this work is that it has created, in me, the desire to continue thinking with the tensions, complexities, and multiplicities that surfaced, sometimes unexpectedly, over the course of this inquiry.

Lindemann Nelson (1995) noted:

Counterstories that facilitate our entry into those communities, not as marginalized objects of contempt but as full citizens who may freely enjoy the goods to be had there, ought not only to be preferred to others, but are badly in need of telling. (p. 38)

I offer this dissertation as a beginning, as through this experience I have come to understand: "It is [more than] time now to explore the creative [and critical] potential of interrupted and conflicted lives" (Bateson, 1989, p. 9). I sense that Tobias', Beth's, Marie's, and my stories shared (and not shared here) might draw out others' stories badly in need of telling. This is our hope for this inquiry. This is our pebble being dropped, invitationally

into the waters. We will continue to wonder about the possible ripples eddying outward.

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## Appendix A - Information Letter and Consent Form

### INFORMATION LETTER and CONSENT FORM

**Study Title:** Teachers' Experiences of/with Trauma and Trauma-Sensitivity

**Research Investigator:** Nathalie Reid  
 PhD Candidate, Elementary Education  
 633 Education South  
 Faculty of Education, University of Alberta  
 Edmonton, AB T6G 2G5  
 Email: nreid2@ualberta.ca Phone: 780-838-7478 (office)

**Supervisor:** Dr. Janice Huber  
 Professor, Elementary Education  
 437 Education South  
 Faculty of Education, University of Alberta  
 Edmonton, AB T6G 2G5  
  
 Email: jhuber@ualberta.ca

Dear potential participant:

#### *Background*

Thank you for contacting me about this study. Information about the study was broadly shared via professional contacts and an advertisement in the Alberta Teachers' Association News. I am seeking 3 participants of diverse backgrounds and experience who are interested in the topic of this study. I invite you to consider participating. Results from the study will: 1) shape my dissertation, 2) be shared at local and national conferences and published in journals; 3) support future professional learning; and, 4) shape other future studies.

#### *Purpose*

The study purpose is to attend to how teachers' experiences of/with trauma shape, and are shaped by, their personal and professional contexts, knowledge, and identities. The study inquires into the experiences of three teachers situated in urban/suburban schools in western Canada, with focuses on attending to: 1) The teachers' experiences with their own and with children and youths' experiences of/with trauma; 2) The personal, social, cultural, familial, and institutional narratives shaping and shaped by the teachers' experiences

of/with trauma; 3) The ongoing development of narrative inquiry as a research methodology appropriate for the study of experiences of/with trauma; and, 4) Ways that narrative inquiry could shape pedagogy, policy, and practice significant for schools, school divisions, departments of education, and programs of teacher education.

### *Study Procedures*

If you consent to participate in this study, that has received University of Alberta Research Ethics Board approval (October 17, 2017), you will be asked to engage in monthly conversations, and then in on-going, less regular conversations as the study and the writing of the dissertation proceeds. Each conversation will be approximately 1 hour in length, and will occur at times and in places of your choosing. The conversations will be digitally recorded from which a written transcript will be made. This will be returned to you via email so that you may check it for accuracy and resonance, which also should take no more than 1 hour of your time. During these conversations we will share stories of experience, create and inquire into artefacts, and wonder with our stories to further our thinking. All of these conversations are shaped by both the participant and the researchers in relation. Should the participant desire, an online journal (shared in google docs) can be created to continue conversations digitally between the monthly in-person conversation. After the six conversations are recorded, transcribed, and shared, we will spend time with them looking for emerging wonders and resonances that will help us inquire together. These resonances will be used to shape a narrative account that reflects the wholeness of our conversations across the transcripts.

### *Benefits*

As a participant in this study you will have an opportunity to reflect upon, and potentially also deepen, your understandings of your past, present and future experiences and understandings of/with trauma, and/or with trauma-sensitivity. Insights from the study might support future pre-service and in-service program development for teachers. There are no costs involved in participating in this study.

### *Risks*

There may be risks that are part of this study. As the nature of the study is inherently difficult, we will work together to establish a plan should additional resources or intervention become necessary. We will work together to ensure that the course of action is comfortable and in place for each of us before beginning.

Absolute confidentiality will be maintained; the only exception to this promise of confidentiality is that I am legally obligated to report evidence of child abuse or neglect.

### *Voluntary Participation*

You are under no obligation to participate in this study. Your participation is completely voluntary. If you are not comfortable with any of the conversations, you are not obliged to approve the transcripts. You can end your participation in this study at any time without

penalty. Until the written transcripts of our conversations are checked by you for accuracy and resonance and returned to me, you can omit, change, or add to their content. You can choose to withdraw from the study entirely up until you have approved the narrative account, written to foreground the resonant threads and complexities surfaced from and across your transcripts. Should you choose to withdraw from the study entirely, all data and the signed consent form, will immediately be destroyed.

#### *Confidentiality & Anonymity*

The researcher intends to use the data from this study to publish her dissertation and present at conferences as well as to shape future pre-service and in-service teacher preparation and professional development. A grant application for a future long-term study will also be developed. In no way will participants be personally identifiable. All data will be kept confidential. Information will be kept confidential unless required by law. Beyond the researcher, the only person who will have access to the data is possibly a transcriptionist, who will sign a confidentiality agreement. If the Research Ethics Board wishes to review the data they, too, will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement. Anonymity will be ensured through the use of a pseudonym to protect your identity. All data will be stored on a password-protected laptop. All hard data will be held in a filing cabinet in a securely locked office. All data will be destroyed after 5 years. If you are interested in receiving a copy of any papers published from the study, these will be sent to you via email.

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. If I use the data I get from this study for future research, it too will be approved by a Research Ethics Board. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at 492-2615. This office has no direct involvement with this project.

Sincerely,

Nathalie Reid

**Informed Consent: Participant**

My signature below indicates my agreement to participate in this study. A signed copy of this form has been given to me and the researcher has also retained a copy.

---

Name (Please Print)

---

Chosen pseudonym (Please Print)

---

Signature

---

Date

My signature below indicates my consent for the researcher to contact me about my potential participation in future studies.

---

Name (Please Print)

---

Contact Information

---

Signature

---

Date

## **Appendix B - Ethics Approval Notification Letter**

### **Notification of Approval**

Date: October 17, 2017 Study ID: Pro00076831

Principal Investigator: Nathalie Reid  
Study Supervisor: Janice Huber

Study Title: Teachers' Experiences of/with Trauma and Trauma-Sensitivity: A Narrative Inquiry

Approval Expiry Date: Tuesday, October 16, 2018

Approved Consent Form:

Approval Date	Approved Document
10/17/2017	Consent Form

Thank you for submitting the above study to the Research Ethics Board 1. Your application has been reviewed and approved on behalf of the committee. A renewal report must be submitted next year prior to the expiry of this approval if your study still requires ethics approval. If you do not renew on or before the renewal expiry date, you will have to re-submit an ethics application.

Approval by the Research Ethics Board does not encompass authorization to access the staff, students, facilities or resources of local institutions for the purposes of the research.

Sincerely,

Anne Malena, PhD

Chair, Research Ethics Board 1

Note: This correspondence includes an electronic signature (validation and approval via an online system).