

Welcoming the Child into the Circle of Understanding

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A woman once described a friend of hers as being such a keen listener that even the trees leaned toward her, as if they were speaking their innermost secrets into her listening ears. Over the years I've envisioned that woman's silence, a hearing full and open enough that the world told her its stories. The green leaves turned toward her, whispering tales of soft breezes and the murmurs of leaf against leaf. (Hogan, 2000, p.115)

In this article you will encounter an educational and methodological orientation that is rooted in a holistic integrative paradigm and an Indigenous worldview. It is written from the viewpoint of an Indigenous pedagogical practice, that of Indigenous storytelling. This storytelling tradition is a way of presenting Indigenous knowledge as well as of facilitating the following of an inherently Indigenous logic or way of thinking. Both were intertwined within the narrative of the story; the knowing and the way of knowing were aesthetically woven into the telling. This created a learning pathway that, when traversed, nurtured understanding and the creative capacity to participate more fully in the world. This pedagogical practice, written from an Indigenous worldview, will therefore challenge many existing understandings as it creatively juxtaposes contemporary educational perspectives with Indigenous wisdom traditions. The intention of the article is to augment and extend theorizing about early childhood education to the end that it is informed by the understandings of Indigeneity. This is an autobiographical inquiry that uses Indigenous Métissage as a praxis for life writing (Hasebe-Ludt, Chambers & Leggo, 2009). I have incorporated lyrical text and photos as well as theoretical text to help me inquire into a curriculum of being human (Hasebe-Ludt et al., p. 2). The specific experiences resulting from my various sites of research, which we shall visit in this article, are integrated or woven into the fabric of Métissage. The multiple experiences help support Métissage as a research practice and also give the added add form and substance to its the representation in this of Indigenous Métissage and resulting in this article. The various research projects are integrated within the autobiographical inquiry and also within the article.

There are so many unresolved issues that we carry in our hearts as educators, as we walk our educational pathway, so many webs of complexity that seem to unravel before us without us seeing possible solutions. Perhaps one of the most in need of attending is what we call relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal persons and what I have come to acknowledge as Indigenous education. I ask: What is the contribution of Indigenous education to the education of the young child? And could the integration of Indigenous education into our educational institutions make a contribution to the future of Canadian and Aboriginal relations? At the core of this wondering is the notion that the education of the young child ultimately begins with the education of the adult who educates. If we are to attend to and indeed transform the future of non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal relations in Canada it must begin with an ecological re-imagining of the educational perspectives and processes that inform early childhood education as well as the health and well-being of the young child.

In turning to the question of how we are to educate the young child I reach out to Indigenous understandings. I honor the Lakota tradition of *Mitakuye Oyasin*, [we are all related], and I raise my hands to Pueblo scholar, Gregory Cajete (1994, 2005), who invites us to think of humanity as multicolored kernels of corn from the same cob lying in a basket. So I have come to understand that we are all children of this earth. I also raise my hands to the elders and the Indigenous scholars in Canada and around the world who are continuing to honor the spirit and intent of our ancestors through their contributions to contemporary life and educational pursuits.

I speak to Indigenous education because that which is at its core is the honoring of wisdom traditions that Indigenous people carry forward into our time, their various understandings of what it means to be Indigenous to a place. These particular

philosophies and practices, which resulted from their long-term habitation in a certain place in the world, support and perpetuate a deeply rooted spiritual and environmental relationship with the land and other entities that thoroughly informs and infuses their specific cultural practices, ecological knowledges and languages. Indigenous people are people of the land and are seen as the holders of a unique sovereignty in their traditional lands and the practitioners of their unique ecological knowledge and other expressions of their cultural traditions. In the Canadian context Indigenous peoples are acknowledged as Aboriginal people, and the term indicates people of First Nations, Métis and Inuit heritage, and their descendants. The Indigenous peoples of Canada have unique understandings of what it means to be endogenous, or of a particular ecology and place. I believe they have an important contribution to make to the education of young children and their understanding that we are all endogenous to earth. In a time of ecological crisis the Indigenous people have something to offer the young child concerning how to live well within the community of life on Mother Earth.

The essence of Indigenous education is that it acknowledges participating in a lifelong learning journey.

The understanding that our lives are truly and profoundly connected to other people and the physical world... one gains this knowledge from firsthand experience in the world and then transmits or explores it through ritual, ceremony, art and appropriate technology. The individual then uses knowledge gained through these vehicles in the context of everyday living. Education in this context becomes education for life's sake. Indigenous Education is at its very essence learning about life through participation and relationship to community, including not only people but plants, animals and the whole of nature. (Cajete, 2005, p.70)

There may not be a word for epistemology in most Indigenous languages; however, there are extensive understandings and knowledge systems that include what Western philosophy explores as the origins, nature and methods of coming to know, and multiple understandings of knowing a way of life (Atleo, 2004; Deloria, 1973; Battiste, 2000; Ermine, 2000; Hawken, 2007; Kawagley, 1995; Littlebear, 2000; Peat, 1994; Meyer, 2003, 2008; Suzuki & Knudtson, 1992; Waters, 2003). There may also not be a word for curriculum in many Indigenous languages, but there are elaborate modes and methods for what is known today as Indigenous Education with its own Indigenous pedagogy (Archibald 2008; Battiste & Barman, 1995; Cajete, 1994, 1999, 2000, 2005; Deloria & Wildcat, 2001). The living legacy of Indigenous knowledge and pedagogy continues to be told in the many stories that the grandmothers tell the young. It is my hope that it lives in the following stories and if you listen well you may hear it.

As a teacher educator, artist, researcher, and Indigenous scholar I find myself poised between multiple understandings and orientations to possible ways of engaging in the education of young children and those who educate them. One of the ways that I have come to understand the tensions of in between places that I encounter is to pursue my work using Métissage as a praxis for life writing and autobiographical inquiry (Chambers, Hasebe-Ludt, & Donald, 2002; Chambers et al., 2008, Hasebe-Ludt, Chambers, & Leggo, 2009). It offers the possibility to transform and, through its properties of mixing, opposes fixed or formal logic and the clarity of concepts that often polarize.

Hasebe-Ludt, Chambers and Leggo (2009) articulate the origins of Métissage in literary and cultural studies:

We take métissage as a *counternarrative* to the grand narrative of our times, a site of writing and surviving in the interval between different cultures and languages, particularly in colonial contexts; a way of merging and blurring genres, texts and identities; an active literary stance, political strategy, and pedagogical practice. Our writing illustrates métissage as an artful research praxis that mixes binaries such as colonized with colonizer, local with global, East with West, North and South, particular with universal, feminine with masculine, vernacular with literate, and theory with practice. We braid strands of place and space, memory and history, ancestry and (mixed) race, language and literacy, familiar and strange, with the strands of tradition, ambiguity, becoming, (re) creation, and renewal into a métissage. (p. 9)

As a curriculum inquiry the praxis of Métissage, through life writing, offers a way of speaking and acting that is both political and redemptive. Métissage offers a rapprochement between alternative and mainstream curriculum discourses and seeks a genuine exchange between writers and their audiences. Its aim, stated by King (as cited in Hasebe-Ludt, Chambers, & Leggo, 2009) is “to go out into the world and love it fiercely (Arendt, 1958; Galen, 1991), always returning home with gifts of new knowledge, new hope that it is possible to live well in a particular place at this time, with ourselves and with all our relations” (p. 9). Hasebe-Ludt and Jordan (2010) provide a rich description of the origins of Metissage:

The word origin of métissage comes from the Latin *mixticius*, meaning the weaving of a cloth from different fibres (Mish, 1990). In Greek mythology Metis was an ancient Titaness, the primordial figure of wisdom, descended from Gaia and Uranus. She was eventually married and swallowed by Zeus (Graves, 1955/1980). Metis was also a figure of skill and craft, and of cunning, a trickster with powers of transformation who resisted notions of purity by weaving and blurring textiles (Harper, 2001). Métissage, derived from these origins, is thus an artful craft and practice, an active literary and pedagogical strategy for negotiating conflicting or dichotomous value systems, a political praxis that might also uncover the swallowed wisdom of lost or forgotten origins. It is a way through which researchers and writers can reformulate understandings of self and other in ways that are meaningful and appropriate for our times (Lionnet, 1998; 2001). The method of métissage, as appropriated in poststructural/postcolonial and curriculum theory as well as pedagogical contexts, encourages genuine exchange, sustained engagement, and the tracing of ‘mixed and multiple identities’ in the ‘messy threads of relatedness and belonging’ (Hasebe-Ludt, Chambers, & Leggo, 2009). (p. 3)

Thus, in the following I gather together pieces of lyric writing as well as autobiographical writing and juxtapose them with theoretical writing, all the while

weaving a Métissage of meaning making. In so doing it is my hope that this article makes a contribution to the thinking on early childhood education and curriculum.

As a form of curriculum inquiry, métissage requires researchers to craft pieces of autobiographical writing in which they research and teach themselves. The texts are selected and braided in such a way as to highlight both points of affinity (Haraway, 1994) and dissonance. The braiding becomes an interpretation of the narratives as well as a form of representation and reporting of research, individual and collective. (Hasebe-Ludt, 2009, p. 9)

In my work as a Métis scholar I have come to understand being Métis in terms of *two-eyed seeing*, a term first articulated by Albert Marshall, a Mi'kmaq Elder, to indicate the idea of using one eye with the strengths of the Western worldview and the other eye with the strengths of the Indigenous worldview to see more fully with both eyes (Bartlett, 2011; Iwama, Marshall, Marshall, & Bartlett, 2009). Ultimately, two-eyed seeing creates the capacity to see holistically, as the two eyes see in different ways and are complimentary to each other. In my work I also recognize the reality that two-eyed seeing is but a pathway to many-eyed seeing, which at its heart acknowledges the Indigenous idea of honoring the circle of understanding.

Indigenous Métissage is inspired by philosophical insights that emphasize contextualized and place-based ecological interpretations of ethical relationality (Donald, 2009). This is why my research in the area of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relations in Canada as well as in Indigenous education is best represented in the form of an Indigenous Métissage. It also allows me to articulate differing perspectives, like that of two-eyed seeing, and seek reconciliation in forms that honor profound difference. Throughout my autobiographical inquiry and life writing I can articulate my own experiences of the legacies of post-colonialism in Canada in ways that transcend or bridge polarized perspectives (Donald, 2012). The intent of this article is to discuss Indigenous education in an inclusive as well as inviting way and to describe how this discussion can inform early childhood education.

The braid made by tracing or tracking (Cajete, 1994) the narrative story lines or threads of my own biography and weaving these together with lines or threads of academic inquiry has led to my present understanding of how we might consider the young child, all children, in Indigenous education. This is clearly articulated in the following quote, and it is also one of the foundations upon which I stand as an Indigenous scholar. Donald (2012) uses the term *ecological* in association with the concept of human relationality

to draw attention to the complex interrelationships that comprise the world as it is understood in Cree and Blackfoot wisdom traditions. Ecology, in this case, does not refer to concerns about the natural environment separate from the lives of human beings. Rather, human beings are seen as intimately enmeshed in webs of relationship with each other and with the other entities that inhabit the world. We depend on these relationships for survival. This insight finds expression through philosophical emphasis on the need to honour and repeatedly renew our relations with those entities that give and sustain life. (p.13)

One of the central goals of doing Indigenous Métissage is to enact ethical relationality as a philosophical commitment. Ethical relationality is an ecological understanding of human relationality that does not deny difference, but rather seeks to understand more deeply how our different histories and experiences position us in relation to each other.

The aim of Métissage is to weave the various stories, artifacts or places in such a way that the braiding itself allows patterns to arise, patterns of emerging understanding. In Indigenous Métissage (Donald, 2012) one follows the tradition of Indigenous storytelling, where the stories have embedded within them the meaning to be taught or transmitted. The story and the meaning are implicitly woven together, as they are in life. In Indigenous Métissage, the stories are crafted and woven so that each of the details or threads is intentional, calling the reader and teller to encounter each other in the aesthetically created storied space or landscape. The method of interpretation or the hermeneutic of the story and of the life lived is unique to the teller. However, to those to whom it is told, in this case, you, the reader, the opportunity is given for each of you to interpret the story or the teaching in your own, unique way. Sometimes understanding of the story develops over time and sometimes over the span of a lifetime.

In this article, as we navigate this storied landscape together, we will encounter each other at the foot of the welcoming totem pole during an unveiling ceremony, and then we will witness the blessing of the welcome pole. These two events, the unveiling and blessing of the welcome pole carved by Aboriginal and non-aboriginal children, become metaphors for a pedagogical process that is then described in the remainder of the article. We will enter this process by gathering around the community fire and participating in the telling of stories of where we are from, and then we will consider the pedagogy of such places. You will meet my students, pre-service and in-service teachers, as they inquire into their lived curriculums of place and perspective, and are invited to engage in storytelling and share the tales of where they are from. I will describe their transformation as they tell us of the places they are of, the living landscapes from which they have emerged, the environmental and cultural landscapes that have shaped their ways of knowing, interpreting, and thus their understandings of the world.

We will then explore multiple cultural contexts in my own life and encounter the idea of two-eyed seeing as a pathway to many-eyed-seeing. This metaphor describes the modern reality of mixed cultural heritage for many of us, and this embodied cultural experience offers us unique perspectives and understandings. Two-eyed seeing fosters unique insight into the various locations and cultural contexts through which we navigate within the field of early childhood education and in our relationships with each other as educators and as citizens of Earth. And finally, we will arrive back at the foot of the welcoming pole, bringing us into the circle of those there gathered, the circle of life, the circle of understanding, and the hope of honoring the learning spirit of the young child.

I invite you as reader to listen to this Indigenous Métissage, to hear, to listen to this particular braiding of stories and to participate in the telling as if we were sitting together around the same fire. I invite you to add your perspective, the view from your place, your position in life. The telling of such a tale invites your lived experience and storied understanding, and it is as relevant to our emerging and merging understanding as is that of the teller. I as a teller am speaking from my heart, and through my words I am reaching towards the understanding of your heart. The intention of what follows is essentially to tell a story that lies close to all our hearts. It is the story of our children's

future and the future of the next seven generations, or as the elders say, *for the next seven generations*.

Indigenous Métissage: The Storied Artifact



The truth about stories is that that's all we are. The Okanagan storyteller Jeanette Armstrong tells us that 'Through my language I understand I am being spoken to, I am not the speaker. The words are coming from many tongues and mouths of Okanagan people and the land around them. I am a listener to the language's stories, and when my words form I am merely retelling the same stories in different patterns.' (as cited in King, 2003, p. 2.)

Indigenous Métissage has informed my research both in Aboriginal communities and public schools in northern British Columbia and also my involvement in an exciting research project, a collaborative project among the university, a local school district, and various environmental initiatives from the community. The school project is a place-based, environmental, imaginative educational initiative that is exploring a cutting edge solution to environmental education. It is a school that lives and is enacted in both urban and natural environments, a “school” without a school building as such. As part of that research project I have been working with the local urban Aboriginal communities as well as the First Nations on whose territories the school dwells. From the school district's Director of Aboriginal Education I learned of an exciting project that was currently

unfolding in one of the elementary schools. Subsequently I was invited to the unveiling of the Welcome Pole. The following is a description of the unveiling ceremony.

I attended the unveiling of welcome pole in a local elementary school. The hall was filled to capacity with elders and community members from the local First Nations, seated as guests of honor at the front and joined by district directors, educators, and local dignitaries, while the parents surrounded the space on three sides. The hall was filled with warm greetings and friendly conversations when the children with their teachers and support staff filed in and settled in the middle of the hall on the floor. All became hushed as we focused on the tall, freestanding pole that stood before us, its countenance covered with cloth.

The drummers rose and filled the hall with the heart throbbing drumbeat accompanied by their powerful voices singing their song of welcome. This was followed by the elder's song of prayer as he danced, encircling all who were gathered. All the children were filled with anticipation, while the sound of the powerful drumming still reverberated, and the lone voice of the elder's song resonated in the air.

The story was told of how it happened that all the children in the school had helped carve the totem pole we were about to unveil. It all began with a logging operation, an immense cedar tree harvested from the local forest, and an offer from a local forester. And it continued over cups of coffee and the fostering of friendships, as arrangements were made to transport the huge log to a drying kiln to be cured for months. And finally the day arrived when the log was ceremoniously delivered to the school. But most importantly we were told of how, for two years, the Aboriginal students and Aboriginal support workers carved every week after school with the master carver. The connections and contacts that wove throughout the tale were a testament to the Director of Aboriginal Education and his vision that this project bring people together and contribute to the relationship building between local First Nations and the local community.

The master carver, who also worked in the schools as an Aboriginal support worker, was invited to unveil the welcome pole and as the cloth slowly fell to the floor there was an audible gasp. There it stood in all its majesty and power. On top stood the human form, hands raised in welcome and gratitude. Below were the carved totems of bear, crane, and salmon. The master carver spoke of how he had met with the various parent and community groups to gather together the visions and values to be embodied in the totem pole; then he had set about creating the design. This was his first large carving, and as he stood before us he was radiant with happiness. In his storytelling he addressed the children as co-carvers with warmth of heart and kindness. He asked those who had carved the welcome pole to raise their hands; gradually hundreds of children's hands rose, Aboriginal and non-aboriginal alike. Then he asked them to turn to their neighbors and give them a congratulatory high five. Suddenly, there were hundreds of hands clasped in celebration and camaraderie. With the sounds of hands clapping and delighted laughter this marvelous moment was imprinted in my memory.

For me the moment in time when the children clasped hands in celebration, and the event of the unveiling of the welcome pole that was to be placed in the entrance to the school, have become metaphors for the future possibilities and potentiality in fostering an ethical relationality in the relationship between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal people.

In the following sections I first reflect upon the blessing of the pole by an elder and the celebration of the carved countenance of diversity, which have become a

metaphor for an Indigenous pedagogical process. This process is then described as the pedagogy of place and the pedagogy of the imagination, two-eyed seeing, honoring the learning spirit, creating circles of understanding, and the pedagogy of the native flute that I embark on with pre-service and in-service teachers. Through the telling of this story I describe the Indigenous theoretical framework that informs my work in teacher education. And ultimately, I believe this perspective can inform early childhood education. As stated earlier, it is by educating the adult educators of young children that we attend to the re-imagining of early childhood education.

Standing in the World and Finding the Centre



Artist Paul Klee once said that we must return to the origins of things and their meanings, to the secret places where original law fosters all evolution, to the organic centre of all movement in time and space, which is the mind or heart of creation. (as cited in Hogan, 2000, pp.116-117)

As an Indigenous scholar I stand like the tree in the forest that yearns to be carved into a welcome pole, where the stories of my own fashioning lead me back to a deeper understanding of my identity. I acknowledge how the various forms of my character are imprinted, stamped out of my love for the land and etched from the values of family, community, and culture. Ultimately totem poles are created to depict the family clan crests and totems, values and identity stories, worldview and cultural understandings; these stories and images live as compressed complexities within the carved surfaces of

the pole. Thus, I have come to know these two aspects of my ecology of being. They are the environmental and spiritual ecologies that have profoundly shaped my worldview and the visions that I hold. On the countenance of my welcome pole I can trace the lines I have been following like tracks left on the floor of the forest, going back again and again, tracing the stories, until I can find the patterns etched into my countenance. The creation story that emerges through markings on my welcome pole with hands raised celebrates past journeys and welcomes new beginnings.

There was a moment in the unveiling ceremony when the elder, who had earlier blessed the tree, the then un-carved log when it arrived at the school, stood before the newly unveiled welcome pole. It was just after the moment when the children gasped as the cloth had fallen to the floor to reveal the completed totem pole. The elder walked humbly forward to stand in front of the carved countenance of the pole. She broke the branches of a cedar bough into two fans of green fronds. She raised her arms up, reaching skyward as she stepped towards the pole. She let the branches caress the countenance of the pole in blessing and as she ran the branches from above her head down to the earth, she blessed the pole four times.

This moment of blessing described above has become a metaphor for aspects of Indigenous education. I wonder how we can learn to honor, respect and ultimately bless the stories of our own becoming? How do we learn to honor the landscapes from which we come? And like the green cedar leaves that traced the patterns carved into the face of the pole, how can we learn to run our fingers over the textured skin storying our own making? How do we honor not only that which we are but also that which we deeply yearn to become on our life journey?

Are we not like the figure standing at the top of the pole gravely facing the future, with hands outstretched to Father Sky, and feet reaching towards Mother Earth? For we too are children rooted to Mother Earth, who stand with our heads, raised high and our hands outstretched to unknown futures. We have all taken risks and like a child first learning to stand, and then to walk, we have stretched our hands towards a parent, teacher, or friend in search of welcome. And we have all welcomed and embraced another. It is through my Indigenous Métissage work, where my life stands before me as the artifact of a totem pole, that I use my life writing to run my fingers over the stories of my life to discover the patterns that have emerged. I learn to read the patterns and the stories and to reflect upon what is written within them, the woven threads of meaning making. There I find, carved into the surfaces of the totem pole, my own patterns of finding face, finding heart, and finding foundation, and in so doing, I find identity, passion, and vocation as an Indigenous scholar. This is also the intention that lies at the heart of the pedagogical process that I enact with in-service and pre-service teachers, to invite them to discover their face, heart, and foundation to the end that they can ultimately engage with such pedagogical processes with their students.

In Indigenous Métissage, telling and reflecting on stories of lived experiences are like running our fingers over the textured surfaces of our living countenances, finding face, finding heart, and finding foundation. The contours and textures become signs or markings that lead us to understandings of the explicit meanings, the signature, of our own stories. In tracing back through the various lived landscapes, we come to understand our origins, the *I am from* places of our birth, the endogenous ecologies that hold our indigenous selves like hands raised up in welcome, in celebration. As educators we run

our fingers over our own emerging countenance to understand that we arose in promise from that moment when we first stood with arms raised, outstretched to welcome the world.

By returning and reflecting on our own life we come to understand the development of the child within us. To know the child in ourselves is to know and welcome the child in another. To trace our own heritage, the places, people, culture we are from, is to learn to discern it in another.

I Am From; The Pedagogy of Place and the Pedagogy of the Imagination



The truth about stories is that that's all we are. 'You can't understand the world without telling a story,' the Anishinaabe writer Gerald Vizenor tells us. 'There isn't any centre to the world but a story.' (as cited in King, 2003, p. 32)

In my classes in teacher education I endeavor to create respectful places in which to celebrate and to welcome the students and their totem poles. We engage in dialogue, a practice of Indigenous pedagogy whereby we tell the stories of our names, our birth, and where we are from. In this process of inquiry through dialogue, we always endeavour to have one ear turned to our heart, to our own voice as the one who is telling the story, and the other ear turned in deep attention to the student with whom we are speaking.

I begin these sessions by sharing the Anishinaabe creation story: From his mighty vision, Kitchi Manitou created the sky world of sun, moon, and stars and then the world of mountains, valleys, plains, lakes and rivers through the elements of earth, water, air, and fire, as well as the plant beings, animal beings, and human beings, to live in harmony and walk in beauty. I ask my student teachers to go to the places that are home for them, or to visit the spaces where they feel most at home, and to share these places and spaces that they feel endogenous to, the places and spaces they come from.

I ask them to share with their partners what the earth, the water, the air, and the warmth is like in this place? I invite them to describe in detail what is present in the places where they are from. They often begin quietly, haltingly searching their memories for that special place; then, through speaking, they are able to call it up in detail. Gradually the place takes shape and becomes vivid in their imaginations as they speak of where they are from. Through their stories they honor the place where they feel they truly belong. Sometimes these places are cityscapes; sometimes they are the rugged coastlines of British Columbia; sometimes they are quiet shores of northern rivers and lakes; sometimes they are exotic far-off places; sometimes they are special rooms or spaces, and sometimes they are the invisible places and spaces evoked by books or music. But always, as they navigate through these spaces, I witness their gradual increasing of confidence as they describe in detail the places where they live well. They become more animated and more alive. Then, I ask them to describe the plants of this place, or, if there are none, the ambiance or vitality of the place and as they wander, to describe the colors, smells, moods, and the vital energies of the place.

I notice that they gradually listen more intently to each other, and incline towards each other, fully absorbed in their conversations. Their arms and hands begin to move and speak as they tell their stories. Their gestures become eloquent and elegant as they reach to grasp and articulate a feeling, or, through the subtle movement of a hand, to indicate a detail or a memory. They gracefully shape the air into contours that complement the telling of their stories. I ask them, what are the animals that live in this place with them, and which of these animals are they most drawn to? What animal do they admire that is like a totem to them and has become a teacher or guide? I can see by their generous and exuberant gestures how they are embodying the various animals they are depicting and I witness them become shape shifters. For a moment they are transformed by their imaginations into the creature they describe and love so well.

Like the animal teachers they describe, the elements of earth, water, air, fire, as well as the plant beings etch themselves into our very being as we grow amidst them. These are our first teachers; they enact a delicate but definite pedagogy of place. They educate our senses and create our unique sensibilities for the patterns and signatures of the creative world in which we are immersed. They shape our instruments for knowing the world intimately and aesthetically. And ultimately this informs the way we see and interpret the world around us.

I ask my students to use color, line and shape to represent on paper these places that they are indigenous and endogenous to. Then I ask them to create poems or lyrical writing that embodies the places they are from. They embody and perform the places they are from as they present their work to the class. I am often struck by how the drawings, poems and performance resonate with similar signatures and reveal a unique disposition. We learn to read the gestures and the way a person stands or moves, and to acknowledge

how this reflects the qualitative signature of the stories they tell and the places they come from. In this way the students learn to perform their autobiographical inquiries and to represent them as a Métissage.

The above is a description of my pre-service and in-service teacher's autobiographical inquiry into the affective influence of land, family, community, culture and ultimately all that affects their lives, their lived curriculum. Gregory Cajete (1994) invites us to explore these places to understand our indigenouness and relationship to our environment. Cajete states that Indigenous education and pedagogy honor the environmental ecologies that shape us, and that understanding them is also vital to understanding who we are; it reveals aspects of our finding face or our finding identity. The elders always say: "You need to know where you are from, the land, family and community to know where you belong." Thus, educators of the young child need to be attentive to how the pedagogy of place has informed them. This understanding then creates the capacity to understand and to honor a similar process in another. Educators come to recognize the children before them as ecologies of being that are actively experiencing the pedagogy of place.

Gregory Cajete (1994) also indicates that Indigenous education and Indigenous pedagogy honor the spiritual ecologies of where we are from: the languages, the words that become the vessels for our thoughts, the stories that fill our imaginations, and the cultural practices, celebrations or family traditions that have shaped our early experiences. In total the spiritual or cultural heritages that we emerge from actively shape what becomes our unique worldview or cultural perspective. In other words the spiritual ecology is the sum total of the worldviews, cultures, traditions, philosophical orientations in which we are implicitly embedded and which give rise to our psychological landscapes.

Environmental and spiritual ecologies, along with their languages, artistic representations, and stories or mythologies offer us unique depictions or ways of being human. For Indigenous peoples around the world their languages and cultures were created in reciprocal relationship to the land where they lived. They understood that the spiritual ecologies were embedded within or interwoven with the environmental ecologies of a place. The worldview and mythology created a cosmology that was a natural complement for the natural environmental ecology of a particular place. These are the spiritual or cultural legacies of Indigenous people for humanity. Wade Davis describes it thus:

Together the myriad of cultures makes up an intellectual and spiritual web of life that envelops our planet and is every bit as important to the well being of the planet as the biological web of life that we know as the biosphere. You might think of this social web of life as the "*ethnosphere*," a term perhaps best defined as the sum total of all thoughts and intuitions, myths and beliefs, ideas and inspirations brought into being by the human imagination since the dawn of consciousness. The ethnosphere is humanities greatest legacy. It is the product of our dreams, embodiment of our hopes, the symbol of all we are and all that we, as a wildly inquisitive and astonishing adaptive species, have created.

And just as the biosphere, the biological matrix of life, is being severely eroded by the destruction of habitat and the resultant loss of plant and animal species, so too is the ethnosphere, only at a far greater rate. No

biologist, for example, would suggest that 50 percent of all species are moribund. Yet this, the most apocalyptic scenario in the realm of biological diversity, scarcely approaches what we know to be the most optimistic scenario in the realm of cultural diversity. (Davis, 2009, pp. 2-3)

Today understandings of bio/cultural diversity (Maffi, 2001, 2010) help us to acknowledge this wholeness of life. Indigenous knowledge acknowledges that through profound acts of reciprocity humanity creates a spiritual ecology, which is the elegant sufficiency to the environmental ecology of a place. We live in a time when cultures and places weave a large Métissage from the many-colored threads or strands of culture that simultaneously co-exist. It has been said of Canada that: “We are a Métis Civilization” (Saul, 2008, p.3). I imagine the embodied cultural landscapes as a living Métissage and understand that what is needed to read the patterns of this Métissage are the capacities that allow us, like the children’s hands carving the totem pole, to trace with our fingers the textures of the landscapes, topographies, mythologies, cosmologies, and cultures from which we emerge. This is the enactment of the pedagogy of the imagination, which contributes to the development of a new ethos, a sensibility, or capacity for profound compassion and empathy for the land, for human beings, and ultimately for the more than human world.

Perhaps this acknowledgement of the pedagogy of place, the places we are from, as well as the pedagogy of the imagination, the psychological landscapes we are of, can be embraced and embodied in the image of the tree becoming the totem pole or the welcome pole.

Two-Eyed Seeing



The truth about stories is that that's all we are. 'I will tell you something about stories,' the Laguna storyteller Leslie Silko reminds us. 'They aren't just entertainment/Don't be fooled/ They are all we have, you see/All we have to fight off/Illness and death. You don't have anything/If you don't have the stories.' (as cited in King, 2003, p, 92)

Honoring diversity, from the specific locales where we find ourselves situated, and in our mixed and mixing of identities, offers an opportunity for two-eyed seeing to become a pathway towards many-eyed seeing. Albert Marshall states that if only we are willing to be attentive and to engage deeply in a profound listening to one another, two eyed seeing is when we honor the strengths with which the one eye, the Indigenous eye, sees and is complimented by the strengths with which the other eye, the Western eye, sees, to the end that one sees more fully, more holistically (Iwama et al. 2009, Bartlett, 2011). With the idea of two-eyed seeing as a way to many-eyed- seeing, we invite the imagination to move from place to place, from perspective to perspective, or from worldview to worldview.

My understanding, if we are to attend to our hope for future generations, is that we must develop this capacity to move to the places in-between, acknowledging the vulnerability of this place that is in-between one way of seeing/being and another way of seeing/being. We learn to understand that there is no need for translation when you go wholeheartedly into and live within one way of seeing, and then move wholeheartedly into the other way of seeing. You come to know the teachings or perspectives of both; so, too, are those fluent in two languages; they can be understood in both languages and yet live well somewhere in-between.

In the description of pedagogy of place and the pedagogy of the imagination it seems as though the only way that we can embrace other ways or ecologies of being is by first knowing our own way or ecology of being. We come to understand deeply how utterly we are from those environmental places and spiritual spaces we come from, and to acknowledge how profoundly they have influenced us. This knowing is the knowing that allows us to navigate, venture forth into other people's places and spaces as we listen to the telling of their stories. This process awakens within us a deep ethos for the various topographies and mythologies or cosmologies of another. And it invites us, through their forms of expression and their gestures of the earth, water, air, and fire, into the places they are from. We encounter the plant beings and animal beings they have come to know and love. And thus, do we hear echoes of their family gatherings, the living legacies of their cultural celebrations and traditions as we wander with them through their stories, as if through the halls of a great long house. We develop the capacity to resonate with other ecologies of being from our place of knowing and acknowledge our own ecology of being. This process also invites us to welcome or offer hospitality toward another and allows us to know of other people's storied ecologies of being. This is the capacity that is needed and is so crucial to what I have come to appreciate as the Indigenous idea of the circle of understanding that recognizes there are different ways of reading the patterns and interpreting the phenomenology of life. This invites us to acknowledge multiple hermeneutical perspectives and fosters the capacity of hermeneutical imagination that is essential to hermeneutic inquiry (Smith, 1991) and to welcoming each other into the circle of understanding. The future of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relations is acutely

connected to this capacity of hermeneutic imagination and the ability to live well within an ethos of ethical relationality (Donald, 2012).

When I invite the pre-service and in-service teachers to understand the spiritual ecology they are from and to share this with one another, I am inviting them to wander into the cultural spaces and places that have nurtured and acted as pedagogues to their imaginations and their learning spirits (Battiste, 2010). As Parker Palmer (2007) indicates we teach who we are, and thus we must learn to teach from these environmental and spiritual ecologies that reflect where we are from. Through the dialogic inquiry described above spaces of deep listening are created that, like hands raised up, welcome and embrace us as we speak of our lived journeys, our lived curriculums.

We learn to understand that we have been part of a profound pedagogy of the imagination, by sharing aspects of the imaginative landscapes we have traversed. We do this by recalling the cultural traditions, family rituals, children's stories, as well as best loved novels that have all been pedagogically informing, shaping the various textures, colors and contours of our imaginations, and ultimately our worldviews. This capacity of imagination also actively reaches out to the world and tries to decipher the patterns, the meanings we make of our lived curriculums, as well as the lives of others. Through dialogue and deep listening the imaginative ecologies emerge, are shared, as well as recognized and welcomed. This capacity to dwell as adults, and as children, within our own imaginative landscapes as well as those of others becomes a pedagogy of the imagination that gradually leads to the capacity of two-eyed seeing. And the understanding of multiple worldviews is an act of the imagination that ultimately becomes the capacity of many-eyed seeing. Thus, we acknowledge multiple hermeneutical perspectives or ways of interpreting the world and celebrate the capacity of hermeneutic imagination that allows us welcome each other into the circle of understanding.

I am Métis. I come from two worldviews. I come from two environmental ecologies, my heritage in the forest and by the shores of lakes with the plant and animals beings that I came to love and delight in as a child, and my Canadian cultural heritage where my grandparents went back two hundred years to some of the first settlers to arrive in this land, for I am Scottish as well as Anishinaabe.

I see the world simultaneously from two very different places. I have learned to move within and between these various locations or cultural locales acknowledging both as having unique environmental and spiritual ecologies. As a child they were quite simply one large diversified experience. As a Métis scholar the lenses of my Indigenous and Western or contemporary worldviews exist as complimentary hermeneutics within the larger circle of understanding. It is through life writing and Indigenous Métissage that I have come to understand and trace the legacies of both my environmental and spiritual ecologies. I have learnt that my senses or the instruments of aesthetic knowing are both Indigenous and Western. Thus, the way that I view the world is at once Indigenous and Western. I move easily between the one eye that sees the world from the Indigenous place and the other eye that sees the world from the Western or contemporary Canadian place. I have come to value the mobility of the hermeneutical imagination and the fluidity that it affords.

Perhaps what is calling us from the future is the invitation to live simultaneously from within and in the in-between. That is the challenge, the gift, and the potentiality of

two eyed seeing as a pathway to many-eyed seeing. This is the moment that is so exciting for me as an educator—when a teacher’s eyes lift from within one perspective to embrace an understanding of another’s perspective, and from which arises the capacity for multiple means of engagement and encounter with the world. This in turn gives rise to new understandings of and orientations to curriculum and pedagogical practice. The experience of other perspectives simultaneously awakens an understanding of one’s own perspective and vice versa. Ultimately, this creates the capacity to move between orientations or worldviews and to dwell within the creation of new possibilities. This is the enactment of hermeneutical imagination and this creates the possibility of acknowledging the ever-expanding circle of understanding. Perhaps the best metaphor for this process is the dropping a pebble into the pond of consciousness and watching the concentric rings appear and ripple across the surface of the water.

When I invite pre-service and in-service teachers as well as other graduate students to not only share the story of where they are from, but also to listen to another’s stories, I am also inviting them to share or to wander within the lived landscape of another. In so doing they are visiting and dwelling intimately with the other and within their unique ecology of being. I invite them to feel deep resonance, or an ethos of compassion, for the similarities and profound differences of where we are from, and to honor and offer hospitality to the various topographies and mythologies of being.

When the children created the totem pole and the carved countenance of welcome they were from various and many places as well as ways of being. They were non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal children. They were children from two worldviews. And they created, by hands working together, a pole that was to welcome all children. Then, with hands raised in respect, honor, and celebration of this reality, they clasped hands. Thus, like the figure standing at the top of the welcome pole, they and those they welcome stand on and within the living legacies of the various ecologies that we share today. They are acknowledging the ecologies of being like the community of creatures depicted on the carved pole, the countenance of raven, bear, crane and salmon. Perhaps, what their many hands have created and where their young eyes are looking to, is a future where these various and profoundly unique places that we are from can be honored and celebrated. Perhaps the living legacy of these children is their vision of a future where all children are respected and celebrated.

Honoring the Learning Spirit



This organic centre of the creation, comes down to us through the long traditions of learning the world's own songs. In American Indian traditions healers are often called interpreters because they are the ones who are able to hear the world and pass its wisdom along. They are the ones who return to the heart of creation. (Hogan, 2000, p. 117)

How do we welcome the learning spirit of young children today within educational settings and situations that are often far removed from the Indigenous places that children come from? How can we honor inclusive understandings of indigeneity today? And how can Indigenous education help us to understand a pedagogy indigenous to childhood? What is the experience of young children in relation to the environmental and spiritual ecologies we have created for them? What are the stories they would tell of those places and spaces? What totem poles would they carve and erect as monuments to their ecology of being? How do we learn a shared responsibility and respect for each other, the land, the places we are from, so that we acknowledge our responsibility to those not yet come into being? In other words, how do we honor the next seven generations in our educational practices today?

If we stand together as a community of educators looking into the future, what are the practices and perspectives that would serve the children for seven generations hence? Who would we be welcoming into our schools, and how would they be different? I sense that if we take up what Marie Battiste (2010) calls the nurturing of the learning spirit, if we would honor the learning spirits of children, we would be led into new places both environmentally, within the institutions we would create, as well as spiritually or culturally in the curriculums that we would enact. We would be creating quite different ecologies and imagining quite different pedagogies of engagement. We would be

enacting a pedagogy of place and a pedagogy of the imagination that would honor the natural ecologies of the being. We would stand like carved countenances of welcome that would trace our journey of finding face, and honor our own ecology of being. We would welcome the young children as ecologies of being and by so doing we would be welcoming a re-imagining education as a living organic and ecological reality. This would be the living legacy of the welcome pole for the next seven generations.

As a teacher educator, autobiographical inquiry, through dialogue and the use of life writing and Métissage, acknowledges that we all participating in a living inquiry (Meyer, 2006). And this living inquiry allows us to develop an understanding of, as well as a disposition for, creating curriculums that engage and embody Métissage as a living ecological praxis. Perhaps the legacy of Métissage as an ecological praxis is the fostering of classrooms as ecological places that actively acknowledge the profound diversity of experience and understanding what it means to be human and the deep intentionality of our learning spirits.

Circles of Understanding



The Truth about stories is that that's all we are. 'There are stories that take seven days to tell,' says Cherokee storyteller Diane Glancy. 'There are other stories that take you all your life.' (as cited in King, 2003, p. 122)

We might wonder what speaks to others, through our embodied pedagogical practices, and is given voice in our visions of education. Perhaps a pedagogy of place, a pedagogy

of imagination, and a pedagogy of presence ask us to be courageous, to step forth into the moment of welcoming young children and the myriads of ecologies they bring with them. As an Indigenous educator I also acknowledge that many children's sensibility to being endogenous to earth is being eroded or undermined, and in our complicity we are forgetting to let the indigeneity within each of us flourish (Louv, 2005, 2011). Perhaps, it is by leading others through the 'I am from' process that I have come to value most an Indigenous sense of place and belonging. I have seen young people acknowledge a fear of, or an allergy to, the natural world, a bio-phobia of the world that I have come to love and acknowledge as biophilia. And in turn, I have witnessed how, through our sharing, coming together within circles of understanding, we also create circles of life that honor unity in diversity. Each one of our perspectives is at the same time the tree and not the tree that others see. We acknowledge that we are all participating in an act of hermeneutical imagination and by honoring the circle of perspectives or understandings we create the capacity for an ecological imagination.

Just as the fullness of a tree becomes apparent in the midst of the circle of our various perspectives, the fullness of a child may more fully be recognized if we place the child in the centre of the circle of understanding created by communities within education. It is only in the midst of perspectives of educators, parents, administrators, support workers, teachers, elders that the whole child appears. It is then the child flourishes like a tree in the forest. The implication of this Indigenous perspective is that it challenges us to honor our places of learning as ecologies and fundamentally as communities of relationship, as places of ethical rationality. For as the elders would invite us: *We are all related, we are all related*. And our various perspectives all have contributions to make from their various locales within the circle of understandings.

The question remains: Can we engage respectfully in a dialogic that honors the circle of understanding and ethical relationality? If we do not understand our own position in relation to others, we will not understand their relationships to us. Ultimately, the various perspectives of educators, parents, community members, children, are situated, contextualized and understood within their own locales, ecologies and/or worldviews. All are relevant to the educational enterprise. An example of this is the understanding of Métissage as a dialogic inquiry, whereby it is recognized that in order to understand the other, one steps forth from one's implicit worldview, and in that courageous act encounters others doing the same. Thus, when we step forward to honor and nurture the learning spirit of the child, or the children before us, we are challenged to step forth from our implicit perspectives or world views, so that we may welcome the child in his or her wholeness and full potentiality as an ecology to be respected and honored within the circle of life. Perhaps by honoring and respecting this in the child, we will come to honor and respect our own learning spirit and recognize it in others. Perhaps this is the real legacy of the welcoming pole.

In the Indigenous understandings we come to the Earth Mother with a gift, and the elders, by witnessing the potentiality within us, give us a name, a name that speaks to the character of this potentiality, the essence of this gift. On our life journey we grow into this name. We bring to fruition, fullness or completion these potentialities or possibilities within ourselves, not as others imagine or would impose, but as we ourselves create through our presence and engagement with the world and with each other and in learning to live well in the places we inhabit. Ultimately, this is the pathway or sacred way that

leads to finding face, finding heart, finding foundation (Cajete, 1994). This is the essence or heart of Indigenous education.

Often when we introduce ourselves within Indigenous community, we give our traditional name, which honors our ancestors, the witnessing of the elders, and also honors the journey of becoming the name, embodying the gift we bring to the community. We live our lives, and in so doing come to fully understand our names. We are also given our places of birth both environmentally and spiritually, the places and spaces from where we are from. We spend our lives laying down the pathway we follow and through our unique ways we also are finding face, our identity, finding passion, our heart, and finding foundation, our vocation. This is what keeps our fires burning. In the Anishinaabe tradition, the elders will often ask: “How is your fire burning?” What they are really asking is: “How is your learning spirit?”

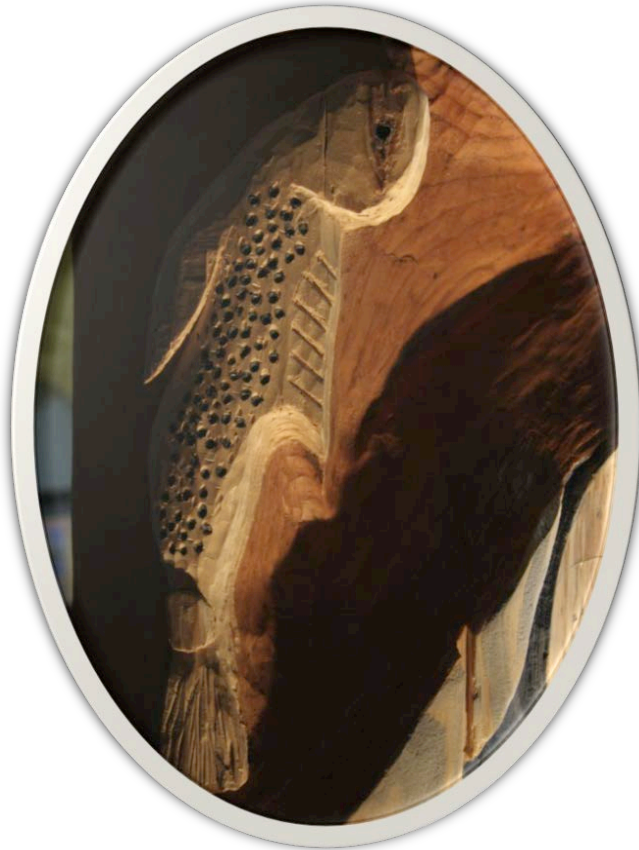
Within the context of the environmental school research project asking how your fire is burning led to the creation of the hearth keepers, a circle of parents, teachers and community members. It has also led us to ask how we create new metaphors, new imaginations that can honor the learning spirit of children and their various ecologies of being? As a Indigenous scholar/educator, I am also struck by the fact that we seldom pay attention to how our own fires are burning. How can we nurture this within ourselves and from our various perspectives as educators? How do we keep our fires burning within the educational community?

Part of my Indigenous Métissage inquiry has led me to understand what I have described as the journey of I am from, and the understanding of the environmental ecology as a site for enacting the pedagogy of place within the circle of nature, family, culture. I have also come to an understanding of spiritual ecology through the exploration of myth or story, art and vision. It is by awakening the power of vision within us through inquiry into our own educational practices that we facilitate and feed the creative force or energy that ignites and nurtures the fires of passion within us. For our visions truly honor our learning spirit.

In my work with new teachers as well as experienced educators there comes a profound moment when I ask them, from this place where you are from, what is it that you imagine in the future? I ask them to visit and to dwell within their various environmental and spiritual ecologies. I invite them to listen well to, or to listen for, the voice of their own vision. I ask: What are you imagining or evoking, and what is emerging in your educational practice? What are you gifting? What do you want for the children that you teach? It is with this invitation that many teachers recognize and re-ignite the deep legacy of their learning spirits and ignite the fires of their passion. Their emerging vision honors and welcomes their wishes to carry into their places of education a profound imagination, a powerful vision for their future work. So it is that I have seen educators whose fires have been nearly extinguished begin to flicker, catch and ignite as they re-imagine their educational practice. This active re-visioning of education by teachers is one of the profound capacities that emerges as a result of the pedagogy of place and the pedagogy of the imagination. It is also one of the most important contributions of Indigenous education and Indigenous pedagogy to teacher education and ultimately the education of young children, all children. The awakening and emergence of an ecological re-imagining of teacher education can also kindle a re-visioning of early

childhood education, creating a vision that actively acknowledges the indigeneity of young children.

The Pedagogy of the Native Flute



The truth about stories is that that's all we are. The Métis singer Andrea Menard reminds us of this in the first verse of her song "The Halfbreed Blues."

*I was born the privileged skin.
And my eyes are bright, bright brown
You'd never know there is Métis blood
Raging underground
Let me tell you a story about a revelation
It's not the colour of a nation that holds a nations pride
It's imagination.
It's imagination inside.*

(as cited in King, 2003, p. 62)

Through Indigenous Métissage, I have learned the pedagogical pathway of where I am from and am now realizing a new pathway that follows the pedagogy of the native flute. When I play the flute I reach with my learning spirit to the heights of a soaring eagle. When I teach, with the flute music resounding within that place of deep listening, my hope is that through deep attending I will enact a pedagogy that allows other learning spirits to resonate and sing. Thus, I developed a practice in my own scholarship that

allows my fire to burn well, and that allows me to nurture my learning spirit as well as my emerging vision.

This practice has subtly changed my pedagogical practice. Not only have I learned to honor the present ecology of myself and the legacies of where I am from, I have also learned to honor the places of others within my pedagogical practice. I have learned to look to the mountain. Gregory Cajete (1994) says Indigenous education is looking to the mountain, reaching for that which one is seeking with a good heart, in other words, the visions that teachers enact in their classrooms, by being loyal to their deepest pedagogical intent with good hearts.

When I play my flute I stand and inwardly reach towards the eagle that soars overhead in my imagination, and then I play, not notes inscribed on a sheet of paper, or melodies previously known, but creations in the moment, out of the moment, in celebration of the moment. Through this practice I am learning to tune myself to various ecologies. I visit places or sacred sites, listen deeply, and then give voice to my experience through the sound of my singing flute. Thus, I have found myself in my teaching practice, standing, taking up my flute, breathing in inspiration, and improvising, sounding, singing, speaking, to the moment, out of the moment.

Recently, while standing in the forest I listened, leaned into the place and played. To my surprise, the landscape seemed to answer: The birds drew near, fluttered and sang, the wind arose and played in the leaves, and the canyon walls resonated with all our voices. When we lean into the places where we dwell as learning spirits, we respect and honor those other voices, the human and the more than human that dwell in that place. Perhaps it is in those places that we connect to what the Indigenous people have called the centre of creation where the creator dwells within us all; this is the part of us that longs to be given voice, and in the echoing also giving voice to the land's longing and deep desire for reverence and reciprocity of relationship. It is by leaning into the places that we visit and dwell in, by sounding our flutes, that we honor the various landscapes of the world that have become silent and forgotten.

That day at the unveiling of the welcome pole, as I stood there surrounded by the children, I wanted to honor them in a song. Listening into the place that I go to when I play my flute, my heart was full of gratitude, gratefulness to the children in the way their hands were leading us into the future. What song could I sing in celebration of their act, leading us, as children do, towards finding new ways to educate the future generations? So, as I listened I was also yearning, leaning into a place that would celebrate such a touchingly courageous act. The song rang out from my flute and soared into the steel rafters of the gymnasium, where it trilled and barked. The murmuring of the children's voices gradually became quiet and then fell silent.

When I felt all ears turned to that place of listening I let the song soar throughout the hall where the welcome pole stood tall. The melody rippled like running water and it trilled like the warbling of birds in song; it rose like an eagle between the tall trees, and it echoed off the mountaintops. In our midst stood the welcome pole that the children had carved, topped with its human figure standing high above us, its hands outstretched in welcome. There were other creatures as well the crane and fishes that floated down the side of the tall timber, the raven and the bear. They were all present now and they were all present when the tree stood magnificent in the wood. And they are all here with us now in the community of life.

What are the ecologies of being that we honor in our songs? What would enable us to truly and ceremoniously celebrate the many trees that had become welcome poles, and the many hands of children carving the countenance of welcome? What are the places we might create that welcome and celebrate circles of understanding between all peoples, and between all creatures? How do we move past and through this moment in time where legacies linger and possibilities urge us on? How do we simultaneously listen to the voices of the children and those of our ancestors? How do we rejoice in ceremonies of renewal and participate in the circle of life? For only when we listen well and deeply by laying our hearts along the songlines of creation will we be able, out of an ecological imagination, to re-envision ways to welcome the next seven generations.

These are some of the questions that linger with me today, that stir in my heart as I contemplate the future. Perhaps the strongest understanding that arose within me in my remembering of the unveiling of the welcome pole is this: Indigenous pedagogy is participatory; it happens in place, a sacred space which reveres the circle of life, of the human and the more than human. It is the child fully participating in that circle of life who holds the promise of the future in his or her hands held high in offering.

Only through such profound listening and engagement will we overcome many of the legacies and practices that hold us apart. Chief Labrador once said: “Go into the forest, you see the birch, maple, pine. Look underground and all those trees are holding hands” (Bartlett et al., 2012, *Trees Holding Hands* section, para 1). When asked who carved the welcoming pole, all the children raised their hands. When invited to celebrate with high fives, the children turned to each other, and in one united clasp, in that single moment, all the children held the promise of welcoming all and in all welcoming.

In this Indigenous Métissage I have celebrated the living artifact of the welcome pole carved by the many hands of children. The legacy of this event is that it has become a metaphor for the processes of Indigenous pedagogy: the pedagogy of place, the pedagogy of the imagination, and the honoring or celebrating of ecologies of being, the human as well as the more than human. Through embracing and enacting aspects of Indigenous Education within teacher education we create the possibility of profoundly impacting the future of early childhood education as well as the health and well being of young children. The intention or heart of Indigenous Education is its understanding of indigeneity, that we are all children of Mother Earth.

Indigenous Education can make a profound contribution to the ecological re-imagining of the educational enterprise and through two-eyed seeing make a contribution to the creation of circles of understanding that will impact non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal relations. Perhaps more importantly the contribution of Indigenous education is in it fostering of an ethical relationality to the earth and the community of life.

*We are all related, we are **all** related, and we are all **related**.*

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