Constructing Living Bridges:

Learning to Listen to Culture in an Indigenous Pre-school Program

Sheryl Smith-Gilman

Department of Integrated Studies in Education

McGill University, Montreal

December 2014

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Our culture, history and traditions should be included in the education of our children so they become proud of who they are.

~ Kim Marcel, Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, Athabasca Tribal Council, Education Committee Member

Abstract

This dissertation begins from acknowledging the close relationship between culture and learning. Despite the plethora of research in pre-school education with respect to culture, the question remains how to translate what is known about early education into specific communities when their pursuit is to maintain cultural identity. This longitudinal study, carried out in partnership with Step by Step Child and Family Center, recounts a three year story of a First Nations (Mohawk) early childhood center in Quebec that actively followed their quest for innovative ways to maintain culture through their early childhood programs. The research commenced with the provocation of the Reggio Emilia approach. Initial research questions focused on where Reggio Emilia principles might resonate with Mohawk culture. However, in the course of inquiry, cultural ownership emerged as core learning, providing a major turning point in the inquiry. With the construction of children's art studios (ateliers) in the Center, new research questions developed. What role would the arts play in developing Mohawk culture and identity in their early childhood program?

The qualitative study drew on various qualitative approaches: participatory action research, narrative inquiry, grounded theory, arts-informed methods and Indigenous research. Indigenous ontological and epistemological values were fundamental in grounding and directing this study respectfully and in honor of the Indigenous participants. The study combined multiple data sources: classroom observation, teacher and researcher documentation of changing practices, photographs, interviews and focus groups. Over three years and three distinct phases, the research partnership involved 3 administrators, 10 teachers and 160 children (aged 18 months to 5 years). The phases unfolded over 320 hours of field work conducted in collaboration with the Center. The research process afforded opportunities over time to together develop a

"pedagogy of listening", which became the guiding theoretical and methodological orientation of the study, as symbolized through the "living bridge": the conduit that carried the researcher back and forth to the community.

The findings give rise to substantial implications for teaching and learning in early childhood arenas and better understanding what it means to develop "culturally relevant" programs. The emphasis on the arts played a major role in the development of a culturally relevant curriculum due to their experiential nature and sharing in Indigenous approaches of holistic and traditional learning. The thesis contends that children's and teacher's simultaneous inquiry can provide meaningful learning through mutual engagement. Providing children with opportunities to revisit their learning, accompanied by teachers' documentation and sharing, came together to uphold goals of a culturally authentic and relevant program, thus holding significant implications for teacher professional development, teacher education as well as early childhood curriculum, especially for other Indigenous communities searching for ways to maintain cultural traditions and identity. The research may provide a framework for suitable entry into conversations focused on a process-oriented pedagogy grounded in cultural values. The study also contributes to current research on cultural values and the Reggio Emilia approach, revealing when and how Reggio principles could be used as provocation and when the approach needed to be set aside. Most importantly, the development of practice of a pedagogy of listening, threaded throughout this dissertation, might illuminate ways of cultivating collegial learning within early childhood communities whereby values, beliefs, and goals can be listened to attentively, reflected upon, and shared, leading to authentic, sustainable change for the benefit of all.

Résume

De prime abord, cette thèse reconnaît l'étroite relation qui existe entre l'apprentissage et la

culture. Malgré l'abondance de la recherche menée en éducation préscolaire au regard de la

culture, il reste à déterminer comment appliquer les connaissances actuelles sur l'éducation de la

petite enfance à des communautés spécifiques, qui tentent vigoureusement de préserver leur

identité culturelle. Cette étude longitudinale, réalisée en collaboration avec Step by Step Child

and Family Center, raconte le parcours d'un Centre de la petite enfance autochtone (Mohawk)

situé au Québec, parcours qui a duré trois ans. Ce CPE a recherché et adopté de nombreux

moyens innovateurs afin d'intégrer une dimension culturelle importante à leurs programmes

d'éducation de la petite enfance. L'approche Reggio Emilia a servi de déclencheur à cette

recherche. Les questions initiales portaient sur les applications possibles des principes éducatifs

de Reggio Emilia dans le contexte culturel de la société Mohawk. Or, au cours de la recherche, le

concept de propriété culturelle a émergé comme apprentissage essentiel, s'avérant un point

tournant majeur de l'étude. À la suite de la construction, à l'intérieur même du CPE, de studios

d'art pour enfants (les ateliers), une nouvelle question de recherche est apparue : Quel rôle l'art

jouerait-il dans le développement de la culture et de l'identité Mohawk dans leur programme

éducatif de la petite enfance ?

        L'étude qualitative a utilisé différentes approches: la recherche-action participative,

l'enquête narrative, la théorie ancrée, l'approche socio-artistique, et la recherche autochtone. Les

valeurs ontologiques et épistémologiques autochtones ont joué un rôle fondamental pour ancrer

et diriger cette étude dans le respect et la valorisation des participants autochtones. L'étude a

utilisé plusieurs sources de données: observation en classe, documentation de l'évolution des

pratiques par le chercheur et par les enseignants, photos, entrevues et groupes de discussion. Au

cours des trois années de recherche et de trois phases distinctes, le partenariat de recherche a

impliqué trois administrateurs, dix enseignants et 160 enfants, âgés de 18 mois à 5 ans. La

réalisation des trois phases a requis plus de 320 heures de travail, en collaboration avec le

personnel du CPE. Durant cette période, le processus de recherche a permis aux participants et

au chercheur de développer ensemble une *pédagogie de l'écoute active*, devenue l'orientation

théorique et méthodologique de l'étude, symbolisée par le « pont vivant », voie de

communication entre le chercheur et la communauté.

Les résultats suggèrent des implications importantes pour l'enseignement et

l'apprentissage dans le domaine de la petite enfance et ils permettent de mieux comprendre ce

que l'on entend par le développement de programmes « culturellement pertinents ». L'emphase

placée sur les arts a joué un rôle majeur dans le développement d'un programme culturellement

pertinent en raison de leur nature expérientielle et grâce à l'intégration d'approches autochtones

de l'apprentissage holistique et traditionnel. La thèse maintient que le questionnement simultané

des enfants et des enseignants permet un apprentissage significatif par le biais d'un engagement

mutuel. Fournir aux enfants l'occasion d'une réflexion métacognitive sur leur apprentissage,

avec le soutien de documents pertinents et des propos de l'enseignant, a contribué à l'atteinte des

objectifs d'un programme pertinent et culturellement authentique, suggérant ainsi des

implications importantes pour la formation et le développement professionnel des enseignants,

ainsi que pour les programmes de la petite enfance, particulièrement pour les communautés

autochtones cherchant à maintenir leurs traditions et leur identité culturelle. Cette recherche

fournit un cadre qui permet de planifier et d'animer des entretiens portant sur une pédagogie

axée sur le processus et fondée sur les valeurs culturelles. L'étude contribue également à la

recherche actuelle sur les valeurs culturelles et sur l'approche Reggio Emilia, révélant quand et

comment ses principes ont pu être utilisés comme déclencheur et quand ils ont dû être mis de

côté. De façon plus importante encore, le développement de la pratique d'une pédagogie de

l'écoute active, présent en filigrane tout au long de cette thèse, met en lumière des moyens de

cultiver l'apprentissage en collégialité au sein de communautés de la petite enfance, de telle sorte

que les membres de ces mêmes communautés puissent s'interroger, réfléchir et discuter au sujet

de leurs valeurs, de leurs croyances et de leurs objectifs, ce qui pourrait conduire à un

changement authentique et durable, pour le bénéfice de tous.

Acknowledgements

has kept me focused on the big picture.   He makes the difference and I am forever thankful. I also have to acknowledge my *parents* who instilled in me the appreciation and understanding that education is a gift. They have inspired me with this concept throughout my life; leading me to impart the gift they gave to me, with as many people as I possibly can.

To Teresa Strong-Wilson, my supervisor:

I owe more than heaps of thanks to you for your guidance and advice throughout this journey. Your extensive knowledge, assuring presence, intelligent insights and honest and valuable feedback have helped me work through the tensions and challenges I encountered. You have also joined me in the celebrations of the project, keeping me mindful to what has occurred and where knowledge might lead. I consider it an honour to have been one of your graduate students.

To my advisory committee, Lynn Butler-Kisber and Elizabeth Wood:

You have been present as readers and mentors and knowing I had your encouragement from the inception of this project, was reassuring. You provided me with feedback that kept me cognizant to my role and identity throughout the years of study and writing. Thank you for believing in my inquiry and for your support.

To the Fonds de recherche du Québec – Société et culture

I gratefully acknowledge and express my sincere appreciation to the Fonds de recherche du Québec for the financial support received during my time of research.

Finally, I must also mention and extend my thanks to my colleagues, friends, professors, administrators, and passionate teachers who I have been privileged to work with over the years. They have been inspirational and responsible for my devotion to the field of early childhood education. I am forever thankful.

Table of Contents

Table of Contents

Table of Contents

List of figures

List of figures

List of figures

List of figures

List of figures

List of figures

Chapter 1

Locating the Bridge

Sometimes you need to move forward and take a chance. Sometimes the biggest decisions start with an inner voice encouraging you to take what you know and travel into the unknown – into unfamiliar places where you cannot foresee the future. Sometimes you sense a new bridge may need to be crossed – but where will it lead?

New route. New journey. A bridge looms ahead. I've got to watch the signage carefully. There it is: the Mercier Bridge – my travel empowering a variety of purposes. Is the bridge notifying me to turn back or welcoming me to go forward? A daunting road: potholes, cracks and cement patches. How am I ever going to get used to this? My longtime fear of driving over bridges will have to be faced. I hope I don't lose a bumper. Why is everyone going so fast? Can't people see two cars don't fit between those cones? My knuckles are white from clutching the steering wheel. Is it the road that is scaring me or the journey that lies ahead? Is my research going to be as intimidating as the bridge? Will this road accept me? Will the Mohawk community accept me? Will my travels be bumpy: filled with potholes and cracks? Aren't there any smooth paved areas on this road? Maybe this route will assemble new perspectives for me and for my research partners. I won't permit the Mercier to only be about travelling back and forth. It will be about connecting….this bridge will be my daily metaphor. Finally, my exit: Kahnawake. Now this road is healthier; a level surface on the other side. The purple flag with the chained white squares and rectangles; that will be my landmark from now on. Turn here. Just a short ride amongst embracing foliage. Nice. Look at that lake –unblemished, clear as glass. I won't mind passing that each time. Right at the stop sign – Testan. I'll have to learn some words in Mohawk. My gosh, look at this school – who would have known? Step by Step – an auspicious message. The air smells fresh…pine scented and firewood burning… Here I go.

Opening Remarks

This dissertation tells a story of the development of a three-year research project that illuminated different ways of thinking about culture and learning in early childhood education. It focuses on the values and climate for learning when cultural identity is placed in the forefront.

The roads traveled yielded passageways amongst people, theory, practice and pedagogy and rested on a belief that culture matters. I use the metaphor of a "bridge" to thread my thesis as it has helped me delineate pathways amid and across gaps and obstacles. The visual of a ``bridge'' has allowed me to reflect on the many roads of experience and new understandings throughout my journey. Arms of the roadway have been comprised of a Mohawk First Nations child and family center (Step by Step), myself (an outsider to the community), and our common search for best practice in support of the young child rooted in his/her culture. My dissertation tells a story of sharing, building knowledge, letting go, and fostering a pedagogy that attended to listening.

Introduction

> *Diverse voci fanno dolce note; cosi diversi scanni in nostra vita rendon dolce armonia…*
>
> *[Diverse voices make sweet music; as diverse conditions in our life render sweet*
>
> *harmony…]*
>
> Dante, *Paradiso IV:* 124-126

1. The matter of education for young children has developed into a global undertaking. International early childhood organizations continue to design policies for countries worldwide and propose universal pedagogy for young children (Robinson & Diaz, 2006). The early childhood community has accumulated a rich heritage of theories and methodologies from the sagacity of early childhood pioneers. Undeniably, early childhood education has transformed and expanded over the past decade. Several major factors have contributed to recent advancements including: research in brain development and learning, globalization of pedagogical principles, technology innovation, shifts in demographics in many developed countries, and a wide-reaching belief in quality

early care (Wardle, 2009). Transformations have been grounded in a progressive

vision: A focus on care, effective teaching, and a curriculum that respects and

responds to diversity.

Education for very young children, at home and in school, has proven to be fundamental

for positive development. Early years of life are considered "windows in time" when

meaningful experiences ought to be provided to lay the groundwork for successful learning

(Berk, 1996; Bredekamp & Copple, 2006, 2009; Derman-Sparks & Olson Edwards, 2010;

Dewey, 1969; Elkind, 1976; Gardner, 1991; Piaget,1950; Piaget & Inhelder, 1969; Vygotsky,

1978). Research has substantiated that the earliest interactions between the child and the adults

in his or her life have a profound impact on developmental progression (Derman-Sparks et al.,

2010). Learning begins at birth, if not before, and the quality of the environment matters greatly

(Espinoza, 2010). The science of early brain development reinforces the need for emotional

support and indicates that curriculum should promote balanced and developmentally appropriate

practices that honour the whole child. (Knudson, Heckman, Cameron & Shonkoff, 2006;

National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2008). Recent discoveries in neuroscience

and pedagogical research in early education have yielded optimism and confidence in today's

interest in cultural education thereby supporting better outcomes for children and their future.

In 1996, the International Commission on Education, headed by Jacques Delors,

presented a report, "The Treasure Within," to UNESCO; the report was a result of a worldwide

three year research study that looked at the face of educational challenges for the twenty-first

century. The "dawn of the new century in education" was viewed as a pivotal time to "turn

attention to both the aims and the means of education" (p. 11). Delors (1996) encapsulates:

It is the view of the Commission that, while education is an ongoing process of

improving knowledge and skills, it is also – perhaps primarily – an exceptional means of

bringing about personal development and building relationships among individuals,

groups and nations. (p. 12)

The commission's account recognized educational progress worldwide in areas of science,

technology as well as an urgency for policy transformations. Content of teacher training, and/or

access to teacher continuing education, were additionally implicated as requiring greater

attention. Notably, the commission emphasized the necessity for new thinking about

relationships for our earliest citizens: young children.

Primarily, the commission questioned and addressed the dilemma: "How can we learn to

live together in the 'global village' if we cannot manage to live together in our communities to

which we naturally belong*?"* (p. 14). This committee called upon "education" to confront

cultural issues since education is perceived at "the heart of personal and community

development." (p. 16). The report emphasized renewed attention to the moral and cultural

dimensions of education whereby distinctiveness needs to be better addressed and more

importantly, understood. This message underscored the impact and necessity for culture being

critical for 21st century education.

Recent literature maintains there remains much work to be done with regard to culture

and its place in education (Katz, 2010). Thinking that the same applies to everyone cannot be

accepted. Robinson and Jones-Diaz (2006) have indicated that several widely accepted early

childhood theories and practices are 'old' ways of thinking and working with children. Past

views do not adequately take into account today's socio-cultural factors; danger lies in dominant

white Western thinking and values (Robinson & Jones-Diaz, 2006). Such perceptions continue

to frame views about young children's development and learning as accepted "norms" which

serve to exclude and marginalize those who follow different pathways of learning and different

ways of bringing up children (Penn, 2010; Robinson & Jones-Diaz, 2006). Robinson and Jones-

Diaz (2006) draw on ideas from postmodern and poststructuralist theories that question the belief

that childhood is universally experienced, viewing it instead as a social construction varying

according to time and place. They critique the discourse wherein multicultural diversity surfaces

as "celebratory"; wherein perspectives of cultural identity are predetermined and structural

inequalities exclusively belong to minority groups. Robinson and Jones-Diaz (2006) call for

early childhood professionals to critically consider these issues for better understandings of

children's experiences with regard to race, ethnicity and power.

    As early as 1916, John Dewey proclaimed, all children have the right to an education that

embraces the whole child in which his or her social, personal and intellectual development is

included. After almost 100 years, research echoes, this indisputable right of all children has been

inadequately addressed (Derman-Sparks & Olson-Edwards, 2010; Espinoza, 2010). Espinoza

identifies such shortfalls: "When a young child is taught to be silent in the company of adults and

that it is disrespectful to draw attention to oneself, it is difficult for that child to enthusiastically

raise his or her hand and make contributions to group discussions when that is the expectation of

the school" (p. 76). Derman-Sparks and Olson Edwards (2010) further explain:

> The field of early care and education has its own set of rules, values and acceptable
>
> behaviours. Some of the field's beliefs about what children need to develop and grow do
>
> not necessarily match what's considered acceptable or "normal" across all ethnic/cultural
>
> lines. Much of the research and writing are based on premises and children from the
>
> privileged group – that is, White, affluent suburban. As with any research-based practice,

the more children's backgrounds match the research sample group's the more applicable

are its conclusions – and the reverse is also true. (p. 67)

Such statements raise the question: Why has progress stalled? Assumptions remain that *certain*

children cannot, and will not achieve success due to educators' lack of cultural awareness or

understanding as to how culture takes its place in schools. Mann (2010) notes rapid

demographic change, deplorable conditions of public education, and increased global

competition as contributors to the issues. While early care has certainly accomplished significant

gains in terms of creating programs for the very young (for example Head Start schools in North

America), issues of cultural responsiveness remain and may be primarily located in the lack of

adequate professional training (Mann, 2010). Educators are not being suitably prepared to

nurture and support children and families from diverse backgrounds. In fact, as Mann stipulates:

When it comes to understanding the impact of culture on development, unfortunately, not

nearly enough progress has been made to deepen our empirical understanding of its

influence and how practitioners can take this knowledge to inform their work with

children and families….it is a tragedy that so little work has been devoted to examining

one of the most important forces that shapes the manner in which parents and other adults

interact with children during and beyond their formative years. (p. 62)

 Bronfenbrenner and others have emphasized that a child`s culture is central to his/her daily life,

interconnecting with other systems that guide development (Bronfenbrenner, 2000; Rogoff,

2003). Most North American early childhood classes are culturally diverse. Not enough research

has explored cultural influences on children`s learning in school. The majority of cultural

studies has investigated the motivation to learn and have been predominantly piloted with white

middle-class students (Espinoza, 2010). Many researchers outside of education have explored

broader cultural influences on young development (Rogoff, 2003: Schweder, Goodnow, Hatano, Levine, Markus & Miller, 1998). Their insights may indirectly help us understand how cultural consciousness might influence teaching, learning and curriculum.

My research has been guided by appeals that position teaching and learning together with cultural identity. My inquiries have aimed to shed light on the way culture and learning might be conceptualized in early childhood education. What components may support a paradigm shift to promote quality early education within a culturally relevant context? A change in thinking could reveal a variety of pathways that might help to honour young children's cultural identity and their development within a socio-cultural framework.

My Story

Lofland and Lofland (1995) emphasize that qualitative research supports the researcher in "start[ing] where you are" (p. 3). Such liaisons between one's research and one's personal life are not always welcomed because the "norms of scholarship do not require that researchers bare their soles, only their procedures" (p. 13). Haynes (1999) reminds us that we are the writers of our own stories as she states, "We all create our own life stories, using and relating only the memories that seem most relevant, serve our purpose for those who are prepared to share at the time of telling" (p. 670). Strong-Wilson (2008) illuminates the premise that researchers come with a past; certain of their stories that have become "touchstones" to hold on to and support them in moving forward in their work and interests (p.1). I have accumulated particular 'touchstones' along my thirty years of teaching: touchstones that have shaped by my commitment to early childhood education and my research. For these reasons, I've decided to start "where I am," with my personal story, which is a story of cultural identity.

Growing up I had always appreciated and reveled in the power of story. As a young child I found meaning between imagined stories and real life by focusing my time in play, reading, creative drama and eventually, writing. As an adult, and later as a researcher, I recognize my passion for stories resided in searching their meaning through identifying relationships (e.g. relationships between people, relationships to my own life experiences). My personal stories have helped shape my research, keeping me conscious of my presence in the investigative process (Barry, Britten, Barber, Bradley, & Stevenson, 1999). Such awareness has led to my internal conversations and scrutiny of "what we know" and "how we know it" (Hertz, 1997, p. iix), pertinent to my progression in this study.

Accordingly, I offer some of my meaningful stories to address matters of subjectivity, reflexivity and ensure transparency. Upon reflection, I realize culture and identity have always been a significant part of my being. Growing up in a traditional Jewish home I reveled in cultural traditions and holiday rituals and embraced the values with which I was raised. My cultural identity is embedded in fond memories of growing up in a secure and loving environment, of attending a local Orthodox synagogue on holidays, and of studying at a Jewish day school during my elementary years. My Jewish identity is soundly rooted in a sense of belonging to a people. Therefore, Jewish history is my history; Jewish culture is my culture. My cultural identity has been a source of the most important values of all: family, knowledge, charity, compassion, social justice, and culture.

Additionally, a positive factor in my life has been the encouragement and guidance from my parents who did not have the educational opportunities I was granted. "The greatest gift a child can receive is a good education" remains my father's mantra. He continues to repeat that phrase to me, my children, and whispers it now in the ears of his great-grandchildren. The

juxtaposition of my cultural background with the prominence of education has influenced my journey. In fact, that drive to learn intensified as I researched further into matters of culture and schooling.

Undoubtedly my interest in culture has been enriched as a consequence of my many professional years of being involved in a Jewish school program.   As a classroom teacher and administrator my mandate included cultivating conditions and curriculum within an environment founded upon Jewish values and religion. During my final years at the school, I became attracted to an Italian early childhood approach, Reggio Emilia, which showed possibilities of connecting to diverse cultures (Fraser, 2007; New, 2007). Discovering the Reggio Emilia approach inspired me to learn not only more about Italian culture but also initiated my efforts into weaving Reggio Emilia methodology into Jewish values and knowledge. As a result, my Master's research in leadership dealt specifically with bringing about change in North American classrooms with the guidance of Reggio Emilia thinking.

A turning point occurred in 2008 was when I was invited to take on the role of Reggio Emilia consultant for a Mohawk early childhood center in Kahnawake. As an 'outsider' I had been asked to become a partner in creating new paradigms for a progressive First Nations early childhood pre-school: Step by Step Child and Family Center. I was invited to consult with a community and culture I knew very little about; it was novel and exciting from the onset. However, it developed into more than that. In a short time my work transformed into reflexive inquiries on how cultural education in this community might be advanced by drawing on a model like Reggio Emilia. Over the course of my doctorate, I have experienced my scholarship coming full circle, which has been powerful as well as revealing. Hampton (1995) speaks of the personal emotional element central to taking one's road to research. I have always felt, if that spirit was

not aflame, then it is unlikely I could have investigated so deeply. The invitation from the

Mohawk community was *my invitation* to journey thoughtfully into examining connections,

meanings, and the place of culture.

My involvement in working with young children and professionals in a variety of cultural

environments have also been the impetus for my research. I envision every young student as

interested, unique and capable, supporting my belief that education must provide experiences

that will not only build knowledge, but will ensure development of identity within socio-

emotional domains. Heeding the words of Paulo Freire (1993), I am dedicated to the re-shaping

of pedagogy in order to "…build the public schools we want: serious, competent, fair, joyous and

curious – a school system that transforms the space where children, rich or poor, are able to

learn, to create, to take risks, to ask questions and to grow" (p. 3).

Moreover, my research has underscored how strongly I feel about my own culture.

While learning about another culture I have come to better understand my own; specifically the

significance of identity. Extensive research in the field of culture and identity corroborates the

perception that culture is a process of human development (Brooker, 2011; Espinoza, 2010;

Rogoff, 2003; Rogoff, Correa-Chavéz, Navichoc Cotuc, 2005). Culture plays a fundamental role

in building knowledge along with personal growth. Often we do not recognize the significance

of our own culture until we encounter a culture whose beliefs are either very different than our

own, or conversely, commonalities are uncovered; some we may never have suspected.

My sense of cultural belonging has allowed me to go beyond myself to explore how

culture resonates within early childhood pedagogy. I ponder over that kinship that developed

with my collaborators, a First Nations community. We share precious beliefs such as the

foundation provided by family, community, and relationships and respect for the beauty of a

distinctive language. What's more, Jews and First Nations people, like many other cultures, have experienced injustices of oppressions. We have both lived through issues of apartheid, persecution and attempted genocide. Colonialism and the Holocaust have led us down a path of pain through generations: the pain of injustices. We have shared experiences of recent traumas such as the challenges of maintaining homelands and often negative cultural perceptions in the media.   Freire (1993) recognized a people's oppression as a "cultural invasion" and clarifies that "whether urbane or harsh, cultural invasion is thus always an act of violence against the persons of the invaded culture, who lose their originality or face the threat of losing it…the invaders are the authors of, and actors in, their process; those they invade are the objects" (p. 134). Like other communities, we have been "objects."   This was a commonality that drew us together, but not the only thing.

Importantly, the kinship that developed toward Mohawk ways of thinking and my profound respect for their cultural richness has ignited a sense of connectedness to a community that was once distant to me. Fitznor (1998) reminds us "that we are all related and all have a responsibility to each other's healing and growth" (p. 33). Indigenous researcher, Tuhiwai Smith (1999) has articulated *my* heartfelt feelings, "Indigenous research is a humble and humbling activity" (p. 5).

It has been through shared stories during my three years of research that I have come to understand the "how" of cultural identity. Culture is rooted in the stories of a people. We are living stories of the past and present. Such narratives may direct us to negotiate two types of associations: uniting and bridging. Some may choose to unite within their own group, thereby developing connections that bind their group together and strengthen a sense of belonging thus remaining on one side of the bridge. And, for some, the association may involve bridging: being

open to crossing over into stimulating relationships with "others," acquiring understandings and

being motivated alongside the "others"; traversing a "living" bridge with enrichment,

connection and respect, thus multiplying knowledge. It is in this spirit and consideration of the

two associations that I have negotiated the bridge and situated myself in my research.

The Step by Step Child and Family Center

My research partners for the past three years have been the educators, administrators,

families, community and children at Step by Step Child and Family Center located in the

Mohawk territory of Kahnawake, a few kilometres over the Mercier Bridge. The Step by Step

Child and Family Center is comprised of nine early childhood classes consisting of Mohawk

native children ranging in age from 18 months to five years old. One of the groups in the center

is a Mohawk language immersion multi-aged classroom. This pre-school offers an extensive

range of services for the community's children and their families. Some of the services present

in the center include: specialists in speech and occupational therapy; a psychologist; an inclusion

professional; a resource library for staff; parents and children; a child and family support worker;

a nurse and dental hygienist; parent sessions and workshops; educators' professional and cultural

development and many family gatherings or celebrations. Step by Step is an inclusive setting

where early intervention programs are visibly in place. Avery's, an outreach home-style daycare

facility of approximately 15 children, aged 12 months to two years old, is additionally included

in this study.

The Step by Step Child and Family Center's settings and mission are culturally directed,

grounded in early childhood theory and nurtured with objectives of healthy outcomes for every

child. Their philosophies have been have been inspired from their initial beginnings. In 1983, a

small group of mothers, known as the seven founding mothers, lobbied together to establish a

pre-school for their children who were faced with physical and mental challenges. There were no such services for the families in Kahnawake at that time. Beginning from an understanding of well-being, they persevered to establish a safe place where their children would be respected and offered an education. This maternal group garnered the support of the community through fund raisers, publicity and meetings with elders, leaders in the community, and professional consultants to inaugurate an early intervention inclusive program that would offer sustenance for the emotional, spiritual, cultural, intellectual and social development of their children as well as provide facilities to support those goals.

For over twenty years, the Step by Step Child and Family Center has remained affixed to their roots of providing for the youngsters of their community. Tom Porter (2008), a Mohawk spiritual elder, has expressed that Mohawk nations need to return to their ceremonies, their language and their families in the ways the Creator had set before them, underscoring the people's relationships and responsibilities to each other and the natural world. Porter (2008) emphasizes "community mindedness" (p. 391). Much of that consciousness has dissolved over challenging years, as Porter recognizes, due to the impact of colonialism but also as a result of today's economic challenges and mindsets of egocentricity. The Step by Step Child and Family Center's search for a richer early childhood program affirms the Mohawk belief in preserving the heritage of their nation. The interrelated relationships of school, family and community emerge from the values of the Mohawk people. Porter (2009) explains that the Mohawk notion of family reaches beyond definitions of the Euro-western traditional family. He highlights the depth of relationships and responsibilities that community members hold towards one another.

Pence and Ball (1999) have suggested that innovative and positive educational approaches in First Nations communities lean toward organization by their own people, this by

blending theory and practice, and by attending to Indigenous ways, insider engagement and knowledge and culture. The Step by Step Child and Family Center has been mindful to such considerations by actively centering their effort on attending to children's well-being, including cultural well-being.

Notably, the Step by Step Child and Family Center educators have underscored as one of the key tenets of First Nations thinking the centrality of the child alongside the high value placed on community involvement in education (Porter, 2008), heeding the message of the Joint First Nations Inuit Federal Child Care Working Group (1995): "Children are not our possessions, they are gifts to us. This is the belief of our people. Children must be restored to their place, the heart of the community and in doing so, restore our communities to a place of power and self-sufficiency" (p. 9).

Five years ago, the Step by Step Child and Family Center embraced a journey of transformation. Their rationale focused on developing a deeper holistic curriculum that would meet the needs of all stakeholders within the Mohawk community. The educators and administrators began their inquiry into the Reggio Emilia approach one year before I joined them. The Step by Step Child and Family Center had been actively searching for creative ways to sustain their Mohawk culture by changing their approach to their early childhood curriculum, and were drawn to the Reggio Emilia approach. Research suggests that, of all early childhood education programs, Reggio Emilia pedagogy resonates with First Nations educational contexts (e.g., Fraser, 2006; Hughes, 2007; New, 2007). Reggio Emilia thinking additionally suggests sensitivity to local culture (New, 2007) as well as to diversity (Fraser, 2007). The administrators in this school community noted that Reggio Emilia values seemed to suit Mohawk culture. The attraction to this approach was ignited by their common belief that perceiving things through the

lens of the child has the potential to restructure, transform and develop teaching and learning experiences. The Mohawk community in Kahnawake was striving to re-awaken and maintain "continuity with Indigenous values and beliefs that are part of a community's identity" (Clavir, 2002, p. 74). However, little was understood about how to resourcefully integrate culture into daily curriculum so as to advance children's learning so as to avoid making "culture" a token appendage.

Our collaboration and my research questions

As mentioned, I was first invited into Kahnawake by the Step by Step Child and Family Center as an educational consultant based on my expertise in the Reggio Emilia approach. I was also a doctoral student at the time. During that first year of our collaboration, launching the integration of the Reggio Emilia principles seemed to support educators in developing professional skills that provided for meaningful experiences for their young students. Arising out of my work of listening to the educators of the center, I began to develop questions about the relationship between cultural identity and learning, which through conversations with the people I had been working with in the Center, became the focus of my doctorate. The research questions were the following:

Phase of Research	Research Question
Phase1	How would the Reggio Emilia approach resonate with Mohawk culture? What were the Mohawk educators using from their own culture? What would they use from Reggio Emilia? Did principles intersect?
Phase 2	What role would the atelier play in developing Mohawk culture in early childhood education? How could the atelier also become "…a place of research where imagination, rigour, experiment, creativity and expression would interweave and complete each other" (Vecchi, 2010, p. 35)? Would the offering of art as a mode in which to express ideas expand the children's cultural experiences? If so, how?
Phase 3	Same as above and added questions: What would have to be let go so as to attend to Mohawk community and culture? How can culture be seamlessly interwoven into daily practice?

Figure 1. Research questions

In discussion with my *now* research associates, we began a conversation of how to move

forward in our pursuits. We reflected upon how Mohawk culture had interacted with Reggio

Emilia approach. The points of intersection were recognized and became vehicles to guide us

into further study. Principles such as the positive image of the child, reflective practice, and a

focus on a project fashioned curriculum became key steps to advance our work. Research has

repeatedly shown that reflection and collaborative learning helps teachers better comprehend

their practices and their students (Ball & Pence, 2000; Gandini, 2004; LaBoskey, 1994; Moran,

Desrochers, & Cavicchi, 2007). Cadwell (1997) too underscores the significance of educators'

continuous dialogues in order to expand not only skills of reflective practice, but to assess where

interests and needs of children can best be addressed. Hughes (2007) and New (2007) have

documented great advancements in cultural integration when teachers in First Nation teachers

implemented reflective thinking based on cultural values and goals. Reggio Emilia teachers have

been described as learner researchers (Bredekamp, 2004) as well as ethnographers (New, 1994).

Therefore, at the onset of the study, I sensed comfort in exploring these roles in conjunction with

my research collaborators.

Undeniably, developing the role of teacher as researcher, collaborator and reflective

thinker was a challenging one. However, Gandini (1993), a Reggio designer, affirms these

dilemmas and discomforts as part of the process that should be welcomed. We recognized that

uneasiness and identified the quandaries. It was not always comfortable for the educators to

express their reflections for reasons of discomfort or felt lack of knowledge. The Step by Step

Child and Family Center educators and administration and I were nevertheless prepared to

pursue reflective practice, to gather data about individual children, groups of children, and find

out how curriculum might unfold within Mohawk culture.

As previously stated, because of my knowledge of the Reggio Emilia approach, I had

been asked to participate in supporting educators in this Mohawk community, with a mandate of

pursuing cultural distinctiveness. This invitation had suggested a perspective on how education,

in particular teacher development, could be a means to preserve cultural identity. I found comfort in our joint inquiry of teaching and learning; a road we would travel together. However, with all the commonalities I initially shared with the educators at Step by Step Child and Family Center, two epistemological frameworks were unfolding simultaneously: one from Reggio (my grounding); one from Mohawk perspectives. As an outsider to the community, a "Western researcher," I drew great reassurance from Reggio Emilia principles that would guide the way of achieving goals for this community. The epistemological framework of the Reggio Emilia approach also suited my preliminary research questions. How would the Reggio Emilia approach resonate with Mohawk thinking? What were the Mohawk educators using from their own culture? What were they using from Reggio? Did principles intersect? Thus began our research of building what was initially understood as well-guided work. Reggio`s respectful image of the child, their belief in teacher as researcher, and in meaningful provocation to promote in-depth projects all suggested segues into furthering a culturally based program. My deep connection with Reggio practice, especially having experienced previous transformations in my own "cultural" teaching practice as a result of using this approach, affirmed, for me possible pathways into how this First Nation community might appropriate Reggio Emilia thinking.

Locust (1998) insists: "as Native people, we cannot separate our spiritual teachings from our learning, nor can we separate our beliefs about who and what we are from our values and our behaviors" (p. 328). Mohawk cultural values rested on such beliefs and practices such as clan heritage, yearly ceremonies and the relationships amongst the people, animals and nature. Efforts to perpetuate language, songs, and dance also illustrated how Step by Step followed the epistemological framework of Mohawk culture: of their ways of addressing cultural identity.

It was therefore not entirely surprising (although still experienced by me as unexpected) that toward the end of our second year of study, a disruption in our/my reliance on Reggio occurred and a turn toward Mohawk values happened. This disruption, which was productive but disconcerting at first, dislodged my security and set in motion a release from the original research questions. Different directions had to be arranged; 'letting go' became the new agenda. What changed? The journey became one of developing into a mutual pedagogy of mindful listening, a road that took on a direction of its own and transformed from my journey and their journey to *our* journey.

Consistent with ethnographic methods, new research questions needed to arise: What would have to be let go so as to attend to authentic practice for this community and for Mohawk culture? How can culture be seamlessly woven into daily practice? This unanticipated occurrence released the Step by Step Child and Family Center educators, and this researcher, to focus on those practices that gave rise to cultural identity in the classroom.

This dissertation follows my journey of being a participant, a teacher, a learner and a researcher. Because of the many roles I encountered over the three years of the research, the subsequent chapters in this thesis will present the various phases through which this study unfolded; phases that altered the direction of this research. The stages of this project led to the creation of a bridge of *learning* that connected the years of investigation and the people involved. When the roads changed evolving into new routes to travel, the destination often became blurred, sometimes practically unknown. However, moving back and forth along the bridge, proved to be fundamental to the research.

Methodology

I have chosen various qualitative methods that drew on approaches that would suit the unfolding of the study: participatory action research, narrative inquiry, grounded theory, arts-informed methods and Indigenous research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) insist that researchers draw multiple sources, methods and theories in order to gather data using different approaches to provide for triangulation and transparency. I collected field notes and anecdotal records; conducted open and informal interviews and focus groups, and assembled artefacts. Over the course of the project, I was able to observe through a variety of contexts and multiple viewpoints thereby allowing for thick descriptions of the data gathered (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

Being an outsider to the Mohawk community, I had been placed in a research position of "student," learning and being taught about a culture in a daily environment – a role Agar (1996) termed "professional stranger" (p. 30). I had to be cognizant of my research partners along with relationships as we progressed through the journeys. Richards and Morse (2013) corroborate that an "awareness of self" (p. 57) during the research process is crucial. I also need to be attentive to my own cultural values and possible biases.

Seale, Gobo, Gubrium and Silverman (2004) confirm that "to be transparent and reflexive about conduct, theoretical perspective and values" illustrates characteristics of solid qualitative research. I will reflect on the variations in my role to ensure attentiveness to voice, trustworthiness, reflexivity and transparency (Butler-Kisber, 2010). I will relate the story as it transpired through the phases of construction. Interspersed in my thesis are selected citations from my field notes, personal observations and pertinent reflections during the research phases. My positions as researcher, participant and guide will be described alongside my research

partners' experiences since we travelled through our learning, applications, reflections and analyses mutually.

Chapter Synopses

When writing this dissertation I meditated with care over the titles of my chapters so they would reflect each stage of my research journey. The metaphor of 'bridge construction,' embedded in each title, expresses shared stages of scholarship. Using the bridge as a representation allowed me to communicate the common ground and commitment between myself and my associates in Kahnawake. The connections to 'construction' inserted in the titles helped me to represent the range of perspectives that kept the "bridge" in motion.

Chapter 1—Locating the Bridge. The study began by introducing the bridge and the notion of "journey," metaphors that will often be used to help organize and conceptualize my study. Chapter 1 provided my personal background and motivation in relation to this study and describes my partners in research, the Mohawk early childhood center, Step by Step. It discussed the rationale for the research and identified the research questions motivating the 'journey.' The chapter concluded with the purpose and significance of the inquiry along with the research questions that have guided the study.

Chapter 2— A Pedagogy of Listening: Theoretical Framework for Bridging Cultural Identity with Early Childhood and Development. This chapter concentrates on the literature and current perspectives regarding cultural identity in early childhood development. It discusses the child in relation to how identity is shaped during the younger years and how early education, whether at home or in school, contributes to growth. The discussion looks at best practice in early childhood education, including the Reggio Emilia approach and considers how a culturally appropriate approach could be developed in an early childhood setting. The central argument is that a focus on a 'pedagogy of listening' in relation to early childhood and to this

study is critical for fostering an education that honours First Nations culture, values and ways of

thinking and being.

   Chapter 3—Engineering the Bridge: Methods for Inquiry. Here, I take a careful look

at the methodological approaches that address cultural research within a First Nations context.

Indigenous methodologies are focused upon so as to attend to ethical and cultural perspectives.

Researcher and teacher identities are explicated to illuminate the significant position each filled

as the years of inquiry transpired. The chapter provides the conceptualization of the research

design, data gathering, analysis processes and interpretation. Subsequently, the rationales for

chosen methodological approaches are well defined. My detailed descriptions of the

methodological designs are necessary in order to document the organization of this longitudinal

study as well as to attend to matters of trustworthiness and transparency.

   Chapter 4—Phase One: Building a Bridge: Learning Together. This chapter focuses

on the preliminary year of study which concentrated on understanding the relationships of

leaning and culture in the context of First Nations principles. The Step by Step community

welcomed the Reggio Emilia approach as a framework because of its responsiveness to culture

and its reputation for positive outcomes (New, 2007). The chapter addresses the research

questions by focusing on where Reggio Emilia principles resonated with Mohawk culture and

teaching as well as initiated transformation in classroom practice. My reflexive tale (Van

Maanen, 1995) describes the process of the teachers' work as they took on long-term cultural

projects as curriculum for their young students. The conclusion of this phase brought about joy

in learning and understanding, only to be further celebrated with the incorporation of art studios

erected over the summer months. My field notes, journal and interview excerpts are presented in

order to illuminate the thought processes realized through this first phase of inquiry,

underscoring the development of not only the educators' acquired knowledge, but of this researcher as well.

   Chapter 5—Phase Two: A Bridge Under Construction: Integrating the Arts. *Chapter Five* articulates the second phase of study that called for new questions as environmental and pedagogical content were altered. A discussion of my reconstructed researcher role is highlighted to provide insight as to how access into the ateliers[1] and my collaboration with teachers and children, impacted the learning. This chapter emerges as significant to this study in that teacher practices and children`s cultural experiences are expanded and reflected upon through a "cycle of inquiry" that was implemented. Accounts of interactions with children in the ateliers are described in detail through my field notes. Journal excerpts and sections of focus group discussions and interviews demonstrate the developing understandings of both researcher and educators in this journey. An evolving pedagogy of listening during this phase, gives rise to significant change in direction; an unexpected juncture that directs the next phase of study.

   Chapter 6—Phase Three: Paving New Roads. This chapter documents the final phase of research at Step by Step. It focuses on answering the same questions concerned with how the ateliers and an arts-integrated curriculum affected and gave rise to Mohawk cultural identity. Supplemental questions are presented and explained in this chapter to draw out how Mohawk culture developed into leading the learning. Case studies of particular projects are offered to demonstrate deepened perceptions and skills when teachers were engaged in cultural topics with their young students. This chapter follows the educator's expanded knowledge and the centre's

---

[1] The atelier/art studio (interchangeable terms) is designed to offer children and their educators a space to extend and support projects and experiences from the classroom. The atelier allows children to work in small groups to explore with a variety of art media.

appropriation of understandings; what was retained through the years of research and what was released. Field notes, informal conversations, focus group sessions follow the unfolding of this phase while journal excerpts and interviews provide reflections on Mohawk ownership of their curriculum.

Chapter 7—Living Bridges. In this section I describe the examination of data collected over Phase Two and Phase Three of my study. While interpretations were ongoing throughout these phases, I chose to analyze them together as the research question remained the same. The organization and analysis of my copious data allowed me numerous opportunities to examine and flesh out what arose as essential over those two years of study. The outcomes of this chapter support my title choice of this thesis: Constructing Living Bridges.

Chapter 8—Bridges Bring You To Another Place. The dissertation concludes with a return to the questions and discussion of the key themes and outcomes that have emerged as a result of this research. In this chapter I reflect on how Mohawk identity took ownership of curriculum whereby culture emerged as the impetus for all learning. I also share my growing understandings as a researcher and how perceptions might be altered when a pedagogy of listening brings about change. This chapter additionally reflects on the limitations of the research as well as recommendations for practice and future research possibilities.

Chapter 2

A Pedagogy of Listening: A Theoretical Framework for Bridging Cultural Identity, with Early Childhood and Development

Watching and listening to infants and toddlers, I have come to the view that being part of a culture is a need human beings are born with—that culture, whatever its contents, is a natural function. (Trevarthen, 1995, p.5)

Introduction

This chapter develops an argument around a pedagogy of listening. It draws on literature from educational perspectives on early learning and culturally responsive teaching. It additionally looks at what is known about children's cultural development, the way that children learn within their home life and how that impacts their lives as learners in school. The rights of children will also be examined and interwoven to illuminate the call to fulfilling children's needs; needs that are considered as a right to be met. The concept of a pedagogy of listening provides the basis for the conceptual framework of this study as well as significantly informing the methodologies chosen.

The notion of a pedagogy of listening first emerged from the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education (Rinaldi, 2001). It focuses on careful listening to children and their theories, providing insight into how young children think and make connections that are meaningful to them. This feature relates to teaching and learning in that it involves the child's and adult's pursuit for meaning and understanding through careful listening to one another (Rinaldi, 2001). Reggio educators 'listen' to children with the support of a variety of documentation tools that collect and follow children's thoughts and ideas: photos, teacher anecdotes, children's own descriptions, journals, videos and tape recordings. The documentation

gathered is referred to for teacher guidance and reflection in order to plan how to build on

children's explorations or interests. The objective is to respect the child in his/her endeavors and

to make the child's learning visible. A pedagogy of listening gives rise to learning as it is an

evolving process whereby teachers further develop theories about children and their ideas

through collegial dialogue, sharing and listening. Rinaldi (2006) explains the process; by 'our'

she means adults and children:

> Our theories need to be listened to by others…any theorizations from the simplest to the
>
> most refined, needs to be expressed, to be communicated, and thus to be listened to, in
>
> order to exist. It is here where we recognize the values and foundation of the pedagogy
>
> of listening. So, we construct our theories, we have a dialogue with others about them,
>
> others listen and respond and then we construct new theories. (p. 2)

Educators can develop a mindset of professional practice based on 'listening' (Ball & Cohen,

1996), in so doing, relationships can be developed. During my years of research at Step by Step

Child and Family Center, a devotion to listening occurred. The pedagogy of listening happened

on many levels: within culture (i.e. educators listening to each other, teachers and children

listening to each other), between cultures (i.e. myself and the community at Step by Step), and

intrapersonal considerations (i.e. listening to myself).

Within a research situation in an Indigenous context, the pedagogy of listening takes on a

new and important meaning. Tuhawai Smith (1999) emphasizes that outside researchers need to

re-position methodologies in order to know, comprehend, and research from Indigenous

perspectives and for Indigenous purposes. Culturally sensitive approaches need to go beyond

Western research practices whereby relationships, conversation and listening take on significant

roles. Effective communication gathers the skills of talking and listening in order for the

researcher to receive privileged knowledge (Tuhawai Smith, 1999) and to develop significant

relationships. As Tuhawai Smith cautions, researchers "have the potential to extend knowledge

or to perpetuate ignorance" (p. 176). Careful and receptive listening takes on a weighty position.

> Listening openly means being willing and able to positively embrace something different
>
> and new from others. This isn't as easy as it may sound, because it involves issues about
>
> personal relations, power, value, alignment and so on. (Ghaye, 2010, p. 178)

A pedagogy of listening may give rise to purposeful dialogue and shared knowledge, as well as

novel ideas and collaborative considerations in support of new ways of thinking about cultural

identity in the early years. It is with this contemplation that the literature examined here would

focus on theories that illuminate a 'pedagogy of listening' within and between cultures.

The Rights of the Child

One of the most significant challenges in the field of early childhood care in North

America is how to respond to student and family diversity (Adelabu, Durand & Jenkins-Scott,

2010). Diaz-Soto, Hixon and Hite (2010) argue for young children's right across the globe.

Noting the intolerances and prejudices worldwide regarding several complex issues (i.e. poverty,

race, power, culture), Diaz-Soto et al. (2010) underscore past injustices to Indigenous

communities worldwide and the outcomes of efforts intended to eradicate Indigenous cultures

and languages. Diaz-Soto et al. call on early childhood scholars to take the lead by allowing

their scholarship to improve children's lives, to pursue social justice and equity, and to look after

children's rights and their families' well-being. Children begin to explore the world around them

during critical years of learning and a sense of well-being and belonging is vital to their healthy

development (Early Learning Framework, 2007). Children require the security of being

grounded in their environment while families desire success for their children in school.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the largest

North American professional organization which promotes excellence in early childhood

education, identifies children's rights as an ethical and responsible pursuit in education. In their

Code of Ethical Conduct and Statement of Commitment (2005), culture and family rights are

highlighted in their core values:

• Base our work on knowledge of how children develop and learn

• Appreciate and support the bond between the child and family

• Recognize that children are best understood and supported in the context of family,

culture, community, and society

• Respect the dignity, worth, and uniqueness of each individual (child, family member,

and colleague)

• Respect diversity in children, families, and colleagues

• Recognize that children and adults achieve their full potential in the context of

relationships that are based on trust and respect

(NAEYC Code of Ethics, 2005, p. 1)

Washington and Andrews (2010) admit that, too often the reality of wanting all children

to flourish in a diverse nation has fallen short. Perhaps due to gaps in accessibility to nurturing

environments, health care quality, education and community services (Washington & Andrews,

2010), such shortfalls augment the call for children to enjoy their rightful and ethical place in

early schooling. Hernandez (2010) maintains that with regard to culture, early childhood

educators must have "hopes, dreams and intentions" (p. 20). He affirms the ongoing challenges

when attending to culture as "we begin to see the children of the world in our classrooms" (p.

20).

Contemporary activists, Antonia Darder and Lucinda Lee Katz, call for improved practice and policy change that would address integration of cultural distinctiveness into education. Darder`s teaching and research have examined issues of inequalities and politics of social exclusions. A victim herself of educational oppression during her early schooling, Darder (2002) states that children are prepared to learn when they are honoured as to *what* they have learned and *how* they learn. Western educational policies choose to concentrate more, and rely heavily, on standardized testing and accountability (Darder, 2002; Washington & Andrews, 2010). Her appeal to educators and policy makers summons "cultural consciousness" with the aim of fulfilling children`s right to cultural identity (Darder, 2002). Darder challenges the field with her questions: "How do we initiate this into our systems? What are the conditions that will stimulate these opportunities to allow for the child's rightful evolution?" (2002, p. 18).

Principle 7 of the United Nations Charter of Children's Rights (1959, 1989, 1990) states:

The child is entitled to receive education, which shall be free and compulsory, at least in the elementary stages. He shall be given an education which will promote his general culture and enable him, on a basis of equal opportunity, to develop his abilities, his individual judgement, and his sense of moral and social responsibility, and to become a useful member of society. (p. 1)

The message is clear: children's rights need to be considered within a context of culture. A pedagogy of listening *is* a pedagogy of ethics.

Dahlberg and Moss (2005) explain that authentic listening encompasses listening to thought, and making meaning from that thought without any preconceived ideas of what is appropriate or valid. As an outsider researching culture, welcoming the Other implies being open to recognizing differences and trying to listen to the Other (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005).

When discussing the rights of children in early care, there is a transfer of daily life from parents to teacher, with teachers most often being complete strangers. Their pedagogy of ethical listening can build dialogue to create connections with the child and the family. Family culture provides the backbone for values and beliefs, validating the life and rights of the child.

The belief in children's rights warrants reflection amongst the community of adults who children encounter (Hall & Rudkin, 2011). To effectually support children's rights, adults must be willing to listen to children, embrace their perspectives, and actively engage with them using a variety of communication methods that are developmentally appropriate to the child.

The Rationale for a Pedagogy of Listening

In the field of early childhood education, there has been consistent scholarly interest in the matter of listening to young children (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, Lansdown, 2005, Rinaldi, 2006). Dewey (1916) suggested that listening embraces the art of communication, generating people's participation with goals of making meaning and breaking down of social barriers. In light of s Dewey's considerations and the principles (i.e. the rights of the child and the value of listening), a question however may be raised: What are we listening to? Such an inquiry would lay emphasis on not only the implication of taking time to listen to those involved, but also on facilitating dialogue where obstacles may be dismantled and culture can be attended to meaningfully.

Pidgeon, Munoz, Kirkness and Archibald (2013) maintain that cultural education, as presented in the Indian Control of Indian Education Act (1972), is still being contested as much as it was forty years ago. The authors call for inquiries that would address persistent issues in establishing culturally relevant programs where Indigenous identity remains central to education (Pidgeon et al., 2013).   A focus on a pedagogy of listening might support the challenge of

attending to culture within an "holistic Indigenous approach" (Pidgeon et al., 2013, p. 31). For that reason I had to consider various perspectives that a pedagogy of listening might support such as: listening to the child, teachers listening to each other and myself as a listener. The arts additionally could be examined as one way in which people may listen to each other. Therefore, listening would be central to my research as a range of perspectives would broaden and deepen understandings of the place of cultural identity in education.

Kirkness, an Indigenous scholar, advocate and participant in developing policies for First Nations education acts (i.e. White Paper, 1969; ICIE, 1972), states: "The answers are within us" (as cited in Pidgeon et al., 2013, p. 7). "We need to educate and involve our total community…we have to work with parents, grandparents, foster parents, everyone" (as cited in Pidgeon et al., 2013, p.8). Pidgeon et al. (2013) further emphasize the importance of relationships: with and among elders, educators, parents, advisory committees. Battiste (2005), Pidgeon et al. (2013) and many others, maintain that 'listening' to the voices of the communities is central to achieving goals and hopes for cultural identity.

Also significant is the belief in relationships between teacher and children. Pidgeon et al. (2013) distinguish relationships as being crucial to generating change in educational systems. The rationale for an emphasis on 'relationships' lies in "…respect to relationships that have been built by Elders…who pushed against the systems to create the necessary space" (p. 20). Such occurrences could not have happened without significant attention to genuine listening.

In order to "move Indigenous education in directions originally envisioned" (Pidgeon et al., 2013, p. 32), co-operative, respectful and reciprocal relationships with 'outsiders,' require attention. Therefore, as an 'outsider,' I had to be focused on building relationships where 'listening' would be crucial for relationships and knowledge to be shared. I argue that a

pedagogy of listening has implications for the rights and positive image of the child as well as reconceptualising what constitutes culturally appropriate early childhood care. Such principles are founded on the ethics of quality care, including bringing adults and children together, community together and extending with 'others' as to what might be known as best practices. A pedagogy of listening, as a methodology, will be further discussed in Chapter 3.

Therefore, in acknowledgment to a pedagogy of listening, along with respecting the rights of the child, I had to investigate what would be required in educational approaches that would support processes of building understandings and relationships. I turned to a constructivist approach whereby teachers' and children's active involvement in learning could be fostered and developed over time.

Constructivist Approaches to the Child

Recent pedagogical attention has converged on demands for teaching and curriculum to be "learner centered." In recognition of such new appeals, Ehly (2009) affirms that the centrality of the young child is the first step toward meeting the challenges of today`s diverse classrooms. From this perspective, as Ehly maintains, learner centred classrooms involve teachers making deliberate and informed decisions about curriculum so as to ensure "all students learn every day" (p. 15). Learner centered classrooms incorporate: providing for differentiated instruction, considering social emotional domains, and valuing families as partners in education (Ehly, 2009).   Importantly, as Ehly (2009) indicates, the practices of thoughtful observation, reflective thinking and a mindset of respect are central to teaching and learning.

Regard for children as being capable of building their own knowledge stems back to Jerome Bruner's (1966) research and his conviction that children have the ability to construct knowledge based on their prior understandings. Later on, Bruner (1996) expanded his basic

constructivist theory to include the perception that teaching must focus on new experiences and

contexts that would prepare and motivate children for learning, thus conceiving the learning

process as a spiralling re-occurrence. Brooks and Wangmo (1992) also supported constructivist

approaches: "Learners control their learning. This simple truth lies at the heart of the

constructivist approach to education" (p. 21). While constructivism includes a focus on social

interactions, the importance of the individual child's role in generating his or her own

interpretations of understandings should be identified as substantial (Auger & Rich, 2007).

The Italian Reggio Emilia approach has been a major source of studies using

constructivist methodologies by considering curriculum for young children as being flexible and

open to "negotiation." Inquiry-based conversations with children, followed by teacher analysis

and reflection on documentation of children`s thoughts, allow for the possibility of curriculum to

be negotiated (Fraser, 2006). Fraser (2006) carried out a study involving a Taiwanese teacher

who began exploring a project approach, a curriculum methodology central to the Reggio

practice. Children were welcomed into conversation around self-directing their experience, an

approach that went against Taiwanese historical practice of expecting the child to be "passive

and obedient in the classroom" (Fraser, 2006, p. 15). The teacher admitted that relinquishing

control was a challenge as children were formerly perceived as "a piece of white paper and

educators can draw the most beautiful picture on it" (p. 14). The findings of this study disclosed

that listening and viewing the child as capable encouraged teachers to regard children in a

'different way' as the children were in charge of their own learning; exploring, questioning and

making decisions that guided their project. What the teacher realized on reflection of the

experiences was that the child had to be regarded in a 'different way.' Fraser (2006) cites Ceppi

and Zini's (1998) explanation that when the young students are viewed as "producers of culture,

values and rights, competent in living and learning,*"* it is in the hands of the adults to initiate and

develop "children`s learning paths and processes … to pass through the relationships with the

cultural and scholastic context which, as such must be a 'formative environment' and ideal place

for development" (Fraser, 2006, p. 117). Practices of careful listening to the child and

perceiving the child as capable of building his/ her understandings emphasize constructivist

learner centered education, foundational to which is that the child is adept at forming his/her own

theories through exercises of creative intelligence, free thought and individuality.

Loris Malaguzzi`s focused attention on the images teachers have of children within a

setting of an emergent and negotiated curriculum, underscores constructivist approaches in light

of Reggio's belief in the rights of children. Malaguzzi developed his stance of children's rights

by provoking educators to re-examine how they approach and view each young child: "We had

to preserve our decision to learn from children ….and to maintain a readiness to change points of

view…" (as cited in Edwards, Gandini & Forman, 1993, p. 45) and "Teachers must possess a

habit of questioning their uncertainties" (p. 65). Malaguzzi conceived the expression of "the

hundred languages of children" where he documented numerous possibilities in the way children

are able to exhibit, make meaning, construct and guide their own learning with the support of

caring educators who provide for experiences where knowledge can be built. The challenge is to

be able to further that consideration to include how culture, identity and the child might

collectively make their place in early childhood education.

Culture, Identity and the Child

The heart of early childhood practice and policy supports the development of a child's

positive identity. Erikson (1993/1950), Kohlberg (1976) and Vygotsky (1995) maintain that

identity from family life forms the foundations that pave the way for early development to

evolve in school.   In view of such considerations, Derman-Sparks and Olson-Edwards (2010)

argue that perspectives on contemporary identity formation within early childhood classrooms do

not lay sufficient emphasis on the child's specific culture at birth and how that impacts learning

at school. Culture here refers to the values and ways of life of the members of a society or groups

in   society, where in which cultural identity is shaped. What's more, as children move into

formal education, a child merges with "new" identities: dominant school cultures, multi-cultural

classrooms, and encounters with educators who may lack experience or understanding of 'other'

cultures. Such occurrences may conflict with the child's acquired personal cultural values during

primary formative years.

      Notably, age-related transformations in physical, cognitive, social and emotional domains

occur during the early years of schooling (Piaget, 1952; Sameroff & McDonough, 1994). By the

same token, at this critical time, a child's approach *to* learning is unfolding; a further significant

domain of development. Hyson (2008) maintains that children's enthusiasm for learning and

their engagement in learning are profoundly influenced by experiences from home as well as in

early childhood programs. With such knowledge, responsive teaching practices encompassing

developmental, individual and cultural backgrounds require the educator's attention (Tomlinson,

2009). Souto-Manning and Mitchell's (2010) multi-year study which focused on culturally

responsive practices in early childhood classrooms, emphasized the paramount role early

educators play in building children's "fluid identities," thus allowing children to recognize and

navigate within and across spaces of cultural differences (Souto-Manning, 2009).

      Several definitions of culture and identity are germane to early childhood. For instance

Coles, Hakkarainen, and Bredikyte (2010) describe "culture" as "historically accumulated

knowledge, tools and attitudes that pervade the child's proximal ecology, including the cultural

practices of the nuclear family members and other kin" (p. 2). Coles et al.'s description honours

the past and recognizes the influences on the child`s life as he/she enters school cycles. Culture

has also been defined as a collective, learned symbolic system of values, beliefs and approaches

that impacts perception and formulates behaviours (Espinosa, 2010). Similarly, Derman-Sparks

and Olson-Edwards (2010) state that children develop personal identities through tactile

experiences, social environments, and intellectual development. Rogoff (1990) adds that

children develop a sense of their personal identity during their entire childhood by means of their

active guided participation in the cultural life of their community.   Identity, therefore, is both a

condition of 'being' and an exercise of always 'becoming' (Uprichard, 2008). Cultural identity

can also be described as a group feeling of "belonging together" personified through individual

experiences, sentiments of belonging and being influenced by a group or culture (Nsamenang,

2008).

However, cultural identity is far more challenging to define than it may at first appear.

Rogoff (2003) maintains that children of a particular culture do not necessarily develop in a

uniform fashion or into an identity that fits into a "cultural box" (p. 28). Schweder et al. (1998)

suggest that ongoing interactions between individual children and their culture may foster a

range of divergent practices and experiences, which may result in different 'desirable' identities

among at different times and in various societies. If educators treat cultural differences as global

"traits", an understanding of individual learning may not be recognized, which can hinder

support for student learning (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, , 2003).

Hall (2003) further considers that cultural identity should not be seen as an

"accomplished fact"; rather it should be viewed as an "ongoing production" (p. 235). He

interprets cultural identity as having two aspects. First, it refers to collective culture, implying a

group of people who share history and ancestry. On this account, cultural identity reflects

collective historical experiences and shared cultural codes. Hall's (2003) second sense of

cultural identity is related to the first; however, it takes on an affective view. This perspective

extends the thinking about identity to *"what we really are"* or, because of the impact of history to

"what we have become" (Hall, 2003, p. 238). Bringing forth the history of colonization,

according to Hall (2003), cultural identity emanates from somewhere as all groups have histories

and like everything historical, cultures too undergo to transformation. Hall states that

"transportation, slavery and colonization" (p. 240) have impacted on identity for many groups

therefore mindful acknowledgment is necessary. Rogoff (2003) too searches for ways to better

understand identity development in context. She makes an argument for Vygotsky's

sociocultural theory; here cognitive development is conceptualized within social, cultural and

historical processes.

> In contrast to theories of development that focus on the individual and the social or
>
> cultural context as separate entities, the cultural-historical approach assumes that
>
> individual development must be understood in, and cannot be separated from, its social
>
> and cultural-historical context. (Rogoff, 2003, p. 50)

Rogoff (2003) explains that inquiries into how people remember, attend, perceive, plan and so

on, are processes that are closely tied not only to social and cognitive goals, but also to

individual learning and participation within cultural communities.

In addition, Espinosa (2010) documents that cultural groups may vary in their beliefs and

approaches. As an illustration, she notes that it is well known that Latino adults often tell stories,

folk tales or sing *dichos* that conclude with moral messages for young children. However, this

does not suggest that all Latino families employ the same practice to convey such lessons to

children. Lynch and Hanson (2004) and McNaughton (2005) confirm that various groups within cultural communities differ in their early socialization patterns, beginning language and literacy practice, as well as in their parenting approaches.

Understanding that homogeneity is not a constant within a cultural group is further underscored by Jessica Ball`s extensive research with First Nations communities.  For instance, one of Ball`s (2005) studies followed two years of community wide dialogue, addressing child and family wellness, where she brought together three groups from rural First Nation populations from Western Canada. Her study was a response to an appeal for providing improved early childhood care to First Nations communities. The research examined how collaboration with communities provided for early childhood centers to become "hubs" for a range of programs and social services that promoted cohesion and cultural stability. Notably, Ball tackled the concept of a universal standard for 'best practices' for these communities. Her findings clearly indicated that there is no "one size fits all" approach. What she does present is that "best practice" implies what is "best" for all stakeholders within a community, further calling attention to diversity even within a cultural group. Again, these expanded understandings of possible differences within cultural groups require attention, especially when considering the variety of cultures.

Nothing is more fundamental within a culture than how its children are raised. Through daily interactions and experiences, families communicate to their children their cultural values, beliefs, rules and expectations (Derman-Sparks & Olson- Edwards, 2010). Through this initial relationship, children come to view themselves, others, as well as their sense of place in society. Rogoff (2003) explains, "All children grow as members of cultural communities so understanding how childhood is supported, constrained and constructed in any community is part of understanding child development" (p. 45). Rogoff argues that human development has to be

conceived within a cultural process because "culture matters" (p. 28). For instance, Rogoff documented how young Mayan females in Guatemala stood and observed their mothers as they engaged in intricate weaving projects; weaving is part of daily life. The mother weavers watched intensely for their daughters' attentiveness to the activity. Once recognized, the mothers then arranged for their daughters' daily weaving projects, in tandem with their own, where they could work beside and guide their daughters in this cultural occupation. Rogoff titled this "guidance embedded in activity" and emphasized how learning rose from the child's interest and teaching emerged from keen observation. Such research contrasts with how North American young children are segregated into child focused settings and often out of context (Rogoff, 2003). How then should support of cultural identity be approached within North American classrooms? And, how does culture link to development and learning competence?

    We need to acknowledge that right from birth a healthy child is an active participant in his/her growth which holds implications for how children learn to develop their competencies (Bowman, 2002). If we can better understand *how* children learn, can we advance our teaching and/or can we adapt curriculum to meet cultural demands with all its complexities (Bowman, 2002)? Barbara Bowman, an authority and innovator in the arena of childhood equity, has noticed that minority children are often labelled as unable to meet benchmarks. Bowman believes that developmental competence does not rely on how well a child does in school; rather it depends on the ways that children have been taught to display competence (Bowman, 2002). There exists a genuine conflict between how children may have learned to think and what schools expect (Heath, 1983), giving further support to Rogoff's (2003) findings on how culture influences development. Young children acquire understandings about what is appropriate from their own communities in which they live. The more *what* or *how* a child has learned that differs

from school expectations, the more difficult it will be for him/her to be successful at school (Bowman, 2002). Learning is built on prior knowledge in order for the child to develop more complex ideas. Therefore, consideration should not only attend to what the child knows, but *how* he/she knows. If it is accepted that all children have the predisposition to learn, then educators need to not only understand what children have already learned, but how that may differ from the *ways* children learn (Bowman, 2002). To illustrate such awareness, Hyson (2004) notes that some cultures value and encourage emotional expression yet in other cultures children may be less expressive when displaying interest, though their underlying feelings may be the same. Similarly, Rogoff (2003) identifies that culture may influence the child's attentiveness during learning. Some children may only observe during learning experiences while others may learn when they tangibly explore materials at hand.

Hyson (2012) posits that culturally responsive teaching increases opportunities for success, whatever the child's background. Children in every culture can be interested and inspired to learn as engagement in learning is part of all children`s behavioral repertoire (Hyson, 2012).

Rogoff (2003), Coles et al. (2010), Bowman (2002), Ball (2005) and Hall (2003) and many others have confirmed that development is rooted in culture. Culture may be a most significant and distinguishing element because an individual's definition of, and expectations for social competency and valued behaviours, are channelled through his/her cultural background (Han & Thomas, 2010). It is because of these findings that teaching and learning has had its challenges.

A Pedagogy of Listening and the Image of the Child

The literature represented previously has examined values and attitudes with respect to strengthening children's sense of self and cultural identity. Learning and teaching ought to reflect such expectations. The numerous scholarly discussions presented here corroborate how culture and development go hand in hand and are grounded in constructivist approaches. First and foremost, the belief in "listening to the child," and respecting the child in light of his/her capabilities and rights, all warrant mindful reflection. The child can be perceived as the protagonist in his/her learning: strong, deserving, rich and capable (Cadwell, 1997; Fraser, 2006). Gandini (1993) explains that all children bring preparedness, potential, inquisitiveness and interest to constructing their learning; negotiating with whatever their environment conveys to them. This image of the young child is deeply rooted in an eclectic collection of philosophies from developmental theorists who continue to impact contemporary thinking. For example, Fraser (2006) identifies Dewey's contribution of considering the child as an active, capable and leading participant in his/her own learning, viewing the child in the context of family and society. Erikson, who regarded the child from social, developmental and cultural perspectives, supports practitioners' decisions to perceive the child in context with a focus on building individual strengths (Fraser, 2006). Piaget recognized the whole child, reminding educators to pay attention to the child. Piaget's concern has long-ago encouraged teachers to shift from directed learning to guiding and facilitating in honour of the child (Fraser, 2006). Vygotsky's influence vis-à-vis the image of the child supports the importance of the social aspects of learning as well as shedding light on the image of the child as intelligent, strong, creative and competent (Fraser, 2006). With respect to learning, recognizing and respecting the development of the young child, Vygotsky has illuminated how children acquire knowledge within a zone of

proximal development. Vygotsky understood the role of educators as providing experiences

within a child's zone, continually encouraging and advancing each child's learning (Fraser,

2006).

Asking the question, "What is your image of the young child?" implies that there are

many images conceivable. Malaguzzi (1994) suggests that teaching begins with how the child is

viewed. What image does the teacher hold? He explains,

> There are hundreds of different images of the child. Each one of you has inside yourself
>
> an image of the child that directs you as you begin to relate to a child. This theory within
>
> you pushes you to behave in certain ways; it orients you as you talk to the child,
>
> listen to the child, observe the child. (p. 52)

In response to Malaguzzi's suggestion of a hundred different images possible, attending to the

young learner, with mindfulness to his/her own culture, calls for discussion as there are

implications as to how to view the child.

Powerful illustrations of the image of the child re-enter in the research, although not

always identified in recent studies that have examined culturally relevant teaching and learning.

For example, a collaborative action research project followed two classes of six and seven year

old children and their teachers in a primary school in Paro, Bhutan. Brooks and Wangmo (2011)

report on the introduction of project based learning and the use of visual representations as

evidence of learning in these classes. Their article follows a detailed journey of teachers'

professional development and applications of documentation while employing The Project

Approach in their classrooms. This study was impressive as researchers and educators, only

some with insider knowledge, were encouraged and tutored to move away from past teaching

practices of rote learning, factual recall and standardized testing. They moved into constructivist

thinking and allowed for learning to be experienced first-hand while knowledge was being built.

Brooks and Wangmo (2011) presented the unfolding of this project, "The Gangtey Hotel," along

with visual documentation that proved to be meaningful to the children and the community.

Following each phase of the project, researchers and teachers reflected on the new-found flexible

structure that was practiced in the classrooms and how children were sharing responsibilities for

decisions of what to learn and how to learn. The teachers' reflections were:

> I had seriously underestimated the capabilities of the children…..I am interacting in new
>
> ways with the children…..I now elicit information from children, to help them pose new
>
> questions….The children are highly motivated by this style of learning...both classes are
>
> showing children that are taking risks, experimenting and sharing ideas. (Brooks &
>
> Wangmo, 2011, p. 29)

While the focus of the article was on how project work might be enacted in a Bhutanese context

(Brooks and Wangmo, 2011), the educators and researchers alike gained a better understanding

of how to view and observe the young child as strong, rich, capable, deserving, creative, and

interested, which are primary steps in appreciating and more importantly, understanding the

culture in every child. However, what was not identified from all the experiences of this

longitudinal study, was that a value was placed on listening and as a result, this was what

reinforced positive experiences, outcomes and reflections.

Bringing forward what has been presented thus far in this chapter, a positive image of the

child has been instrumental in guiding us toward a mindset of attentive listening through various

channels (i.e. community, parents, the child, the teacher, and documentation). Perceiving an

image of the child as unique in a family's upbringing comes into view when children's

opportunities of constructing their own knowledge are woven into learning experiences. Rogoff

(2003) reminds us that understanding cultural identity does not imply determining whether *one way is right;* rather, what is understood about how the child evolves within his/her culture demands attention and thought. With a vision of a positive image of the child, Rogoff's acknowledgement of understanding culturally diverse rearing practices could support educators to move beyond long-standing assumptions and develop into careful listeners.

Particular themes in support of culturally relevant teaching and learning in the early childhood context seem to take the position of: cultural sensitivity as grounded in the image of the child, a positive image of the child and his/her culture, and practitioners focused on active listening. Mann (2010), Derman-Sparks and Olson-Edwards' (2010), and Han and Thomas (2010) recognize that teachers who acknowledge their own ethnocentrism and biases, will then strengthen their abilities to listen respectfully. When teachers move into active listening, as well as acquire sound knowledge of the cultural backgrounds of their students and families, then development of a culturally responsive pedagogy can occur (Han & Thomas, 2010; Souto-Manning & Mitchell, 2010). Cultural identity then becomes a lens through which teaching, learning, and curriculum can subsist. Irvine (2003) names this process as "teaching with a cultural eye" (p. 48). Crucially, as Han and Thomas (2010) have recorded, when cultural identity is welcomed into practice, children's overall growth and development advances. A positive image of the child is then retained as the focal point to teaching and learning.

This section has addressed the image of child in view of his/her cultural identity in early education. What has arisen from this examination is a focus on the relationships amongst, teachers, children, families and communities. Consideration follows as to what each member brings to the relationships, in support of the image of the child, and how the relationships are affected in various contexts.

 A Pedagogy of Listening and Relationships

Attention to relationships, as Wien (2004) suggests, is based on the perception that the child is seen as a social being and deeply connected to family, peers, community, school, and environment. Correspondingly, Rogoff (2003) claims that the child learns what is important in his/ her culture by the envelopment and participation of family, community, tools and values: all vital exchanges in early development.

Rinaldi (2006) and Cadwell (1997) explain that attentive educators take on a "pedagogy of listening." A belief in "taking listening seriously" (Resonant of Brooker, 2011, p. 137) not only applies to children but toward families as well, allowing for the principle of relationships to become critical considerations when supporting cultural identity in the classroom. When educators investigate and commit to developing partnerships with families, in support of the child's learning (Cadwell, 1997), families undertake a crucial role in the life of the school and classroom (Gandini, 2004). Because of such practice, "funds of knowledge" (Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 1992) yield support not only for familial interactions, but for a curriculum that takes notice of culture.

Reciprocal relationships between the child's experiences and others build trust, respect, collaboration and partnership. Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, and Walberg (2004) have found that there is a growing body of empirical research that supports the impact of social relationships on a child`s later success.  Recent attention to Vygotsky's sociocultural theory has contributed to this emphasis on sociocultural aspects of children`s growth. Vygotsky's (1978) theory addresses the significance of social interaction in the development of cognition but, more importantly, he recognized that culture is influential during the process of children's first years of meaning making. Vygotsky posited that the child's development rises from the social and cultural context

in which he or she is surrounded. As an example, Vygotsky described "the tools of intellectual

development" (p. 58) such as memory, mnemonics, and brainstorming, as considerations.

Vygotsky draws out the belief that recognition of cultural upbringing can be associated with

meaningful teaching and learning and therefore support relationship building.

Parnell (2011) recognized that relationships are at risk when early childhood teachers do

not value the distinctiveness of the young child. The image of the child re-emerges as salient

when we consider the environment needed for culturally responsive teaching and learning. A

lack of recognition extends outward from the classroom: to others in the school, to home, and

into the community life in general (Parnell, 2011). Cheatham and Santos (2011) have identified

problems in home and school communication whereby misperceptions and misunderstandings

have appeared between teachers and families from culturally diverse backgrounds. These authors

examined a series of parent–teacher conferences that emphasized goals of effective

communication. Cheatham and Santos found that when teachers developed communication

strategies with families, and were receptive to learning about individual cultural values, more

effective collaboration occurred. Cadwell (1997) confirms that parental participation plays an

active role not only in children's learning experiences but importantly, in the exchange of

philosophies with parents as teachers acquire new ways of thinking about education. Spaggiari

(1993) suggests that when partnerships can be built, families will not be seen as threats, but

instead as collaborators who add to the learning. Dahlberg and Moss (2005), theorists in the field

of ethical practice, caution professionals about treating "others" as ourselves, or in the case of

young children, "attempting to make others into people like ourselves" (p. 27). Coles et al.

(2010) also insist that in order to understand culture, families need to be involved since all

families have implicit goals for their children's outcomes.

Several research studies have corroborated that when the teacher's perceptions of cultural challenges have transformed, and careful listening during family encounters has been accomplished, the consequences have proven significant. Souto-Manning and Mitchell's (2009) study of culturally responsive practices in early childhood, along with others (Espinoza- Herold, 2003 Lahman & Park , 2004; Pappamihiel, 2004), recommended that supportive practices of the child's cultural identity, ought to be pursued through each child's home culture and family values. Souto-Manning and Mitchell's (2009) study presented teachers as "…collaborative action researchers, ethnographers seeking to learn more about the culture of the classroom communities and of individual members of this community" (p. 271). Souto-Manning and Mitchell (2009) eloquently comment on the teacher's role:

> This reflection [of teacher practice] indicates the need to take a humble stance (Freire, 1998), and embody the position of learner and teacher, blurring the boundaries of teacher and learner (Freire, 1970), and learning alongside the children, their parents and families.
>
> (Souto-Manning & Mitchell, 2009, p. 272)

Further studies have supported integration of children's culture into school when teachers requested support from families. Ensuring that "surface culture" (Derman-Sparks & Olson-Edwards, 2010) was avoided, teachers in Sanchez's (2009) study approached children's family members to share "dichos." Stories, rooted in Hispanic "dichos," or popular sayings, are frequently articulated by Spanish-speaking people to communicate values, attitudes and perceptions (Espinoza-Herold, 2007). Since the educators involved in this project were not of the culture, their objectives were to ensure that what they explored with the children was culturally and linguistically appropriate. As Sanchez (2009) explains, "Dichos may be an effective tool for learning about students and families since it integrates critical elements of

Hispanic cultures and language." (p. 161). By eliciting family stories through home projects and

class presentations with a variety of family members (i.e. parents, aunts, uncles, grandparents),

teachers were able to glean information that, in the end, influenced their teaching and curriculum

(Sanchez, 2009). Educators additionally sent a message to families that they were

collaboratively involved in their child's education in meaningful ways, thereby supporting

cultural identity. Moll (2000) describes family involvement as a rich resource and "funds of

knowledge" (p. 138), Family participation can support resources such as cultural artifacts to be

utilized as knowledge; artifacts that inspire family practices and values. Importantly, "funds of

knowledge" can fluctuate from one family to another, from one community to another (Moll et

al., 1992). The application of "funds of knowledge" additionally appeared in Souto-Manning

and Mitchell's (2009) research when teachers' projects involved family participation in the

classroom. By welcoming families, both studies opened the door to allowing cultural practices

from home to enter the classroom in authentic ways.

As a further example, Hughes' (2007) research identified key values shared by the

Reggio Emilia approach and an Alaskan First Nations community. The values included:

meaningful relationships with family and community, the child's connection to the natural

environment, and teacher`s vision or image of the child. The objective of Hughes' study was to

regard the community as a resource that could deepen understanding of cultural identity. What

distinguished Hughes' (2007) study from others was a common insider vision of cultural

identity, instigated by the native educators themselves. Through reflection and collaborative

discussions, the cultural values that Indigenous educators deemed important provided the

direction and context for the children's learning experiences. These educators, driven by their

cultural principles and community history, incorporated oral stories and legends as well as

provided experiences with the natural world; values they deemed as being absent from their young children's lives. The act of listening to each other guided their study, unearthing what was meaningful to this community and to the education of their children.

Malaguzzi (1993) states, "We consider relationships to be the fundamental organizing strategy of our [Reggio] education system" (p. 10). My argument centers on the fact that relationships are central to objectives of learning and development, especially significant when culture is a dominant goal. Relationships with children, families and communities develop when questioning and listening are thoughtfully attended to. By keeping in mind relationships with stakeholders, a focus on the pedagogy of a cultural curriculum came into being.

Teaching, Learning and Curriculum in Support of Cultural Identity

Through the lenses of early childhood curriculum content, policy and programs and professional development, accounts of a pedagogy of listening indicate that we need to embark on a project of *rethinking* what has been accepted as developmentally appropriate practice in relation to culture (Genishi & Goodwin, 2008). Genishi and Goodwin encourage practitioners to question whether young children, within the context of developmentally appropriate practice, truly have their "identity" validated or not. They challenge professionals to rethink the issue before moving on to 'doing diversity' in the classroom (Genishi & Goodwin, 2008). Derman-Sparks and Olson-Edwards (2010), activists in support of anti-bias and cultural education in early childhood, admit that maneuvering through various cultures can be "complex and confusing" (p. 55) as well as joyful and inspiring. They acknowledge the challenges educators may face:

Those of us who work with other people's children are continually juggling our own

culture, the culture of our early childhood education programs, and the cultures of the

families in our program. (Derman-Sparks & Olson-Edwards, 2010, p.55)

Mann (2010) also appreciates teacher dilemmas when attempts are made to 'integrate culture'

into the school's work. Many educators have neither the knowledge nor the communication

skills to responsively address tensions in ways that are beneficial for learning. Breaking through

teachers' resistance may require adults to challenge their own values and beliefs (Mann, 2010).

Derman-Sparks and Olson-Edwards (2010) maintain that too often teachers in early childhood

classrooms consider "surface culture" (p. 60) as curriculum; artifacts, foods, costumes and

holidays are used as the focus of their cultural teaching. The authors recognize that culture is

"much deeper and more significant than those things" (p. 55). As highlighted previously, those

elements central to culturally responsive education are: educational values and beliefs, positive

images of children, language relevance, relationship building (i.e. family, community,

intergenerational) and an understanding of specific migration possibilities (Derman-Sparks &

Olson-Edwards, 2010).

For all these reasons, it is essential to learn how each person defines her or his cultural

identity, rather than make assumptions based on generalized or stereotypical ideas about

a cultural group's way of life, how a person looks or a person's family name.

(Derman-Sparks & Olson-Edwards, 2010. p. 57)

Hyson (2012) stipulates that culturally responsive teaching increases the chances that children,

whatever the culture, will develop enthusiasm for learning. What`s more, attention to families'

views on what they would want to include in their children`s education, or *not* include, needs

mulling over as well. While some communities desire cultural representation in their child's

education, there are other groups that would prefer to leave culture behind as a result of

challenges encountered in Western environments (i.e. refugee children).

Copple and Bredekamp (2009), early childhood consultants on the NAEYC (National

Association for the Education of Young Children), have proposed that the early childhood field

must develop wider views about how educators envision practice. Copple and Bredekamp's

(2009) purpose in their recent redesigning of the position statement, "Developmentally

Appropriate Practice," was to offer *"...enduring values of our field – commitment to the whole

child; recognition of the value of play; respect and responsiveness to individual and cultural

diversity and partnerships with family"* (p. 9). Since this is the authors' third edition of the

NAEYC position statement within a span of approximately fifteen years, it underscores that the

early childhood environment is continually evolving and guidance is required to connect to the

contexts of early childhood schools nowadays. Importantly, though, as Derman-Sparks and

Olson-Edwards (2010) have cautioned, considering all early childhood practice as "universally

applicable" can be harmful to children's intellectual and socio-emotional domains. The authors

emphasize that for healthy development and goals of anti-bias education, curriculum needs to be

adapted in accordance with and respecting each child's home culture.

The question remains as to how to address cultural diversity within the social group of

children at school. At this time, educators have an increasing responsibility to explore children's

perceptions by no longer talking *about* children but rather how they regard children and interact

with children. Examining how we view the child could set foundations of blending culture into a

meaningful place early on in a child's education. The successes that will result from such

understandings will depend on a curriculum approach that will be meaningful and authentic to

the culture(s) in discussion. One such approach would be based in the arts, a topic I will return

to later in this chapter.

By outlining recent contributions to the discourse of teaching and learning, I also argue

that conceptualizations of listening are best understood when perceived in practice. Recently

Brooker (2011) maintained a focus on the act of careful listening to children and their families,

in combination with taking cultural identity seriously. She began her discussion with the

presentation of two important longitudinal studies that looked at early childhood pedagogy in the

U.K.: Effective Provision of Preschool Education (EPPE) (Sylva, Melhuish, Samoons, Siraj-

Blatchford, & Taggart, 2004) and Research into Effective Pedagogy in the Early Years (REPEY)

(Siraj-Blatchford, Sylva, Muttock, Gilden, & Bell, 2002). These research projects offered

rigorous evidence of the impact of pedagogical approaches and practices that respected cultural

identity and young children's development. The discourse that followed centered on looking at

the individual child with:

> … recommendations of observing and scaffolding children's learning, using questioning
>
> to extend children's thinking. Teachers became aware that a balance between child-
>
> initiated and adult-initiated activities and between individual and group work was viewed
>
> as optimal.   (Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2002, p.139)

Brooker (2011) later amalgamated five qualitative studies: two studies in three London early

childhood centers (children aged 1-3), two studies in London preschools (children aged 4-5), and

one study conducted in Belgium that both explored views of migrant mothers of small children

(Vandenbroeck , 2009). The studies were all conducted in English early childhood locations

where a minimum of two distinct cultural groups were compared so as to better understand a

group perspective on early childhood care in a county different from their birth country. One of

the major principles educators adopted during these studies was 'taking listening seriously.'

Dialogue with the mothers and attention as to how the child navigated in their environments

supported the teachers' understanding of the role culture played in learning. Through child

observations and adult conversations teachers were able to attain improved knowledge regarding

cultural values and traditions as well as insight into ways of child rearing. The positive results,

as Brooker (2011) pointed out, lay in the commitment to authentic listening to children and

parents that served as important indicators for educators and policy makers. While the act of

'listening' may be seen as simple behaviour, based on these studies, Brooker (2011) has argued

that listening and allowing children and parents to have their say should be perceived as the

child's right. This study showed children themselves as competent members of society who

contributed in important ways to their learning. Fundamentally, such pragmatic studies

addressed how children are entitled to the same respect as adults for their views (Brooker, 2011).

Alderson (2008) maintains that competent educators comprehend the significance of

thoughtful and active listening. A pedagogy of listening emerges from a constructivist approach

in that a teacher's active listening supports and allows for a child's experiential learning where

new knowledge is built. A constructivist approach needs to regard the child in light of his/her

right to be heard. A pedagogy of listening provides for hearing children and their families in the

school environment, offering opportunities that not only allow children to express their thoughts

and understandings, but also establishes conditions that attend to their rights, one of those rights

being cultural identity. Acknowledging that a child's cultural identity is significant as to how

he/she learns, perspectives of the image of the child become important. The image of perceiving

and treating children as capable and deserving supports them in developing their abilities and

underscores their place in school. A pedagogy of listening encourages educators to respond to

children suitably, ensuring their rights are met: the right to be heard, respected as tied to their culture. Retaining practices of careful and active listening would cultivate the exchange between how the child is viewed, taught and supported with regard to his/her culture. Such considerations shed light on the principle of listening and how it interconnects with the image of the child, his/her rights and culture.

If improved and genuine listening to children develops into a primary tenet and stimulus for early childhood practice, combined with children being deserving of the right to be heard, then improved practices with regard to supporting cultural identity can certainly be envisioned. Culture influences every aspect of human growth (Mann, 2010) and a sense of identity is at the core of the child (Derman-Sparks & Olson-Edwards, 2010). Schweder, Goodnow, Hatano, LeVine, Markus, and Miller (1998) elaborate:

> It is evident that culture does not surround or cover the "universal" child. Rather, culture is necessary for development – it completes the child. Culture provides the script for "how to be" and for how to participate as a member in good standing in one's cultural community and in particular social contexts. Simultaneously, cultural psychology perspective recognizes that children are active constituents of their own cultures and that changes in individuals initiate changes in their relations with others and thus, their immediate cultural settings. (p. 896)

Generating practitioners' new and mutual understandings of cohesive listening is not necessarily about alterations in practice. Efforts toward authentic listening develops into "… a shift of the mind, will and heart" (Sharmer, 2008, p. 59), providing space for practitioners to teach with aspirations for responsive practices. A 'pedagogy of listening' might give rise to purposeful dialogue, and in the process, uncover shared knowledge, ideas and collaboration toward new

ways of thinking. Therefore, curricular approaches intended for young children, need to be meaningful, developmentally appropriate and intentional. The arts could help meet these needs by blending what is known about teacher practice with methods useful in engaging the young child.

The Place of the Arts within a Developmentally Appropriate Cultural Program

Supporters of arts-integrated education often examine how their teaching methodology provides for differentiation in learning styles, cultural backgrounds and readiness. Because it is not necessarily reliant on a specific set of cognitive or linguistic abilities, arts integration can be very effective with young children (Gardner, 1993; Greene, 1995, Willis & Mann, 2010). Elliot Eisner (2002) argues that "the arts" can meaningfully contribute to educational practice and promote progress in support of "the means and ends of schooling" (p. 1). Present-day education continues to be rooted in beliefs and visions of measurable outcomes while curriculum remains steeped in "uniformity," for instance, for the benefit of parents being able to compare school institutions to others (p. 2). Eisner stands firm in his interpretation that education has much to learn from the arts. He maintains that curriculum experiences can be designed according to principles drawn from the arts so as to call attention to relationships: experiences that would enhance perceptions, emotions, thoughts, and allow for teachers to retain focal attention on the individual child and how he/she learns.

Eisner (2002) understands that decisions regarding curriculum, teaching and learning have a great deal to do with "the kinds of minds" we hope to develop in schools (p. 3). He explains that, "Minds unlike brains, are not entirely given at birth; minds are forms of cultural achievement" (p. 3). Eisner continues that there ought to be a transformation in pedagogical objectives: careful reflection on the kinds of experiences we bring to children, the kinds of

thinking we ask of today's children, and the ways we choose to assess their work as well as our

own. We need to be attentive and listen.

The query here is: How can the arts authentically support cultural identity in an early

childhood classroom? Most people experience or enjoy the arts in some context during their

lifetime. The arts provide pleasurable moments and entertainment but, more importantly, the arts

record and preserve visions, attitudes and values (Wright, 2003). Wright (2003) comments that

art-based experiences bear witness to cultural traditions that have been passed down through

generations. Cultural life in general has been preserved through various art forms, namely

dance, music, storytelling and the visual arts. Wright (2003) adds that not only has the arts

conserved and reconstructed history for many cultures, the arts additionally play a significant

role in shaping current and future cultures.

The arts not only reveals cultural heritage; the arts can be a means by which culture may

be defined as well as having a capacity to evoke responses and communication in or with others

(Wright, 2003). However, as Arendt (1961) has cautioned, there is much at stake here: Cultural

relevance has to be integrated wisely and with meaning so as not to lose the values and qualities

precious to a culture.

Arts-based experiences can pilot meaningful integration with communities who support

children as to how to learn. Echoing an awareness of culture as a developmental process

(Rogoff, 2003) a focus on *how* to learn, as opposed to *what* to learn, will require fundamental

changes to educational practice. Wright (2003) believes collaboration with all stakeholders is

implicated.

For these reasons, learning in artistic ways may support a healthy process of learning in

today`s cultural world. Numerous researchers have underscored the significance of facilitating

and guiding young students to plan, be problem solvers, to develop self-direction, imagine and

be creative thinkers (Eisner, 2001, Gardner, 1991, Wright, 2001). These considerations call

upon alterations in teaching, learning and curriculum. The emphasis therefore is removed from

learning content and focuses further on learning process accompanied by a pedagogy of

listening.

Arts-based educational endeavours have begun as alternative approaches in support of

cultural teaching and learning. The Canada Council for Learning reported on a three year

longitudinal study titled: *Arts-based Teaching and Learning as an Alternative Approach for

Aboriginal Learners and their Teachers* (Patterson, Restoule, Margolin, & Leon, 2009). The

research team, comprised of four Aboriginal researchers and three non-Aboriginals, affirmed

that conventional approaches to education have been unsuccessful in attending to the needs of

Aboriginal youth (K-12), illustrated by the continuing low school graduation amongst Aboriginal

peoples in Canada. The researchers had heard of anecdotal accounts of an arts-based program

implemented in some Aboriginal communities, the Learning Through the Arts (LTTA) program,

which was developed by the Royal Conservatory of Toronto. They adopted this approach

throughout their inquiry with three hundred and ninety-two individuals (teachers and students) in

the Atlantic Provinces, Ontario, Manitoba, Alberta, British Columbia, and the Northwest

Territories; fifty six percent of the participants were Aboriginal. Experiential arts based-

workshops, led by Aboriginal artists, were piloted. Patterson and Restoule (2009), co-

researchers in this investigation, appreciated the need for educational approaches that would

speak to the importance of Aboriginal values and where holistic learning would be placed at the

core of the process of teaching and learning. The report explained:

In the literature concerning educational approaches that would suit Aboriginal learners,

the term holistic is widely used to describe learning opportunities that promote the

physical, mental, social, and spiritual engagement of the learner (e.g., Aboriginal

Learning Knowledge Centre, November 2009; Antone, Gamlin, & Provost-Turchetti,

2003; George, 2004). In its *Position Paper on Aboriginal Literacy* (2002), the National

Aboriginal Design Committee (NADC), spoke of the need to provide holistic education

for Aboriginal learners and the negative effects of not doing so. (Patterson et al., 2009, p.

15)

Findings from this research project showed an increase in students' personal and cultural pride,

in their abilities to concentrate and feel confident in pursuing their learning, and in their overall

involvement, joy and educational achievements (Patterson et al., 2009). Furthermore, teachers

expanded their repertoire by feeling self-assured in using the arts in their teaching of non-arts

related subjects as well as better recognising the capabilities of their students (Patterson et al.,

2009). These researchers especially noted that during their conversations with Aboriginal

individuals, the practice of incorporating traditional art forms within the curriculum could well

attend to restoring a sense of identity and cultural pride (Patterson et al., 2009, p. 86).

Battiste (2004), Kirkness (1999) and Stairs (1994) believe that while education has

deeply contributed to the oppression of Canada's Aboriginal people, education may also hold the

potential of healing and well-being. Battiste (2004) calls for education to acknowledge past

injustices and atrocities and in turn, search for teaching and learning that "reflects the languages,

literacies, visual expressions, and philosophical foundations of Indigenous communities, while

acknowledging the differences that exist among Aboriginal communities" (p. 12).

Engaging a "funds of knowledge" approach may involve "the hundred languages" (Malaguzzi, 1998) demonstrating that what occurs during early development in the home is seen as education and, that it can be transmitted from families to school. By one hundred languages, Malaguzzi meant the numerous ways the child may express his/her understanding or knowledge. The languages may include: painting, sketching, dancing, sculpting, singing, storytelling, or constructing.

Vecchi (2010) makes it clear that employing the arts, in no matter what form, can only add to the richness and diversity seen in today's school. She questions: "How much do we support children to have ideas different from those of other people and how do we accustom them to discussing their ideas with their classmates?" (p. xvii). At the same time, there is not enough of an emphasis in teacher training to prepare educators to allow for the process of learning to unfold (Vecchi, 2010). Teachers are often "excessively seduced by techniques and tend to propose them with only simplified knowledge rather than informing through sensitive dialogue" (p. 36). Vecchi (2010) names this process "meaning making" and titles the arts experiences as the child's "visual narrative" (p. 40). In other words, all children's stories deserve to be told, cycling back to the regard of the image of the child, their relationships and the careful listening that has to occur.

Merging Knowledges and Moving Toward a Pedagogy of Listening

Howard Gardner (2006) identifies five minds for the future: a disciplined mind, a synthesizing mind, a creative mind, a respectful mind and an ethical mind. Distinctively, the first of these three minds concentrate on cognitive skills while the last two – the respectful and ethical minds – focus on how people interact and how they relate to others. Gardner sets forth a proposal for merging knowledges for effectual education in the 21st century.

Furthermore, Gardner's theory of multiple intelligence has expanded the scope of children's potential for learning via the ways in which children are understood to acquire knowledge and express their understandings. Consistent with multiple intelligence theory (Gardner, 1993), Reggio Emilia philosophy emphasizes long-term projects that develop multiple areas of learning and understanding, not solely the logical and linguistic. Gardner (1983) and Malaguzzi (1998) agree that the expressive arts can play a significant role in a child's search for knowledge and understanding. If we listen to the call for fundamental change in curricula, specifically around cultural identity (Ball, 2014; Battiste, 2002; Pidgeon et al., 2013), then a pedagogy of listening may prove to be a useful vehicle to instigate a shift in thinking about curriculum. The belief in children's rights, capabilities, active learning, and cultural identity can merge with mindfulness by the incorporation of a teaching method to meet such demands.

My review in this chapter has disclosed layers of understandings that have filtered into the direction and support for cultural identity in education through attentive and thoughtful listening. My objective was to focus on illustrating the vehicle of 'listening' whereby curriculum and cultural distinctiveness might be interconnected with thoughtfulness, engagement and commitment from all stakeholders. The literature here gave rise to improved understandings of viewing the rights and image of the child within his/her culture as well as noticing the significance of that child's place embedded in relationships. An arts-integrated education may attend to experiencing cultural values in ways that would be meaningful to young children. Significantly, pedagogy of listening has risen from the various perspectives presented.

In Chapter 3, I shift the discussion from theory to action, to address my decisions about methodological approaches to the study as well as to clarify why certain methodologies were selected that could attend to a pedagogy of listening.

Chapter 3

Engineering the Bridge: Methods for Inquiry

The search for method becomes one of the most important problems

 of the entire enterprise of understanding the uniquely human form of

psychological activity.

(Vygotsky, 1930/1978, p. 65)

Opening Remarks

In the earliest stages of choosing a methodology I sensed echoes of my own cultural

values and experiences. One memory, in particular, involved an international partnership project

in which I participated during my years of teaching in a Jewish school. The project was titled:

Gesher Chai, which can be translated as "a living bridge." True to its name, the endeavour's

framework promoted people-to-people communication, aimed to preserve unity, and strengthen

cultural identity. This recollection made me realize that the qualitative methodologies I chose to

draw on would have to support, expand, and work toward building interpersonal connections

between all participants (i.e. myself, teachers, children, families, community) since we all shared

the objective of developing a culturally significant early childhood program. This was especially

important for me, being an 'outsider' and working in a First Nations community; a community

and culture I knew little about at the outset of my study.

I mulled over the methodologies for this research but eventually recognized that the

methodological approaches that I selected to inform this qualitative study would *be* the bridge:

the bridge would prove to be a re-emerging metaphor that would support (viz., scaffold) as well

as help connect the participants in their relationships but also the various epistemological

orientations involved in my study. I also accepted that paths and participants' roles may change

along the journey, therefore the methodological approaches I drew on in constructing my

qualitative study would have to be flexible enough to support the research and uphold channels

of communication between me and the community: the children, and the team of educators and

administrators at Step by Step Child and Family Center in Kahnawake. These initial reflections

and beginning stages were significant as they helped engineer the road ahead.

I was first invited into Step by Step Child and Family Center as an educational

consultant. After the first year, I took on the role of researcher and became a partner in an active

mission to construct a 'living bridge'. As a qualitative researcher I became "situated in activity

that located me [the observer] in the world of study" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 3), a

culturally-specific world where I would soon progress in my deep feelings of respect and

understanding towards the Indigenous community context in which I found myself.

When investigating the sensitive topic of culture, it is important that a qualitative

approach to research occurs in a natural setting, and reflects an intention to discern phenomena in

terms of the meanings people bring to it (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Barbara Rogoff's (2003)

anthropological approach to the study of culture, for example, has illustrated how qualitative

research practices can allow for such flexibility. She has used case studies, interviews, and arts-

based inquiries to investigate the organization of teaching and learning in family settings and

schools. Rogoff's findings of the *how* in learning not only offered me new ways of thinking

about early childhood pedagogy, but also provided me with various ways of listening in support

of deepening my study.

Brunson-Day (2010) argues that early childhood professionals need to 'rethink culture.'

Discourse about culture will have to be widespread and long-term so as to gather what can be

learned from lives (Brunson-Day, 2010). Gray (2003) explains that studying culture is

"constitutive of and constitutive by the lived" (p. 35). Research methodology, as Gray argues, positions cultural studies within an interdisciplinary open-ended field of inquiry that undergoes constant transformations and, as a result, needs to be continually re-visited contextually. Transparency is fundamental to the inquiry process, so as to flesh out not only what was to be known, but ways of knowing (Gray, 2003).

So what became my ways of 'methodological' knowing? Gray suggests that methodological questions and approaches cannot be firmly settled in the early stages of research but will reiterate themselves throughout a study, prompting questions not only about 'the what' but also about 'the how'. This is certainly what occurred in my study. In designing my qualitative study, I pulled from five methodological traditions: participatory action research; grounded theory; narrative inquiry; arts-based forms of inquiry and Indigenous approaches to research. By using multiple perspectives, divergent theoretical outlooks, diverse methods of gathering, and mindful analysis and interpretation of data, a qualitative research study can open a pathway to the research (Arsenault & Anderson, 1998).

Cultural Research and the First Nations Community

I begin, though, by acknowledging Tudor's (1999) recognition that cultural research has, in the past, failed to sufficiently attend to methods and methodology. In response, Gray (2003) has encouraged a 'methodological eclecticism' that is beginning to shape the field of cultural research; the adoption of adaptable qualitative research which allow for multiple ways of knowing so as to address different perspectives. Researchers also need to critically examine the methods they use and the ways they use them (Barker & Weller, 2003, Sanders & Munford, 2005).

For instance, I experienced significant tensions about whether my methodology would be

trustworthy enough for carrying out suitable research with a First Nations community. These

tensions are first addressed here as they also helped guide my methodological choices. On the

one hand I had available various qualitative methodologies that might lead me through the study

and on the other hand, I felt my personal responsibility to carry out research in collaboration and

with acceptance from the community. Clough and Nutbrown (2002) address such tensions:

> It is the methodology which makes the difference. By which I mean that it is, the
>
> construction and justification of the enquiry, which ultimately gives credence to, or
>
> calls into question the findings. And such questions of 'how' and 'why' can matter
>
> long after the study has been completed and reported. (p. x)

My approach therefore had to include an "interpretative strategy" (Clough & Nutbrown, 2002, p.

17) whereby I would be an involved researcher, listening well to fully understand not only what

occurred during the research, but importantly to the people and lives involved. With this

understanding I have focused on methodologies that: suit the research inquiries of this project,

were ethical, and were considerate of specific characteristics of the participants as well as the

cultural and physical setting where the research occurred (Christensen & Prout, 2002).

Collaboration was an important consideration, given the legacy of research with First

Nations. In the past, research (especially anthropological research) has exhibited a deficiency in

understanding and respect towards Indigenous ways of knowing and has tended to

misappropriate cultural knowledge. A report issued by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal

People (1996) reflected this common truth:

> Aboriginal people have not been consulted about what information should be collected,

who should gather that information, who should maintain it, and who should have access

to it. The information gathered may or may not have been relevant to the questions,

priorities or concerns of the Aboriginal people. Because data gathering has been

frequently imposed by outside authorities, it has met with resistance in many quarters.

(as cited in Schnarch, 2004, p. 82)

Ball (2005) has also detailed past injustices in research involving Indigenous people. She

underscores that, conventionally, "Outside researchers have situated themselves as experts and

focused attention unilaterally towards the research subjects" (p. 85). Recognizing that this

perspective is no longer tolerated in Indigenous communities, or elsewhere for that matter,

outside researchers need to negotiate within a paradigm of partnership and relationship-building

(Ball, 2005). Importantly, Ball suggests, non-Indigenous researchers need to respect cultural

protocols and ethics. Deloria (1995) adds that Indigenous people have repeatedly witnessed

misinterpretations when research has been carried out by outsiders. Deloria (1995) and Ball

(2005) report that numerous Indigenous research projects have been finalized with "outside

interpretations that have been steeped in racism" (Ball, 2005, p. 90). In my own work, I have

deeply reflected on cultural epistemology and ethical practice in order to make both my

experiences and those of my collaborators at Step by Step Child and Family Center significant.

My reflection practices will be communicated in the coming stories of each phase of this

research.

In order to uphold a 'living bridge,' I had to work hard at maintaining my research within

an Indigenous paradigm that embodied the perspectives and knowledge held in this particular

First Nations Mohawk community. For three years I acted as 'participant observer' (Giltrow,

1995), interacting with: ten teachers (1st year: eight Mohawk educators, two non-Mohawk

educators; 2ⁿᵈ year: seven Mohawk educators, three non-Mohawk educators; 3ʳᵈ year: six

Mohawk educators and four non-Mohawk educators); two administrators (one Mohawk, one

non-Mohawk, the executive director of Step by Step Child and Family Center (Mohawk); and

ten classrooms of children who are First Nations (aged 18 months to 5 years old; approximately

160 children each year) so as to create a collaborative research community. My approach

mirrored Maori scholar Graham Smith's 'power sharing model' (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999).   I

established my role as qualitative researcher through a meaningful relationship of collaboration

and trust with the community at Step by Step Child and Family Center.

The qualitative research design I chose had to attend to the complexities of exploring

cultural identity within this early childhood setting in this community. I needed a flexible

approach, one that would allow me to draw on methodologies at pivotal times in the qualitative

research as it evolved in collaboration with the participants. None of these methodologies

became the dominant methodological paradigm in the study; instead, each became a resource in

designing the qualitative study. For example participatory action research and arts-informed

inquiry proved to be instrumental to the act of meaningfully attending to participants' voices

while the participants and I documented research practices, including the creative use of

photographs both in collecting data and in representing the story to be told. Narrative inquiry

supported both the unfolding of this collaborative journey as well as the telling of a collaborative

story. Grounded theory was needed to remain close to the data. In retrospect, my profound

discomfort when choosing the right methodologies, which remained with me throughout, also

guided me, continually reminding me to stay close to the perspectives of the participants as well

as true to myself. Next, I briefly elaborate on each of these methodological approaches, pertinent

elements of which became flexibly mapped onto, and into, the design of my qualitative study. I

then turn to describing the design of the study itself.

Participatory Action Research (PAR)

Reason and Bradbury (2001) define participatory action research as:

A participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the

pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory worldview….[and

bringing] together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others

in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more

generally the flourishing of individual persons and communities. (p. 13)

In view of the fact that objectives of my research aspired to yield "practical knowledge that is

useful to people in the everyday conduct of their lives" (Reason & Bradbury, 2006, p. 2),

participatory action research (PAR) methodology suited my goal of attending to and supporting

the vital goal of cultural responsiveness in daily early childhood practice.

PAR epitomizes a constructivist approach towards developing "living knowledge"

(Reason & Bradbury, 2006, p. 5). Research "emerges over time in an evolutionary and

developmental process as individuals develop skills of inquiry" (p. 2). The methodological

phases in my research with Step by Step Child and Family Center responded to the changing and

growing needs of the participants over the life of the project: mutual planning, analysis of needs

of community and interests, cooperative learning environments, and sequential phases for

realizing objectives. My research offered occasions to foster teacher development, an area that

has been identified as crucial in bringing about improved culturally responsive classroom

experiences (Brooker, 2011; Derman-Sparks & Olson-Edwards, 2010; Espinoza, 2010).

Goodnough (2008) emphasizes that when teachers use PAR to study classroom practice,

engagement must include "…continuous cycles of reflections, dialogue, action and learning" (p. 432). Throughout my three years of study in the community, the classroom teachers and I took on participatory roles that developed into shared opportunities of reflection with the purpose of advancing professional skills to meet cultural objectives. The process over the years became a cycle of reflective planning and action. I was focused on listening to the thoughts and needs of the participants. The goal to encourage and deepen cultural identity in their children had been initiated by the community themselves. They approached me to become a partner in research, which allowed us to share knowledge. Because we were all invested in one goal, we were able to facilitate an environment of collegial support and friendship amid honest and respectful interactions (McTaggart, 1991).

Rogoff (2003), Goodnough (2008), Park (2001) and many others, reiterate PAR's cardinal principle of carrying out research "*with* people instead of doing research *on* them" (Reason & Bradbury, 2008). Drawing on a PAR methodology allowed me to concentrate in my study on involvement from ALL participants (McTaggart, 1991) which was especially important for me as an outsider to this First Nation community. Since the participants at Step by Step Child and Family Center and I were in constant interaction together, collaborative decisions could be made, yet individual perspectives developed, within a space of mutual learning.

Grounded Theory

A grounded theory approach to research asks that the researcher plans his/her study in relation to developing partnerships with the participants in order to support the shared construction of meaning (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This focus on relationships and mutual knowledge building, echoed from PAR, was critical, as I sought a research method that would promote reciprocal listening and observations of matters related to Mohawk identity, this to

facilitate interaction with the educators, young children, and other community members. Such

an approach was crucial to my efforts of carrying out research transparently and respectfully to

Indigenous ways. Grounded theory suited my study as it allowed for an emphasis on listening to

the participants and how they experienced any changes that might occur (Glaser & Strauss,

1967). Grounded theory also offered me the foundation for constructing conceptual frameworks

during data collection and analysis. A grounded theory methodology provided flexibility,

significant to the practical context of the conducting of this research.

Grounded theory and its further elaborations provided guidance during data collection

and analysis. For instance, Glaser (1978) indicates that the researcher's part during interviews is

to mostly maintain a stance of passive listening, later to be followed by theoretical sampling and

more direct inquiry because of categories that emerge. Glaser alludes to the fact that with

constant comparison of the data, theories emerge. Strauss and Corbin's (1990) view was more

pragmatic than Glaser's, because they address the fact that interpretation plays a major role in

data collection and analysis. Strauss and Corbin explain that "doing analysis is, in fact, making

interpretation" (1990, p. 59). Charmaz (2005), who refers to grounded theory as a "method and

product of inquiry," recognizes the key role of the researcher in this constructivist approach; a

suitable fit to my research design, which emphasized the researcher as listening to the voice of

the participants: a transactional process between the researcher and the data collected. One form

that interpretation takes in qualitative research is the telling of stories. Narrative inquiry helped

me to formulate a way of telling a research story by investigating along with my participants.

Narrative Inquiry

Connelly and Clandinin (2006) explain that narrative inquiry is "the study of how humans make meaning of experience by endlessly telling and retelling stories about themselves that both refigure the past and create purpose in the future" (p. 21). Narrative inquiry and action research are closely associated in that they are both attentive to change and action (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006; Pushor & Clandinin, 2009). Each approach recognizes teacher knowledge as that which is gained through a process of inquiry.

A narrative methodology informed my decision to compose and express my story alongside the participants. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) perceive this as "living the story" with participants; that sentiment proved to mature throughout our close collaboration. I looked at multiple ways of knowing to draw out outcomes for "authenticity, resonance [and] trustworthiness" (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2006, p. 4).

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) suggest that narrative inquiry produces a mutually constructed story out of the experiences of both the participants and the researcher. The documentation of our stories, from beginning to end, as harvested from field notes, interviews, journal reflections and informal conversations, provided rich data. Our narratives developed into a shared story construction and reconstruction, this at significant intervals during our years together. Numerous conversations I had with the teachers and administrators were stories in themselves. By that, I mean that often participants were forthcoming and disclosed sentiments and experiences related to our work together. They invited me into their lives and allowed me a "glimpse of the self" (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2006, p. 20). Such occurrences were powerful given the personal nature of their stories. A particular conversation I had with Debbie Delisle-Giasson, the executive director of Step by Step Child and Family Center, impacted me profoundly:

When I complimented her on her hard work, Debbie related that she simply sees this as

part of her responsibility, "I am a mother, a grandmother, a sister, an aunt…I see this as

part of my responsibility to my community." Debbie emphasized her care as her work; it

has always been important to her. Alluding to the 13 squares on the back of the turtle, and

through the meaning of the story that is told for generations, she is still in process of

finding her place on the turtle's back[2]; being subjected to residential schooling and

working at sustaining culture; all part of the journey of finding a place.

(Journal, April 21, 2011)

Narrative inquiry helped in drawing out stories of listening; it became a vehicle through which

cultural perspectives and cultural ways of being could be communicated. Bruner (1996a)

suggests that narratives allow people to bring clarity to experiences: "Without narrative, we

would be lost in a murk of chaotic experiences" (p. 128). I was "living alongside participants as

their lives unfold[ed] in particular contexts" (Clandinin & Huber, 2010). The interpretation of

the evolving stories became an integral and ongoing aspect of research (Clandinin & Huber,

2010).

In this kind of approach to research there are always concerns about the trustworthiness

and validity of narratives (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). It was important for me to be conscious

that my questions would respect the narratives themselves, since most often I was the creator of

the stories using my own language, values and perspectives. While I acknowledge that my

journal reflections are interpretations, they remain as powerful outlets that allowed me to express

my observations and the unfolding of the experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Butler-

Kisber (2010) maintains that trustworthiness includes researcher reflexivity. In all the research

---

[2] The turtle is symbolic to Mohawk culture as it represents Mother Earth, as identified in their Creation Story.

stages, I made sure to share my interpretations and findings with the participants and strove to

maintain a transparency of process and clarity in language, in order to ensure and promote

understanding. The administrators from Step by Step Child and Family Centre have read my

dissertation and have agreed to how their stories have been told.

Arts Informed Inquiry

I have long appreciated the use of the arts as a method of inquiry, and arts-informed

inquiry in this project allowed me to flexibly draw on elements of creative experiences to make

meaning of teaching practice and children's learning (Mcniff, 2007b). As Barone (2008)

maintains, the arts can provide a distinct way of seeing.

My intent in using an arts-informed methodology was to demonstrate that as scholarship,

the arts could be regarded holistically. In the literature regarding educational approaches to best

suit Indigenous learners, the term holistic is broadly used to illustrate learning opportunities that

maintain the physical, mental, social, and spiritual engagement of the learner (e.g., Aboriginal

Learning Knowledge Centre, 2009; Antone, Gamlin, & Provost-Turchetti, 2003). I was

interested in how the arts might broaden teacher and children's perspectives in their learning;

how might drawing on this approach help unearth significant contributions as to how the arts

might expand early childhood praxis, specific to the matter of addressing cultural identity? An

arts-informed approach might help the participants to express their ways of being, and illustrate

how they learn and participate in the culture in which they live (Wright, 2003). Several Mohawk

cultural traditions are recognized as art forms (e.g. storytelling, dance, drumming, beading).

With this understanding, Mohawk cultural art practices could provide a way for the children and

educators to record and preserve the culture's meaningful achievements – its visions, aspirations,

attitudes and values. An arts-based approach would help me recognize the people of this

Mohawk community as "knowledge makers engaged in the act of knowledge advancement" (Cole & Knowles, 2008, p. 60). Despite its detractors, Eisner (1972) defends the use of arts-based approaches, arguing that:

> …art is a unique aspect of human culture and experience, and that the most valuable contribution that art can make to human experience is that which is directly related to its characteristics. What art has to contribute to education is precisely what other fields cannot contribute. (p. 3)

Children's artistic expression was a constant throughout our research. Their stories evoked powerful responses in others (i.e. the teachers, the administrators, and the community). In many ways, artistic opportunities supported children in their ability to listen to cultural teachings and then be able to represent their learning in an age-appropriate way. "The arts not only reveals cultural heritage, it is also a means by which culture can be defined" (Wright, 2003, p. 303). Storytelling, drawing, painting, drama, music, dance, and a range of other symbolic ways of knowing, proved to be meaningful tools that allowed children's voices to be heard in this project. An arts-informed approach helped inform, understand, communicate and facilitate a careful listening to the experience of the Mohawk children in this community; a world distant from my own cultural background and understanding.

Prosser and Burke (2008) identify an emphasis in recent scholarship on hearing children's voices in research practice. Oral language would be a natural consideration as a main vehicle for communication; however, hearing directly from young children about their experiences may be challenging as their expressive language is still undergoing early stages of development. Very young children may not be able to communicate their thoughts and beliefs clearly. Therefore, children's verbal expressions cannot be considered entirely reliable as

children cannot perform to adult standards. How could I find what is meaningful to a young child, seeing that words might be "disempowering to the young" (Prosser & Burke, 2008. p. 407)? In response, Prosser and Burke acknowledge paradigm shifts in research that have given rise to envisioning children as active participants who construct meaning in their social worlds. Gonzalez-Mena and Stonehouse (2008) remind early childhood educators to regard young children "as contributors to their own learning and contributors to the life of everyone in the program… [It] requires focusing and building on children's strengths, and interests rather than paying attention to their deficits" (p. 174). These authors support the value in using arts-based approaches, such as drawing, photography and videos, to analyze data supported by the lens of a child's ideas, thereby empowering and offering voice to the child. Children's voices can be brought to light through arts-based methodology as it supports and represents life experiences, beliefs, and values (Wright, 2003).

When it came to 'hearing from children' in this study, the use of a variety of in-depth arts approaches helped us to uncover and recount their stories. Documentation of the art processes, through photography or transcriptions of discussions with the children, played a key role in developing narratives that offered information (Keat, Strickland & Marinak, 2009) from the children's perspectives. An arts-based approach would help develop the stories and support children in being active learners, "Learning with all [their] senses – or from action to thought" (Samuelsson, Sherridan & Williams, 2006, p. 19).

The place of Indigenous research in my qualitative study will be described shortly, after first coming to understand more about the context of the research and of the people involved.

Purpose of Inquiry: Culture in Learning in Kahnawake

Educators at Step by Step Child and Family Center came to our study with the belief that culture played a significant role in what children were learning. The key questions concerning culture that we kept in mind were: How could Mohawk culture be deepened and seamlessly interwoven into the children's learning? How could teachers develop their skills and practices to attend in culturally responsive and inclusive ways? How could cultural identity be supported in young children? The team of educators and administrators perceived the world through values and principles which come from Mohawk tradition. The non-Mohawk teachers had years of experience in the community and were well familiar with values, traditions, teachings and their place in educating young Mohawk children. Two new educators (non-Mohawk) were hired during the research and were specifically placed in teaching teams with Mohawk assistants to support and develop cultural values in their teaching.[3]

Often the administrators at Step by Step Child and Family Center reminded me that the relationship between culture and thinking was so close that it would be impossible to disentangle one from the other. This was a challenging concept for me to apprehend at the inception of our study, however, as experiences unfolded, the clarity of that thought became apparent. For the educators at Step by Step Child and Family Center, the objective of making cultural knowledge a seamless source of understanding in the classroom was central, and as the years of the study passed, I too began to better understand how culture affects learning.

Therefore, the qualitative methods I chose had to support our investigation into how teachers built the experiences for their students, which married a deep understanding of Mohawk culture in early childhood curriculum with developmental goals. Encouraging educators to

---

[3]Teachers and administrators at Step by Step have granted permission for their full names to be used in this dissertation. Children's names will be represented by a first initial only. Parental/custodian written permission has been granted for children's names, photos and work.

reflect on their own attitudes and practices had to be an integral part of the methodological design so as to uncover what and if changes occurred. Delpit (1995) reminds us that "we all interpret behaviours, information and situations through our own cultural lenses; these lenses operate involuntarily, below the level of conscious awareness, making it seem that our own view is simply the way it is" (p.151). With this in mind, the matter of multiple identities became central to my study.

Teacher and Researcher Identities

Examining the relationships between teachers and their experiences during the research provided tremendous insight during my visits at Step by Step Child and Family Center. Teachers shared their reflections throughout the years and presented elements of their identities thereby shedding light on principles of change. What's more, my researcher identity developed in tandem with alterations that came about during the phases of study. Important data was gathered because of the outcomes of developed teacher practice.

Teacher identities. Contemporary educational research reminds us that teaching is not solely a technical or cognitive method, but is made up of multifaceted personal and social processes and practices that encompass the whole individual (Cochran-Smith, 2005; Olson 2008). A trajectory of teachers' professional identity developed due to how teachers positioned themselves in their interactions with me and in their new experiences. I emphasize here that my time spent at Step by Step Child and Family Center was a process of carrying out research *with* the teachers and administrators. The objective was to support teachers in their search for meaningful approaches to the implementation of a culturally relevant early childhood program.

The teachers were also 'learners' working toward a direction of change for new approaches with their young students. They were open and prepared to embrace different

concepts about curriculum. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2011) note that there has been an evolution from the past when teachers were perceived as 'all knowing.' This paradigm shift encourages teachers to now see themselves as learners in the context of social change (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2011). We began this project with the pursuit of integrating Mohawk cultural ways and knowledge into daily learning. While Mohawk culture was already embedded in teachers' understandings and objectives, they needed to revisit their 'knowledge' to consider how cultural principles could influence fluid practice. The experiences the teachers and I shared during our time together required us to trust one another, as we sought to "connect the webs of our local micro-cultures in a much more complex network of webs" (Florio-Ruane de Tar, 2001, p. 27). Teachers were active learners in the process whereby their identities were shaped through reflective (Schön, 1983) and social interactions (Vygotsky, 1978). What was critical in our process of engagement is that we shared knowledge.

The research discussions, interviews and focus group sessions expanded our understanding of what was developing in our practice. My multiple roles (i.e. as coach, mentor, model, consultant and researcher) provided me with a lens to observe not only the implementation of a culturally appropriate curriculum, but how teachers grew professionally. During the three year period, the teachers experimented with ways of implementing new approaches. For example, teachers had to acquire a better understanding of the difference between a project-based approach to learning and a thematic approach. After numerous discussions, coaching sessions and reflections, a framework for a project-based approach was put into practice. Consultations between myself and educators were ongoing throughout the three phases as we revisited and fine-tuned the emerging framework. Nancy and Gail, the two administrators, summarized these shifts during an interview after the first year pilot project:

Gail: Time was allowed – not the rush that has happened in the past.

Nancy: We saw important learning for children who struggle with learning – time was

allowed. Teachers involved the school community; they used local resources, arts

and talents. It gave everyone a sense of excitement.

Gail: Some projects went further; the children inquired more and revisited their

experiences. It was all connected. It was like a breath of fresh air. I've been away

from teaching and I remember teaching that way. Projects helped to push and

emerge the curriculum. I saw an emphasis on the Mohawk child specifically; the

image was there. I liked the movement away from the structure – change from time

and schedule – it never sat well with me.

Nancy: It was very satisfying to have gone through the research and then see it. There

was strategic planning to make the change; research, thinking and launching. After

years of working one way and then such a profound shift.

(Interview, June 20, 2010)

As the study progressed, other curricular objectives were added which brought about new

challenges to the teacher's roles and influenced their identities. Some of the additions included

school environmental changes and developing teachers' documentation, display and assessment

strategies. These initiatives encouraged teachers to expand their sense of identity as they began

to see themselves as aesthetic designers and evaluators (I return to these particular experiences in

Chapters 5 and 6).

Bi-monthly teacher group meetings supported their progress and increasingly established

a learning community amongst the staff. Teachers grew into seeing themselves as part of a

learning community, individually and jointly engaged toward common goals. Cochran-Smith

and Lytle (1999) maintain that the practices of teaching and researching need to be challenged,

as much can be gained from both teacher reflections and from their collaboration with a variety

of professionals.

Researcher identity. Norton and Early (2011) emphasize that in the past researcher

identity was missing from cultural studies. Identifying the researcher as an important

stakeholder has become a significant and welcome development (Norton & Early, 2011). My

identity was particularly important as the roles I settled into during each phase added to the data

and allowed me to reflect on how I saw myself in relation to what was occurring.

As previously mentioned, the research process followed Tuhiwai-Smith's (1999)

collaborative framework, which maintains that outside researchers need to co-construct

investigations with their associates, and be educated in and cognizant of Indigenous ways of

thinking. While my personal and professional values were strong foundations to my

understandings, I welcomed the learning and shared experiences with my colleagues. I was

motivated to travel into the journey with the community at Step by Step Child and Family Center

and to educate myself about Mohawk culture. The "living bridge" again emerged; collaboration

and inclusion gave rise to my understandings. I consider my identity as having been informed

through two-way practice with the teachers and administrators. The experience of the journey

felt, at times, like sharing a story of "being and becoming; belonging and longing to belong"

(Yuval Davis, 2006, p. 201), as I recognized early on that both my and the participants'

understanding would evolve, be challenged, and transform and grow.

As a researcher in this community, I took on three kinds of collaborative roles (i.e. coach

model/mentor, and consultant), all within the framework of being an "international guest"

(Norton & Early, 2011, p. 417). When I began, my research identity was that of an 'outsider'

(Norton and Early, 2011) researching in Mohawk territory with "my life and my experiences to

share" (p. 424). My intention throughout the phases of research was to travel with my partners

on this journey, and listen well to them in order to support Mohawk culture and ways of

thinking.

The following chart (Fig. 3) presents how I understood my identity as it changed over

time during my research years at Step by Step Child and Family Center. The administrators and

I negotiated my roles through ongoing in-depth discussions, reflections and reciprocal listening

to each other in order to attend to the development of the investigation. Such discussions will be

shared in upcoming chapters that relate the stories of the research's three phases.

Research Phase	My Roles in Research
1	Collaborator Coach
2	Collaborator Model/Mentor
3	Collaborator Consultant

Figure 3. Researcher identity development

I highlight here how I consistently identified my researcher identity throughout the

research process as a collaborator "in" the community, rather than a researcher "of" the

community, and clarify that the work I participated in ultimately belongs to the people of Step by

Step Child and Family Center. I reflect back on my role as an invited "international guest" who

traversed a bridge of building understandings. The gradual release of my responsibilities during

the final phases of the research emphasized Mohawk ownership of the project. The research was

theirs to be maintained, preserved, and adjusted for the benefit of the community to which it

belonged.

Coaching

In order to understand my role as coach and later as mentor, I have had to examine and

reflect on how my identities changed during the various phases of study. Connor and Pokora

(2012) posit that coaching and mentoring often overlap. Both roles facilitate insight, learning

and transformations. Coaching and mentoring are "learning relationships" (p. 8) wherein the

researcher *and* participants develop and transform. My position as coach involved direct

teaching. Direct teaching involved explicit instruction of process and skills important to

developing project-based learning. As mentor, I was able to support the educators through

demonstrations and gradually they took charge of their own development and attained

meaningful results (Connor & Pokora, 2012).

During the first year, I focused mostly on 'coaching' then subsequently transformed into

a 'model and mentor.' Mraz, Kissel, Algozzine, Babb, and Foxworth (2011) understand

coaching as reflective instruction. As a coach, I supported and encouraged teachers' reflection as

they developed their practice (Mraz et al., 2011). I collected data by conferencing with teachers.

I worked at asking questions instead of making statements; collaboratively we looked for

answers (Mraz et al., 2011, Robertson, 2005). Robertson (2005) claims that coaching motivates

teachers as well as influences their beliefs and practices. Mraz et al. (2011) caution that it is

critical for coaches to recognize participants' contextual understandings, intentions, and actions

and anticipate the impact any transformations in practice might have on the people and the

environment of a study. With support from the administrators and teachers, I worked diligently

to create safe places for learning and inquiry, where teachers could develop skills in reflection and communication that might enhance their teaching practice.

In my coaching role, I also acted as a 'teacher', because I presented new strategies for the educators. Norton and Early (2011) explain that the "researcher as teacher" (p. 429) often struggles to balance his/her role because in acting as a 'teacher', the researcher may appear to take on a position of power over the participants. I tried to remain cognizant of this, and believe that my transparent relationship, with attempts to gain continuous feedback from the two administrators, helped maintain a side-by-side approach. When I was in discussion with the teachers (in groups or individually), listening was key. I paid attention to their comments so that my coaching might address and attend to the educators' concerns, which was significant in the initial phase of the first project as this reflected a period of learning for them. In Phase One, I had to introduce the foundations for conceptual thinking that would match a project-based curriculum intertwined with Mohawk culture.

During the first phase when teachers' classes were involved in project work, my identity as coach focused on eliciting teacher performance by addressing the tasks (Connor & Pokora, 2012) pertinent to cultural relevance in a community context, and to the principles of Reggio Emilia approach such as collaboration, relationships and the image of the child. I remained attentive to ethical practice and focused on Mohawk values and the community. Such considerations gave rise to "openness and transparency" (p. 11) in our relationships and safeguarded not only our common objectives, but also strengthened relationships and our quality of work (Connor & Pokora, 2012). Forming clear expectations, undertaking ongoing review, and implementing professional practice were critical to my coaching role with this First Nations

community. Chapter 4 will elaborate further on my role and the practices that occurred during the first phase of the study.

Mentoring and Modeling

The mentoring role I took on reflected the developing relationships between myself and the teachers (Austin, 2002, Garvey & Alred, 2003 as cited in Alan & Eby, 2010), an area that has been neglected in past research (Ragins & Kram, 2007). Alan and Eby (2010) call for increased research and scholarship in the field of mentoring in research and practice. Earlier literature mostly focused on three main areas: mentoring of youth, student-faculty mentoring and mentoring in the workplace (Allen & Eby, 2010; Ragins & Kram, 2007).   The mentorship practice, which developed into a "learning partnership" (Alan & Eby, 2010, p. 10; see also Connor and Pokora, 2012), suggested that we would both gain knowledge from our collaboration. Our reciprocal relationships involved attentive listening and observing, as we consistently worked toward goals of development in teacher practice.

In comparison with the first phase of study, our exchanges became more reciprocal and resulted in mutual learning, as neither of us reflected more "power" or "expertise." The teachers had already acquired considerable understanding of major principles for new practice during the first phase. Coaching had centred more specifically on development of topics and was more formal than mentoring (Connor & Pokora, 2012). As a mentor, I facilitated instead of providing answers (Connor & Pokora, 2012) and demonstrated a continuum of learning and relationship-building. In this role, Connor and Pokora suggest that genuine mentoring occurs when the agenda is arranged by the participants with the intention of supporting and preparing the educators for future roles. This was my experience during my time at Step by Step Child and Family Center in the final two phases of the project: Nancy and Gail, the two administrators,

discussed where and how they felt my support would be most meaningful and effective, and collaboratively we coordinated the progression for each phase toward Step by Step's goal of sustainability.

The mentoring process had to nevertheless develop through various stages to achieve teachers' "acceptance, growth and self-efficacy" (Ragins & Kram, 2007, p. 5). In my research, I identified with Ragins and Kram`s (2007) three stage framework for effectual mentoring: The first stage was an initiation period where teachers expressed their readiness and efforts to look at themselves in practice; The second, the "cultivation stage" (Ragins & Kram, 2007, p. 10), at times exposed the teachers' vulnerability and reflected their lack of self-confidence. While this held true during their initial experiences, as the mentoring happened, over time the teachers began to understand that their process of transformation had to grow through stages. They became more open to experiences, perspective taking and seeing the goals ahead (Ragins & Kram, 2007). My identity developed alongside the participants since at the final stage of mentorship, "redefinition" (Ragins & Kram, 2007, p. 10) came about as teachers demonstrated more comfort with regard to their practice. The excerpt below from my journal during Phase 2 illustrates the three stages in action. The teachers were open to revealing their thoughts, even if not successful or unsure, while my mentoring aimed to support teachers toward self-efficacy:

> Today's visit to Glorianne's class was interesting. As she shared some of her plans
>
> for the water project she explained how she was using a globe for the first time…
>
> She admitted being very pleased when observing … I encouraged her to focus
>
> on relationships as there were so many ways to connect to water…I asked more
>
> about her plans. Glorianne appeared unsure but understood…Glorianne soon saw
>
> the benefit in taking children through experiences to see the relationships…I agreed

with Gloria; this was an opportune time to share…I would be happy to support her in

her intentions.   (Journal, Jan. 18, 2011)

During Phase 2, with the administrators' assistance, I additionally took on the role of 'model' to

the teachers. Ragins and Kram (2007) maintain that modeling is part of mentoring practice. I

actively demonstrated and lead practices with the children in each classroom while teachers

observed and then joined as participants. My modeling involved hands-on experiences which

initiated a variety of art media, and demonstrated questioning skills and methods of documenting

children`s ideas and meaning-making. Further discussion of my modeling practice will be

elaborated upon in Chapter 5.

Consulting

During the third phase of research my role shifted to that of 'consultant,' as I prepared to

leave Step by Step Child and Family Center. The teachers took on more of a leadership role and

I became sounding board and advisor.   This final phase of study involved "letting go" of my

active roles and allowing the teachers to carry on, on their own. At times, this move towards

independence presented tensions for both of us. For instance, I was, at times, drawn in by some

teachers to continue offering the direct coaching I contributed in the beginning. However, the

goal was to gradually remove my input and make way for the teachers' independence. My close

collaboration with the administrators, Nancy and Gail, provided tremendous support in resolving

such issues to work toward sustainability, and will be elaborated further in Chapter 6.

I identify my transformation to 'consultant' as a move towards the "teacher [as]

educator" (Norton & Early, 2011, p. 430). During the final phase, I listened carefully during

teacher meetings, and recognized that the educators began to open up more to one another.

Through their supportive conversations, the teachers began to teach each other. One teacher,

Monique, had a colleague film her during a science session with a small group of children in the atelier. Monique showed the video clip to her colleagues during one of the weekly teacher meetings. She asked us all: "What is your feedback? Were my questions open enough? Why did some children in this small group lose interest?" (Field note, March 4, 2011). I listened to the responses, suggestions and stories. I noticed how the teachers gained understanding from their interactions and recognized that they had developed a common language. They were making meaning together, learning new ways of thinking and collaborating. This was significant to both our identities, as the teachers had developed their skills and knowledge and I had developed my researcher identity.

Balancing Identity

Throughout all phases of the research, it was critical to balance and harmonize the multiple identities I was managing. How I carried out the research and positioned myself as researcher had to be negotiated according to the progress and context of the study (Norton & Early, 2011). These "negotiations" (e.g. attending to the tensions between researcher and participants) helped me maintain relationships and equitable roles between myself and the teachers.

Despite the shifts in my multiple identities (e.g. participant/observer, mentor, consultant) during the research project, I carried a constant "touchstone" (Strong-Wilson, 2008): the Reggio Emilia approach. I was first invited into the Mohawk community because of my years of experience practicing Reggio Emilia, and was delighted to share my knowledge and experiences. At the inception of our collaboration, my research partners and I were led by the guiding tenets of the Reggio Emilia approach. Our original plan was to investigate how Reggio Emilia thinking might support a curriculum for young children and cultural values. Reggio principles such as the

image of the child, the role of the teacher, teacher collaboration around a negotiated curriculum, the environment as a "third teacher," an emergent curriculum and community and stakeholder involvement were all objectives we welcomed jointly. We anticipated that long term projects[4] would be the key vehicles for a framework to support children and teacher learning.

     While the Reggio Emilia approach provided a point of reference for our initial thinking, it also served as a blind spot for me; an intrusion in the underlying engineering of the bridge. Over my many years of being involved in the early childhood community, I had internalized and connected to this Italian early childhood approach and at times, it became a challenge to release myself from this thinking to consider alternatives. Such tensions would contribute to modifications in my methods as the project progressed. Some of those adjustments included avoiding Reggio terminology, allowing for holistic provocations for project work and importantly, developing listening that attended to a focus on culture.

    Because my roles evolved and transformed with every phase of this study, reflexivity became fundamental to my developing identity. Teacher and researcher identity unfolded jointly. The synergy of collaboration within and between each of us became central to developing our understandings (Etherington, 2004). Such interactions fostered attention to a pedagogy of mutual listening and helped add to my identity as a researcher.

---

[4] Long term projects (Dewey, 1916, Katz & Chard, 2000) involve an age appropriate investigation into a topic either selected by the teacher or children. The topic derives from interests of the children and teachers act as guides and facilitators. Teachers present materials and experiences to invite inquiry, often allowing a shift into unanticipated directions. Children build understandings based on prior knowledge as well as via authentic experiences and using resources.

Developing a Methodology of Listening: The Critical Place of Indigenous Approaches to Research

Research corroborates that culture can profoundly influence children's approach to learning (Ball, 2005; Battiste, 2000; Brooker, 2002; Espinoza, 2010; Li, 2001; Silva, Correa-Chavez, & Rogoff, 2010; Méja-Arauz, Rogoff, & Paradise, 2005; Rogoff, 2003). Some young children come to school accustomed to practices of learning from their communities that have guided them since birth. Moreover, Preston et al. (2012) have claimed that the structures of early childhood programs in Aboriginal communities need to match the values of the community. Vanderbroeck (2009) has established that goals of respecting and attending to cultural diversity in early schooling have not moved forward enough. Perhaps, as Brooker (2011) suggests, research has been looking for answers to the wrong questions about how to attend to culture in early childhood.

For these reasons, I realized that my research would have to attend to a methodology of *listening*: a way or method of hearing, reflecting on and attending to multiple perspectives in the research process. These perceptions included Indigenous perspectives, my own, and those of the educators and the children. Indigenous knowledge has been part of a broader discourse that challenges mainstream knowledge and how it is generated (Wilson, 2008). Indigenous Opaskwayak Cree researcher Shawn Wilson (2008) considers Indigenous knowledge a living process that might reflect a thing or a body of knowledge, but to Indigenous communities it represents much more.

Wilson (2008) explains that Indigenous epistemology, how one contemplates reality, encompasses a way of thinking or manner of reasoning that may be common and at the same time, diverse amongst Indigenous people. Wilson further explains that mainstream

methodologies do not show consideration to Indigenous paradigms which are made up of their

own epistemological and ontological thinking. Indigenous epistemology and ontology are based

on relationships and Indigenous axiology is grounded in preserving interpersonal responsibilities

(Wilson, 2008). Indigenous paradigms, according to Wilson, are "embroiled in relationships" (p.

11) and for that reason he sees "research as ceremony" (p. 11) since relationships are involved.

According to Wilson, the intention of ceremony is to build relationships. For Indigenous people,

ceremony nurtures consciousness and understanding of their world. Indigenous knowledge

"refers to the traditional norms and values, as well as the mental constructs that guide" (p. 74).

        For some scholars, such as Battiste (Mi'kmaq) (2002) and colleagues, Indigenous

knowledge provides a counter discourse that completes and fills the gaps of Eurocentric

knowledge(s). Battiste affirms that Indigenous knowledge today is "an act of empowerment by

Indigenous people" (p. 4). The objective for Indigenous scholars is to give rise to "the wealth

and richness of Indigenous languages, worldviews, teachings and experiences all of which have

been excluded from Eurocentric knowledge systems" (p. 5). Battiste further explains that

Indigenous scholars are working toward such goals in order to develop their methodologies and

decolonize themselves, their communities and their schools. In an endeavour to support their

people and build their capacities, Indigenous scholars have turned to their ancient teachings, the

elders, and community perceptions (Battiste, 2002). Like Wilson (2008), Battiste suggests that

Indigenous knowledge has a "sacred purpose" (p. 14). She explains that knowledge is a process

stemming from creation: In the same way that relationships in the natural world are

interdependent, so must people share knowledge with one another in learning and teaching.

        Ball and Simpkins (2004) add that the Western trends in research to search for concrete,

visible practices as identifying 'culture' may disregard the more important fundamental

attitudes, meanings, memories and values being passed on. Ball and Simpkins suggest that

Indigenous ways of knowing are comprised of knowledge embedded in local communities that

have evolved over time. Rinehart (2000) respects the fact that Native children need the balance

of traditional teachings and languages. She identifies that experiencing the core values of their

community provides Native American children with strength and a sense of cultural identity.

This fact may also hold true for many other cultural communities, but because the legacy of

research carried out *on* Indigenous communities is so problematic, Battiste (2002) explains that

new, Indigenous methodologies are necessary in order to restore the development of native

communities and build for the future (Battiste, 2002).

The influence of culture on method in this project rested on principles and ethics of the

culture with which I was engaged. Indigenous scholar Weber-Pillwax (2004) has expressed that,

in her research, she enters into a study bringing a perspective that is shaped by her experiences as

an Indigenous woman. For example, her traditional upbringing has been guided by an emphasis

on relationships. Therefore, when she works with people she focuses, at the onset, on building

those relationships as it will support the "flow of the research" (p. 89). I attended to such

awareness when positioning myself as a researcher involved in the Mohawk cultural context;

building relationships impacted the epistemological approaches brought forward throughout my

course of study. My practices toward such considerations were comprised of active *listening*. I

began with self-reflection, contemplating my own strengths and weaknesses when engaged in

particular situations that involved listening attention. Such thinking at times had to be reiterated

during pivotal moments of the research when directions were altered. My *listening* also included

thoughtfulness to what was being shared and I worked hard at reflecting through my journal as

well as deferring judgement; I grew to better understand 'wait-time.' Over the phases my skills

developed in gaining information and perspectives, critical to attending to trustworthiness and building relationships with the community.

What matters, in Tillman's (2002) estimation, is "whether the researcher has the cultural knowledge to accurately interpret and validate the experiences" (p. 4) of others involved in the study. Tuhawai–Smith (1999) supports this view by articulating that relationships have to be involved: there needs to be a "strategy of consultation" in order to allow for a "strategy of making space" (p. 177). She insists that meaningful research can unfold when the researcher and participants' voices are both consciously and mutually brought into discussions. For these reasons, at each stage of the research I tried to encourage openness and collaboration with the participants from Step by Step Child and Family Centre. As an illustration, when working with the educators in their design of projects with young children, I often began with inquiry and a request for them to *teach me* about the cultural topic before any plans were suggested.

Because research of Indigenous people involves sensitive cultural issues, my position as researcher has to be acknowledged. Tuhawai-Smith (1999) raises concerns regarding insider/outsider researcher positions on Indigenous communities and the repetitive clash of Western and Indigenous ways of thinking. When considering the complexities involved in attempts to address such issues, questions arise as to how to theorize and carry out research without creating cultural categories and stereotyping ways of children's and teachers' understandings. With this in mind, I focused on 'practice' as not only a way of understanding culture and cultural variation, but of knowing how children may learn. I began the research process by engaging in self-reflection: contemplating questions that probed my personal beliefs and perspectives, such as: What do I know? Would culture influence the way children learned? Would Mohawk identity find its place? Tillman (2002) asserts that scholars need to be engaged

in an initial process of reflection to raise their awareness and consciousness of Indigenous ways

of thinking. Wilson (2008) explains that his research practice begins with self-reflection,

analysis and synthesizing internal experiences in relation to his study. He clarifies that this

process gives rise to self-awareness, which is particularly important in order for the researcher to

see himself in relation to others. This process is all the more critical for non-Indigenous

researchers: I had to learn to listen to others.

Debates, discussions and perspectives regarding who can and should conduct research

with and about people are prevalent topics in the discourse of education (Tillman, 2002). Milner

(2007) warns that in the process of conducting research, dangers can arise when and if

researchers fail to avoid misinterpretations, misinformation and misrepresentation of individuals,

communities and systems. Milner`s framework has certainly influenced my inquiry. As he

relates, "The nature, depth and meanings of (and answers to) the questions posed may change,

evolve and emerge as researchers come to know themselves, their situations, and their

experiences in a new, expanded or different way" (Milner, 2007, p. 395). Similar occurrences

did transpire during the various phases of my research.

Milner's (2007) second suggestion is that researchers ought to reflect on themselves in

relation to others in order to ensure transparency as to what he/she brings to the study. If the

researcher is an outsider to the culture, this is critical to the process of researcher development

(Tilman, 2002). And so, I needed to acquire an understanding of the culture as well as

acknowledge tensions arising out of my own interests and power in relation to those involved in

my study (Milner, 2007). I had to learn to listen to myself. My practices included keeping

attentive to writing and reviewing my research journals, and maintaining ongoing conversations

with the administration.

The third feature of Milner's framework involves engaged reflection and representation. The phases of this research offered opportunities for both myself and my research partners to engage in reflection together. What was crucial here was the representation of shared perspectives even if we were in disagreement. We had to learn to listen to each other.

The final feature of Milner's (2007) framework is the suggestion that researchers contextualize and solidify their views, new and extended, to take into consideration the realities of their study, whether it includes, political, historical, or social matters. This phase elevates the study to connect to a broader sense of knowledge. I had to recognize what is known about Indigenous research, and embrace my uncertainty and personal work towards understanding Indigenous ways of knowing through careful *listening*. This was a skill I would develop as my research advanced.

Research Design

To reiterate, the methodological approaches I selected for this study were meant to help me develop a strategy for learning to 'listen' in an Indigenous context. As a result, and in collaboration with two administrators from Step by Step Child and Family Center, my role during each phase underwent review and re-shaping. Chronological documentation was essential so that a chain of evidence or data trail could be developed (Anderson, 1998). I believe that building a data trail supported the trustworthiness of this study (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994), especially important given challenges of researching in a First Nations context.

The data for this study included interviews, focus group discussions, observations, journal reflections, field notes and in its final phase, the evaluation of progress towards this preschool's goals of culture in learning. As mentioned, I carefully selected methodological approaches that might inform the First Nations context, the research questions, and a framework

for inquiry that could promote *listening*. I have presented below a detailed overview (Fig. 3.1) of

the three phases of my research. Every phase involved arts-based inquiry; however the approach

was more prominent during Phase Two and Phase Three. Each phase will be explained in

subsequent chapters, and a more detailed account of why changes occurred in and among the

phases will be addressed.

	Methodological tools	**Participants**	**Data Analysis**
Year 1: Phase 1 Crossing the Bridge March 2010 – June 2010	Field Visits Field notes Participant observation Interviews Focus Groups Conversations with educators, administrators & executive director Photographs	Classroom teachers(9) Administrators (2) Executive Director(1)	Review of: Field notes, Journal entries Focus groups, Interviews. Patterns noted; Common themes coded & noted
Year 2: Phase 2 Under Construction August 2010 - June 2011	Participant observation Field notes & journals Interviews Focus groups Conversations with	Children (130) Classroom teachers (10) (1 new educator)[1] Administrators (2)	Continuous gathering of data; Review of documentation from: Field work

---

[1]
One of the ten educators from Phase 1 left the school, and during Phase 2 a new teacher was added each year for each phase. A Mohawk immersion class was added in Phases 2 & 3.

	educators, administrators & executive director Photographs	Executive Director(1)	Journal Reflections Focus groups Interviews Patterns noted; coding. New developments noted for follow up.
Year 3:Phase 3; Paving New Roads August 2011- Sept. 2012	Participant observation Field notes Journals Interviews Focus groups Conversations with educators, administrators & executive director Questionnaire Photographs	Classroom teachers (10) (1 new educator) Administrators(2) Executive Director(1)	Gathering of field notes, Journal entries Focus groups Interviews: Patterns/ common themes noted and coded; New perspectives noted; Final analysis.

Figure 3.1 **Research design**

Description of Phases

My research occurred over three phases, each presenting new challenges and the need for changes due to my transforming roles. At each stage I added research questions, which will be discussed in following chapters, but one research question remained constant: What would support seamless integration of Mohawk culture into Step by Step's early childhood program?

Phase 1: Crossing the bridge (March 2010- June 2010). This phase involved

gathering data to provide perspectives on where Reggio Emilia principles might resonate with

Mohawk culture and teaching as well as help provoke changes in practice. This phase served as

a starting point as to where intersections of Reggio and Mohawk principles might occur when the

goals of curriculum were culturally focused. My field visits included my coaching sessions,

observation in classrooms, holding focus group meetings and interviewing teachers and

administrators. This stage was intended to be one of learning, a project that would focus on

teachers becoming familiar with a project-based approach to teaching and learning using cultural

topics. Additionally, it was an educational phase for me as I developed a better understanding of

Mohawk culture and traditions. During this time period of March until June, I was present at the

Step by Step Child and Family Center for four hours a day, two days a week.

Phase 2: A Bridge under Construction (August 2010 – June 2011). This phase

involved building on the first project and extending it by focusing on the role of the atelier (later

to be changed into *Entewate'nikonri:sake* (Mohawk)[5] with attention to culture and learning.

Step by Step initiated the construction of the ateliers so as to provide space and place for the

school community to engage in the arts-based experiences that had been woven into their

curriculum. The addition targeted every classroom with intentions of developing young

students' skills in the language of art and applying Reggio thinking of the 'environment as a third

teacher.' [6]

---

[5] The space of the atelier (or studio) provides an environment for the individual or small groups of children to inquire and explore arts-based approaches in the process of making meaning of a topic. The atelier represents a place for relationships (i.e. child and peers; child and teacher; child and materials) to unfold. The meaning of the Mohawk word will be explained in Chapter 4.

[6] The Reggio Emilia approach considers a child's parents as the first educators; the teacher as the second educator and the learning environment as the third. Physical space in the classroom encourages children's active encounters, communication and the development of relationships. Teachers work diligently to create the environment by adding intentional materials, artifacts and documentation to allow for revisiting of the children's experiences.

Arts-based experiences were emphasized to allow opportunities for children to express themselves freely and to encourage developmentally appropriate goals within Mohawk culture. My journal entries, field notes, photographs, interviews and focus groups were the major methods that were used to gather data. The teachers and I worked alongside each other in hands-on sessions with children in the ateliers. My role transformed into mentor and model, facilitating and guiding educators and children in their experiences. Focus groups and interviews were held twice during this time period.

I consider this phase to be the most important chapter of our study as it involved the full implementation of teachers' developing skills guided by Mohawk cultural values and thinking. A cycle of inquiry (to be explained in Chapter 5) was constructed at the beginning of this phase that guided educators' practice as well as supported a framework to continually refer to, that was tailored to Step by Step's program. During this phase (August – June), my presence at the center ranged from two to three days a week for five hours per day.

Phase 3: Paving New Roads: (August 2011- September 2012). To some extent this phase was similar to Phase 2. However, my role transformed into that of consultant, and was intended to support teachers who would now take over the work in the ateliers with the children. The educators would continue to explore a variety of arts-integrated approaches, as they guided students and facilitated the culturally relevant topics that would emerge in their classrooms. My conversations with teachers were built on a Cycle of Inquiry (to be discussed in Chapter 5), and incorporated the project approach, documentation as resources, arts-integrated experiences and Mohawk culture. I relied on field notes, personal journal reflections and photographs to document my observations of how new approaches were unfolding. Focus group meetings and interviews provided reflective discussions in which educators frequently took the lead. While

my conversations with the teachers had been ongoing throughout our collaboration, it was

critical that during this phase (a phase of closure), members of Step by Step Child and Family

Center had the autonomy to articulate, share, and analyze their observations with regard to what

was occurring in the classroom and what was happening in their teaching. I distributed a

questionnaire (See Appendix 2) to teachers that invited them to reflect on what they considered

as most influential to transformation of practice.

At the start of this phase (August – December) I was at Step by Step twice a week for

three hours each time. Beginning in January 2012, I was in the field one day a week for three

hours each day and, by April, my site visits tapered down to 2 visits per month for two to three

hours.

Methodological Tools

Throughout the three phases of this study, I gathered data and created texts in order to

document the development of a Mohawk cultural program for young First Nations children. The

texts provided reference points as to where to travel in our endeavours and allowed for methods

of triangulation. For example, I recorded anecdotal observations during my participation with

the children in the ateliers, which were later augmented by teacher conversations and photos

shared during focus group meetings. Such occurrences provided for thick data and trustworthy

analysis.

The following tools were utilized to assemble data:

Field notes and journal entries. Field notes are "the first ordering of what we know"

(Wolf, 1992, p. 91). Wolfe (1992) maintains that field notes have a different meaning to

someone reading them, without knowing their context, than they do for someone who has lived

the experience. My field notes were comprised of my immediate observations of days spent at

Step by Step Child and Family Center. At all times I kept a note pad next to me, jotting down remarks, reminders, and records of what was occurring during each visit. At times my field notes described experiences while I was actively involved in practice, underscoring my role as 'participant observer.' I watched for reactions and listened for comments made by the participants. These routines allowed me to accumulate a written record of observations and experiences. Writing on-site field notes was challenging at times as I wanted to be present in the experience, actively participating and offering support when needed. Sometimes I audiotaped my interactions with the children and later on that day, I jotted down additional comments from memory.

While my field notes became my records, my journal entries added deeper reflections. Every two to three weeks, I would review my field notes and blend my observations with what I was learning about our experiences. As an illustration, following is a journal entry after several weeks of participation in the Mohawk immersion classroom:

> Kaweriiostha's work with names…this responsive commitment between the teacher and the child…I observed the "caring presence"; an emphasized commitment in their interactions so that the child learns something a "delicate dance" between the two of them; teacher – child relationships… Although the children have worked individually, the classroom experiences of "family" have developed their relationships with one another and that familiarity has provided them with identity; a sense of ownership as to who they are individually and as a people. Can this be possible at such young ages….and then again, if not now, then when…. The educator has supported this experience, taking great joy in the children`s words and ideas. The experiences were planned purposefully and in reflection, they all engaged in the richness of Mohawk culture.  The depth of children`s

potential has been illuminated. It was the experiences of culture that allowed me to listen

better….I wonder if the children felt that too.

(Journal reflection, May 25, 2012)

My journal served more as a researcher diary, showing what was I acquiring in understanding

about the progress of our projects, about relationships, about identities, and gradually, acquiring

better understandings about Mohawk values and culture.

Focus Groups. Wilkinson (2004) describes focus group sessions as informal discussions

amongst a group whereby specific topics are deliberated. Morgan (2002) suggests that informal

focus group approaches allow participants opportunities to converse with each other, to expand

on ideas of interest.

Several focus group sessions were held during each phase of research so as to gain

insight into the participants' shared understandings of new approaches studied and implemented

in daily practice (see Appendices 2.2 and 3.4). I chose to conduct focus groups to illuminate

what was important to participants and to allow for an active environment where insights and

questions could be exchanged amongst the group (Wilkinson, 2004). My role was facilitator of

the discussion, presenting topics with the hope of gaining understandings while listening to

interpretations from the educators directly involved in the study. What's more, I listened intently

to those conversations amongst the educators as interactions might evoke new topics or issues.

During the focus group sessions, participants told stories of children's projects, added

commentaries and shared reflections through discussion and photo documentation**.**

There has been some criticism regarding focus group methodology (Kreuger & Casey,

2009). Some barriers include: not enough depth to the conversations and specific personalities

of individuals may get in the way of the discussion (Hopkins, 2007). Our profound exchanges

during conversations negated such criticisms however evidence of personal discomfort for some participants did emerge. As an illustration, mostly all the teachers agreed to participate in the focus groups *and* one-on-one interviews however, two participants preferred to be only part of the focus groups as they wished to discuss topics solely amongst their colleagues.

With these understandings and total respect, I collaborated with the administrators to construct open-ended questions for the group prior to our meetings. I helped to guide the discussions and encouraged individual participation. At times I worried that my familiarity and enthusiasm would interfere in the discussions, and in the beginning periods, I often had to be reminded by the administrators (and by myself) not to insert opinions into the discussion (Krueger, 1998; Vaughn, Schumm, Sinagub, 1996). I offered probes or open ended questions based on the discussions taking place so as to clarify and encourage conversation when necessary. (The focus group questions can be found in Appendix 2 for 2009, 2010, 2011).

Photographs in research. I noted early on in our study that a sharing of 'captured moments' stimulated, as well as elicited emotional responses important to this team of educators. Harper (2002) acknowledges the collaborative aspect that rises when participants are involved together in meaning-making using photographs. I took photos and the teachers also took photos.

Using photography in the research allowed teachers to develop skills in representation; an awareness for seeking out what was important while changes occurred in teaching and learning. With the support of photography the educators progressed in skills of mindfulness, accompanied by rich discussions and often, occasions for collegial feedback. Taking pictures and then analyzing what had been captured helped the educators in the development of professional skills as well as attentiveness to *listening* to children. For example, I gathered data from focus groups sessions when teachers' photos were brought in as accompaniments to topics being questioned.

The conversations that rose were important as photos supported teachers' understandings and acknowledgement of change:

> Melissa (teacher): I know this documentation did not involve clay or paint but it was so
>
> impressive and I learned about R. because you can see him; it went on for a long
>
> time….he never did that before….
>
> Stephanie (teacher): You can see how happy he is. It's genuine. You were lucky to have a
>
> camera handy to capture it. Just by this picture you can learn from the children and
>
> about the children.
>
> (Focus Group, Feb. 23, 2011)
>
> Stephanie (teacher): I encouraged them to create lines by pressing hard on their pastels. In
>
> the photo I was saying, "Can you make the big waves? Can you make the lines that
>
> go with splashing?" Once the line drawings were completed, the children were
>
> shown how to paint over their drawing. L.M. (child) tried to cover here lines of
>
> blues and greens she simply could not, as the paint resisted the oil pastels. The
>
> children recognized the "magic" of their lines and giggled.
>
> (Focus Group, Feb. 28, 2011)

Such visuals added layers of meaning to our discussions. The photographs became ways of living and relating stories of listening and experiences. This visual methodology would offer us a meaningful tool whereby participants were motivated to learn, extend discussions and impart reflections. The active practice of photographic documentation throughout the phases of study affirmed, as Butler-Kisber (2010) states, approaches aimed at "reflection, elicitation and representation" (p. 124). Documentation unfolded as a seamless integration since there was an intentional concentration on photograph recording throughout the phases of study. I realize

retrospectively that this use of photographs in the research falls partly in line with photo

elicitation, which is an open-ended approach for interviewing and/or provoking discussion using

images (Rose, 2006). Photos that would apply to our discussions could come from the

participants, (Pink, 2001), or I would introduce pertinent images that might elicit responses

(Harper, 2002).

Informal Conversations.   From the outset of the study I attempted to draw out

descriptions and responses that "would go beyond the particular story" (Pring, 1999, p. 6).

Relationship-building and being sensitive to each other's views during our daily interactions

proved to be windows into learning. I did not always want to "plan tactics in advance"; rather I

searched for processes that would "unravel as life does" (Gabriel, 2003, p. 181). I was in the

field as a "member of the landscape" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 63), in relationship with

the Step by Step community. The developing rapport with all participants would open doors to

more informed analyses, but I had to be cautious not to overstep the boundaries and neglect my

researcher role (Fontana & Frey, 1994). Most of my conversations with the administrators and

teachers were spontaneous, often after atelier sessions with children or following focus group

meetings, sometimes even a 'talk' over lunch. Regardless of the situation, I took notes in the

moment or afterwards (Lofland & Lofland, 1995) and wrote them up as addendums in my field

notes, to be reflected upon in my journal later on.

Semi-structured Interviews. During each phase of the study I held two sets of semi-

structured interviews with individual teachers. They typically lasted anywhere between one hour

to two hours. I gave them questions in advance to offer time for their reflections (see

Appendices 2.3 and 3.5). I offered "highly purposeful" (Anderson, 1998, p. 190) questions that

were identical for all the teachers. I hoped that these queries would prompt them to contribute as

much information as possible and lead to more probing questions during the interviews (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2003). I audiotaped and later transcribed all of the interviews. The transcription process and details of how interviews were organized will be elaborated upon in the data analysis sections of Chapter 4 and Chapter 7.

I arranged for interviews with the objective of unearthing stories behind the participants' experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Through the process of interviews I could focus on pursuing in-depth understandings and information around the questions of teacher development around a more focused cultural curriculum (McNamara, 2009).

At the end of every phase, I held interviews with the two administrators, Nancy Rother and Gail Taylor who were "key informants" (Anderson, 1998, p.191). The administrators too were given their questions in advance. I was secure in feeling that interviewing them together would prove to be beneficial as they worked closely daily and during questioning, ideas could be exchanged.

Creswell (2007) maintains that selecting the appropriate candidates for interviews is important so as to engage participants who can offer trustworthy information. Creswell emphasizes the significance of choosing participants who will be open to share with the researcher what they were acquiring in understanding and/or "their story" (p. 133).

In guiding the interviews, I had to allow time for responses and be an active listener. I had to be mindful to not offer opinions or remarks that would sway the conversation and ensure my probes (planned and unplanned) served for elaboration and clarification (Richards & Morse, 2013). My relationships with the participants at Step by Step Child and Family Center evolved over the years, and my reactions to respondents' answers could have filtered into the discussion. I recognized this issue as I listened to audiotapes at the beginning of the project, which

encouraged me to be cautious. However, this realization did not undermine the fact that the

relationships that were progressing were key to our research journey and especially important to

Indigenous research protocols.

Questionnaire. One questionnaire was given toward the end of the third phase of my

research. Questions were offered to teachers to provide an opportunity for reflection on where

educators saw their practice at that point in time as well as what provoked transformation (see

Appendix 2.3). Since not all educators participated in interviews and, recognizing the possibility

that during focus groups some teachers might not be as comfortable to discuss questions openly,

it was important to provide another outlet for participants to comment and allow their voices to

heard (Anderson, 1998).

The methodological tools utilized provided me with a variety of ways to address and

examine the unfolding of the study. It was worth investigating a range of methods in order to

understand what was important to the participants. What's more, the incorporation of various

resources allowed for diverse ways to connect to the participants, to their personalities, and to

attend to their comfort levels when addressing changes that occurred.

Analyzing Data

My process of analysis was ongoing throughout every phase of study. My journal

supported me with interim reflections and allowed me to gain insight at poignant times of the

research. Arranging my data involved months of organizing field notes, journal entries and

transcribing taped discussions (the lengthy exercises of data analysis will be elaborated upon in

Chapter 4 and 7).

A more in-depth analysis began after each phase I applied the Constant Comparison

Method (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994) in order to evaluate the texts. For every phase, I followed

a systematic procedure that began with several close readings; a "course grained" analysis that

allowed me the opportunity to get to know my data well (Butler-Kisber, 2010, p. 31). I

examined field texts, journals, interviews and focus group transcriptions and reviewed my photo

documentation. During such time I looked for broad categories and began making memos of

significant themes and naming them (Butler-Kisber, 2010). I then moved into a deeper look at

my data to gain a "fine grained" analysis (Butler-Kisber, 2010, p. 31). I re-examined my memos

and extracted chunks of texts that created categories (Butler-Kisber, 2010). For example below

are samples of data harvested that supported and gave rise to the theme of the impact of children

learning through experience:

> The children were definitely engrossed in this activity because of the sensory properties
>
> and their ages however, the more we played with it, the older children began to "see"
>
> things in their play and creations emerged.
>
> <div align="right">(Deidra, Interview June 24, 2011)</div>
>
> …they may have created something by accident without a specific intention and then
>
> realized "Hey, this looks like a…', but they would not necessarily have the ability to sit
>
> down with some clay, with an idea in mind, and know just how to manipulate the
>
> material in a way to represent their idea. The sessions beforehand helped….
>
> <div align="right">(Sonia, Focus Group, Feb. 28, 2011)</div>

 I identified patterns in conversations and looked closely at harvesting the emerging

themes and assigned codes (Creswell, 2007). Once these patterns were identified, categories

began to take shape. I had to develop "rules of inclusion" that would define each grouping and

explain why particular sections of the texts would fit into the category (Butler-Kisber, 2010;

Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). Each code was culled from identifying repetitive expressions,

sentiments and thoughts that were shared amongst the participants (Kvale, 2007).

With every phase, various themes arose and I compared them accordingly. I examined

themes with respect to the perspectives of the teachers, myself, administrators and the children

(who are added during the second phase). A range of perceptions from the participants, and the

changing purpose of each phase, will be elaborated upon in subsequent chapters. In retrospect, I

believe that the lengthy analysis work provided me with an opportunity to engage with the data

and look carefully at the relationships that emerged.

Phase One Analysis

In my initial analysis of the data, I searched for basic themes that would illustrate what,

where and how the community's cultural goals intersected with principles of the Reggio Emilia

approach. I followed the stages of data analysis as I had planned them. During "coarse grain

analysis" (Butler-Kisber, 2010, p.10) I memoed and began to flesh out patterns and repeated

themes that emerged. After further reflecting on the data during a period of "fine grain analysis"

(p.11), I was able to categorize my data into three comprehensive themes:

1. Respecting an Image of the Child

2. Developing Professionally

3. Communicating Culture

I wanted to address the emerging themes in consideration of what the Step by Step Child and

Family Center might find significant. Subthemes, therefore, served as rules of inclusion (Butler-

Kisber, 2010) whereby each supported the "umbrella" overall theme. I worked hard at moving

from largely descriptive categories to more conceptual ones and themes. Descriptive categories

came about through my recurring practices of organizing and identifying patterns that emerged

from my data. Conceptual categories developed from my in-depth examinations of harvested

sections of data thereby allowing me to consider and bring forward lessons learned, along with

identifying questions that were raised (Wolcott,1999). I then moved into interpreting and

positing theories that would be relevant to the community in which I was involved. This was an

important process as I kept cognizant of my researcher identity, the interpretive process and

transparency.

The first theme, **Respecting the Image of the Child,** reflected the enjoyment and

appreciation educators identified as salient during the process of altering their curriculum.

Supportive sub-themes here included documentation of children's unique abilities, social

interactions with peers and adults in their lives, and the image of the child who is guided by

Mohawk values.

The second theme, **Developing Professionally** recognized the significance of adult

participants' development in the process of building a culturally relevant program. Classroom

practice and professional interactions emerged as repeated factors in developing new

instructional approaches. In their statements, teachers identified a sharing of materials, exchange

of knowledge, and the development of their own relationships as important components in their

development.

Last, Step by Step's focused vision in **Communicating Culture** was illuminated by the

data. Teachers' and administrators' constant attention to cultural relevance in children's daily

experiences gave rise to this theme. Relevant sub-themes included: the natural world, family and

community, the thanksgiving address (the Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwen), and Mohawk beliefs of

how children learn. I further explain the analysis process, and provide a more in-depth

clarification of each of the three themes in Chapter 4. However, the following diagram (Fig. 3.2)

illustrates how the three final themes emerged:

Mohawk image	Child unique in abilities	Child as a social being

1. Respecting the Image of the Child

Sharing of materials	Sharing of knowledge	Changes in relationships

2. Developing Professionally

Natural world	Family & Community	Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwen	Beliefs about childhood

3. Communcating Culture
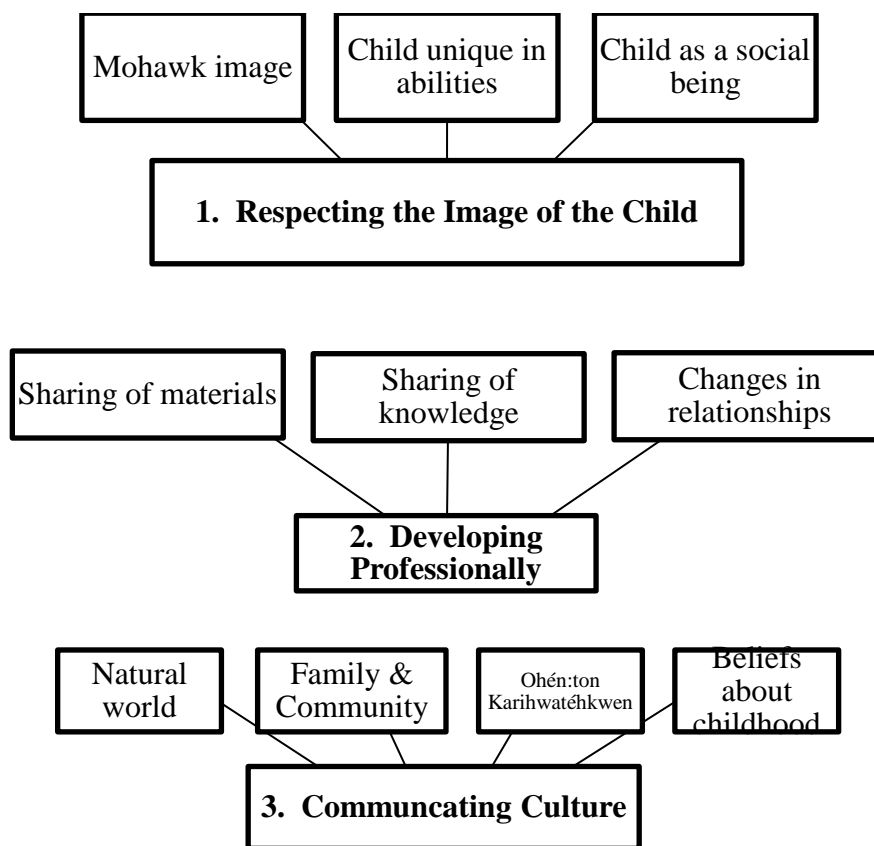
Figure. 3.2. Themes and sub-themes: Phase 1

To illustrate my strategy for analysis, the following provides an example of chunks of

texts that represent data I first marked as "seeing the child as capable".   After several read-

throughs, the overall "rule of inclusion" (Butler-Kisber, 2010, p. 10) was: seeing the child unique

in his/her abilities. I noticed a pattern in the data that represented the young child as having

abilities and skills:

Nancy (administrator): It's the image of the child that was seen. If you listen to what

people are saying and you read the guestbook, the comments all people kept saying

was, "I can't believe that children so young can do this." That was a common

remark.

Sonia (teacher): One of the kids from next door, I think he is in Grade 4 or 5. I was

taking pictures of the children's' little deer and he said, "Wow, we couldn't even do

work like this and I told him, "They're three!" "Wow, that's really good." And this

is coming from a child to another child.

(Focus Group, June 3, 2010)

Nancy (administrator): They [the children] had the opportunity to return to their work

and they could change things – they could reflect. M. (assistant) talks about a picture;

about the child who didn't like her picture and added a bear. To me that was very

illuminating. Other stories like that; that the child went back and had the right to change

it. In the past we wouldn't have given that time – it would have been up on the wall. That

was important.

(Focus Group & Photo Elicitation, June 23, 2010)

A similar process of memoing and then harvesting chunks of data supported my analysis

throughout all the phases of my research. I had to review the data many times in order to

understand what emerged as significant and what constituted the interactions between the

patterns.

Phase Two and Phase Three Analysis

The analysis of Phase Two and Phase Three evolved from Phase One with the creation of

the studios (ateliers) at Step by Step Child and Family Center. Culture, learning and the arts

simultaneously were emphasized as we asked: How can the atelier become "…a place of

research where imagination, rigour, experiment, creativity and expression would interweave and

complete each other?" (Vecchi, 2010). Specifically, how could the atelier and the arts promote goals in early childhood education in Mohawk culture? From both phases I culled data from focus group sessions, photo elicitation and interviews, field notes, journal reflections, and identified critical themes. I went through the same reading and review process as I had carried out in Phase One: memoing descriptive findings, creating broad themes, highlighting chunks of texts that fit my "rules of inclusion" (Butler-Kisber, 2010, p. 31), and organizing them by code. This lengthy and challenging procedure reflected both "coarse-grained and fine-grained analysis" (Butler-Kisber, 2010). My field notes and journal reflections were valuable tools because they provided a chronological record of experiences as well as my personal thoughts on who and what was changing in the research environment. My documentation also corroborated and/or disconfirmed what was emerging. (Such representations will be presented in Chapter 7 where I will discuss my data analysis of the two phases). The use of photos carried out during focus group sessions allowed participants to tell stories that I later analyzed with same procedures of constant comparative methodology (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). The descriptive categories I chose for each theme reflected the initial research question: What role can the atelier and arts play during these two phases of study?

The first theme that emerged from my data was **Learning through Experience**, which identifies the active elements that brought about learning during each phase. As an illustration, and later more extensively discussed in Chapter 7, the following chunks of data were harvested:

In the studio, the children then sat around the table to explore the small paper lines presented to them… I. (child) first placed the lines around the circumference of the paper. She independently tore off smaller lines to fit small open spaces. She slid the glue around carefully and then related: "The glue shrinks when it's under the lines." When W.

(child) completed his line design he was asked what his lines made him think of, he said:

"It makes me think like happy."

P.L. (child) was happy to summarize her line creation: "It's a monster. It's a climbing

thing. It's a ladder." L.E. (child) placed her lines carefully. She tore the lines into

smaller pieces to fit into open spaces of her paper. T. (child) was happy to create a line

design: "I'm crossing the lines. The ladder is going to the other side of the house. K.

(child) exclaimed: "Snake family!"   K. noticed that her lines are longer than the paper:

"Mine lines is dancing off the page."

(Field notes, Melissa's class, Jan, 27, 2011)

I like that the emphasis is in on more open-ended and child directed centres as project

work. The challenge here is to understand that there will be a little more chaos and mess

as children move to different areas but they are creating and representing in different

ways. I love the idea of projects and emergent curriculum.

(Monique, Focus Group, April 6, 2012)

Kolb (1984) suggests that experiential learning is "…a combination of grasping and transforming

experience" that results in knowledge (p. 41). The sub-themes that highlighted **Learning**

through Experience as a key finding included: children's active experiences, following a cycle

of inquiry, and teachers' active experiences.

The second theme was: **Communicating through the Ateliers.** A focus on the arts

during Phase 2 and 3 was an initial objective. The outcome of integrating the arts in daily life at

Step by Step Child and Family Centre proved to be important. The exploration of different

media, the impact on teaching practice and attentiveness to Mohawk culture and language as

daily integrations, were all sub-themes that emphasized the significance of the arts.

Culturing Curriculum, the third theme, emerged as a driving force for change as the

incorporation of a culturally based program required a reconceptualization of teaching and

learning. The data revealed how educators began to pay increasing attention to the holistic

(physical, mental emotional, and spiritual) needs of the child. Mohawk cultural values therefore

influenced the emergence of important sub-themes: The choice of topics meaningful to Mohawk

culture and community, the Mohawk image of the child as central to all experiences, Mohawk

ways of thinking, and Mohawk language.

The diagrams of final themes and sub-themes identified for both phases follows:

Children's active experiences	Following the Cycle of Inquiry (project work)	Teacher's active experiences

1. Learning through Experiences

Exploration of different media	Impact on teaching & learning	Integration of Mohawk language & culture

2. Comunicating through the Ateliers

Meaningful topics	Mohawk image of the child	Mohawk ways of thinking	Mohawk language

3. Culturing Curriculum

Figure 3.3. Themes and sub-themes Phase 2 & 3

As an example of my process of analysis, I provide excerpts here that shed light on teaching and learning in the ateliers. These defining chunks of data present examples of repeated comments that underscored how teaching and learning were impacted because of the new ateliers and arts experiences:

> In the studio today, Melissa chose to work with each child individually. Since her group was so young, she found that a one-to-one conversation was helpful for understanding, especially during the introduction of a new material. There weren`t any distractions… He explored the pastels by making dots on his paper and took delight in seeing vibrant colors appear. He didn`t seem interested at first in recreating his line design, but when challenged with Melissa`s sound of "Whee" to draw a line across his paper, he was happy to follow through.
>
> (Field note, Melissa`s class. Jan. 27, 2011)
>
> We took 2 -3 children at a time, whomever was interested and willing…We will begin our discovery in the atelier and not have to search for available space. However, I will still introduce the clay on the floor, as I feel it offers more freedom and intimacy while getting to know the clay.
>
> (Interview, Deirdra (teacher), June 24, 2011)

Figure 3.4. Teaching and learning together

Additionally I harvested reflections on how the arts and the new studios provided for *the integration of Mohawk language and culture*:

> This is why the atelier experience is especially helpful in broadening children's understanding of their culture. The atelier awards the teacher the opportunity to uncover what the child already knows and to challenge each child in a way that is personal and meaningful. I know from experience that this is extremely difficult to achieve in a busy classroom setting, even with the best of intentions.
>
> (Interview, Melissa (teacher), June 24, 2011)

> I feel that through our work that took place in the atelier, the children and I both felt a connection to the people and places in the community. The atelier was a place we used not only for art but also as a place of reflection about the places we had visited in the community. (Interview, Rebecca (teacher), June 24, 2011)

The sensitive approach to the surroundings, made up of daily activity, thoughtfulness, and choice allowed for teacher and child`s simultaneous participation and space for exploring culture and ways of learning. The relationship with the environment became significant as experiences within the ateliers were dedicated to dialogue and ways of working with children. Chapter 7 will elaborate on the analysis process and findings with respect to the themes presented.

Conclusion

My methodological approaches were flexible and adapted to the knowledge and theory that emerged from the research, reflecting Denzin and Lincoln's (2008) assertion that "choices regarding which interpretive practices to employ are not necessarily made in advance" (p. 4).

Denzin and Lincoln (2008) acknowledge that the use of multiple methods contributes to triangulation and provides a clearer, in-depth understanding of one's research endeavours. For these reasons, particular qualitative practices were selected.

In this methodological review, it has been my intention to underscore the importance of choosing appropriate qualitative approaches that would facilitate a methodology of listening. The unfolding of different phases of research propelled the study forward, therefore listening was crucial. "Listening," at every phase of the research, represented ways of learning, working and being together, committed to learning and knowing.

Understanding *listening* as an integral part of the research emerged as a research methodology on its own. Listening, for example, was a critical component in gaining narrative inquiry data (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Narrative inquiry such as teachers' written and photographic documentation, offered opportunities for the participants to have their voices heard. Additionally, Participatory Action Research supported a methodology of listening: Our collaborative and co-creative practices (Reason and Bradbury, 2001) could only happen when we were attentive to what was occurring in our work. As an illustration, bi-monthly teacher meetings were held throughout the three phases. During those session teachers and administrators presented, shared, and gave feedback on documentation of children's experiences. Furthermore, Arts-informed Inquiry (Sullivan, 2005) as a method also allowed me and the participants to listen in ways that revealed deep understandings of cultural meaning. For example, during Phase 3 I reflected in my journal when cultural significance rose to the surface:

> Every child has had an *experience* with his or her name using different areas of the school and multiple materials to support the ideas. Children learned about the significance of their name and explored their identities through the arts.

Kaweriiostha has brought her knowledge and the language forward daily; it is

everyday conversation with the children – all ages. They have learned about their

culture and have communicated meaning in a variety of symbolic ways.

(Journal, May 25, 2012)

I reiterate here, that my inquiry would not have been thorough if I had not addressed, from the

outset, Indigenous perspectives toward cultural research. In the beginning, I sought to develop

study methods shaped by ethical parameters and principles of the Mohawk community. Restoule

(2004) articulates that Indigenous principles of methodology are comprised of experiential

learning opportunities with acts of ongoing listening when the community is involved. My

challenge was to discover new ways to investigate and harmonize Indigenous ways of knowing

with Western research approaches. *Listening* helped to bridge these two elements, and enabled

all parties to participate in respectful research. Overall the methodology of listening supported

my partnerships and greatly added to the "living bridge" of knowledge.

In the next chapters, I relate the story of my three-year exploration of culturally relevant

practices for an early childhood program in this Mohawk First Nations community. Chapter 4

contains a reflexive account of myself as researcher within the context of the initial project. This

first phase of the research presents the progression of study, and the provocation of the Reggio

Emilia approach. In the first year of research, the essential question became: Which principles

will resonate with Mohawk culture and teaching as well as elicit transformation in early

childhood praxis?

Chapter 4

Phase One: Building a Bridge. Learning Together

March 2010 – June 2010

Secured only by a seatbelt, I head toward the uncertainty of the Mercier Bridge; a passageway removed from boundaries of familiarity that escorts me into the unfamiliar domain. A magnet pulls from across the bridge. Why is that attraction so strong? I am the one in control of crossing this bridge after all; I've visited the other side many times before. But this time it has changed. This is not a visit. The road carries responsibility…new information is needed to fill the gaps. The Mercier's metal crossbeams are in view now, opening up possible horizons for exploration…heading onto a gnarled road. The potholed highway reminds me that experiences may be bumpy, but that it will be a road frequently traveled. Nothing will be found by remaining idle. Entering into the unknown will allow for new roads to be discovered. Could this daily ride help future travelers? Below the beams I drive toward learning. I am ready to enter. I am ready to listen.

Opening Remarks on the First Project

This chapter describes phase one of research carried out with the members of Step by Step Child and Family Center in Kahnawake Mohawk Territory. The progression of this phase will be explained and supported by excerpts from my field notes, journal reflections, focus group discussions and individual interviews.

Between the months of March 2010 until June 2010, I was at Step by Step Child and Family Center twice a week for a minimum of four hours a day. The participants included me, ten classroom teachers, two administrators (Nancy Rother, Coordinator of Inclusive

Programming and Gail Taylor, Head of Programming) and the executive director, Debbie

Delisle-Giasson. Step by Step provided me with consent to research. In order for me to enter

into this setting and authentically be an active part of the school, it was necessary for me to gain

understandings of daily routines and the way the program worked (Fontana & Frey, 1994).

During my visits, I observed educators in their classrooms and had opportunities to talk

informally with teachers and their teams. I participated in and led bi-monthly meetings that

brought together all classroom teachers and the two administrators, Nancy and Gail. Some

meetings were set aside for me to coach teachers on developing their thinking and approaches in

their teaching. Most of the meetings were sharing times when teachers had the opportunity to

impart information and listen to each other regarding new understandings, challenges and

successes. The objective was to expand their teaching repertoire by considering long-term

culturally relevant project investigations where children could have opportunities to explore

meaningful topics in depth.

Coaching practice included in-depth conversations regarding components that would help

build project-based learning. Project principles were adopted from the Reggio Emilia approach;

a philosophy that encourages children to learn about topics through their own interests and on

their own time. The Reggio Emilia approach perceives the child as "…not a target of

instruction, but rather having an active role as an apprentice…learning is not something that is

done to the child, but rather something [s]he does" (Hewett, 2001, p. 96). Our objective meant

transforming from practices of "add on" cultural activities to child-centered learning experiences

where culture would *be* the curriculum. Such thinking was a huge movement away from

teacher's prior methods of approaching culture as a separate "topic."

Nancy and Gail were active participants during meetings, adding their observations, offering resources, as well as asking questions. They were especially devoted to their objectives of creating and sustaining a meaningful cultural program for their young students, their staff and the Mohawk community. I noted my observations and reflected as they occurred:

Our meeting went well today. Classroom teachers are developing their topics by going into the community for resources. Other teachers are picking up how some classes are involving experts from town or possible ways that family members have come into the classroom to teach the children. Nancy and Gail offered other suggestions and proposed visiting the Cultural Centre when appropriate.   (Field notes, April 6, 2010)

Our discussions these past weeks were meaningful. Nancy and Gail's consistent presence at our meetings is impacting. They provide for their teachers by listening well and they are always taking notes. The three of us often review the sessions after everyone has left. Nancy and Gail's attendance and involvement sends a message to everyone: what we are doing is important.   (Journal, April 10, 2010)

From the onset of our collaboration, Nancy and Gail were driving forces who encouraged teachers toward deeper practice.

As mentioned earlier, I considered myself an active participant rather than an observer from the sidelines. My partnership over the months incorporated coaching and working in collaboration with the educators and administration of the center. I entered the school community with hopes of taking on a supportive role as a participant observer. Outside researchers need to select methods that "require active collaboration with the Indigenous group who know their own people, who are informed and are in better positions to advise researchers to

respond helpfully" (Ball, 2005, p. 91). At times I felt I was a student learning and being

educated, yet not actually being one of the group – a role Agar (1996) has labeled a "professional

stranger."   Holding tight to my positionality, I believed in "...the ethical principles of respect,

inclusion reciprocity and relevance" (Ball, 2005, p. 93).

For these reasons I was dedicated to gaining better understandings of Mohawk culture in

tandem with becoming familiar with how Mohawk culture was being presented in the children's

learning experiences. Early on, the administrators provided me with Tom Porter's (2008), *And

Grandma Said: Iroquois Teachings…as passed down through traditions,* a text that gave me

some grounding in understanding Mohawk culture and values. Tom Porter, a well-known

spiritual leader of the Mohawk nation, had recorded stories of Iroquois customs, traditions, the

story of creation, ceremonies, life-cycles and the effects of colonialism on his people.

Interspersed in the chapters are recollections of tales his Grandmother passed down to him that

illuminated emic perspectives. I appreciated this book (later on buying my own copy) as when

teachers discussed the essence of their projects occurring in their classrooms, I had some

background as to the "what" and "why" of the topics selected. Additionally, I had the support of

a cultural language and resource teacher, Owen:nakon Deer. She frequently provided me with

background information regarding the holidays, festivals and other traditional events during the

year. It was important for me to educate myself in the issues and values of the Mohawk

community so as to carry out an ethically responsible study with my research partners. I needed

to go beyond solely attaining informed consent. I had to be knowledgeable and open to

collaborating with my research partners (Ball, 2005). Ball (2005) cautions that frequently,

within collaborative partnerships, the interests of the Indigenous group may overtake the

researchers' objectives. Such was not the case in my situation with Step by Step Child and

Family Center as our relationship was built on mutual trust and ongoing co-development of the

research (Ball, 2005).

Furthermore, I remained cognizant of the two defining characteristics of my role; that of

coach and that of researcher. I had to handle the daily experiences of living in those two

domains. At times, it was challenging for me to balance being absorbed in practices and yet at

the same time, remembering to remain detached at significant periods. Hammersley and Atkins

(1995) explain:

> While ethnographers may adopt a variety of roles, the usual aim throughout is to maintain
>
> a more or less marginal position, thereby providing access to participant perspectives but
>
> at the same time minimizing the dangers of over-rapport. (p. 113)

With that in mind, I worked hard at situating myself and recognizing which roles were in play

and where they had to cross over. For example, during this initial phase, several teachers

requested direction in providing a more open-ended approach in their interactions with individual

children, rather than a controlled pedagogical approach as was carried out in the past. Over

several weeks, I guided those teachers in exercises of asking open ended questions to children

and we focused on developing a flexible process of learning over time. My reflections in my

journal helped me examine such situations as well as supported me in perceiving coaching

opportunities and maintaining my research role:

> It was apparent during our discussions that several teachers need to expand their
>
> understanding regarding visual arts; the experience of painting. There is little discussion
>
> with the children and they are asked to paint a …. For the younger age group a focus on
>
> the exploration of colour mixing and what their paintbrush can do needs to be

investigated. Children are gluing tissue on cut out bears. I question why some teachers

are still preparing pre-fab items and cut out animals to paint. Amalgamating theory and

the practice – still under construction.   (Journal, April 10, 2010)

After reviewing field notes from several meetings, some teachers' documentation of

conversations includes closed ended questions (e.g. Is your fish going fast or slow/instead

of: Tell me about your swimming fish and Do you want to make a book of all your

pictures/instead of; What would you like to do with all these insect drawings?) I have to

remember to offer the handout A Guide to Questioning Skills.   (Journal, May 3, 2010)

 I waited several weeks to review my field notes; I didn't like to write in my journal too rapidly

for fear of making a decision too hastily or misinterpreting individual occurrences. Carrying out

my journal reflections in such a manner built my ability to ponder thoughtfully in support of my

coaching role with respect to teachers' endeavours.

Since this phase was the first project, an emphasis was placed on the process of

professional learning rather than focusing solely on new strategies to develop curriculum. The

progression of adapting principles of the Reggio Emilia approach, and including Mohawk culture

as part of that approach, would take time and flexibility. Seeing this experience as a *process* of

transformation was an important message that teachers, at times, neglected. They were hard

workers and sometimes felt pressured. They often looked more at change as a distinct stage

rather than a progression of learning. Nancy affirmed such emotions during an interview when I

asked her about *her* challenges during this phase. She explained:

I think the staff understands change much like moving a household. You upset your

delicate balance, pack up and move to a new place but then you want to unpack the boxes

and settle. The move is over and it's time to put your feet up and have a beer. I think

they keep expecting that we will settle and each new phase of our development is met

with a certain feeling of destabilization and exasperation. I'm hoping we are slowly

changing that mindset and that culture.   (Interview, Nancy, August 13, 2010)

The emphasis at this point was on creating a dialogue to locate common ground of Reggio

thinking and Mohawk values. Participants were empowered to share knowledge, ideas and co-

create possibilities (Moss, 2006). The manner in which we would attend to our process of

learning, individually and collectively, would determine how we would proceed in the following

years.

 Purpose of the Inquiry and Research Questions

        As of March 2010 my role had shifted from "Reggio educational consultant" to

"researcher."   Nancy, Gail and I collaborated on an action plan with intentions of building on

principles of the Reggio Emilia approach that had been studied in the previous year. A Museum

Project was decided upon as it addressed a project approach, the key Reggio Emilia vehicle that

offers young children time and motivation to demonstrate their learning and convey their

understandings via their "hundred languages."[7] Project work would allow educators to plan and

facilitate phases of a culturally relevant project. Teachers' ongoing documentation[8] would

---

[7] "Hundred languages" is a term created by Loris Malaguzzi, orchestrator of the Reggio Emilia approach. The term implies a belief that children have many ways of expressing their theories, learning or knowledge. Educators provide experiences, materials and resources to provoke children to express what they know and in ways that they know. The "languages" may include drawing, painting, dramatizing, sculpting, music, dance or storytelling.

[8] Documentation is teacher's data collection of children's (or an individual child's) learning experiences. Documentation may include: photographs of children engaged in learning, children's art work at different stages of development, photos of the child, videos, and/or transcribed conversations or comments unique to

support reflective practice with the purpose of exploring what they were learning about children and their own pedagogy. For several months I had been coaching the educators in their acquisition of the principles of project-based teaching and learning. We were guided by Katz and Chard's (2000) framework of the project approach that featured: anticipatory planning, launching the project, developing the inquiry and then concluding the project.

The objective was to establish starting points from which Reggio principles could intersect with culturally focused intentions within the Mohawk context. It was imperative for all of us involved (i.e. myself, administrators, teachers themselves) to look at how the educators applied the principles to their own environments. The research questions for the pilot project were: **What are the educators using from Mohawk culture? What are they using from Reggio Emilia? How would they use projects and art experiences to expand children's cultural understandings? Did intersections of Reggio principles and Mohawk culture occur?**

Tools for Construction: Methodology

The methodology that was implemented during this first phase was Grounded Theory (Charmaz, 2008 Glaser & Strauss, 1967) utilizing field notes, journal reflections, focus groups and interviews. Data was systematically compiled at vital stages; common themes were identified through memoing, categorizing and then analyzed (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). We were eager to uncover what would resonate as meaningful, culturally speaking. Since we considered this phase as an initial project we were hopeful that new theories would develop to support future endeavours (Charmaz, 2005).

---

the child. Documentation panels can also be created by educators in order for children to revisit their experiences; for teachers to refer to for further planning; to share with families and school community.

Authenticity is vital to Reggio practices as well as to this investigation. Therefore, focus group discussions of topics unfolding would attend to specific areas of Reggio Emilia but more importantly, to the educators' views of whether Mohawk culture had resonated with their classroom practices using this approach. Since the focus group members would share common experiences but from different vantage points, their perspectives would allow for various opinions and visions. Focus group sessions were held twice during this period (May 18th, 2010 & June 3rd, 2010). Participants were given questions to consider prior to our meetings and were invited to add their own prior to or during the meetings (See Appendix 1.2).

Since the teachers, as part of the documentation of classroom practices had been taking photographs, a photo elicitation methodology (Lykes, 2001) was also used during the June 3rd focus group session to provoke conversations as to how and why their pictorial samples were meaningful. Visual research has become a common technique as it supports mindful discussions with regard to social relationships (Harper, 2002; Rasmussen, 2004). As Harper (2005) suggests, the use of photos might elicit deep reflections and disclose emic perspectives. Hopefully, memories would be stimulated in order for educators to explore what it meant to have participated in the project.

Additionally, individual interviews were held with three out of the ten teachers (June 15th & June 19th, 2010) as well as two interviews with the two administrators, Nancy and Gail (June 20th, 2010 & August 13th, 2010). They all received their questions before each meeting so as to offer them time, flexibility and choice when responding (See Appendix 1.3). These interviews were conducted in order to capture participants' personal and professional thinking of the cultural content of the projects carried out, Reggio Emilia's influence, as well as their teacher role in their endeavors.

Guba and Lincoln (1989) have identified an evaluative approach as fundamental to gaining in-depth understandings, both planned and unplanned. The emphasis during data collection was on a constructivist approach to evaluation that required the involvement, empowerment and consideration of stakeholders' perspectives and values (Anderson, 1998), which is in harmony with Reggio Emilia founding principles but also in keeping with Tuhiwai-Smith's values regarding Indigenous educators being actively involved. This 'process research' is encouraged by educators in Reggio Emilia as it promotes teacher reflective practice and program development through a formative methodology whereby educators may better understand the context of their teaching, evaluate the needs and analyze what is beneficial on an ongoing basis (Edwards, Gandini & Forman, 1993 Katz & Cesarone, 1994).

The Cultural Art Museum Project

The foundation for learning at Step by Step Child and Family Center is culture. In every class, the Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwen (Thanksgiving Address) is recited daily in Mohawk language in an abridged form. Porter (2008) explains that the Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwen is recited before anything of great importance is about to occur. This address, as it is often titled, holds great meaning for the Haudenosaunee (people of the Longhouse). It is usually narrated at gatherings, festivals, important meetings or traditional ceremonies. The context of the address includes how the people stand in harmony with the natural world. They give thanks. The Creation story is interwoven in the address and the spiritual world is embedded in the verses. When the young children at Step by Step recite the Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwen daily, the natural world is recognized. Included in their daily thanks are: the people, Mother Earth, the water, the fish, plants and roots, the medicines, the three sisters, fruits, all insects, all animals, all trees,

birds, Grandfather Thunder, the Four Winds, Brother Sun, Grandmother Moon, stars and the

Creator (Porter, 2008).

After several experiences of engaging in a variety of classroom mini-projects, and

discussing the worth of long-term investigations, the educators at Step by Step began their

center-based cultural project.

> The teachers engaged in brainstorming various cultural topics that could be presented to
>
> children during the meeting. All thoughts journeyed toward one theme, the Ohén:ton
>
> Karihwatéhkwen. What was realized, amongst the staff, was that any meaningful cultural
>
> theme held a place in the Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwen. Topics have been selected: fish,
>
> trees, Recycling (Mother Earth), the insects, the seasons, family, fruit (strawberries),
>
> animals (bears, wolf, deer, turtles). (Field note, March 30, 2010)

The classroom experiences would begin with a piece of relevant provocation such as a painting

of family life long ago, an animal sculpture, or a poster depicting a colourful assortment of fruit

and berries. Guided by their teachers, over the months, the children had the opportunity to

explore and participate in learning activities and arts-integrated experiences that concentrated on

their selected topic from the Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwen:

> Carina is working with the children on Mother Earth. The children and teacher are
>
> working on a papier maché back of the turtle. They are adding various biomes as the
>
> children are acquiring understandings of each section and at the same time, understanding
>
> the elements of "thanks" for the natural world...

> (Field note, April 24, 2010)

Carly shared the representations of fish skeletons each child had constructed out of

toothpicks. This was the end result of a busy week. It began with a friend from the

community who came to school with a load of fish he had just caught. That day they were

all busy cleaning and scaling the fish then cooking and eating it during lunch. The

children experienced the full cycle; the importance of fish in their daily lives; part of their

history of survival–part of the Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwen.

(Field note, May 11, 2010)

What was affirmed here was the remarkable connection of simple provocations to what children

give thanks for every day. Numerous discussions, hands-on activities, art interpretations and

children's observations and learning were documented methodically by the teachers so as to

communicate children`s thinking, feelings and growing knowledge.

Notably, one of the outstanding features of the Reggio Emilia approach is focused

attention on the importance of documentation. The teachers worked hard at developing

documentation skills. Careful documentation of children`s work throughout a project opened a

"window" into exploring, thinking, problem solving, hypothesizing and meaning making

occurred (Harris Helm et al., 1998). Documentation was purposeful and organized so that a

varied assortment of artefacts and entries were collected to represent children`s learning (Moran

& Tegano, 2005). Documentation included samples of children's work, photos of children

engaged in experiences, conversations, records of the child's observations, teacher reflections, or

narratives related by the child. The documentation was then collected and teachers made

decisions as to what samples represented how the child had built new understandings and what

directions needed to be further pursued. These attempts at recording for meaning provided data

for us to assess learning and move ahead in the projects.

During those months of activity on the school-wide project, each class concentrated on a

segment of the Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwen. The young learners communicated their thoughts

and theories into visual depictions. The development of this project, and a final school-wide

display at an in-house museum, provided the occasion for children's work to be showcased in

order to share with families and the community. Although intended to be presented for only a

few days, the exhibit remained standing for weeks in the Step by Step gymnasium to extend the

membership within and outside the community. Reggio Emilia's guiding aphorism "niente

senza gioia" (nothing without joy) came to life in this culturally based project. Malaguzzi,

(1998) believed deeply that nothing can be accomplished without ample opportunities for

children's creativity and inquiry to develop. It was up to the adults involved to provide the

environment that nurtured this energy (Goleman et al., 1992). In the end, the teachers,

administrators, children and community revisited those stories of their deep understandings with

joy and pride. (See Figs. 4, 4.1, 4.2 & 4.3)

Figure 4. Cultural museum: Giving thanks for the insects

Figure 4.1. Cultural museum: Child's sculpture of the bear

Figure 4.2. Cultural museum: Giving thanks for Mother Earth

Figure 4.3. Museum project: Giving thanks for the forest animals

While documentation of the cultural project itself revealed successes, deeper thought was required to bring to light what teachers had understood about what had changed. Were cultural goals being addressed as a result of the adaptation of the Reggio Emilia approach? Harris Helm et al. (1998) consider the ability to professionally reflect as an additional "window" into understanding whereby teachers can gain insight to improve the effectiveness of their teaching. These authors highlight documentation as a way to facilitate a better understanding of child development and learning experiences. Teacher self-reflection may hold "the greatest impact of all three windows" (p. 32).

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

Data was gathered from interviews, focus group sessions, journal reflections and field notes including photo documentation. Transcripts of interviews and focus groups sessions were written up and analyzed qualitatively. I engaged in the Constant Comparative Method (Maykut

& Morehouse, 1994) in order to evaluate the data.   Commonalities were identified. I harvested

emerging themes by first memoing, extracting chunks of data, and then coded points of cohesion.

I re-visited my field notes and journal reflections as they were useful in providing descriptive

insight of what I gathered during my visits. Themes were culled and examined with regard to

points of connection (as well as tensions) between Reggio and Mohawk cultural values. The

themes that were gleaned have been highlighted with support of direct quotes from conversations

and one-on-one interviews. All words have been drawn from the transcripts without any

modifications. My comments have been interjected to clarify and guide the context of the theme

being underscored along with identifying Mohawk cultural relevance and points of intersection

with the Reggio Emilia approach.

As introduced in Chapter 3, the following themes emerged and proved to be significant in

their relationships to the community of Step by Step: Respecting the Image of the Child,

Developing Professionally and Communicating Culture. These themes were supported by their

sub-themes, which pointed to various kinds of transformations on the levels of relationships,

curriculum, and pedagogy

What surprised me, after countless hours of analysis, was the appearance of a major

theme, an umbrella theme that merged with recurring topics of study: "Relationships."

It`s All About the Relationships

Appreciating schools as systems in which various relationships are all interconnected

(Gandini, 2008), my study aimed to travel deeper in order to draw out "where" and "what"

would augment a Mohawk age appropriate program for very young children. Importantly,

reciprocal and meaningful relationships between people and environments rose to the surface as

each was activated and supported throughout our months of carrying out culturally integrated

projects. Within the context of this inquiry, the theme of "relationships" took on important meanings on several levels, which I elaborate on through the sub-themes and how main themes emerged.

Theme 1: Respecting an image of the child. Step by Step`s educational philosophy and Reggio Emilia`s guiding tenets were both rooted in a positive image of the young child. Step by Step`s inclusive environment attended to respectful rights of children; a collaborative professional effort that was part of life at the center. Yet, even with this confirmed belief, what emerged during this first phase of research was an emphasis on the image of the child as unique, capable, creative and knowledgeable. During focus group sessions these images were brought to light and memoed "image of the child":

Nancy (administrator): It's the image of the child – it's huge.

(Focus Group, May 18, 2010)

Carina (teacher): What has impacted my thinking is that the children are valued through their ideas and their curiosity.   (Focus Group, May 18, 2010)

Glorianne (teacher): For me, this project helped me to focus on the children; how much the kids actually know, learned and were able to retain.   (Focus Group, May 18, 2010)

Sonia (teacher): The children were so interested to learn about each animal. In the end, we learned from the children what they knew.   (Focus Group, May 18, 2010)

Gail (administrator): This was all about the image of the child; talented, artistic, creative, capable strong and intelligent. All that. (Focus Group & Photo elicitation, June 3, 2010)

The interviews with teachers and administrators also underscored that a focus on the image of the child and his/her abilities was linked to the changes that were occurring as a result of introducing Reggio Emilia principles:

Sheryl: What principles from Reggio did you see being used during the entire project?

Monique (teacher): I would say we used all of the Reggio principles to varying degrees but some stood out. The child as protagonist, collaborator and communicator. I think we worked in an atmosphere that respected each child in that it allowed each child to follow their interests and we encouraged each child to share their interest and to develop more deeply into their ideas. Also the children were encouraged to choose an insect, to learn. Their ideas were solicited and activities were developed in accordance to their ideas as much as possible.

Sheryl: Do you feel you have benefitted professionally by facilitating and guiding this incorporation?

Monique: I learned to look at each child in their small groups; looking at their strengths and at the things they enjoyed doing to guide me in helping with medium for their art pieces.   (Teacher Interview, June 19, 2010)

Throughout our months of study, the educators placed great emphasis on listening to children. Careful listening included written and photo documentation of children's experiences, as well as teacher reflection on documentation to plan for future experiences. (See Figs. 4.4, 4.5, 4.6).

Figure 4.4. Teacher's documentation of children engaged during project work.

Figure 4.5. Teacher's documentation highlighting work and interests of an individual child

Fig.4.6. Teacher's documentation of individual child's aesthetic abilities

The pedagogy of *listening* became a metaphor for educators' attempts to gain deep

understandings about children and their learning process (Rinaldi, 2006), and in so doing,

identified how relationships to change were built on a positive image of the child.

Teachers' appreciation of the child as 'a social being' added to this theme. Early

childhood education focuses on the importance of the children's social domain. Developing peer

relationships and participating effectively as a member of a group are typical objectives for

young children. Ladd (2008) emphasizes that children who possess well- developed social

abilities are more likely to experience success in other early childhood domains. Research tells

us when children are socially adept it translates into greater happiness and confidence at home

and in school (Ladd, 2008). Reggio Emilia thinking places an emphasis on children's social

interactions as young students work in small groups whereby they can negotiate and construct

meaning with their peers (Cadwell, 1997). This view of the social child, grounded in Vygotsky`s

social constructivist theory, recognizes that children shape themselves through peer interactions.

During the months of inquiry that occurred in every classroom, the collaboration amongst

the children increased. Peer interactions were identified in adult conversations and in numerous

documented photos of children working in partnership on their topic from the Ohén:ton

Karihwatéhkwen. Photo documentation captured meaningful encounters between the children

(See Fig. 4.7 & 4.8).

Figure 4.7. Children worked collaboratively on re-creating Mother Earth.

Fig. 4.8. Children working together in representation of the turtle's back

Careful observation and listening to children suggested that peer relationship was a key

component of the ways of thinking about teaching and curriculum that teachers were developing:

> Monique (teacher): For me, it's because of the documentation.   It's really different from
>
> what we did in the past. When we documented it was focused and it was a
>
> collection of skills. We are now not only looking at skills, we are looking at more
>
> evidence of thinking, more at the collaboration between the kids. It's changed.
>
> (Focus Group, May 18, 2010)

> Janet (teacher): Children were working together in small groups; children who wouldn`t
>
> usually work together and not minding that someone was leaning over them; not
>
> minding, as in the past, if someone was pushing over them; they didn't care. They
>
> were tolerant of each other while they were working. They often aren`t.
>
> (Focus Group & photo elicitation, June, 3, 2010)

Gina (teacher): See this photo. My T.A. had worked with both of these children last year. She said never in a million years would they work together and they did.

Sheryl: What does that do for you when you observe this, as the educator?

Gina (teacher): It`s a wonderful feeling because…

Stephanie (teacher): They look like they are working well together.

Gina (teacher): Never in a million years for the two of them to work together.

Stephanie (teacher): They look like little adults.

Gina (teacher): And see this little boy. It was hard to work with the material. The gauze was getting stuck so this little girl was showing him: This is how you do it and showing him and pulling it out. And he got it with her help. It was the collaboration; that relationship was built among the children.

(Focus Group & Photo elicitation, June 3, 2010)

Monique (teacher): The relationships came from collaborating. Here in our picture, when we were out, we only had a finite number of nets and they had to learn to share and work together, learning together, researching together and collaboration.

(Focus Group & Photo elicitation, June 3, 2010)

Collaborative learning between peers is emphasized in early childhood forums where the interactive experiences augment children's abilities to develop their cognitive and meta-cognitive capacities (Rogoff, 2003). A shared foundation of learning in peer groups and learning communities is evidence of the collective nature of knowing (Brown, 1994; Lave, 1991;

Salomon, 1993), consistent with Dewey's (1969) notion of the individual as a social learner.

The collective nature of the experiences was particularly significant to the Mohawk group. The

image of the child within Mohawk culture lies in the deep belief of the gift of children and

recognizes the future of the people because of them. "In the eyes of the Creator, there is no more

valuable life form in the entire world, in the entire universe, than a brand new baby…" (Porter,

2008, p. 45). Cultural values strengthen the future as a people (Porter, 2008). While the positive

image of the child emerged as a significant theme that addressed the research questions, a

resurgence of Mohawk values seems to have deepened that understanding. By that I mean that

because of their continuous emphasis the child as the future of their community, teachers'

recognition of the image of the child within the school context extended that understanding. As

Gail (an administrator) confirmed during an interview: "That [image of the child] was an easy

transition. It's where we come from, the way we look at the child. It had true meaning for us"

(Focus Group & Photo elicitation June 3, 2010). For the educators at Step by Step Child and

Family Center, identifying and respecting the positive image of the child underscored the power

of reciprocal relationships and their impact on change.

        Theme 2: Developing professionally. The staff at Step By Step Child and Family

Center came into this study with respectful feelings toward their colleagues. However, most

educators worked on keeping relationships to friendly encounters and collegial appreciation. My

field notes, journal reflections and focus group transcripts often highlighted the mounting

relationships and teacher's fresh openness in sharing ideas and materials amongst their

community. Below are some examples:

    The first months have been filled with good conversations and good questions. Everyone

      is going through the same thing. I`ve observed, these past two weeks, teachers working

hard with their teams to extend their topics into a variety of learning experiences. They

are also looking at adding relevant materials to their environments. I have seen such

interesting items – some members of the team are bringing in objects from home or

borrowing from colleagues. (Journal, April 14, 2010)

I am observing how teachers are discussing project ideas with their neighbours. The

sharing is informal; it's entirely just chatting but the language is refined. Teachers are

conversing with each other about the phases of their project with intentionality of sharing

and receiving feedback. (Fieldnote, April 20, 2010)

Teachers are asking each other for materials, artefacts, and they are sharing their plans.

Stephanie has given some good suggestions to the teachers of the younger children.

(Fieldnote, May 2, 2010)

Monique (teacher): It was good to have a common goal.

Nancy (administrator): It had great meaning; you could see it; it had great significance.

Stephanie (teacher): The collaboration amongst the teachers and then amongst the class

  itself. Just putting this all together – the museum. It's another level of collaboration.

Nancy (administrator): And the custodians. They're understanding the Reggio principles.

    They've built things for the displays!

All: Yes, Yes… the whole building…everyone collaborated

Sheryl: Can you elaborate how the whole building collaborated?

Stephanie (teacher): Oh well everyone, so many people kept on sharing ideas; even here

informally, formally, spontaneously. People offered items, "Oh I have something

good for your project." People came together. Someone came to my room and said:

"I have something you might want to use." Most obvious, it's the culture. Everyone

knows it's a Reggio principle. We took it and really made something of it this year.

(Focus Group, May 18, 2010)

New (2007) emphasizes that central to Reggio is the development of relationships through

collaborative practice, much in line with this fundamental value of the Mohawk people. Cultural,

spiritual and community belief is grounded in the relationships that the Mohawk people share.

There was a clear overlapping of Mohawk values with this Reggio principle.

Furthermore, the burgeoning relationships addressed a bigger picture of a professional

learning community that was evolving because of knowledge being shared. Most educators

extended themselves to listen and observe others and requested feedback from colleagues and

from me. This was attested to by the administrators:

Sheryl: What principles from Reggio did you see during the execution of this entire

project?

Nancy: The collaboration amongst the children and also amongst the staff. There was

ongoing discussion and problem solving.

Gail: Sharing of ideas and really sharing of the process amongst the staff.

Sheryl: How do you think the staff can be further supported keeping in mind goals

of culture and the role you assume as an administrator?

Gail: We need to develop professionally; coaching, mentoring and visuals. This is

important for the staff.

Nancy: And it's the ongoing discussion; reflective thinking as in Reggio; the children

and the staff. It took time for everyone to understand especially for the teacher

assistants. It's still going on. Also, we respect the staff struggles and

accomplishments. The message is sent that this is a huge process and time is

allowed – no expectations.

Sheryl: Is there something you would like to add.

Nancy: Challenge has been trying to keep educators on the same level; trying to balance

the skills. Some teachers are still unsure, some confused. I am not sure. What

has worked well is the fact that we are going through this together and reminding

all that this is a process. We are learning together and from each other.

(Interview with Nancy & Gail, June 19, 2010)

As the project progressed, educators increasingly extended to each other mutual respect and trust and were ready to support each other. There needed to be a belief in continuous professional learning if there were to be advances in meaningful curriculum. Pursuing group learning and sharing knowledge would carry on the work toward a culturally rich program while building sustainability.

Theme 3: Communicating culture. The Museum Project encouraged teachers to transfer their learning of the Reggio Emilia approach into daily practice. As mentioned, long-term project work was attempted within culturally relevant themes. The educators were focused on taking this responsibility and they worked hard at organizing age appropriate experiences for their young students. How did they perceive cultural integration and what had been learned?

What were the outcomes? My data illuminated various sub-themes that addressed the communication of Mohawk values and principles: topic relevance of the Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwen; significance of the natural world; family and community relationships, cultural ways of child teaching and learning and Mohawk language. These were memoed constructed and contributed to the overall theme of the relationship to Mohawk culture.

Specifically, interviews and focus group sessions shared that focus on a culturally relevant topic *as* the curriculum (i.e. aspects of the Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwen) allowed cultural values and language to develop within an age appropriate approach. I listened attentively to the discussions in order to examine what held the greatest significance:

> Stephanie (teacher): And I notice that when the children come out of the classroom and see the painting, our provocation, more this year than any other years, they say: Look, there's Grandfather Thunder. There's the strawberry and they really see it as the Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwen more this year than ever. They really say it with excitement. They really recognize it as the Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwen museum and the connections.
>
> (Focus Group, May 18, 2010)

> Sonia (teacher): But everything tied in so much. We talk about it in the Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwen. When we spoke about the bear; the bear eats the fish and we need fish; we have to keep the water clean so you see, even between classes, everything tied in so much and you can even hear it at home. You know, Kalyn once saw someone walking and throwing something and she would say: "Hey don't pollute

Mother Earth." You could tell it was what they were working on in class. You could tell every single day. I could hear it.

Stephanie (teacher): The interesting thing is that it is about the Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwen relationships; nature, the relationships to the people to the natural world too. Our interdependence. It was culture already about the relationships.

Gail (administrator): For myself, it was the Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwen and not something isolated. In particular, for every person here it was something else. If you go to each display it was there: the trees, the animals, it was all there. Everything you get from trees, everything you get from water. It was all interconnected. There was really no space between what everybody did. That was the main provocation. It wasn't separated.

Nancy (administrator): It was different than what we expected. We started with your model[9], Sheryl, because of the topic. We chose it and it went another way; it went with the provocation. The Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwen , like Gail said, it went off into many ways of interpreting.

Debbie (executive director): It was amazing. You all took something spiritual and I wondered; how are you going to do this? How can you take something spiritual and make it physical? When you did it is the provocation– this tool of Reggio is now the way. There is no going back now.

Stephanie (teacher): One other reason I chose my picture that just came to mind. It relates to culture. Every morning when we would say the Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwen sometimes I just ask the children, is there anything you like to say nia:wa (thanks)

---

[9] Here she means Reggio Emilia approach and using visual art as provocation for the projects.

for. Spontaneously – just that – not necessarily the Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwen.   I

don't' always get answers that are spontaneous from my children; often it is

something I would say or you would say. After we were talking about family a lot

when I first did it, immediately I had children saying I am thankful for my mom; I

am thankful for my friend. I am thankful for my teacher. That's not often said. In

the Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwen we thank for the people, we do not say who

specifically. And there's parts of the book, "And Grandma said…" where he says:

We greet the people because we come to together to say nia:wa, we come together.

Not only do we say nia:wa for the people but we are coming together so nia:wa for

coming together. We want to come to one mind and put layers of thanks to a

multitude to send to the creator. So when we sit down together now, it's good to say,

we all say the Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwen all together 'cause we can make this happy

– this picture. That's thankfulness even more (See Figs.4.9).

                                                                                  (Focus Group June 3, 2010)

While a variety of artefacts were used as provocation, upon reflection, they were not the

actual instigators of the experiences. I had acquired an understanding that the whole premise of

the Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwen is rooted in bringing people together to give thanks for the

responsibilities people have for one another and for the natural world (Porter, 2008). Gail

(administrator) explained that "sharing in the long-term project process can apply to any area of

our culture–as it is all connected because of ways of thinking, our relationships, family, it's all

transparent."   (Interview, June 19, 2010)

Figures 4.9. Stephanie's references to her provocation

Figures 4.9.1. Stephanie's provocation

What's more, the sub-theme of the natural world emerged as significant to the children and teachers. A common cultural belief among Indigenous people is the importance of the natural world and the relationship to the land. To perpetuate the continuance of life, Mohawk people participate in ceremonies throughout the year, during which thanks is given to each other, to all living things in the natural and spiritual world, and to the Creator (Porter, 2008). The attachment to the natural world seamlessly unfolded in the children`s studies and were supported by teachers' planning and practice.

> For myself, personally, I am not of the culture; it was a learning experience for me; to learn more in depth about the connections. To me the connections I have to nature is not the same as I would find as the people in Kahnawake. It's a much deeper relationship. So I opened my eyes to that. (Monique (teacher), Focus Group & Photo Elicitation June 3, 2010)

I looked closely at teachers' photo documentation, their observations as to what was important, as they depicted children`s likely relationship with nature (See Figs.4.10). Snapshots included classroom experiences of the children's investigations of the natural world connected to how they comprehended the Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwen. One teacher commented on a child's simple tree chalk drawing:

> It's evidence of their learning. Together children were able to put everything together…And they really drew it. They didn't go over any other's drawing and everyone thought of something different on the tree. And it's culture. It's about the trees and it's part of the Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwen. It's an important part of thanksgiving.

> (Gloriane (teacher) Focus Group & Photo Elicitation, June 3, 2010)

Another teacher added:

> We had it [trees] in our room. The children didn't even know what we were going to talk
>
> about but they knew there was a forest that we all need. Having trees, ohskennonton
>
> (deer), in the classroom, it was constant provocation. The environment became the third
>
> teacher.   (Sonia (teacher), Focus Group & Photo Elicitation, June 3, 2010).
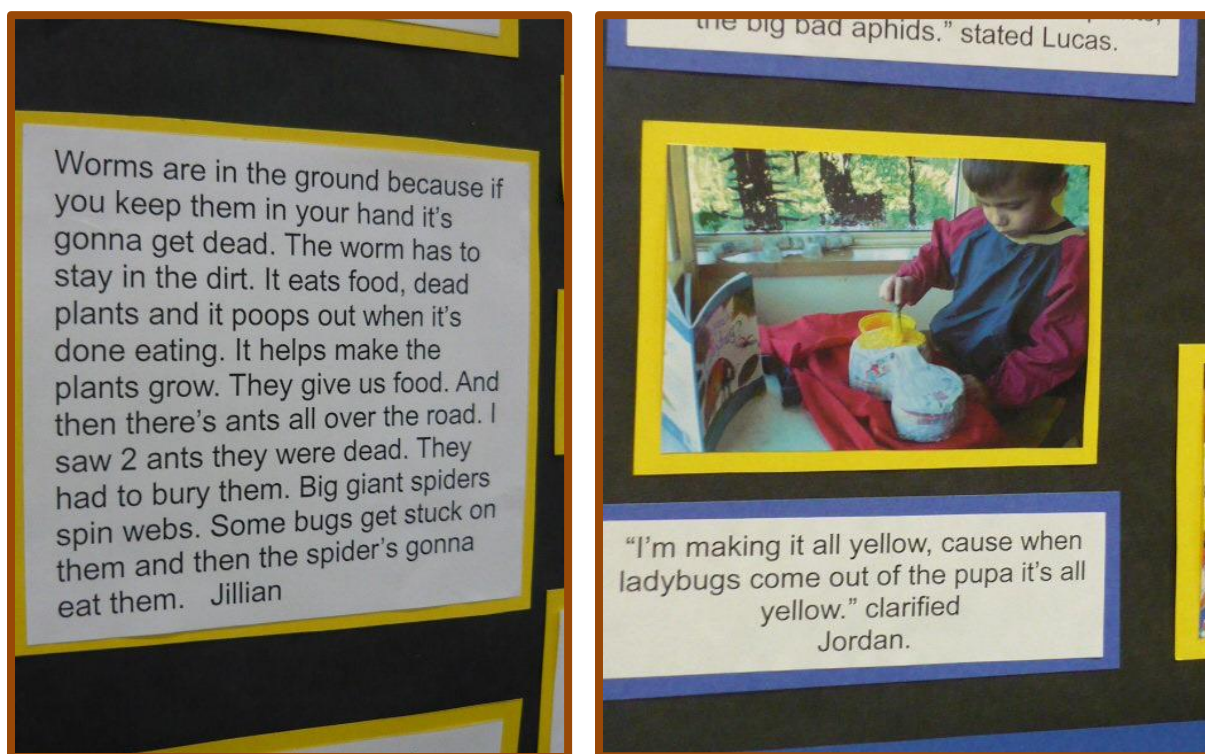
Figure 4.10.   Teacher's documentation highlighted the children's active engagement with the

natural world

Figure 4.10.1. Teacher's documentation of natural world engagement

Upon reflection, the topics that each class chose (i.e. fruit and berries, the insects, the

trees, the fish, the deer and the moose, caring for the environment) were deepened because of

Mohawk beliefs and values in relationships to nature. First Nations consider that their values

and traditions of "being" were given to them by the Creator (Assembly of First Nations, 1995).

One of the most significant teachings is that the people must work toward living harmoniously

with the natural world (Porter, 2008). The topics of the children's projects connected to the

Mohawk language and the gratitude that is given to everything in nature.

The children's projects were constructed on one of the Reggio Emilia principles,

"bringing the outdoors in"; which is the use of natural materials to invite children to explore with

all their senses. This Reggio principle resonated with the teachers culturally however, my

findings indicate that Mohawk culture deepened the relationships between cultural identity,

teaching and learning. More will be said about this shortly.

Project topics yielded emotional response from the teachers resulting in their incorporation of Mohawk literacy into the presentation of the projects. For instance, several teachers independently added their own embellishments to the children's displays at their Museum event (See Figs. 4.11, 4.12. 4.13, 4.14).
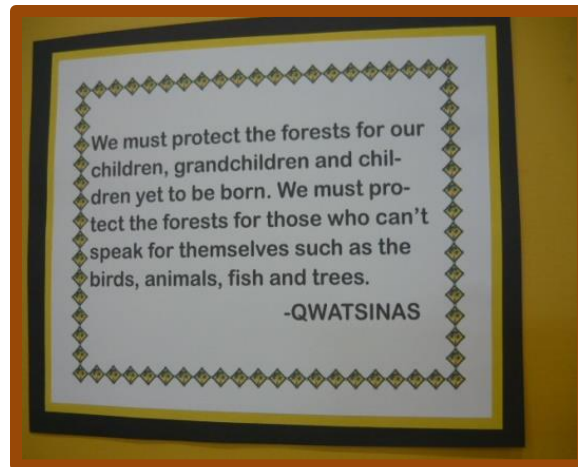
Figure 4.11. Teachers' accompaniment to the museum showcasing
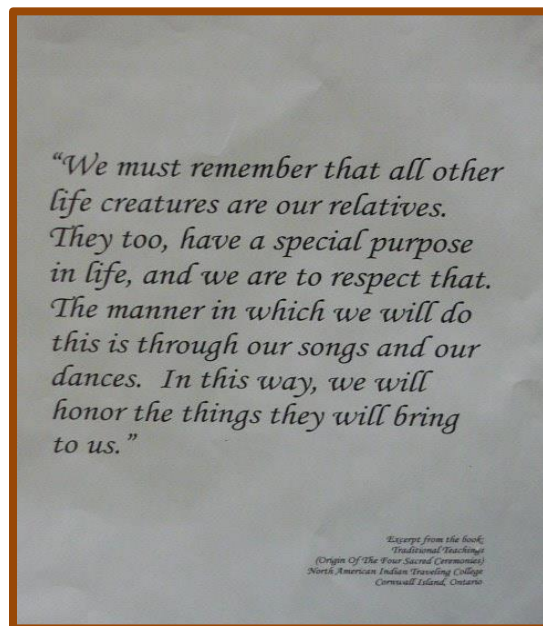
Figure 4.12. Quote added by a teacher

Figure 4.13. Teacher's addition to display of children's trees
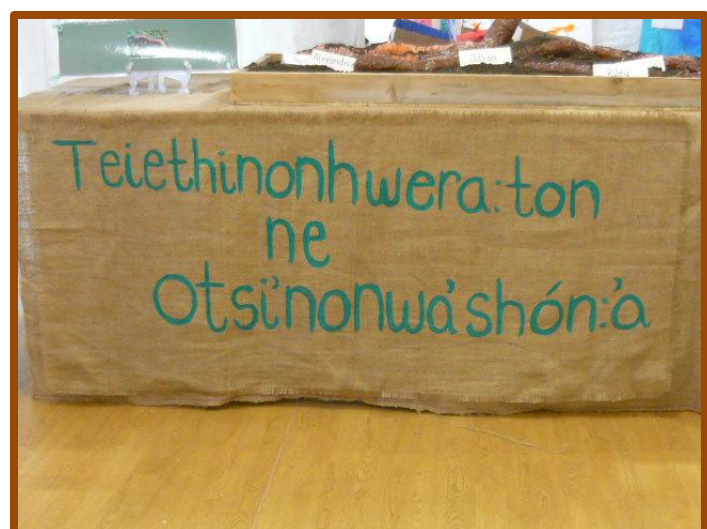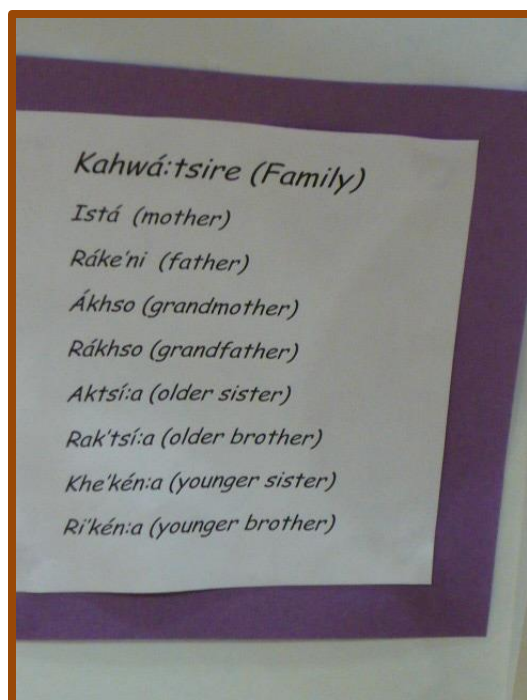
Figure. 4.14. Mohawk language as part of museum display

The data further illuminated this impact of the topics on teacher's interest and developing

understandings as they learned alongside their students:

> I originally had no idea how insects connected to culture–but we give thanks for them
>
> every day. I began to research the connection. I thought the answer would be simple, but
>
> in fact it was quite complex. I grew to understand that the connection applies not only to
>
> insects but to the entire Ohén:ton Karihwaté́hkwen. What I learned is that the Mohawk
>
> culture represents all life and believes in the continuity of life: a cyclical effect that
>
> creates the stability of the dependence of one thing on another. This interdependence
>
> ensures the continuity of all life. The culture gives thanks to all that sustains Mother
>
> Earth for each has a role to play. This knowledge led me to understand the complex role
>
> that insects, ots'non:washon:a (animals that dig), play in nature. *My cultural objective*
>
> *became clearer*; teach the children how bugs contribute to the continuous life cycle; how
>
> they change over their life span and how they return to the earth upon their death to
>
> nurture the dirt which in turn helps plants to grow that then …. *I feel I learned more*
>
> *about the culture and developed a greater appreciation*…Also, my personal knowledge
>
> came more slowly because I am not of the culture. I think that inhibited me from delving
>
> into cultural aspects more deeply, but as my knowledge grows I think I can create more
>
> cultural experiences for the children. I think this requires more reflection on my part and
>
> perhaps more discussion with my colleagues.   (Monique (teacher), June 20, 2010)

Furthermore, memos extracted from my field notes, journal entries, focus group sessions

and interviews illuminated the sub-theme of community and family relationships and its

significance to cultural identity. In Reggio and Mohawk domains, families play an active part in

children's learning experiences and community is involved as an extension of that belief. Reggio thinking sees the exchange of ideas between family members and community as a viable resource that favours a development of new ways of educating (Cadwell, 1997). The Reggio Emilia approach views family and community as "an intrinsic element of collegiality and as the integration of different wisdoms" (Spaggiari, 1993 as cited in Cadwell, 1997, p. 6).

Mohawk values are deeply embedded in relationships with family and community. Tom Porter (2008) explains that each member of the Mohawk community is dependent on each other. As an illustration, all elderly women and men are customarily addressed as grandmothers or grandfathers. The Mohawk traditional word for "aunt" is the same as mother. This insider language establishes respect "as you respect your mother" (Porter, 2008, p. 45). Porter relates that he knows of all his cousins, perhaps not personally, but he has been told by his elders. "I know we are related. So family is much closer in the Indian way, than it is in the western people's society. And we mustn't lose that tradition" (Porter, 2008, p. 46).

The teachers moved slowly toward including families and community in classroom projects. Their sensitivity towards seeing family and community as sources of knowledge began to emerge slowly. The Kahnawake local paper, *The Eastern Door*, visited and wrote about the exhibition and an on-line resource, *Iori:wase* (Kahanwakenews.com) wrote up a summary of Step by Step`s endeavour as well:

> Carly Philip's class decided to take look at fish life. "We had a lot of really nice things going on our classroom," said Philips who invited local fisherman Eric McComber to the school. "It was nice because he had just come off the water and he had a boatful of sturgeon. McComber, who brought along some of his family members explained to the

kids what he does, why he does it and how uses every part of the fish, even the guts he uses as fertilizer in his garden. He even cleaned and cooked a fish on site for the kids to eat. The goal of this project was not only to be thankful for these things, but how everything connects to Mohawk culture. Not only do we eat it (fish) but they filter the waters and help keep Mother Earth clean. (LeBorgne, 2010)

The Step By Step Child and Family Center opened its doors to premier its children's vision of the Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwen, or the Thanksgiving Address, last Thursday, May 20. Seeing how the children see our world and learning how to respect the land and life was breathtaking to experience. The children shared their vision of our creation and showed how much determination they had to just have fun and learn about our Mother Earth and what the Creator has provided. Each of the school's classes chose what they wanted to cover from the Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwen. A majority of the 160 students from Step By Step took an interest in representing an important part in our lives including the seasons, trees, water, animals and insects that make our world a natural fertilizer. It was great to hear that most of the materials that are displayed at Step By Step are all natural. (Beauvais, 2010)

The value of *connecting* to families and community was affirmed. The project stimulated reaching out to build on these relationships. Rogoff (1990) underscores the fact that when children's learning is supported by the adults in his/her family or community, a certain tenor is established: inspiration for learning. The interaction between children and community can be grounded in a strong sense of identity and belonging (Rogoff, 1990). This first phase of inquiry

stimulated building family and community involvement in children's education. Importantly, the participants' first attempts at project-based teaching and learning were met with strong feelings of pride:

Stephanie (teacher):   It's community.

Sonia (teacher): It's one thing when parents say it, but when older children say it and they don't even know them.

Debbie (executive director): And the part that is not written in those books, what people are saying; the feedback that people gave; what has been done is bringing out emotions in other people they feel; things that they could not do when they were younger. So what you are giving them, the families, not only the children, you are giving them something that they had lost; that they are finding and they are so appreciative. They are so glad that children have this opportunity to be different, to be themselves. Many of them had to work to make their lives.

Sheryl: So can I ask you something further? Does it all connect in any way? Does this provoke you to think on a deeper level?

Nancy (administrator): Debbie is talking about the principle of relationships, connections and community. It's quite spread out. It wasn't just about in here; it wasn't just about the parents. It moved to the community, who are not part of the immediate family in here, and its making them connected.

Debbie (executive director): It's about knowledge out there. It's really about the culture out there.

[Silence.]

Sheryl: We've touched a key experience. Let's go further and look at your photos.

Melissa (teacher): I've brought a picture of when we took the children to Lafleur's

grocery store. Since our project was about giving thanks for the fruits, we went

there to look at the fruits we eat every day. The reason I brought his picture, it

showed me how we can take the learning out into the community. The kids had a

great time.   It was a real process. The kids had a real life experience. It's a place

they go. The big thing for me was taking note of it all.

(Focus Group & Photo elicitation. June 3, 2010)

The Reggio Emilia principle, of connecting with families and community ignited the prospect

that was already present in teachers' thinking. While I found substance in this step forward, I had

to admit that there was some discomfort when thinking about where we would go next:

Our focus group sessions have elicited powerful exchanges between the participants.

They are coming to their own realizations. While the principles of Reggio thinking have

been a major focus, it is the Mohawk values that are being celebrated.   I wonder if I am

making the right choices for coaching. I am guiding them in principles of Reggio to look

at their program uniquely, but I think, as I type up the transcripts, much of the

understanding is already there. Relationships, image of the child, meaningful

provocation, project approach – that's all Reggio. I did enter inquiry with some

assumptions – but I have not judged whether and are Reggio principles being adopted or

adapted…we`ll see. (Journal, June 3, 2013, midnight)

Additionally, during data analysis I noted the educators' frequent references to the way Mohawk children are raised and taught. I culled this sub-theme from conversations and by memoing occasions when educators were making connections between the changes that were occurring and their cultural knowledge:

> You know what I notice. They learned what it really is supposed to be. We recite it and if you would think if you missed something you have to go back and recite it. The Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwen really comes from you. But no, what it is your own personal thanksgiving? What I saw was each child's own personal thanksgiving. That's why it is so meaningful to me. We always say it by rote but this time it was what it meant to them. That's the REAL. It's the Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwen creation-period.
>
> (Debbie (executive director), Focus Group, May 18, 2010)

> I visited Carina's class today and remarked how each child was engaged in the project at different centers. When the children went outdoors I remained in the classroom with Carina and we spoke about her active classroom. She explained: "You know Sheryl, it's how we learn. From the time children are very young they are set up to observe and learn. They're leaned up against a tree in their cradle board and they watch the adults plant, fish, hunt and garden. Then they touch and feel. From a very young age kids have hands-on experiences. That's how we learn. That's why I give the children lots of active hands on doing – they watch and then do. That's when they create themselves. Kids are using knives and cutting fish when they are very young; it's what we do. You learn by doing.
>
> (Carina (teacher) Field note, May 20, 2010)

Deidra (teacher):   Yes. It [project approach] has opened my mind; reminding me of our

culture and the olden days of learning my grandmother spoke of. Learning was

culture.

Sheryl: Can you elaborate on that?

Deidra: As children we were always active in our learning and we were allowed to and

take a chance…to learn the way. Schools, even for little ones, don't always let you

do that.   (Deidra (teacher), Interview, June 15, 2010)

I don't know if I would call it a tension but I think that they're very similar. I believe that

if Mohawk culture were a type of curriculum that was used around the world or studied,

that the learning would be very similar and we wouldn't need to incorporate the two

together. I do not believe Mohawk culture should be used this way. It is unique and

sacred to our people. I just think that if more of our people understood what the culture

was about then we wouldn't need to incorporate Reggio or any other principles to our ways

of teaching. But, unfortunately our language and ways have been lost along the ways and

only some people carry the traditions and pass it down to their children.

(Carly (teacher) Interview June 15, 2010)

I saw an emphasis on the Mohawk child specifically. The image was there before.

(Gail, administrator, Interview June 20, 2010)

As the supervisor of programming I feel that this approach not only lifted my spirits but is right in line of my philosophy in how we should be teaching our children. As a past early childhood teacher I always felt that this [project approach] is the only way to teach. Unfortunately I was told many times I was wrong. Since we started on this path I know that this is what our children need in order to learn especially with incorporating our culture and language and building on strengths and interests. It's all about the image of the child and how they learn; through their experiences, reflections and documenting their development and accomplishments through emergent curriculum. We learned.

(Gail (administrator), Interview, August 13, 2010)

The educators' comments describe principles of Mohawk culture whereby Indigenous ways of learning were identified through analyzing the children's experiences. Such meta-cognition supported the teachers as they felt confident that the shift in their teaching provided for Mohawk ways of learning. Porter (2008) explains that traditionally, First Nations children acquire knowledge through their natural participation in the life of their families and communities. The outdoors is the classroom and the Elders and families are the educators (Porter, 2008). Young children learn about their culture through deliberate teaching and through active participation (Batiste, 2002). The educators in the first phase of the research followed their responsibilities of transmitting culture by immersing children in meaningful learning and creating opportunities for learning through experiences (Battiste, 2004).

Conclusion to Phase 1

Careful analysis of the data illuminated how the classroom projects yielded deep cultural meaning within this early childhood environment. What was acknowledged during this phase of research was a clear starting point as to how culture can be maintained when the provocation is

culturally founded, in this case the Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwen. The teachers and children

embarked upon a venture jointly, listening to the words of the Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwen. The

Reggio Emilia approach resonated with Mohawk culture, in particular to relationships,

connections with the natural world and the image of the child.

   During my final interview with Nancy and Gail, the two administrators, perceptions about

teachers, children and curriculum emerged that proved significant to the future direction of the

project:

> Nancy: What helped with respect to Reggio was that understanding and learning became
> more concrete. All were highly motivated.

> Gail: And time was allowed; not the rush that has happened in the past.

> Nancy: We saw important learning for children who struggle with learning. And what was
> really interesting is that culture prevailed. It worked for us; ways from what we
> originally thought. This spoke of the power of culture.

> Gail: It was like a breath of fresh air. I`ve been away from teaching. Reggio helped me
> push and emerge the curriculum. I liked the movement away from the structure.
> Change from time and schedule. It never sat well with me. I saw a discriminating
> shift. There's no turning back.

> Nancy: I see a greater sense of joy in the work environment. I heard a lot more about the
> change as a process.

> Gail: They are a great group of teachers. Our relationships are with each other. We are of
> one mind.   (Interview, August 13, 2010)

Gleaned from the participant's reflections was the suggestion that through the consideration of

principles from the Reggio approach, cultural topics were deepened:

Sheryl: Do you feel you have benefitted professionally

Carly: The benefits are that we have developed a sense of belonging in the world. The

children are learning their culture by being involved and using a hands-on approach

like Reggio, which makes the teachings more meaningful to them. *I really had a*

hard time grasping on to the Reggio approach…. When we did the cultural project it

*was so much easier because we share the same values…*This project worked well for

my team and my students. The processes, documenting, pictures, display boards,

meetings; they have all seemed to fall into the right places.

(Carly (teacher), Interview, June 15, 2010)

This first project permitted them (i.e. the teacher and child) to learn together as they searched for

a rich cultural program. As described previously, the three themes (i.e. respecting the image of

the child, developing professionally and communicating culture) were profoundly connected.

Malaguzzi (1993) has stated that we can "never think of the child in the abstract" (p. 3).

What's more, the focus on a culturally relevant integrated curriculum for all of the

preschoolers supported the connections among child, teacher and community. Such joining and

interdependency of the three themes cycles back and helps respond to the research questions:

What are the educators using from Mohawk culture? What are they using from Reggio Emilia?

How would they use projects and art experiences to expand children's cultural understandings?

Did intersections of Reggio principles and Mohawk culture occur? To be inspired by Reggio

Emilia thinking was, on one hand, encouraging for us all. Yet, when encountering deep cultural

values, there were tensions that needed to be recognized; in this case Reggio Emilia coming face

to face with Mohawk cultural identity. Such tensions were illuminated when listening to the

conversations with the Mohawk educators who, on one hand, acknowledged Reggio principles as

providing the terminology, motivation and flexible framework to incorporate culture as a natural

unfolding in curriculum. However, many participants cautioned that Mohawk culture was ever-

present in all thinking, in all ways of knowing. Gothson (2010) identifies that when we learn

from Reggio Emilia pedagogy, it is essential to address the issue of "becoming Reggio."   He

questions: "What makes this story of Reggio Emilia a contribution to the understandings of

another's own context…where is the balance?" (p. 320). Gothson further quotes Spaggiari,

director of the Reggio Emilia preschools who, after a study tour, who said: "Go home and forget

us, and use the inspiration you have got to put your strength into the challenges of the childhoods

you are part of" (p. 321). As the project came to a close this mindfulness of considering Reggio

Emilia as freely being able to cross borders caused unsettling feelings. Finding an appropriate

place within Reggio philosophy became an issue. Gail in particular confirmed that while Reggio

Emilia served as a springboard to deepen culture, cultural identity stood proudly and was

foremost. And, as I listened to recordings of conversations numerous times, it was conveyed that

Reggio inspiration was being placed cautiously in conjunction with Mohawk cultural identity.

"Reggio has been a template to use for the future with the intentionality which has always been

connected to culture here at Step by Step" (Nancy (administrator), June 3, 2010).

The Cultural Art Museum project carried out by the Step by Step Child and Family Center,

influenced by the Reggio Emilia approach, proved to be momentous for the educators and

administrators with regard to improving practice and deepening learning for their young

students. However, echoes of a hurtful past emerged and Mohawk cultural foundations rose

above the surface. Through careful listening, I broadened my perspective by realizing that, for

this First Nations community, the purpose of learning was to develop the abilities, knowledge

customs and values needed to respect, guard and honour Mohawk culture. The project acted as a

progression of well-being that contributed to the individual (child and teacher) as well as to the natural world and connections to family and community life. This realization began to pull me away from thinking of the research as adopting Reggio principles but rather thinking of Reggio values as guiding inspirations to work alongside my research partners.

Some theoretical postulates began to be constructed in this first phase of study:

1. Reggio Emilia principles connect with Mohawk culture. The Reggio approach stimulated cultural cognizance and has implications for future objectives.

2. Teacher collaboration and reflection added to the learning.

3. The theme of "relationship" pervades all experiences for this First Nations community.

4. A pedagogy of listening will have to lead us further into finding place for culture and learning to work as one.

During our closing conversations, Nancy, Gail and I returned to the notion of the potential of a deeper arts-integrated program to extend learning and enriching cultural integration. We witnessed the excitement of how visual art experiences became children`s meaningful language while affirming joy in the process. As the school year came to a close, the administrators informed me that they were successful in receiving a grant to erect four art studios that would be attached to the school; each would be shared by two classrooms (See Fig. 4.16). These studios, ateliers as Reggio titles them, would be constructed over the summer months. They would lead us into our further investigation in the coming year.

With all this excitement, I approached Nancy and Gail and suggested a Mohawk name be given to our forthcoming ateliers. They agreed and suggested I speak to Owen:nakon Deer, the cultural language and resource teacher at the time, to help decide on a name.

Three weeks ago I approached Owen:nakon all excited about the upcoming addition to our research. The ateliers! Just like the Reggio schools in Italy! I asked her for the Mohawk word for atelier; an art workshop, a studio. Owen:nakon then inquired more about these new places that were to be built. I explained to her that the ateliers would provide a place where children could meet to construct their ideas outside of the busyness of the classroom; where children could work at their own pace to develop their visual language. Owen:nakon listened. I went further and described that small groups of children would have a place to think in an environment surrounded by windows and light; where they would have materials presented to them meaningfully; where they would be provided opportunities to learn, and to explore the arts to express their understandings. Owen:nakon said she would think about a good name. I was surprised she did not offer a title immediately. I figured that was a thorough explanation.

Impatiently, after a week or so, I approached Owen:nakon and asked her if she remembered about naming the ateliers. She explained that she spoke to her aunt and would get back to me. Spoke to her aunt…what did that mean?

I waited another week and a half (impatiently I might add) and finally Owen:nakon approached me to inform me that her aunt, an elder she admired, had created a name that would suit the uniqueness of these ateliers. Still a bit bewildered why this was taking so long, I humbly listened and heard the new name: Entewaténikonrí:sake. As Owen:nakon spoke the name, and I saw the expression on her face, I understood that this naming held more importance than what I originally thought would be quick and easy titling in Mohawk language. I asked Owen:nakon what it meant. She explained that her aunt had given it much thought, as if she was naming a child, and explained that Entewaténikonrí:sake

meant: We will think and create in our own mind; a place where great thoughts will come together. I listened to Owen:nakon's description and I am not certain if she witnessed the tears that filled my eyes. Was I emotional because of being angry at myself for being so impatient or was it the beautiful description that touched me profoundly? How impatient I had been. I had to still learn to listen better. I thanked her for her efforts. Owen:nakon had listened well to my explanations and now I had learned by listening to her. The name of Entewate'nikonri:sake belonged to Step by Step. All I had to do is learn how to pronounce it! Tom Porter's explanation about Mohawk language has shown its face. He wrote, "Like all people of the world, we have a language. I know you're not gonna understand my language, but I wish you could. Because Mohawk is very beautiful. The language that I heard my grandma and mother talk is very poetic, but it wasn't meant to be poetry. It just was. And it just *is* yet today" (Porter, 2008, p. 91).

(Journal reflection, June 8, 2010)

Figure.4.15. Construction of ateliers begins, June 2010

Chapter 5 continues the journey holding on firmly to the outcomes of the pilot project. New questions are considered subsequent to our new understandings. Attention to developing an arts-integrated approach becomes more of a focus. Chapter 5 will follow the story of the incorporation of the ateliers and how a facilitated concentration on the arts, through a pedagogy of *listening*, brought about joy, acceptance as well as uncertainty.

I look out my rearview mirror and watch that purple flag that waves goodbye as I head toward the Mercier Bridge. So-long for now; Ó:nen (goodbye). My car recognizes the route back over the narrow Mercier road. I am almost relaxed as my tires fit the grooves. With each journey to Kahnawake, I have been slowly removed as being a tourist and I have become a citizen of the Step by Step community. Nia:wen (thank-you) to my partners; Nia:wen to the bridge that transports me each day. The cracks and patches now map my route of research. I have lots to think about as I descend the Mercier for two months. Until Seskeko:wa (September). Seskeko:wa means a time of much freshness…..I look forward to that.

Chapter 5

Phase 2: A Bridge Under Construction. Integrating The Arts
August 2010 – June 2011

The summer months have elapsed and I have been granted some time to reflect on future

directions. Never thought I would say this, but it feels good to be back on the Mercier

Bridge. Same cracked road; same commitment to continue the journey. New crevices

have emerged but they do not stop me from driving to the other side. I am glad that this

bridge needs recurrent consideration. Lines of traffic, flaws in last year's maintenance,

new orange cones alongside and now, only one lane…and yet, no obstacles will disturb

my ride nor the view of autumn ahead. A sea of golden reds appears as I descend the

bridge. The foliage is kind and warm, as if welcoming a return to the study. I can't wait

to see everyone – so much ahead. And now we will have the studios –

Entewate'nikonri:sake. I've practiced that word over and over again. The rhythm of my

tires descending the Mercier sings to a new beat. Entewate'nikonri:sake,

Entewate'nikonri:sake, Entewate'nikonri:sake……Great thoughts will come together.

Opening Remarks

This chapter describes the second phase of the research and reflects a more formal study

of the arts-integrated curriculum at Step by Step Child and Family Center. Built on the previous

year's project, this segment of the study focused more deeply on children's arts experiences in

order to gain a sense of their understandings of Mohawk culture. This phase progressed in

conjunction with the participants' first encounters of the newly built art studios,

Entewate'nikonri:sake. This story of how the research year unfolded is supported by my field

notes, journal reflections, interviews and several focus group meetings.

From late August 2010 until June 2011, I was at Step by Step Child and Family Center

twice a week for five hours a day. The study participants were comprised of myself, Nancy and

Gail (two administrators) and the centre's executive director, Debbie. This time we included the

children in the research and there was a change in the number of teacher participants, from nine

to ten (seven Mohawk and three non-Mohawk). The school culture had shifted with the addition

of a new class, a Mohawk mixed-age immersion class led by Kaweriiostha, a teacher who was

returning to Step by Step Child and Family Center after a two year absence. During those two

years, Kaweriiostha had participated in an intensive Mohawk language immersion/culture course

offered by the community and she was welcomed back to lead this addition to the center. Also,

one Native teacher had left the school and was replaced by a new non-Native teacher. [10]

Purpose of the Inquiry and New Questions

Eisner (2002) reminds us that those who have had intimate connections with the arts (i.e. as

creator, performer or teacher) would acknowledge the unique ways in which thinking and

communicating emerge from their practice. The educational team at Step by Step Child and

Family Center acknowledged the potential of an arts-integrated curriculum and were prepared to

implement one. As a result of the first phase of inquiry, a transformation in teachers' practices

occurred, as they moved away from a topic–or theme-based educational approach to a process-

oriented pedagogy influenced by the principles of Reggio Emilia. Long-term culturally-related

---

[10] In keeping with policy of ethics regarding research with human participants, ethical approval was carried out with all participants accordingly (See Appendix 1 & 2)

projects became the main vehicles for the enrichment of the program for Step by Step's young

students.

The adult participants acknowledged how Reggio Emilia principles and Mohawk values

(i.e. significance of relationships, connections to the natural world and the centrality of the image

of the child) overlapped, and were prepared to advance and deepen their teaching. A paradigm

shift arose out of a pedagogy of listening, whereby the teachers learned to "hear" and attend to

the many voices and perspectives of participants in order to support culture and learning. The

challenge for educators, as Rinaldi (2006) has expressed, was "to create a context in which

children's curiosity, theories and research were [are] legitimated and listened to," (p. 121), a

perspective where the child would be respected and introduced to new theories, concepts,

environments, languages and materials as prolific working tools. For these reasons, the emphasis

during this second phase was on teachers supporting children`s investigations of culturally

related projects through the arts. The educators would offer various arts-based resources to help

the children develop their own processes of inquiry and facilitate their integration of thought,

emotion, imagery and movement. Research has identified the arts as critical for children's

learning in all domains (e.g. physical, social, emotional, aesthetic, language, cognitive) (Snyder,

2001). In the development and construction of the studios, we strove to create a space where the

children could experience the language of art and share the pleasure of creating with their peers

and teachers.

At all times in our study, we sought to merge culture and learning within an arts-based

approach. How could those foundations work fluidly together? The research questions for this

phase became: What role would the atelier play in developing Mohawk culture in early

childhood education? How could the atelier also become "…a place of research where

imagination, rigour, experiment, creativity and expression would interweave and complete each other" (Vecchi, 2010, p. 35)? Would the offering of art as a mode in which to express ideas expand the children's cultural experiences? If so, how?

Changing Roles

As the study changed, so did my role in order to suit the needs and context of the inquiry. Nancy and Gail felt that educators would benefit from my taking on the role of coach (through direct modelling) so that I might help them adjust to the new environments (ateliers) and develop different ways of thinking about practice in the studios. My bi-weekly visits occurred mostly during class time where I worked in the studios with the teachers and small groups of children. After the sessions, time was also allotted for short teacher meetings to reflect, discuss and plan for follow-up.

As researcher, I strove to be "grounded in the empirical world of the other" (Madison, 2005, p.32). Based on my familiarity with the Reggio Emilia approach, it would have been easy for me to suggest how teachers' inquiries might unfold, yet I had to move beyond my subjective self (Madison, 2005). I followed the lead of the administrators. They were responsive to the challenges of change and kept aware of an appropriate pace that would offer time for educators to grow into their new environments and roles. Our conversations during planning meetings in August were important precursors to action. We engaged in two-way conversations, reciprocal listening times that added to our growing relationship. A pedagogy of listening extended our views in that we offered and accounted for each other's personal perspectives as we collaborated on the study.

As an active participant in the studios, I gained insight into the teachers' and children's interpretations of cultural topics during project investigations. I had the opportunity to work

closely with the participants to facilitate and guide in the construction of a project and how to

build on ideas (Vecchi, 1998). I observed thoughtfully and actively worked with children during

atelier experiences and at the same time I was also supporting teachers in their practice. This

involved role allowed me to gain emic perspectives as we were all profoundly engaged in the

encounters.

 Tools for Methodology

My field notes and journal reflections kept me focused during the process of gathering

data. My notes reported on daily experiences, and at times revealed my questions and doubts

along the way, but these anxieties, as Hertz (1997) indicates, are to be anticipated in qualitative

research. I worked to carefully monitor the flow of our study when considering times for focus

group sessions and interviews, and created intervals to address study developments by setting

meetings for review with the teachers. My timetable was as follows:

Focus Group Sessions	Interviews with Teachers	Interviews with Administrators
Oct. 28, 2010	March 16, 2011	June 24, 2011
Nov. 26, 2010	April 2 & 3, 2011	August 16, 2011
Feb. 23, 2011 Photo Documentation	May 24, 2011	
Feb. 28, 2011 Photo Documentation	June 23 & 24, 2011	
	August 16, 2011	

Figure 5. Schedule of Phase 2 focus group sessions and interviews

The interviews that were held in June and August focused on the objectives of reflection and planning for the following year. Nine out of eleven teachers participated in the interviews, and I interviewed some teachers twice at different intervals in the study.

The demanding undertaking of reading, reviewing, and transcribing interviews and focus group recordings allowed me to explore important conversations regarding culture and identity. Geertz (1973) reminds us that it is an ethnographer's responsibility to search and understand the semiotics of a culture in order to proceed in analysis. My detailed field notes provided thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973), allowing me to gain insights into Mohawk values and customs.

In view of my active role as model and coach during this phase, it was also important for me to document in an ongoing fashion, my own experiences and reactions. Such notations supported my observations and the research process in an important period of the study (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995). I was also experiencing the impact of the ateliers by interacting with the teachers and the children, and my own reflections broadened the data.

During my many sessions of in-depth data analysis, I memoed the repetitions and patterns from conversations and assigned these data sets the following themes: *Learning through Experience*, *Communicating through the Ateliers* and *Culturing Curriculum.* How the themes emerged and the rules I developed for their inclusion (Butler-Kisber, 2010) will be discussed in Chapter 7.

The Pedagogy of Entewate'nikonri:sake

The studios, named Entewate'nikonri:sake (a place where great thoughts will come together), were welcomed by all of us at Step by Step Child and Family Center. Exploring a curricular project approach during Phase One had allowed the teachers and children to work in small groups during their investigations. The teachers had expressed the benefits of small group

work and also, the challenges in scheduling and dealing with classroom noise. Often they had to

locate "private places" in the school, outside the classroom. During the second phase we hoped

to develop Entewate'nikonri:sake into a place that would facilitate the depth and breadth of

project work: a special place for children to feel at ease to hypothesize, explore and create

through integration of the arts.

The concept of having a studio as a workplace is suggested by the Reggio Emilia

approach (Gandini, 1997). The Reggio studios, or 'ateliers' as they are titled, are led by an

atelierista, a teacher with an arts background who works in partnership with classroom teachers

and children. My modeling and coaching role shouldered that practice and supported methods of

participatory action research. Characteristic of the Reggio ateliers is a belief in the "...use of

visual language as a construction of thoughts and feelings within a holistic education and [the

fact] that the atelier becomes a cultural vehicle for teacher development" (Vecchi, 1998, p.139).

Visual language would be the written and photo documentation of project work. It was with this

provocation that we moved ahead in research to explore the hundred languages of children,

Mohawk culture, and the development of teachers' skills.

The pedagogy of Entewate'nikonri:sake took on many meanings. On the one hand it was

defined as a physical space for children that engendered thought and artistic expression, away

from the "busyness" of the classroom. The studios at Step by Step Child and Family Center

were arranged with care, and supplied with c.d. players, cultural artifacts and a generous amount

of art materials. Fresh paint brushes, categorized by size, were placed in glass jars or transparent

tubes. Small clear jars of paint were grouped by shades and placed on low shelves for children

to access. Small tables were arranged diagonally between large windows so children would be

provided with light and could have a clear view of the outdoors. The teachers included

important symbols of Mohawk culture as part of the studios' décor: a dream catcher; a kastowah

(male headdress); natural items such as pine cones and twigs placed in baskets; jars of shells or

stones; a sculpture of a turtle or bear. (See Figs. 5.2.1, 5.2.2, 5.2.3, 5.2.4)

Figure 5.1. Beginning photos of the studios at Step By Step Child and Family Center.

Figure 5.1.1. The turtle lines the windows of the atelier

Figure 5.1.2. Kastowahs, natural items and native prints in upper shelving

Figure 5.1.3. Native dream catcher hangs in the atelier window

Teacher's aesthetic consideration augmented the pedagogy of Entewate'nikonri:sake. The

studios were meant to be a space for practicing the arts and sensitizing perspectives; a place to

develop children's research and teachers' investigations. Entewate'nikonri:sake would "bring

great thoughts together." The teachers and I made resources available to the children to promote

their observation, exploration, hypothesizing, analyzing and creating. The construction of the

studios motivated the educators, and gave them confidence to move ahead in their intentions of transformation of practice:

> The studios are not complete but the teachers and children are excited and anxious to enter. Since construction is still occurring, some teachers are asking children to guess what is going on; others have told them about a special art room they will have soon. They are all busy talking about the noise and construction. Following through after our group discussions, teachers are collecting materials and arranging them with care. Several teachers have brought in cultural artefacts from home to add to the classroom and eventually to the studio environments. It feels like they are making a home for learning. The workers outside have noticed the interest! The builders at Monique's and Roseanne's studio have left a little window, inviting the children to observe and witness the final touches before the dividing wall goes down. Monique shared with me the children's drawings and messages to the builders, encouraging the workers to move ahead or simply to enjoy some of their drawings and sketches. Monique's class baked cookies for their construction workers; after all, they would get hungry. The relationships stretch beyond the walls of this school… (Journal, Sept. 9, 2010)

Vecchi (2010) identifies that young children in school are frequently asked to "produce" in "hurried actions" and in "short periods of time" (p. 31) often resulting in ineffective quality of relationships between teachers and students and experiences of very little meaning. One of our major objectives was to consider the ateliers as a space for educators and children alike, whereby each would have opportunities to develop skills over extended periods of time. With that allowance, relationships developed and so did the pedagogy of Entewate'nikonri:sake. The attention to relationships was a significant way of approaching topics through a world of art and

it additionally implied acts of attention and care toward the work that was to be carried out in the studios.

Entering Entewate'nikonri:sake: The research moves forward

Several meetings with Nancy and Gail prefaced my routine visits at Step by Step Child and Family Center. As a result of our mutual appreciation of the principles of Reggio Emilia, we began the research with faith in the environment as the "third teacher."[11] By mid-August our work had begun:

The ateliers are almost complete but won't be ready for the first months of school. Nancy and Gail feel that the classroom ateliers can be arranged and I could begin my modeling and mentoring practice within the first weeks. Although there has been some delay in construction the excitement is ever-present. Nancy has asked me to generate a list of suggested materials for the in-class ateliers – to begin thinking of the environment as a space with resources in support of prolonged art experiences. Gail exclaimed that each stage of the outdoor construction gets us even more excited about the development of beautiful indoor spaces for our children. (Journal, August 26, 2010)

My early discussions with the administrators focused on envisioning children's learning in an inspiring environment that would offer a variety of materials for children to test their theories and develop their cultural understandings. We noted that teachers would need support in their implementation of the pedagogy of Entewate'nikonri:sake: guidance in developing skills

---

[11] Loris Malaguzzi, orchestrator of the Reggio Emilia approach, believed that the child has three teachers: adults, other children and the physical environment. Considering the environment as third teacher – as a communicator and shaper of values – encourages a new approach to classroom practice. Environments are thoughtfully arranged to be beautiful, organized, equipped with materials for wonder and discovery where children can be provoked, encouraged, respected and listened to as they spend their day in school.

and confidence in facilitating this kind of learning with young children. Here again, my role would have to change. I would support the educators by modeling how one could promote the exploration of different art forms and mediums while encouraging arts experiences during culturally-related projects. This arrangement was intended to support teachers as they developed their skills in empowering the children to make their learning visible through the various "languages" of sculpting, storytelling, singing, dancing, collaging, painting and sketching.

Our research also led us to the philosophies and work of Ann Pelo (2007), an American mentor teacher, who was also influenced by the pre-schools and ateliers of Reggio Emilia, but who felt uncertain about how to bring theory to praxis: "In all these resources, however, we have not found any concrete guidance about 'how to do' the work we feel called to do" (Pelo, 2007, p.2). Nancy, Gail and I read Pelo's (2007) book, *The Language of Art.* We connected with her focus on building inquiry whereby children would first develop relationships with art media and after time, use art media to communicate ideas, experiences or emotions.

We held back on presenting too much too soon to the teachers. We reminded each other that studio experiences had to unfold one step at a time, allowing for surprises and new questions. We appreciated Pelo's (2007) thoughtfulness of building relationships with art media over phases and focused on learning to first speak the language of art (e.g. line, shape, colour, form, texture) as it would serve as a foundation for later exploration. Therefore, our first encounters in Entewate'nikonri:sake would begin with introducing visual art media and concepts. Children would have the opportunity to enjoy and explore the physical qualities of a particular medium over time:

> …and see how it [art medium] feels in our hands, how it moves across the paper; holds
>
> its shape. We experiment with tools and with techniques. Through many encounters and

engaged exploration, we can become comfortable with the art medium. We begin to

think in terms of color, texture, movement and sculptural image. We can claim the

language of art as our own. (Pelo, 2007, p.7)

Nancy, Gail and I were attracted to Pelo's thinking as it focused on addressing children's

questions and theories and the teacher's ability to plan in conjunction with professional

observations. Pelo (2006) explains: "When we put inquiry at the heart of our programs we

organize our curriculum for children and for teachers around observations, study and responsive

planning" (p. 50). Bringing forward the image of the child, our objective was to support

children's dispositions to be learners—to embrace new questions, collaborate with others and

challenge their own ideas. We appreciated Pelo's belief in a "culture of inquiry" (2006, p. 50)

that would maintain practices of inquiry with young children. Pelo describes such an approach:

> To grow a culture of inquiry, we need professional development rooted in inquiry, aimed
>
> at fostering the values and growing the dispositions and skills of researchers: curiosity;
>
> willingness to linger with questions; commitment to constructing knowledge with others
>
> through dialogue, disagreement, and challenge; and, attentive observation. When we put
>
> inquiry at the heart of our programs, we organize our curriculum for children and for
>
> teachers around observation, study, and responsive planning. (p. 50)

Nancy, Gail and I built on Pelo's beliefs in observation and reflection, and created our own

'Cycle of Inquiry.'

A Cycle of Inquiry

Jeanne Goldhaber of the Children's Campus Center at the University of Vermont (Gandini,

Hill, Cadwell & Schwall , 2005) created a cycle of inquiry that supported educators in following

a cycle of learning that relied on an emergent curriculum. Children's experiences are recorded

and identified as "…cycles of hypothesis, experiments and conclusions or cycles of experience, reflection and expression" (Gandini et al., 2005, p. 190). Each undertaking along the process of inquiry is built on the previous step thereby allowing learning to follow a continuum or a spiral-like progression.

Gail, Nancy and I created our own Cycle of Inquiry before the school session began. After reading Pelo`s (2007) text and after several discussions of how we envisioned teachers and children`s roles during various stages of project work we brought our learning forward (Strong-Wilson, 2008) to create a visual representation of the framework (See Fig. 5.2). This cycle was specifically intended to connect to arts and project experiences occurring in the ateliers.
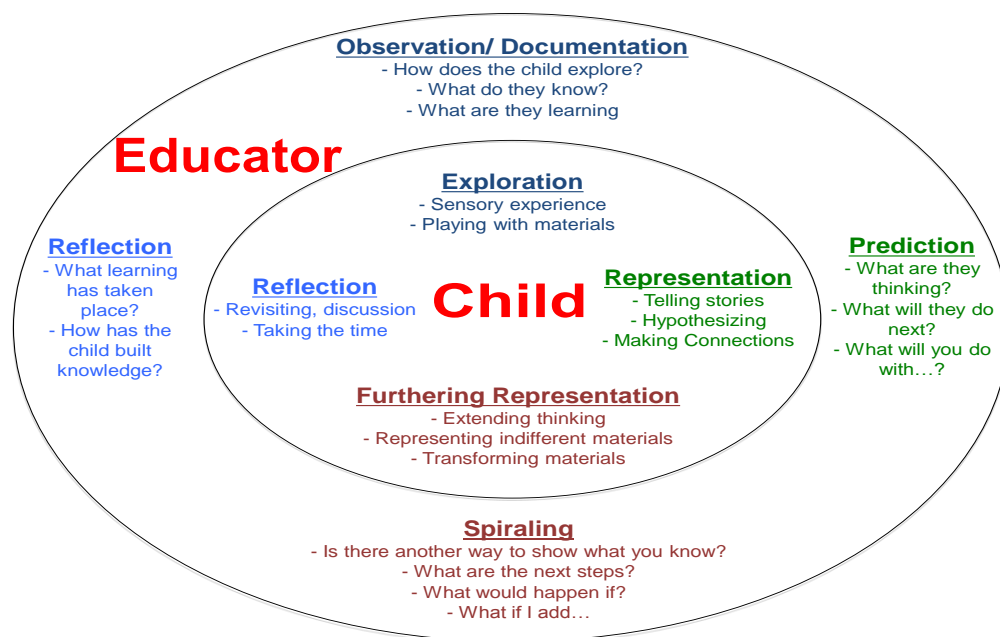
Figure 5.2. Step by Step's Cycle of Inquiry

Our Cycle of Inquiry focused on the learner and not on the topics that might be covered by the curriculum. The cycle situated educators alongside the children, observing and listening carefully to their questions, theories and experiences. The visual framework was intended to be used as a resource throughout this phase of study.

The beginning stage for the child was "Exploration" whereby he/she was allowed time and space to explore and interact with new materials or media. At that stage, the teacher acted as "Observer," and had the opportunity to document the children's first encounters with the art medium and reflect on the child's first experiences. Extended time was offered and considered essential, so that the child had the opportunity to explore at his/her own pace. The teacher later began to "Predict" and consider the child's "Representation" as she followed her student along the cycle and supported inquiry by offering various additions to the media (e.g. finger painting first; then finger painting with thick finger paint, then diluted finger paint; then adding sand to the paint and finger painting again; and then painting a scene with choices of the created finger paints). When ready, the child was encouraged to tell stories, hypothesize; to make connections from their first experiences toward "Representation." The teacher revisited the experience with the child (or small group of children), and continued their written and photographic documentation when observing and listening to the child. Photos, videos and transcriptions of conversations were produced at important stages of the cycle.

The child, who had gained familiarity with the material, could then consider representing their ideas with the support of teacher scaffolding. "Further representations" (i.e. product) followed as teacher's "spiraling" occurred. Children were encouraged to extend their thinking with assistance from the teacher, who would present open-ended questions to elicit further representation of their ideas. And, as a project came to a close, the child was asked to "reflect" on what had occurred, summarizing the process. What knowledge was built through this cycle? The teacher also "reflected" on the unfolding of the child's inquiry with support from documentation that had been carefully maintained along the way. At this stage, the cycle came

full circle. The project might come to an end or lead to further inquiry, perhaps through an

offshoot of the original topic, allowing the cycle to begin again.

The result of our efforts in designing a Cycle of Inquiry tailored to Step by Step Child and

Family Center affirmed a paradigm shift was occurring in the centre. My continual dialogue

with the two administrators kept us on track and illuminated their movement away from a theme-

based curricular approach (with add-ons of cultural topics) towards a project approach *involving*

cultural values. Our understandings were grounded in a constructivist theory of how children

learn (Dewey, 1969; Piaget, 1966; Vygotsky, 1978) and affirmed our belief that young children

are capable of constructing knowledge for themselves, both individually and socially.

Teachers First

Start-up week at Step by Step Child and Family Center was met with excitement and

activity, as the final stages of the construction of the ateliers progressed. We first introduced The

Cycle of Inquiry at the end of the initial professional days as Nancy, Gail and I wanted teachers

to have experiences similar to the ones that their young students would eventually encounter in

their ateliers. During four pedagogical days before the children arrived, I brought the teachers

and their classroom teams together and introduced them to the notion of simply exploring

materials. Nancy, Gail and I arranged the centres and related materials in the gym. We provided

teachers with several handouts of articles or chapters from books that discussed the use of each

of our selected resources. After they read the related texts, they were invited into the gym (at

their leisure during the pedagogical days) to discover and play with a variety of materials that

were set at individual centers. Below is the invitation that teachers received:

> **Task:** Explore and play with the materials. You can do this at times alone, in pairs and
>
> especially as a team. Discover something new! Perhaps a new way of playing, creating,

collaborating; a new fact about the material; a new talent you never knew you or a team mate had; try not to play the same old way!

Process: Each team will take at least ½ hour (feel free to take as much time as you want) in at least 5 centres throughout the week (Monday to Thursday). You will need to bring your class camera with in order to take pictures. At each centre one of your team members will be designated as an observer/recorder. Make sure everyone gets a turn in this role. Each observer will take note of the following and write down your observations:

- How are individuals playing with the materials?

- How does the play/exploration develop over time?

- How does group play evolve?

- Record a bit of dialogue.

- What is the atmosphere?

- How many times does someone say, "What if we…?" and what happens afterward?

- Take a few pictures.

The centers included the following:

1. <u>CLAY CENTRE:</u> Blocks of clay; pencils, wire; rolling pins, stones, feathers, toy cars, mats, carving tools.

2. <u>PAINT CENTRE:</u> Butcher paper hung on the wall; black and white paint, paint brushes of various sizes and lengths, cushions for sitting, an easel, masking tape, large paper.

3. <u>BLOCK CENTRE:</u> wood blocks of all sizes; paper and pencils; mirrors, a chair, masking tape.

4. <u>LIGHT CENTRE:</u> Overhead Projector on trolley with wheels; baskets of objects (doilies, keys, combs, string, twigs, pine cones, colored blocks, coloured transparent paper), paper and pencils, clipboards.

5. <u>PAPER CENTRE:</u> Large rolls of paper, cushions, umbrellas, tape, string, flashlights.

6. <u>FINGER PAINT CENTRE:</u> Pots of finger paint; finger paint paper, CDs with a variety of music (classical, native, folk, rock…)

7. <u>MUSIC CENTRE:</u> Instrument trolley; variety of instruments, ribbon, crepe paper, scarves, paper and markers.

During those four days, the teaching teams engaged with and entered into the pedagogy of Entewate'nikonri:sake. (See Figs. 5.3)

Figure 5.3. Step by Step Educators during start-up week (August 2010).

Figure 5.3.1. Teacher observing and documenting colleague's experience.

Figure 5.3.2. Teacher explores the medium of clay:

After four days of "play" we all met to debrief and informally discuss the experiences of start-up week. Below are excerpts from our conversation that unexpectedly hinted elements from the Cycle of Inquiry that were about to be presented:

> Sheryl: Was there any area that impacted your thinking when you worked with the different materials at the mini-ateliers?

> Stephanie (teacher): Right from the beginning we observed and used the materials with intentions. We examined what we had and we used our hands and our minds to create. I really took my time to work with the materials.

> Roseanne (teacher): Well we were working all together. And even if we weren't working on the same thing – our team was close by working too. The observer had to watch everyone…

> Monique (teacher): I think it was good to go as a class team. We experienced the centres together. I liked the simplicity of the materials. And we had no directions or instructions as to what to make. The open-ended atmosphere made as very comfortable; comfortable to create.

> Rebecca (teacher): We also had fun. There were no models to copy or re-create. Kids would like that…

> Stephanie (teacher): We also concentrated on observation; just observing the exploration and the strategic planning some of our team followed. They studied and adjusted what they were doing along the way. Observing was a good idea. We should be doing more of the same with the children. I did it last year, documenting that is, but I have to watch more when they are working and take notes…

Stephanie (teacher): I think we experimented with every material –and even if we didn't

say it out loud, we were asking ourselves questions about what we could do next.

(Field notes, Sept. 3, 2010)

This reflective discussion sensitized teachers to "their" elements of the Cycle of Inquiry (i.e. observing, documenting, inquiry, planning, reflecting) and to the characteristics of the child's experiences: Having unhurried time, open-ended sensory exploration, telling stories, working in small groups, representing, reflecting and revisiting. What's more, the teachers acknowledged the significance of their observations and reflections; these expectations would help to solidify their practice in scaffolding children's inquiry during investigations.

Our intentions over the course of implementing the "teachers first" stage was to generate an understanding of the Cycle of Inquiry and to provoke teachers' thoughts regarding their guidance of children's experiences in the ateliers. Attention to the way they could work with children in the studios might encourage them to develop their practice in supporting children's exploration and conversations with their peers. Some teachers underscored the importance of organizing rich yet simple materials as they noticed the impact from their own experiences. Observing, commenting and recording were acknowledged as important practices for understanding how children would hypothesize, wonder and make sense of their involvements.

This introductory experience was important for providing context for teacher reflection. Since the studios were not complete, mini-ateliers were arranged in the classrooms (See Figs. 5.4) so teachers could initiate projects "in the spirit of the children," the mindset of Entewate'nikonri:sake. It was at this time that we formally introduced the Cycle of Inquiry to the teachers.

Figure 5.4. Mini-ateliers arranged in the classrooms

Figure 5.4.1. Mini-ateliers in the class

During presentation of the visual diagram of the cycle at a full staff meeting, I reviewed how the circles run simultaneously, representing teachers' and children's mutual journey of learning. A progression along the cycle would permit movement back and forth for reflection and revisiting. The flow of discovery would move clockwise to monitor the process of classroom investigations. Teachers would further their role of observing, listening and documenting by tracking children's work and thinking, using notes and photos. As projects unfolded, teachers could find themselves hypothesizing about children's theories and developing inquiries and activities in order to plan next steps.

The teachers, as Pelo (2007) explains, had to see themselves in both "…receptive and active roles" (p. 108). At times, teachers would be documenting and at other times they would offer experiences, conversation and materials that would take the child's media thinking forward (including art media). How we presented the Cycle of Inquiry proved to be important. At the time, I saw it as a useful instrument for the teachers. With reflection, however, I consider it to be more than that: The Cycle of Inquiry gave us a common language to support our journeys in the studios. Implementing the framework was challenging as teachers were in the process of renovating their environments and their curriculum. I acknowledged the challenges and hoped coaching in the studios would allow the educators to move slowly into praxis. In the end, however, it was up to them to bring who they were to the Cycle of Inquiry and to the studios. The Cycle of Inquiry process was not only about integrating arts into a cultural curriculum. The strategy was also not meant to add work to teacher's plates. It was about the relationships of children, teachers, their experiences, materials and the environment in the context of Mohawk culture.

The school year was about to begin and I reflected on my research questions. Would the studios develop into "…a place of research where imagination, rigour, experiment, creativity and expression would interweave and complete each other" (Vecchi, 2010, p. 35) and also attend to the goals of early childhood education in the context of developing of Mohawk identity? Would the offering of art as an expression of ideas expand the children's cultural experiences? At the time, I felt that in tandem with the production and action of Entewate'nikonri:sake, I too was finding my place. I was discovering a renewed sense of self amongst developing relationships as I supported the teachers' construction of new thinking. All along, I was encouraged by Pelo's (2007) vision, "Art becomes a verb and studio becomes a way of being rather than a specific place" (p. 2). At that moment, I felt that I had joined the Step of Step community as they journeyed into new places – places we had never been before.

Materials, Relationships and the Language of Art

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, I felt it critical to pay due attention to the pace of entry of this Cycle of Inquiry for both the teachers and the students. From September to January 2011, our objective was for the teachers and children to build a 'language of art' through the open-ended exploration of a variety of art materials and media. We hoped that we all would get to know the art resources better by working collectively, and that our documentation of the interactions between the child and the teacher would support planning for future stages to extend children's learning. Upholding the image of the child, as central to all experiences, would encourage teacher practice in a movement away from the more traditional role of manager and illuminate the potential of an emergent curriculum. An emergent curriculum (Dewey, 1969; Piaget, 1966; Vygotsky, 1995) develops from the child's initiative to actively participate in learning in the classroom and is driven by their creation of learning 'projects'. Teachers still

plan for learning activities, but make room for flexibility in how they are implemented. As

facilitator, the teacher is responsive to the child, actively listening to promote his/her voice to be

heard and his/her right to lead the learning. Teachers learn to welcome unexpected directions in

the learning process. Such pedagogy aims to foster methods of interaction, conversation and the

shared construction of knowledge between teacher and child that responds to children's

immediate interests and ideas (Gandini, 2008). These encounters with children provide

opportunities for a rich foundation to cultural project investigations following the Cycle of

Inquiry.

> Ball and Pence (2000) remind us:
>
> When a 'one size fits all' approach is taken to training, all too often the result is a
>
> homogenizing, mono-cultural, colonizing approach to caring for children in ways that are
>
> inappropriate to the social ecologies of which children may be a part. (p. 3)

As I have previously mentioned, during the research process I made an effort to be mindful of

my 'outsider' position. I reflected often on the need to be attentive to Mohawk cultural values

such as supporting connections to Mother Earth when in discussion about the natural world, and

to the individuals who worked in the studios. Co-developing guidelines with the administrators

settled some of my anxieties about maintaining cultural awareness. Additionally, the study's

emphasis on integrating the arts as a language *for* culture, underscored our collective recognition

that the arts could offer young children flexible, meaningful ways of knowing about themselves,

others and their perspective on the world (Edwards, 1998; Wright, 2003). Our first exploration

in the studios focused on experiences with clay; a fitting natural item to begin Phase Two of

study.

Clay and Children Meet

Our use of clay extended over months of research, and was re-visited as a vital art medium later on in the school year during project explorations. Our first steps in working with the clay emphasized a manipulation of the material. Pelo (2007) addresses these beginning stages as "understanding [clay's] identity" (p.59). The notion of 'culture' resonated not only with the new media about to be explored (i.e. clay being natural product of the earth) but also with the objectives of this study; seamless integration of Mohawk culture within daily life at school. Culture and the integration of Mohawk language persisted at the heart of all experiences and needed to remain throughout all encounters. Kenneth Deer, Mohawk leader and Chief Administrative Officer of the Canada-based organization Indigenous World Association, addressed this critical educational principle when he spoke at the Human Rights Council in Geneva, Switzerland. This was shared with me by Debbie Delisle-Giasson, the executive director of Step by Step Child and Family Center:

> So when we talk about culture and language in our education, it should be reversed to
>
> read: education in our culture and language. In order to preserve our well-being and our
>
> identity, our education must be in our culture and language. (Deer, 2011)

 I held on to this message as a guiding reminder of the essence of experiences about to occur. What's more, we were beginning with clay, "a material fundamental to the human species" (Clemens, 1991, p. 23) as a natural by-product of Mother Earth. "Mohawk values are rooted in their acceptance of being caretakers of Mother Earth" (Porter, 2008, p.28). At Step by Step, giving gratitude for Mother Earth's gifts is discussed daily, beginning in the morning with children's recitation of the Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwen, a thanksgiving address. The fact that clay

is derived from the earth, primitive, natural, and significant to the land, held great meaning as the first art medium to be explored.

In the studio, I would meet a small group of children (usually three or four) with their teacher and we would begin to "play," to get to know the properties of clay. We highlighted and modeled the language of art for the teachers, emphasizing the medium's technique vocabulary (e.g. pulling, squeezing, rolling, coiling). Kolbe (2001) maintains that clay work also allows children to acquire "a language of the hands" (p. 22). Eventually the children would learn proper names for the medium's tools and any other materials we would add. My first sessions were important as I focused on listening to the children and the teachers:

Sheryl: How do you like my big block of clay? (The 3 year old children just stared at the big block of gray clay. I begin to rub my hands across the block and then I start to pound).

K (child): What is that?

Sheryl: This is clay, a huge block of clay. I am so glad you came to join me. Clay, meet the children; children, meet my block of clay. (I put my ear to the clay).What? You want the children to rub you and feel you? Really? You won't get hurt clay – I think they'll be gentle. It may tickle (The children listen and show their curiosity by coming a little closer. Their teacher joins and sits down next to the clay on the other side of the table. She rubs the clay and moves both hands across the block.)

Teacher: Wow, this is fun. Such a big block of clay.

K (child): Can I try?

J (child): Me too?

Sheryl: Please yes, come feel the clay.

J (child): (He places his hand on top of the block and leaves it there) It's cold. It's wet.

K (child): (He slides his hands across, back and forth) It's cold and I can slip my hand all over.

Sheryl: This is such a big block. I can press down real hard and make a print, watch. (I push my fist into the clay and grunt. The children laugh and follow through – grunt and all.)

K (child): It's soooo hard. I can push it right in. (K pushes his fist into the side of the block).

J (child): (He places his hands at both ends of the rectangular block). I gonna lift it. Oooo too heavy.

Sheryl: I'll try to lift it…You're right I can't lift it. But I can pull off a piece and play with it. (I pull off a piece and show them). I can squeeze it now because it's a small piece. Squeeze, squeeze.

J (child): Is it playdough?

Sheryl: No, this is clay; it comes from the earth; way down deep in Mother Earth. Would you like to try to pull and squeeze?

Teacher: I will. (And she does. K and J follow and giggle as they pull off a piece. The children soon start to pull off several pieces, squeezing each piece flat and then piling it on the place mat. They repeat the exercise several times). Look what I can make, I can make a bowl. What can you make?

K (child): We'll take the whole brick apart. I can make a transformer. (He continues to be

    interested in simply pulling off pieces and squeezing them flat.)

J (child): Yeah. (J pulls off pieces but starts to roll the pieces of clay into balls. He lines

    them up).

Teacher: I like to make things. Look, I put a handle on my bowl. Can you make

    something from your clay pieces? A snowman? (The children continue to tug at

    the block of clay and pull off pieces. They then pile their pieces on the table, one

    on top of the other.)

Sheryl: You first pulled the pieces of clay, then you piled and pressed them down, now

    you are rolling. Wow, you can do a lot with clay. How do you know how to roll

  them like that?

J (child): It's easy. I do that with play dough.

Sheryl: Do you think clay is like play dough?

J (child): No, we have blue play dough in class.

Sheryl: But you know how to roll and pull and squeeze clay; can you do that with play

    dough too?

J (child): I even know how to squish, see. (He starts to "squish" the rolled balls. In the

    meantime K. has rolled our several balls of clay and has placed them one on top of

    the other).

Teacher: What are you going to make? You can make a snowman with all those balls.

(Field note, Sept.23, 2010)

This first session in the three-year old class went on playfully for twenty minutes. While the

intention was to allow the children to manipulate the clay freely, the teacher repeated, several

times, "What are you going to make?" I listened carefully to the children, who communicated

their delight in the open-ended experience; however the teacher focused more on product ("What

are you going to make" and "Look what I made") and not on the process of exploring. This

happened with many of the teachers and became an area of communication that needed to be

addressed:

> This week was a busy one as all the classes are well into their exploration of clay.
>
> After a couple of weeks of just playing with the material and using the language
>
> of art (squeezing, poking, pinching), we are exploring with water and clay. The
>
> children are not fearful and are enjoying the sensory experience. I have had the
>
> chance to speak to four teachers about their conversations with children. I have
>
> been very straight-forward in suggesting that "What are you going to make" be
>
> removed from their discussions at this point in time. Right now it is about
>
> developing the language and the skills of using the media. It is challenging for
>
> some (at times for myself as well) but the focus is on extending
>
> experiences…moving away from a rush to produce … It is a habit all teachers
>
> need to break…it takes time to allow for time. (Journal, Oct. 15, 2010)

 After several weeks of clay workshops with groups of children and the teachers, our technical

vocabulary was developing (e.g. rolling, pinching, pushing, stacking, pressing), and the teachers

did begin to show growth in focusing on the manipulation of the medium and rethinking how

they communicated with the children about their experiences. Vocabulary was important: a

common language to use and retrieve when needed in the future when artifacts would be created

to represent children's ideas or understandings. Some classes posted words about activities with

accompanying photos of the children engaged in their art and new vocabulary. Some teachers

added Mohawk translations to the words and photos of children working, and Mohawk spoken

language was often implemented during their sessions. (See Figs. 5.5).

Figure 5.5. Clay vocabulary posted

Figure 5.5.1 Child "reading" his clay vocabulary

These months of studio experiences were occupied by our building a relationship with clay. The new ateliers provided quiet workspaces, and the children were eager and happy to enter them. One four-year old child called me the "Clay Lady." When I entered the classroom, she would announce, "Clay Lady is here." Most of the teachers became better at "holding back" on asking product-driven questions like "What are going to make?" and took part more in the discovery and play occurring during the open-ended art experiences. After developing a common language for manipulating the clay, the teachers and I offered children opportunities to change the clay's texture by adding water. The children immersed themselves in this sensory exploration as they researched the water's impact on the clay: They used tools such as plastic knives, authentic clay carving tools, Popsicle sticks, chopsticks and natural items such as twigs, feathers, pine cones and stones (see Fig. 5.6).   With every encounter, the children's relationship with the material deepened:

Figure 5.6. Child exploring texture in clay using a rolling pine cone (natural items)

My field notes from these sessions repetitively underscored the impact of "contact," when the

children "met clay," and reflected how the teachers were developing their skills along a cycle of

inquiry:

> The children had immediate contact with the material…Each child pulled the clay balls
>
> out, touched them, squeezed them and then they began pulling off chunks to manipulate.
>
> *Squeezing, pinching, poking* were independently repeated by the children R. (child) said
>
> he could make holes as deep as he could by poking. He told me he would roll first (and
>
> he did so; first on the table then between his palms). Then he related that could poke and
>
> pinch the holes closed. The other three children followed R. Representations soon came
>
> about: eggs, various sized balls, snowman, faces, trees, funny noses (and they were tried
>
> on!) When necessary, the teacher and I used verbal prompts only and the techniques were
>
> carried out with ease. There was constant manipulation; pulling, flattening, poking,
>
> pinching, squeezing and piling.   (Field note, Sonia's 3 year old class, Oct. 6, 2010)
>
>
> The children were invited into the atelier to revisit clay. The clay was prepared in square
>
> chunks ready for the children to confront. I. (child) was first to be presented with the
>
> clay. S. (child) first examined the clump in her hands and soon began to pinch, poke,
>
> bend and roll. She enjoyed pulling off small pieces from the main square chunk and then
>
> manipulating small bits of clay.
>
> T. (child) soon joined us and was happy to see the clay once again. She immediately
>
> began squeezing and using many of her previous acquired strategies to work with the
>
> clay….

K. (child) thoroughly enjoyed his clay encounter. He began by rolling out snake-like

pieces and flattening them out. He applied our language of clay (squeeze rolling,

flattening) showing his familiarity. Poking soon became a game. Using both hands, one

finger from each, he rhythmically poked his fingers into a flattened piece of clay. He

repeated: "Poke, poke, poke" and his enjoyment was contagious. The educators and his

friend T. joined in the fun. This poking game lasted for quite a while. (See Fig. 5.7).

Seeing his delight, I asked K. why he was having so much fun. He replied, "Because the

room, it's for clay." (Field note, Melissa's class, revisiting clay; April 20, 2011)

Figure 5.7. The "poking" game

While some of the educators may have been reluctant to engage in the activities at the start of the

clay experiences, they entered into the study with optimism and were open to developing new

ways of thinking. My modeling in the studios supported the teachers and within months, they

felt more at ease presenting clay experiences to their groups of children. Accomplishing this

first, focused art practice provided confidence for us all to move on in developing the language

of art with our next concentration: line and paint.

Can A Line Become Art? Can We Paint Coloured Lines?

Because we engaged with clay at a pace that permitted exploration, we applied this strategy to our next task, learning "line" and "painting." I suggested to Nancy and Gail that, since sketching, drawing and painting might be considerations in upcoming classroom projects, we should develop the language of art in this area as well. Nancy had identified the progress in our first focus group session:

> The teachers talked less and listened more. That's profound. The child was the leader. We sometimes have preconceived notions about how children would learn or use material. We also think we know what children would like. Clay gave them spontaneous timed experiences. (Focus group, Oct. 28, 2010)

We agreed that a continuum in approach would develop practice and be significant to Mohawk ways of understanding. As explained to me by Gail, and repeated during many conversations, "It's how we think. It's all about the relationships and understanding how everything connects" (Informal conversation, August 26, 2010). Battiste (2002) explains that Indigenous ways of knowing suggest that "Knowledge is not what someone possesses and what others do not ...knowledge is not a commodity that can be possessed or controlled….but it is a living process that can be absorbed and understood" (p. 15). Allowing the children to get to know the materials and resources before applying their thoughts to a representation, reflected Mohawk ways of learning and emphasized the kinesthetic process as significant to gaining understanding. Experiential learning is "the first principle of Aboriginal learning" (Battiste, 2002, p. 15) and underscores that, in this study, children learned by "…observing, listening and participating with a minimum of intervention or instruction "(p. 15).

After realizing results in our first endeavours, we began our next project in the ateliers: Promoting learning the language of art by developing a vocabulary for lines. Our explorations began simply:

The children were handed long strips of purple crepe paper and were invited to play with the purple lines. They were eager to get their hands on them! I. (child) stretched her line across the table trying to keep it straight (See Fig. 5.8). D.A. (child) stood and manipulated hers as a dancing line. She stood and stretched out her line with all her might – it tore! She laughed, watched for adults' reactions (which was also laughter) and seeing her action as being accepted, she happily tore her long line into shorter lines, soon falling all around her (See Fig. 5.9).

After the lines of crepe paper became too short to play with, small paper strips (we called colored straight lines) were positioned on the table. J.A., A.T. and D.A. each began examining the small paper lines and soon created designs on the table. We talked about the colors, lengths widths; they labeled them big and small and skinny and chubby thick. Children heard some new vocabulary of straight, thick lines and thin lines. The children were invited to glue their lines onto a white paper. They arranged their line designs independently, enjoying the use of the glue stick tremendously. We practiced sliding the glue stick in line too! (See Fig. 5.10)

Figure 5.8.   I. attempting to create a straight line

Figure 5.9.   D.A. tearing and creating shorter lines

Figure 5.10. Child creating a collage of different straight lines:

C. and L. M. (children) came to the table once there was room. They too spent a long

time gluing on numerous lines on their paper. L. M. applied their own strategy of gluing

only the ends of the paper lines and bending it as she affixed it to her paper. When the

table all reacted to her ability she worked on more "bridges" of lines. She was happy to

peek through and show her work (See Fig. 5.11). C. thought it was a great idea, and

joined in by creating "line-bridge" and also asked to take his picture peeking through (see

5.12).   (Field notes, Stephanie's class, Jan, 26, 2011)
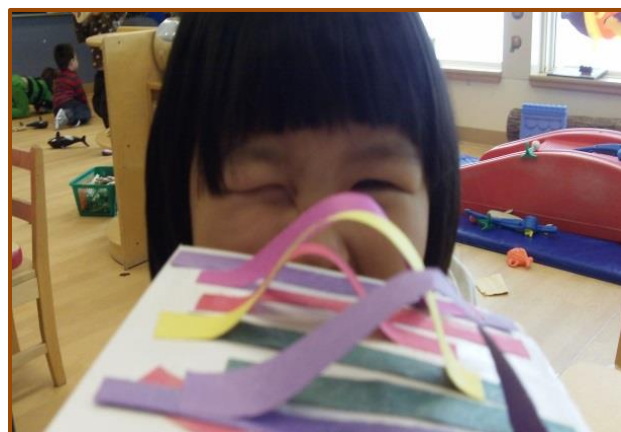
Figure 5.11. Peeking through bridges 1

Figure 5.12. Peeking through bridges 2

Stephanie's group explored line for over a month. They experimented in a variety of ways:

collaging lines, using plasticine to create lines (revisiting "clay" techniques) and constructing

line designs with a variety of classroom "line-like" materials. The children's line exploration

was celebrated in several displays of the children's growing relationships with "line." (See Fig.

5.13)

Figure 5.13. A month of work on 'line'

Each class imitated their exploration by playing with straight paper lines. Since we had the

space in the studios, the children were able to use their environment as they wished to examine

what could be achieved, first through play and then following through with creating more

permanent line designs. (See Group Figs. 5.14).

Figures 5.14. Small groups working in the atelier using various media to explore line

Spontaneous play with lines emphasized children's joy in experimentation. The approaches reflected individual teachers' understanding of the mindset and potential of the atelier; of engaging with a range of 'languages' to encourage exploration, pleasure, and discovery of relationships and of not segregating learning into compartments (Vecchi, 2010). In Roseanne's class:

> The group of children first explored lines by playing with long strips of purple crepe paper. Fafa (music teacher) joined the classroom fun and helped us move our paper lines to the rhythms of her violin. When the music went high, the lines flew high. When the music went low, lines dropped and crawled on the floor. The children were happy to make their lines dance fast and slow–depending on the surprise music Fafa offered. It was an advantage to have Fafa come during our time in the studio. It was spontaneous play with lines. (Field notes, Roseanne's class, Jan. 16, 2011)

Our line vocabulary developed over the month of January and we were soon ready to introduce painting, so as to make associations between painting and lines. Attending to my modeling role in the atelier, I encouraged educators to follow our Cycle of Inquiry. The teachers understood the concept of breaking down stages and not giving in to the immediate gratification of having "one step" hurried art activities to hang up immediately on bulletin boards. Upon reflection, I appreciate how pragmatic we were during these experiences in the ateliers. I noticed teachers' growing flexibility as they provided children's with more time and materials to complete activities. They seemed to be engaged in *listening* and acknowledge that new foundations for learning were being laid. The Cycle of Inquiry assisted in emerging improved practice for the teachers and for the children:

The winter months have been busy in the studios. I look through my field notes and notice I have recently only had to model once for every class. The teachers are quickly picking up on how to break down using new tools as well as delaying jumping right into the practice of painting. I believe they have come around in understanding that when using tools with the children to emphasize and comment on how the tool or medium acts. I`ve observed it. The children are being guided to get to know the power in the tool or material, and in themselves. Interestingly enough, there hasn`t been any evidence of a finished product or representation for months now. The atelier experiences have been all about exploring – nothing has been demanded of the children except developing relationships with the materials. This is amazingly odd. We will soon be diving into projects. The studios are getting messy; they are being used constantly.

(Journal, Feb. 5, 2011)

The ateliers provided space for movement when exploring the art materials, and in fact, many participants decided to work on the floor to allow for greater comfort. The teachers and I gathered the tools: a variety of paint brushes (thick, thin, long short, chubby brushes, flat ends, painter`s brush), a bucket of water, and hand-held blackboards. The goal, once more, was for children to get to know the material before using paint. What would a thin brush do? What would a flat end do? And, with the development of the language of art: Could a paint brush make a line? Can a paint brush make as straight line? What other kinds of a line can a paint brush make? Small groups of children were invited into the studios to meet their new tools. Teachers first observed my interactions with the students and later followed independently to work with

other groups. Below are excerpts from one such practice where I modeled and a teacher (Carina) observed:

Sheryl: Come on in everyone. So happy to have you in the studio today. Look what is here today. I have all these paint brushes.

R (child): Where is the paint?

Sheryl: Well we're not painting right away. Let's get to know the brushes so we can learn how to paint with them – learn what each brush does when we paint. Look at this one, and this one, and this one. Are these brushes all the same?

R (child): No way.

Sheryl: What's not the same? They're all paint brushes.

R. (child): This one – it's bigger than this one.

Sheryl: Yes I see.

C (child): This one, the brush part at the top is flat – and that one is rounder at the top so it's not in a line.

Sheryl: I wonder what these brushes do.

R (child): Look Sheryl, these two are the same. They'll paint the same.

Sheryl: I think you are right. All of these brushes will paint a certain way – a certain kind of line. Look at this one. I wonder what this one will paint.

C. (child): You mean a thick line or a skinny line?

Sheryl: Which one will make a thin skinny line? (They all point to the smallest brush that has the least hair). Let's try it. Each brush will give us

different lines – unless they are the same brush like you said R., I think

we`ll have to try each brush to see what lines they make. Which one

should we start with…let`s see…

(Soon small chalkboards and bowls of water are offered to the children)

Sheryl: Now, I`m pretending the water is paint. I can spread lines across. Do you

think you can spread the water across using this straight-edged brush? I

see you are trying it already I., K. you are doing it too. I`m going to try to

blow this all dry. I`ll blow the line off, watch. (I demonstrate how to

follow the line and blow it dry. They all try it and giggle.) Good. Well

will you look at this? Even though the lines are dry I can still see my lines

– hmmmm.

R. (child):   I can still see mine too. (All follow and say, "Me too.")

Sheryl: Wow, we can really see what that straight brush does. Do you think we

 should try another brush? Now, which one? (They select the chubby

round brushes.) Do I have 4 the same? I think I do…

R. (child):   I am using two skinny lines.

Sheryl: I like that idea. I think I will try it too.

C. (child):   When I use the two brushes I get some lines. Skinny one lines. It is a life

boat. When I brush over two, the water comes back.

Sheryl: Why do you think that is happening?

C. (child):   I put too much water.

Sheryl: You may have. But if you spread it you can make something appear. (I

spread my water around.)

R. (child):   Your lines turn into pictures. Look at the hill of water. It's funny.

C. (child):   It is funny.

Sheryl: Sometimes I use a skinny brush like a pencil. I feel like I could draw

                something with a skinny brush. Look when I spread the water and draw.

I. (child):   It looks like a flower to me. I like to draw with skinny lines.

Sheryl: I see you made lines all over. (It appears to have the design of a woven

                mat). How did you do that?

I. (child):   I just kept drawing lines, back and forth but not spreading water. I like it

                with straight lines (See Figs. 5.15)

Sheryl: I do too. My lines now look like balloons on ladders.

R. (child):   Mine lines looks like my grandma on a boat! (Everyone laughs).

                (The children then start selecting various brushes to try as they seem well

                acquainted with the process of trying the brushes.)

R. (child):   Look, my grandma disappeared off the boat.

Sheryl: What happened?

R (child):   She dried all up! (Everyone laughs.)

C (child):   I have two grandmas. I could paint them…

                (Later on we added the paint blocks)

                        (Field note (taped conversation), Carina`s class, Feb.20, 2011)

Figure 5.15. Students exploring with various paint brushes and water

Figures 5.15.1 and *5.15.2* Painting

Practicing arts-based foundations in the studios provided ideas for the teachers to employ

as they considered topics for upcoming cultural projects. My collaborative work with the

children and teachers also supported a sharing of cultural philsophy, in that the active, well-

paced work added to the pedagogy of Entewate'nikonri:sake. The reciprocal listening that

occurred between myself and the teachers, and the teachers with the children, involved being

sensitive to what was meaningful and enjoyable for participants. Our hope was that children

and educators would assimilate the past months of exploration and skills into meaningful

representations showing exploration in their cultural knowledge.

Arts-based Cultural Projects

Mohawk culture reflects a profound belief in the interconnectedness of everything, and

this value is embedded in relationships (Porter, 2008). This understanding is reflected in a

Mohawk spiritual attachment to the land, their history, community, the story of creation and how

they address social problems (Porter, 2008). Early on in the school year, Nancy and Gail had

presented their idea that this year's Cultural Museum would focus on the theme of relationships

(an open-ended topic) and be entitled "Our Culture, Our Ways." From February until the end of

May 2011, the projects became the curriculum. After months of developing skills with art

mediums and a language for art, teachers were encouraged to present the topic of relationships in

any way they envisioned, or listen to topics generated by the children. The project topics for the

classes ended up focusing on the following:

Class	**Age Group**	**Topic**	**Arts Focus**
Avery's: (Satellite daycare) Deidra's group	18 mos.- 2yrs. Old	Our Relationship to Bugs (insects)	Drawing (line), painting, clay
Stephanie's class	2 year olds	Our Relationship to Water.	Music, dance, drawing (line), painting, drama
Melissa's class	2 year olds	Our Relationship to the Turtle	clay, drawing (line), painting
Glorianne's class	3 year olds	Our Relationship to Festivals	painting, drawing (line), clay
Sonia's class	3 year olds	Our Relationship to the Three Sisters (corn, beans, squash)	Sketching & drawing (line) , painting, sculpting(clay)

Kariiostha's class	Mixed-age Mohawk immersion):	Our Relationship with the Natural World (exploring colours of Mother Earth)	Painting, drawing (line)
Roseanne's class	4 year olds	Our Relationships with Celebrating Festivals (music & clothes)	Music, Clay, Sketching and drawing(line)
Monique's class	4 year olds	Our Relationships with Kanien'kehá:ka Long Ago (storytelling/ the Longhouse, history)	Sketching, drawing (line), clay, weaving, drama
Rebecca's class	4 year olds	Our Relationships with our Community (Kahnawake)	Sketching, drawing(line), sculpting, painting, drama
Carinas class	4 year olds	Our Relationship to the Forest and the Animals (clans)	Sketching, drawing(line), painting, clay

Fig. 5.16. Cultural projects Phase 2

My field notes of this stage are comprised of written observations of the classes as well as photo documentation of the children as they explored their topics in the studios. Because the teachers had gone through the learning process with the children (with clay and line) and had observed positive outcomes as well as noted a transformation in their own attitudes about "teaching" art, they found that their teaching was not only shaped by the children's perceptions but influenced by their own views (Wright, 2003).

The Cycle of Inquiry placed children's investigations at the core of the work in the studios and situated the teachers as partners in investigations. Teachers observed and listened

carefully, recording and photographing. Their documentation would inform future planning by

assisting them as they expanded and facilitated the explorations. For children, turning to the arts

offered the opportunity to make their thinking visible. An arts methodology also provided

suitable entry points for children to deepen their cultural understandings.

During lunch hours or after school, I had the opportunity to converse with teachers and

became aware that several culturally-related arts practices were being implemented into the

children's investigations. I visited the classes and noted specific art customs or symbols that

teachers were incorporating during project work. In this respect, the teachers also took on the

role of teacher with me, as I was not aware of some of the Mohawk representations and art

traditions. While this reminded me of my position of 'outsider' to the cultural community, this

lack of recognition did not upset me, as I, like the educators and children, had to listen and learn

about "languages" that were meaningful to Mohawk culture. These instances occurred

particularly during teaching about: our relationships with celebrating festivals, revisiting line and

our work on the mini-shawls, and in Roseanne's class:

> As a follow-up to creating actual festival shawls for ourselves, the girls in the class also
>
> created mini-shawls made out of cardboard sheets. Our first step involved creating a
>
> background motif. This was accomplished using water paint and the children's
>
> imaginations. An assortment of colours was thoughtfully painted on to create original
>
> designs. Holes were punched out along the circumference of the cardboard plates so
>
> ribbons could be easily affixed.
>
> Our revisiting had to include additional consideration as to who we are as a people. The
>
> girls were presented with a print-out of Iroquois patterns often found on traditional
>
> clothing. They tried the Celestial Dome pattern first. On a "practice paper" each of us

attempted to reproduce the patterned lines several times. (Comments from the children: "Here are some swirly lines.' "This straight line runs across the bottom and there are hill lines on the top." "This one has bows for lines.") Once comfortable, using markers, the girls sketched out the design pattern across the cardboard material. K. was so pleased with one of her "practice" patterns she insisted on cutting it out and gluing right on to her cardboard shawl. I. thought that was a great idea and followed suit. After drawing on several duplicated patterns, K. decided she would create some of her own line decorations: heart patterns, butterflies too! I. brought in the natural world with drawings of trees, turtles and snakes. L. E. was happy to copy the Celestial Dome design. She also had to punch holes for the ribbons – a strenuous task – indeed but she did it! In fact all 3 girls added on rainbows of ribbons to their mini-shawls. When no room was left for designs or ribbons, the cardboard plates were then easily stapled into mini-shawls ready for display and sharing. I. even tried her shawl on one of the classroom stuffed bears; it fit! (See Group Fig. 5.17 & 5.18) (Field note, Roseanne's class May 20, 2011)

Figure 5.17. Preparing a coloured shawl
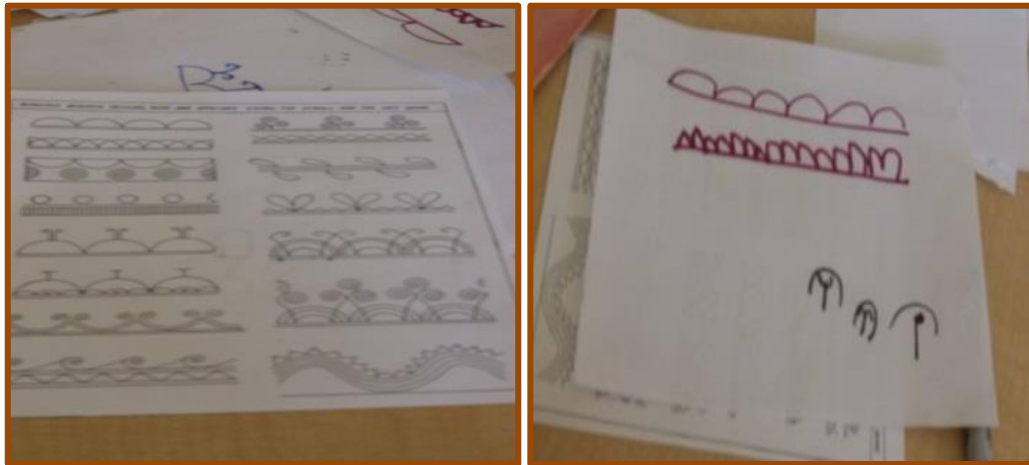
Figure 5.17.1.. I. practices the lines of the Iroquois patterns

Figure 5.18. I. dresses a stuffed bear in her finished shawl.

Allowing children to learn through "keen attention to ongoing activities, rather than relying on lessons out of context" (Rogoff, 2003, p. 9) proved to be important in that everyday

life supported principles of culture that "…fit together and [were] connected" (Rogoff, 2003, p.

11), such as Kaweriiostha's exploration of colour using a cradleboard, which is used by many in

the Mohawk community today:

> Kaweriiostha's has been creative in her thinking as to how to bring Mother Earth's
>
> colours to a mixed-age group immersion class….She began with her cradle board as
>
> provocation as there were a variety of natural colours and the children were attracted to it
>
> (See Fig.5.20). She is developing language by focusing on the names of the colours
>
> along with supporting children in their appreciation of nature's colours and working one
>
> on one with the children (See Fig. 5.19**).** (Journal, March 2, 2011)
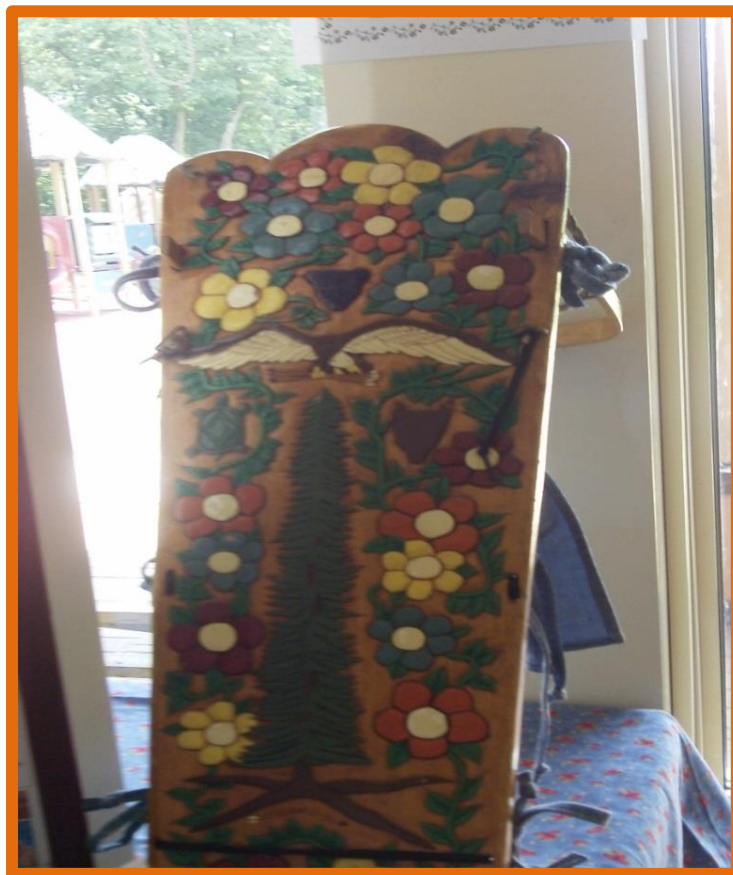
Figure 5.19. The provocation: Kaweriiostha's cradle board.

Figure 5.20. One on one in the Mohawk immersion class.

Throughout the months of February 2011 until the end of May 2011 the classes at Step by Step Child and Family Center were engaged in their cultural projects. An enlarged poster of the Cycle of Inquiry was a permanent fixture in all classrooms and hung in several of the ateliers. It served as a constant visual reference to support educators when guiding investigations. During one of our focus group sessions after months of simply "playing" with clay, I inquired if and how the initiation of the Cycle of Inquiry supported their practice:

Stephanie (teacher): Well it helped us think: Where are we with clay? Can we connect our clay work into project experiences?? Can we lead without directing too much

Sheryl: Did this in any way inform your teaching?

Sonia (teacher): More open ended experiences needed and play needs to be sensory especially for the little ones.

Monique (teacher): I think that the Cycle helps us know that exploration can continue, so we have to provide more opportunities…and continue small group work.

Nancy (administrator): And the documentation of that is significant so you can go back

and think forward.

Stephanie (teacher):   And the dialogue that goes on in between. That will allow

children's interests to be discovered and we can ask good questions

to guide the learning.

(Focus Group, Feb. 23, 2011)

Teachers used the Cycle to identify where their students were in their investigations and where

they needed to go next. The Cycle of Inquiry helped teachers to alter their practice, as it

prompted them to continually examine what they were trying to teach and what the children were

learning; a reflective practice that developed throughout this phase.

March 16th: Detours and Discovery

March 16th was a day filled with activity. I was at Step by Step Child and Family Center

all day visiting the ateliers, observing the teachers and children in action. My discussions with

individual teachers continued to focus on the Cycle of Inquiry and where arts approaches were

suitably being incorporated. It was an exhilarating day filled with commotion: I had paint on my

clothes and was completely satisfied. I felt content that my study was in full gear and there was

action. On my way to visiting a class, Nancy popped her head out of her office and asked if I

had time to meet with her and Gail. We arranged for a lunchtime meeting. I anticipated that this

was going to be an informal discussion about the progression of our work.

At around noon that day, Gail and Nancy were waiting in the office for me and, feeling

quite at ease at that moment, I sat down prepared for a conversation. Our relationships had

grown; our interactions were composed and transparent. Nancy began by telling me that they

were looking at a turnaround in thinking, and that they had something to discuss with me. I

detected a peculiarity; something was about to happen and I asked the two administrators if I could audiotape our discussion. They agreed. What follows is our conversation and I have chosen to include in its entirety as it proved to be a poignant juncture of the study:

Nancy: We want to discuss looking back at the principles of what we learned from Reggio, but really we want to start looking at the way it could be expressed that is more reflective of Mohawk culture. How all this could be expressed in language that is more Mohawk. For example; we say environment as third teacher and we include heavily, nature. That is a Mohawk value and has nothing to do with Reggio. So we want to identify how it could be expressed in more culturally meaningful terms, in both English and Mohawk. So, eventually what we would be presenting is our own principles.

Gail: And not only that we have these really nice descriptions of environment and that's where we can take this all and make it our own. As an example we can look to the elders to give us quotes that are meaningful; for them to talk about childhood and what it means and how we teach our children. I have been thinking about this for a long time now. The culture itself and why in Reggio we talk about the principles, environment, transparency and it's all been described to me in the past. In our culture it's all inter-related. It's not separate things from one another, you know what I mean?

Sheryl: I see what you mean but as far as Reggio thinking goes, it's also all about the relationships between the principles. They intersect, in fact the Reggio literature insists about seeing the connections and it's about flexibility.

Gail: I guess it's about the way we've been teaching the teachers here and how we've

been taught in the past.

Sheryl: Maybe it hasn't come across as all inter-connected. Carina and I spoke about

this. She feels that there's space in this; there's room for literacy, cultural literacy.

That came from her. I asked her what she feels has changed and she said the

program was more structured before and since nature has been bought more in,

she feels good about that. She felt Reggio gave her that space. But now you are

telling me it is that you want to make this your own? It should be your own.

I thought it was.

Gail: Yes, that was there in the past, confined. But it so happens it was also always

confined to the classroom, but we saw it. Reggio *awakened* those ideals and now

teachers are saying; what am I doing teaching about trees in the classroom. I

should be out in the bush teaching about tress, a real life experience which is how

we learn. We don't learn in segments. We learn as a whole. It's language, the

culture and in the ceremonies that go along with it. I don't see it as just this; it's a

way of life. It's the way it is, whatever it is, it's from the time we were little

babies.

Nancy: One thing that is very important, as we move into greater understandings. We're

not adopting Reggio Emilia principles. It's the teaching of Reggio that have

allowed for a *return* to an understanding; to return something that got lost. It's

like a mini-history lesson. It got lost for all the reasons, in terms of a society that

was oppressed and so this is a return. It is profound.

Sheryl: Yes, very profound. I guess I'm glad you feel this way. What will happen when the children leave Step by Step? How do you feel when the children will go into the public schools?

Gail: For myself, I feel what the children are getting here can be carried in to any setting. They will be prepared. It may be more structured out there but they will be prepared.

Nancy: Their character will be prepared, in their heart. They say the same thing about inclusion. Here they are in a totally inclusive environment with some children for four years and it's fine. They will go off and there will be qualitative changes in their experiences but what they understand, know and have learned about being with people knowing differences that it's there; they will be prepared.

Sheryl: I saw it when I was teaching too. I saw children move on in schooling holding on to foundations that were constructed in pre-school. I saw them.

Gail: The knowledge is there. I feel it will be carried out in Kindergarten. They've learned to be problem-solvers and they are inquiring and asking and reflecting.

Nancy: And the whole idea that we are building creativity right? I think of a great quote by Anna Freud, something to the effect of: A creative mind can rise above any poor education. So if they are going to move to a place that is not going to give as rich a curriculum as they have received here, we've helped them become creative critical thinkers- they'll rise above it.

Gail: Also, some of your questions that you are asking during our meetings or for
          reflection, or for interviews; too focused on Reggio principles.

Sheryl: Is there something that you feel should be taken out – you need to be comfortable
          with my questions.

Gail: Yes. I want to stop using that word transition from Reggio to Mohawk, as if what
          we're doing we didn't know. We have to re-word things, using ideas that say
          we're connecting to Mohawk culture.

Nancy: I think what we want to say is, we don't want to call it Reggio thinking; it's our
          thinking. We can say we've been inspired or stimulated because you know
          language is important. So how we communicate is important. We want to own it
          not deny the influence but to put it in its place. It's been an inspiration, stimulus,
          a provocation but it's not about Reggio thinking.

Sheryl: I hear you, it`s good. (Silence). I will re-word my questions for some meetings
          and I will send them to you. You know, I've done a few interviews and I guess I
          have been hearing already what you have been saying. I think the teachers
          appreciate Reggio as an influence, but now, I'm thinking, maybe there were
          deeper messages out there. I have to go back and listen to my tapes, get them all
          written down.

Gail: Well, I've been thinking about this a long time and I just feel that at this point
          they're learning. They've realized this a while back and they are trying to make a
          connection and now they've realized it. Wait a minute, it's the same and they get

it now. Hey, that's the way I did think all along, not saying that Reggio invented it. I'm sure there's other cultures that do the same thing.

Sheryl: You're proving the flexibility of Reggio. Please know, they do encourage it to make it your own. Yet, you've made the point further for me; and to make it a point to use your language.

Nancy: I think what Gail is saying is that we have a very palpable feeling to change for this building and for the people of this culture. I think that even though they can't say it, there's been something viscerally experienced with this shift and with this return in some sense; something that was lost and now you feel a different energy in the building.

Gail: I don't think it was lost, it just needed to re-emerge because it was more the way of Western teaching, the way we learned from the outside. So now it's coming back to them and saying, oh yeah, I know. I have this in me.

Sheryl: And you are not taking offence are you? I hope not.

Gail: Oh no, I'm appreciating it. You know, sometimes some staff members are trying things but they come up and ask me: Can I do this? Because it has been instilled in them to do this, this, this. We're bringing out the knowledge that they have and when they ask, can I do this and I say, "Yes, yes, of course, try it or research it," and they go ahead. We have two levels of knowledge of our culture. There are some who have a lot of knowledge and others not quite confident in bringing it

out and some who have very little knowledge and feel ashamed, so you have to look at that too, but it's in them.

Sheryl: I understand. If you look back just in this short time, you moved and I won't say forward, in the direction you want to, that's what it is all about. You are making it your own.

Gail: That's what we wanted from the beginning, to make it ours.

Nancy: It's always been the intention. (Silence)

Sheryl: I'm thinking now… It's not Reggio thinking, it's inspiration from Reggio.

Nancy: Yes, and we're very excited to see the connections to the community in all this.

Gail: As Debbie says, "There's a spark in that fire again." They have it already and they can say, "I can do this. I know enough about my culture, to pass on and I know more."

Sheryl: It's different now. It's taking a new direction.

Gail: It started as Reggio, but we involved everyone, the teachers, the children, Joe, Jimmy, everyone. But those principles have been in our community. We are all responsible for the children. Even if you're not the focus, each of us all have role.

Nancy: So we're clear. We'll change the language.

Sheryl: I'm listening. There will be a change.

<div align="right">(Field notes (transcribed taping) March 16, 2011)</div>

I left Nancy's office feeling odd and concerned that perhaps my Reggio foundations had come across too powerfully. The excitement in the "Reggio" work that was being carried out in new studios may have transcended the objective of strengthening cultural meaning.

My drive home that day was just as uncomfortable. The Mercier Bridge, again under repair, was down to one lane and a narrow one at that! I had to concentrate well to stay within the boundaries. My car and I shared an analogous experience of attending to the journey, a route that somehow was being detoured and there were no choices. This is a road that had to be taken and yet, the bridge and this recent conversation challenged my thinking, almost to the point of disorientation. I would have to carefully consider what was occurring before moving on. What was clear was the fact that being culturally sensitive was a raw and intense experience, and I had to always try to be mindful of that to honour the participants and the road ahead. Feeling out of sorts at that time, I eventually began to acknowledge that this juncture was significant as it added unique pieces to the map of my study. That day, I conquered the narrowing cones alongside the railings of the bridge, keeping me in line as I crossed over to the other side. Would I be able to overcome the diversions when I had to return the next day?

Our Culture, Our Ways

The months of project work occurring in the school were coming to a head, and preparations were being made for our June cultural museum. My encounters with the children diminished as teachers took on the role of guiding them in their closure of the project. My

meetings with teachers, either individually or in small groups, were relaxed conversations and shared our documentation of the children`s work. With attention to my last meeting with Nancy and Gail, I was mindful in my communication with all participants; Reggio comparisons were omitted from my inquiries.

In June, we distributed flyers and invitations to the cultural museum to families and the community and displayed these throughout the school. The title the teachers chose for the museum spoke to the significance of the work that had transpired over the year and pointed to the direction of our study from thereon in: "TSI NIIONKWARIHÓ:TEN Our Culture/Our Ways: Inspired by our Kanien'kehá:ka Culture and Teachings."   Several teachers requested to use their classrooms as the venue, since most of the documentation was already set up in the rooms. Teachers also felt that showcasing the students' work in their classrooms was less formal than a gym exhibition. Nancy and Gail left this choice for display in the hands of the individual teachers, therefore some classes presented in the gym and others in their classrooms. The following photos depict some of the finished projects in mid-June when families and community were invited in to share the children's learning. (See Figs. 5.21 & Figs. 5.22)

Figure 5.21. Gym exhibits

Figure 5.21.1 Gym exhibit

Figure 5.21.2 Pottery exhibit

There has been a lot said about the sacredness of our land which is our body, and the values of our culture which is our soul; but water is the blood of our tribes, and if its life-giving flow is stopped, or it is polluted, all else will die and the many thousands of years of our communal existence will come to an end.

Frank Tonorio

March /2011
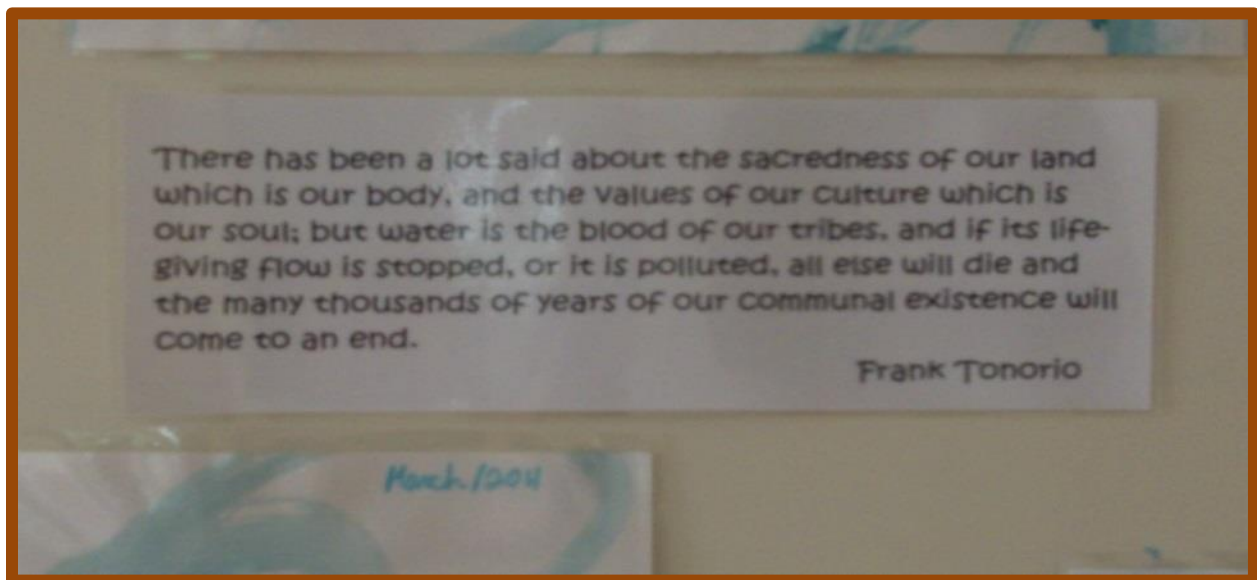
Figure 5.22. Classroom exhibit

Figure 5.22.1 Classroom exhibit

Figure 5.22.2 Classroom exhibit

Bridge Delays and Voices Heard

The school year was coming to a close, and I felt wounded. To make matters worse, the Mercier Bridge closed completely which meant that I would now have to travel hours around the entire island of Montreal to get to Kahnawake, a drive that habitually took me twenty minutes. The last few weeks of road detours resulted in interminable hours of travel, the stress of getting continuously lost and learning how to properly program a GPS. I recall one night at nine p.m., waiting in my car on the banks of the Champlain Bridge, weeping to my husband on the cell phone because I had been travelling home for over five hours and the mounds of traffic were at a standstill. In truth, it was the stress of unexpected challenges in my study that had heightened my sensitivity. For the next few weeks I felt the mounting pressure of travelling to and from Kahnawake. In my thoughts I went back and forth for hours, recreating my trepidations that the study was descending into unknown territory. These incidents — the closure of the bridge, exhausting travel hours to and from Step by Step Child and Family Center, and having to alter my initial ways of thinking during the last months of phase two of study–were occurring simultaneously, and it gave me an ominous feeling.

As the school year was coming to an end, Gail, Nancy and I planned a relaxed reflective closing meeting for the staff that would give us additional data regarding this journey of implementing cultural projects in their classes. In keeping with our use of art approaches with the children, we similarly planned for an arts-informed methodological approach to investigate teachers` views. We titled it: "The Hundred Languages of Teachers." In teaching teams, educators were asked to discuss any or all of the following reflections:

- Comment on the process of how the topic of your cultural art project emerged. What went well with this process and what was challenging?

- In what ways did the cultural art project unfold that was different than the previous year? What do you feel you have learned about this process in the past year?

- Consider the principles of Reggio Emilia as well as important values of Mohawk culture. Describe key principles and values that were evident in the doing of this project.

- Discuss if there was a most memorable or meaningful experience for you as a team or individually.   (Communication to teachers, June 20, 2011)

The educators were invited to share their discussion using one of the `languages of art' we had developed; one that they would feel comfortable presenting with at our meeting. Some suggestions were made such as: a collage, a short skit, a song or poem, a dance, a sculpture, a drawing, or painting or the freedom to create their own "language." On the afternoon of June 20, 2011 we all met in the gym to share our journeys. I videotaped the educators' skits in response to the provided reflection questions. Some groups wrote poetry; others used music and movement, and some brought back their documentation of classroom projects to explain the process of their project. What was common to all presentations was the active participation of all the teachers and their interest in sharing their reflections.

This second phase of study concluded with joy, laughter and suggestions as to how we would proceed in our following year. It was a phase of learning for *all* of us and future directions would pursue new understandings. I came to accept that the adaptation of the Reggio Emilia approach had transformed into an appreciation of Reggio principles, and that this synergy had rekindled Mohawk values in this community. From that moment on our living bridge would help the community search further for *their culture, their ways.*

Closing remarks

Phase One of our research brought about values for advancing our investigations. Phase Two of study had broadened my understanding as to what resonates in a program that attends to cultural identity. Regardless of which conversation I have had with educators and administrators, Mohawk identity has emerged as predominant in all thinking. While the Reggio Emilia approach provided the terminology and in some ways the stimulus, insight into the relationships of doing, thinking, reflecting and understanding turned consistently to what was meaningful culturally. This phase, because of the transformation in thinking and terminology, brought forward a most important finding of this inquiry; none of this could have transpired without the practice and respect for a pedagogy of listening.

The third phase of study will be presented in Chapter 6. With a release of addressing Reggio Emilia as the guiding philosophy, we returned to the ateliers inspired by an arts-integrated approach that followed a Cycle of Inquiry. Yet this time, it would be different. Mohawk culture would lead the way, and in my role I would have to follow the Centre's suit.

Chapter 6

Phase 3: Paving New Roads
August 2011 – September 2012

The Mercier Bridge has been narrowed down to one lane and my return is guided by Indigenous ways.   Large vehicles have been forbidden until repairs are complete; only some of us are invited back along the road. I ascend the Mercier and manage to squeeze my car in between the orange cones. The tapered paths require me to respect the set guidelines. The bridge changes directions throughout the day and I have to fit myself into its agenda. I have had two months to reflect on my research and, like the Mercier Bridge, have been re-directed. As the lanes open to traffic, I realize that this time away has allowed me to ease back into the study. The closure of my usual route last summer had been difficult to deal with and yet, it was important that it happened. A major detour was necessary. Time spent away from the familiar helped me deal with the unfamiliar, and now I venture back on the challenging bridge that brought me to Kahnawake in the first place, renewed with understanding as to what the road now holds.

Opening Remarks and the Purpose of Phase Three

This chapter will discuss the final stage of my research, and is based on the findings of the previous phases. In this phase, I remained focused on examining the principles of arts-integrated practices in Native cultural projects. While the research community had demonstrated their appreciation of the Reggio Emilia approach, they realized that their movement forward in the project would be guided by cultural pride, First Nations ownership, and Mohawk values as the grounding for "provocation" for all experiences yet to come.

My site visits to Step by Step began late in August 2011 and continued until the first

weeks of September 2012 (excluding the summer months of July until mid-August). My days

consisted of approximately four hours on each occasion, and during April and June, I was at Step

by Step for half-days only, approximately two to three hours a session. Once a month we held an

hour-long after school meeting for teachers, which allowed for shared reflections and dialogue

about our experiences in the ateliers. Nancy, Gail and I created a schedule based on my

transformed role as "consultant." I no longer worked with the children in the studios, but

observed, in order to support the teachers.

The teaching staff was divided into two groups that alternated meeting with me every

second week. Scheduled appointments with individual teachers to discuss and guide topics

around the Cycle of Inquiry were held in the atelier offices. Participants for Phase Three

included the administrators, (Nancy, Gail and Debbie) and ten classroom teachers. One

classroom teacher had left and had been replaced with a new teacher.[12]

Questions Re-visited

What role would the atelier play in developing the objectives of early childhood

education and Mohawk culture? How could the atelier become "…a place of research where

imagination, rigour, experiment, creativity and expression would interweave and complete each

other" *(*Vecchi, 2010, p. 35*)*? This over-arching set of questions from Phase Two continued to

inform the study; however, with a shift of direction from thinking of the study in terms of Reggio

Emilia "culture," to articulating its significance to *Mohawk* culture, new queries lead the way. I

had to rethink and address the nature and direction of the study: How could cultural knowledge

---

[12] Participant approval was carried out in keeping with policy of ethics regarding research with human participants (See Appendix 2).

be regarded as a source of understanding for young children in their classrooms? What would have to transform?

Role development

My role as "consultant" focused on my provision of direct support for teachers. I worked one-on-one with the teachers in this stage, which allowed me to further develop my relationship with the staff. With reflection, I believe that I learned most from the teachers during this phase. Our collaboration went beyond simple conversations for information. We moved more deeply into reciprocal exchanges, where we drew on each other's theories and knowledge, and listened attentively to one another. Such roles and responsibilities indicated a growth of an authentic learning community (Louis & Krus, 1995). Our learning community developed out of these collaborative attempts to tackle questions that emerged from our actual classroom experiences. In this process I observed how the educators were motivated by their own inquiries, and reflective in their search for improved practices building each stage of experience (Louis et al., 1995).

Methodology

Participatory action methodology in this First Nations context once more kept me cognizant of my position as researcher. Because experiential learning emerged as significant in my preliminary findings, and supported Indigenous ways of acquiring knowledge (Porter, 2008), a large amount of my data came from my field notes (reflecting observations and discussions with teachers). By this third phase of study, I believe trust had been established between all of the participants. I appreciated the personal contact I had developed with the educators more than ever, as our interactions were warm, open, direct, transparent, and followed Indigenous research protocols that upheld Mohawk values: the participants provided consent and had ownership of all

of their experiences in the research (Freire, 1970; Reitsma-Street & Brown, 2002; Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999).

The focus group sessions, held twice during Phase Three (September 12, 2011 and April 6, 2012) allowed me to gain insight into transformed teaching practice by listening to teachers' voices. In our gatherings, we set aside time that " encourage[d] a range of responses which provide[d] a greater understanding of the attitudes, behavior, opinions or perceptions of participants on the research issues" (Hennink 2007, p. 6). I met with teachers individually throughout the year, and also practiced photo documentation during that time. These details were pertinent to the summative interviews I conducted with teachers at the end of the school year in June (June 22 & 23, 2012) and with administrators in July 2012.

In my data analysis, I followed a constant comparative methodology by carefully studying my field notes, journal entries, transcriptions of focus group sessions and interviews. I used constant comparative analysis in close readings, memoing, re-reading and ultimately to code when patterns in the data emerged. This cycle of comparison and reflection on 'old' and 'new' material occurred several times, and revealed repetition in the following themes: *Learning through Experience, Communicating through the Ateliers, Culturing Curriculum.* Later in Chapter 7, I discuss in greater detail how these themes were revealed by the data. The various methods I employed for data collection, along with the way data converged over the previous phases, allowed for triangulation (Butler-Kisber, 2010; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992) in this final phase of study.

Re-entering Entewate'nikonri:sake

In mid-August, Gail, Nancy and I met to discuss my role as consultant, and to determine how we would move into the school year. The administrators explained that this would be a year

of planning for the future, and would release me from my interactions with the children and in some ways, the teachers as well. They suggested a schedule of bi-weekly individual meetings in order for me to confer with teachers, attend to specific requests and to reinforce the mindset of Entewate'nikonri:sake.

I took Nancy and Gail's advice in planning my first discussion with the educators. In August, I met with the staff to address the methodology with an added focus on the community of educators. We began a warm-up exercise with the following question: "*As a team, can you come up with five questions that give you the same answer?*" After 15 minutes of table discussions, laughter and negotiations, each team presented their responses. Replies came in the form of mathematical problems (e.g. five different ways of getting to 10 as an answer) and questions that lead to direct people and events (e.g. Who gives birth to a child?; Who feeds a child? A mother). The content of the questions was really not the objective; it was their approach to working together that was actually the goal. At the end of the exercise I asked: "*How did you come up with your responses? Describe the strategies you used to work together.*" Teachers thought for several minutes and then we noted the approaches taken.

- We were all working toward one goal.

- We gave each other positive feedback.

- We shared ideas and kept notes to remember.

- We asked each other questions and that expanded our ideas.

- We were shown the possibility of working with one objective.

- Discussion helped open the door to other questions.

- It helped us look differently at our own situations

(Field note, August 22, 2011)

The list produced by the educators would set the tone for their collaborations from that time onwards, and was important for their future professional work. In the task that day, the teachers made meaning together about what constitutes a team approach.

Our discussion then turned to a review of the past few years: Cultural long-term projects that followed a Cycle of Inquiry, environmental enhancements, and integrating the arts into teaching and learning. Educators defined the phases of project work, clarifying any misconceptions of the process of project work. We discussed the studios with regard to how they were being used and we reviewed arts approaches, other than visual arts, that could be better investigated.

Last year's clay exploration reminded us of the well-paced practices that supported inquiry over an emphasis on product or representation. Nancy and Gail encouraged "painting" as a concentration, as they felt this was an art media that required attention. Painting could be explored in a similar fashion to our clay experiences: getting to know the materials, exploring different painting techniques, investigating colour. It would be interesting to see if teachers would be able to transfer the approach: using painting as a tool for investigation and then as a tool for representation (Pelo, 2007).

Our conversation ended with the administrators' presentation of a focus for the cultural projects this year. "Relationships," they announced. My journal that evening reflected my thoughts and observations of our first discussions and our new motivation.

Relationships once again will be the topic of our projects this year. This time though there was no mention of provocation. How wise to select such attention. When they first announced the topic, there was silence and finally someone inquired: Relationships with what? The response: With anything that will be meaningful to your classroom. The

rationale behind this choice is transparent. Nancy and Gail have sensed the pressure

teachers have felt and the stress teachers have put on themselves. They want to offer an

open-ended topic that would elicit a more relaxed approach as there was no single or exact

subject that had to be chosen. Something fresh might come about, opening minds and

enabling educators and children to build knowledge, together, an emergent curriculum.

Relationships will also look at educators' "relationships." Inviting assistants to

become more involved is profound. There has always been recognition of their worth in

the classroom as well as the knowledge they bring. It was emerging last year: Dee's tender

approach when teaching her group about the significance of the turtle; Michelle's never-

ending work with every child to create replicas of their homes in the community; Darlene's

comment of this being the best year ever, and a focus on involving parents more and

community outreach. "Relationships" is showing its face in many directions… Instead of

leaping right back into work, we began with reflection…we began with teachers first

again….I can sense the traditional approach. Culture is resonating within all areas of the

curriculum including teacher respect. Culture matters and it is a priority. The well-being of

each member of the teaching teams is first in thought. Nothing will move forward without

reflection first. Our journey is moving swiftly; moving back to review and then moving

forward again. Our passages are not linear rather we are moving across many domains;

children, teachers, community…looking after everyone… relationships… revisiting here

has allowed me to see places I have already been, yet somehow, I am seeing it for the first

time.   (Journal reflection, August 22, 2011)

Cultural projects, Entewate'nikonri:sake, and Kanien'kéha (Mohawk) Relationships

Consulting sessions began early in September and teachers were already proposing topics that could possibly be explored. Several educators mentioned that while they would present a topic associated with "relationships," they were also prepared to allow projects to emerge according to the children's interest. Additionally, there was recognition that project topics could change if there wasn't an interest. Since discussions were developing rapidly, a focus group session was held mid-September:

Sheryl: It seems that the topic of relationships is unfolding already. How are you approaching this topic?

Stephanie: I think, for me, it will have to develop. My children are very young so I am just looking at the relationships with each other…friendships…that is a goal I work on every year but this time it will be through the experiences they have…

Glorianne: My class is going to do Water. The Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwen starts off every day and we talk about water every day. I ask; what's in the water….fish, plants…some medicines. What do we do with water? And life cycles that need water. What insects? Animals? Past couple of years when I do the Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwen I start to elaborate more each year; each topic. And the children add to it. This is as far as I am thinking now – relationships with water. It can go on all year…

Rebecca: We're just focusing on our relationships to nature and we'll try all kinds of techniques for painting and collaging in the atelier; for now that's in the plan. We're looking at Red Maple already; observing, sketching, painting, photographing. We'll

probably look at some planting throughout the year….I am excited to work and bring it back with them in the ateliers. Collaging, painting, painting with natural items too. We'll slow it down like we did with clay. We'll try using different brush strokes, different brushes; looking at lines…what brush will make a thick line…..It will be good to start like that. I have canvases eventually for them to work on.

Sonia: Well, I have a great idea for "relationships" and I am so excited. When I heard the topic I wrote down my immediate thought: Ironworkers. This is a major relationship for and with the children. W.'s dad is an ironworker. Families of the children in my class have so many ironworkers in their families. I've opened a discussion already and there is an interest. I asked some of the children; what do you think they build? They love construction. We'll build with everything to start; boxes, blocks, bricks, whatever. Then we bring in the families; who are they? Dads, grandfathers, uncles, our community. And I like the physical education that comes in: balancing, balancing with tools, climbing. We can go out into the community, going to see the bridge; go to JoJo's to find a safe place to observe. It's the families. I'm already asking for photos and the children are coming back to talk about it. Maybe we'll create a book. I really want to make a storybook for them, from a child's view. There are no books like that and it's important to tell the stories like: "My dad leaves all week. He comes back every second Friday 'cause he's working on a bridge…" (Focus Group, Sept. 12, 2011)

The focus group session transformed into a sharing session; picked up again during a teacher meeting the following week. The teachers were eager to listen and communicate preliminary directions of their projects. The discussion illuminated how "relationships" drew out meaningful

topics to explore, as well as suggested how teacher's knowledge had developed and how they were bringing that knowledge forward with each other. It did not take long for all the classes to have a focus for their yearlong projects. Following is a list of the projects each class embarked upon:

Class	**Age Group**	**Topic**	**Arts Integration**
Avery's: (Satellite daycare) Deidra's group	18 mos.- 2yrs. Old	Our Relationship with the Seasons The seasons' colours	Painting Collaging Impasto Photography
Stephanie's class	2 year olds	Our Relationship to each other Friendships	Music Dance Drawing Collaging Painting Drama
Melissa L. class	2 year olds	Our Relationship to our Families	Clay Drawing (line), Painting
Glorianne's class	2 ½ - 3 year olds	Our Relationship	Painting Storytelling

		to Water	Drama
			Collaging
Sonia's class	2 ½ - 3 year olds	Our Relationship to the Ironworkers	Sketching Drawing Painting Sculpting Building Drama photography, Storytelling
Kaweriiostha's class	Mixed-age Mohawk immersion	Our Relationship with our Families A Focus on **Kanien'kéha** Names	Painting Drawing Collaging storytelling drama
Roseanne's class	3-4 year olds	Our Relationships to Mother Earth through the Creation Story	Clay Collaging Painting Storytelling
Monique's class	4 year olds	Our Relationships	Painting Drama

		with Water	Storytelling
			Impasto
Rebecca's class	4 year olds	Our Relationships to the Seasons	Sketching Painting Collaging
Melissa S. class	3-4 year olds	Our Relationship to Our Music	Sketching Drawing Wood sculpting Dance Music Painting Storytelling Drama

Figure 6. Table of topics and art practices

My meetings with the teachers followed a schedule throughout the months of September to April. What follows are several descriptions of these investigations from various classrooms, and excerpts from my field notes, journal and conversations with the educators. I was fully engaged in my field visits and each session with the educators highlighted the power of focused cultural projects. The experiences shed light on how Mohawk culture was the catalyst that would drive our inquiry forward.

The Voice of the Teachers

While I continued my role as researcher, I remained cognizant that the research belonged to this Mohawk community. Teachers collaborated in the inquiry, monitoring the components of project during this phase of study. A Cycle of Inquiry (initiated during Phase 2), arts-based methods of meaning making, and the incorporation of past modules were deeply grounded in the culture of the Mohawk community.

The ateliers were meaningful in that they provided an extension to the classroom experiences, helped modify the pedagogy, and supported innovative ways of perceiving culture and carrying out those experiences. The teachers were focused on the children's interests, and were committed to developing knowledge that would be important for the children.

Frequent meetings with the teachers provided meaningful sharing opportunities that allowed me to listen carefully to their experiences and concerns. The teachers learned from each other as they described their projects in process and offered professional feedback (See Figs. 6.1). Our goal was consistent: How could the project be moved along further? How was culture being interwoven?

Figure 6.1 Teachers discussing new projects unfolding

Figure 6.1.1 Educators discussing photo documentation

The following discussion refers specifically to two case studies from the research that illustrates

the kinds of projects teachers and children generated. The first project, Relationships with My

Family, focused on the children`s Mohawk names. The second project, Our Relationships with

the Ironworkers, belonged to the three year old group.

Conversations with Kaweriiostha

Kaweriiostha, the teacher of the Mohawk immersion class, was faced with the challenge of

having a mixed-age (three to five years old) group of children. Her goal was to have her young

students investigate a topic that would apply to all age groups as well as emphasize

Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk culture and language). During our first meeting in September,

Kaweriiostha explained that her yearlong project would focus on family and relationships. She

indicated that the development of a vocabulary for members of the family and related

terminology (i.e. home, meals, festivals) would be emphasized through storytelling, dramatic play, visual arts and daily discussions.

Kaweriiostha hoped to address the importance of each child's name, as every Mohawk name has meaning. Porter (2008) emphasizes the centrality of the child to the family, its traditions and its future, and highlights the greetings a baby is given upon birth. Babies are named thoughtfully, and as Kaweriiostha expressed, pondering over the child's name carries great meaning. Occasionally, babies are not named upon birth as the family gets to know the child and discovers his/her personality or circumstances, and then a name is given. Other times, babies are named immediately, their Mohawk name being connected to cultural beliefs. No matter what the case, there is great significance in one's Mohawk name. There is a relationship to identity.

During a follow-up meeting in October, Kaweriiostha and I exchanged ideas as to how "names" could be depicted through various art media. Similar to the uniqueness of each name, every child would be offered individual activities and ideas for visual depictions. We tested our ideas with a four year old child whose name meant: White Grass or Sage. The child's experience began with a sensory activity: Smelling, touching and observing several branches of natural sage. Kaweriiostha requested that I observe in the atelier as her assistant, Kanerhatitake, was going to lead the experience, keeping true to goals of total inclusion of the teaching team.

> I met with Kanerhatitake and her young student in the studio to observe their exploration into the child's name. Kanerhatitake gently presented him with a branch of sage and his immediate reaction was to smell it. He then examined the shape, length and leaves meticulously, and he verbalized that this was his name (See Fig. 6.2). He showed his knowledge when Kanerhatitake asked him what was special about the sample presented.

He replied that it was medicine; that it helps you when you are sick. Also he found well-

being in holding this representation as he exclaimed that it was soft (using a Mohawk

word) and like a "comfy blanket." He was then presented with some painting tools and

water paint blocks and was encouraged to create a space for his branch of sage (See Fig.

6.2.1). The session lasted for almost an hour; slow, focused and meaningful. It was a good

beginning. Kanerhatitake and I both felt the profound impact of this experience. In

appreciation she presented me with a branch of sage to keep in my bag….the smell is

wonderful.   (Field note, Oct.4, 2011)

Figure 6.2. Examining sage

Figure 6.2.1. Creating a place for sage

My subsequent conversations with Kaweriiostha consisted mostly of *her* presentation of

plans, experiences and reflections. My role was one of listener, and occasionally I offered

suggestions. After Kaweriiostha described the children's names to me, emphasizing their

significance to the Mohawk traditions, we brainstormed designs as to how the arts could be

integrated into the children's exploration of their names. I would not have been able to offer

suggestions nor understand the power of each name without Kaweriiostha's moving descriptions

and explanations. She shared her knowledge with me, and I appreciated it greatly. The meaning

of the investigations travelled deep as numerous experiences to explore their names were offered

to each child. Following is a list of some joint notes that helped us plan for those experiences:

Sha'nienhawe (He carries a stick again):   Beginning activities: collecting nature's

sticks/twigs….Simple play with sticks he has collected (observes and document).   Offer

other stick like things to build with (pipe cleaners/ popsicle sticks/toothpicks).

Cumulative activity (3 panelled cardboard squares). Have child sponge paint earth colours

on each square).   Allow child to create stick collages – each square different (first one

twig collage then other panels…his choice of stick things) (See Fig. 6.3).

Ratonhnhenhaké:ton (He scratches/scrapes at life): Read together and highlight earth's varieties of colours. Look together to find pastels and colour with the colours he has chosen. Keep first representation. Allow child to match up finger paints with you to his pastel earth colour drawing. 3-4 cardboard panels/spoon on paint on first cardboard panel. Allow child to spread paint with spoon and scratch with twigs, sticks, his fingers… 2nd panel can be covered with burlap. Repeat paint and scratch activity- 1 panel can be impasto technique apply on panel and let dry/then paint earth's colours on top! Podge well (document progression along the way).   (See Fig. 6.4)

Teiakononwáthe (Bright Water):   Present child with a variety of photos of water (magazines/ books). Can he find the brightness in each? Or how could he make it brighter? (Document).   Create colour cards (4-6) of blues- starting with dark to light… ask him to put the cards in order of dark to light and light to dark. Paint metallic paper; starting with dark blue/ add some white paint another row/ then add white and paint……to eventually shades of blue from dark to light. (Can be done over several sittings.   Document the progression with photos).   (See Fig. 6.5) (Field notes, Nov. 3, 2011)

Figure 6.3 Sha'nienhawe (He carries a stick again)

Figure 6.4. Ratonhnhenhaké:ton (He scratches/scrapes at life)

Figure 6.5. Teiakononwáthe (Bright Water)

The profound interactions between Kaweriiostha and each child occurred over several months. Kaweriiostha respected her students' interests and abilities and listened to the children, engaging in attentive and extended discussions.

Conversations with Sonia

I recall Sonia's excitement and early announcement of bringing stories of Kahnawake's ironworkers into her classroom. Perhaps, due to my lack of knowledge on the subject, I was surprised and intrigued by Sonia's choice of topic. My conversations with Sonia over the months were informative and collaborative in that we listened and learned from each other. Sonia believed deeply in this project. She had hoped that the investigation would appeal to the children and expand their knowledge. She led the project with enthusiasm and emotion, sensing early on that their experiences would be meaningful to the children and the community.

Perhaps it was her passion that supported the success of this project. Her modelling and role playing experiences captured the children's attention throughout a cycle of inquiry: questioning, gaining knowledge, hands-on experiences, revisiting, participating in new experiences, family collaboration and continuous discoveries. The yearlong project resulted in the children's ability to provide factual accounts when expressing the stories of the Ironworkers from Kahnawake.

My meetings with Sonia involved sessions of her telling me about her young students' experiences as the plans were unfolding. She explained to me how her team worked closely with her and the responsibilities they shared. My consulting role centered on supporting Sonia through the documentation process. Our meetings followed a pattern. We would examine the photos, discuss the children's experiences, and Sonia would explain why she had selected certain depictions. Together we put our thoughts into words, adding to the documentation and the children's portfolios. Our interactions were important listening sessions, as we attended carefully to each other's thoughts and searched for words to make learning more visible. It felt

at times like another level of research: Building relationships with images, art, emotions, knowledge about the Ironworkers and their meaning for the community, and then bringing it all together in written form. Our strategies for documenting evolved into a practice, and along with that our relationship grew as well. Sonia educated me about the history of her people that continues today, and informed me about parts of Mohawk culture I knew little about.

At this point my field notes were full, yet the passion Sonia communicated was so powerful that I asked her to write the story of her project.   At first she questioned whether she would be able to relate all that was occurring, and she stated that her writing skills were simple. I assured her that simple writing was sufficient and that her message was what was important; her voice was what had to be heard. I would support her endeavour if she was willing, and in fact, I'd provide guiding questions and we could write the story together. With this arrangement, Sonia agreed. The following is our narrative of the Ironworker Project; a combination of Sonia's story, my observations and the documentation she collected:

My name is Sonia Nicholas and I am the classroom coordinator for children ages 2½- 3½. This is my sixth year at Step by Step. I chose the project as when we spoke at the beginning of the year that our topic would be on "relationships", immediately I thought of "Ironworkers" and the relationship they have between New York and Kahnawake; their families and traditions. Ironworking was not in my family but I have several friends whose fathers were ironworkers. My best friend's husband is an Ironworker and listening to her stories always impressed me. My husband was an ironworker before he became a police officer. I remember hearing so many stories of how the men leave and then arrive home on Friday night; spend time with their families and then drive 6 hours back to New York on Sunday night. After 9/11 when men from Kahnawake stayed to help in the disaster, I

became more intrigued as to what was the "the strong connection" they had with New York. I knew that this was the perfect project for our class to do. My team was immediately onboard. One staff member is not native and at first she found it hard to understand how a "profession" could be turned into a project on relationships. It didn't take long for her to understand, due to the overwhelming response she had from coworkers and fathers.

The following was how I began the project. We began with observation and discussion about bridges and construction. I asked the children: "How am I going to get to LaSalle if there's water in front of me?" They answered:

- *A boat*

- *If there's snow you can use a skidoo.*

- *Get skates and just walk on the ice.*

- *Maybe drive across.*

- *Use a bridge.*

With that last comment the project took off. During Phase 1 we used different materials and talked about bridges. We slowly introduced vocabulary while exploring the new materials. In the meantime, letters were sent home asking families for pictures, artefacts, anything that would relate to Ironworkers. The response was overwhelming; pictures were being sent in and fathers were involved in morning discussions during drop-off. The children were very interested. I had several students whose fathers were ironworkers or their grandfathers were. We had one student who came from multiple generations of Ironworkers. Our first observations included examining photos of towers and bridges and even feeling the height! (See Figs. 6.6)

Figure 6.6. Sharing photos

Figure 6.6.1. Feeling the height

Our materials changed to play dough and sticks. The children were willing & happy to

build different bridges. (See Figs. 6.7)

Figure 6.7. Building bridges 1

Figure 6.7.1. Building bridges 2

Over the next few days the children experimented in building their own bridges. (See

Figs. 6.8)

Figure 6.8. Daily bridge construction

Fig. 6.8.1. Daily bridge construction at the light table

Phase 2 of the project began with a visit from an Ironworker father who came in and talked to the children about what he does; what clothing he needs to wear, the tools he carries on his belt and the safety procedures he takes due to the heights he has to travel. The children were very interested and even tried to walk on a balance beam wearing the tool belt filled with authentic tools of the ironworker! (See Fig. 6.9)

Figure 6.9. Balancing like an ironworker

The children were eager and ready to build on their own using all the information they

obtained about being an Ironworker. The children took their observations and

experimented with straws and connectors. It was good that Lance taught us about how

iron is brought up to the connectors in order for it to be bolted in. (See Figs. 6.10)

Figure 6.10. Practicing skills of bolting

Fig. 6.10.1. Building buildings: Straws and connectors

Each child had the chance to bring their learning forward to sketch their ideas about

towers or bridges. (See Fig. 6.11)

Figure 6.11. Children documenting their developing knowledge.

In our play, we added the tools explained to us by Lance. The challenges were balancing materials and getting the right height. (See Figs.6.12)

Figure 6.12. Balancing building materials

Figure 6.12.1 Balancing building materials 2
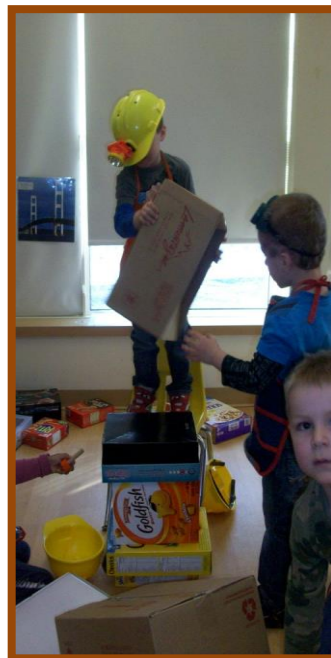
Figure 6.12.2. Balancing building materials 3

During this phase of study the environment of the classroom changed. Materials often involved

some kind of construction. The construction centre was renamed LOCAL 4 and images of

bridges, towers and building machines were displayed throughout the classroom. (See Figs.6.13)

Figure 6.13. The class environment is transformed

Figure 6.13.1. Classroom building materials

A children's book on fathers as Ironworkers was written by the educators. Sonia related

that there are no such books available for children and hearing the stories of the father

(Rákeni) who was known as one of the Skywalkers (Karístatsi Roió'tens) would be

wonderful for the children. A book was created through drawings, technology support

and a story was fashioned that provided age appropriate information of the life of the

Skywalker. The book also included Mohawk words at strategic places allowing for

children to chime in while the story was told (and more than once).   Following are 2

excerpts from the text. (See Figs. 6.14)

Someone called Rákeni a Skywalker and I didn't know why… Until my family went to visit Rákeni in New York and whoa! The buildings are really tall!

Figure 6.14. Excerpt from *The Life of a Skywalker*

Rákeni works high up in the clouds, Rákeni is a Karístatsi Roió'tens. He builds big buildings!
Bridges too!

Figure 6.14.1. Excerpt from *The Life of a Skywalker*

The multitude of pictures and stories that the families shared with the class was

overwhelming.   One famous photo that included a family member of one of the students

in the class, inspired Sonia to recreate the scene (See Figs. 6.15). *The children role-*

played their families, garb and all. They created the backdrop of the city and with clever

placement of props and using technological tools, the children became the workers.

Figure 6.15. Mohawk skywalkers in New York

Figure 6.15.1 Step by Step skywalkers in New York

The photo event was such a success; other scenes were reproduced allowing for all the

students to participate in the experience (See Figs. 6.16)

Figure 6.16. Documentation of another Mohawk scene above New York

Figure 6.16.1. Becoming Mohawk skywalkers over NYC

In January 2012, Sonia and I met to review the progress of her project. She asked for guidance as to where she could go further with the experiences. We revisited the inquiry through her documentation and agreed that in order to move forward, we would cycle back to what the children know and build on from their acquired knowledge. Sonia followed through by asking children more about their understandings about bridges: How are they built? Who builds them? Why do we know so much about bridges? How do we help build cities? The discussions were documented and the educators considered plans to bring the learning to culmination. The children brought forward their knowledge by working conscientiously in the atelier. Using

recycled materials they decided to re-create the skyline of New York City. For several weeks the children worked at planning, sketching, building, painting and arranging the city that they knew their community had helped shape (See Fig. 6.16). Now it was their turn to join the ironworkers in construction (See Fig. 6.17 & Fig. 6.18).

Figure 6.17. Sketching New York buildings before construction

Figure 6.17.1. Creating New York City out of recycled materials in the studio.

Figure 6.18. New York City

Studio work brought together young children's growing knowledge about their community, active learning experiences, and an emergent curriculum that happened over a series of stages in a cycle of inquiry.

Coincidently, early in May, television stations broadcasted the placement of the highest antenna on the new Freedom Center in New York City (See Fig. 6.19). Sonia arranged for the children to see it *live;* Kahnawake ironworkers were on the screen. The children applauded and showed great pride as one of their relatives was an integral part of completing the project that they understood so well.

Figure 6.19. Live footage seen by the children in their classroom.

And, following suit to their previous experiences, the nephew of the Ironworker recreated the

memorable scene with his friend (See Figs. 6.20).

Figures 6.20. Children experience final stages of the Freedom Tower

Sonia brought together the project by going out into the community to reflect collectively and to

observe the authentic impact Ironworkers have on the community. Sonia recalls:

> *Our final phase has brought our learning into deep understandings. Our walk on the*
>
> *bike path brought us to an important monument dedicated to the men who worked on the*
>
> *Quebec Bridge* (See Figs. 6.21*). We looked and talked about it, and then took a final*
>
> *photo to remember all that was learned.*

Figure 6.21. Learning the names of Mohawk skywalkers

Figure 6.21.1. Remembering on the Quebec Bridge

Sonia added:

The Ironworking project all started by examining a sculpture of a Mohawk worker

climbing a column (See Fig. 6.22). *We discussed so much of what we had learned about*

ourselves:

- *The heavy tool belt*

- *The hard work*

- *The strength & balance*

- *The extreme heights that have to be climbed*

- *Almost touching the clouds like a true Skywalker*

Figure 6.22. Skywalker sculpture

My meetings with Sonia were always intriguing. Early on, she theorized how the group experience would unfold. What was significant was that the teaching team kept firm to the principles of continuing inquiry by providing for active experiences that would expand the children's knowledge. The project gave them pride, and facilitated the development of a relationship to the community's ironworkers. Careful documentation opened a window to

understanding the role of the study materials and how they might help develop the potential of arts mediums in children's learning.

The children's experiences were showcased during a museum evening in May 2012, and the local papers wrote articles about the Ironworker project. Since the museum event occurred during the week, Sonia offered to open the school on Saturday to make sure the Ironworkers, who came home on the weekend, could visit. The children had the opportunity to visit the exhibit during the day, and the families and the community could view the children's work at their leisure.

Teaching, Learning and the Community

Reflection and pride transported the educators into the final stages of selecting the children's meaningful work that would be presented at The Kahnawake Language and Cultural Center (Kanien'kehá:ka Onkwawén:na Raotitióhkwa). This was a new endeavour, and all the participants felt great excitement about bringing the children's learning *into* the community. Early in April, several days after an afternoon visit to inspect the space, we loaded up our cars with samples of the children's work and headed to the centre to prepare for the exhibit. (See Fig. 6.23, Fig. 6.24, Fig. 6.25, Fig. 6. 26, Fig. 6.27 & Fig. 6.28)

Figure 6.23. Loading up precious art pieces

It took hours to arrange the materials but the gallery lights and calmness of the environment gave us all a sense that what was occurring was precious. I believe, for the staff, it proved to be a critical collaborative experience—to highlight important aspects of the projects and share them with their community. The Cycle of Inquiry was meaningful for the adults involved. Throughout the planning, implementing, documenting, questioning, selecting, and reflecting, we maintained the child at the center at all times.

Figure 6.24. Step by Step's children's art lines the halls of the Cultural Center

Figure 6.25. Group painting and natural item collage by 3 year olds

Figure 6.26. Fall collage paintings on canvas

Figure 6.27. Friendship collages

Figure 6.28.   Reflections in the water

A month after our vernissage at the Cultural Center, the children's full projects were

presented to families and friends at Step by Step Child and Family Center. Once again, the

educators had the choice of exhibiting the children's work either in their classrooms or in the

gym. I strolled through the school during the early evening joining the families as they ventured

through the various displays. Nancy and Gail greeted families with a map of the school

accompanied by written descriptions of class projects so that everyone could visit the spaces

where children's cultural learning was visible.

Several classes included the families' active participation during the project. Roseanne's

students depicted a scene from the Creation Story: Skywoman falling (See Figs. 6.29). The

children had worked with an overhead projector, tracing an enlarged pictorial representation of

Skywoman. The long roll of paper that held the children's numerous tracings was then painted

by the children, using only the earth's colours. The young artists selected the hues of Mother

Earth thoughtfully and as they worked, we documented their comment. The Creation story is

very long and is most often told to the children in abridged versions. In fact, according to oral

tradition, it can take days to express an entire account of the story (Porter, 2008). Roseanne had

invited parents and families to share in the "telling."   She provided each family with a written

segment of the Creation Story and requested that the families, including their child, create their

own art interpretation pertaining to that part of the story (See Fig. 6.30). The final presentation

in the gym was powerful, and importantly, had given parents a chance to share in the experience.

During one of our pre-museum meetings, Roseanne related:

> You have to see what I have been getting from the parents. Some of them are so
>
> beautiful and the parents are so talented. I was going to make a book but I think they
>
> should be put up in order to show the story and they may not be seen or appreciated in a
>
> book. They're like works of art.   (Informal conversation, May 10, 2012)

Figure 6.29 Skywoman falling
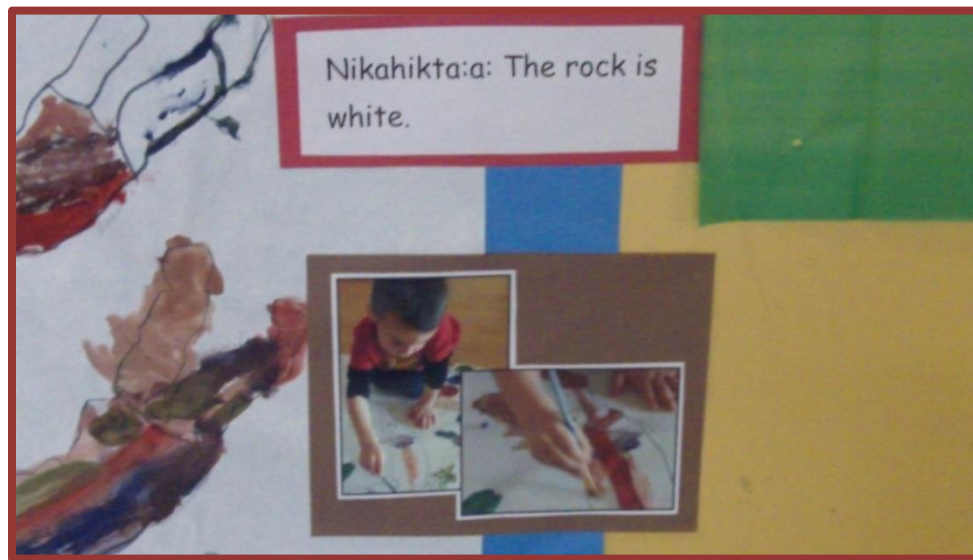
Figure 6.29.1. Documentation of children's addition of color
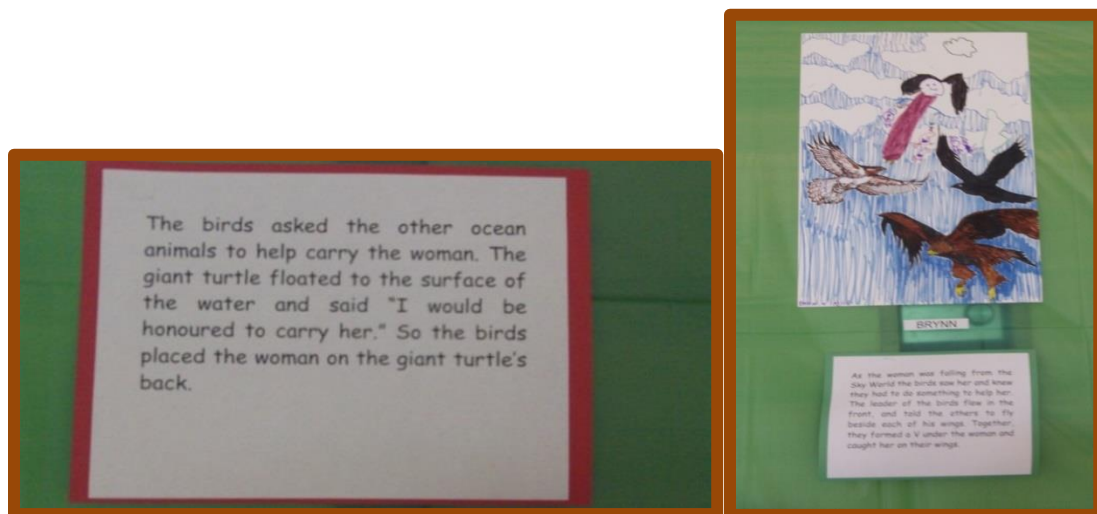
Figure 6.30. Parent and child depictions of the Creation Story

Teachers transformed their classroom environments into museums that exhibited the months of

learning that had occurred through various forms of documentation, and presented unique

representations that made the children's meaning and learning visible. Following are only some

of the exhibits viewed during the museum times (See Group Figs. 6.31, Group Figs. 6.32, Fig. 6.33, Group Figs. 6.34).

Figures 6.31. Rebecca's class: Our Relationship to the natural world and the seasons
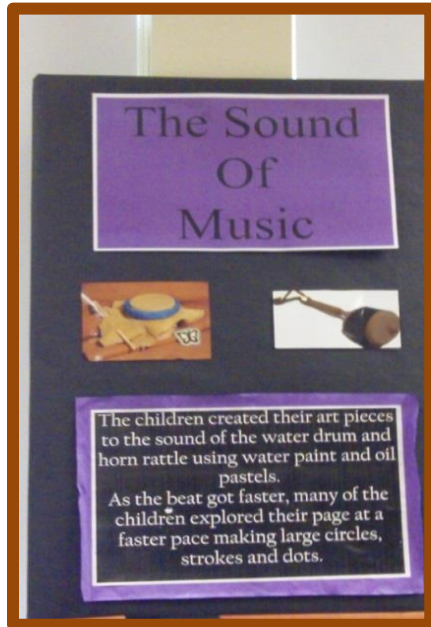
Figures 6.32. Melissa's class exploration of relationships with music

Figure 6.32.1. Melissa's class: The in-house Longhouse where music often takes place.

Figure 6.33. Deidra's class display of relationship with the seasons: Colours of Mother Earth

Figure 6.34. Monique's class: Our Relationship with Water

Meeting the Roads Travelled

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, I postponed interviewing the teachers and administrators during the school year, as my frequent field visits and conversations with the staff at Step by Step provided sufficient data. Upon reflection, I believe that this was a prudent decision as it allowed the educators space, after a very busy stretch of time, to revisit their processes themselves, according to the objectives of the study. One area I have developed in personally and professionally throughout the research, and with thanks to my Indigenous partners, is in allowing for such time and space to think. I have learned to wait for thoughts to be expressed by others, instead of inquiring all the time. I developed that thoughtfulness from Owen:nakon Deer who guided me in Phase One when the studios were being named, and that experience has affected me profoundly.

The closure of the school year seemed the best time to bring participants' thoughts together; a good time for listening and reflecting. At this point, I was able to talk to teachers individually about their teaching and children's learning, to inquire what rose to the surface as significant to the process. I held one on one interviews, and a group meeting where educators themselves had the opportunity to present their reflections to each other. A final interview with Nancy and Gail brought together what had been appropriated over the years of study. The participants were honest and forthcoming with their perspectives. I had to reflect deeply after our conversations; it took me weeks to write in my journal, as I tried to listen well to their experiences and consider how they mirrored multiple components of the research. I had to examine what role each piece of our study played toward building a knowledge that gave rise to cultural identity. One of my final journey entries summarized my observations and thoughts:

Nancy and Gail were very clear that culture now took the lead. They have appreciated

Reggio but have found their meaning through culture. The arts have helped build,

strengthen challenge and transform approaches of teaching and learning. And, while

some practices during our study will be laid to the wayside, the support that those

experiences offered were necessary; necessary to the point that Nancy and Gail could

address what can be let go, and what can stay and move curriculum forward. Children,

teachers and the community have identified the change and will take responsibility for

the future. Showcasing children's projects will be placed as it should be, in the

community, for sharing, pride and making cultural learning visible. It will follow the

flow of Indigenous ways and affirm cultural identity; ways of thinking and being. I am

reminded by Rogoff's words, "culture matters," Moll's belief in "funds of knowledge"

and Porter's introductory phrase in his first chapter: "Grandma said, Try to write it all

down and make a book." (Journal, August 20, 2012)

I have re-read this journal entry often as it speaks to the depth and breadth of this journey.

Nancy and Gail's message illuminated the reality of Western theories of education, which have

permeated their school systems and have masked what holds meaning in this Mohawk

community. Campbell (1983) refers to this obstruction as an oppressive blanket that needs to be

shed. I have grown in my listening in that I better understand now what has propelled this

community's detachment from the "blanket," and can see how the Reggio Emilia approach

offered an opening for renewed spaces to be considered. Culture took the lead and *they* made it

happen. The educational team at Step by Step realized that "it" was there and theirs all along. It

was time for me to move aside and acknowledge the useful role that Reggio provided and to

appreciate Reggio as being a catalyst for change and, for seeing myself in "letting go."

Closing the Gate of Phase Three

The curriculum cycle, namely our Cycle of Inquiry, involved the simultaneous listening

processes of teacher and child. Planning, implementation and documentation of experiences

came about through a continuous sequence, each step reliant on the other. The cycle has been

intensely attached to the people (i.e. resources, people, families, communities). What's more,

artistic methods intermingled into meaning-making tools for all participants. The child, always

at the center, had to be listened to along the way. As summarized by Nancy:

> For me, the introduction of this way of thinking opens up to the many gifts this
>
> community has; they have been revealed. In the children, we see what they are capable
>
> of doing. In the adults, we see leaders emerge, the assistants, the teachers, Joe. The gifts
>
> have also been of the culture; beauty, celebration, appreciating, valuing. It's all helped.
>
> As for our development, it has become our own language for change. Now it's our own.
>
> That`s why we leave Reggio Emilia and change our terminology.   It becomes our own
>
> with our way. (Interview, June 23, 2012)

This chapter has reflected on how culture bridges individuals and their communities. Such

connections supported child and teacher development, community, relationships and

significantly, cultural identity and pride. Chapter 7 will document my process of data analysis

and findings that spans Phase 2 and Phase 3 of study.

> *My drive home, back over the challenging Mercier, embraces the scholarship of paved*
>
> *new roads. Sharing these years of learning with my partners has empowered me to*
>
> *return home thoughtfully, holding on to bridges of knowledge I have gained, and the*
>
> *learning about Native cultural identity that has been afforded to me. At one time this*
>
> *bridge terrified me, but now I read the bumps, crevices and cracks as old friends. We*

built a living bridge, of communication, friendship and ownership and raised it with the assistance of the arts, Mohawk culture, experiential opportunities and the warmth of careful listening. My thoughts travel back to first crossings; I was not aware how this endeavor would reach its destination. When I had to re-route, I gained time for reflection that transformed my thinking and gave me strength. I needed to attend to the roads less travelled with apprehension and curiosity as to where this journey would take us.....change questions, take different paths…broaden the bridge. My travel has changed what I know and who I am. I add my voice to other narratives about effective change. I am reminded of Nikos Kazantazakis' (poet and novelist) understanding of "teacher": "True teachers are those who use themselves as bridges over which they invite their students to cross; then, having facilitated their crossing, joyfully collapse, encouraging them to create their own." My partners and I have been true teachers to each other, and now it is time to celebrate.

Chapter 7

The Living Bridge

For three years the bridge has been present in the life of this story. It has been a pathway, an obstacle and a road of transition. At times the bridge felt like an "in-between;" an uncertain terrain in the middle of boundaries. One thing for sure, the bridge was alive with wonder, emotions and values. This 'living bridge' brought together stories of lives; people to people accompanied by their beliefs. Any bridge can be seen from countless directions; standing underneath it, beside it, driving across or leaving it. A 'living bridge' opens different horizons. It is time to let the bridge live on its own.

Opening Remarks

This chapter gathers the data from Phase Two and Phase Three and follows the in-depth process of analysis. Throughout Phases Two and Three, I collected and analyzed interviews, focus group sessions, videotapes, field notes, photo documentation and my journals. Because of the bulk of data I had accumulated over two years, I had to examine and re-examine my documentation many times in order to flesh out themes and patterns. My early analysis had suggested several general categories similar to Phase One. However, in the course of Phase Two, with a major shift in mindset to "our culture, our ways," other meaningful concepts rose to the surface (Butler-Kisber, 2010). I sifted through the data, expanding my understandings of what had been illuminated during these phases of study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). I worked persistently at distilling the data into manageable chunks by a process of highlighting and memoing common ideas and then assigning specific themes (Butler-Kisber, 2010; Miles & Huberman, 1994). What was noteworthy was what emerged (Corbin & Strauss, 2008): elements

that held profound meaning to draw out what would be important when supporting culture and identity in early childhood education.

 Data Analysis

Both phases included my ongoing practice of analyzing data and building interpretations; adding construction to the 'living bridge.' In the course of transcribing and reviewing my texts, I focused on identifying information that gave rise to cultural identity. I knew that culture was foremost in the teacher's thoughts; therefore illuminating areas that supported culture would be crucial. I continued to use *constant comparison* to review and classify my information (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) and identified key themes as I memoed (Butler-Kisber, 2010; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) during course grained and more fine grained analysis sessions (Butler-Kisber, 2010). I examined how teachers provided critical information in discussions by using repeated words, phrases, themes and metaphors, allowing me to draw out broader meanings in relation to our discourses (Lofland & Lofland, 1995). As an illustration, following is a sample of harvested repeated teacher reflections giving rise to one of the descriptive categories of teachers' careful listening to children:

Phase Three:

- When documenting the small group it was beneficial with better outcomes as better listening occurred

- Tape recorders were used to select better evidence of learning

- Plenty of documented photos to choose from: sharper skills had to be used for selection

- Videos were taken for sharing and teacher reflection

My extensive process of organizing my descriptive records for both phases proved to be useful in the sense that they provided for understanding and thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973),

responding to the inquiry of how Mohawk culture and values could be interwoven into a curriculum for young children. My analysis process added to augmenting my "bricolage" of knowledge (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 10). I kept in mind the research question: What role would the arts and the atelier play in developing cultural identity within early childhood programming? I gathered numerous detailed sections from my data that seemed especially significant to early childhood education and to Mohawk culture.

My narratives of Phase Two and Three illustrate how the arts became the resource for communication that added to children's ways of expressing their ideas and values within Mohawk culture. What emerged from my analysis was the demonstration how teachers developed their skills in exploring the arts and integrating cultural knowledge into age-appropriate experiences in the atelier environments. Would the offering of art as a mode in which to express ideas expand the children's cultural experiences? And if so, how? The following themes emerged as important responses: *Learning through Experiences; Communicating through the Ateliers; Culturing Curriculum* and a continuing theme that developed: *Understanding a Pedagogy of Listening*. Each theme is described in turn.

Theme 1: Learning through experience. *Learning through Experience* emerged as a central theme of importance, affirmed by the teachers in their interviews and exhibited by the children daily. This theme is comprised of three sub-themes: *Children's Active Experiences, Following the Cycle of Inquiry, and Teachers' Active Experiences*. These sub-themes are interconnected, rely on and relate to each other.

Children's Active Experiences. Children's active experience defined the progression of Phase Two and Three. During both phases of study children were engaged in a process of active hands-on learning. My field notes, photo documentation and journal summaries recorded how

the young participants were involved in the practices in the studios. Interviews with the

educators in Phase 2 affirmed children's active learning:

> It all looked like play…It was a play experience and atmosphere that the kids really
>
> wanted to just play along…..The kids taught eachother. It was fun and engaging and they
>
> were experiencing it all without anyone telling them how to have fun or do it.
>
> <div align="right">(Interview, Carina, March 16, 2011)</div>
>
> <div align="right">(Memo:children exploring/activity/social experiences)</div>
>
> We took 2 -3 children at a time... The children were curious and seemed excited to try
>
> something new. They looked first and then were active participants in the discovery of the
>
> clay.   (Interview, Deirdra, June 24, 2011)
>
> <div align="right">(Memo: activity and children exploring)</div>

Children's learning through experience was illuminated for a second time in Phase 3 when

teachers reflected, during a focus group session, how children moved forward because of active

opportunities:

> Glorianne (teacher): I've even used a globe – I never did that. I leave the globe out now
>
> and the children see where land and water connects. They love to look at it…
>
> Monique (teacher): I'm watching the children to see where they are interested… they are
>
> the ones who are exploring what they want- I'll see where that goes…
>
> <div align="right">(Focus Group, Sept. 12, 2011)</div>
>
> <div align="right">(Memo: children exploring and activity/observation)</div>

My field notes supported a triangulation of evidence. Below are some observations of children's

activity that I memoed:

> …the two friends sat at the table and drew with the "water colored" pastels while
>
> listening to sounds of babbling books and splashing waterfalls.   M. joined and was happy
>
> to walk around the atelier and listen to the music of water. He observed and identified
>
> the photos and was happy to sit with his friends at the table to sketch….
>
> (Field notes, Stephanie's class, April 27, 2011)
>
> (Memo: social interactions/children exploring/activity/joy)

What worked well was that the children were so interested in the activities of learning.

The boys really were so interested in the drilling and the hammering and the

sawing…they got together and talked about it…even the 4 girls, the shawls were done

and they danced with them freely…" (Field notes, Roseanne, June 20, 2011)

> (Memo: social interaction/children and activity)

The children are so busy constructing everywhere in the class- every child is involved!

Sonia has created a huge construction center and has named it Local 4- the Ironworker's

station. The children are living the experiences of the Ironworkers… the environment

and the children are alive in the life of the Ironworkers! (Journal, March 10, 2012)

> (Memo: activity/exploring in play)

The act of learning through experience resonated profoundly with Mohawk culture and ways of

learning (Battiste, 2002; Porter, 2008). Classroom projects that occurred over extended time

allowed children opportunities to observe and explore; reflecting traditional ways young children

learn in communities (Rogoff, 2003). Indigenous learning looks at methods of knowing through

keen attention and ongoing activity "rather than relying on lessons out of context" (Rogoff, 2003, p. 9).

Important to an Indigenous knowledge process is for children to be regarded with respect as to who they are individually, socially and through meaningful experiences (Battiste, 2002). Battiste (2004) identifies the importance of experiential learning as it relates to core practices of Indigenous knowledge acquisition. Rogoff's (2011) work draws attention to how, early on, children acquire knowledge by participating in their cultural communities; whether it be observing or contributing to them, with the support of the adults in their lives. Cummins and Danesi (1990) support Rogoff's perspective in that they perceive educational accomplishments as being deeply connected to the child's development within his/her own culture. That development includes participating *in* their language and culture to promote pride and knowledge of their culture. In our study, the children at Step by Step Child and Family Center gained understanding according to Indigenous ways of observing, exploring, experiencing, and creating in daily activities (Battiste, 2002; Kirkness, 2013; Porter, 2008; Rogoff, 2003). Through their active experiences they made meaning of Mohawk culture. Such practices were maintained throughout both phases.

Additionally, constructivist theory describes learning as a vigorous process where children build their knowledge and hypothesize based upon their prior or recent knowledge (Bruner, 1996a). Piaget (1997) affirms that learning happens through a progression of energetic experiences rather than a passive pedagogy. Piaget also underscored the constructivist belief that children be offered opportunities to assimilate new understandings into existing knowledge, and that these also, importantly come from family life. The sub-theme of children's active learning involved a process of experiences that echoed Indigenous ways of education.

Following the Cycle of Inquiry. In the context of constructivist thinking, the Cycle of Inquiry was critical because it supported and maintained children's experiences and guided teachers in their own experiential learning. During my analysis, I highlighted "*following the Cycle of Inquiry,*" which was also identified as valuable in promoting Mohawk principles for the children and the teachers. The sections harvested from my data suggested that this framework respected relationships between participants and addressed the vision of a culturally integrated program. The Cycle of Inquiry provided strategies for children's explorations and guided teachers throughout extended project investigations. The underlying motivation was "inquiry" whereby teachers led children in examining their topic through active experiences. Along the cycle teachers posed questions and used the atelier, and artistic endeavours, to provide for time, space, thought and flexibility so that children could communicate their developing understandings. I grouped chunks of data that underscored teacher's developing awareness of a more process-oriented approach:

> They [the children] really concentrated more on what they were doing. The hands-on approach proved to be better than me demonstrating right off the bat. It may be the way specific materials were used–like the clay. That [the Cycle of Inquiry] was such a good way of experiencing…They had active time to learn more on their own; then we had a role.
>
> (Interview, Rebecca, May 24, 2011)
>
> The younger children in general seemed unsure of the new material and played with much hesitancy. However, as the weeks unfolded, they became accustomed to the clay and eventually played with enthusiasm.   (Interview, Deidra, June 24, 2011)
>
> From this experience I learned how important it is especially with kids this young to slow down their first experiences with a new material… (Interview, Rebecca, June 24, 2011)

My field notes described this more investigative approach along a cycle of inquiry, guided by the

teachers and experienced by the children:

> L.M. (child) and R. (child) were first to come to the atelier. They sat quietly listening to
>
> the sounds of water that were being played on the tape recorder. Soon, they stood up and
>
> identified the water pictures that were posted on the cupboard doors (See Figs. 7). R.
>
> commented as he pointed to one of the photos, "The whale dives." As the children eyed
>
> the images, associating the sounds they heard with the photographs, they were then
>
> presented with pastels the colours of water. They matched various colours of blues and
>
> greens to the pictures by picking up the puck paints and walking over to the photos to show
>
> the similarities in colours. (Field notes, Stephanie's class, Feb. 15, 2011)

Photographic documentation accompanied my field notes, providing evidence of the children's

process of learning:

Figure 7. Finding water

Figure 7.1. Observation first

Figure 7.1.1. The music leads the painting

Figure 7.1.2. Painting with watery blues

I grouped statements that acknowledged the educators' growing understandings of the Cycle of

Inquiry:

…I think providing this type of experience, for children and teachers alike, would really develop a deep understanding of process along with the properties of the clay, so that when representation is requested or required for a particular project they children would understand all of the nuances of the clay… (Interview Monique, May 24, 2011)

…to move the experiences in meaningful directions; less teacher directed but more exploratory to allow for the ideas to lead the learning. I always thought that way when I was teaching. You have the ateliers now to allow you or your assistants a break away to focus on it all.   (Gail (administrator), Focus Group Session, Feb.28, 2011)

…Debbie and I agreed that we are on the right path, moving back to how education had always been for the Mohawk people. Debbie explained that since infancy, being leaned against a tree, strapped to the cradle boards, children are always observing and finding interests and she feels we are now continuing that at Step by Step. According to Debbie, we are watching children better, finding out what keeps them interested and wanting to learn and guiding them from there… (Journal, April 21, 2011)

Interestingly enough, during Phase 3, the educators proceeded directly to identifying the Cycle of Inquiry as extending their curriculum and being beneficial in promoting Mohawk values:

Monique (teacher): I truly appreciate the implications toward learning when educators

follow the children's interest…

Stephanie (teacher): It has been less highly structured and teacher directed with tight

lesson plans. Our program is more student-centred and naturally flowing. It's

flexible now and we take on a more guiding approach because of the Cycle of

Inquiry. There is certainly more time allotted for deeper more meaningful

explorations and investigations of topics...   (Focus Group, April 6, 2012)

- Experiences for the children were meaningful individually and for the group

- Revisiting experiences was key. The Cycle of Inquiry allows for that.

- Classroom challenges; I see things more positively; now with the cycle I looked

upon opportunities to grow.

(Teachers' comments during a meeting. Field notes, June 22, 2012)

Nancy (administrator): With the cycle I felt the shift was the pedagogical approach from a

skills focus to something that reflected broader learning outcomes and meaning.

For me, it really became about meaning. It was a pedagogical focus from what to

how. It used to be what are you making and now it's, how did you make that?

So, it's about a focus on a transformational quality of pedagogy. We weren't

doing that before.   (Interview, July, 12, 2012)

Freire (1993) posited that the core of all learning depends on the way an individual processes

experience, and identifies, in particular, the significance of critical reflection. Freire describes

learning as a cycle that begins with experience, continues with reflection, and leads to action,

which itself become a kind of experience. These beliefs were reflected in the children's daily

involvements and in the teachers' participation in the Cycle of Inquiry. The teachers' reflections

on their own active experiences completed the process of experiential learning (O'Connor, 2010).

Teacher's Active Experiences. During analysis of Phase 2 and 3 another critical sub-theme emerged: that of *teachers' active experiences*. Teachers' active participation was key to the development of a creative curriculum that provided for cultural learning. Their relationships with the children were critical as acting as facilitators and guides; they took their place alongside their students in the ateliers. I examined the photos of teachers and children in the ateliers and noted how teacher's active experiences were significant to the learning. Through practice teachers developed an awareness of being attentive to a "process" of learning and their active involvement as seen in Phase Two:

> …After only a few minutes, M. (child) walked over to the window ledge where bottles of colored water were resting. He first selected blue and carried it over to the easel. He insisted that the blue water be added to his white block paint, and so it was. He painted a bit and then returned to the window to then select green water as his addition to the block paints. M. worked for quite a while and most diligently while exploring colours and large paper on his easel (See Figs. 7.2).

Figure 7.2. Observing bottles of colored water

Figure 7.2.1. Stephanie assists M. in his exploration

Figure 7.2.2. M. paints

Thoughtful provisions for children's active participation underscored a belief that young children can learn in many different ways when accompanied by a significant change in teacher practice. As a result their active participation in the ateliers, teachers became committed to developing their own skills and were directly involved in the progression of acquiring arts-based approaches.

My notations, culled from my data, pointed to *educators' active experiences*, supporting the argument for *learning through experience*. Following are portions of my data that suggested the event of teachers' transformation during Phase Two of the study:

…But, it went in a completely different direction. I thought it would focus on the White Pine when we first started talking about trees in the fall, but now we are so into the animals in the forest, so I brought in discussing the forest animals and then the clans. It had to take time so I now understand time and flexibility, just not to rush and allow for exploration. (Carina, Focus group & photo sharing, Feb, 23, 2011)

(Memo: teacher learning through the experience with children)

I think also that I started to look better at what documentation I was taking because of the art going on in the atelier. Before I would take pictures of children but I've had such a good time focusing in on their hands (See Figs. 7.3) because it meant something...I've always like photography and I have my own camera that I use. (Roseanne, Focus group & photo elicitation, Feb. 28, 2011)

(Memo: teacher developing skills through atelier experiences– noticing more)

.

Figures 7.3. Some of Roseanne's photos of clay work in the studios

…From this experience I learned how important it is especially with kids this young to slow down their first experiences with a new material. Teaching them techniques gave them more tools for them to use later to represent something more meaningful, something with purpose, whereas had we not taught technique, the children may have discovered some on their own, possibly lacking the vocabulary to describe it…

(Interview Rebecca, June 24, 2011)

(Memo: Teacher appreciating time allowance because of atelier /arts experiences)

Such illustrations presented teachers' direct involvement. Teachers identified their movement away from thematic approaches and disconnected topics as was carried out in the past. Vecchi

(2010) cautions that teachers are often captivated by techniques that "produce" and are concerned with end-product success.

The sub-theme of teacher's *active experiences* arose as significant during Phase 3 as well. Teachers took the lead in their classrooms, moving beyond providing materials and practicing techniques. They demonstrated that they were also pedagogical thinkers who constantly revisited and reinterpreted their work to support learning experiences for the children. As an illustration from one of my selections for teacher's active experience during Phase 3:

> I have become more open minded in my teaching style. I take more direction from the children…. My classroom is more reflective of the children and their ideas. I think I have changed my definition of teacher. I like that I don't always have the answers and that I can learn alongside the children; and moreover I often learn from the children…
> (Interview, Monique, June 23, 2012)

Indigenous values speak to a dual responsibility of being a teacher and a member of a First Nations community. Battiste (2010), Kirkness (2013), Porter (2008) and many others describe 'teaching' as a cultural responsibility that a community has toward its members. Pidgeon et al. (2013) add from their findings of a First Nations studies program in 2008, that the educator's impact *in* experiences allows for student success. These researchers note that the key to success is the relationship between teacher and student (Pidgeon et al., 2013). Therefore, teacher's active experiences with or alongside their students, gave way for meaningful change to occur over the course of the phases of study.

Teachers provided for cultural meaning in the context of children's learning processes and in their methods of teaching. Porter (2008) encourages these connections as he calls for First

Nations communities to ground children's development in knowledge and appreciation of their

culture and traditions through meaningful experiences. Kolb`s (1984) description of experiential

learning helps summarize the theme and sub-themes that emerged: "Experiential learning is the

process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge

results from the combination of grasping and transforming experiences" (p. 38).

What has emerged from the data is that learning through experiences can be an

instrument that attends to objectives of learning and at the same time, cultural integration.

Children's and teacher's dynamic participation illuminated a view of children practising their

own culture and similarly, the adults practicing the cultural role of "teacher." They guided their

young students' unique perspectives and helped to develop their autonomy. How the children

and teachers attended to their explorations relates to the next theme of "*Communicating through

the ateliers*."

Theme 2: Communicating through the ateliers. The environment and arts-based

practices during Phase 2 and 3 of study aimed at developing knowledge that would assist

children in acquiring a holistic background. The ateliers, and a concentration on exercising the

arts, involved seeking out a balanced approach whereby intellectual, social, emotional and

spiritual components of learning would be addressed. The teachers at Step by Step Child and

Family Center worked hard at maintaining their young students' education *for* understanding

which included much more than cognitive development. Three sub-themes supported

Communicating through the Ateliers; Exploration of different media; Impact on Teaching and

Learning; Integration of Mohawk Language and Culture.

The matter of culture *in* teaching and learning was deeply involved. By that I mean children's participation in the arts provided numerous experiences for integration of thought, skills, emotions and communication, significant to First Nations ways of teaching and learning. Battiste (2002) reminds us that "…distinctive features of Indigenous knowledge and pedagogy are learning by observation and doing, learning through authentic experiences and individualized instruction, and learning with enjoyment" (p. 18). With an understanding of children being able to communicate through a variety of modes, cultural symbols and topics could be valued and integrated into learning. Children's learning about their Mohawk culture would involve "learning how to gain, render and communicate meaning in a number of symbolic ways" (Wright, 2003, p. 91).

Beginning practices in Phase 2 were kept at a slow pace in order to establish safe and supportive environments where children could follow their instincts and engage with materials thoughtfully. At the start, the data showed that educators repeatedly exhibited a "product oriented" approach, asking children often, "What are you going to make?" rather than nurturing exploration, discovery and reflection. It did not take long for the educators to self-regulate and provide for experiences that would allow for rich investigations.

Through a coarse grained analysis (Butler-Kisber, 2010), I repeated my practice of memoing and uncovering patterns. I became aware that educators supported arts approaches*:* a concept that eventually rose as a key contributor to addressing my research question whether the arts would expand children's cultural experiences. During a deeper stage of examination, a fine grained analysis (Butler-Kisber, 2010), my initial memoing was affirmed. More chunks of data were gathered and categorized supporting sub-themes that suggested how the arts had developed into a tool for investigation and expression of culture.

Exploration of different media. My notations gave rise to a sub-theme that suggested that with the *exploration of different art mediums* teachers could generate children's cultural learning. Consideration of a variety of art mediums developed in sequential steps. Below is an example of what I memoed and gleaned from early investigation of one of the mediums explored during Phase 2: Clay.

> S. (child) joined us ... She showed her handling the clay by rolling and pulling off chunks for herself. She rolled out lines of clay using the palm of her hand and lined them up carefully. When she had many snake-like pieces she decided to stack them and then flatten them…B. (child) soon joined us and took pieces to squish and tear apart. A. (child) explored the material by squeezing it hard and then feeling the change of texture with the palms of her hands. She pinched the newly shaped pieces with her fingers thereby creating new shapes. R. (child) requested a spot at the table where a great deal of squeezing and tearing clay took place at the corner. When it was time to clean up, those who were still at the table were thrilled to take all the pieces of clay and stick it back together into one large pile of clay. (Field notes, Stephanie's class, Sept. 23, 2010)
>
> (Memoed: Art medium: clay /learning through discovery/joy)

> Monique (teacher): At first children wanted to make something. I encouraged them to explore and play with the material. We used clay vocabulary: poke it, pinch it, roll it out. The second and subsequent times the children really explored more as I tried to predict what they were thinking. The more they explored with the techniques, I added materials to provoke. In that time, we stoppped verbalizing or attempting to make representations. When water was added that really extended the exploration. (Focus Group, Oct. 28, 2010)
>
> (Memo: clay investigated/ discovery and extended play)

Phase 3 data also showed repeated patterns of the exploration of different media.

> Rebecca (teacher): …As for work in the atelier I think we'll try *collaging with natural*
>
> *materials* and *painting.* When we will try to *layer* the art and the children will see a
>
> piece progressing… They'll be *painting and collaging* as they follow Mother Earth
>
> through the seasons. (See Figs. 7.4)… We also used *light and shadows*; that brought
>
> in Mother Earth and the natural world to our *painting sessions* (See Figs. 7.5).
>
> (Focus Group, April 6, 2012)

Figure 7.4. Collage Technique

The children of class 7 enjoyed gathering sticks, pine cones, and tree bark in the forest and bringing them into the dark atelier. They worked cooperatively to select and place the natural materials on a projector and then proceeded to trace the shadows.
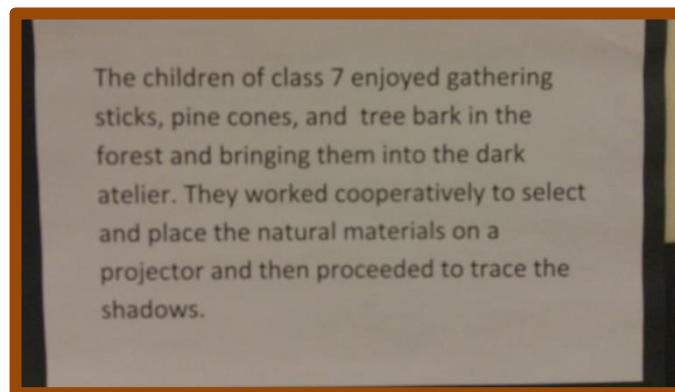
Figure 7.5. Teacher documentation

Figure 7.5.1. Example of light and shadow technique

Monique's class showed their appreciation of water, planning occasions to value the

natural world by way *of sketching and illustrating* reflections in the water. Exploring,

discovering and understanding the central purpose of why thanks is given for the water was

represented in children's depictions of the river and their representation of the river

through the season. I am so glad she tried various art mediums: *pencil sketching, blurring*

and smudging (See Fig.7.6), and *the impasto technique* – those canvases are amazing (See

Fig.7.7). (Field notes, June 8, 2012)

Figure 7.6. Examples of sketching, blurring and smudging

Figure 7.7. Impasto technique and paint

Such sections harvested from the data provided insight into how the young children developed skills over time and delighted in their clay experiences in the ateliers. First steps involved discovering clay properties through sensory exploration. When it was time, children acquired techniques of rolling, pinching and poking and eventually making stories. Sculpting, molding,

creating symbols and visual language completed the stages of development. Kolb's (2001)

identification of "acquiring a language of the hands" (p. 22) was supported and led to children's

developing artistic skills when creating their representations.

Phase Three gave further emphasis to educators' developing considerations of different art

mediums, as well as 'other' arts-informed approaches. For example, Sonia's vigilant

documentation of the Ironworkers showcased many creative drama sessions. In these, the

children were engaged in role-playing opportunities that held great meaning for the Mohawk

community of Kahnawake. When the children had opportunities to actively be involved in the

life of the community, through the arts (here creative drama), they experienced what it meant to

'live' the culture to which they belonged. Such data shed light on purposeful teaching methods

using the arts, and identified the possibilities that creative encounters in the ateliers could add to

everyday learning.

Explorations of various art mediums and arts approaches allowed for differentiation

whereby students were able to work at their own level, in the atelier environments, and at a pace

that was comfortable for them (Wright, 2003). Such approaches addressed Indigenous methods

of acquiring understanding as well as providing for the child's positive identity. As stated in the

Indian Control of Indian Education policy (ICIE, 1972): "[We] want education to give [our]

children the knowledge to understand and be proud of themselves and the knowledge to

understand the world around them" (p. 1). Consistent with Indigenous learning practices, the

children first observed and used new skills that brought their understandings into active

experiences (Rogoff, 2003). The data showed that teachers' offerings of various mediums (i.e.

clay, paint, pastels, collage and the language of art), combined with a constructivist approach to

teaching and learning, fulfilled goals of "…creating the learning environments suited to the

habits and interests of the Indian child" (National Indian Brotherhood, 1972, p.18).

Impact on teaching and learning. Furthermore, I culled from my data repeated

sentiments that suggested that the ateliers gave rise to improved teacher practice. Chunks of data

showed *the impact on teaching and learning* that developed into a sub-theme of *Communicating*

through the Ateliers. The voices of the educators were important and therefore I had to review

my notes well. As an outsider to the culture, I wanted to attend to their words (Porsanger, 2004).

I studied conversations from my field notes, interviews and journals to examine what was

changing in teacher practice. I found frequent comments that represented teachers' self-

reflections about the integration of the arts (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006) during the times in the

studios. I identified and gathered teachers' reflections such as "I learned," "I began to see," "It

made me realize," "I now understand" and "I started to look better at…"   These terms came

from the teachers themselves whose objectives were grounded in supporting children's

development spiritually, emotionally, intellectually and physically. I identified repeated

references to the implementation of the arts as catalysts for change in teaching and learning. For

example in Phase Two:

> Melissa (teacher): …I just loved this photo. R. is not a child who often participates in the
>
> arts-like activities. But see he is having such a good time playing with the rattle and the
>
> music……you have to understand R.   It is just the joy that the music brought him. I think
>
> the environments are allowing children the joy…

> Nancy (administrator): You can see that joy on his face; it's priceless. Music is art and
>
> we've seen that joy with the drumming going on in the school too. There is a

response that children give. It can be painting, sculpting, dance and movement – it's

the hundred languages.   (Focus Group & Photo elicitation, Feb. 28, 2011)

(Memo: Arts-based learning/joy)

…I think I would love to incorporate clay into the atelier as a permanent fixture— not only

as a medium to be used as representation, but as a medium to be understood more

deeply as when we started. My experience taught me that.

(Interview, Monique, May 24, 2011)

(Memo: Arts-based approaches in teaching)

What also emerged in Phase Two was that during projects, Mohawk cultural arts became visible

in the practices in the studios. I reviewed my data and photo documentation and noted that

teachers themselves brought in cultural arts that presented a unique addition to the time spent in

the ateliers. Some of the cultural arts included: a variety of wood stumps (and the corresponding

tools) that would be used to depict the stages of making the water drum, weaving looms that

were created for children to partake in traditional weaving practice, pottery making, and samples

of Iroquois bead design patterns when some children learned about Mohawk life long ago (See

Figs. 7.8).
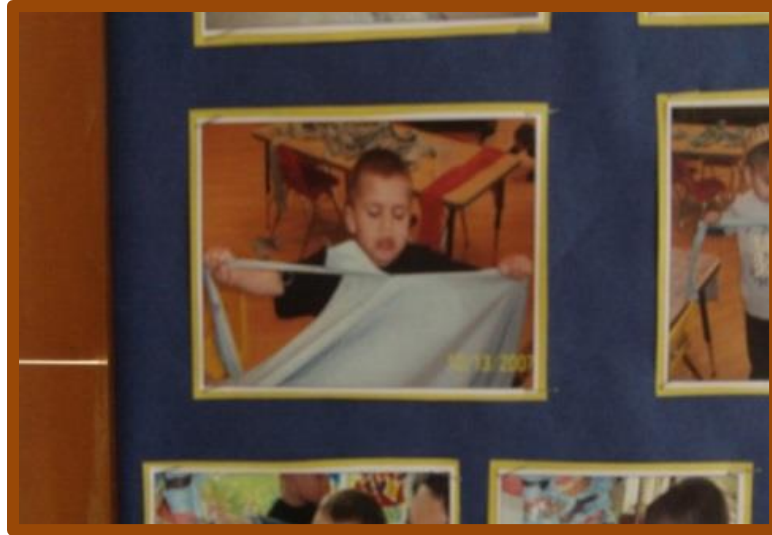
Figure 7.8. Preparing material for traditional weaving

Figures 7.8.1. Finished weaving on a loom constructed of a log and branches

In the course of analysis of Phase Three, my memos showed repeated references to the development of teaching practices because of the emphasis on the arts and the communication that evolved in the ateliers. By that I mean that arts practice in the environments developed teaching while encouraging relationships and experiences that embraced cultural life in everyday events. Some of the data harvested and memoed included:

- Teachers relinquished control.

- Collaboration was active when the art experiences were going on in the studios.

- Everyone had opportunities to work in small groups in the ateliers.

- There was better support for each other because teachers and children were sharing ideas. We learned together there.

- Also more natural environments have been created in the classrooms and more natural materials are being used. (Field notes, June 22, 2012)

   (Memoed: Arts impacting teaching & learning/Relationships to Mohawk values (natural world))

Nancy (administrator): …There's major learning that allowed teachers to see everything being played out. There were visual representations of what they were doing. The clay work was also a major contributor. It allowed for the notion of time. Children could revisit and no one rushed into representation. Clay work was a major working tool for children and teachers. (Interview June 23, 2012)

   (Memoed: Arts as impacting teaching and learning)

Dewey (1906/1977) proposed that children's arts experiences are celebrations of meaning. He not only emphasized the joy in learning but additionally, underscored the significance of the

activity itself. Ulbricht (1998) calls for explicit connections to be made between art, culture and environment so that art education can be valuable and all-embracing. With the teacher's growing practice in the ateliers, and the emphasis on the arts as a tool for meaning-making, teaching was impacted and learning was augmented.

Integration of Mohawk language and culture. The impact of arts methods and the atelier experience also led to the appearance of the sub-theme: *Integration of Mohawk culture and language* in support of *Communicating through the Ateliers.* When exploring my data I was able to discover and found the two being integrated constructively. Some of my collected excerpts consisted of comments gleaned from Phase Three:

> I saw the children observing and discovering in the pictures from the atelier work; they were taking part in their culture – that was meaningful.
>
> (Field notes, Teacher comment, June 22, 2012)
>
> (Memoed: Arts – Relationships to cultural ways of learning in the atelier)

> Gail (administrator): …It wasn't about just making a whole bunch of crowns or kastowahs; it was much deeper than that…I liked the practice with clay. They learned the skills and then learned about lines that led them to pottery and symbols in the pottery. It had deeper meaning to our culture. It brought it so much further. … And painting too; new technique, new vocabulary. Teachers told me that because there was a slow process and getting to know the materials, children who wouldn't go near painting saw it through- a change in the child. It's how they should be taught.
>
> (Interview, June 23, 2012)

(Memoed: Arts – Relationships to Mohawk ways of teaching and learning/Image of the child)

Stephanie (teacher): Also just using natural materials is a perfect fit for the traditional

spirituality of this community, the natural curiosity and interests of the children and

my personal love and appreciation for the natural world. It's been brewing to get

out.   (Interview, June 23, 2012)

(Memoed: Arts– Relationships to the natural world)

Gail (administrator):   It has really brought us back to how we should be thinking as

teachers, as educators in our early childhood culture…it relates to the arts in the

investigations and the studios, observations, relationships, language, everything is

part of everything. Our ways.

(Interview, July 5, 2012)

(Memoed: Arts – Relationships to culture and learning in the atelier)

Importantly, teacher's active learning highlighted educators' conscientious attention to

culture in the curriculum and their implicit undertakings of responsibility. The extended active

experiences provided opportunities for vocabulary building and integration of daily terminology.

Mohawk language appeared in the classrooms and the ateliers during Phase 2. I gathered chunks

of data from field notes and interviews as well as from photo documentation that illustrated

increased language presence in the environments (See Fig.7.9)
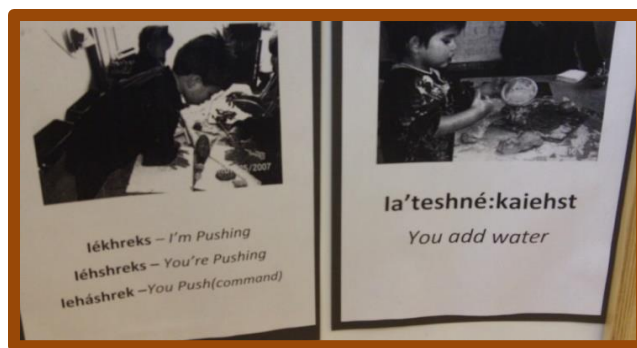
Figure 7.9. Sample of Mohawk vocabulary presented in a class for 2 year olds

As they worked they explored the texture. Kaweriiostha supported the activity with

Mohawk language to identify techniques used and named their representations.

(Field note, Kaweriiostha's class, Oct. 8, 2010)

…Being that this is my first year teaching here on a Mohawk reservation, I learned a lot

about the culture and the language, although it is really simple – just by working on our

project on the community in the atelier I learned familiar words.

(Interview, Rebecca, June 24, 2011)

I feel that I have used more language in the atelier. Mohawk words were provided for the

clay actions, and the knowledge I have for simple commands and coloring, counting, etc.

Having the quiet space and the one on one, it was relaxing and easy to be comfortable

with speaking to the child or children in the room...I do feel that I have benefitted from

facilitating as I have become more familiar with certain Mohawk words and I can use

them in more aspects than just the atelier. … (Interview, Deidra, June 24, 2011)

Language is embedded in culture and crucial toward rebuilding First Nations societies (Aquash,

2013). The National Indian Brotherhood policy states that, "Knowing [his] maternal language

helps a man know himself; being proud of [his] language helps a man be proud of himself" (p. 15). Cultural pride emerged in the classroom with teacher's use of vocabulary building in pedagogy, a significant finding.

The educators' professional and cultural backgrounds gave rise to exercising the arts over time, which allowed teaching and learning to take shape with meaning. This was a significant finding that addressed my research questions: How would the arts expand children's cultural experiences? The teachers' exploration of a variety of arts approaches, and concentration to the incorporation of cultural values and language, were supported in the ateliers.

The ateliers developed into a welcomed place that would provide for cultural understanding where "great thoughts would come together." Greene (2004) maintains that a process of transforming awareness through artistic experiences underscores how teachers can implement the arts to develop knowledge along with creating spaces for dialogue, relationships and a deeper awareness of possibilities. Significantly, my data highlighted how cultural topics and unexpectedly Mohawk arts emerged and foreshadowed what was about to come: the theme that ensued.

Theme 3: Culturing curriculum. The research design, the process of gathering and analyzing data, and the specific methodologies maintained during the study have led me to identify the theme of *Culturing Curriculum*. With our mutual vision of cultural integration in curriculum, culturally-based projects played a key role in the search for a meaningful program as well as addressing strength in responsive teaching. Using developed skills in visual arts, and an appreciation of the intimacy of the ateliers, teachers (and children) focused on topics of cultural relationships with excitement, creativity and meaning. What emerged as significant was "…the formation of identity and self-esteem, and [is thus] central to the development of a new form of

First Nations education" (McLellan, 2013, p.82). Ball (2004), Battiste (2002) and many others have identified that when First Nations education is culturally focused, pride and identity emerge. Ball (2004) explains:

> …true engagement in learning requires a curriculum that is relevant and personally meaningful and that affirms the student's own identity and experiences….This approach is essential within an anticolonial agenda. (p. 472)

From the onset of Phase Two and repeated in Phase Three, a focus on developing Mohawk culture was explicitly situated at the core of the curriculum. The teachers selected culturally specific topics (e.g. Phase Two: Carina's class investigated "our relationships to the forest and with the animal." Phase Three: Monique's class studied the importance of water). Yearlong projects developed from them. While teachers remained attentive to developmentally appropriate practice, they took risks as to their selection of topics and found creative ways to make meaning for their young students. *Culturing curriculum* developed from several influential sub-themes: *Meaningful topics; the Mohawk image of the child; Mohawk ways of thinking, and Mohawk language.* Priority given to culture was a critical objective throughout the research:

> I can sense the traditional approach. Culture resonates within all areas of the curriculum including teacher respect. Culture matters and it is a priority. The well-being of each member of the teaching teams is first in though.
>
> (Field notes (teacher meeting), Nancy, June 2, 2012)

I saw a resurgence of pride and pleasure in teaching about the culture, traditions

and values of the community because it came first…

(Interview Nancy, July 5, 2012)

From my perspective over the past years there was a sincere concentration on the culture.

Meaning, we did age appropriate teaching but it was on a different level and culture

became the way to think; the way we even moved forward in carrying out activities.

There was a certain new awareness. Experiences were just more meaningful for each

child.   (Interview, Gail, July 5, 2012)

Meaningful topics: The priority of Mohawk culture in daily life at Step by Step Child and

Family Center created a paradigm shift that altered and enhanced their curriculum. *Meaningful*

topics' emerged as encouraging that change. During analysis I was able to hone in on the

support that was provided and a focus on curriculum topics arose as the provocation that incited

teaching and learning.

As an illustration of the value and impact of *meaningful topics*, I highlight Roseanne's

class of 4 year olds who focused on projects that dealt with Mohawk festivals. One of her many

sub-topics was the water drum; an important instrument to the Mohawk people. From the data

collected I harvested significant chunks of texts from field notes, journal and photo

documentation and memoed *"meaningful topics."* Following is part of the sequence of events

from Roseanne's project that illustrated the impact of selecting significant topics:

Roseanne: You know, I started about three weeks ago… I started explaining about the

project and about the drum. They [the children] already had ideas–I know we can

make it out of wood–somebody said we can make it out of twigs. … So I already

have names in Kahnawake. Two names that would know about the water drum…

And we want to get the children to understand drumming. My assistant has a friend

who plays the bongos who would come in…We've also thought about doing the

Alligator Dance….Also the shawls–I hope…I really want the girls to get to do the

beading and the weaving. I'm hoping.

(Field notes (transcribed conversation), Feb 2, 2011)

Over the months I have learned about the art of making a water drum thanks to Roseanne

and Darlene. Their major focus on festivals has had Roseanne busy on the computer

exploring the construction of the water drum… Darlene has been hands-on guiding the

children in their proper use of tools ... (See Fig. group 7.10) and the visits from the

community important (See Figs. 7.11).

(Journal, April 20, 2011)

Figures 7.10. Teacher's documentation of some of the water-drum making process

Figures 7.11. Teacher's documentation of some of the water-drum making process

Figure 7.11.1.   Water drum display at the museum event June 2011

The significance of *"meaningful topics"* was further illuminated during a closing meeting with

the teachers at the culmination of Phase Two:

> Today's meeting: The 100 languages of teachers meeting allowed the staff to reflect and
>
> present their perspectives of our work this past year… Roseanne spoke and related that

the children learned the importance of community, besides making drums and shawls.

One assistant walked away from her presentation and emotionally stated; "The best year

ever."   (Journal, June 25, 2011)

As a further illustration, the emphasis on meaningful topics reappeared in Phase Three:

Topic emphasis is on culture; and culture is the curriculum. All roads lead to Kahnawake,

that`s how I see it.   (Field notes (Teacher meeting) Nancy, June 2, 2012)

With the introduction of cultural projects and cultural focus as the lead, my knowledge and

understanding has grown immensely and I know it will continue to develop.

(Interview, Monique, June 23, 2012)

It's about culture being the deliverer of the curriculum, which I feel has become very

seamless now…It's like when you get glasses, you see what was already in front of you

and you never saw it before… so teachers learned to pay attention differently with the

focus on cultural topics and the relationships.

(Interview, Nancy, July 5, 2012)

The data shows that teachers turned to a pedagogy that utilized a project approach based on

culturally relevant topics that could be explored over time. *Meaningful cultural topics*

encouraged the children to acquire *meaningful* cultural understandings in their daily life at

school.

Mohawk image of the child and Mohawk ways of thinking: As I explored the data two

sub-themes actually emerged concurrently: the interconnected principles of Mohawk cultural

belief in *the image of the child* and *Mohawk ways of thinking.* It was, and is, challenging to

separate these two themes as the centrality of the child *is* grounded in Indigenous mindfulness.

However each sub-theme had their role in explaining the product of *Culturing Curriculum.*

The teachers were able to uphold a focus on *culturing curriculum* because the Mohawk

value of the *image of the child* supported this objective. The First Nations belief in the centrality

of the child to the people was already embedded in daily life at Step by Step child and Family

Center and in Mohawk ways of thinking. The educators' perspectives and practices echoed this

visionary segment from a 2004 Ontario report on Aboriginal early childhood:

> Throughout the history of First Nations, children have been cared for, nurtured, instructed
>
> and encouraged to grow and develop to their full potential. First Nations people view the
>
> care and development of the children as one of the most important responsibilities of a
>
> Nation, and share the belief that "the children are our future."
>
> (Ontario First Nations Early childhood Development on the Reserve Report, 2004, p. 4)

When it comes to the matter of children's education, First Nations communities advocate

for culturally appropriate systems and programs that focus on the needs and values of their

communities (Wright, 2003). Pidgeon et al. (2013) state, "Education shapes our youth which in

turn, shapes our communities" (p. 25). The Reggio Emilia key principle of a positive image of

the child held importance for the educators at Step by Step Child and Family Center and perhaps

what was what attracted them to Reggio in the first place. However, Mohawk ways of thinking

deepened that principle through the educators' commitment to "the cultural survival of their

people through the education of their children" (Cajete, 1994; Graveline, 1998; Hampton, 1995;

as cited in Wright, 2003). During analysis I gathered repeated references and memoed "focus on the child:"

> The session in the atelier was less teacher directed but more exploratory to allow children's theories, ideas to lead the learning.
>
> (Journal, Feb. 25, 2011)
>
> Debbie and I shared that we are moving back to how education had always been for the Mohawk people…we are now continuing that at Step by Step. We are watching children better, finding out what keeps them interested and wanting to learn and guiding them from there…   (Field notes, April 21, 2011)
>
> Stephanie's pantomime and metaphors at a teacher meeting: Water sun & soil: the importance of environment and what necessities are need for children to grow.
>
> Fruits: all different- like the children- also fruits of our labour-our responsibilities.
>
> (Field notes, June 25, 2011)

Mohawk culture brought forward how the child is viewed as a predominant theme. Affirmed in the Phase Two interviews, teachers stated that while the connections to Reggio Emilia thinking of the image of the child could be identified, it was "*Mohawk* thinking; their view of the child and Mohawk ways" (Gail, June 25, 2011), that was the source of meaning-making. Such connections showed how these two sub-themes emerged simultaneously.

Upon reflection, teachers maintained that the way in which learning was happening could not be separated from their culture, customs, how children learn and how they view the world. This was an important consideration in that such thinking resonated with an understanding that "the answers are within [us]" and that First Nations education should be driven by the people

and the community (Pidgeon et al., 2013, p.7). I gleaned important comments from the educators:

> I've taught this way for years…As far as culture we've always had the respect for our children. We never put children away. They're out with us all the time, learning alongside all of us…. We're living proof that we know our ways. You come to our community now very often. You see it on a daily basis.
>
> (Interview, Carina, March 16, 2011)

> You know Sheryl the project is really underway – our turtle – the connection to Mother Earth – I see it all connecting for everyone. Stephanie's class is working on water. We are both talking about the same thing – the Creation story – it is all one. The children, even though they are so young, are really understanding the turtle and how important it is to our culture... I see how I know that Mohawk culture all connects to the whole–the whole idea of the project— it makes it all meaningful. Nothing is done in isolation.
>
> (Informal conversation, Melissa, March 29, 2011)

While a positive image of the child was addressed in *every* classroom project, Sonia's undertaking of the challenging topic of "The Ironworkers," in Phase Three, to three year-olds, illuminated Mohawk beliefs. Sonia's appreciation to children's innate strengths and capabilities was demonstrated as she brought to life the depth of the Ironworkers' lives, primarily through her image of the child. As Gandini (1993) explains, "All children have preparedness, potential, curiosity and interest in constructing their learning, in engaging in social interaction, and in negotiating with everything the environment brings them" (p. 5). Sonia's attention to the life of

her community *and* how she believed in her students' abilities, broadened beliefs about how and

what young children can learn. Children made connections between past experiences and

present realities; a goal significant to Indigenous visions of children and their education vital for

cultural sustainability. "In this way, education shapes our youth which in turn, shapes the futures

of [our] communities" (Pidgeon et al., 2013, p.25).

Alongside *the image of the child* was the attention to community and family involvement

are deeply embedded in Mohawk ways of thinking (Ball, 2004; Battiste, 2002). The Ironworkers

project allowed for families and friends to come forward and lend photos and materials. The

community attended the exhibitions and Sonia took pains to open the showcase on the weekends

so that Ironworker families could visit and share in the children's learning together:

> Everything was so meaningful. The families; they sent in some wonderful materials and
>
> the photos too. Everything helped move the project forward. What was really special was
>
> that fathers were involved. It's usually the mothers but the fathers liked to come in and
>
> share and bring in stuff. It was important to have the fathers involved. It was really good
>
> to see and good for the children to see.   (Field notes, April 27, 2012)

 I memoed 'families and the community' and listed them as they were represented many times in

the classroom projects:

- Parents produced illustrations for the Creation Story with their children during

  Roseanne's work on "Festivals of Life." (Phase Three)

- Melissa L.'s class included paintings dedicating each child's page to a family member.

  (Phase Three)

- High school students explained the makings of a water drum and present music to the class of four year-olds in Melissa S's class. (Phase Three)

- Families and the entire community shared the children's' cultural learning at the museum events. (Phase Two and Three)

- Sharing with the community at the Kahnawake Cultural Centre.

(Journal, May and April, 2012)

Nancy (administrator) suggested that the children's curriculum especially during Phase Three had had a "rippling effect" on the community: the projects garnered attention from radio stations and the local newspaper also helped to surround them with an aura of excitement and pride. Therefore, "school and community were not two isolated places" (Oskineegish & Berger, 2013, p.120) but came together to reflect culturally responsive learning and engagement that reflected critical values related to Mohawk thinking.

Another critical outcome from the children's projects was the development of a Mohawk cultural belief toward respecting and caring for the natural world (Porter, 2008). Many of the children's projects dealt with the seasons and Mother Earth that opened the door to connecting to their natural environment.

- Kaweriiostha's class project: Relationships with the natural world

- Deidra's group: Our relationships to bugs

- Carina's class: Our relationship to the forest animals and our clans

(Field notes (Phase 2), Nov. 20, 2010)

- Deidra's group investigated the colours of the seasons.

- Monique and Glorianne's classes focused on the thanks given for water.

- Rebecca's students explored nature and the changing seasons.

(Field notes (Phase 3), Feb. 14, 2011)

The teachers also took on an educational consciousness that demonstrated a respect for the natural world and implemented native values and language (Battiste, 2002) into their daily teachings and stories. This attention to the natural world in the children's projects and teachers' perspectives, once more supported the sub-theme of Mohawk cultural values. What continually emerged from the data was that *Mohawk ways of thinking* added to *culturing the curriculum.*

Mohawk language. Furthermore, during data analysis, I highlighted recurring references to the increased integration of *Mohawk language*, a sub-theme that complimented *Culturing Curriculum.* The young children's experiential activities positioned language learning as part of the development; seamlessly incorporated into daily life and through the culturally arts-based projects. I gathered the chunks of data and memoed 'Mohawk language,' underscoring the building of native language into daily life at a school:

Well, my mission is language. I have used lots of basic Mohawk vocabulary such as colours, shapes, sizes and had to learn quickly art terms such as roll it, pinch it and flatten it. I have also taught the children the names of things we find and see on our Mother Earth every day. (Interview, Kaweriiostha, June 16, 2011)

… I've used more Mohawk words or phrases. I'd like to use more Mohawk language that I haven't tried and display the words for others to use as well. The more I learn, the more I can share with the children in my care. (Interview, Deidra, June 24, 2011)

- Mohawk vocabulary increased; cultural knowledge developed…

- When I use language now it has a purpose and it is repeated…

- The language being used is supporting this new focus as culture being at the heart. Kids are understanding it [Mohawk] better- they don't have to be able to speak but they have to hear.

(Field notes: Teachers' comments during a meeting, Jan. 28, 2012)

…The Mohawk language is there to use.

(Kaweriiostha, Focus Group, April 6, 2012)

Significantly, March 16, 2011 was a day etched in my memory as that day foreshadowed a change in my study. My meeting with Nancy and Gail in the course of Phase Two proved to be a turning point in the research; one that took me by surprise at the time. After numerous reviews of teacher interviews and discussions with the administrators, I acknowledge I had been informed for some time that Mohawk culture had ownership of the content and context of the study. I listed their comments in my field notes such as: "I remember when…"; "It's part of us and who we are;" "I've taught like that in the past and was told to focus on…It brings me back." While Reggio principles had been appreciated, it was time to "let go" and focus on what resonated with the children's own culture and community according to Mohawk values and beliefs. Ball and Pence (2000) affirm that First Nations communities are actively involved in attempts to "…revitalize their cultures, assert the legitimacy of their culturally based values and practices as integral to the fabric of Canadian society as a whole, and foster among First Nations children positive identities with their aboriginal cultures of origin" (p. 4).

The professionals at Step by Step Child and Family Center had added to the design of this study with an understanding and confidence steeped in culture. I repeat my belief that the title assigned to the museum in Phase Two spoke volumes: TSI NIIONKWARIHÓ:TEN, Our Culture/Our Ways: Inspired by our Kanien'kehá:ka Culture and Teachings. In reflection, I can affirm from my data analysis, it *was* more, "their way."

Theme 4: Understanding a pedagogy of listening. *Listening* was central to my research design and methodology. *Listening* unexpectantly emerged as a significant theme to this study. Because of my background in Reggio Emilia pedagogy, whereby 'listening' was part of my philosophy, I worked hard at not anticipating any outcomes for this research. I did not want to be lead to any conclusions about 'listening' prematurely. However, *a pedagogy of listening* arose from this research journey and from my data. I emphasize that the theme of *a pedagogy of listening* was an actual value that emerged and not a predictable one. In keeping cognizant of my role as researcher, and respectful to this First Nations community, I needed to identify the qualities of "a living bridge." My inclusion of *understanding a pedagogy of listening* has been driven by the unfolding of this research, the relationships built with my associates in Kahnawake, the construction of 'living bridges,' and my attempts to unearth relevant themes from the data, alongside those themes that illuminated the questions being investigated. Mays and Pope (2000) maintain that depth and breadth of qualitative research lies in examining and identifying essential themes that may offer additional space for augmenting theories. I place *understanding a pedagogy of listening* in such a category.

In this final section, I examine ways of teaching and learning in relation to three significant subthemes: *How the teachers listened to the children; How teachers listened to each other; and How I learned to listen to myself and others.*

Teacher's listening to children. Teacher's thoughtful listening to children emerged as a sub-theme, well-illustrated by the educators' interactions and documentation of the children's experiences and ideas. Phase Two brought about the transformation of the preschool environment within the classrooms and the additions of the studios. The environmental and psychological changes that came with the establishment of the ateliers, foreshadowed the careful listening that was about to occur. The inventory of materials and thoughtfulness to creating a space that "spoke" Mohawk culture were elements that set the stage for meaningful interactive experiences. As educators became more accustomed to working with small groups, and focused intently on the arts experiences, their skills developed in careful and tender listening. This was especially significant during the beginning months when teachers and children advanced in their relationships with materials (i.e. clay, paint) and worked towards establishing the language of art (i.e. line, shape). During Phase Three, I noted how educators had developed their skills in observation and focused teaching practices:

- She took notes on slips of paper

- She told me she would transcribe the essence of the experience later on

- She told me she needed time to reflect on the conversation

- Monique would only take smaller groups into the atelier now. It was challenging for her to listen to more than 3 or 4 children at a time when in an activity.

<div align="center">(Field notes, March 10, 2012)</div>

The administrators also seemed to appreciate the careful listening that occurred between teachers and children, as Gail described:

Also, it's about reflecting, the documentation; a whole other meaning. It's made teachers aware. They said it, especially during our meetings. It made them listen. They actually saw the children differently. They learned from them. They're all better listeners. They're better at observing them more. It all comes from a better understanding of the child's strengths… (Interview, Gail (administrator) June 23, 2012)

The concept of teacher's careful listening was further emphasized by the vigilant documentation that the educators produced, gathered, studied and discussed, as presented throughout two phases of research. Photo sharing sessions during focus group meetings underscored how teachers collaborated and listened carefully to their students when transcribing their thoughts. Teachers described photos that told the stories of children's active learning because of the experiences. Specifically, Nancy (administrator) remarked that teachers "talked less and listened more" thereby appreciating that *listening* allowed for improved understandings of how children were making meaning. As an example, during Phase Three, Sonia picked up on the children's interest in constructing like the Ironworkers and therefore transformed the classroom into a variety of learning centers that focused on "building." (Field notes, March 12, 2012).

While the work itself was demanding, teachers' careful listening to the children allowed them to reflect on what their young students were understanding and what they were feeling. The practice of listening helped the educators plan for future experiences regarding each project:

- When documenting the small groups it was beneficial with better outcomes as better listening occurred.
- Tape recorders were used to select better evidence of learning.

- Plenty of documented photos to choose from. I sharpened my skills that I could use

  for selection.

- Children's words were used more often.

- I like that I don't always have the answers and that I can learn alongside the children;

  and moreover I often learn from the children and my co-workers.

(Field notes (Teacher s' comments during a meeting), June 2, 2012)

I am more comfortable with flexibility of time and topics allowing for repeated activities.

I love revisiting them in the documentation. The experiences being offered has allowed

for better observing of children's exploration, interests and development.

(Interview, Stephanie (teacher), June 23, 2012)

Significantly, teachers took on the responsibility of listening intently to the voices of children.

Their careful attention helped to build a culturally responsive program for their young students.

Teachers listening to each other. The evolutions of the studios coincided with teachers'

growing abilities to share and listen to each other. From this *pedagogy of listening*, the staff of

Step by Step Child and Family Center developed into a true learning community. The educators

shared knowledge and were open to feedback when offered. I was able to harvest recurring

indications of professional teamwork that arose from such careful "listening":

- There is more collaboration as we as a team ventured in into this journey together –

  all the staff. We shared ideas and kept notes to remember.

- Videos were taken for sharing and teacher reflection.

- I enjoy sharing and discussing ideas with other teachers and teaching assistants.

- We gave each other positive feedback.

(Field notes, Teacher meeting, June 2, 2012)

I see that we can sit together in an academic fashion and have a discussion that deepens

knowledge. It helps to move us forward by expanding our minds and our thinking.

(Interview, Melissa (teacher), June 22, 2012)

…the projects have given me the opportunity to gain a lot of insight into various aspects

of the culture… it is incorporated it into my everyday teaching. We listened to each other

and moved forward.   (Interview, Monique (teacher), June 23, 2012)

Pidgeon et al. (2013) call for First Nations communities to take possession of their education to

"…ensure the protection of the next seven generations rights to good quality education that truly

honours Indigenous ways of knowing, being, languages and values and culture" (p. 5). The Step

by Step teachers developed their understandings as a result of careful listening and working

alongside their students and colleagues.

Reciprocal listening. Illustrated earlier in Chapters 5 and 6, the cultural long-term projects

showed how the child and teacher interacted along the Cycle of Inquiry in a *pedagogy of*

reciprocal listening.   This sub-theme emerged due to the strength in mutual and communal

listening amongst all participants (i.e. children, teachers, administrators, community, researcher).

During one of our final teacher meetings during Phase Two, I threw out a question: What has

changed? Teachers spontaneously responded:

- Teaching and learning has been enhanced.

- We became more open to change by listening.

- More interaction between classrooms and between teachers- sometimes we were isolated

  in our classrooms before.

- Conversations about culture have gone deeper- child and teacher AND between teachers.

• Smaller groups of children have helped learning– ateliers were important places. We

took culture and made it happen.   (Field notes, June 20, 2011)

I listened carefully to such comments, and in reflection, those remarks supported the importance

of *a pedagogy of listening*. As I place more and more emphasis on the appearance of *reciprocal*

listening, I have become intimately aware that I too am implicated. It was always my intention

from the very beginning of collaboration with Step by Step Child and Family Center that this

research would belong to the Mohawk community. My ongoing review of field notes and

journal entries garnered the message of Mohawk ownership and culture; a message that had to be

listened to mindfully:

> She [Debbie] told me that she appreciated that there was more work with teams of
>
> teachers, especially with assistants who have been "quiet' and now they are also bringing
>
> their knowledge to the children and even leading cultural projects. She saw this as a
>
> huge step and explained to me how so many of them have been told to "keep quiet."
>
> Debbie shared with me the fact that several members of the staff are products of
>
> residential schools, still looking for a voice. "Where do they fit in? Being able to share
>
> the culture, the teachings, it is still hard for many, but it's changing."
>
> (Journal, April 21, 2011)

I had a responsibility of listening and acting upon what was being communicated: *"Our culture,*

our ways; Inspired by our Kanien'kehá:ka Culture and Teachings." That was the message. I

believe *my listening* additionally supported the theme of *understanding a pedagogy of listening.*

What has been acquired from this section of analysis is that *understanding a pedagogy of*

listening gave rise to the value *in* listening. It comprises taking hold of one's personal and

professional beliefs, disclosing them, and then being able to take the time to understand that

there may be differences, and therefore being responsible to take action. My relationship with

the community at Step by Step Child and Family Center was grounded in respect, understanding

and sharing mutual goals for the education of their young children. I felt a deep and ethical

responsibility to move forward in the collaboration but within the thinking parameters of my

partners; appreciating the provocation of, but leaving aside Reggio. The primary direction had to

come from the ways of Mohawk thinking. Listening was difficult but proved to be an

indispensable exercise. I recall Patricia Hill Colin's message to the researcher who takes on the

role of 'the outsider within': "Indigenous research is a humble and humbling activity" (as cited

in Tuhiwai Smith, 1999, p. 5).

My Reflections

My researcher position as 'listener' has allowed me opportunities to gather data as a

participant observer. I have compiled my field notes, engaged in conversations with teachers and

administrators and interviewed key informants selected for their cultural knowledge and

reflection over all of the phases of this study. I acknowledge that I didn't know everything there

was to know about education, and was fortunate enough to be embraced by the community at

Step by Step Child and Family Center. They guided and helped me make connections between

my knowledge sets and theirs in order that these might be conjoined and translated into plans for

daily teaching and learning. Battiste (2010) explains that this research process is an "untangling

of knowledge knots" (p.17). For me, this meant untangling myself from preconceived ideas in

order to think about what was truly important to this community. The curriculum had to be

theirs because it is critical for First Nations communities to affirm ownership of their vision of

education (Oskineegish & Berger, 2013). I struggled with that message on March 16th as I

listened to Nancy and Gail reclaim the research and distinguishing Reggio and Indigenous

approaches to education:

> Gail: …It involved culture; we needed to move into it more and be skilled. We always had
>
> it; it's there. We needed that inspiration.
>
> Nancy: I see that too… Movement had to be made with culture. Culture had to have
>
> dominance. The vision is always the culture…. That vision has always been
>
> communicated and it was there to begin with….
>
> (Interview with administrators, June 2010)

Eventually, I also had to surrender my role as mentor and coach to the educators and

administrators as they had become the researchers.

I have learned how Mohawk culture took the lead and I had to follow and learn to listen.

My long process of gathering data and months of analysis has shown *understanding of a*

pedagogy of listening. It is as if I, and all the participants, have come together as co-producers of

knowledge (Davidson-Hunt & O'Flaherty, 2007) to acquire a new and deeper understanding of

each other and the research outcomes. I have learned that *listening*, if open, shared and

reciprocal, can help facilitate and construct the integration of cultural identity and curriculum.

Chapter 8

Bridges Bring You To Another Place

Culture is best understood historically, examining how current practices reflect past

circumstances and ideas, and seeing how new generations adapt practices of those who

went before. This historical approach involves the development of individuals as well as

of generations.   (Rogoff, 2011, p. 41)

Opening Remarks

This final chapter discusses the learning outcomes of the research with regard to

developing and maintaining a culturally relevant early childhood curriculum. This chapter will

summarize findings and proceed with a discussion of implications that can be drawn from the

research. Research questions will be revisited to illuminate various perspectives gained with

intentions of identifying what resonates as significant when considering the role of cultural

identity in early childhood education.

I began this journey with a belief in an image of the child as competent, curious, creative

and deserving of a meaningful education. My grounding lies in envisioning schools for young

children as communities; children actively engaged with peers and adults in the process of

developing their knowledge. I have always valued the meaningful relationships between

children and educators. I entered into study with attentiveness to supporting an emergent

curriculum that would allow the child autonomy in his/her search for understandings.

Drawing on socio-constructivist theory (Bruner, 1996; Vygotsky, 1987), the study has

traced teachers' and children's active learning and discoveries through a culturally integrated

curriculum based on a project approach. The art was posited as the methodology for meaning-

making. From the inception of this study I was familiar with the flexibility of Reggio Emilia principles. I was open to accepting adaptations away from the Italian based theory that I knew so well. Even so, this journey has expanded my knowledge in that "adaptations" can extend only to a point. It has taken me years of research to fully understand what is implied by 'uncertainty' and the dangers of adaptation when the matter of cultural survival is in the forefront. I have remained alert to Rogoff's aphorism, "culture matters." While Reggio scholars acknowledge that educators can shape Reggio principles to suit one's own environment and community (Vecchi, 2010), the strength in what had happened within this First Nations community has cautioned and underscored authenticity to cultural awareness. My initial objectives of research began with thinking how Reggio Emilia "fits" within an environment that focuses primarily on culture. My intention was never to examine the culture itself and this was clearly emphasized to the participants at Step by Step Child and Family Center.

Upon reflection, I suggest this research has drawn out a methodology for contemporary early childhood programs that work toward cultural objectives. Affirmed by the educators and administrators at Step by Step Child and Family Center, Reggio Emilia principles supported a vocabulary for a return to what was meaningful to this community. What emerged as a finding in the study was ownership to what was rightfully "theirs." Mohawk culture would direct the children's learning, the teacher's planning, and would be the "language" that would be maintained. At the time I felt this was as setback yet, as mentioned at the end of Phase Two, this was a pivotal turn in scholarship. Something significant arose and a pedagogy of listening supported the participants in what was essential for teaching, learning and for constructing a curriculum that encompassed cultural meaning. I was encouraged to revisit initial questions and to search further for broader implications embedded in this inquiry.

Revisiting Research Questions and Relevance

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 followed the progression of the research and responded to the questions presented at each phase. The summaries following will re-examine the findings from Chapter Seven so as to acknowledge what has been gained from the outcomes of each stage of research.

Phase One: Building a bridge. The first project. Research Questions: What are the educators using from Mohawk culture? What are they using from Reggio Emilia? How would they use projects and art experiences to expand children's cultural understandings? Did intersections of Reggio principles and Mohawk culture occur?

The first phase of research was a pilot project designed to search for connections between the Reggio Emilia approach and Mohawk culture. Prior to the research journey, the team of educators had explored Reggio principles through discussions and preliminary readings and they had identified commonalities in thinking. Reggio principles, at this initial phase, led the learning. These principles included recognition of the positive image of the child, teacher's facilitating and nurturing relationships, attention to materials and the natural environment, and curriculum being documented and described as long term investigations.

Importantly, since the topic selected for children's projects was significant to Mohawk culture (the Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwen), it initiated and addressed cultural relevance. A critical topic at the onset of the study was meaningful in that it supported the primary focus of the research: cultural integration. The initial emphasis, namely a long-term project approach responded to intersections of Reggio principles and Mohawk culture. However, the findings identified that it was the prominence of the cultural topic that held ultimate meaning.

Furthermore, while Reggio underpinnings suggest presenting children with visual provocations to move projects along, the educators had to push themselves to provide for such arrangements. It was not natural. Herein with lies a beginning aperture where culture entered into theory that eventually would drive learning forward. Visuals were presented to the children but they were not the driving force behind the projects; it was the conversations and the ongoing referral to the Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwen that gave rise to meaning. Perhaps Mohawk culture rose as significant due to the topic being theirs, or perhaps there existed a deeper implication that could not yet be addressed nor articulated. I recall during a focus group session, Gail searching for a description of the progress that was occurring. She explained that the Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwen could not be isolated and that the values themselves were the principal motivation; the address encompasses all the relationships that Mohawk people share therefore it led the way.

What's more, my interview with a teacher, Carly, reminded me that "incorporating Reggio" came across as an initial procedure, and that was not welcomed. As Carly had related, "….Mohawk culture is sacred…. If more of our people understood what the culture was about then we wouldn't need Reggio or any other principles to our ways of teaching. But unfortunately, our language and ways have been lost along the ways…." Carly's heartfelt thoughts linger with me even today.

However, Reggio terminology, during this first phase, filled a space for pedagogical principles and connected to Mohawk culture. The Reggio Emilia approach did stimulate new ways of thinking about culture in curriculum. What rose as significant from the first phase of study was an initial entrance of Mohawk culture through a project approach. The power of 'listening' started to show its significance as it became a conductor to all learning: listening to

the child, colleagues listening to the children and to themselves, and intentional 'listening' to Mohawk cultural values.

Phase Two: Bridge under construction. Research questions: What role would the atelier play in developing the objectives of early childhood education and Mohawk culture? How can the atelier become "…a place of research where imagination, rigour, experiment, creativity and expression would interweave and complete each other" (Vecchi, 2010, p. 35) along with attending to early childhood education and the development of Mohawk identity? Would the offering of art as an expression of ideas expand the children's cultural experiences? If so, how would it occur?

We were all delighted with the good fortune of having art studios constructed over the summer months. The ateliers were thoughtfully named in support of what was occurring as we moved deeper into study: Entewaténikonrí:sake. We will think and create in our own mind; a place where great thoughts would come together. Reggio philosophy encourages and invites educators to make meaning through materials and environments while focusing on goals of attending to children's culture (Schwall, 2005). Along with arranging art supplies, the teachers attended to creating culturally rich environments by adding artefacts to the décor of the studios such as dream-catchers, kastowahs, fur pelts, plants and photos or drawings of bears, wolves and turtles.

Phase Two of study concentrated on constructing curriculum for culture and learning with an emphasis on an arts-integrated approach. The studios would allow for small group work in a focused environment away from the busyness of the classroom. Modeling for teachers was added to my role. I participated alongside the teachers and with the children as we explored the

language of art and the cultural topics of the projects. This position permitted me opportunities

to gain emic perspectives, increasing my knowledge about Mohawk culture and I was grateful.

The question as to how the atelier would support early childhood and cultural objectives

as well as establish a place of inquiry was addressed with the presentation and implementation of

a Cycle of Inquiry. This visual guide became a framework for teachers and students alike. The

child and the teacher would move together through a process of inquiry along a cycle of events.

While the child would observe, hypothesize, plan and experience, the teacher would watch,

document, listen and plan. Simultaneously teachers and students engaged in exploring cultural

topics through a process of developing ideas that included: observing, questioning, exploring,

discussing and representing understandings through arts experiences.

Acquiring the "language of art" addressed preliminary answers to the question as to *how*

art experiences could expand children's ideas. We began with scaffolded involvements that

encouraged children to take their time when exploring and getting to know the materials, instead

of moving rapidly into producing products. It was anticipated that during project work teachers

would be requesting children to show their understanding through art representations. Therefore,

it was important for the children and the teachers to begin with foundational skills to feel comfort

with the "language of art" before producing answers. The months of exploring clay; slow,

focused, and open-ended, developed familiarity and an understanding of the material. Such

rehearsals built skills that would hopefully be transferred to a variety of learning contexts. This

process of learning was repeated with other materials such as paint and paintbrushes and later

learning about line.

Art projects in the studios developed into a way of being (Vecchi, 2010). Teachers'

careful written and photographic documentation of experiences reflected a pedagogy of listening.

What's more the educators also engaged in professional sharing sessions thereby extending the pedagogy of listening. While teachers learned and received feedback from each other, colleague relationships were strengthened and a meaningful learning community emerged.

What surprisingly occurred during this phase was Mohawk ownership and a release from Reggio Emilia leadership. With acknowledgement to the Reggio Emilia principles that ignited development, it was the Step by Step community who let go of Reggio control and clearly identified cultural values and their own commitments as foundations for all learning. I had to attend to the desires and needs of this community; I had to listen.

I learned about the depth of cultural identity from this turn of events. Reason and Bradbury (2006) explain, "Participation can also empower [them] at a second and deeper level to see that they are capable of constructing and using their own knowledge" (p.10). Such an experience emerged. Step by Step educators assumed responsibility to maintain "continuity with Indigenous values and beliefs that are part of a community's identity" (Clavir, 2002, p.74). The language and the direction had to be "theirs" in support of their children, their future, and cultural identity. The educators at Step by Step held firm to cultural preservation and sustainable development as their quest for improving education (OFN, 2004).

Data analysis allowed me to examine the question, *how this would all occur*. That process generated some theories:

1. *Learning through authentic experiences can be considered meaningful and important trajectory to support cultural values in early years of schooling.* The sub-themes that gave rise to this theory were: children's active experiences; teachers' active experiences alongside the child, and the support of an age-appropriate appropriate framework (i.e. The Cycle of Inquiry).

2. *Participation in the arts can provide meaningful experiences for integration of a culturally relevant early childhood program.* The arts can serve as the communicative tool for theory and practice. This theme was driven by: the exploration of different media; the positive impact on teaching and learning because of arts incorporation, and the variety of arts-based possibilities when integrating culture and language

3. *Culturing curriculum has to be central to all thinking.* The priority of culture, daily life experiences (i.e. program and environments) and the offering of meaningful topics all supported the outcome of culturing curriculum. Values for teaching and learning, minding the image of the child, and incorporating Native language proved to be the supportive sub-themes that helped to fulfill goals of culturing curriculum.

4. *A pedagogy of listening is critical for development and understanding the breadth of a culturally relevant program.* Listening includes membership and involvement from all participants whereby objectives are collectively the same. Listening pedagogy has to look at: reflection on professional practice; colleague collaboration, acknowledging children's abilities, involving families and community, and an approach that values the joy in learning no matter what the age.

"While the mind shapes culture, culture also shapes the minds…" (Wright, 2001, p. 309). Mohawk culture took the lead and the educators at Step by Step Child and Family Center took control of their cultural responsibility, shaping the future for their community.

Phase Three: Paving new roads. Phase Three differed from Phase Two in that Mohawk culture was articulated as directing the movement ahead but added the research questions: How can cultural knowledge be regarded as a source of understanding for young children in their classrooms? The "language" of Mohawk identity had replaced Reggio in terms of what would have to transform. A return to examining an arts-integrated approach, within culturally based project investigations, drew out repeated themes of: *Learning through Experience, Communicating through the Ateliers, Culturing Curriculum*. A *pedagogy of listening* affirmed that these themes were beneficial in maintaining cultural objectives.

The educators had become skilled in practice and implementation of culturally relevant classroom projects. I admit to having learned the most during the last phase of study when I had the least input into decision making. My journals often reflected my "backseat" role that permitted me to carry out a profound methodology of listening. I gathered data and learned more about First Nations culture and importantly the components that created a culturally relevant program. There were several components (i.e. Reggio thinking) that were "let go" along the way; components that actually had built initial understandings. For example, the release from visual provocations for project work had never sustained as a motivator for investigations. The teachers were skilled enough to draw out cultural meaning without the implementation of tangible provocation. Great thoughts could come together as illustrated in the projects on Ironworkers, family relationships and the depth of meaning in ones' Mohawk name.

Additionally, the celebrations of the museum events had developed tensions and questions as to what were the rationales for exhibiting children's work. Teachers soon began requesting showcasing projects in the classrooms allowing for more intimate sharing with families within the comfort of daily learning – the classrooms. The administrators agreed and

with that flexibility, handed responsibility and ownership over to the teachers: Our culture, our

ways.

What's more, Phase Three saw community and family outreach emerge as significant

while educators became more skilled in their abilities to follow a cycle of inquiry. The showing

at Kahnawake's Cultural Centre, opening school doors on Saturday to welcome the Ironworkers

back home on the weekend, and searching Kahnawake for ecological and people resources

addressed the fact that learning extended into the community; beyond the classroom walls. With

that, teacher's documentation of the unfolding of project work became more targeted and

succinct, honing into what was essential to children's understanding and development. Such

refinement was addressed in my concluding interview with Nancy and Gail as they reflected on

the paradigm shift that had occurred. Nancy explained it as "stripping away to get to the core."

Gail recognized that the process of the phases had to get us to this point. In reflection I argue

that the team of educators in fact journeyed through the same process that the children

experienced when they began their inquiry into the workings of the ateliers. Similar to their

young students, teachers had to go through the process of engaging in a range of "materials",

participating in an active process of commitment that was reflective, emotional, creative and

intentional (Pelo, 2007). I return to Nancy's description:

> …As for our development, it has become our own language for change. Now it's our
>
> own. That`s why we leave Reggio Emilia and change our terminology. It becomes our
>
> own with our way. (Interview, August 20, 2012)

This final phase of this study encourages the future. It does not conclude the journey rather it

designs and extends the roads to be travelled, and as Debbie has taught me, *in the spirit of the*

children.

Limitations of study

Every study contains limitations. For instance, a research process and data collected in a particular place and time cannot be generalized to the larger population. Step by Step is a program situated within a particular Mohawk community in Quebec. However, this early childhood center was progressive in their thinking and active in their development and plans for the future, thus linking them to a wider world, giving rise to implications for other early childhood education programs open to change within and outside of First Nations cultures. The fact that I was first a consultant and an outsider rather than a researcher in the community also proved to be a limitation. I had to negotiate my role as Reggio Emilia consultant/expert in order to become a researcher/learner. This limitation became a strength, indeed becoming a cornerstone of the dissertation, in that I had to undergo a process of releasing myself from thinking "the Reggio way" and move into a space of uncertainty. I experienced tensions of letting go of the principles and language I believed in and had long established as my own way of thinking. It was not until the end of Phase Two, when the bridge had broken down and the administrators had cautioned about the over use of Reggio terminology, did this limitation fully emerge. While at the time I felt wounded, that juncture proved to be a central learning experience. I had to acknowledge that the Reggio Emilia approach was a motivator, but could not provide the script, and instead embrace the process of the journey and develop a "pedagogy of listening" to identify, with the teachers and administrators, what was important to this First Nations community.

Implications and Recommendations for Further Research:

The focus of this dissertation has been on early childhood education and the support for cultural identity in young children. The community at Step by Step Child and Family Center

granted me entry into research, sharing and searching jointly for methods that would meaningfully resonate with First Nations culture. As an outsider I was welcomed into day to day life to collaborate, explore, and document challenges and successes when culture stood at the core of all learning. I hope this study will inspire and enable researchers, classroom teachers and teacher educators to formulate projects and develop appropriate reflexive methods into their fields in support of the belief that "culture matters" (Rogoff, 2003).

Implications of a longitudinal research when examining "culture." I consider that the implications from a longitudinal study emphasized ways of approaching empirical research in cultural inquiry. The researcher participatory experience over phases of study built understandings of cultural identities along with knowledge that a process of development was integral. Time allowed for the emergence of understandings as to how teachers appropriated new methods with goals of cultural awareness and values. A practice of supporting professional capacity for extended periods of time might hold great importance toward professional development and gaining insight into how children progress within a pedagogy of inquiry.

Implications for teaching and learning for culturally relevant programs. With the rapid increase in movement and migration of various cultural communities, education is severely challenged in that schools and teachers are feeling inadequate in providing effective education for their young students (Keat et al., 2009). In the case of mixed cultural communities in classrooms, Western ways of teaching and learning may not meet the needs for many cultures. Teachers are not equipped and may not have the understanding of how various cultures learn and develop (Keat et al., 2009). Therefore implications from this study should encourage research and innovations in early childhood classrooms to address cultural demands with objectives of supporting cultural identities. Researchers and teachers need to work collaboratively to develop

networks of educators, either within schools themselves or with like communities, to explore the ways of culture.

This research could inform change with regard to how schools consider and incorporate culture as part of the curriculum so as to avoid culture being placed as an "add-on" to existing programs. How can a seamless integration occur in classes when there are several cultures to look after? What curriculum changes might support cultural integration without disturbing the requisites of the program? What methods from this research could inform development? I emphasize the focus on the "how" of cultural methods of child rearing and respecting a pedagogy of listening as sources for professional growth and learning.

Research and Practice: This study supports contemporary thinking for Indigenous communities engaged in developing their early childhood care. The phases of my research show and affirm that reform, or growth of any program, cannot be focused solely on curriculum. Pedagogical development in Indigenous communities needs to encompass all stakeholders as well as being responsive to the fact that each community may hold unique values, beliefs and traditions. Ball and Pence (2000), Battiste (2002) Kirkness (1999) and many others emphasize that there are differences amongst First Nations communities therefore the future of education has to include participation from members of the communities (i.e. parents, teachers, leaders, grandparents, children, foster parents, elders).

Furthermore, development has to be grounded in the relationships among the participants. A focus on relationships in any organization may appear as commons sense, but for Indigenous communities it is the heart of all intentions. Significantly for an 'outsider' involved in program development, building healthy and transparent relationships, and sustaining those interactions,

requires work. Relationships need to be nurtured over time whereby professional and personal

responsibility, trustworthiness and accountability, become active agents for change.

Leaders in Indigenous educational communities have to empower all stakeholders and in

particular, the teachers who work with young children on a daily basis. Leadership, from a

constructivist position, is not concerned with power or position and cannot be assigned to

definite roles. Leadership needs to be linked to practice (Sergiovanni, 2007) and shared amongst

the educators. As demonstrated over the phases of this study, teachers can be instrumental in

addressing their own development and leaders can guide and support the construction of

knowledge collectively and collaboratively with teachers. With that in mind, this research

underscores how cooperative learning amongst the educators would not only bring about new

understandings, but teachers and administrators can also assume a sense of responsibility for the

growth of their colleagues and in the end, for their community. Creating spaces for ongoing

professional dialogue and reciprocal learning opportunities (i.e. peer learning, coaching,

reflective meetings, study groups) communities can be supportive in attaining their goals for

cultural education. This research shows relevance to the depth of knowledge that can emerge

from the building of reflective approaches that arise from professional learning communities.

Successful teaching and learning in Indigenous communities calls for environments that

are culturally whole. By that I mean environments, curriculum, teaching and learning *together*

need to reflect the values, customs, and beliefs of the culture. A successful learning environment

requires reinforcement of the values young children bring from their homes thereby promoting

self-worth, pride and identity. The image of all teaching and learning has to be Indigenous;

"relevant to the philosophy and needs of the Indian people" (National Brotherhood, 1972,

p.3).The question now lies in the hands of the communities. How can professional learning be

arranged whereby those who are on the frontline in the classroom assist in taking ownership of their cultural goals for improved teaching and learning?

What has been identified as an outcome of this study is the need for vision, experiential opportunities, flexibility, relationship building and celebration. The following recommendations for early childhood cultural programing might be considered:

1. *Project based cultural learning:* When classrooms are organized around inquiry children are allowed the time and open-ended experiences to move through a cycle of observing, hypothesizing, experiencing, planning and reflecting. The spiral approach to learning is influenced by a variety of supportive elements such as people, resources, space and time. Adults and children can enter into a dialogue with one another where culture can be experienced through age appropriate learning opportunities. Teachers' sensitive attention can support plans to extend the learning. Experiences can provide a window into the history of a culture or preserving cultural tradition such as storytelling, music, dance, and art. Such an approach to learning can extend beyond the walls of the classroom, into communities, families and other cultural resources. A project approach to exploring culture addresses children's active involvement in their own learning, in support of their own culture, or perhaps learning about other cultures as well.

   Eisner (1991) underscores the fact that a project or inquiry approach allows for "productive unpredictability" (p.103). The arts, observation and investigation allow for multiple ways to "get to the heart of a subject." Therefore an emphasis on meaningful experiences, dialogue, inquiry and family and school partnerships will enhance children's ways of making sense of *their* world. Projects should be related and important to the lives away from the classroom, building children's understandings, interests and

experiences (Novick, 1996). Further inquiries could look deeper at the processes of

knowledge construction via a curriculum based on a project approach. Such studies

could support cultural learning, steering clear of methods that compartmentalize ways of

learning whereby culture becomes an add-on to curriculum. A similar ethnography with

different cultural groups could broaden our understandings of project-based early

childhood programs that focus on cultural values and identity.

2. *Arts-based education for young children's cultural development:* "Artistic expression

   communicates and shapes thoughts, perceptions and feelings" (Wright, 2007, p.303).

   Children can come to understand their world, and the world of others with the help of a

   range of artistic opportunities. Importantly, the art carry values and has the capacity to

   evoke those values in the child himself/herself or in response to others. The arts can

   capture meaning-making for young children and can uphold traditions. Importantly,

   children's early engagement in the arts draws on the pleasure and joy in creating.

   What's more the arts have provided a way for culture to be preserved and handed down

   to generations (Wright, 2007). Culture can be explored through the arts via children's

   active experiences. Advocacy for the arts may involve discussions in schools amongst

   teams of teachers and other professionals. Further inquiries could look at effects over

   extended periods of time, perhaps examining groups of children who experienced early

   childhood programs where culture (individual or multi- cultural focuses) and the arts

   were central to teaching and learning. A look at the outcomes over the course of several

   years could provide insight into how the arts may have influenced cultural understandings

   and considerations to identity.

3. *Understanding a pedagogy of listening:* One of the outcomes of this study was that experiences were grounded in careful, respectful listening practices: teachers listening to young children, colleagues listening to each other, and listening that included attending to oneself (i.e. the researcher's listening).

Teachers had opportunities to come together and bring classroom practice into conversation. Their bi-monthly dialogue provided reflective listening time on the matter of developing a cultural curriculum. This professional practice also augmented relationships amongst colleagues. Teachers looked after their students, themselves, and curriculum thoughtfully. A professional learning community was fostered because colleagues *listened* to each other.

Teachers listened to their young students' using strategies of observation and documentation. Vecchi (2010) names such an approach "visible listening" whereby teachers' methods of documentation were practiced, communicated, and shared with others. This process expanded educators' understanding of children's thoughts along with developing professional abilities to augment children's experiences during project work. Therefore, in-depth considerations to *listening* suggests an area for teacher professional development and pre-service teacher training whereby *listening* becomes a key factor in support of developing a culturally relevant program for children.

And from a perspective of researcher, *listening* facilitated reflexivity whereby I was able to use my journal and examine "personal assumptions and goals" and place my "individual belief[s]" (Ahern as cited in Russell & Kelly, 2002, p. 2). *Listening* was the support I needed to maintain attention in honouring and keeping mindful to my identity and to Mohawk culture; a lesson that affected me and the research profoundly. My

listening had to be transparent therefore data collection and analysis had to be distinctive (MacNaughton, 2001). In view of that, I have told my story alongside that of my associates at Step by Step Child and Family Center. This experience might add to the discourse of qualitative inquiry whereby listening to oneself throughout the research process continues to be a rigorous matter of attention.

The primary undertaking of this journey was to explore the complexities involved in developing an integrated culturally significant early childhood program. The research was exploratory, qualitative and built on grounded theory. *Listening* became a heuristic "tool" that arose and helped examine inter-related patterns of meaning found in this study thereby contributing to the scholarship of *listening*. This research presents meaning about what is crucial when developing and following a pedagogy of listening; insights that hopefully will inspire and support further inquiry into culture and learning.

Closing remarks

My dissertation has followed the routes I have taken during my travels over the many bridges of construction and understanding. Locating the bridge initiated the journey. I identified and connected with the site of my investigation, Step by Step Child and Family Center in Kahnawake Mohawk Territory. For several years I travelled across a 'living bridge' that welcomed me, challenged me and provided me with thought, reflections and knowledge. I worked within and engineered the bridge through methods of qualitative inquiry. Phase One of research erected the first pathway, an initial project that would set the parameters for further travel. Phase Two continued the journey. Studios were being built and arts explorations were moving forward. However, without forewarning, I was faced with a bridge of detours and

redirections. The bridge under construction was re-routed, upsetting the flow of the research

journey. Cultural ownership secured new routes and I needed to travel alongside my participants

in research as this was their chosen direction; ownership and identity. With a new map for

direction, the final phase of study paved new roads and I learned to appreciate the disruption in

travel. Fresh thoroughfares had been established providing a route surfaced with meaning, with

joy, and ongoing plans to maintain a living bridge.

August 2010

Nancy and Gail were kind enough to come over to my house on a hot summer day as I

was unable to travel to Kahnawake. Gail and Nancy entered my kitchen and they noticed

my wall of dreydle collections. (A dreydle is a four sided small spinning top played with

by children on the Jewish holiday of Chanukah. Each side of the dreydle carries a

Hebrew letter: נ (Nun), ג (Gimel), ה (Hei), שׁ (Shin), which together form the acronym of

(Nes Gadol Hayah Shum – "a great miracle happened there"; thereby celebrating the

miracle of the Chanukah story when a little bit of oil lasted for 8 days after the temple in

Israel was destroyed. My collection of dreydles (about 60 of them) come from various

countries such as The Czech Republic, Italy, Israel, France, Greece, Russia each

carrying their own story. Some I have purchased when travelling, others have been given

to me as gifts from special people in my life. I was happy to share a few of the tales with

Nancy and Gail.

While dreydles are considered a game for children nowadays, the legacy they carry has a

great deal to do with culture and survival. According to a Jewish legend, Jews had to

hide in caves when studying the Torah (the bible) and were often killed if discovered.

The dreydles became a popular game in that when the teacher would become aware their

enemy was approaching, the students were told to hide their scrolls and play with their

dreydles. My collection reminds me of the ongoing fight for cultural survival and identity

and the joy I feel for my own culture.

 Fast forward to March 2013

I went to visit Step By Step today to see the wonderful projects that have been carried out

throughout the past months. Nancy and Gail called me in to consult with a few teachers

today; to be honest, there really was no need. I really just sat and listened and reveled in

the stories of their projects. They are on their own. I was more than impressed by the

wonderful work, documentation and joy that were exhibited throughout the school. They

feel no need to have "museum evenings" to highlight the work; culture is ever-present.

The topics are culturally rich and seamlessly interwoven into daily events. They have

taken ownership. They have made it their own and they are flying. This center has

attained a plateau of excellence, and I am completely at ease in saying that. How

wonderful for the community and for the children.

Upon leaving the Center, Gail called me in to her office. She handed me a card and a

small box; "A little gift for you," she told me. I opened the card and within seconds tears

filled my eyes. I began to read over a few of the messages from the educators and then I

told her I had to stop. I would read it all at home. In the envelope was a gift of a

keychain, handmade of suede and decorated with Mohawk beading. The pouch is filled

with tobacco, a traditional native way of offering thanks; the smell will remind me of

what I have inhaled from this journey. Gail insisted I open the box she handed to me and

within seconds, once more my tears poured down my cheeks. Inside was a dreydle – A

Mohawk dreydle. Gail had a native artist carve a dreydle and on it are the Hebrew

letters set in Mohawk beading (see Figure 8). I looked at Gail and identified how our

two cultures had come together. How lucky I have been to be invited into this community

to participate in this study and how lucky I have been to have made these friendships.

This entire experience has changed me. I thought my research was over but

today's discussions, and the showing of friendship, have impacted me deeply forever – a

postscript to our work together.

While I could not express my gratitude at the time, my follow up email to Nancy and Gail

expressed my sentiments. As mentioned to them in closing, every one of my dreydles has

a story, but this one; this one has a thesis.

Figure 8. A Mohawk dreydle

References

Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre (2009, November). Retrieved 20, March, 2011 from

http://aerc.usask.ca/publications/ ABLKC%20Brochure.pdf

Abramson, S. (2006). Documentation, communication, action: Co-inquiry meetings for

facilitated interchange. *Co-Inquiry Journal,* 1 (1):1-14. Retrieved 21, December, 2011

From http://www.coinquiry.org/coinarticles.html

Adelabu, D., Durand, T.M., Jenkins-Scott, J. (2010). Full service community schools. In V.

Washington & J.D. Andrews (Eds). *Children of 2020: Creating a better tomorrow (*pp.13

– 23). Washington: NAEYC.

Agar, M.H. (1996). *The professional stranger: An informal introduction to ethnography.* (2nd

ed.) (pp.28-46). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Alderson, P. (2008). *Young Children's Rights: Exploring beliefs, principles and*

practice. London: Kingley.

Allen, T.D. & Eby, L.T. (2010) (Eds.). *The Blackwell handbook of mentoring: A multiple*

perspectives approach (pp. 5-35). UK: Wiley and Sons.

Antone, E, Gamlin, P. & Provost-Turchetti, L. (2003). *Literacy and learning: Acknowledging*

Aboriginal holistic approaches to learning in relation to 'best practices' literacy

training programs. Toronto: Literacy and Learning Final Report.

Aquash, M. (2013). First Nations control of education: One community's experience. *Canadian*

Journal of Native Education, 36(1), 59-75

Arendt, H. (1958). *The human condition,* (pp.1-21). Chicago, Ill: University of Chicago Press.

Arendt, H. (1961). The crisis in culture. In *Between past and future* (pp. 197-225). NY:

Penguin Books.

Arsenault, N. & Anderson, G. (1998). Qualitative research. In *Fundamentals of educational research* (p.119-135). Bristol, PA: Falmer Press, Taylor & Francis Inc.

Asselin, M.E. (2003). Insider research: Issues to consider when doing qualitative research in your own setting. *Journal for Nurses in Staff Development,* 19(20, 99-102).

Assembly of First Nations (1995). *Report of the national treaty gathering.* Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Auger, W.F. & Rich, S.J. (2007). *Curriculum theory and methods* (pp. 37-60). Mississauga, Ontario: John Wiley & Sons.

Bach, H.(2008) Visual narrative inquiry. *Sage encyclopedia of research methods.* Retrieved from: **DOI:** http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412963909

Ball, D. L., & Cohen, D. K. (1996). Reform by the book: What is-or might be-the role of curriculum materials in teacher learning and instructional reform? Educational Researcher, 25(9), 6-8, 14.

Ball, J. (2004). First Nations partnership programs: Incorporating culture in ECE training. *Journal of the Early Childhood Educators of B.C. Professional Association.* Spring, 19(2), 12-16.

Ball, J. (2005). Early childhood care and development programs as hook and hub for inter-sectoral service delivery in First Nations Communities. *Journal of Aboriginal Health.* March 2005.

Ball, J. (2014). On thin ice: Managing risks in community-university research partnerships. In C. Etmanski, T. Dawson, & B. Hall (Eds.). *Learning and teaching community based research: Linking pedagogy to practice (pp. 25-44).* Toronto: University of Toronto Press

Ball, J. & Pence, A. (2000). A post-modernist approach to culturally grounded training in early

      childhood care and development. *Australian Journal of Early Childhood.* 25(1), 21-25.

Barone, T. (2008). Creative nonfiction and social research. In J. G. Knowles & A. L. Cole (Eds.),

      Handbook of the arts in qualitative research (pp. 105–115). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Barone, T., & Eisner, E. (2006). Arts-based educational research. In J. Green, G. Camilli, & P.

      Elimore (Eds.). *Complementary methods in education research* (pp. 95-109). Mahwah,

      NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Publishers.

Barry, C.A., Britten, N., Barber, N., Bradley, C. & Stevenson, F. (1999). Using reflexivity to

      optimize team work in qualitative research. *Qualitative Health Research,* 9, 26-44.

Battiste, M. (2000). *Reclaiming indigenous voice and vision*. (pp. i-xviii).Vancouver: UBC Press.

Battiste, M. (2002). *Indigenous knowledge and pedagogy in First Nations education: A literature

      review with recommendations*. Retrieved from

      http://www.afn.ca/uploads/files/education/24._2002_oct_marie_battiste_indigenousknow

      ledgeandpedagogy_lit_review_for_min_working_group.pdf

Battiste, M. (2004). *Animating sites of postcolonial education: Indigenous knowledge and the

      humanities*. Plenary address, CSSE, May 2004, Winnipeg, Manitoba. Retrieved 13, April,

      2013 from http://www.usask.ca/education/people/battistem/csse_battiste.htm

Battiste, M. (2005). Post-colonial remedies for protecting Indigenous knowledge and

      heritage. In Tripp, P. & Muzzin, L. (Eds.), *Teaching as activism: Equity meets

      environmentalism* (pp. 224-232). Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Battiste, M. (2010). Nourishing the learning spirit: Living our way to new thinking. Education

      Canada, 50(1), 14–18.

Battiste, M., Bell, L., & Findlay, L.M. (2002). Decolonizing education in Canadian universities:

An interdisciplinary international, indigenous research project. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 26(2), 82-85.

Beauvais, T. (2010, May 27). Step byStep art exhibit. *Ioro:wase.* Retrieved from http://kahnawakenews.com/StepbyStep-Art-Exhibit-i61-99.htm

Berk, L.E. (1996). *Infants, children and adolescents.* Toronto, Ontario: Allyn and Bacon.

Berkes, F, (2008). *Sacred ecology.* (2nd ed.) (pp. 19-70). New York and London, Routledge.

Bogdan, R.C., & Biklin, S.K. (2003). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theories and methods.*(4th ed.) Boston: Allyn and Bacon

Bowman, B. (2002). The role of culture and community in children's learning and development: An interview with Barbara Bowman. *Innovations in Early Education (*pp. 4-14). NAREA.

Bowman, B., Donovan, S. & Burns, M.S. (eds.) (2001). *Eager to learn: Educating our preschoolers.* Report of the National Research Council, Washington, DC : National Academies Press.

Brearley, L. & Darso, L. (2007). Vivifying data and experience through artful approaches. In A. Cole & G.Knowles (Eds.) *Handbook of the arts in qualitative research: Perspectives, methodologies, examples and issues.* (pp.10-68). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.

Bredekamp, S. (2004, June). *Critical issues in early childhood workforce development,* Paper prepared for the Cantingy Conference on the Field of Early Childhood Education Professional Development: Implications for teaching, research and policy. Chicago, Ill.

Bredekamp, S., & Copple, C. (2006). *Basics of developmentally appropriate practice: An introduction for teachers of children 3 to 6.* Washington, DC: NAEYC.

Bredekamp, S., & Copple, C. (Eds.) (2009). *Developmentally appropriate practice for early childhood programs*. (Revised edition). Washington, DC: NAEYC.

Bresler, L. (2000). The relationships of school art, national goals, and multi-layered cultures. *Arts Education Policy review, 101(*5), 3-7.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (2000). The ecology of developmental processes. In W. Damon & R.M. Lerner (Eds.), *Handbook of child psychology: Vol. 1. Theoretical models of human development (*6th ed.) (pp. 993-1028), NY: John Wiley & Sons.

Brooker, L. (2002). *Starting school: Young children learning cultures* (pp. 1-40). Buckingham: Open University Press.

Brooker. L. (2011). Taking children seriously: An alternative agenda for research? *Journal of Early Childhood Research* (9), 137-149.

Brooks, M., & Wangmo, T. (2011). Introducing the project approach and use of visual representation to early childhood education in Bhutan. *Early Childhood Research and Practice,* 13(1). Retrieved 12, January, 2012 from http://ecrp.uiuc.edu/v13n1/brooks.html

Brown, A.L. (1994). The advancement of learning. *Educational Research*, 23 (8), 4-12.

Bruner, J. (1986) *Actual minds, possible worlds (*pp. 18-30).Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Bruner, J. (1996a) . *Toward a theory of instruction.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Bruner, J. (1996b) *The culture of education.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Burkett, A. (1996). The Reggio Emilia Approach: An interactive model challenged by American Diversity Retrieved from

http://www.ematusov.com/final.paper.pub/pwfssfp/0000002e.htm

Butler-Kisber, L. (2010). *Qualitative inquiry: Thematic, narrative and arts informed*

perspectives. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Cadwell, L.B. (1997). *Bringing Reggio Emilia home: An innovative apporach to early childhood education.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Cadwell. L.B. (2003). *Bringing learning to life: The Reggio apporach to early education.* New York: Teachers Colleg Press.

Campbell, M. (1983). *Halfbreed.* (pp. 1-65). Halifax, N.S.: Goodread Biographies.

Canovan, M. (1998). Introduction. In H. Arendt *The human condition* (pp. Xi-xix). Chicago: Ill. University of Chicago Press.

Carter, M. (2007). Making your environment the third teacher. *Exchange*. (July/August 2007) 22-27.

Castellano, M.B. (2000). Updating Aboriginal traditions of knowledge. In G.J S. Dei, B.L. Hall, & D.G. Rosenburg (Eds.), *Indigenous knowledge in global contexts*. Toronto, Ontario: University of Toronto Press.

Ceppi, G., & Zini, J. (Eds.) (1998). *Children, space and relations: Meta-project for an environment for young children.* New York: Reggio Children.

Chambers, C. (2004). Research that matters: Finding a path with heart. *Journal of the Canadian Association for Curriculum Studies, 2 (1),* 1-19.

Chang, J. M. (2004). Family literacy nights: Building the circle of supporters within and beyond school for middle school English language learners. *Educational Practice Report,* No.11 (pp. 1-23). Washington, DC: Center for Research on Education, Diversity and Excellence.

Charmaz, K. (1995). Grounded theory. In J.A. Smith, R. Harré, & L. Van Langenhove (Eds.), *Rethinking methods in psychology.* (pp. 20-49). London: Sage Publications.

Charmaz, K. (2005) Grounded theory for the 21st century. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds),

    The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research (3rd Ed.), (pp. 507-535). Thousand Oaks,

    CA: Sage Publications.

Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructivist grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative*

    analysis. (pp. 20-50). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Charmaz, K. (2008). Constructivism and the grounded theory method. In J. A. Holstein & J. F.

    Gubrium (Eds.), *Handbook of constructivist research* (pp. 11-20, 397–412). New York:

    Guildford.

Charmaz, K. (2009). Shifting the grounds: Constructivist grounded theory. In J. M. Morse, P.N.

    Stern, J. Corbin, B. Bowers, K. Charmaz, & A.E. Clarke (Eds.), *Developing grounded*

    theory: The second generation (pp. 127-154). Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

Chavers, D. E. (2000). *Deconstructing the myths: A research agenda for American Indian*

    Education (pp.2-40). Albuquerque, New Mexico: American Indian Science and

    Engineering Society.

Cheatham, G., & Santos, R.M. (2011). Collaborating with families form diverse backgrounds

    and linguistic backgrounds. *Young Children* (Sept. 2011), 76-82.

Christensen, P. & Proult, A. (2002). Working with ethical symmetry in social research with

    children. *Childhood*, 9(4), 477-497.

Clandinin, D.J. & Connelly, F.M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative*

    research. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Clandinin, D.J. & Huber, J. (2010). Narrative inquiry. In B. McGaw, E. Baker, & P.

    Peterson (Eds.), *International encyclopedia of education* (3rd ed.). New York,

NY: Elsevier. Retrieved from

http://www.mofet.macam.ac.il/amitim/iun/CollaborativeResearch/Documents/NarrativeIn

quiry.pdf

Clavir, M. (2002). *Preserving what is valued: Museums, conservation and First Nations*. (p.73-

75).Vancouver, B.C.: UBC Press.

Clemens, S.G. (1991). Art in the classroom: Making every day special. *Young Children* 5(46),

13-19.

Cochran-Smith, M. (2005). The new teacher education: For better or for worse. *Educational*

Researcher, 34(7), 3-17.

Cochran-Smith, M., & Lytle, S. L. (1990). Research on teaching and teacher research: The issues

that divide. *Educational Researcher,* 19(2), 2-11.

Cochran-Smith, M., & Lytle, S.L. (Eds.). (1993). *Inside outside* (pp. 40-58). NY: Teachers

College Press.

Cochran-Smith, M., & Lytle, S.L. (Eds.) (1999). The teacher-researcher movement: A decade

later. *Educational Researcher* 28(11), 15-25.

Cochran-Smith, M., & Lytle, S.L. (2011). Changing perspectives on practitioner research.

Learning Landscapes, 4(2), 17-23.

Cohen, L. Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2007). *Research methods in education.* London:

Routledge.

Cole, A.L., & Knowles, G. (2008). Arts-informed research. In J.G. Knowles & A.L. Cole (Eds.),

Handbook of the arts in qualitative research (pp. 55-70). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Coles, M., Hakkarainen, P., & Bredikyte, M. (2010). Culture and early childhood learning. In

R.E. Tremblay, R.G. Barr, R. Peters & M. Boivin (Eds.). *Encyclopedia on early*

childhood development [online]. Montreal, Quebec: Center of Excellence for Early

Childhood Development; 2010:1-6. Retrieved 2, January, 2012 from:

http://www.childencylcopedia.com/douments/Cole-Hakkarainen--BredikyteANGxp.pdf.

Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D.J. (1988). Narrative meaning: Focus on teacher education.

Elements, 19(2), 15-18.

Connelly, F. M. & Clandinin, D.J. (2006). Narrative inquiry. In J.L. Green, G. Camilli,

& P. Elmore (Eds.) *Handbook of complementary methods in educational research*

(pp.477-487). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Connor, M. & Pokora, J. (2012). *Coaching and mentoring at work: Developing effective*

practice. (pp. 1-79). NY: McGraw Hill.

Copple, C. & Bredekamp, S. (Eds.) (2009). *Developmentally appropriate practice in early*

childhood programs: Serving children from birth through age eight. Washington, D.C.:

NAEYC.

Corbin Dwyer, S. & Buckle, J.L. (2009). The space between: On being an insider-outsider in

qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 8(1)* 54-63.

Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2008). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for*

developing grounded theory (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Correa-Chavez, M. & Rogoff, B. (2005). Cultural research has transformed our ideas of

cognitive development. *International Journal of Behavioural Development,* 29 (3), 7-10.

Creswell, J.W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five*

approaches (2nd Ed). London: Sage Publications.

Creswell, J. W. (2008). "Analyzing and interpreting qualitative data" and "Narrative research

designs." In *Educational research: Planning, conducting and evaluating quantitative a*

and qualitative research (3rd ed.) (pp. 243-270; 511-550). Upper Saddle River, NJ:

Pearson Education.

Creswell, J.W., Hanson, W.E., Plano-Clark, V.L., & Morales, A. (2007). Qualitative research

designs: Selection and implementation. *The Counselling Psychologist,* 35(2), 236-264.

Crozier, G., & Davies, J. (2007). Hard to reach parents of hard to reach schools? A discussion

of home-school relations, with particular reference to Bangladeshi and Pakistani parents.

British Educational Research Journal, 33(3), 295-313.

Cummins, J. & Danesi, M. (1990). *Heritage languages: The development and denial of*

Canada's linguistic resources. Montreal, Quebec: Our Selves Education Foundation.

Dahlberg G. & Moss, P. (2005). *Ethics and politics in early childhood education*. London:

Routledge Falmer.

Dahlberg G. & Moss, P. (2008). Beyond quality in early childhood education and care:

Languages of evaluation. *New Zealand Journal of Teachers Work,* (5)1, 3-12.

Darder, A. (2002). *Reinventing Paulo Freire: A pedagogy of love.* Boulder, Colorado: Westview

Books.

Darling-Hammond, L., Ancess, J., & Falk B. (1995). *Authentic assessment in action: Studies of*

schools and students at work. NY: Teachers College Press.

Davidson-Hunt, I. J. & O'Flaherty, R.M. (2007). Researchers, Indigenous peoples, and place-

based learning communities. *Society & Natural Resources: An International Journal*

20(4), 291-305.

Day, C. (1990). *Places of the soul: Architecture and environmental design as a healthy art.*

London and San Francisco, CA: Thorsons.

Deloria,V. (1995). *Red earth, white lies.* (p.47-59). New York: Scribner.

Delors, J. (1996). Speech by chairman, Jacques Delors, InternationalCommission on Education

for the Twenty-First Century. UNESCO, Paris.

Delpit, L. (1995). *Other people's children: Cultural conflicts in the classroom.* (pp.15-40). NY :

The New Press.

Demmert, W.G., & Towner, J.C. (2003). *A review of the research literature on the influences of*

culturally based education on the academic performance of Native American students.

Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. Retrieved from

http://educationlnorthwest.org/webfm_send/196.

Derman-Sparks, L. & Olsen Edwards, J. (2010). *Anti-bias education for young children and*

ourselves. Washington, DC: NAEYC.

Denzin, N.K., & Lincoln, Y. (1994). (Eds.). *Handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks,

CA: Sage Publications.

Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, K S. (2000). (Eds.). *Handbook of qualitative research*. (pp.1- 40)

Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Dewey, J. (1916). (Copyright renewed 1944). *Democracy in education.* NY: McMillan.

Dewey, J. (1969). *Experience and education.* NY: MacMillan/Collier Books. (Originally

published in 1938: reprinted in 1969).

Dewey, J. (1900/1956). The child and the curriculum and the school and society. (pp. 25-80).

Chicago, IL:The University of Chicago Press.

Diaz-Soto, L., Hixon, S., & Hoite, C. (2010). Diversity, linguistics and the silencing of social

justice in education and care. In G.S. Cannella & L.Diaz-Soto (Eds). *Childhoods: A*

handbook (pp. 215-230). New York: Peter Lang.

Early Learning Framework (2007). A framework for early childhood settings in Ontario. *Best*

   start expert panel on early learning. Ottawa:Ontario.

Edwards, C. (1998). Partner, nurturer and guide: The role of the teacher. In C. Edwards, L.

   Gandini, & G. Forman (Eds.). *The hundred languages of children: The Reggio Emilia*

   Approach. Advanced reflections (pp. 179-198). Greenwich, CT: Ablex.

Edwards, C., Gandini, L., & Foreman, G. (1993). *The hundred languages of children: The*

   Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education and care (pp. 40-80). Norwood,

   New Jersey: Ablex.

Egan, K. (1997). *The educated mind: How cognitive tools shape our understanding* (pp. 15-55)

   Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Ehly, S. (2009). *The learner centered classroom: Ten keys to success for standards based*

   classrooms. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Eisner, E. W. (1972). *Educating artistic vision* (pp. 1-12). New York: Macmillan Publishers

Eisner, E. W. (1991). What really counts in schools. *Educational Leadership*, 48(5), 10-17.

Eisner, E.W. (2001). Music education six months after the turn of the century. *Arts Education*

   Policy Review, 102 (3), 20-24

Eisner, E.W. (2002). *What can education learn from the arts about the practice of education?*

   Encyclopedia of informal education. Retrieved 3, January, 2012 from

   www.infed.org/biblio/eisner_arts_and_the_practice_or_education/htm.

Elkind, D. (1976). *Child and development: A Piagetian perspective.* NY: Oxford

   University Press.

Ellis, C. (2004). *The ethnographic I: A methodological novel about auto-ethnography* (pp. 3-18).

> Walnut Creek, CA: Rowman & Littlefield.

Ember, C. & Ember, M. (2006). *Cultural Anthropology* (pp. 2-26).Upper Saddle River, NJ:

> Prentice Hall.

Emerson, R.M., Fretz, R.I., & Shaw, L.L. (1995) *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes* (pp. 1-65).

> Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Epstein, J. (2001) Building bridges of home, school and community: The importance of design.

> *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk,* 6 (1), 161-169.

Erikson. E. (1959). Identity and the life cycle .*Psychological Issues,* 1*,* 1-71.

Erikson, E. (1993) *Childhood and society* . NY: W.W. Norton and Company. (Original work

> published 1950)

Espinoza, L. (2010). *Getting it right for young children from diverse backgrounds: Applying

> research to improve practice*. Washington, DC: NAEYC.

Espinoza-Herold, M. (2003). *Issues in Latino education: Race school culture and the politics of

> academic success*. Boston: Alyn Bacon

Espinoza-Herold, M. (2007). Stepping beyond *Si se puede*: Dichos as a cultural resource in a

> mother-daughter interaction in a Latino family. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly,*
> 38(3), 260-270.

Feinstein, L. (2003). Inequality in the early cognitive development of British children in the

> 1970 cohort. *Economica,* 70, 73 – 98.

Fitznor, L. (1998). The circle of life. Affirming Aboriginal philosophies in everyday life. In D.

> C. McCance (Ed.), *Life ethics in world religions* (pp. 21-39). Atlanta, GA: Scholars
> Press.

Florio-Ruane, S. with de Tar, J. (2001*). Teacher education and the cultural imagination: Autobiography, conversation, and narrative* (pp. 16-58). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Fontana, A. & Frey, J.(1994). The art of science. In Y.L. Denzin (Ed.) *The handbook of qualitative research*, (pp. 361-374). Thousand Oaks: Sage

Fraser, S. (2006). *Authentic childhood: Experiencing Reggio Emilia in the classroom.* Toronto, Ontario: Thomson Nelson.

Fraser, S. (2007). Play in other languages. *Theory into Practice,* 46(1), 14-22.

Freire, P. (1993). *Pedagogy of a city.* NY: Continuum International Publishing.

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed.* NY: The Continuum Publishing Company.

Gabriel, Y. (2003). Glass palaces and glass cages: Organisations in times of flexible work, fragmented consumption and fragile selves. *Ephemera*, *3*(3), 166-184.

Galimberti, U. (2007). *Art in schools* (paper translated). La Republica delle Done, Italy.

Gall, M. D., Gall, J. P., & Borg, W. R. (2003). *Educational research: An introduction* (7th ed.). (pp. 5-25). Boston, MA : A & B Publications.

Gandini, L. (1993). Fundamentals of the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education, *Young Children, 4*9, 4-8.

Gandini, L. (1996). Teachers and children together: Constructing new learning. *Child Care Informational Exchange,* 96, 61-66.

Gandini, L. (1997). Foundations of the Reggio Emilia approach. In J. Hendricks (Ed.) *First steps toward teaching the Reggio way* (pp. 14-25). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall**.**

Gandini, L. (2004). Foundations of the Reggio Emilia approach. In J. Hendrick (Ed.), *Next*

   steps toward teaching the Reggio way: Accepting the challenge to change (pp. 13-27).

   Columbus, Ohio: Merrill Prentice Hall.

Gandini, L. (2006). *In dialogue with Reggio Emilia: Listening, researching and learning.*

   New York: Routledge.

Gandini, L. (2008). Introduction. In L. Gandini, S. Etheridge, & L. Hill (Eds.) *Insights and*

   inspirations from Reggio Emilia: Stories of teachers and children from North America.

   (pp. 1-36) .Worcester, MA: Davis Press.

Gandini, L. & Goldhaber, J. (2001). Two reflections about documentation. In Lella Gandini &

   Carolyn Pope Edwards (Eds.), *Bambini: The Italian approach to infant/toddler care* (pp.

   124-145). New York: Teachers College Press

Gandini, L., Hill, L., Cadwell, L., & Schwall, C. (Eds.) (2005). *In the spirit of the studio:*

   Learning from the atelier of Reggio Emilia. NY and London: Teachers College Press.

Gardner, H. (1991). *The unschooled mind: How children think and how schools teach.*

   NY: Basic Books.

Gardner, H. (1993). *Multiple intelligences.* NY: Basic Books.

Gardner H. (2006). *Five minds for the future* (pp. 1-48). Boston, MA: Harvard Business School

   Press.

Garroutte, E.M. (2003). *Real Indians: Identity and the survival of Native America.* (pp. 100-

   115). Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures: Selected essays. (*pp. 3-30). NY: Basic Books.

Genishi, C. & Goodwin, A. L. (Eds.) (2008). *Diversity in early childhood education: Rethinking*

   and doing. Oxon: Routledge.

Ghaye, Y. (2010). *Teaching and learning through reflective practice: A practical guide for positive action.* (pp. 170-180). New York: Taylor Francis.

Glaser, B. G. (1978). *Theoretical sensitivity.* Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.

Glaser, B. G. (1992). *Basics of grounded theory analysis: Emergence versus forcing* (pp. 40-60). Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.

Glaser B.G., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative Research.* (pp. 3-100, 240- 271). Chicago: Aldine.

Glesne, C., & Peshkin. (1992). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction.* White Plains, NY: Longman.

Goleman, P., Kaufman, P., & Ray, M. (1992). *The creative spirit.* NY: Dutton.

Gonzalez, N., Moll, L.C, & Amanti, C. (Eds,) (2005). *Funds of knowledge: Theorizing practice in households, communities, and classrooms* (pp. 25-40). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Gonzales, N., Moll, L.C., Floyd-Tenery, M., Rivera, A., Rendon, P., Gonzales, R., & C.,Amanti (1993). Teacher research on funds of knowledge: Learning from households. *Educational Practice, Report 6*. National Center for Research on Cultural Diversity and Second Language Learning. Santa Cruz, CA: University of California.

Gonzalez-Mena, J. & Stonehouse, A. (2008). *Making links: A collaborative approach to planning and practice in early childhood programs* (pp. 170-176). NY: Teachers College Press.

Goodnow, J., Miller, P., & Kessel, F. (1995). Editor's note in cultural practices as contexts for development. *New Directions for Child Development, 68,* 1-3.

Goodnough, K. (2008). Dealing with messiness and uncertainty in practitioner research: The nature of participatory action research. *Canadian Journal of Education,* 31(2), 431-458.

Gothson, H. (2010). Approaching Reggio Emilia: From cults to cultural constructions. In G.

    S. Canella & L. Diaz Soto (Eds.), *Childhoods: A handbook*. (pp. 319-354), NY: Peter

    Lang.

Goulding, C. (1998). Grounded theory: The missing methodology on the interpretivist agenda.

    Qualitative Market: An International Journal 1(1), 50-57.

Gray, A. (2003). *Research practice for cultural studies.* London: Sage Publications.

Graziano, KJ. (2004). Oppression and resiliency in a post-apartheid South Africa: Unheard

    voices of black gay men and lesbians. *Cultural Diversity & Ethnic Minority Psychology*,

    10(3), 302-16.

Greene, M. (1995). *Releasing the imagination: Essays on education, the arts, and social change*.

    New York: Teachers College Press.

Greene, M. (2004). Carpe diem: The arts and school structuring. In G. Diaz & M. B. McKenna

    (Eds.), *Teaching for aesthetic experience: The art of learning* (pp. 17-31). New York:

    Peter Lang.

Grundy, S. (1995). *Action research as professional development* (pp. 15-38). Perth, Australia:

    Arts Accord Affiliation of Arts Educators.

Guba, E.G. & Lincoln, Y.S. (1998). Competing paradigms in social research. In N. K. Denzin &

    Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The landscape of qualitative research*. (pp. 195-220). London:

    Sage.

Gutiérrez, K.D. & Rogoff, B. (2003). Cultural ways of learning: Individual traits or repertoires

    of practice. *Educational Researcher,* 32(5), 19-25.

Hagood, T. K. (2000). Popular culture and the imagined body. *Arts Education Policy Review,*

    102(2), 33-34.

Hall, S. (2003). Cultural identity and diaspora. In J. Evans Braziel & A. Manner (Eds.),

    Theorizing diaspora (pp. 233-257). Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.

Hall, E. & Rudkin, J.K. (2011). *Seen and heard: Children's rights in early childhood*

    education. New York: Teachers College Press.

Hammersley, M. & Atkinson, P. (1995). *Ethnography: Principles in practice,* (pp. 20-

    80). NY: Routledge.

Hampton, E. L. (1995). Memory comes before knowledge: Research may improve if researchers

    remember their motives. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 21, (supplement), 46-54.

Han, H.S., & Thomas, M.S. (2010). No child misunderstood: Enhancing early childhood

    teachers' multicultural responsiveness to the social competence of diverse children.

    *Journal of Early Childhood Education (*37), 469-476.

Harper, D. (2002). Talking about pictures: a case for photo elicitation. *Visual Studies.* 17(1), 13-

    26.

Harris Helm, J., & Katz, L. (2001). *Young investigators: The project approach in the early years.*

    (pp.1-8). NY: Teachers College Press.

Hart, M. A. (2010). Indigenous worldviews, knowledge and research: The development of an

    Indigenous research paradigm. *Journal of Indigenous Voices in Social Work,* 1(1), 1-16.

Hasebe-Lundt, E., Chambers, C., & Leggo, D. (2009). *Life writing as an ethos for our time.*

    NY: Peter Lang.

Haynes, M. (1999).Whose life is it anyway? *Women's Studies International Forum,* 22, 659-671.

Heath, S.B. (1983). *Ways with words: Language life and work in communities and classrooms.*

    New York: Cambridge University Press.

Hendrick, J. (1997). *First steps toward teaching the Reggio way.* Upper Saddle River, NJ:

Prentice Hall.

Hendrick, J. (Ed.) (2004). *Next steps toward teaching the Reggio way: Accepting the challenge*

to change. Columbus, Ohio: Merrill Prentice Hall.

Hennink, M.M. (2007). *International focus group research: A handbook for the health and*

social sciences. (pp. 1-30). Cambridge: University Press.

Hernandez, L.(2010). What is anti-bias education. In L. Derman Sparks & L.Olson Edwards

(Eds). *Anti-bais education for young children and ourselves.* Washington, DC: NAEYC.

Heron, J., & Reasom, P. (2001). The practice of co-operative inquiry in communities of practice.

In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds). *Handbook of action research* (pp.144-154).Thousand

Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Hertz, R. (Ed.) (1997). *Reflexivity and Voice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage..

Hewitt, Valarie (2001). Examining the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood

education". *Early Childhood Education Journal,* **29** (2), 95-100.

Hope, S. (2000). Arts education in wonderland. A*rts* *Education Policy Review,* 102 (2), 11-13.

Hopkins, P.E. (2007). Thinking critically and creatively about focus groups. *Area,* 39(4), 528 –

535.

Hughes, E. (2007). Linking past to present to create an image of the child. *Theory into*

Practice, 46 (1), 48-56.

Hyson, M. (2004). *The emotional development of young children: Building an emotion centered*

curriculum (2ND ed.). New York: Teachers College Press.

Hyson, M. (2008). *Enthusiastic and engaged learners: Approaches to learning in the early*

childhood classroom. New York: Teachers College Press.

Hyson, M. (2012). Becoming enthusiastic and engaged. In C. Copple (Ed.), *Growing minds:*

> *building strong cognitive foundation in early childhood* (pp. 41-63). Washington, DC:
>
> NAEYC.

ICIE (1972). *Indian control of Indian education. Policy Paper* National Indian

> Brotherhood/Assembly of First Nations. Retrieved from: : http://www.ainc-
>
> inac.gc.ca/ai/rqpi/apo/index-eng.asp

Irvine, J.J. (2003). *Educating teachers for diversity: Seeing with a cultural eye.* NY: Teachers

> College Press.

Isak-Ercan, Z. (2010). Looking at school from the house window: Learning from Turkish

> American parents' experiences with early elementary education in the United States.
>
> *Journal of Early Childhood Education,* 38, 133-142

Jacobson, L. (2007). Famed early-childhood philosophy expands horizons. *Education Week,*

> 26 (22), 10-12.

Joint First Nations/Inuit/Federal Child Care Working Group (1995). *Considerations and*

> *recommendations for the First Nations/Inuit child care program and funding*
>
> *framework*. Ottawa: The Group.

Katz, L.G. & Cesarone, B. (1994). Reflections on the Reggio Emilia approach. Urbano, Ill:

> Eric Clearinghouse.

Katz, L. (2010). How young children learn: Part l. In S. Schmidt (Ed.), *Key issues in early years*

> *education: A reader* (pp.9-14). New York: Routledge.

Katz, L.G. & Chard, S. (2000). *Engaging children's minds: The project approach.* Stanford:

> CT: Ablex.

Katz, L.L (Feb. 2009). *Learning.* Paper presented at the NAIS Annual Conference. Washington,

      DC: National Association of Independent Schools.

Keat, B., Strickland, M.J., & Marinak, B.A. (2009).Child voice: How immigrant children

      enlightened their teachers with a camera. *Early Childhood Education* (37), 13-21.

Kemmis, S., & McTaggart, R. (2005). Participatory action research: Communicative action and

      the public sphere. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.). *Handbook of qualitative*

      research (pp. 559 - 604). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Kirk, J., & Winthrop, R. (2004). Promoting a gender-just peace: The roles of women teachers

      in peace building and reconstruction. In *Gender and development* (pp. 50-59). Retrieved

      25 November, 2010 from

      http://www.oxfam.org.uk/what_we_do/resources/downloads/genderpeacebuilding

      and_reconstruction_kirk.

Kirkness, V. (1999). Aboriginal education in Canada: A Retrospective and a prospective.

      Journal of American Indian Education, 39, (1).

Kirkness, V.J. (2013). *Creating space: My life and work in Indigenous education.* Winnipeg,

      Manitoba: University of Manitoba Press. (pp. 20-58).

Knudson, E.I., Heckman, J.J., Cameron, J.L., & Shonkoff, J.P. (2006). Economic,

      neurobiological and behavioural perspectives on building America's future workforce.

      Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 103, (27).

Kohlberg, L. (1976). Moral stages and moralization: The cognitive-developmental approach. In

      T. Lickona (Ed.). *Moral development and behavior: Theory, research, and social issues*

      (pp.31-53). New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and*

development. (pp. 23-60).New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

Kolbe, U. (2001). *Rapunzel`s supermarket: All about young children and their art.* Sydney,

    Australia: Peppinot Press.

Kolig, E. (2002). Introduction: Cultural revival: The construction of indigeneity and the world

    system. In E. Kolig & H. Muckler (Eds.), *Politics of indigeneity in the South Pacific* (pp.

    7-20). Hamburg, Germany: LIT Verlag Press.

Krueger, R. A. (1998). *Moderating focus groups: Focus Group Kit 4*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Krueger, R.A., & Casey, M.A. (2009). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research,* (4th

    ed.) (pp. 5-20). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

LaBoskey, V.K. (1994). *Development of reflective practice: A study of pre-service teachers.*

    New York: Teachers College Press.

Ladd, G.W. (2008). Social competence and peer relationships: Significance for young children

    and their service providers. *Early Childhood Services,* 2(3), 129-148.

Lahman, M., & Park, S. (2004). Understanding children form diverse cultures: Bridging

    perspectives for parents and teachers. *International Journal of Early Years Education,*

    12(2), 131-142.

Landown, G. (2005). *Can anybody hear me? The rights of young children to participate*

    in decisions affecting them. Working Papers, No 36. The Hague: Bernard Van Leer

    Foundation.

Lave, J. (1991). Situated learning in communities of practice. In L.B. Resnick, J.M. Levine &

    S.D. Teasel (ed.) *Perspectives on socially shared cognition.* Washington, DC: American

    Psychological Association.

LeBorgne, B. (2010, May 28). Step by Step cultural museum. *The Eastern Door*, p.4.

Lee, K., & Johnson, A.S. (2007). Child development in cultural contexts: Implication of cultural

psychology for early childhood teacher education. *Journal of Early Childhood Education*

35, 235-243.

Lieblich, A., Tuval-Maschiach, R., & Zilber, T. (1998). *Narrative research: Reading, analysis*

and interpretation. (Vol.47), (pp. 60-80) Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.

Li, J. (2001). Expectations of Chinese immigrant parents for their children's education: The

interplay of Chinese tradition and the Canadian context. *Canadian Journal of*

Education, 26(4), 477-495.

Li, P. (Ed.) (1990). *Race and ethnic relations in Canada.* Toronto: Oxford University Press.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Locust, C. (1998). Wounding the spirit: Discrimination and traditional American Indian belief

systems. *Harvard Educational Review*, *58*(3), 315-330.

Lofland, J. & Lofland, L.H. (1995). *Analyzing social settings: A guide to qualitative observation*

*and analysis (part 2) (*pp. 15-35). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing.

Louis, K. S. & Kruse, S. D. (1995). *Professionalism and community: Perspectives on reforming*

urban schools (p.12-34). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Lynch, E.W., & Hanson, M.J. (Eds). (2004). *Developing cross-cultural competence: Working*

*with young children and their families.(*3rd ed.) Baltimore: Paul H. Brooks.

Lykes, M.B. (2001). Creative arts and photography in participatory action research in

Guatemala. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (eds). *Handbook of Action Research:*

Participative Inquiry and Practice. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Maclennan, F. (2013). Mokasige: Redeploying a colonial institution to reaffirm and revitalize

Algonquin culture. *Canadian Journal of Native Education,* 36(1), 77-94.

MacNaughton, G. (2001). Action research. In G. MacNaughton, S. A. Rolfe, & I. Siraj-Blatchford (Eds.), *Doing early childhood research: International perspectives on theory and practice* (pp. 208-223). Crows Nest NSW: Allen & Unwin.

Madison, D. S. (2005). *Critical ethnography: Method, ethics, and performance* (pp. 1-15). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Malaguzzi, L. (1994). Your image of the child: Where teaching begins. *Child Care Information Exchange*, 3, 52–94.

Malaguzzi, L. (1998). History, ideas and basic philosophy: An interview with Lella Gandini. In C. Edwards, L. Gandini, & G. Forman (Eds.) *The hundred languages of children: The Reggio Emilia approach-advanced reflections* (pp. 28-90).Greenwich CT: Ablex.

Mann, T. (2010). Culturally responsive perspective. In V. Washington & J.D. Andrews (Eds). *Children of 2020: Creating a better tomorrow (*pp. 61-66).Washington: NAEYC.

Maykut, P., & Morehouse,R. (1994). *Beginning qualitative research: A philosophical and practical guide.* (pp. 9-45). Bristol, PA: Falmer Press.

Mays, N. & Pope, C. (2000). Qualitative research in health care: Assessing quality in qualitative research (pp. 50-52). *Pub Med*, 320 (7226). Retrieved from: http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1117321/

McNamara, C. (2009). *General guidelines for conducting interviews*. Retrieved January 20, 2012 from http://managementhelp.org/evaluatn/intrview.htm

McNaughton, S. (2005). Considering culture in research based interventions to support literacy. In D. Dickinson & S. Neuman (Eds.) *Handbook of Early Literacy Research* (Vol.2) (pp.229-242). New York: Guilford Press.

McNaughton, S., Moss, P., & Petrie, P. (2002). *From children's services to children's spaces: Public policy, children and childhood* (pp. 34-60). New York: Routledge Falmer.

McNiff, J. (2007a). My story is a living educational theory. In D.J. Clandinin (Ed.) *Handbook of narrative inquiry: Mapping a methodology* (pp. 308-329). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

McNiff, J. (2007b). Arts based research. In A. L. Cole & G. Knowles, *Handbook of the arts in qualitative research* (pp. 29 -40). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

McTaggert, R. (1991). Principles for participatory action research. *Adult Education Quarterly,* 41 (3), 168-187).

McWilliams, S., Maldonado-Mancebo, T., Szczepaniak, P., & Jones, J.(2011). Supporting Native Indian pre-schoolers and their families. *Young Children*, 66(6), 34-41.

Meier, D.R., Henderson, B. (2007). *Learning from young children in the classroom. The art and science of teacher research* (pp. 15-45). NY: Teacher College Press.

Mejía Arauz, R., Rogoff, B., & Paradise, R. (2005). Cultural variation in children's observation during a demonstration. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 29, 282-291.

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, M. A. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: A sourcebook of new methods* (2nd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Mill, L.C., Amanti, C., Neff, D., & Gonzalez, N. (1992). Funds of knowledge for teaching: Using a qualitative approach to connect homes and classrooms. *Theory into Practice,* 31(2), 132-141.

Milner, H.R. (2007). Race, culture and researcher positionality: Working through dangers seen, unseen and unforeseen. *Educational Researcher,* 36 (7), 388-400.

Moll, L.C., Amanti, C., Neff, D., & Gonzalez, N. (1992). Funds of knowledge for teaching, *Theory into Practice, 31,* 132-141.

Mood, L. (2005). *Cultural identity in kindergarten: A study of Asian-Indian children in New Jersey* (pp. 2-30). NY: Routledge.

Montessori, M. (1946). *Education for a New World.* Madras, India : Kalakshetra Publications.

Moran, M.J., Desrochers, L., & Cavicchi, N.M. (2007). Progettazione and documentation as sociocultural activities: Changing communities of practice. *Theory into practice,* 46(1), 81-90.

Moran, M. J., & Tegano, D. W. (June 2005). Moving toward visual literacy: Photography as a language of teacher inquiry. Journal of Early Childhood Research and Practice, 7(1).

Moss, P. (2006). *Listening to young children: Beyond rights to ethics, Let's talk about listening to children: Towards a shared understanding for early years education in Scotland* (Vol. 2). Scotland: Learning and Teaching Scotland. Retrieved from:

http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/Images/listeningtochildren_tcm4-324433.pdf

Mraz, M., Kissel, B., Algozzine, B., Babb, J., & Foxworth, K. (2011). A collaborative professional development initiative supporting early literacy coaches. *NHSA Dialog*, *14*(3), 174-184.

Munford, R. & Sanders, J. (2004). Recruiting diverse groups of young people to research: Agency and empowerment in the consent process. *Qualitative Social Work,* 3(4), 469-482.

Myrdal, G. (1969). *Objectivity and social research. (*pp.6-35). London: Duckworth.

National Association for the Education of Young Children & National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education (2003). *Early childhood curriculum, assessment, and program education: Building an effective accountable system in programs for children birth through age 8.* Joint position statement. Retrieved

12, January, 2012 from www.naeyc.org/positionstatement.cape

NAEYC (2005). *Code of ethics* (revised). Washington, DC: NAEYC

NAEYC (2009). *Quality benchmarks for cultural competence project.* Washington, DC:

NAEYC.

National Indian Brotherhood (1972). *Indian control of Indian education: Policy paper.* Ottawa,

ON: Author. Retrieved from http://64.26.129.156/calltoaction/Documents/ICOIE.pdf

National Scientific Council on the Developing Child (2008).*The science of early childhood*

*development.*Retrieved from: http: www. file:///C:/Users/admin/Downloads/InBrief-

The%20Science%20of%20Early%20Childhood%20Development%20(1).pdf

New, R. S. (1994). Culture, child development, and developmentally appropriate

practices: Teachers as collaborative researchers. In B. Mallory & R.S. New (Eds.).

Diversity and developmentally appropriate practices: Challenges for early childhood

education. (pp. 64-83). New York: Teachers College Press.

New, R.S. (1998). Theory and praxis in Reggio Emilia: They know what they are doing and

why. In L. Edwards, L. Gandini, & G. Forman (Eds.) *The hundred languages of children:*

The Reggio Emilia approach-advanced reflections (pp.261-284).Greenwich CT: Ablex.

New, R.S. (1999).Playing fair and square: Issues of equity in preschool mathematics, science and

technology. *Dialogue on early childhood science, mathematics and technology*

education: Fostering high quality programs. Washington, DC: Project 2061, American

Association for the Advancement of Science. Retrieved from

http://www.project2061.org/publicaqitons/earlychild/online/fostering/new/htm.

New, R.S. (2007). Reggio Emilia as cultural activity: Theory to practice. *Theory into Practice*

(46)1, 5-13.

NICD (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development) (2006). *The NICHD study of*

    early child care and youth development: Findings for children up to age 4 ½ years.

    Washington, DC: Government Printing Office. Retrieved from

    http://www.nichd.nih.gov/publications/pubs/upload/seccyd 051206.pdf

Nightengale D., & Cromby, J. (1999). *Social constructionist psychology: A Critical analysis of*

    theory and practice (p. 228). Philadelphia: Open University Press.

Norton, B. & Early, M. (2011). Research identity, narrative inquiry and language teaching

    research. *TESOL Quarterly*, 45(3), 415-459.

Novick, R. (1996). *Developmentally appropriate and culturally responsive education: Theory*

    and practice. Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. (ERIC

    ED 397 985).

Nsamenang, B. (2008).Constructing cultural identity in families. In L.Brooker & M. Woodhead

    (Eds.), *Developing positive identities: Early childhood in focus. Diversity and young*

    children. Milton Keynes, United Kingdom: Thanet Press.

NUIFC (National Urban Indian Family Coalition) (2007). *Urban Indian American.* Seattle, WA:

    Retrieved from http:// www.mniba.org/download/UrbanIndian America.pdf

Ochs, E. & Capps, L. (2001). *Living narrative: Creating lives in everyday storytelling*. (pp. 5-

    28). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

O'Conner, K. (2010). *Experiential Learning in an Indigenous Context: Integration of place,*

    experience and criticality in educational practice. Canadian Council on Learning.

Ontario First Nations (2004). *Ontario First Nations early childhood development on reserve:*

    Facilitator's guide. Brantford, ON: Chiefs of Ontario.

Ogbu, J.U. (2003). *Black American students in an affluent suburb: A study of academic*

disengagement. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Olson, B. (2008). *Teaching what the learn, learning what they live: How teacher`s personal*

   *histories shape their professional development. (*pp. 19-65). Boulder, CO: Paradigm.

Oskineegish, M., & Berger, P. (2013). The role of the non-Native teacher in remote First Nations

    communities in northern Ontario. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 36(1), 113-

   125.

Pappamihiel, N.D.E. (2004). Hugs and smiles: Demonstrating caring in a multicultural early

   childhood classroom in early childhood education. *Contemporary Issues in Early*

    Childhood, 3(10), 90-116.

Park, P. (2001). Knowledge and participatory research. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds).

   Handbook of action research (pp.83-93).Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Parker, L.D., & Roffey, B.H. (1997). Back to the drawing Board: Revisiting grounded theory.

    Accounting, Auditing and Accountability Journal, 10(2), 212-247.

Parnell, W. (2011). Revealing the experience of children and teachers even in their absence:

   Documenting in the early childhood studio**.** *Journal of Early Childhood Research,* 9(3),

   291-309.

Patterson, A., Restoule, J.P., Margolin, I., & De Leon, L. (2009). *Arts-based teaching and*

   learning as an alternative approach for Aboriginal learners and their teachers. Report

   for The Canadian Council for Leaning. Retrieved 20, January, 2013 from

   http://www.cclcca.ca/pdfs/FundedResearch/201009PattesonRestouleMargolindeLeonFull
   Report.pdf

Pelo, A. (2006). Growing a culture of Inquiry: Observation as professional development.

   Exchange (Nov./Dec.), 50-53.

Pelo, A. (2007). *The language of art: Inquiry-based studio practices in early childhood settings.*
St.Paul, MN: Redleaf Press.

Pence, A. & Ball, J. (1999). Two sides of an eagle's feather: University of Victoria partnerships
with Canadian First Nations communities. In H. Penn (Ed.) *Early childhood services:
Theory, policy and practice.* (pp.15-36). Buckingham: Open University Press.

Penn, H. (2010). How young children learn. In S. Smidt (Ed.), *Key issues in early years
Education: A reader. (*2nd ed *.)(* pp.18-23). New York: Routledge.

Perry, G., Henderson, B., & Meier, D.R. (Eds.) (2012). Our *inquiry, our practice: Undertaking,
supporting and learning from early childhood teacher research(ers).* Washington, DC:
NAEYC.

Piaget, J. (1950). The psychology of intelligence. London: Routledge.

Piaget, J. (1952). *The origins of intelligence in children.* New York: International Universities
Press.

Piaget, J. (1955). *The child's construction of reality*. Sydney: Routledge – Kegan Hill.

Piaget, J. (1966). *The construction of reality in the child* (pp.30-75). NY: Ballantyne Books.

Piaget, J. (1997). *The moral judgement of the child.* (pp. 1-100). NY: Simon & Schuster.

Piaget, J., & Inhelder, B. (1969). *The psychology of the child.* NY: Basic Books

Pidgeon, M., Munoz, M., Kirkness, V.J., & Archibald, J. (2013). Indian control of Indian
education: Reflections and envisioning the next 40 years. *Canadian Journal of Native
Education*, 36(1), 5-35.

Pink, S. (2001). *Doing visual ethnography: images media and representation in research*. (pp.
1-38) London: Sage Publications.

Pinnegar, S., & Daynes, J.G. (2007). Locating narrative inquiry historically: Thematics in

the turn to narrative. In F.J. Clandinin (Ed.) *Handbook of narrative inquiry: Mapping.*

(pp. 3-65). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Porsanger, J. (2004). An essay about Indigenous methodology. Nordit: Special issue on northern

Minorities, 105-120. Retrieved [on line]:

http://septentrio.uit.no/index.php/nordlit/article/view/1910

Porter, T. (2008). *And Grandma said…Iroquois teachings as passed down through oral*

tradition. Bloomington, IN: Xlibris Corporation.

Porter, T. (2009). Family: Kawatsire. *Kanatsiohareke Newsletter.* Retrieved from

http://www.mohawkcommunity.com/images/Kanatsiohareke_2009-rev4_FINAL.pdf

Preston, J.P., Cottrell, M., Pelletier, T. R., & Pearce, J.V. (2012). Aboriginal early childhood

education in Canada: Issues of context. *Journal of Early Childhood Research.* 10(1), 3-

18.

Pring, R. (1999). Reflecting on the reflective practitioners. In Ai-Yen Chen & John van Maanen

(Eds.), *The reflective spin: Case studies of teachers in higher education transforming*

action (pp.3-10). Singapore: World Scientific.

Prosser, J., & Burke, C. (2008). Image-based education research. In G.Knowles & A.Cole

(Eds.), *Handbook of action research: Participative inquiry and practice.* (pp. 363-371).

Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage Publications.

Pushor, D. & Clandinin, D.J. (2009). The interconnections between narrative inquiry and

action research. In S. Noffke & B.Somekh (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of educational*

action research. (pp. 290-300). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Ragins, B.R. & Kram, K.E. (2007). *The handbook of mentoring at work: Theory, research and*

practice (pp. 1-40). Thousand Oaks, CA; Sage Publications.

Ramey, C.T., Campbell, F.A., Burchinal, M.R., Bryant, D.M., Wasik, B.H., Skinner, M.L., & Gardner, D.M. (1999). *Early learning, later success: The Abecedarian study.* Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina. Retrieved from http://www.fpg.unc.edu/ABC/ells-04.pdf.

Rankin, B. (2004).The importance of intentional socialization among children in small groups: A conversation with Loris Malaguzzi. *Early Childhood Education Journal* (32)2, 81-85.

Reason, P., & Bradbury, H. (2001). *Handbook of action research: Participative inquiry and practice*. (pp. 1-14). London: Sage Pubications.

Reason, P. & Bradbury, H. (2006). Introduction: Inquiry and participation in search of a world worthy of human aspiration. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.), *Handbook of action research* (pp.1-14). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Reason, P. & Bradbury, H. (2008). Introduction. In Peter Reason & Hilary Bradbury (Eds.), T*he Sage handbook of action research. Participative inquiry and practice* (2nd ed., pp.1-10). London: Sage Publications.

Reinharz, S. (1997). Who am I? The need for a variety of selves in the field. In R. Hertz (Ed.), *Reflexivity and voice* (pp.3–20). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Reitsma-Street, M. & Brown, L. (2002). Community action research. In M.O. Melia & K. Miley (Eds.)*, Pathway to power* (pp. 70-95). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Restoule, J. P., (2004). *Male aboriginal identity formation in urban areas: A focus on process and context.* Doctoral dissertation, University of Toronto, Canada. Retrieved June 1, 2013; *International Journal of Qualitative Methods 2009, 8(1)* 40 *Dissertations & Theses: Full Text Database*. (Publication No. AAT NQ94516)

Richards, L. & Morse, J.M. (2013). *Qualitative methods* (3rd ed.) (pp. 120-175). Thousand

Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Rinaldi, C. (2001). The image of the child and the child's environment as fundamental principle.

In L.Gandini & C.P. Edwards (Eds.) *Bambini: The Italian approach to infant toddler*

Care (pp. 45-53). New York: Teachers College Press.

Rinaldi, C. (2006). *In dialogue with Reggio Emilia: Listening, researching and learning.* New

York: Routledge.

Rinehart, N.M. (2000). Native American perspectives: Connected to one another and to the

greater universe. In L. Diaz Soto (Ed.). *The politics of early childhood education.*

(pp.135-142). NY: Peter Lang.

Robertson, J. (2005). *Coaching leadership: Building educational leadership capacity through*

coaching partnerships. (pp. 20-48). Wellington, New Zealand: NZCER Press.

Robinson, K. & Jones Diaz, C. (2006) *Diversity and difference in early childhood education:*

Issues of theory and practice. Colombus, Ohio: Open University Press.

Rogoff, B. (1990). *Apprenticeship in thinking: Cognitive development in social context.* New

York: Oxford University Press.

Rogoff, B. (2003). *The cultural nature of human development.* New York: Oxford University

Press.

Rogoff, B. (2011). On culture and human development: An interview. *Europe's Journal of*

Psychology. 7(3), 408-418.

Rogoff, B., Goodman- Turkanis, C., & Bartlett, L. (2001). *Learning together: Children*

and adults in a school community. New York: Oxford University Press.

Rogoff, B., Correa-Chavéz, M., & Navichoc Cotuc, M. (2005). A cultural/historical view of

schooling in human development. In D.B. Pilemer & S.H.White (Eds.) *Developmental psychology social change: Research, history and policy* (pp. 225-263). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Rose, D.G. (2006). *Visual methodologies: an introduction to the interpretation of visual materials.* (pp. 20-150). London: Sage Publications.

Roulston, K., Legette, R., DeLoach, M., & Buckhalter Pitman, C. (2005). What is 'research' for teacher researchers? *Educational Action Research*, 13(2), 169-189.

Russell, G. M., & Kelly, N. H. (2002, September). Research as interacting dialogic processes: Implications for reflectivity. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung*, *3*(3). Retrieved from

http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/831/1807

Salomon, G. (1993). *Distributed cognitions: Psychological and educational considerations.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sameroff, A., & McDonough, S.C. (1994). Educational implications of developmental transitions. *Phi Delta Kappan* 76(3): 188-193.

Samuelsson, I., Sheridan, S., & Williams, P. (2006). Five preschool curricula: Comparative Perspective. *International Journal of Early Childhood*, 38(1), 11-30.

Sanders, J. & Munford, R. (2005). Activity and reflection: Research and change with diverse groups of young people. *Qualitative Social Work,* 4(2), 197-209.

Schnarch, B. (2004). Ownership, control, access and possession or self-determination applied to Research. *Journal of Aboriginal Health* 1(1), 80-85.

Schon, D. (1983). *The reflective practitioner* (pp. 1-75). New York: Basic Books.

Schwall, C. (2005). The atelier, environments and material. In L. Gandini, L. Hill, L. Cadwell, &

S.Schwall (Eds.) *In the spirit of the studio: Learning from the atelier of Reggio Emilia* (pp.6-31). NY: Teachers College Press.

Schweder, R.A., Goodnow, J.J., Hatano, G., LeVine, R.A.,Markus, H., & Miller, P.J.(1998). The Cultural psychology of development: One mind, many mentalities. In W. Damon (Series ed.) & R.M. Lerner (Vol. ed.) *Handbook of Child Psychology: Vol.1. Theoretical models of human development* (pp.716-937). New York: John Wiley and Sons.

Seale, C., Gobo, G., Gubrium, J.F., & Silverman, D. (Eds.)(2004). *Qualitative Research Practice.* London: Sage Publications.

Sergiovanni, T.J. (2007). *Rethinking leadership: A collection of articles.* (pp.20-80). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Sharmer, O. (2008). Uncovering the blind spot of leadership. *Executive Forum* (52), 52-59.

Shonkoff, J.P., & Philips, D.A. (2000). *From neurons to neighbourhoods: The science of early childhood development* (p. 188-194). Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

Shweder. R.A. (1996). True ethnography: The lore, the law and the lure. In R. Jessor, A. Colby, & R.A. Shweder (Eds.). *Ethnography and human development: Context and meaning in social inquiry (*pp. 15-40). Chicago: University of Chicago.

Silva, K.G., Correa-Chavez, M., & Rogoff, B. (2010). Mexican–heritage children's attention and learning from interactions directed to others. *Child Development,* 81 (3), 898-911.

Siraj-Blatchford, I., Sylva, K., Muttock, S., Gilden, R., & Bell, D. (2002). *Researching effective pedagogy in the early years (REPEY).* London England: DIES Research Report 356.

Snyder, S. (2001). Connection, correlation and integration. *Music Educators Journal,* 87(5), 32-39.

Souto-Manning, M. (2009). Syncretic home literacies: Learning to read in two languages and three worlds. In G. Li (Ed.). *Multicultural families, home literacies and mainstream Schooling.* Charlotte, NC: Information Age.

Souto-Manning, M., & Mitchell, C.H. (2010). The role of action research in fostering culturally responsive practices in a preschool classroom. *Journal of early Childhood Education* 37: 269-277.

Spaggiari,S. (1993). The community teacher partnership in the governance of the schools. In C. Edwards, L. Gandini, & G. Forman (Eds.) *The hundred languages of children: The Reggio Emilia approach-advanced reflections* (pp. 91-100).Greenwich CT: Ablex.

Stairs, A. (1994). The cultural negotiation of Indigenous education: Between micro-ethnography and model-building, *Peabody Journal of Education*, 69 (2),154-171.

Strauss, A.L., & Corbin, J.(1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Streng, J.M, Rhodes, S. D., & Ayala, G.X. (2004). Real dad Latina: Latino adolescents, their school, and a university use photo voice to examine and address the influence of immigration. *Journal of Interprofessional Care*, 18(4), 403-15.

Strong-Wilson,T. (2008). *Bringing memory forward: Storied remembrance in social justice education*. New York: Peter Lang.

Sylva, K., Melhuish, E., Sammons, T., Siraj-Blatchford, I., & Taggart, B. (2004). *Final Report: Effective provision of pre-school education (EPPE) project.* London, England: Institute of Education.

Taaffe, C. (2012). Two's company, three's a crowd: Peer interactions in a preschool social triangle. In G. Perry, B. Henderson & D.R. Meir (Eds.) *Our inquiry, our practice*

undertaking, supporting and learning form early childhood teacher research(ers).
Washington, DC: NAEYC.

Tillman, L. C. (2002). Culturally sensitive research approaches: An African-American
perspective. *Educational Researcher,* 31(9), 3–12.

Tomlinson, H.B. (2009). Developmentally appropriate practice in the kindergarten year: ages 5-
4. In S. Bredekamp & C. Copple, (Eds.). *Developmentally appropriate practice in early
childhood programs: Serving children from birth through age 8* (pp. 187-216).
Washington, DC: NAEYC.

Trevarthen, C. (1995). The child's need to learn a culture. *Children & Society*, 9 (1), 95.

Tudor, A. (1999). *Decoding cultural theory and method in cultural studies* (pp.5-20). London:
Sage Publications.

Tuhawai Smith, L. (1999). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research an Indigenous peoples.* NY:

United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Rights of the Child (1959, 1989, 1990).
Retrieved from http://www.unicef.org/barbados/spmapping/Legal/global/
General/declaration_child1959.pdf]

Ulbricht, J. (1998). Changing concepts of environmental art education: Towards a broader
definition. *Art Education*, 51(6), 22–34.

Uprichard, E. (2008). Children as being and becomings: Children, childhood and temporality.
Children and Society, 22 (4), 303-313.

Vandenbroeck, M. (2009). Let us disagree [editorial]. As cited in L. Brooker (2011) Taking
children seriously: An alternative agenda for research? *Journal of Early Childhood
Research* (9), 137-170.

Van Maanen, J. (Ed.). *Representation in ethnography* (pp. 1- 40). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

Publications.

Vaughn, S., Schumm, J. S., & Sinagub, J. (1996). *Focus group interviews in education and psychology*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Vecchi, V. (1998). What kind of space for living well in school? In G.Ceppi & M. Zini (Eds.), *Children, spaces, relations: Metaproject for an environment for young children* (pp. 128-135). Reggio Emilia, Italy: Reggio Children.

Vecchi, V. (2010). *Art and creativity in Reggio Emilia: Exploring the role and potential of ateliers in early childhood education.* NY: Routledge.

Vygotsky, L.S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of the psychological process.* Cambridge, Mass: University Press.

Vygotsky, L.S. (1987). In R. Rieber & A. Carton (Eds.), *The collected works of L.S. Vygotsky: Vol. 1. Problems of general psychology*. New York: Plenum Press.

Vygotsky, L.S. (1995). Identity formation: A socio-cultural approach. *Journal of Educational Psychology,* 30(2), 83-92. MA: Harvard University Press.

Wang, C., Yi, W.K., Tao, Z.W., & Carovo, K. (1998).   Photo voice as a participatory health promotion strategy. *Health Promotion International,* 13(10), 75-86.

Wardle, F. (2009). *Approaches to early childhood and elementary education.* Colorado: Red Rocks Community College.

Washington, V. & Andrews, J.D. (Eds.) (2010). *Children of 2020: Creating a better tomorrow*. Washington, DC: NAEYC.

Whitin, D., Mills, H., & O'Keefe, T. (1990). *Living and learning mathematics: Stories and strategies for supporting mathematical literacy.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

White, S.H. (1965). Evidence for a hierarchical arrangement of learning processes. In L.P.

Lipsitt & C.C. Spiker, (Eds.). *Advances in early childhood development and behavior* (pp. 182-220). New York: Academic Press.

White Paper (1969). *Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian policy*. Indian Affairs and Northern Development Ottawa, Queen's Printer Cat. Retrieved from: ww.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100010189/1100100010191

Wien, C. (2000). A Canadian interpretation of Reggio Emilia: Fraser's provocation. *Canadian Children,* 25(1), 21-27.

Wien, C.A. (2004). From policing to participation: Overturning the rules and creating amiable classrooms. *Young Children,* 59(1), 34-40

Wilkinson, S. (2004). Focus groups: A feminist method. In S.N. Hesse-Biber & M.L. Yaiser (eds.), *Feminist perspectives on social research* (pp. 271–295). New York: Oxford University Press

Williams, L., & Tanaka, M. (2007). Schalay'nung Sxwey'ga: Emerging cross- cultural pedagogy in the academy. *Educational Insights*, 11(3). Retrieved on line: [http://www.ccfi.educ.ubc.ca/publication/insights/v11nO3/articles/420ynda420420s/ Williams.html]

Willis, S. & Mann, L. (2000). *Differentiating instruction: Finding manageable ways to meet individual needs*. Curriculum Update, Winter 2000. The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. Retrieved on line [http://www.ascd.org]

Wilson, S. (2001). Self-as-relationship in Indigenous research. *Canadian Journal of Native Education, 25*(2), 91-94.

Wilson, S. (2008). *Research is ceremony: Indigenous research methods*. Halifax, Nova Scotia & Winnipeg, Manitoba: Fernwood Publishing.

Wolcott, H.F. (1999) *Ethnography: A way of seeing.* (pp. 80-125). Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press.

Wolf, M. (1992). *A thrice told tale: Feminism, postmodernism, and ethnographic responsibility.* (pp. 80-99). Stanford, CA: Stanford Publishing.

Wright, S. (2001). Guiding learning processes in the integration of the arts. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood.* 2(2), 225-235.

Wright, S. (2003). *The arts: Young children and learning.* Boston, MA: Pearson Education.

Wright, S. (2010).*Understanding creativity in early childhood.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Yuval Davis, N. (2006). Belonging and the politics of belonging. *Patterns of Prejudice,* 40(3), 197-284.

Zins, J.E., Bloodworth, M.R., Weissberg, R.P., & Walberg, H.J. (2004). The scientific base linking social and emotional learning to school success. In J.E. Zins, R .P. Weissberg, M.C.Wang, & H. J.Walberg (Eds.) *Building academic success on social and emotional learning* (pp.3-22). New York: Teachers College Press.

Appendix 1: Phase One Letter of informed Consent for Teachers

MᴄGɪʟʟ Uɴɪᴠᴇʀꜱɪᴛʏ   *Participant Consent Form*
Fᴀᴄᴜʟᴛʏ ᴏꜰ Eᴅᴜᴄᴀᴛɪᴏɴ

Lᴇᴛᴛᴇʀ ᴏꜰ ɪɴꜰᴏʀᴍᴇᴅ

ᴄᴏɴꜱᴇɴᴛ: ᴛᴇᴀᴄʜᴇʀꜱ

Date

Dear Participant;

This letter is an invitation for you to consider participating   in a pilot project that I am hoping to use as a beginning phase of my doctoral studies in the Department of Integrated Studies at McGill University; my doctorate is under the supervision of Dr. Teresa Strong-Wilson. I would like to offer you more information and what your involvement would be if you decide to take part.

Purpose of this research

The purpose of the research is for you to have opportunities to reflect, individually and with other teachers, on the relationship of culture and learning in the Cultural Art Project. The research will allow you to reflect on your teaching and respond to the children's classroom experiences you have witnessed.

Why am I asking you?

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are an educator who is directly involved in the Cultural Art project. Your role in providing inspiration and support in carrying out the cultural activities are key to the project. The classroom practices, cumulative events and reflective practice you will be involved in will provide the authenticity required for a deeper understanding of the connection of learning and culture. By participating, you will have an opportunity to reflect on how to best integrate culture with learning in an early childhood setting.

What I am asking you to do?

I am asking you to reflect on what you have observed in your classroom practice on the Cultural Art Project and to share your perspective on how you used Reggio Emilia in your classroom during this process. You will be invited to be interviewed as well as be a member of a focus group to reflect on

the project. In the interview, you will also have the opportunity to reflect on the focus group discussion.

Focus Group and Interview:

The focus group will involve four of the teachers and their teacher assistants. Questions will be provided in advance. It will last for approximately 2 hours and take place in Kahnawake in the Step by Step Centre.

<u>Head teachers only</u>: I will then ask you for an individual interview. Each interview will last for approximately 60 minutes. We will have the interview at a time and place that is convenient for you.

The questions for the focus group and interview will be provided to you in advance. You will be asked if you would like to add other questions you see as important to this reflection process. You can tell me in person, call me, or email me with the questions. You will also be invited to bring photographs to the focus group from your classroom Cultural Art Project that you might like to talk about.

Concerns and Questions

Participating in research means some extra time may be involved. The focus group and interview, though, is intended to help you reflect on your practice. I will send you a copy of the transcripts of both the focus group and the interview to offer you the opportunity to confirm the accuracy of our conversations and to add or clarify any areas you feel need attention. All responses you provide are completely confidential. Your name will not appear in any report as a result of this study, unless it is your wish that it be used. No children's names will be used. The name of the program will be kept confidential (unless the community wishes otherwise; I will advise you so that you can make an informed choice about confidentiality). With your permission, quotes may be used in the research as well as in a research report for Step by Step. The data will be stored in a secure location on the researcher's computer, protected by passwords known only to the researcher. Data collected will be kept under lock and key in my private office and only I will have access to it. There are no known or anticipated risks to you as a participant in this pilot project.

So as to ensure you are continuing to agree to participate in this study, I will ask you if you have any questions or concerns, and if you do, they will be addressed so that comfort is present. The focus group and interview will offer you the possibility to reflect on your participation and offer feedback in the course of this project.

Your voluntary participation in this research is being requested. You have the option to withdraw at any time without any consequences or need for clarification. If you do remove yourself from the study, your data will be removed and not used, unless you agree otherwise in writing.

How to Reach Me

You may reach me at 514-486-1198 or by email at (sheryl.smithgilman@mcgill.ca). You can also contact my supervisor Dr. Teresa Strong-Wilson at (teresa.strong-wilson@mcgill.ca) or by phone 514/398-4170.

I would also like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received ethics approval through the Office of Research Ethics at McGill University. However the final decision about participation is yours.

Your signature below indicates that you understand the conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researcher.

You can verify the ethical approval of this study by contacting Lynda McNeil, the Research Ethics Officer, James Administration Bldg, Room 419, Tel: 514-398-6831, lynda.mcneil@mcgill.ca.

I look forward to speaking with you and thank you in advance for your assistance in this project.

Sincerely,

Sheryl Smith-Gilman

PhD student

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.

Consent form:

I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Sheryl Smith-Gilman of the Department of Integrated Studies at McGill University. I have had the opportunity to ask any questions related to this study, to receive satisfactory answers to my questions, and any additional details I wanted. Additionally, I understand that I have the right to refuse to answer any question.

Furthermore, since the research will be carried out in partnership and collaboration with the approval of the members of the Mohawk community and since the participants at Step by Step are known to one another, I am aware that identities cannot be kept as confidential. .

This project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the Office of Research Ethics at McGill University.

With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

☐ YES ☐ NO

I agree to have my interview audio recorded.

☐ YES ☐ NO

(if applicable) I prefer, and give permission for, my real name to be used.

☐ YES ☐ NO

Participant Name: _____ (Please print)

Participant Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 1.1: Phase One Letter of Informed Consent for Administrators

Letter of Informed Consent for Administrators

MCGILL UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF EDUCATION   *Participant Consent Form*

Date

Dear Name;

This letter is an invitation for you to consider participating   in a project I am hoping to use as beginning phase of my doctoral studies in the Department of Integrated Studies at McGill University under the supervision of Dr. Teresa Strong-Wilson. I would like to offer you more information and what your involvement would entail if you decide to take part.

Purpose of this research

The purpose of the research is for you to reflect on the relationship of culture and learning in the cultural art project and its use of Reggio Emilia.

Why am I asking you?

You are being asked to participate in this study because you have helped oversee and support the educators directly involved in practice. Your role in providing guidance and scaffolding in carrying out the cultural activities has been key to this project. The classroom practices, cumulative event and reflective opportunities you will be involved in will provide the authenticity required for a deeper understanding of the connection of learning and culture. Importantly, the interview will be an opportunity for you to consider your role in supporting a program of study for young children where cultural distinctiveness is the focus.

What I am asking you to do:

I am asking you to reflect on what has been carried out as a result of this pilot project, in particular its cultural relevance. Your interpretation of The Reggio Emilia Approach and how it may intersect with the mission and values significant to Mohawk culture will be requested for consideration during the interview. Your interview will last for approximately 90 minutes and can either be conducted alone or with both administrators present. We will have the interview at a time and

place that is convenient for you. The questions will be provided to you in advance. You will be asked if you would like to add other questions you see as important to reflecting on the project.

Concerns and Questions

Participating in research means some extra time may be involved. The interview, though, is intended to help you reflect on the project and its direction. I will send you a copy of the transcripts of the interview to offer you the opportunity to confirm the accuracy of our conversations and to add or clarify any areas you feel need attention. All responses you provide are completely confidential. Your name will not appear in any report as a result of this study, unless it is your wish that it be used. No children's names will be used. The name of the program will be kept confidential, unless you and the Mohawk community decide that they would prefer to be acknowledged in any research endeavor. The educators would also be involved, so as to have the choice to use their names or pseudonyms. With your permission, quotes may be used in the research as well as in a research report for Step by Step. The data will be stored in a secure location on the researcher's computer, protected by passwords known only to the researcher. Data collected will be kept under lock and key in my private office and only I will have access to it. There are no known or anticipated risks to you as a participant in this pilot project.

So as to ensure you are continuing to agree to participate in this study, I will inquire if you have any questions or concerns, and if you do, they will be addressed so that comfort is present. The focus group and interview will offer you the possibility to reflect on your participation and offer feedback in the course of this project.

Your voluntary participation in this research is being requested. You have the option to withdraw at any time without any consequences or need for clarification. If you do remove yourself from the study, your data will be removed and not used, unless you agree otherwise in writing.

How to Reach Me

You may reach me at 514-486-1198 or by email at (427ynda427.smithgilman@mcgill.ca). You can also contact my supervisor Dr. Teresa Strong-Wilson at (teresa.strong-wilson@mcgill.ca). I would also like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received ethics approval through the Office of Research Ethics at McGill University. However the final decision about participation is yours.Your signature below indicates that you understand the conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researcher.

You can verify the ethical approval of this study by contacting Lynda McNeil, the Research Ethics Officer, James Administration Bldg., Room 419, Tel: 514-398-6831, lynda.mcneil@mcgill.ca. I look forward to speaking with you and thank you in advance for your assistance in this project. Sincerely,

Sheryl Smith-Gilman
PhD student

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.

CONSENT FORM (Administrators)

I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Sheryl Smith-Gilman of the Department of Integrated Studies at McGill University. I have had the opportunity to ask any questions related to this study, to receive satisfactory answers to my questions, and any additional details I wanted. I understand that I have the right to refuse to answer any question.

Furthermore, since the research will be carried out in partnership and collaboration with the approval of the members of the Mohawk community and since the participants at Step by Step are known to one another, I am aware that identities cannot be kept as confidential.

I was informed that I may withdraw my consent at any time without penalty by advising the researcher.

This project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the Office of Research Ethics at McGill University.

With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

☐ YES ☐ NO

(if applicable) I prefer, and give permission for, my real name to be used.

☐ YES ☐ NO

Participant Name: _____ (Please print)

Participant Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 1.2: Phase One Prompts for Focus Groups

Prompts for meetings with focus groups

- Can you tell me about your roles in the classroom with regard to adapting Reggio Emilia principles and bringing in Mohawk cultural values?

- What Reggio Emilia principles did you observe that connected to Mohawk cultural objectives? Were there areas that were challenging? Explain.

- What strategies did (do) you use to support Reggio Emilia ideals? How are they helpful?

- With regard to your classroom, select what you believe has impacted children's learning with regard to cultural development over the past year. What was important as far as your role was concerned?

Photo elicitation: Documentation of cultural education of your group.

- Explain why you have chosen this photo as a sample.
- Do you distinguish any principles of the Reggio Emilia Approach in your documentation?

Appendix 1.3: Phase One Interview Questions

Interview

1. What have you as educators used from Mohawk culture to further your teaching?

2. What principles from the Reggio Emilia approach did you see being used during the execution of this entire project?

3. Explain how you think you can support children further keeping in mind goals of culture and the role you assume as a Reggio Emilia educator.

4. Do you feel Reggio Emilia principles and Mohawk values overlap? If yes, at what point(s) does this occur? Explain.

5. Do you perceive any tensions between the Reggio Emilia approach and Mohawk values in the project? Please explain

6. What benefits do you feel children received by employing Reggio principles in partnership with cultural objectives? Any disadvantages?

7. Do you feel you have benefited professionally by facilitating and guiding this incorporation? Explain.

8. How could you use past experiences to move forward in expanding children's cultural experiences?

9. What would you like to learn more about in the Reggio Emilia approach that would facilitate this goal?

Appendix 2: Phase Two and Three Letter of Informed Consent for Educators

MᴄGɪʟʟ Uɴɪᴠᴇʀꜱɪᴛʏ   *Participant Consent Form*

Fᴀᴄᴜʟᴛʏ ᴏꜰ Eᴅᴜᴄᴀᴛɪᴏɴ

Date

Dear Participant;

This letter is an invitation for you to consider participating   in research for my doctoral studies in the Department of Integrated Studies at McGill University under the supervision of Dr. Teresa Strong-Wilson. I would like to offer you more information on what your involvement would look like if you decide to take part.

Purpose of this research

The purpose of the research is to explore the relationship of culture and learning through the connections of the Reggio Emilia approach and Mohawk culture. Your students will be involved in art activities in classroom ateliers (workshops) which have been named Entewate'nikonri:sake. I am interested in observing and understanding how these Reggio experiences may add to children's ways of expressing their ideas and values about Mohawk culture within the Step by Step Centre.

Why am I asking you?

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a teacher who is directly involved in the daily art experiences with the children.

What am I asking you to do?

I am asking for permission to observe in your classroom as well as inviting you, over the school year, to participate in two interviews, three focus groups and to complete one short questionnaire. To talk about what you have observed, three two hour **focus group** sessions (6 hours in total) and two one hour **interviews** (2 hours in total) will be arranged over the school year, at your convenience. This commitment entails a total of eight hours.

Observation: I would like to observe in your classroom for 1.5 hours every two weeks for the school year (October to May). I will consult with you about which day and time are best. The purpose is not to evaluate your teaching but to see at first hand your and the children's learning processes in the atelier. I will not be audio or videotaping but writing notes during and after being in your classroom**.**

Focus Groups: There will be 3 two-hour focus groups (6 hours in all): one in the Fall 2010, one in the Winter 2011 and another in Spring 2011. The focus groups will happen at a time and place convenient to you, as participants. I will provide questions in advance so that you have time to reflect. I will also ask you to bring a classroom documentation photo to each focus group: a photo that best shows your understanding of the relationship of culture and learning in the classroom using a Reggio/Mohawk approach. With your permission (and with parental permission), the photos may be included in the research.

Interviews: Two one hour interviews will allow for in depth discussion as well as opportunities for further reflection on the relationship of culture and learning. I will give you the questions in advance. The interviews will take place at a time and place convenient for you; once in Winter 2010, another in Spring 2011. The interviews will be audio recorded. After the interview, I will send you the transcript so that you can check that it's accurate and clarify any areas you feel need attention.

Questionnaire: At the end of the school year, I will ask you to respond in writing or electronically (as you prefer) to a short questionnaire on the relationship of culture and learning in your experience of the atelier. The purpose is not to evaluate your teaching or students' performance but to gather reflections on the atelier experience.

Concerns and Questions

Participating in research means some extra time may be involved (approximately 9 hours in total spread out over the school year). All responses you provide are confidential. However, since the research will be carried out in partnership and collaboration with the approval of the members of the Mohawk community and since the participants at Step by Step are known to one another, I am, aware that identities cannot be confidential with respect to each other; we will talk about confidentiality in the first focus group. Your name will not appear in any report, though, as a result of this study unless you wish your real name to be used. In any presentations and publications, I will use pseudonyms .

The data will be stored in a secure location on the researcher's computer, protected by passwords known only to the researcher. Data collected will be kept under lock and key in my private office and only I will have access to it. There are no known or anticipated risks to you as a participant in this research. Your participation in the research is voluntary. So as to ensure you are continuing to agree to participate in this study, I will ask you (e.g., in the interviews) if you have any questions or concerns, and if you do, they will be addressed so that comfort is present. You have the option to withdraw at any time without any consequences or need to explain. If you do remove yourself from the study, your data will be removed and not used, unless you agree otherwise in writing.

How to Reach Me

You may reach me at 514-486-1198 or by email at (sheryl.smithgilman@mcgill.ca).You can also contact my supervisor Dr. Teresa Strong-Wilson at (teresa.strong-wilson@mcgill.ca). If you have any questions or concerns about your rights or welfare as a participant in this research study, please contact the McGill Research Ethics Officer at 514-398-6831 or 432ynda.mcneil@mcgill.ca.

Your signature below indicates that you understand the conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researcher.I look forward to speaking with you and thank you in advance for your participation.

Sincerely,

Sheryl Smith-Gilman

PhD student

With full knowledge of all forgoing, I agree, of my own free will to participate in this study.

I agree to have my interview audio recorded. ☐ YES ☐ NO

(if applicable) I prefer and give permission for my real name to be used.

☐ YES ☐ NO

Participant Name : _____ (Please print) Participant Signature : _____
Date : _____

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.

Appendix 2.1: Phase Two and Three Letter of Informed Consent for Administrators

Letter of Informed Consent for Administrators

MCGILL UNIVERSITY

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM
FACULTY OF EDUCATION

Dear Participant;   Date:

This letter is an invitation for you to consider participating   in research for my doctoral studies in the Department of Integrated Studies at McGill University under the supervision of Dr. Teresa Strong-Wilson. I would like to offer you more information and what your involvement would entail if you decide to take part.

Purpose of this research

The purpose of the research is to explore the relationship of culture and learning through the connections of the Reggio Emilia approach and Mohawk culture. The students will be involved in art activities in classroom ateliers (workshops) which have been named Entewate'nikonri:sake. I am interested in observing and understanding how these experiences may add to children's ways of expressing their ideas and values within Mohawk culture.

Why am I asking you?

You are being asked to participate in this study because you have helped establish, support and oversee the experiences in the atelier. Your reflections will provide a leadership perspective required for a deeper understanding of the needs for atelier implementation.

What I am asking you to do:

I am asking for you to reflect on what has been carried out during the experiences that have transpired in the atelier, specifically the identification of cultural relevance. Your interpretation of The Reggio Emilia Approach and how it may intersect with the mission and values significant to Mohawk culture will be requested for consideration during two one hour interviews (2 hours in total) during the school year. I am also asking you to participate in three two hour focus group sessions (6 hours in total) to be arranged at your convenience over the school year. This commitment entails eight hours in all.

Focus Groups: The researcher will facilitate the discussions and prompts will be offered in advance for discussion. During the three focus group sessions you will be asked to present a photo from a documentation routine that has impacted your understanding of atelier practice with regard

to the goals of Step by Step curriculum. This photo elicitation will be used for discussion purposes only during our session.

<u>Interviews:</u>

T**wo** one hour interviews will allow for in depth discussion as well as opportunities for further reflection on the relationship of culture and learning. I will give you the questions in advance. The interviews will take place at a time and place convenient for you, once in Winter 2010, another in Spring 2011. The interviews will be audio recorded. After the interview, I will send you the transcript so that you can check that it's accurate and clarify any areas you feel need attention.

Concerns and Questions:

Participating in research means some extra time may be involved (8 hours in total spread out over the school year). All responses you provide are confidential. However, since the research will be carried out in partnership and collaboration with the approval of the members of the Mohawk community and since the participants at Step by Step are known to one another, I am, aware that identities cannot be confidential with respect to each other; we will talk about confidentiality in the first focus group. Your name will not appear in any report, though, as a result of this study unless you wish your real name to be used. In any presentations and publications, I will use pseudonyms .

The data will be stored in a secure location on the researcher's computer, protected by passwords known only to the researcher. Data collected will be kept under lock and key in my private office and only I will have access to it. There are no known or anticipated risks to you as a participant in this research. Your participation in the research is voluntary. So as to ensure you are continuing to agree to participate in this study, I will ask you (e.g., in the interviews) if you have any questions or concerns, and if you do, they will be addressed so that comfort is present. You have the option to withdraw at any time without any consequences or need to explain. If you do remove yourself from the study, your data will be removed and not used, unless you agree otherwise in writing.

How to Reach Me:

You may reach me at 514-486-1198 or by email at (<u>sheryl.smithgilman@mcgill.ca</u>).You can also contact my supervisor Dr. Teresa Strong-Wilson at (<u>teresa.strong-wilson@mcgill.ca</u>). If you have any questions or concerns about your rights or welfare as a participant in this research study, please contact the McGill Research Ethics Officer at 514-398-6831 or 435ynda.mcneil@mcgill.ca.

Your signature below indicates that you understand the conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researcher.I look forward to speaking with you and thank you in advance for your participation.

I look forward to speaking with you and thank you in advance for your assistance in this project.

Sincerely,
Sheryl Smith-Gilman
PhD student

With full knowledge of all forgoing, I agree, of my own free will to participate in this study.

(if applicable) I prefer, and give permission for my real name to be used in the research.

☐ YES ☐ NO

Participant Name: _____ (Please print)
Participant Signature: _____
Date: _____

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher

Appendix 2.2: Phase Two and Three Letter of Informed Consent for Children

(Parental Consent form)

McGill University

Faculty of Education

Parental Consent Form

November 2010

Dear Parent(s) or Guardian(s):

My name is Sheryl Smith-Gilman and I am a PhD student at McGill University under the supervision of Dr. Teresa Strong-Wilson. I have been involved with the Step by Step educators and administrators for the past two years. I am writing to ask permission for your child to participate in a research study for my doctoral thesis. I am interested in understanding how art experiences may add to children's ways of expressing their ideas and values within Mohawk culture. Please note that I have full support of the Step by Step Board and administration and we will be working on this project collaboratively in order to benefit Step by Step.

I will be asking your child questions during art activities and will be writing down   his/her responses for research purpose only. Photos will be taken by the teachers and myself as this practice is a natural routine of your child's classroom. You will have the opportunity to see the photos in school displays and in your child's portfolio during the school year. Some photos may be requested for my study however **no names will used**. Your permission to have your child participate in this research is being requested.

Your signature below indicates that you have been informed of your child's participation in this study and that you consent for me to use the information in my research.

I thank you in advance for your assistance in this project.

Sincerely,

Sheryl Smith-Gilman

PhD student

Please return one signed copy of this letter to your classroom teacher and keep one for yourself.

Parent/Legal Tutor signature: _____

Name of Child_____

I agree to allow my child's conversations about art and photographs, to be used for publication related to Sheryl Smith-Gilman's research study. NO NAMES WILL BE USED.

☐ YES ☐ NO

Nia:wen

How to Reach Me

You may reach me at 514-486-1198 or by email at (sheryl.smithgilman@mcgill.ca). You can also contact my supervisor Dr. Teresa Strong-Wilson at (teresa.strong-wilson@mcgill.ca). If you have any questions or concerns about your child's rights or welfare as a participant in this research study, please contact the McGill Research Ethics Officer at 514-398-6831 or lynda.mcneil@mcgill.ca The final decision about participation is yours.

Appendix 2.3: Phase Two Questionnaire for Teachers

<u>Questionnaire</u>

1. Do you see <u>**your role**</u> in the atelier as different from your work in the classroom in the past?

                                 YES   NO

    Explain:

5. Have you seen advantages <u>**for the children**</u> having a mini atelier in the classroom?

                                 YES   NO

Explain:

Any disadvantages?

                                 YES   NO

Explain:

6. Have you seen advantages <u>**for yourself**</u> with regard to having a mini atelier in classroom?

                                 YES   NO

Explain:

Any disadvantages?

                                 YES   NO

Explain;

7. Can you suggest any improvements for next time?

Appendix 2.4: Phase Two and Three Prompts for Focus Groups

Prompts for meetings with focus groups:

- Did you notice art experiences that the children found new and interesting ? Which ones? How do you know they were interested?

- What Reggio Emilia principles did you observe during those experiences? Are those principles connected to Mohawk cultural objectives? How?

- Can you identify any Reggio Emilia principles that have become clearer to you because of the atelier environments? Explain. Are there any principles that have challenged your understanding?

- Can you identify if children's learning has been impacted with regard to cultural development in the atelier. From your perspective, what was the most important development?

Photo elicitation: Documentation of atelier experience(s).

- Explain why you have chosen this photo as a sample of importance with regards to the goals of the atelier experience. What does it document?
- Do you distinguish any principles of the Reggio Emilia Approach in your documentation?
- Do you distinguish any cultural significance?
- Did the environment of the atelier have an effect on the importance of this piece of documentation?

Appendix 2.5: Phase Two and Three Interview Questions

INTERVIEW

1. Select a "new" medium or technique that was used by the children in the atelier. Take me through how this technique was used in the atelier. How did the children use the medium? For instance, was their focus mostly sensory? Did any of the children attempt representational work? What would you want to use from this experience in order to work more with this medium or technique?

2. What positive outcomes of using the 'mindset' of atelier experiences can you identify? What have been the challenges?

3. What have you used from Mohawk culture to further your role in the atelier?

4. Do you feel you have benefited professionally by facilitating and guiding the activities in the atelier. Explain.

5. How do you feel you could expand children's cultural experiences specifically with regard to the "workings" of an atelier?

6. What would you like to learn more about that would facilitate the goal of allowing children to use their "hundred languages" to communicate their ideas?   .