

STORY-MAKING RECONCILIATION WITH FOUR GRADE 5-6 YOUTH

CAROL LEE

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in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
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Thesis Advisor:

Dr. Nicholas Ng-A-Fook
Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa

Thesis Committee Members:

Dr. Barbara Graves
Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa

Dr. Ruth Kane
Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa

Dr. Giuliano Reis
Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa

Dr. Amélie Lemieux
Faculty of Education, University of Montreal

Abstract

In consideration of TRC Call to Action 63.3 that asks teachers to facilitate cultural understanding, mutual respect, and empathy between First Nations and non-Indigenous students, my thesis sought to find out if a collective, collaborative, story-making activity with four Grade 5-6 students of different cultural backgrounds, including one First Nations student, could further the objectives of Call 63.3. The results of my research suggest that a collective and collaborative story-making activity does, on its own, further two of these reconciliation objectives, mutual respect, and empathy. The third objective, cultural understanding, could probably not been achieved without the intervention of a knowledgeable Indigenous adult, in my case, Annie, (a pseudonym) who was consulted by the story-makers during the scripted “mentor” part of the 12-part hero/ine’s journey story-making process. Using primarily a Posthumanist framework that also integrated some arts-based research/research-creation and critical discourse theoretical orientations for my analysis, I found that an extended focus on a single-story task by four students, not only brought them into a closer relationship with each other, thus facilitating mutual respect and empathy, it also permitted them to imagine a common vision of education. The education world they imagined, in which an educational reconciliation might be realized, was informed, in part, by Indigenous ways of knowing and teaching.

Keywords: *TRC Call 63.3, reconciliation, story-making, cultural understanding, mutual respect, empathy*

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Dedication and Acknowledgments

For my children, Vasanta, Darius, Argos, and Trajan

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¹ I was either five or seven years old when I learned about her from an Ottawa newspaper that published a commemorative piece on either the 100-year anniversary of her birth or the 50-year anniversary of her death. I don't remember which only that it was a commemorative piece. Her poetry spoke to me, and I heard my calling as a poet through her words. Her gender spoke to me of the strength of women outside the home. Her mixed Haudenosaunee (father, a hereditary chief) and English (mother, immigrant) heritage and her public performance of both, spoke to me as well; at the time I framed it as not an *either/or* but as a *both* kind of acceptance. She helped model a way for me of accepting my own mixed linguistic and cultural ancestry. She continued as an influence throughout my life and perhaps is responsible for setting me off on the creative, intra-cultural, feminist journey that led to this academic research.

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² At the time of my data collection, Francine Payer was known in the school where I conducted my research as an Elder and by the name, Grandmother Francine. She was employed by the school board to provide Indigenous students at many schools in the school region with guidance and support. Since then, her affiliation with specific Indigenous communities has come into question. I am in no position to comment on the allegations that have been made nor do I have any wish to do so. In the initial draft of my thesis, I referred to Francine Payer as Grandmother Francine as she was known to all at the time. In a subsequent version of my thesis, I have placed double quotation marks around the term “grandmother” when referring to her. I did this to connote the grandmotherly role she played with the children rather than the title Grandmother that can only be conferred on an individual by a specific Indigenous community. No disrespect is intended by this gesture towards Francine Payer or towards the Indigenous communities in question.

INTRODUCTION

A PREFACE: LIMITED AWARENESS IN THE ORDINARY WORLD

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Report and Calls to Action are not just landmark documents in Canada's history (TRC, 2015a & b). For me, they signal the beginning of a learning journey that settler Canadians must take, both individually and collectively, to redress the systemic and personal wrongs done to Indigenous peoples, to heal the rifts these wrongs created, and continue to reconcile³ with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities on lands and in environments that together we now share. This learning journey is a quest of sorts and a critical endeavor that calls the learner/traveler to experiences outside those in their ordinary world. The TRC report was the event that for some settler Canadians created limited awareness of another world in which Indigenous people were/are forced to live in ways against their will, but also of another world that is rich with different ways of knowing. This limited awareness is what propelled and compelled me as a traveler to venture into this other unknown world to learn some of its truths and to become more open to possibilities of reconciliation. As a traveler on this learning journey, my hope is that both the participants and I bring back what we have learned of this other world to the communities in our ordinary worlds to effect greater "intercultural understanding, empathy, and mutual respect" (TRC, 2015b, p. 7). In ways, this doctoral thesis is a story about the journey that I undertook as a PhD student, researcher, learner, and teacher with four culturally diverse Grade 5 and Grade 6 students.

* * *

³ A brief note about terms: I use the term *reconciliation* here, as contextualized by TRC Calls to Action 63.3 to mean a movement towards intercultural understanding, empathy, and mutual respect. I discuss this term and how it is taken up in Canada by scholars at length in my literature review, however, a more general understanding of how I use the term is needed here, at the beginning. For me, implicit in the term are three concepts. The first is contrition and acknowledgement of the wrongs done. The second is action that makes right the wrongs done to the satisfaction of the wronged Indigenous populations. The third is an agreement on how to move forward in peace and balance together, but not as one assimilated people. Braidotti (2019) gets at the spirit of this third point when she says "we are all in this together but we are not one and the same" (p. 52). I use the term *relationship* to mean "a praxis, [and] a collective engagement" between students of Indigenous heritage and students of settler heritage" (Braidotti, 2019, p. 53).

What should follow now is a statement of researcher positionality that is customary in academic works that address critical content such as this one will. Such statements are contested though. Amaro (2019) and Wynter (2014; Wynter & Mckittrick, 2017) suggest that providing a positionality statement immediately sets up a whole framework of binaries based on absence as lack that are foundational to and reproduce colonial racisms at a conceptual level. In consideration of this, I try to refrain from making statements that reduce my positionality to essentialized discursive markers. However, in consideration of and respect for Anishinaabe introductory traditions, I say this: I was born to a French mother and an Irish father whose ancestors settled and farmed in villages along the Gatineau River. I grew up in a town on the Ottawa River composed largely of British physicists. Even though my endeavors in this world have been facilitated by the privilege of settler colonialism, it is, however, also settler colonial systems of thinking and education that denied me, from an early age, of the privilege of learning about Indigenous ways of knowing. In retrospect, it would have been more helpful to me and more aligned with my personal inclinations to have been educated by Indigenous thinking and guided by Indigenous mentors. I may have found kinship and community from a young age as I made my way through life, instead of constantly feeling at odds with the culture I was born into. While settler colonialism privileged me with certain legal, economic, and material advantages which I do not trivialize, I also see how it also disadvantaged me spiritually, intellectually, and emotionally.

For these reasons and because I am more invested in describing the evolving conditions of a storied and collective self in relation to others, I present an alternative starting point, a pre-face, for readers to form some idea of me to connect to. The preface is a sketch that situates me as that tiny spec in a wide landscape, the contours of which represent my teachers, both human and more-than-human. If you look closely at the geography of this sketch, you may notice a narrow path trailing behind me. This is the path that you can walk to find the stories that turned me this way and that, and which in the end, brought me to this place—writing my doctoral thesis.

* * *

I work with words. I think in words. I am a crafter of words. I have been a writer and editor for more than 40 years and a poet even longer than that, which is to say, most of my life. During that time, it is with words and the writing process that I have done most of my thinking. I write continuously and it is through a process of rewriting and editing that I refine my thinking. So

entrenched is the process, I admit I cannot read a book or article without mentally editing it—the written text and my mental text—as I go. I am passionate about words, but from moment to moment they can appear as a string of pearls or as a garrote. I love them and I hate them. But like it or not, words shape my world and sometimes are the lived experience itself.

As a teacher, I am conscious that most of what I teach is with words. As a student, it is the same. I learn with words. I make sense with words, whether read or heard; I make sense of my world with words. As a Language Arts teacher, I am aware that teaching about words with words is a meta discourse that contributes to students' understanding of themselves as "meta beings." As Innocent (2020) explains, "we watch ourselves in the act of watching and become conscious of consciousness itself" (recorded lecture, 2020). While words are significant contributors to consciousness, literacy, and the field of education, I do not over-value their power or utility.⁴

To be honest, the times of most significance in my life have been wordless ones. They include times with my children in the womb, later forehead to forehead, with my grandfather in the garden and with my grandmother picking berries and wild asparagus, with my mother always, but especially at the end, and with my husband at the beginning, with the two eagles on the day my father died, with a giant snapping turtle I stopped for as she crossed a back road while I was driving home from work, with a patch of trilliums I stumbled on, with a winter green plant I found still bright and verdant under a foot of snow, with several red foxes, one of whom I met not a meter away, with several deer, mostly does, with a family of Merlin Falcons, with various Ospreys, with a pair of Blue Herons silent as the breaking day gliding effortlessly below the hydro wires in my back yard, and with a hummingbird who stopped mid-air to investigate me in a red sweater, so close we could have touched had we dared. And there are other wordless relationships with canine companions Homer and Virgil, Marlowe and Shakespeare, and Coltrane and the countless little kindnesses we exchanged.

Despite these profound wordless exchanges, it is only through words, stories, or art, and perhaps music that I am sometimes afforded opportunities to share those occasions with another. For each occasion, I may tell you a story (in words) of its happening and in doing so forge a

⁴ This is similar to the sentiment that Barad (2007), a posthumanist, feminist scholar I draw on expresses when she says, "Language has been granted too much power" (p. 132).

wholly new exchange with you that is (post)qualitatively and discursively different from the original exchange, even though it is similar.⁵ More than this, story, art, and music, even when understood as representations, are unique in that they can be experienced directly by the senses as artifacts or performance, as well as experienced indirectly as ideas (including impressions, imagination, memories). In other words, as phenomena or representative phenomena.⁶

It is from this rich view of words and story that I will share some stories within a story within a thesis. While I acknowledge the inadequacy of words to fully convey all the connections and relationships that inform these stories, I also accept that “the story [is] its own law and [is] to be respected no matter what” (Spence, 2010, p. 34). As such, I will be faithful to what Spence (2010) describes as a story’s bare bones. In the writing and telling of my larger thesis story, I will endeavor to become a worthy academic “storyteller, whose job [is]...to put aside modesty or pride, assumptions and reservation, or any wishes [I] might hold for a particular ending” (p. 34). Indeed, the straightforward doctoral journey, as well as the research journey that I had initially imagined for myself turned into very different stories from what I planned. So, what I am about to share are those “different” stories and what I learned from them generally, pedagogically, and for Indigenous truth and reconciliation in the context of TRC Call to Action 63.3 (TRC, 2015b).

⁵ I see an application of Benoit Mandelbrot’s (2010) fractals at work here. Fractal iteration might describe the relationship between an experience and the art/story that follows, and the relationship of this art/story with the experiences they create in others, then the repetition of these storied experiences as stories again and again and so on.

Fractals are mathematical iterations that produce material self-similarity but also infinite material differences in terms of scale and assembly. Fractals measure the “roughness” (nuances) of a phenomenon.

⁶ There is an interesting correspondence between these two types of experience and the two *substantial* human attributes identified in Spinozian philosophy, namely extensions and thought that I do not take up here but that I am compelled to mention (Deleuze, 1988).

THE JOURNEY CALLS: FROM TRUTH TO A DESIRE FOR RECONCILIATION

Truth is vital but without love, truth is unbearable.

—(The Two Popes, 2019, 1:43:35)

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) Call 63.3 asks teachers to support reconciliation by "[b]uilding student capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy, and mutual respect" (TRC, 2015b, p. 7). For schools, this means not only providing students with truth education about the cultural genocide perpetrated against Indigenous people (Johnson, 2016; Stastny et al., 2016), it also means providing students with opportunities to build respectful, empathetic, intercultural relationships. The purpose of my research was to see if collaborative storying-making could foster the goals of TRC (2015) Call 63.3 in a modest way with four Grade 5/6 students of mixed heritage. And if so, how?

I designed my study, initially alone then later with the help of the members of my Research Advisory Committee, "grandmother" Francine Payer and Sylvia Smith, to connect *collective* engagement with story *making* to see if together they could address Call 63.3 in a meaningful way. I was curious to see a) if a *story-making activity* could provide students with opportunities to learn about each other's cultures and help build relationships with each other, b) if the *creative process* itself could make conscious the connection between making choices/decisions and world-building and if so, could this consciousness empower students to make respectful and sensitive choices in their everyday world, and c) if *collaborative making* in a collective process of inquiry and analysis which entails tinkering, iteration, and peer learning could help student authors empathize with each other and imagine futures together that they would collectively want to live in (Kurti et al., 2014).

Expanding on these questions, I wondered how a posthuman orientation might inform my research. I wanted to know if and how posthuman concepts, such as an *assemblage* (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) of students in a specific school could generate *situated knowledges* (Haraway, 1988) about reconciliation using the various *apparatus* (Barad, 2007) typically associated with authoring a story. For example, could a group of students use the apparatus of plot, characters, setting, etc. to imagine reconciliation consciously and critically (Braidotti, 2019d)? Could they then, create a plausible fictional verisimilitude (Leavy, 2019a)? Could they use the specific apparatus of the wonder-tale/quest/hero/ine's journey to structure their story (Bacchilega, 2017;

Campbell, 1949; Propp, 1984)? Could they use the life-like artifice of the story world as an experimental playground or proving ground within which to test the consequences of specific decisions? Could they use collaboration and making together to learn about negotiation and relationship-building (Martin, 2015)?

On another level, I wanted to see how a group of students might collectively weave their individual personal and cultural threads with the threads of their collaborators to produce a single story. Would they braid together their different perspectives and worldviews to advance intercultural understanding (Kimmerer, 2013)? Would they draw on empathy to motivate the redress of past wrongs, and imagine possible different futures based on mutual respect (Cajete (Tewa), 2017)? Would they, as children, harness their collective agency as personal responsibility for reconciliation like Witi Tame Ihimaera (2013), the first published Māori novelist, suggested they might?

Given the many things I wanted to learn from this project, my single overarching research question was: What will a small multicultural group of students (including an Indigenous student) working together as story-makers learn about one another and reconciliation?

My research took place in a Quebec, English elementary school with four participants, two from Grade 6, *Sage* and *Navy*, and two from Grade 5, *Cedar* and *Stephanie* from January 2020 to March 2020.⁷ During that period we spent many lunch times together, eating and making a story. While the story didn't end up being explicitly about reconciliation, it did imagine a reconciliation future and it was significantly influence by Indigenous ways of knowing provided by an older Indigenous woman, the participants call Annie in their story, who came to visit the group as a mentor once. Her visit resulted in an unexpected turn of events in the story.

* * *

The structure of my thesis, from one perspective, follows a typical thesis structure with an Introduction followed by chapters for Theoretical Framework, Literature Review, Methodology, Data Collection, Analysis, and finally Conclusions. However, in consideration of the story

⁷ All names in this paragraph are pseudonyms. They are, in fact, the character names that the authors chose for themselves and other players in their story. To distinguish between participants in the research and the characters they play in the story, I use italics to identify the participants and plain text to identify their characters'. For example, *Sage* indicates that the participant is speaking, while Sage indicates that the character is speaking.

template the students used in this study to make their story—the monomyth, otherwise called the Hero/ine’s Journey (Campbell, 1949; Vogler, 2007)—I have added the hero/ine’s journey’s three act story structure to my thesis structure.

Vogler’s (2007) *The Writer’s Journey* outlines a condensed version of the hero/ine’s journey set out by Campbell (1949) in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Vogler’s version, which I use, has 12 parts instead of Campbell’s 17 parts. The following is a list of Volger’s 12-part hero/ine’s journey provided here for quick reference but explain fully later in the Theoretical Framework chapter.

In Act 1: Departure, there are five parts:

- Ordinary world,
- Call to adventure,
- Reluctance or refusal of the call (sometimes omitted),
- Meeting with the mentor,
- Committing to the journey then crossing into the *unknown* world.

In Act 2 A: Navigating the Unknown World (Descent), there are two parts:

- Tests, allies, and enemies (learning how things work in the other world), and
- Anticipating and preparing for the work to come (approaching the inmost cave).

In Act 2 B: Initiation, there are two parts:

- Ordeal, and
- Reward.

In Act 3: Return, there are three parts:

- The road back (implications and consequences),
- Resurrection (final test of lessons learned), and
- Return to the community with the elixir (the knowledge and/or ability to heal).⁸

The addition of the hero/ine’s journey’s three act story structure to my thesis structure creates a discursive superposition of sorts. This superposition shows how these two different discursive

⁸ While Campbell’s terminology for these same Act 3 parts frame them in more psychological terms (The Crossing of the Return Threshold, Master of the Two Worlds, and Freedom to Live) Volger’s terminology frames the hero/ine’s return as one to a community with gifts that benefit the whole community, not just the individual. My understanding of both suggests that the psychological and social framings are better taken as a composite of the two.

and organizational structures meet, diffract, converge, and move through the text causing some differences and commonalities to be amplified and other to be nullified and rendered unimportant.

This said, neither the thesis nor the hero/ine's journey's discursive structure is an overlay of the other; both move through the text on their own terms. While each retains its own structural and discursive integrity, in bringing them together, both discursive structures and the content contained within each change slightly to account for and adjust to the other's presence. For example, this thesis has a Preface and three more chapters than the typical thesis, and the standard thesis chapters sometime overlap or double as parts of hero/ine's journey story structure. Both structures work together, each one within the other without becoming one or the other, or one and the same. The structure of this document might be understood as a structural and discursive reconciliation of sorts, similar in spirit, I think, to what TRC Call 63.3 asks for in a wholly different context: mutual respect of the other (discourse), an understanding of what informs each culture/discourse, and empathy for the (discursive) displacements/adjustments imposed by one structure on the other. If indeed this document can be understood this way, it supports my wish for this thesis to reflect the spirit of reconciliation set out by TRC Call 63.3 on as many levels as possible and to make readers conscious of this spirit as often as possible.

Bringing these two different discourses together structurally also produced something new and unexpected. What emerged, because of this structural convergence, was the foregrounding of a discourse around child agency which neither the thesis structure nor the hero/ine's journey structure overtly model on their own. This child agency discourse, that the combined thesis and the hero/ine's journey structures foreground, is also foregrounded in the story the participants made. The result, as you will see as you read this document is an embedded and embodied child agency meta discourse that behaves like a fractal. Throughout the document it plays out as the thesis watching the story watching the thesis watching the story, kind of discourse. For example, the *thesis* is about the *story* that four Grade 5/6 youth made together. Within that, is the *story* of their making it. Within that, is the research *story* involving their *story* and its making. And within that, is my doctoral *story* composed of the research *story* and all its *embedded stories embodied* in this document as a *thesis*. This novel meta discursive structure, while unexpectedly born as I was thesis writing, does parallel a similar planned feature of my research methodology involving the participants' story decisions. During data collection/production, I not only asked participants to create a story using the hero/ine's journey but to consciously examine how the story-making

decisions they made, made some story elements possible and made others impossible. These almost daily examinations of the previous day's decisions produced lively meta story-making conversations about their story-making itself. The story-makers also watched themselves learn in the story-making process as they collectively made a story.

Bringing these two discursive structures together and watching them ripple through each other like two waves intersecting and diffracting in superposition is also a critical one. It made visible the academic and pedagogical strengths and limitations of both the thesis discursive structure and the hero/ine's journey discursive structure as stand-alone structures. Among the differences made more visible between these two discourses and their discursive structures were the following two. First, the hero/ine's journey structure is more concerned with facilitating a current and possible future learning process through a sequenced series of steps. Second, the thesis structure is more concerned with the outcomes and results of a learning process that has already happened. The first can handle the imaginary and make-believe contexts and is therefore better equipped to deal with potentialities, the present, and with temporal futurity. The second is better equipped to handle reported facts because it's temporal focus is on a past event, and presumably one that has already manifested some consequences. This thesis hopefully combines the best of both structures. What follows is a structural outline of my thesis and its convergence with the twelve parts of the hero/ine's journey that compose the story of my doctoral journey.

The Preface and Introduction describe how the thesis unfolds in terms of structure and content. Together, they explain how this research came into being and provide a brief description of me, the author. The Preface also describes my ordinary world from a personal perspective. The Introduction articulates my research questions as a response to TRC (2015) Call 63.3 and how it became *the* call that set me off on an academic journey to learn more about reconciliation. Further, both the Preface and Introduction contextualize my doctoral learning as a journey that is simultaneously personal, artistic, and academic.

In Chapter 1, Theoretical, Methodological, and Literary Frameworks, I articulate the theoretical frameworks, primarily posthumanism, my study draws on. I show how these frameworks, including *research-creation* facilitate the integration of maker space principles with artistic materialism in ways that are productive in my work. I also show how a literary theory, the hero/ine's journey, is put to work as part of my overarching theoretical framework. In many ways, Chapter 1 situates the research and the reader in my ordinary world.

In Chapter 2, Literature Review, I review the reconciliation, maker, posthuman, and art-based research literature that helped me understand how my study might contribute to a body of academic and pedagogical knowledge in these areas. It also helped me appreciate the contrary points of view in these areas of research within the academy. This chapter is largely about finding academic helpers and allies in the literature and finding out what my research might offer the academic and teaching communities.

The Chapter 2-3 interlude returns the reader explicitly to the hero/ine's journey story development. It includes typical story parts not typically included in a thesis, namely, a part concerning reluctance and uncertainty about answering the *call* and a part concerning committing to the journey and crossing into the *other* unfamiliar world. This chapter also includes a section on finding personal mentors who helped me stay on course despite numerous setbacks and trials. This personal mentor section is a correlative of Chapter 2 (academic mentors) in the same way that the Preface is the personal correlative of Chapter 1 which describes my ordinary academic world. This chapter also focuses the action of the thesis on its moving parts, that is, on the processes that constitute it rather than on the fixed and distinct component parts of the thesis familiar to scholars—Literature Review, Methodology, Data Collection, etc. These moving parts constitute a learning process that are always dynamically in play with other seen and unseen forces. They constantly evolve, sometimes predictively and sometimes not, affecting/effecting/infecting the nature and course of things. In this chapter, I begin to show, how a relatively fixed story-making template, in this case, the hero/ine's journey story is not only infinitely flexible, but how its orientation is process-related rather than state-related. I also start to show how the hero/ine's journey story can foreground a particular set of relationships and make conscious, for both author(s) and readers, the decisions that flow from them. I contrast this *way* of knowing with the *what* of academic knowing and speculate about both in the terms of research repeatability.

In Chapter 3, Methodology, I describe the formation of my Research Advisory Committee and how I worked with them. I describe the research recruitment process, the story-making process, and data collection processes that took place on 26 days over a period of three months. I also describe the analytic methodologies I use in the Analysis chapter. In terms of the hero/ine's journey, Chapter 3, can be understood as preparation for my research and as preparation by the participants for their story making.

In Chapter 4, Data Collection and Data Creation/Production, I present the story produced by the participants as data and the story-making process data I collected while the story was being made. In terms of the hero/ine's journey, Chapter 4, might be understood, as the participants' knowledge creation and making skill challenges (ordeals) that led to the production of the final story artefact as their learning (reward). The story artefact, in many ways, also documents the challenges experienced by the participants and the story characters, Sage, Navy, Cedar, and Stephanie and represent how the participants' challenges were resolved. In terms of my research, this chapter documents data collection and data creation/production.

The Chapter 4-5 interlude returns the reader explicitly to the hero/ine's journey story development. In this interlude, I suggest that from a researcher's perspective, the academic thesis structure of the Methodology chapter and Part 1, Act 2 of the hero/ine's journey structure intersect as does the Data Collection and Data Creation/Production chapter with Part 2, Act 2 of the hero/ine's journey structure. From the participants and characters perspective, the Data Collection and Data Creation/Production chapter contain all twelve parts of the hero/ine's journey. The characters' story is a whole world within the participants' story which is a whole world within my research story.

In Chapter 5, Data Analysis, I analyze the story the participants made as well as the data I collected from the initial and exit questionnaire, from questions asked about the story decisions the participants made and any changes to those decisions, from observations of us as a group, and from notes taken of the story-making process itself. I discuss three unplanned events and how in one case the event significantly changed the course of the story and this researcher, how in another case, an external event changed all the participants indirectly and one participant directly and thus the dynamic of the group, and how in the third case, the group adapted to unexpected guests. In terms of the hero/ine's journey, this part of my doctoral story might be understood as my knowledge reward.

The Chapter 5-6 interlude returns the reader again to the hero/ine's journey story and its development. Like the first interlude, it includes two typical story parts not typically included in a thesis. The first part is concerned with the road back where we, researcher, and participants, became aware of the implications and consequences of what we learned together and severally from the research project. The second part, called Resurrection, is concerned with any final tests or events that confirm what we have learned. These tests and events indicate and solidify the changes that have transformed us and made us new beings due to the collective story-making

journey we took together and the relationships the story-making apparatus helped forge. This chapter, like the first interlude refocuses the action of the thesis on its moving parts by examining the processes that constitute it. In it I reframe the research project not so much as an unalterable done-deal-fixed-in-time event with specific unalterable results, but as one that over time may continue to ripple and converge with moments in our pasts or help to shape (reconciliation) futures we only imagined when making the story. I also relay a few stories of our end-of project celebrations and the gratitude we expressed for our time together. Sadly, I also relay how our plans to meet for other story-makings had to be abandoned because of COVID-19 but strangely, how it led to a surprising realization on my part. In considering our desire to make another story together, this desire suggested our faith in the repeatability and trustworthiness of the story apparatus to produce similar affective, effective, even infectious results. I consider the implications of this in this chapter.

In Chapter 6, Conclusions, I summarize my findings. I answer my initial questions which were: In what ways does collaborative story-making a) provide an opportunity for students from different cultures to learn about each other, b) enable students to imagine more equitable futures and collectively and agentically enact that in the present, and c) provide a model for real-life practices that include being accountable and responsible for the decisions one makes in relation to others? I also identify new questions that developed during the research. In terms of the hero/ine's journey, this part of my doctoral story might be understood as my return to the ordinary academic world with knowledge that may help the educational community address the reconciliation process called for by the TRC (2015) in Call 63.3.

ACT 1: AN ORDINARY ACADEMIC WORLD: THEORY & LITERATURE STUDY

CHAPTER 1: THEORETICAL, METHODOLOGICAL, AND LITERARY FRAMEWORKS

Subtract the unique from the [multiple]; write at $n - 1$ dimensions.

—(Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 6)

In this chapter, I articulate the theoretical frameworks my study draws on and discuss the composite that they form. I draw primarily on posthumanism, but also on research-creation/arts-based research (ABR) theory, maker space theory, and literary theory associated with the hero/ine's journey genre. I show how a posthumanist framework supports *research-creation*, an arts-based research framework, and how they converge in ways that allow me to integrate maker space theory productive in *story-making*. I also include a discussion of the hero/ine's journey as a literary framework and show how I put it to work with the other frameworks I use. To a lesser degree, my composite theoretical framework is also informed by aspects of critical discourse analysis (CDA) which might be argued have posthuman correlatives, although I do not make that claim here. Finally, I rely on an agential theory of child. While an agential theory of child falls under the umbrella of posthumanism, this aspect of posthumanist thought deeply situates my composite framework (Murris, 2016; Somerville, 2015).

I integrate two CDA aspects into my discussion and later into my analysis. The first is the agency of both verbal and written texts (Gee, 2014; Halliday, 1985; Rogers & Schaenen, 2014; van Dijk, 2006; Wodak, 2002). The second is the dialogic currency of a text. The latter is influenced by both what is and is not said/written, who is saying it, who is taking it up and making meaning with it, and where, when, and how a message circulates (Fairclough, 2003; Leeuwen, 1996; van Dijk, 1980, 1996, 2014; Wodak, 2012). New materialism, which regards matter (including texts) as vibrant and agential, also adds to my understanding of text agency (Bennett, 2009; Coole & Frost, 2010a). In a similar way, critical posthumanism also informs my understanding of dialogic currency (Barad, 2012b; Braidotti, 2016b; Braidotti & Regan, 2017; Davies, 2018; Francesca Ferrando, Gisella Sorrentino, & Elena Cappanera, 2019; Hackett & Somerville, 2017; Manning, 2012a; Masny, 2015; J. L. Rosiek, Snyder, & Pratt, 2020). Critical posthumanism regards global capitalism and advanced technology, and their effect on the planet as discursively material and that all dialog or sense-making is tempered by them. It is also to say that the overt discourse surrounding these two conditions may attempt to minimize their negative

effects on humans, non-humans, eco-systems, world politics, economies, urban environments, agricultures, and other social and biological constructs. As the dominant discourses of our times, they may also erase, lose sight of, forget, and exclude specific groups, human or otherwise, from the dialogic altogether (Braidotti, 2019b).

One such excluded group is the *child*, and as it concerns my work, children in education. Much of what is written in school curricula assumes that children need not have a significant say in their own education because their lack of maturity prevents them from making responsible decisions about it. For example, these curricula support the proliferation of technology and paint it as a necessary good because technology orients students' education and skills development towards marketable careers in a global economy. While there may be nothing wrong in these curricular objectives, children are noticeably absent from these conversations about curricular policies (Murriss, 2016b).⁹

My research took up a different view. It put what youth participants had to say verbally and through their story, and their ability to make decisions about their world, albeit a story world, at the center of all our conversations. Our dialogic assumed that children/youth were always already fully formed agential beings, not just incomplete adults or lesser beings because of their age (Murriss, 2016; Somerville, 2015). It also assumed a corollary of this position that youth have an "inherent low tolerance for inequality" (Blackstock [interview] Howard, 2016, np). From a critical posthumanist perspective, my research took up a theory of the child that assumed my participants had a low tolerance for inequity, were vibrant material beings, had an ability to make informed decisions, thus making them ideally suited as agents for the social change needed to bring about the reconciliation suggested by TRC (2015) Call 63.3.¹⁰

Research-creation is a term, in Canada, that is sometimes used interchangeably with Arts-Based Research (ABR). In this work, I distinguish it as the post-qualitative practice of arts-based

⁹ Also, see any of the documents on standardized testing in Ontario at <http://find.gov.on.ca/?searchType=simple&owner=edu&url=&collection=educationtcu&offset=0&lang=en&type=ANY&q=standardized+testing&search.x=0&search.y=0>. These documents were written by adults and contain information about what adults want children to have learned.

¹⁰ Karin Murriss (2017) and Margaret Somerville (2015) like myself, identify as posthumanists. Others, like Cindy Blackstock ([interview] Howard, 2016), do not identify as posthumanists but share a view of children as fully formed agential beings.

research and distinguish it from what is ordinarily understood as the qualitative practice of ABR. This theoretical framework also informs my work and is defined by Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) as

An approach to research that combines creative and academic research practices and supports the development of knowledge and innovation through artistic expression, scholarly investigation, and experimentation. The creation process is situated within the research activity and produces critically informed work in a variety of media (art forms). Research-creation cannot be limited to the interpretation or analysis of a creator's work, conventional works of technological development, or work that focuses on the creation of curricula. The research-creation process and the resulting artistic work are judged according to SSHRC's established merit review criteria. Fields that may involve research-creation may include, but are not limited to: architecture, design, creative writing, visual arts (e.g., painting, drawing, sculpture, ceramics, textiles), performing arts (e.g., dance, music, theatre), film, video, performance art, interdisciplinary arts, media and electronic arts, and new artistic practices. (<https://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-financement/programs-programmes/definitions-eng.aspx#a22>)

A detailed description of research-creation/arts-based research (ABR), posthumanism, critical discourse analysis (CDA) to a lesser degree, and the monomyth as the theoretical frameworks that underpin my study are presented in the sections that follow.¹¹ Note that both posthumanism and research-creation frameworks are often considered, perhaps erroneously, *post-qualitative* frameworks (Truman & Springgay, 2015; Taylor, 2017). ABR and CDA are generally considered *qualitative* frameworks, although Leavy (2019b) has argued that ABR is a qualitative model unto itself (Rogers, 2005). The monomyth (hero/ine's journey) is considered a *literary* framework (Bertens, 2010). This said, an educational post-qualitative approach to research is not a straight forward thing; it often conflates concepts and method, regarding them as one and the same (Lenz Taguchi, 2016; St. Pierre, 2020). Other times it takes up Karen Barad's (2007) onto-

¹¹ More information on CDA as a stand-alone framework is also provided in Appendix B.

epistemological-ethics that conflate epistemology and ontology and ethics (Le Grange, 2018). Sometimes post-qualitative educational research has a methodology that produces data that can be collected, but sometimes it does not (Taguchi & St. Pierre, 2017).

In broad terms, my research uses the posthumanist concepts of agential realism and diffraction as its theoretical and methodological framework (Barad, 2007). However, it draws on other methods such as ABR, CDA, and Hero/ine's Journey that it diffracts with posthumanism (Leavy, 2019b; Norris, 2011). An agential realism and diffractive methodology entails "carefully reading [listening, observing] for [and attending to] differences that matter in their fine details" (Dolphijn & VanderTuin, 2012, p. 50). Agential realism and diffraction, however, do not set out a one size fits all prescriptive methodology because an inquiry's methodology is only determined by the methodological/discursive practices of the discipline-specific apparatus it uses. For example, M. Sheridan et al. (2020) describe a seemingly rhizomatic set of methods that they used to attend to the making and entangled aspects of their study. They used "multi-layered methodologies" (p. 1289). Their methodological approach included "complex methodological pairings such as video recordings of making, observational narratives, process documenting, blueprint design and one-on-one interviews" (p. 1283). Mine included voice recordings of the story-making sessions and of the story itself, process documenting, observational hand-written notes, records of story decisions, as well as pre- and post- research group questions.

Post-qualitative educational research is still trying to figure itself out and therefore, hard to define (Ulmer, 2017). Regardless, of the general lack of consensus within the community of educational post-qualitative practitioners, a common thread unifies us. It is a desire to enact a more relational ontology in our research and to a lesser degree, to express the limitations we see with the underlying ontology that informs qualitative- and quantitative-based academic inquiry.

Hero/ine's Journey as Structural Framework and Literary Genre

It matters what stories tell stories; it matters whose stories tell stories...

—(Haraway, 2019, p. 565)

The hero/ine's journey not only has a specific structure, but also a specific literary genre. This genre frames one or more central characters as a hero/ine(s) and plots the transformation of the hero/ine(s) as a (learning) journey. The hero/ine's(s') new knowledge or new skills developed on the journey allows the hero/ine(s) to return home with something of value to the

community. The hero/ine's journey is ultimately a success story even if that success is partial or limited. Typically, in comics and movies, the hero is cast as a "superhero/ine." However, in books like *The Secret Life of Bees* (Kidd, 2003), the hero/ines are more ordinary and the journeys are more situated, social justice ones. These types of hero/ines and these types of journeys suggest that the transformation of the hero/ine(s) and those around them is not just about a successful outcome, but that the journey itself is important too. In fact, the hero/ine may have to journey repeatedly or iteratively, making modifications along the way for the desired outcomes to occur.

While educators often use the term journey to mean an individual's educational journey and sometimes frame the learner as the hero/ine of that educational journey, the hero/ine's journey as a literary *genre* should not be confused with this general pedagogical metaphor. Although, the conceptual similarities between these two merits a brief explanation. For some teachers, myself included, *journey* is a concept central to an understanding of learning, as is the concept of *hero/ine* central to an understanding of the learner (Beachboard & Dause, 2019).¹² Taken together, the *hero/ine* plus *journey* is a suitable metaphor for life-long learning. However, for writers and storytellers, the hero/ine's journey is less a learning metaphor than it is a specific step by step story unfolding that works to code a learning process. This learning process code is the framework that readers or listeners recognize in story lines in many cultures world-wide (Campbell, 1949; Propp, 1976). It can be used for telling youth about how individual learning unfolds in the context of the community and how learning takes on value when returned and resituated in the community collective, be it human or more-than-human (Bevacqua & Bowman, 2016; Coombes, 2001; Kuwada & Yamashiro, 2016; Visoka, 2018; Vogler, 2020).

The distinction, in the context of this project, is that participants engaged with the hero/ine's journey *genre* while making their story as part of my research but were already central characters (heroines) of their own individual educational journeys mandated and structured by the provincial government in Quebec's curriculum. As Grade 5 and Grade 6 students in a public

¹² While the concept of learner as hero/ine is not widespread, the cited authors do frame learners this way. By way of contrast, education as a journey is so common a metaphor as to be almost trite. A library search of education and journey as keywords produces hundreds of entries. For this reason, I do not cite them here, although some appear in the citations for learning re-integration into the community for the benefit of the community.

school, they were about halfway through that educational journey. No doubt they were also engaged in less structured education journeys at home related to the individual cultures practiced there, among them being Cree, East Indian, and Italian. For one participant, who never disclosed her heritage, she frequently mentioned how tired she was because she often waited up for her father to get home because he worked an evening shift. For her, her educational journey was as much about learning how to balance her home culture with school demands including attendance.

The hero/ine's journey genre is an outline of the steps (some tests and trials) the hero/ine must undertake and the nurturings he/she/they must obtain for learning to happen. The purpose of these steps is to grow confidence and courage for dealing with the unknown, and for developing knowledge of the world for the benefit of self and others. Most of us will never be the capital H - Hero/ines on the scale of those in myths. And yet we can be small h - hero/ines actively challenging our younger selves in a learning process that is deeply personal, self-conscious, and that begins and ends with the community. The hero/ine's journey, as described by Campbell (1949) and Vogler (2020) unfolds in three acts. See Figure 1 for a visual representation of these acts and the stages within each.

Act 1 chronicles the hero/ine's *departure*. It first describes the hero/ine in the ordinary world and how a new awareness of a "something" begins to develop. Next, the hero/ine is intrigued by something that attracts her attention; something that Somerville (2016) might call "glow." Despite the hero/ine's limited awareness, the "glow" beckons in such a way that the hero/ine hears a call to action. After the attraction is acknowledged, then comes the hero/ine's uncertainty about his/her/their ability to answer the call and sometimes this self-doubt manifests as a full out refusal of the call. The hero/ine's equivocation, is finally resolved through the help of a mentor. The mentor is a being, not necessarily human, that the hero/ine either seeks out or accidentally meets. The mentor offers guidance (often in the form of story about a similar call to action he/she once faced).

Act 2 chronicles the hero/ine's *initiation*. This act begins with the hero/ine's acceptance of the call and a commitment to make the journey outside the familiar. Next, the hero/ine needs to learn how to identify allies and enemies in this unfamiliar territory. The hero/ine needs to learn who he/she can trust. With the help of trusted allies, the hero/ine starts preparing to engage with the specific challenge in the unknown territory. After a period of making ready, the hero/ine

faces the challenge. The result of the challenge engagement in the hero's journey is always a positive one even if the result is only partial success because (self-)knowledge is also a reward.

Act 3 chronicles the hero/ine's *return* to the familiar with new knowledge and self-awareness. On the way back the hero/ine reflects on how this new (self-)knowledge can benefit the community and realizes his/her/their purpose in the community context. When the hero/ine arrives back home and presents the community with the results of the quest, that is, the

Figure 1

Hero's Journey Three Act, Twelve Part Story Progression



Note. (<https://blog.reedsy.com/heros-journey/>). In the public domain.

gift of self and knowledge of the other world, this specific journey ends for the hero/ine. The hero/ine's knowledge is then integrated into the body of community knowledge.

Research-Creation/Arts-Based Research (ABR) Frameworks

*It is a question of producing within the work a movement
capable of affecting the mind outside of all representation.*

—(Deleuze, 1994, p. 8)

In my work, I take up arts-based research (ABR), also known as research-creation when framed as a post-qualitative endeavor. While both ABR and research-creation, for some are interchangeable terms, ABR is the one most often used by academics working within a qualitative framework and research-creation is the term used by academics working within a post-qualitative framework. Some scholars, like McNiff (2019) and Leavy (2019), argue that ABR uses different qualitative methods than other qualitative research and thus should be regarded as a paradigm or model in its own right. To some extent, I engage with this perspective.

For Leavy (2017), the purpose of ABR is not only the study of artistic processes, but also a generative artistic methodology. Methodologically, her conception of ABR, as a paradigm, embeds a process of asking questions (inquiring), finding answers (data collection and analysis), and communicating what was learned in the form of an artistic production. This approach places “the *inquiry process* at the center [of the research] and value[s] aesthetic understanding, evocation, and provocation” (Leavy, 2017, pp. 9-10 emphasis added). In my study, participants engage in the inquiry process as Leavy frames it and as a/r/tography as defined by Sinner et al. (2006), as “a commitment to aesthetic and educational practices, inquiry-laden processes, searching for meaning, and interpreting for understanding” (p.1223). The participants in my study not only inquire about how best to tell their story, but they also make inquiries of each other and with members of the community about issues related to social interaction and social justice. They deliberately ask questions and find answers to move their story forward.

As will become apparent, the ends and purposes of post-qualitative researchcreation educational research in my study are different from those of its ABR quantitative counterpart. Springgay and Truman (2018) suggest that one such difference is often marked by *intentions* saying “[i]f the intent of inquiry is to create a different world, to ask what kinds of futures are imaginable, then (in)tensions need to attend to the immersion, friction, strain, and quivering unease of doing research differently” (p. 103). Their research, like mine, emphasizes socially intentioned change.

Although research-creation produces material artefacts or performances that are representative, the event in which they were made is the important thing. The artefacts

themselves, are somewhat secondary and need to be regarded as a creative means to a knowledge producing transformative end rather than a representative artifactual end. Art, Iser (1978) suggests seeks to imagine or provoke something different from the everyday—possibilities, relationships, solutions, and even other worlds—as a different way of being or living in the world. Post-qualitative research-creation seeks to have its participants “experience” that through the artistic process rather than produce art that evokes it. Its purpose contrasts sharply with qualitative approaches that seek

...to explore; to robustly investigate and learn about social phenomenon; to unpack the meanings people ascribe to activities, situations, events, or artifacts; or to build a depth of understanding about some dimension of social life. (Leavy, 2014, p. 9)

A secondary purpose of ABR is an effort by practitioners to make “research publicly accessible, evocative, and engag[ing]” as art (Leavy, 2019d, p. 1). They argue that research expressed as art is accessible to ordinary people, not just to scholars who have access to academic journals. This accessibility, according to Leavy (2018) creates opportunities for pedagogical research to become useful again to those it can potentially help. In her keynote address to the Artful Inquiry Research Group, Leavy (2018), recounted the positive feedback she received from women readers of *Low-Fat Love*, a novel she wrote based on years of interview data she had collected (Leavy, 2015). Her readers expressed gratitude for the novel saying it made them realize that they too had “settled for low-fat love” and needed to make a change (p. jacket).

More than just public accessibility and usefulness, Leavy (2012) claims that research insights expressed in artistic form also have the power to engage with an audience in ways that an academic article, or a thesis, such as this one, rarely do—ways that encourage dialog about the social conditions of the artistic work. *Low-Fat Love*, for example, provided a “critical commentary about popular culture [media] and the social construction of femininity” that encouraged readers to think about and talk about (p. jacket). The story makers in my study explicitly produced this kind of publicly accessible research/art. It was a product of their research inquiry, at times into reconciliation and at other times into what they could offer the community as youth. This thesis, by contrast, represents my research inquiry into the participants’ use of ABR acts of inquiry and acts of analysis method.

For those interested in the power of imagination, as I am, research-creation through story-making offers a theoretical option for reconciliation-making. It offered the students in my study,

an opportunity to build respectful relationships with their fellow makers, to imagine different possible futures together, and learn how to think about their actions/decisions as hopeful, socially shaping acts that had the potential to help address past mistakes and injustices by not repeating them in the here and now.

Posthumanism

The posthuman ontological, ethical, aesthetic, and epistemological concepts I draw on are grounded in the philosophy and writings of Spinoza (1992 [1677]). However, there are many schools of thought around the idea of the posthuman. The “posthuman” is a term that is sometimes used to encompass both posthumanism and transhumanism (Ferrando, 2020). In my work, it is productive to differentiate between the two.

Transhumanism subscribes to a notion of human perfectability and a belief in a techno-humanity, which, if created, would be superior to all other earthly beings. The ultimate goal of transhumanism is the creation of a downloadable human brain. While this ultimate goal may be realized in the future, in some ways, many humans are already transhuman or cyborg, that is, a composite of organic and inorganic parts. Pacemakers, cochlear implants, and artificial joints are some common examples of inorganic parts found “inside” human bodies. Scholars like Andy Clark (2003), regard some items that reside “outside” the human body, such as eye glasses, cell phones, computers, and even notebooks to be techno-extensions of the human and therefore part of the human body. He argues that we, as humans, have been transhuman or cyborgs from the time the first human fashioned a tool and used it.

Posthumanism, in contrast to transhumanism is a perspective not a goal. It is concerned with affects and effects related to human-technological-ecological relationships in the here and now (Braidotti, 2019b). Posthumanism is still concerned with technology, however, not for its value to humans, but because it permeates all aspects of life on planet Earth and in our global village, and the condition we find ourselves in together (McLuhan, 1977). Human life today is immersed in technology and bound to it, and all life on this planet is affected by it. Katherine Hayles (2006) describes this assemblage as the “cognisphere” (p. 159). Braidotti (2013) describes it as the “posthuman condition” (p. 41).

Posthumanism also subscribes to a notion of the human as many and varied, where one group of humans does not have more intrinsic value than another group, thus, it refuses the notion of Humanism (Mazzei & Jackson, 2017; Snaza, 2017; Snaza & Weaver, 2015b; Wynter, 2014). Posthumanism also includes a notion that more-than-human species and the environment do not

have less value than humans, thus, it refuses anthropocentrism (Oppermann, 2016; Pedersen & Pini, 2017). Posthumanism includes a notion that nothing can be understood simply as one thing or another (ex. female/male) but rather must be understood as a composite of many entangled things (Haraway, 1987). Such a composition is determined largely by the relationships and assemblies that constitute it and interact with it (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Latour, 2005). Thus, posthumanism refuses dualism. In refusing dualism, critical posthumanism also refuses the artificial moral polarities dualisms construct to aid those who try to exert power/control over the agency of human and more-than-human others (Coole & Frost, 2010a; de Freitas, 2017).

Posthumanism, as a conceptual framework works well with the anti-racist intentions of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's recommendations. Its anthropocentric stance harmonizes well with Indigenous conceptions of the earth in which all earthly creatures, plants, and water, etc. are valued beings and teachers (Cajete (Tewa), 1994). The TRC (2015a) points out that many have said "that reconciliation will never occur unless we are also reconciled with the earth. Mi'kmaq and other Indigenous laws stress that humans must journey through life in conversation and negotiation with all creation. Reciprocity and mutual respect help sustain our survival (p. 19). The idea that we are all related is also a commonly held belief of both posthumanism and Indigenous ways of knowing (Latremouille et al., 2016; Todd, 2015). On many fronts, posthumanism and Indigenous ways of knowing share similarities in terms of relational conceptions of epistemology, ontology, and ethics but in no way should these be conflated or construed as being the same as the other. However, their similarities provide for some common ground that allow particular dialogs to happen with greater ease.

Posthumanism has its roots in Spinoza's (1992 [1677]) writings that were later taken up by post-philosopher Gilles Deleuze (1988) and post-psychoanalyst, Felix Guattari (1992). Among the many concepts Deleuze and Guattari adopted from Spinoza, perhaps the most important one is the preeminence of desire/affect and its relationship to agency. For Spinoza, desire/affect, more than effect, is the force most likely to influence a being's movement towards or away from conditions that enhance or reduce one's agency. Spinoza (1992 [1677]) defines these conditions as good and bad. Good is anything that enhances one's agency, as in eating a nourishing meal; bad is anything that reduces or extinguishes one's agency, as in eating poison (p. 200). Desire/affect also explains personal relationships and collective associations. Desire moves

one towards relationships and associations that enhance one's agency and drives one away from associations and relationships that reduce or kill one's personal or social agency.¹³

As already mentioned, posthumanism and research-creation are usually framed as post-qualitative worldviews. There is an equivalency implied here between posthumanism and Post-qualitative concepts, and between research-creation and Post-qualitative concepts that are, however, misleading. While Post-qualitative, posthumanist, and research-creation world views share many characteristics, Post-qualitative inquiry is more absolute in its strict adherence to the ideas of the French post-structuralist philosophers of the 1970s and 1980s. Curriculum scholars, Elizabeth St. Pierre and Patti Lather (2013) call themselves Post-qualitative researchers and St. Pierre (2020) lays claim to inventing the term Post-Qualitative inquiry. However, while educational posthumanism is still very much informed by French post-structuralist philosophers, posthuman educational scholars often prefer to adapt post-philosophies to the realities of life in the posthuman condition—a world that has changed significantly since the 70s and 80s.

Posthumanism, as a theoretical framework explicitly acknowledges that today's world is one informed by the Anthropocene, the 6th Mass Extinction, technological advances, globalization, and advanced capitalism, to name a few. Among the many educational or curriculum scholars taking up posthumanist inquiry, as distinct from *pure* Post-qualitative inquiry, are Nathan Snaza (2014, 2019), John Weaver (2010, 2018), Margaret Somerville (2020), Carol Taylor (2016), Karin Murris (2016; Murris & Bozalek, 2019a) and others like Lesley Le Grange (2018) who take their lead from a variety of posthumanist thinkers like Karen Barad (2012c), Donna Haraway (2011, 2013), Rosi Braidotti (2019b), Katherine Hayles (1999), Bruno Latour (2004, 2005), and Jane Bennett (2009).¹⁴ As I go forward, I use capitalization to distinguish St. Pierre's

¹³ Spinoza's concept of *desire* is not like Lacan's (2019) concept of *desire*. Lacan's is based on lack. Spinoza's concept of desire is based on plenitude as described by Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus; Capitalism and schizophrenia* (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983) and *Chaosmosis an ethico-aesthetic paradigm* (Guattari, 1992).

¹⁴ The following educational researchers also take up posthumanism (and the posthuman subject) in their work: Margaret Somerville (Hackett & Somerville, 2017; Somerville, 2016; Somerville et al., 2020), Karin Murris (Murris, 2016, 2018, 2019; Murris & Bozalek, 2019a, 2019b), Carol Taylor (2016; Taylor et al., 2019; Taylor & Fairchild, 2020; Taylor & Gannon, 2018; Taylor & Hughes, 2016; Zarabadi et al., 2019), Nikki Fairchild (Benozzo et al., 2019; Osgood et al., 2020; Taylor et al., 2019; Taylor & Fairchild, 2020; Zarabadi et al., 2019), Simon Ceder (2018), Jerry Rosiek (2019b, 2019a), Kay Sidebottom (Mycroft & Sidebottom, 2019; Sidebottom & Ball, 2018a), Fiona Blaike (2020), Jayne Osgood (Moxnes & Osgood, 2019; Osgood, 2017; Osgood et al., 2020; Osgood & Miriam Giugni, 2015), Jessica Ringrose (Niccolini et al., 2018; Ringrose, 2012; Ringrose & Renold, 2016; Strom et

brand of Post-qualitative inquiry from its more general use as an umbrella term that includes posthumanism and research-creation.

Posthumanist and a Post-Qualitative Ontology in Educational Research

In their introduction to the Post-qualitative special issue of *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, Patti Lather and Elizabeth St. Pierre (2013) take up the ontological differences between qualitative and post-qualitative inquiry. They assert that a qualitative ontological perspective is inherited from “Descartes’ invention, [of] the cogito, the knowing subject... [in which the] human is not only at the center of but prior to all those categories of qualitative inquiry” (p. 630). Central to their argument for post-qualitative inquiry is a refusal of the assumption that the “doer exists [separate from and] before the deed” (Lather & St. Pierre, 2013b, p. 630).¹⁵ On this difference alone, a post-qualitative ontological position is a radical departure from a qualitative ontological position, and is one that has far-reaching implications for education and educational research.

For posthumanists doing post-qualitative research, the doer (participant, researcher, or more-than-humans) is never figured as just a subject, but rather as a subject formation, not separate from but entangled in various and multiple assemblages. In my study, for example, the participants, me, *Annie*, the school, our room, and our story-making task form an entanglement or assemblage that produces a unique subject formation. In posthumanist, post-qualitative research, the doing of a deed is not simply a moment of interaction between disconnected entities, it is the moment of ecological mingling—an *intra-action*—when a doer comes to matter (or becomes entangled) within a specific set of relationships (or ecology as Le Grange (2018) puts it) associated with the deed. An entangled doer then, might be figured as a dynamic set of relationships in which it has specific agencies in specific material formations. In my study, the assemblage I mentioned earlier, is the entangled doer with story-making agency. An entangled

al., 2019), Katie Stafford Strom (Strom et al., 2018, 2019; Strom & Porfilio, 2019), to name only some more well known educational posthumanist academics.

¹⁵ “Nietzsche is famous for challenging the assumption that the doer precedes the deed. For Nietzsche, the “I” is a fiction, a “specifically linguistic figurative habit of immemorial standing” (Spivak, 1974, p. xxiv). Could [it be] that “I” is just a habit, a bad habit? Perhaps “I” does not precede the verb, “think.” Perhaps thought is not initiated by the “I” but comes to the “I” from the world. Perhaps the “I” is not even separate from the verb or the object of the verb in the sentence, “I am running in the road.” Perhaps “I,” “running,” and “road” only exist together—irunroad—in a spatiotemporal relation without distinctions” (St. Pierre et al., 2016, p. 103).

doer might also be figured as a set of relationships in constant re-trans-formation, “intra-action,” or “becoming together-apart” and as such, is becoming different in small or huge ways from moment to moment (Barad, 2012b).^{16,17}

Carol Taylor (2017) lays out five ways that a posthumanist ontology is figured in educational post-qualitative research in the *general*, lower case, post-qualitative sense, not in the *purist*, upper case, Post-qualitative sense.

(1) to de-centre the human...to recognize the agency of the other-than-human and more-than-human bodies, objects, things and matter with which we (humans) share the world; this ‘flatter’ ontology reworks will, intention and causality, seeing them not as the properties of individual bodies but as post-personal events in an emerging confederation;

(2) to recast epistemology by breaking open the individualized, rational and binary representational logics on which the Cartesian knowing subject and his (sic) knowledge-making practices rest; thereby displacing views which posit ‘truth about’ and ‘power over’ by forms of immanent, embodied and embedded knowing-in-being which better attend to indeterminacy, uncontainability, excess, flow, dynamics, multiplicity, and happenstance;

(3) to move from a consciousness-based, cognitive, interiorized, phenomenological view of experience to a materialist, relational, co-constitutive, affective, vitalist, corporeal notion of experience which foregrounds entanglement; this move is productive of responsible and ethical accountability for-and-with-others, such that the category of ‘other’ is rendered redundant;

¹⁶ Barad’s conception of entanglement is taken from quantum physics but is consistent with how educational post-qualitative researchers conceive of it. According to Barad (2007) and Mark Kruse (in Hayles, 2017, p. 69) both particle physicists, entanglement is consistent with how physicists currently view the workings of the physical universe.

¹⁷ Chaos theoreticians, such as Lorenz or Prigogine would qualify this sentence adding that such becoming’s occur only in nonlinear systems that are far from equilibrium. Such systems fluctuate between periods of stability called steady states where feedback loops allow a system to interact somewhat predictably with and if necessary, to adapt to changing environmental conditions, and periods of seeming instability in which topological mixing of multiple systems overlap causing the system to break from its environment, in some cases bifurcating before finding a steady state relationship in a different ecology (Lorenz, 1993; Prigogine & Stengers, 1984).

(4) to recentre the focus on practices, doings and actions as material-discursive enactments of the real in all its messiness, and to shift away from interest in epistemological correspondence between culture and nature (as in constructivist approaches), or language and culture (as in post-structuralism); in doing so, it sees the future as radically open;

(5) to write inventively...to undo the 'god-trick'¹⁸, the presumption of objectivity, or the view from nowhere; instead, to recognize the partiality of our knowing, acknowledge that which is beyond our interpretation, and appreciate our situatedness and uncertainty. (p. 313)

The quotation, although quite long, succinctly outlines the key features of a posthumanist orientation to educational research that I discuss now in more detail.

Implications for the Subject as I and the Object as Other

Leaning on post-structuralists, Derrida (1978) and Foucault (1972), St. Pierre (2018) asserts that deconstruction of qualitative research makes visible the privileged assumptions of power and authority assigned to the subject and researcher (Foucault) and exposes the inherent contradictions (Derrida) implicit in a humanist qualitative epistemology and ontology regarding a knowing subject. St. Pierre and Lather's (2013) deconstruction of qualitative inquiry gets at some of these contradictions and assumptions by way of the following questions:

Can we disconnect ourselves from the mangle somehow (Self) and then carefully disconnect some other small piece of the mangle (Other) long enough to study it? What ontology has enabled us to believe the world is stable so that we can do all that individuating? (p. 630)

Rhetorically speaking, their answers are respectively that you can't, and that the world is not. For St. Pierre (2018), a Post-qualitative ontology precludes the separation of the subject or doer from the object of study in educational inquiry. In some ways Serres (2012) might agree. Although what he suggests is, that subjects and objects take on something of the other in the process of

¹⁸ Taylor does not attribute this quotation, but it was coined by Donna Haraway in *Situated Knowledges* (1988, p. 581).

study, “giv[ing] up a part of them[selves], the knowing subject objectivizes itself, [and] the object cognitivizes itself” (p. 34).

In contrast, posthumanist researchers are not bound by St. Pierre and Lather’s interpretation of Post-qualitative research. Like Taylor above, posthumanist researchers have adopted an *entangled* ontology for their post-qualitative research but have found different answers to the questions St. Pierre and Lather (2013) pose; answers that are perhaps more nuanced and less rigid than the answers St. Pierre and Lather suggest are logically self-evident.

Braidotti (2018, 2019c) for example, a posthumanist researcher that many educational scholars draw on and who studied directly with the post-structuralist scholars St. Pierre draws on (but who is *not* an educational scholar herself) does not abandon the concept of the subject. Instead, she redefines it as a subject formation dependent on the forces that brought it into being and continue to transform it. Nor does she abandon the idea of a knowing subject, rather, she suggests that knowing subjects are needed “to devise new social, ethical and discursive schemes of subject formation to match the profound transformations we are undergoing” (Braidotti, 2013, p. 12). My study adopts this view of knowing subjectivities. Specifically, it attends to the kind of subject formations story-making forges and the transformations this formation produced in the direction of reconciliation. For example, the story direction changed after a visit from *Annie*. Her individual knowing became entangled with the collective formation of the participants’ story by way of temporary physical membership in the assemblage.

For Braidotti (2019), subjectivity is nuanced. It is registered not in “reducing the notion of agency to the criticism of the subject–object distinction and replacing subjectivity with the idea of a generalized symmetry of actors and objects” similar to what Latour’s (1996) Actor Network Theory does in ways (p. 56). For Braidotti (2019), a focus on the subject-object distinction runs “the risk of failing to grasp what kind of subjects we are in the process of becoming” (p. 56). Instead, the priority of her research is “to ground the posthuman in real-life conditions; to detect alternative formations of posthuman subjects; to assess the fast-growing volume of posthuman knowledge production; and to inscribe posthuman thinking subjects and their knowledge within an affirmative ethics” (Braidotti, 2019b, p. 4).

For me then, subjectivity can be further nuanced. It is also registered and informed by autopoiesis (Maturana & Varela, 1980). Or put another way, a lifetime of watching how I think and feel in various assemblages as I am thinking and feeling. Autopoiesis can be defined as the ability of most creatures to be sensitive to environmental conditions and changes both inside and

outside specific individuated formations and at different scales via feedback loops. For humans, or at least for me, it can take the form of consciously tracing the paths of these feedback loops through my own consciousness and being sensitive to changes—when “new” or “different” bits of information get integrated into the personal or social body. Contrary to St. Pierre and Lather’s (2013) view above, an entangled subjectivity for me *can study* its intra-actions with an object of study so long as it does not pretend to stand outside of the ecology it is studying, doesn’t claim to know everything about the intra-action, and is aware of the affordances and limitations of the apparatus (lens) used to produce knowledge.

Braidotti’s (2019b) take on subjectivity aligns with that of Katherine Hayles (1999, 2010, 2017), even though they use a different language to express it. Hayles is the author of *How We Became Posthuman* and one of the first academics to write about the posthuman. Both academics’ figuration of posthuman subject formation as a knowing subjectivity is pervasive in educational research and is one that I take up as well. (See Footnote 9.)

Implications for Qualitative Research Methods: Lived Experience and Being There

For Post-qualitative researchers, like Lather and St. Pierre (2013), the categories “invented to organize and structure humanist qualitative methodology (e.g. the chapter headings in introductory textbooks) – research problem, research questions, literature review, methods of data collection, data analysis, and representation” (p. 630) are problematic. These categories not only pose serious concerns for Lather and St. Pierre generally, but specific problems, in terms of getting research approval from institutional Research Ethics Boards. These problems occur because they do not use recognizable qualitative research categories in their work. These Post-qualitative (not necessarily posthumanist) educational researchers contend that there is no way that one can know what methods will be needed until one is in the thick of the research (St. Pierre, 2021). While emergent conditions always seem to arise during any research project, making adjustments necessary and what St. Pierre says true, a case can be made that planning a research project including its methods is a form of imaginative world-building—an imaginative doing, that enables a researcher to test her research ideas imaginatively before committing to them (Rosiek, 2019b). For me, teasing out a method appropriate for the research in advance of the research, for say, a research proposal is akin to what story-makers do when they imagine and build worlds for their stories before writing or telling them.

On another level, Lather and St. Pierre (2013) refuse qualitative categories for Post-qualitative inquiry because “face-to-face methods of data collection...privilege the immediacy, the ‘now,’ the ‘being there’ of qualitative interviewing and observation that assume both the ‘presence’ of essential voices and the foundational nature of authentic lived experience” (Lather & St. Pierre, 2013, p.630). While the emphasis in posthumanist and Post-qualitative research is on *becoming*, a posthumanist theoretical framework cannot simply dismiss the transformational affects and effects of lived experience. For me, lived experience is the genealogy *becoming* leaves behind. It contains the immanence/potential of *becoming*’s evolution that is “grounded in the real-life present world” (Braidotti, 2019b, p. 108).

Posthumanist educational researchers tend to frame methodology and ways of becoming as knowing subjects differently from Post-qualitative researchers. Posthumanist educational researchers happily use, for example, A/r/tography (Irwin et al., 2019). They use face-to-face collaborative or community events in their studies because a posthumanist framework is focused on learning about what the entangled formations of these engagements are becoming, not on avoiding the pitfalls of qualitative research categories (Hickey-Moody & Willcox, 2019; Kuby et al., 2018). Snaza (2014), a posthumanist educational researcher, in quoting Serres (2012) makes plain his hope that educational research takes up such a position. Referring to the methods of Life and Earth sciences practitioners, he suggests that educational researchers...

practice a more sharing, open, connected way of knowing, in which he who knows participates in the things he knows, is even reborn from them, tries to speak their language, listens to their voices, respects their habitat, lives the same evolutionary history, is enchanted by their narratives, limits finally, through them or for them, his power and his politics. (p. 33)

Here Snaza feels that it is necessary to hear the voices and stories of the world attached to reports of lived experience. While Snaza and Weaver (2016) do not reject qualitative categories altogether, they do argue for more methodological openness and less “methodocentrism” in educational research.

The form of Post-qualitative educational research that Lather and St. Pierre (2013) suggest should replace qualitative methodologies is one called “concept as method” (p. 630). It means “doing educational inquiry: [in] a way where concepts—acts of thought—are practices that reorient thinking, undo the theory/practice binary, and open inquiry to new possibilities”

(Taguchi & St. Pierre, 2017, p. 643). While some educational scholars experiment with concept as method,¹⁹ others like Lemieux and Rowsell (2020) do not seem to, focusing instead on the role materiality plays. In my work, my research framework cannot ignore the lived experiences that humans tell as stories to each other or use as the basis of stories they imagine. To do so, would be to ignore or render unworthy specific subjectivity formations, be they personal, social, or historical. It also would be to ignore or minimize the agency of these stories to “produce for readers [and listeners] that [which] would otherwise be unthinkable” (Franklin-Phipps & Rath, 2018, p. 152).

Implications for Representation

For some Post-qualitative educational researchers, representing participants, their deeds, and their stories as thick descriptions in formulaic “humanist qualitative methodology” privileges representations of reported language over the written word and is therefore problematic in and of itself (Lather & St. Pierre, 2013, p. 630). This may be a narrow view.

Yes, post-qualitative researchers should ask what conditions make a participant’s experience thinkable or possible as the Post-qualitative researchers suggest we do, and should not just report/represent the experience then try to interpret it (St. Pierre, 2018). However, distinctions made between representation as reported language (a qualitative orientation) and representation as written language (a concept as method orientation) seem argumentative to me, and distracts from the key issue, that of interpretation. Interpreting or not interpreting representation, including artistic representation, is the point of concern. Posthumanist and post-qualitative researchers are not very interested in artistic interpretation, but rather they are interested in how a piece of art works. In many ways, refusing to interpret a representation—a piece of art, for example—and look instead at how it works in and through a subjectivity formation avoids questions about whose academic or critical interpretation is more correct, especially in academia.

Deleuze and Guattari (1987), speaking of their book, *A Thousand Plateaus*,²⁰ advise readers not to look for meaning but rather to “ask what it [their book] functions with, in conjunction with what other things it does or does not transmit intensities, in which other multiplicities its own are

¹⁹ See articles in special issue volume 23 of *Qualitative Inquiry*, 2017.

²⁰ This said, a book is still a representation of the authors’ thoughts.

inserted and metamorphosed” (p. 4); to ask simply, “How does it work?” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983, p.179). This line of thinking is easily applied to post-qualitative research that studies processes. However, it can also be extended and applied to research studying representations of children’s drawings. For example, Somerville (2016) does this, by focusing the inquiry on what makes a representation of an actual or imagined experience thinkable or desirable. Or by asking, what does a representation make possible? What can be further imagined because of it? Why does the representation “glow” (p. 1163)? In the same way, my research asks what the story-making process makes possible, makes thinkable. And to some extent, what does the story as a material object make possible.

Similar questions can be asked of other stories, paintings, and sculptures that are unquestionably representations. They can be asked of music and dance that are similarly representations only performative ones, and of memories that are likewise representations, although perhaps of a different sort. In so much as art is representation, it is also so much more than just representation. There is a quality of fire in art that is also concerned with its making, and concerned about care, dialogue, and the ripple effects of engagement with the art to name only a few.

These fiery features associated with art, make rejecting representations outright, as Post-qualitative researchers do, a little tricky for posthumanist researchers like me, if not a little silly. In my view, creators/researchers cannot be dismissed, regardless of their stripe, if they make some ideas thinkable and if those engaging with those ideas, can now think something about those ideas and respond to them in discreet ways depending on their environment (Deleuze, 1994).

However, the significant concern with representations that qualitative researchers raise, and post-qualitative researchers avoid are questions about the authenticity of the copy/representation. Posthumanism offers an alternative to representations that removes the need to prove that a representation is an authentic copy of the original as with transcripts of interview dialogs or photos of actual events. Posthumanism focuses on *performativity*—how the art works—thus side-steps the issue altogether. This *performative* perspective that began as a feminist one combines well with posthumanist thought (Butler, 1988). Barad (2003), like other posthumanists, focuses on “matters of practices/doings/actions” thus, never has to address how well a representative description corresponds to reality (p. 802). Rather than using the lens of geometric

optics to understand representations as things that mirror or copy, posthumanists use the lens of physical optics to understand representations and other material phenomena as forces that produce *diffractions* (Haraway & Goodeve, 2013). For the most part, my research employs diffraction to understand what various mingling(s) produced diffractions and how these diffractions worked to produce transformations and generate knowledge.

Diffraction

Diffraction is a physical phenomenon that happens when two or more forces/waves (optical and other types) intersect. This phenomenon is known as superposition. When waves meet, they can produce areas of greater amplification as well as areas of nullification. In a broad sense, these amplifications and nullifications are what posthumanist researchers understand as data of difference. Differential data shows how two or more forces come together and their consequential effect on each other as they evolve together in the phenomenon. Conceptually, diffraction is a term posthumanists use to study the intersection of materials, power, and energies. Popularized by Donna Haraway (2013) and Karen Barad (2007), diffraction differs from geometric representation—reflection and reflexivity—in the following ways, as Barad (2007) explains in the following quotation that also quotes Haraway:

diffraction can serve as a useful counterpoint to reflection: both are optical phenomena, but whereas reflection is about mirroring and sameness, diffraction attends to patterns of difference. ... Haraway notes that "[reflexivity or reflection] invites the illusion of essential, fixed positions, while [diffraction] trains us to more subtle vision" (1992). Diffraction entails "the processing of small but consequential differences," and "the processing of differences ... is about ways of life" (ibid.). (p. 29)

In my study, the different cultural backgrounds of the participants and the inter-generational differences between the participants, *Annie*, and I, were among the differences that became consequential in our story-making assemblage. As I looked for “patterns of differences that ma[d]e a difference,” I drew on diffraction not only as a method for collecting differential data but as a method for analyzing differential data too (Barad, 2012a, np). Further, as Bozalek and Zembylas (2017) suggest, I also noticed how diffraction as “a process of *producing* difference” created transformations in myself and the participants (emphasis in the original, p. 117). My diffractive methodology focused on difference, ongoing movement, boundary formations, and *intra-actions*, a word coined by Barad (2007) to distinguish it from the word, *interactions*. Intra-

action being “how matter and meaning are co-constituted” within specific material arrangements that Barad (2014b) calls phenomena,²¹ and Deleuze and Guattari (1989) call assemblages which, over time, produce histories (Bozalek & Zembylas, 2017, p. 112).

Diffraction patterns record the history of interaction, interference, reinforcement, difference. Diffraction is about heterogeneous history, not about originals . . . Unlike reflections, diffractions do not displace the same elsewhere, in more or less distorted form, . . . Diffraction is a narrative, graphic, psychological, spiritual, and political technology for making consequential meanings. (Haraway, 1997, p. 273)

Barad (2003) explains how diffraction, as an alternative to qualitative representation, also provides insight into posthumanist ethics, saying

What often appears as separate entities (and separate sets of concerns) with sharp edges does not actually entail a relation of absolute exteriority at all. Like the diffraction patterns illuminating the indefinite nature of boundaries—displaying shadows in “light” regions and bright spots in “dark” regions—the relation...is a relation of “exteriority within.” This is not a static relationality but a doing—the enactment of boundaries—that always entails constitutive exclusions and therefore requisite questions of accountability. (p. 803)

For many posthumanists, exclusions are theoretically constitutive of every formation or assemblage, therefore cannot be ignored or circumvented. However, much of educational posthumanist research often avoids this discussion, in part, I believe, because of a tendency for posthumanists to support inclusivity as a general principle (and politically correct one) and to see exclusions as an unwanted social evil. I too, hold this sentiment and feel the pressure to conform to it as an ideal, even though my observations of the natural and human world demand that I examine this belief more closely for veracity. Many posthumanist educational scholars take up Barad’s and Haraway’s concept of diffractive boundary formation, including, Bayley (2018), Bozalek and Zembylas (2017), Haynes & Murriss (2017), Hickey-Moody (2020), Sheridan, Lemieux, Do Nascimento, and Arnseth (2020), Murriss and Bozalek (2019a), and Taylor and Gannon (2018). However, none that I am aware of explicitly study constitutive exclusions as

²¹ Barad does not mean phenomenology or the essentializing experiences associated with this way of thinking.

conscious ethical decision-makings, which my study does. Story-making is, if nothing else, a series of consequential decisions that specifically exclude or allow certain story behaviours in terms of plot and character action. The implications of each story decision, ethical or otherwise, was something my research focused on. Participants practiced repeated conscious examination of each story decision to determine what each allowed or prevented/excluded. It was my hope that the participants would apply this type of analysis to their day-to-day decisions as it related to reconciliation. There were indications from the before and after questions that this was beginning to happen on a life-living scale.

Implications for Ethics, Agency, Materialism, and Immanence

Immanence is central to a posthumanist and Post-qualitative ontology. St. Pierre (2019) describes immanence as being “both the virtual and its actualization simultaneously without there being any assignable limit between the two (Deleuze & Parnet, 2007a, p. 149)” (p. 5). To paraphrase, immanence means being always within a system or assemblage, never outside it. As such, each system or assemblage contains within itself and in connection with other systems a range of actions or materializations that are possible for it. This means that while a system has specific materializations that arose from a virtual pool of possibilities, the materializations can always be otherwise. Immanence is a conceptual term taken from the writings of Deleuze and Guattari (1994) to connote latent potential and possibility. Interestingly, Deleuze and Guattari (1994) figure immanence as a plane and its infinite potential as “always single, being itself pure variation” (p. 39). St. Pierre (2019) adds that immanence “is an unlimited field of formless matter not yet individuated into subject or object, thought or practice” (p. 5).

Related to this, is individuation and materialization. A materialization, as thing, thought, or action is just one instantiation of a system’s immanence that could always be otherwise. A creative story-making endeavor, like the one in my study was premised on a sense of the immanent from which a single-story materialization would be formed. As participants made decisions that materialized their story, those same decisions also limited the scope of what was possible for their story. Even so, within that shrinking set of story possibilities, there still seemed to be endless possibilities the story-makers could pursue. Barad (2014) describes the process of individuation, materialization, or subjectivity formation as a cutting together-apart in a single performative action in a specific moment in time. Story-making might be understood as a series of these cutting together-apart type actions.

Related to ethics, Barad (2014) goes on to explain how each discreet subjectivity formation in a specific moment in time has internal and external degrees of freedom within which it can, or to use Barad's lexicon, is able to respond. She calls this ability to respond, "response-ableness" (p. 184). It is only within these degrees of freedom or its response-ableness that an entity can exercise agency. An entity exercising its agency as instinct or choice (left or right; carrots or peas) within these degrees of freedom is still accountable for the actions it takes (and choices it makes). Barad calls this accountability, respons-ability. Thus, notions of ableness, agency, and accountability together, not separately, constitute her idea of a posthuman ethic.

Response-ableness can also be understood as the immanent force in a material that makes itself known to the immanent forces of another material (including material humans) in specific arrangements (Kuby, Spector, & Thiel, 2018). To further explain response-ableness as distinct from responsibility, consider a school in a refugee camp to see how the presence or absence of tents, pencils, books, food, even parents can influence the ableness of children to respond to education. Thus, the agency implicit in response-ableness while linked to immanence is also constrained by its specific instantiation.

Response-ableness also applies to artmaking. Consider a sculptor who works with marble and wood. Both wood and marble can be carved—changed by the sculptor, however, marble exerts its agency or force differently from that of wood when the sculptor intra-acts with one or the other. Each assemblage of material and sculptor is different; therefore, the sculptor's range of responses is correspondingly different. As the sculptor learns the material, the sculptor is changed by the material. Her brain changes as she learns how she is able to respond to the material and to how each material responds to the touch of various tools, to the environment, etc. (Rosiek, 2019a). The force that these seemingly inanimate objects exert (agency) in specific arrangements, make demands of knowledge and skill on the sculptor as well as demands of relationship which may explain why artists sometimes characterize their work as a labour of love and care. In many ways, the participants in my study, were learning the knowledge and skill (literacy) required to use the story-making medium effectively. It was important to them that their story be interesting to a reader.

Put more succinctly perhaps,

Agency is not held, it is not a property of persons or things; rather, agency is an enactment, a matter of possibilities for reconfiguring entanglements. So agency...is

about the possibilities and accountability entailed in reconfiguring material-discursive apparatuses of bodily production, including the boundary articulations and exclusions that are marked by those practices. (Barad, 2012a, np. Q2 answer)

Seen this way, the relationships between immanence, materialization, agency, and ethics may be understood as one where materialization is contingent on immanence, agency is contingent on materialization, and ethics is contingent on agency. It follows that every cutting together-apart necessarily has ethical implications. In binding some things together and excluding other things, matter comes to matter differently in specific contexts and within each context different ethical imperatives based on ableness to respond exist (Barad, 2003).

Choice (not just human choices) within the limitations and affordances (degrees of freedom) of each entangled assemblage or set of relationships can be exercised or not, although *choice* is not a term Barad (2012a; 2014a) would use because it conjures ideas of liberal humanist free will and self-determination association with the notion of a fixed subject or actor. However, as already discussed, a subjectivity formation is not simply a fixed subject in different environments. On the contrary, intra-actions produce subjectivity formations. Some formations involving bears, for example, have degrees of freedom that allow bear-human friendship choices to be available and to occur while other formations do not allow such choices (Genzlinger, 2018). Some scholars, such as, Murris (2016), Somerville et al. (2020), Tinker (2004) believe that choices that involve humans are not just made by the humans but by the materials too. Each of these educational scholars assert that picture books, children's illustrations, rocks, respectively, have chosen them. Borrowing from Deleuze and Guattari (1987), Somerville (2020) calls this active choice-making agency of materials their "glow." Borrowing from Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, Cadena (2015) locates material agency between humans and nonhumans in their relationships with each other. She speaks about this material agency specifically in terms of Andean Indigenous life where "[s]ingular beings...cannot sever the inherent relationship that binds them to one another without affecting their individuality—even transforming it into a different one" (p. 102). While this latter articulation of material agency was somewhat difficult to observe in my study, I noticed it once when the participants were talking among themselves about the groups' dispersion in the coming year. The Grade 5 students would no longer have contact with the Grade 6 students in the group because the Grade 6 students would be attending a different school. Further, both Grade 6 students would be attending

different schools from each other. The tone of their conversation suggested a sense of loss (perhaps even of their individuality) they anticipated because of their eventual separation. Their sense of place together in the place they gathered for school had forged relationships that were not trivial in terms of understanding who they were to themselves and to each other. In a way, they enacted a scaled down version of place-based knowledges and learning sometimes described in Indigenous and Indigenous-related academic writings (Battiste et al., 2005; Christian, 2010; Ng-A-Fook, 2007; Watts, 2013).

New materialism, a branch of posthumanism, similarly foregrounds “matter [a]s an active principle” (Bennett, 2010, p.47). Barad (2007) uses the term, agentic matter. Bennett writes about our extensive entangled existence with matter as edible, microbial, political, ecological, not to mention as stem cell science, and pollution via waste plastics or waste metals, to name a few. The participants in my study were especially aware of the agency of edible matter as we ate lunch together each day we met. They were also concerned with the agency of plastic matter and its effect on the planet. This was a matter they discussed in both entrance and exit group interviews. Their concern and entanglements with this matter, in both senses of the word, extended specifically to recycling their lunch box plastic refuse, to the plastic islands in the oceans, to their more than casual relationships with plastic technologies, such as “Blue”, what they named the large microphone I used to record our lunch-time sessions. Like Gale and Watts (2017), participants also seemed to sense that materiality and immanence were entangled haptically, often touching “Blue” the recording device as they greeted it as a being. They seemed to appreciate the power and distributed agency of matter, specifically with “Blue” and lunch without understanding Bennett’s theory of new materialism that Gale and Wyatt (2017) paraphrase below:

Bennett’s contention that agency is distributed, that, within an affective plane of immanence, everything has power, and that the existence of “agentic assemblages,” as vibrant confederations of discourses and materials of all kinds, have the power to displace our reliance upon the influence of the autonomous individual human agent. (p. 320)

Coole and Frost (2010) raise a red flag for scholars about the dangers of thinking that materiality is something less important and divorced from our intellectual abilities. They “claim that foregrounding material factors and reconfiguring our very understanding of matter are

prerequisites for any plausible account of coexistence and its conditions in the twenty-first century” (p. 2). Lemieux & Thériault (2021, p. 258) make this position more explicit in their work, saying “bodies materialize in the world in the Baradian sense: [as] ‘boundaries and properties [that] are only determinate within a given phenomenon’... In other words, ...[what] Barad (2007, p. 381) defines as a ‘material practice for making a difference’” (p. 258).

Bozalek and Zembylas (2016) in their Special Issue of *South African Journal of Higher Education*, suggest that

New feminist materialists have moved beyond a critical deconstruction and critique to alternative enactments of becoming, where power is not only seen as limiting but also as affirmative (Braidotti 2013). New/feminist materialisms have expanded Haraway’s ideas on situated knowledges, critiquing universalist disembodied ‘God’s eye’ views of the world, paving the way for ethical accountability in local and grounded knowledges. Rather than seeing epistemology, ontology and ethics as separate, new materialisms consider them as coimbricated and entangled... (p. 193)

This is not to say that incorporeality is outside the material realm.

Incorporeality is not simply the absence of materiality, it is a force that is felt/sensed but alludes sight, touch, taste, hearing, and smell. Grosz (2017) takes up entanglement, from an incorporeal perspective. She articulates an incorporeal aspect of posthuman ethics that is “not separated from being and becoming: it is [she says] a modality or a manner of becoming, how and in what directions becomings occur” (Grosz interview with Bell, 2017, p. 242). Ethics, for her also involve the incorporeal as a directional force “immanent in our actions” (p. 242), or what Springgay may call “intentions” (Springgay & Alarcon, 2020a). By this they mean the force(s) that influences the choices one makes and steer “the direction to the future” (p. 242). Choices, when understood as influenced by this kind of force, makes the story choices of the participants in my study relevant as intentions of reconciliation.

Barad (2007) and Grosz (2017), in different ways suggest that in addition to ethical intentions and the agency of physical matter, the assembly or reconfigurations of material-discursive apparatuses can change what and how something comes to matter. That is, by redefining what is excluded or included in an assemblage (or story) and by tapping the entanglement’s latent possibilities—its immanence—new trajectories can be created that can change the future perhaps into more socially just formations. My study looks at the convergence

of intentions, agency, and assemblies/apparatus and how these come to effect what matters in a story and what matters in the pursuit of reconciliation.

In the context of my research project, I understand this convergence as a formation's possibility for and movement towards social change. It comprises an awareness of the marks a constitutive inclusion/exclusion leaves in/on a formation, an immanent openness signaled by porous boundaries, and an experimentation or testing of the potential embedded degrees of freedom for the re-formations a formation can embody. The implications of these convergences for knowledge production are considerable.

Implications for Knowledge Production: Apparatus, Touching, and Imagination

As already discussed, posthumanism and Post-qualitative inquiry are attentive to difference, rather than sameness. For posthumanists, sensitivity to difference and becoming different might be understood as an ontological, ethical, and epistemological definition of *learning*. What is implicit in the notion of difference as learning, not often acknowledged by posthumanists and especially not Post-qualitative educational researchers, is that a conscious sensitivity to change also requires a conscious sensitivity to *what was* and now is becoming something else. This *what was* in other contexts might be called pattern recognition as simulations (Barsalou, 2016). Or as genealogy (Davies, 2018; Davis, 2009). Or as history (den Heyer, 2003). Or as evolutionary predicates (Haraway, 2015; Ulmer, 2015). Or as socialization (Thiel & Dernikos, 2020). However, framing it this way suggests that absolute or fixed states exist. This is not what I mean to suggest; it only indicates my difficulty to describe it otherwise. I mean only to say that when difference is noticed consciously, it is against a background of sameness or what is already known, that it is.

It is against this backdrop of sameness or what is known that the material and discursive apparatuses used in educational research are performed. Both the "backdrop" and the research instruments figure in the material and discursive apparatus of a research project, but so do their ordinary or unusual performances. According to Barad (2007) apparatus have agency that affect what is seen as data and how that data is perceived. Because apparatus in research is a boundary-making mechanism that includes/excludes (explicitly or not) specific agents, concepts, knowledges, and discursive practices the inquiry uses, how an apparatus is materially assembled, practiced, operated, enacted, and performed significantly shapes what knowledge can be produced or brought to the fore, that is, into view. For Barad (2014), the research apparatus cuts

together-apart as one action. Rosiek (2016) suggests that the research apparatus determines, in part, the intra-actions made possible by the

“cuts” that define the boundaries between one agent and another agent, but that could always be made otherwise. “Cuts” are made through certain conceptualizations that lead to creating an “apparatus” for an inquiry—an experimental instrument or a methodological practice. The world exerts its agency by responding to the apparatus in ways that can’t entirely be predicted. Once certain cuts are made, and an inquiry is conducted, ontological agents become “entangled” in specific ways. (p. 12)

In these specific entanglements, specific knowledges are produced and, in a sense and for some, become part of the known backdrop against which other differences might be noticed. For others, because of the reporting component of the academic apparatus that surrounds and embeds a specific research project, it may also become the knowledge “difference.” In a philosophical sense, specific knowledges can be understood as producing apparatus as well as being produced by them, in the same way one might imagine the immanence implicit in the yin-yang symbol.²² In my study, I recognize that the conventions (apparatuses) of story making and the specific structures of the hero/ine’s journey story shape the kind of story the participants were able to make but I also recognize how the story they made might have changed the shape of the story-making apparatus too. For example, participants changed it from solo authorship to collaborative authorship and from adult authorship to child authorship.

Apparatus like story, story templates, and story-making processes, can produce speculative knowledges (Haraway, 2011; Rousell et al., 2017). Speculative knowledges are imaginative and generative, making this the point in my theoretical framework where an idea of a posthumanist apparatus converges with arts-based research-creation processes.

In the educational academy and to a larger extent educational policy politics, speculative knowledges have little currency in what some see as a system obsessed with standardized testing and measurement (Saatcioglu et al., 2021). However, Barad (2012c) has an interesting



perspective on measurement that she adapts from both Bohr's and Heisenberg's physics. "Bohr [says] that things are indeterminate, that there are no boundaries and therefore no objects/things before the measurement apparatus is operationalized. This is to say, that the very act of measurement through the lens of an apparatus produces determinate boundaries and the properties of things" (Barad, 2012a, np). Heisenberg, would not go so far as to say that, but puts an interesting spin on the idea of a measurement apparatus, saying that "[m]easurement is surely a form of touching" (Barad, 2012c, p. 108). As already noted, Bohr's (in Barad, 2007) view of apparatus and measurement demonstrates how the apparatus itself allows some knowledges to become knowable and hides other knowledges, but it is Heisenberg's idea of measurement as touching that brings to the fore a quality of relationship. Touch "moves and affects what it effects" (Barad, 2012c, p. 108). Bohr's idea of measurement as a boundary-forming apparatus does not diminish the effects of touching as intra-action within and with an already porous boundary. However, it does raise questions for educators about the boundary formations/assemblages standardized testing produce and the kind of touch it is measuring. It forces me to question the kind of knowing it prioritizes.

A Refusal of Anthropocentrism, Dualism, and Humanism

According to Braidotti (2019), "new ways of knowing...are [also] emerging from the convergence of posthumanist and post-anthropocentric approaches" (p. 17). She suggests that this convergence can be used as "an analytic tool for understanding the grounded, perspectival and accountable nature of the affective, social and epistemic processes we are currently involved in, and the role of non-human agents in co-producing them" (p. 18). Posthumanism therefore, because of its ontological orientation, refuses anthropocentrism, dualism, and humanism. The implications for some of these concepts have already been discussed, however, anthropocentrism now, more than ever before, is a major concern of posthumanists when one considers how humans affect the earth and how a changed earth is now affecting humans in unexpected ways (Ferrando, 2019). The participants in my study were also sensitive to this and while they did not draw a straight line between the conditions of the Anthropocene and Indigenous ways of knowing our relationship with the earth, thus a form of reconciliation, I saw this connection.

Posthumanism calls for a rethinking of hierarchies where the human is seen as the most gifted and most important. It also calls for a rethinking of nature as something humans are free to own and use, especially for profit. It calls for a rethinking of ecologies and environments, where human actions must be accountable to members of those ecologies, other than its human

members. It also calls for a rethinking of capitalism, a human invention that not only affects the condition of our planet in terms of deforestation, exhaustive mining, unsustainable agriculture through reckless water use, pollution, etc., but also the condition of our human lives. “The posthuman predicament” as Braidotti (2019) calls it, is “framed by the opportunistic commodification of all that lives, which...is the political economy of advanced capitalism” (p. 13).

What counts as capital today is the informational power of living matter itself, in its immanent capacity to self-organize. This produces a new political economy: ‘the politics of Life itself’ (Rose 2007), also known as ‘Life as surplus’ (Cooper 2008), or, quite simply as the post-genomic economy of ‘biocapital’ (Rajan 2006). The true capital today is the vital, self-organizing power of converging technologies whose vitality seems unsurpassable. (Braidotti, 2019c, pp. 30-31)

In the context of advance capitalism, posthumanism also calls for a rethinking of technology, artificial intelligence, the web of social connection, etc. as agential.

While post-anthropocentrism is an important aspect of posthumanism and an important part of the advanced capitalism that affects Indigenous land claims and thus reconciliation, the focus of this thesis is not here, but specific to the reconciliation possible in schools as articulated in TRC (2015) Call to Action 63.3. Among the education scholars addressing anthropocentrism from a larger educational posthumanist perspective are Nathan Snaza (2015, 2016) and Helena Pederson (2012; Pedersen & Pini, 2017) to name only a few.

Post-qualitative and posthumanist researchers collectively refuse dualism, but not all for the same reasons. As already noted in the sections dealing with methodocentrism and subjectivities, Lather and St. Pierre (2013) regard the self-other dualism in qualitative educational research as logically inconsistent, whereas Barad’s (2012a) take on the self-other dualism, is informed by quantum physics and feminist performativity, and is taken up as a refusal of positivism.

Instead of there being a separation of subject and object, there is an entanglement of subject and object, which is called the “phenomenon.” Objectivity, instead of being about offering an undistorted mirror image of the world, is about accountability to marks on bodies, and responsibility to the entanglements of which we are a part. (Barad, 2012a)

Together, both perspectives inform posthuman post-qualitative inquiry as a refusal of positivism.

Dualism, for Barad, has broader implications too, especially for academia as it concerns research and what she regards as the need for wide-scale research trans-disciplinarity.

the entanglement of matter and meaning calls into question [a] set of dualisms that places nature on one side and culture on the other. And which separates off matters of fact from matters of concern (Bruno Latour) and matters of care (Maria Puig de la Bellacasa), and shifts them off to be dealt with by what we aptly call...“separate academic divisions,” whereby...natural sciences are assigned matters of fact and the humanities matters of concern, for example. It is difficult to see the diffraction patterns—the patterns of difference that make a difference—when ... separate domains elides the resonances and dissonances that make up diffraction patterns that make the entanglements visible. (Barad, 2012a, np)

More than just rejecting the dualistic separation of body and mind, “Self/Other, subject/object, and human/non-human” Post-qualitative and posthumanist educational researchers also reject Humanism (Lather & St. Pierre, 2013b, p. 630).

Humanistic values, historically, have figured man, Man, and specific types of men (white, Anglo-Saxon, protestant, able-bodied, heterosexual, etc.) as ideal forms of the human. Humanism, historically, has also figured every other human that didn’t conform to this idealization as somehow lesser, subhuman or not even human at all (Braidotti, 2016a). Posthumanism signals a critical move away from colonialism, a brand of Humanism that historically empowered colonizing humans to subjugate most of the natural world and many other humans. Colonialism/Humanism rationalized the exclusion of many other humans from the category of human being.

Historically, among these excluded or devalued humans were women, children, transgender people, Indigenous peoples, people of colour, people with disabilities, poor people, the aged, people who attended this school instead of that one, and any other group deemed lesser for any reason (Braidotti, 2016a). These excluded humans, have been and in many cases still are exploited by systemically enfranchised humans or corporate entities whose ethos is informed by Humanism (Braidotti, 2019d). Humanism, as a ...

Eurocentric paradigm implies the dialectics of self and other, and the binary logic of identity and otherness as respectively the motor for and the cultural logic of universal

Humanism. Central to this universalistic posture and its binary logic is the notion of ‘difference’ as pejoration. Subjectivity is equated with consciousness, universal rationality, and self-regulating ethical behaviour, whereas Otherness is defined as its negative and specular counterpart. In so far as difference spells inferiority, it acquires both essentialist and lethal connotations for people who get branded as ‘others.’ These are the sexualized, racialized, and naturalized others, who are reduced to the less than human status of disposable bodies. (Braidotti, 2013, p. 15)

This thinking, to a large extent, informs the critical in critical posthumanism. In so far, as the TRC is meant as a guideline for redressing systemic injustice arising from the colonial brand of Humanism, my study is also critical in this sense. However, like the TRC, my study focuses on strengthening and affirming good relations rather than criticism per se.

Critical Posthumanism

Critical posthumanists are specifically attentive to the inequitable differentials caused by our “posthuman predicament” which is to say, attentive to those who have become unseen and unheard because of the realities of global economies, big pharmaceuticals, internet algorithms, advanced capitalism, etc. (Braidotti, 2019c, p. 52). Critical posthumanism attends to the disenfranchised but recognizes that disenfranchisement today is brought about by a world that cannot be understood or controlled by national politics. It recognizes that the pressing issues of today are on a global scale and brought about primarily by the convergence of the Anthropocene, advanced capitalism, and information technology (Braidotti, 2019b; Haraway, 2014).

Contrary to what is usually understood as “critical,” critique does not figure much in critical posthumanism, except possibly to criticize posthumanist theories, such as transhumanism, that exclude notions of human-nonhuman subjectivities (Braidotti, 2022). Critical posthumanism takes an affirmative stance. It does not ignore inequitable differentials, but instead of only critiquing them, aims to bring about change through collective praxis energized by a common desire to commune with those whose shared interest in a good, in the Spinozian sense, increases our personal agency. Hence the slogan, “We are all in this together, but we not all one or the same” (Braidotti, 2019c, p. 52).

Child Agency

While I always thought that child agency would figure in my study, I had no way of knowing how central a concept it would be for the participants and ultimately the story itself. It

turned out that the participants were particularly interested in their own agency and that of other children and that they were sensitive to the power and authority of parents, teachers, and school. As their story unfolded, I realized that its “bare bones” was the authors’ desire for self-determination and adult support (Spence, 2010).

From a critical posthumanist perspective, Murris (2016) and others in her edited book *The Posthuman Child* question “dominant figurations of child and childhood” that position the “child as epistemically and ontologically inferior” (p. 1). In examining child agency, some posthumanist educational scholars, like Murris, aim to advance the notion that children are instrumental in producing social justice knowledges. While Murris does not explicitly take up Bignall’s (2014) concept of excolonialism, a collaborative and cooperative effort between the disenfranchised and enfranchised, in this case, between the children and adults to exit from systemic patterns of behaviour that privilege some and disadvantage most, it is productive concept for discussing child discourses. Children talk to adults all the time in families and in schools, but when they are allowed to step outside of the discourses they ordinarily have, those being, the entrenched discourses of day-to-day life put in place by adults, they have interesting things to say about how the world works and how they believe it should work. Adults know this about children; it is even a cliché. They say, “out of the mouths of babes” when children make them see the world differently, often in more socially just terms.

Even though I always try to attend to child voice especially in situations that are new to them, and I have believed in the agency of children as already fully functioning humans and not just *almost* human adults, it seemed I still had more to learn. I was also forced to inquire into the “purpose of education” as it currently exists and how to support its change from a settler colonial structure to something else that supports a child’s self-determination (Murris, 2016, p. 1). In the next chapter, I try to find such ways and means as I connect with the literature that applies directly to my study.

Critical Discourse Analysis

Franklin- Phipps and Rath (2018) “contend that examining the function of a text, what it does and does not do, and how it does what it does, requires a thinking and a looking that is...complex, nuanced, and relational” and in turn adds a critical dimension to educational inquiry (p. 151). Thus a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is useful in identifying what stories get told, who tells them, who makes them, what patterns and devices characterize plot, and how characters are employed (Fairclough, 1995; Scollon, 2001; van Dijk, 2001; Wodak, 2008). As a

research practice, it examines language, genre, and theories of language and genre. It examines the diction used because it can carry “important ideological functions such as deleting agency” and reification, both of which convey socially implicit value (Billig, 2008, p. 1). As Tuen van Dijk (2001) writes, “discourse analysis, [is] socio-politically ‘situated,’ whether we like it or not” (p. 352). I look at the story’s diction, the characters’ agency, and critical functions in my analysis.

While my CDA analysis is limited, I also analyze the dialogic aspects of the story made by the youth in my study. As Bakhtin (1981) suggests, it is relevant to ask who the authors and their story are in dialog with and what knowledges the authors assume their audience bring to a reading or listening of the story. My analysis addresses the situatedness of the story and thus the scope and scale of influence the story might have in terms of social reconciliatory change.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I review three distinct but connected bodies of reconciliation practice in educational literature: reconciliation through praxis, reconciliation through collaboration, and reconciliation through story. I also review three posthumanist-oriented educational constellations of practice in the literature (Mycroft & Sidebottom, 2019). Two are strongly connected and can be easily applied to story-making. They are maker(spaces) literacy and research-creation/ABR literatures. The third one connects to existing research on collaborative, collective story-making in educational contexts. I had hoped to find existing research in this third group that also dealt with reconciliation through story-making, but I found none. Because of that, this literature review makes connections to related, more established literatures.

To situate my research, I connect the bodies of reconciliation practice to the posthumanist constellations of practice throughout this chapter, but I must point out that there is not a one-to-one correspondence between a specific body of reconciliation practice and a specific posthumanist constellation of practice. However, there is significant overlap and dependency between them, in much the same way that the sun and moon affect earthly and other planetary bodies, or the way constellations are related to each other in the night sky.²³

In the context of school-age educational story-making, my review of the literature as bodies of reconciliation practice and posthumanist constellations of practice focus on how they converge with the principles in TRC (2015) Call to Action 63.3 for: “[b]uilding student capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy, and mutual respect” (np). This chapter is figured largely as encounters with academic helpers and allies that I found in the literature. However, it also touches on how my research can contribute to filling the existing gap in the body of knowledge concerned with reconciliation through collaborative story-making in a school setting. Further, my literature review begins to address the gap in reconciliation pedagogical literature regarding decision-making as a teachable literacy. A decision-making literacy concerned with boundary formation (inclusion/exclusion) has potential implications for thinking about truth and reconciliation as a *literacy*, not simply as information delivery. Approaching both decision-

²³ The North Star is part of the Little Dipper and points to the Big Dipper and the three stars of Orion’s belt point to the Pleiades which is part of Taurus.

making and reconciliation as literacies may have practical or helpful applications/implications for teaching truth and reconciliation in the classroom. I discuss this further in my conclusions.

While I would not frame hero/ine's journey literature as either a body or a constellation of practices, I do in many respects see it metaphorically as the North Star of my literature review; that is, all other literatures revolve around it. The hero/ine's journey as a story template is a key piece of the research apparatus that shapes what data my research project could see and what I could analyze. This apparatus formed material and discursive boundaries around the kind of story the participants in my study could tell which in some ways determined what they could include and exclude in their story and how it would unfold.

As a literary genre, the hero/ine's journey is sometimes taken up by Indigenous writers today. Thomas King (2020) is one such writer. I drew on his work to inform the connections between lived stories and lived lives, and the differences I came to see between Indigenous fiction and Indigenous storytelling. Although King (2003, 2008, 2013) would never frame it this way, his work also provided me with insight into story-making as an apparatus and social conveyance.

The Hero/ine's Journey: The Connective Issue Between Literatures

Despite the distinction I made previously between the hero/ine's journey genre as a specifically coded step-by-step learning process and the pedagogical metaphor that figures education is a learning journey, the two overlap when it comes to youth and the way their personal life stories develop as they transition into adults. According to Duff (2015), young adults play out a hero/ine's journey story as lived experience during this transition. In her doctoral thesis, she suggests that youths, when actively trying to know their place in the world, go through the same steps as in the hero/ine's journey learning process. If this is true, and I tend to believe it is, it suggests that the hero/ine's journey framework might be better understood as a true-to-life learning model for youth that the genre has merely adopted for storytelling. For Duff (2015), the hero/ine's journey is not just a story genre but a framework for learning about how our unique voice and skills give us purpose and provide value to those around us. In a different context, Chambers (2008) calls this kind of life-based learning journey, wayfinding. Bruner (2004) too, understands human development as a journey punctuated by many stories of shorter journeys or detours that happen along the way. This orientation towards the hero/ine's journey as more than a genre (that is, also a teenage life process) had implications for my research project.

As the four youth, almost teen aged, participants were just beginning to be self-conscious of their own individual and collective wayfinding journeys, it was not surprising that the story they created was about an older teenager who wanted to find way forward that was at odds with the career his parents wanted for himself. It seems to me now, that they might have unconsciously used their story-making as a playground/sandbox for testing scenarios associated with potential career choices they anticipated having to make and potential engagements with authority figures.

Stories of the hero/ine's journey are sometimes wonder tales. Wonder tales still employ the learning process steps of the hero/ine's journey but include extra ordinary or fantastical elements, such as in Spence's (2010) story called *The Land, the Storyteller, and the Great Cauldron of Making Meaning*, and Cajete (Tewa) (2000) retelling of the *Scarface* story, both of which I planned to read to the participants in my research as model stories. Stories like *Scarface* are old and similar ones can be found in many cultures (Bacchilega, 2017; Bevacqua & Bowman, 2016; (Cajete (Tewa), 2017; Kuwada & Yamashiro, 2016; Propp, 1928). This suggests that the hero/ine's journey is also productive as a multi-cultural genre, and as such, productive to the multi-cultural dimensions of my research. Hero/ine's journey stories not only provide multi-cultural readers and listeners with the same cross-cultural guidelines for how to learn, how to mature, and how to over-come in the face of fear and danger, they have, in many cases, been handed down generation after generation and repeated by our human forebearers. They resonate.

As a genre, the hero/ine's journey is a good choice to use with youth from different cultures because it also resonates with storylines, we have all heard as children. Perhaps more importantly, "stories go wherever they please" crossing personal and cultural timeframes and worldviews as they go (King, 2013, p. xvi). King's (2013) sense of story as a worlding entity with travelling capability adds a rather delightful reciprocity and perhaps fractal dimension to the very simple but almost universal hero/ine's journey story structure. Stories travel but travels are also made into stories that journey out again. This, not-with-standing, Thomas King (2003, 2013) puts a comfortable spin on why readers respond to (journey) stories and story-making the way that they do. He suspects that others are like him in that they prefer fiction to facts, although I doubt that his readers would "rather make up [their] own world" as the writer in him prefers to do (King, 2013, p. xi).

Like almost all journeys, whether a vacation, business trip, pilgrimage, etc., the hero/ine's journey is not only about arriving at a destination. This genre is also about getting there. It is about the stay, but that is putting the wrong spin on it because a "stay" is usually anything but

static. Of course, a journey is not usually linear even though we tend to think of it that way. A journey is usually at least two-way and may have mini journeys within it. A typical journey usually returns us to the place we started from, albeit to a slightly different version of the place and as slightly different versions of ourselves.

King's (2020) stories often employ the hero/ine's journey structure and some, like *Indians on Vacation* are actually journey/travel stories. King, I believe, is necessary to any discussion of the hero/ine's journey genre not because of any significant contribution he has made to it but because he highlights the part about *conscious choice* as instrumental and key to the genre. He reminds us that the central character (hero/ine) in the (hero/ine's journey) story must always make a conscious choice to learn about or adventure into something new. There is first desire, then choice.²⁴ He also reminds us that stories, at least every story of his that I've read, demand a conscious choice on the part of the listener or reader too.

As he points out, one can either ignore or act on what one has heard or read in a story but remaining unconscious of the story is not an option. There is no unlearning it.²⁵ One can either be transformed or not transformed by the story. Often his story characters, including the first-person story character he frequently writes for himself, chooses to ignore, and not act on story knowledge. However, as he constantly reminds us, if a reader does that, one can't say "in the years to come that you would have lived your life differently if only you had heard this story. You've heard it now" (King, 2003, p. 168). Like King, I too emphasize conscious choice in my work. A significant component of my research, the review of the previous day's story decisions, sought to understand how being conscious of and attentive to the choices one makes can change the stories we make and the storied lives we live.

²⁴ A story about a forced journey is a different type of story. The hero/ine's journey must begin with a personal decision or a desire for something.

²⁵ "Unlearning" has become a popular way of framing the kind truth and reconciliation learning that has to happen with regard to teaching Indigenous histories. I wonder what King would say about this framing. My guess is that he would not approve.

FINDING ACADEMIC MENTORS IN RECONCILIATION LITERATURE

To do biology with any kind of fidelity, the practitioner must tell a story, must get the facts, and must have the heart to stay hungry for the truth and to abandon a favorite story, a favorite fact, shown to be somehow off the mark. 'The practitioner must also have the heart to stay with a story through thick and thin, to inherit its discordant resonances, to live its contradictions, when that story gets at a truth about life that matters.

—(Haraway, 2003, p. 19)

Reconciliation research is a diverse literature. A popular line of thought in this literature is “historical consciousness raising” as a path to reconciliation. It is, however, a contested pedagogical practice. Justice (2012) suggests that truth education is necessary for reconciliation, but it may not be, on its own an effective way for teachers to ensure that the cycle of Indigenous cultural genocide stops and that an era of support for Indigenous cultural restitution begins (Biddle & Lea, 2018). Some scholars, such as Tupper (2014) suggest that creating historical consciousness about the truth of past events helps to challenge “epistemologies of ignorance” and promote reconciliation and peacebuilding (p. 469). Other scholars such as Maddison, Clark, and De Costa, (2016) suggest that history education’s capacity to raise historical consciousness has done little to promote reconciliation in places like Australian where it has been taught for more than 20 years. Battiste (2013) suggests that Canadian public education is so steeped in settler discursive practices that it cannot help but undermine reconciliation efforts regardless of the content or the best intentions of teachers. A different way of thinking about reconciliation comes from Bell (2011) who suggests that without an understanding of “Indigenous and non-Indigenous worldviews and values, ... [students] will never be effective change agents toward healthy cross-cultural relations” (p. 383). I follow on Bell’s conceptualization of reconciliation which is consistent with that of TRC (2015) Call 63.3 but remain mindful of Battiste’s (2013) reservations about settler-colonial schools.

According to Lederach (2005) and Gair (2013), empathy and imagination are important aspects of relationship building and integral to the reconciliation process. Specifically, moral imagination—the ability to imagine a relationship with another—is key. Taking Lederach’s lead, Maddison et al. (2016), educational academics concerned with reconciliation, suggest that “relational concerns” are central to “reconciliation efforts” (pp. 34-35). Further, they suggest that relationship building needs to be the focus of reconciliation efforts in the classroom. Meeting moral imagination at a specific ethical intersection characterizes Brant-Birioukov’s (2017) view

of reconciliation as a pedagogical dialogic praxis/practice. She asserts that this praxis must continue past the teacher education stage and move into the classroom where it must be enacted ethically. Furo (2018) conceptualizes reconciliation as a classroom-based relationship-building praxis. MacDonald and Markides (2019) intersects with it as collaboration with the land. Korteweg and Fiddler (2019) intersect with it as embodied collaboration. For Korteweg and Fiddler, their collaborative path to reconciliation is through their sustained work together *making* a course and co-authoring several scholarly papers. Similarly, Daniels, Deer, Donald, Low, and Wiseman (2019) came together as editors in a cross-cultural collaboration to produce/make a journal publication that explored different approaches to and conceptualizations of reconciliation. Like Korteweg and Fiddler (2019), they used a making task, the creation of a special issue, to focus and situate their reconciliation efforts. Working as “a collective of Indigenous and Canadian educators” and as “co-editors of this special issue, [they] thus conceived of teacher education broadly, and wondered what it might mean to teach so that future generations ‘can live together in dignity, peace, and prosperity on these lands we now share’ (TRC, 2015, p. 13)” (p. 202). Together, they produced a single material artefact that valued their cultural differences, even celebrated them, and sent a constructive reconciliation message out into the teaching and academic world.

Conrad, Jagger, Bleeks, and Auger’s (2019) also embrace this way to reconciliation and extend it using the arts. They seek to understand reconciliation as a collaboration with place, people, and culture using art. Added to their view of collaborative art, is Blackstock’s (2013) mosquito advocacy of truth and reconciliation as it applies to storytelling. Mosquito advocacy is in part the infectious bite that “great storytellers [use] to carry the message” of equality and social change one bite at a time (Howard, np).

In the following sections, I describe the pedagogical in-roads made by these and other educational scholars that clear a way for reconciliation to be understood as a praxis, a collaboration, and as story.

Reconciliation through Praxis

My study defines praxis using Freire (2005) which is how it was taken up by Brant-Birioukov (2017), and to a lesser degree Furo (2018). Indigenous praxis beads a broad critical dimension into and across an otherwise smooth colonial landscape. This contoured praxis maps Indigenous resurgence as Indigenous ways of knowing and being that enables Indigenous collective action to assert self-determination over colonial oppression (Francis, 2002).

Reconciliation through praxis follows and responds to an Indigenous praxis of self-determination to support respectful intercultural exchanges.

Drawing on the oral testimonies used in teacher education programs, testimonies like those shared by Indian Residential School system survivors in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) report (2015), teachers can participate in history-based truth telling that supports Indigenous praxis—collective self-determination and resurgence. Oral history education is a praxis that opens public space for Indian Residential School survivors to share their histories with each other and with others, a sharing that was previously ignored and often banned (TRC, 2015a). Oral history also seeks to honour Indigenous history as a different (non-text) form of history record by bringing it to students. The practice of ethical listening, as Brant-Birioukov et al. (2019) make clear, is an appropriate response to this Indigenous telling praxis because it affords students opportunities to challenge colonial history scripts and to question the events in colonial historical accounts. Her history-based approach to truth and reconciliation is a praxis with two closely coupled dimensions: a telling praxis that gives voice to Indigeneity and helps heal those directly affected by the intergenerational harms of the Indian Residential School, and the practice of ethical listening which helps raise historical consciousness. Many educators and scholars hope that raising historical consciousness will lead to the social/institutional transformations needed for reconciliation (Ng-A-Fook et al., 2019).

Part of this effort is to promote an historical understanding of the intergenerational trauma caused by Indian Residential School, and to connect acts of Indigenous ancestors and the acts of violence committed against them to events of the present and future. It explains, as Simpson (2011) articulates, the importance of Indigenous resurgence and regeneration on Indigenous terms.

Are we participating in a process that allows the state to co-opt the individual and collective pain and suffering of our people, while also criminalizing the inter-generational impacts of residential schools and ignoring the larger neo-assimilation project to which our children are now subjected?... Reconciliation must move beyond individual abuse to come to mean a collective re-balancing of the playing field. This idea is captured in the Nishnaabeg concept Aanji Maajitaawin: to start over, the art of starting over, to regenerate. (p. 22)

Further, from the perspective of Indigenous self-determination and way finding, Simpson (2011) says those living today in the aftermath of the Residential Schooling system are responsible to

their ancestors for Indigenous resurgence. She says that this is brought about by listening to the ancestors for guidance through stories, ceremony, and songs.

Considering how differently Western and Indigenous perspectives conceive narrative accounts of the past, I am personally not hopeful that raising historical consciousness is an effective route to reconciliation (Seixas, 2011). Nonetheless, this does not diminish the necessity of truth education, and the value that teachers must place on an Indigenous truth-telling praxis and an ethical listening practice. In fact, it is essential for what Furo (2018) discusses as an “ethics of relationship building” (p. 2). For Furo, a praxis of relationship building is key. She highlights the importance of an Indigenous telling praxis and supportive settler listening practices in building relationships for reconciliation.

In an on-going way, Indigenous praxis continues through scholarly, literary, and artistic works, such as *City Treaty, A Long Poem* by the late Marvin Francis (2002). His book, written in English makes a powerful statement as a praxis of resilience and resurgence. Francis (2002) uses the English language in ways that defy conventional usage and that play with conventional meanings to make a point about colonialism. He asserts the rights of traditional community members to deny assimilation even when forced to live in settler urban environments. His affirmative refusal to accept English usage and his lexical playfulness can be seen in the names of some of his poems: “Trick or Treaty,” “mcPemmican” and “Lee Eegle Eze.”

In his final poem “word drummers,” Francis (2002) suggests that English words that speak to English speakers’ regard for the landscape, are empty things. He also suggests that perseverance like the slow and steady movement of the turtle is an Indigenous language of action tied to the drumming heartbeat of the land—to Turtle Island.

those word drummers pound away and hurtle
words into that English landscape like brown beer
bottles tossed from the backseat on a country
road shattering the air turtle words crawl slowly from
the broken glass (p. 69)

Reconciliation borne of intercultural respect for Indigenous ways of knowing, listens for direction from Indigenous praxis of resilience and resurgence then follows and supports those paths.

Reconciliation through Collaboration

Collaboration, as taken up by Korteweg and Fiddler (2019), Longboat, Kulnieks, and Young (2019), and Peterson et al. (2018) is a personal and interactive way for people of different cultures to learn about one another and develop an understanding of each other. Reconciliation pursued through collaboration often involves a shared creative or making endeavor to contextualize and focus the collaborating members who are not all necessarily human. Collaboration with the land's tree people, medicine people, and rock people is taken up by scholars like Robin Wall Kimmerer (2013). MacDonald and Markides (2019) take it up as a hands-on, on-the-land, and in-the-woods collaboration by treaty peoples, who, through learning a respectful relationship with the environment, may come to value of Indigenous ways of knowing. Metaphorically, collaboration between culturally different or various beings can be likened to the sinuous stitches that sew two or more pieces of leather together to dress, address or re-dress a body of knowledge needed (as metaphorical clothing) for the reconciliation journey ahead. The stitches must be strong enough to hold differences of equal value together long enough to reach the desired reconciliation destination.

Collaboration celebrates difference and composes a greater ability to act together than apart. Collaborative paths involving mainly humans, focus on bringing people of different cultures together to make, share, and participate in activities with each other. Korteweg and Fiddler (2019) regard their “Indigenous-settler” collaboration as a learning partnership that requires them to enact reconciliation to ensure that they juxtapose their “identities in such a way that [their] differences—cultural, racial, socio-economic, educational, knowledge systems—[are] highlighted without subjugation, erasure, dominance or denial” (p. 256).

On a larger scale, there are national initiatives that also understand reconciliation as collaboration. One is the Canadian Roots Exchange Youth Reconciliation Initiative (*Youth Reconciliation Initiative*, n.d.). Another is the Caring Society which “supports educators and schools across Canada in nurturing citizenship, agency, and self-confidence by providing opportunities for students to take part in activities that foster reconciliation and culturally-based equity for Indigenous children and youth” (First Nations Child & Family Caring Society, n.d.).

Reconciliation sought through shared activities and physical proximity is a cultural collaboration meant to cultivate the personal side of mutual respect, empathy, and intercultural understanding using direct experience.

Reconciliation through Story

Etymologically, facts refer to performance, action, deeds, done-feats. In short, a fact is a past participle, a thing done, over, fixed, shown, performed, accomplished. Facts have made the dead-line for getting into the next edition of the [news]paper. Fiction, etymologically, is very close, but differs by part-of-speech and tense. Like facts, fiction refers to action, but fiction is about the act of fashioning, forming, inventing, as well as feigning or feinting. Drawn from a present participle, fiction is in process and still at stake, not finished, still prone to falling afoul of facts, but also liable to showing something we do not yet know to be true, but will know.

—(Haraway, 2003, pp. 19-20)

Stories take us places and connect us in many ways (Kovach, 2009; Archibald, 2008). They are porous enough to allow personal identification with characters and situations yet very strong. A story's arrangement, the sequence of its telling can always be altered—reimagined, redesigned, and repurposed which is why in many Indigenous cultures, according to Cajete (2000, 2005, 2009, 2017), King (2013), literary scholars, such as those discussed by Bertens (2010), and Shaw, Kelly, and Semler (2013a), revere story's power to teach. Yet, the same attributes that make us revere the power of story are the same attributes that can be used to manipulate, distort, and subvert the truth.²⁶ As Cole (2006) puts it,

my story is not yours my history is not yours
 our stories and histories including accounts receivable transmissible are not yours
 your stories about us are housed in libraries archives museums special collections...
 my words belong to the air and to ancestors those to come
 not to places of white legislated or otherwise expropriated ownership. (p. 83)

Even though stories are all these things and more, perhaps it can be said that while stories are personal and cultural, stories when told are less about who launches them and more about why

²⁶ The freedom of fiction to enter into dialogue with the given context in such a way as to underscore the play of interpretation...is at once necessary and extremely dangerous. Fiction is never innocent. The imagination is never disembodied. But that is precisely why fiction-as-research possesses huge potential for engendering agency. The grounded, emotional particularity of fiction is capable of transforming the reader. *[And I would add the listener too.]* Fiction permits border crossing and defamiliarization, which are both essential for diacritical empathy (de Freitas, 2003, np).

they were told in the first place and in the end where they land and root. It is also why once a story is created and shared, it must be regarded as a living being that has a life of its own, related to but independent of its makers, and who over time, becomes a cultural relative or ancestor (Garrouette & Westcott, 2015; Jan Shaw et al., 2013a).

Stories, be they literary creations, personal anecdotes, or oral histories catch us with their emotional content and make us empathize with others. Empathy is important for reconciliation for obvious reasons but also because the “power of storytelling to produce narratives *about* reconciliation...can *effect* reconciliation” (Shaw, 2013, p. 3). However, the greatest power of stories exists because they are intertwined with what Shaw (2013) calls an “ongoing process of social formation” (p. 2). Stories, she claims, shape how we think and behave. Further, she says that our personal and collective agency can be expressed as an ability to change existing stories either by telling them differently or by creating new ones and adding them to the “cultural store of stories” (p. 2). Key to my research is the connection between stories and reconciliation, where stories act as agents of change and further reconciliation through social re-formations.

FINDING ACADEMIC MENTORS IN POSTHUMANIST LITERATURE

Maker(spaces) literacy is the first of the three posthumanist-oriented constellations of practice that I situate in the educational literature. Maker literacy, as a constellation of posthumanist practice is associated with concepts of intra-action, assemblages, and iterative development. I discuss how these concepts have been taken up in educational research and how they function as a constellation of practice that speaks to my project as a collective making, as a collaborative inquiry, as an iterative decision-making process, and as an experimental sandbox. This constellation also situates aspects of skill-building and practice as a literacy around knowing, becoming, and doing (Kuby et al., 2019). This literature also helped inform my research design, specifically with how my Advisory Committee and I envisioned the identification and collection of decision-making data. In the planning stages and later in my analysis phase, I drew heavily on posthumanist maker literature and ABR literature related to fiction (Leavy, 2019b). I found correlatives in reconciliation literature concerned with *praxis* and *collaboration*.

The second posthumanist-oriented constellation of practice in the literature that I take up is research-creation/ABR. The literature in this constellation is associated with two seemingly

unrelated topics, ethics and imagination. In terms of ethics, I situate the posthumanist practices of response-ability, collective agency, and affirmative activity in the educational literature. This literature speaks specifically to practices of listening to others and being responsive to them, of enjoying material differences that matter, and of working together to make something more than the individual. This ethical practice was most applicable to my analysis of the transformations that took place in the students and myself around engaging difference and injustice, as well as enacting social change. In both the planning and analysis phases, I drew heavily on critical posthumanist literature, and I found correlatives in reconciliation literature related to *collaboration* and *community*.

In terms of imagination, I situate the related topics of indeterminacy, immanence, creative adjustments, and *Imagineering* in the educational literature (Camargo-Borges, 2015, 2019). The literature associated with imagination helped me prepare for and understand the unexpected turns in my study, such as story surprises, story starts, stops, rethinks, and rewrites. This literature also helped me understand how imagination, specifically as world-building, is key to imagining possible or different more socially just futures and how imagining these worlds can affect the present (and possibly the future).

This constellation of ethics and imagination helped inform the day-to-day processes the participants developed to move their story forward and what they did when they encountered impasses. Perhaps, more importantly though, the (critical) posthumanist literature related to ethical boundary formations/assemblies showed a gap in the (critical) educational literature in this area as a literacy. Further, I found no educational literature and very little posthumanist literature that addressed decision-making as an affirmative critical literacy, and one that links decision-making to practices of reconciliation. Throughout my study, I drew heavily on posthumanist-oriented ABR/research-creation literature and found correlatives in the reconciliation literature related to the role of imagination in reconciliation through *storytelling* and *Indigenous story work* (Archibald, 2008).

Collaborative and collective story-making is the third of three posthumanist-oriented constellation of practice I situate in the educational literature. The literature in this constellation, while sparse, suggests that a convergence of makerspace and research-creation/ABR practices with posthumanism practices have a real place in education generally and in Canadian classrooms specifically. I hope to enlarge this body of educational literature with my research contribution. There is no reconciliation literature, that I am aware of, that speaks explicitly to the

potential of collaborative and collective story-making as a praxis for furthering reconciliation as defined by TRC (2015) Call 63.3. There are, however, many tangential links that my Advisory Committee saw as related and applicable to my project. I hope to add the practice of collaborative and collective story-making to the growing body of educational reconciliation literature.

Makers and Maker Spaces Literacy

The research coming out of the maker-spaces community suggests that children and youth collaborations in the context of making fosters idea exploration, peer-to-peer training, tinkering/tweaking, community partnership, and a culture of creating (Hobson Foster, Lande, & Jordan, 2014; Litts, 2015; Moorefield-Lang, 2015; Shercliff, 2015; Wang, Dunn, & Coulton, 2015). These attributes of making relate in important ways to the principles of reconciliation—mutual respect, empathy, and intercultural understanding (Cohen, Jones, & Smith, 2016). Peer-to-peer training, an attribute of making in maker spaces has positive applications for reconciliation in the classroom if students are given opportunities to teach each other about their own cultures (Britton, 2012; Gummerum, Leman, & Hollins, 2014).

Martin (2015) and Sheridan et al. (2014) also suggest that makers in collaborative environments often come together to solve complex problems. Collaborative making as a form of complex problem solving may hold a promising applicability for reconciliation-making and dialog. While collaboration should not be confused with or offered as a replacement for the practice of teachers making space for reconciliation across the curriculum, making is one strategy for combining both. Teachers can both make space for reconciliation and create opportunities for collaborative fabrication that builds intercultural relationships.

Briton (2012), and others such as Cohen, Jones, and Smith (2016) suggest that maker spaces are easily adapted to story-making environments, a point that was clearly supported by the National Writing Project in the USA that was called “Writing as Making and Making as Writing” (NWP, 2013). Lenters and Smith’s (2018) story-making research links making and collaboration to empathy. They studied collaborative dramatic story-making in high school students and found an unexpected by-product of their research that has implications for reconciliation as in TRC (2015) Call 63.3 and reconciliation research generally. Students, on completion of their collaborative dramatic story-making, surprised the researchers by requesting more class time to create individual stories that extended and built on group stories by taking up a different point of view or by exploring “new trajectories” (p. 188). This is significant for

reconciliation research because it suggests that a collaborative story-making activity produced empathy in students, or alternatively, allowed them to imagine different possible worlds. Students wanting to story different points of view suggests a desire to further develop their skills of empathy as a response to the collaboration. Students wanting to story different trajectories suggests that collaboration opened students to the possibility of alternative worlds or futures—of imagining different endings and different ways forward. This impulse towards iterative creation, also called tinkering, that we see in Lenters and Smith’s (2018) maker spaces research also encourages student makers to experiment with ideas and iteratively rework/edit content.

Tinkering in the context of story-making can also be understood as the act of making provisional story choices then testing the implications of those choices (Dougherty, 2012b; Litts, 2015). This form of tinkering has practical applications for modeling life choices. The story world becomes, in a sense, a test bed or sandbox where ideas and actions can be safely explored within an artistic or making endeavor (Barone & Bresler, 2006; Phegley & Oxford, 2010). In most cases, choices take on the characteristics of a *palimpsest*; they are often changed, reworked, or over-written, although the traces of the earlier choice/text remain and perhaps inform the new choice, even as learning (Sameshima & Morchel, 1982).

Implicit in the act of tinkering are other ideas too, related to the changing nature of materials, environments, and humans as well as what constitutes error (Gee, 2003). There is an idea associated with tinkering that suggests that nothing stays (or has to stay) fixed and that mistakes are simply that, an attempt that missed the mark that could be fixed or used as an opportunistic base or stepping stone for some further inspired iteration (Lemieux & Rowsell, 2020a; Sheridan et al., 2014). Tinkering also orients one’s thinking away from what something means, and towards the way that something works, that is, the “mechanistic” relationship of its parts, be it a story, a dinner, or a gadget, and its relationship to other things/systems (Deleuze & Guattari, 1989, p. 4). This orientation also supports a posthumanist notion of immanence; a making can always be otherwise depending on the choices possible and the ones that are made. It follows that there is no one right way of doing or making a thing, unless one is trying to make a copy.

As Sheridan, Lemieux, Do Nascimento, and Arnseth (2020) explain, this orientation has implications for pedagogy. “[W]hen pedagogy emphasizes process rather than product, educators pay more attention to the ways children’s making may take multiple unpredictable pathways based on how materials shape that making, and these pathways do not necessarily align with

pedagogical design ideas” (p. 1288). One such study by Wohlwend, Peppler, Keune, and Thompson (2017) shows how a preschool classroom teacher praised the student who completed a circuit-making activity first but failed to recognize the greater depth of learning conducted by another student who tinkered with multiple makings by iteratively helping many others. After a girl in the class asked for and received help from the boy who finished first, she completed her own circuit then deliberately moved around the room to help other students. The researchers observed that this girl, apart from being outwardly helpful, was also deepening and widening her own learning by exposing herself to multiple states of circuit incompleteness (those of her fellow students) thereby pushing her ability to assess and troubleshoot solutions to the circuit problems that presented themselves. Unlike the boy who moved on to other activities, she practiced tinkering and collaboration with her fellow students as a learning strategy. She also practiced relationship building by offering her encouragement and assistance (peer-to-peer training) to anyone who wanted it.

The literature associated with collective making, collaborative inquiry, and iterative (decision-making) processes in creating a safe sandbox for idea testing forms a constellation of practices that speak directly to my project as a literacy. As such, this constellation of practice situates skill-building and practice around *knowing* and *becoming* as forces that build confidence and lead to *doing* (Kuby et al., 2019).

Research-Creation/ABR

Researchers who use a post-qualitative research-creation/ABR approach, do not seek to construct *representative* or *reflective* narratives of the world or Self, although the production of an artefact or performance is one outcome of this kind of research. Rather they inquire into the creative, generative, and educational processes associated with art production and what these processes and the art make possible (Gunnarsson & Hohti, 2018).

Implicit in research-creation/ABR literature are three post-qualitative movements relevant to my research project. They have been modelled by a number of researchers, but those who had the most influence are Jerri Rosiek (2019), Celiane Camargo-Borges (2019), and as already noted, Stephanie Springgay (Springgay & Alarcon, 2020). The first is a movement towards a more collective understanding of the “artist” and the research work that “they” do rather than the artist as an individual (Stout & Daiello, 2019). The second is a movement towards accepting the artistic process as a research method in and of itself (Leavy, 2019b). The third is a movement towards social change by way of imaginative world-building where participants explore social

options for change by making material some possible alternatives to the problems of this world as art (Camargo-Borges, 2019).

The first movement towards a view of the artist/art as a collective entity or assemblage, as I've positioned the participants in my study, is taken up as collaborative/collective knowledge-making and problem-solving through the process of making art, or through artistic performance (MacDonald & Wiens, 2019). To be clear, each participant does not surrender her identity, but with her co-story-makers, they come together in a temporary assemblage to imagine and make something together. To understand the forces at play in this temporary assemblage, one might imagine a company of dancers on stage or a community of singers performing together. In these contexts, the artist is plural, both in the collaborative production of knowledge and in its collective performance. This movement has strong links to posthumanists' conceptions of subjectivity formations. Manning (2012) suggests that in dance, for example, the

...mobile architecture of a choreography is not the plan of the movement or the partitioning of the individual bodies in space. It is the relational force that persists from the collective movement's incipient cueings and alignments. It is the gathering of a force-field not of the bodies per se but of the active intervals their relational movement creates, intervals it taps into to make felt the more-than of a given movement composition. (p. 136)

The physical or musical dialogs and exchanges through "the cueing and alignments" expresses the dynamic knowledge generation taking place between performers which the audience may experience as breath-taking moments or the "*more-than of a given movement composition.*"²⁷

The story making cueing and aligning dynamics between the participants in my study may not be as obvious as they are in performance art, but they were present none-the-less. Not only did such cueing and aligning happen among the participants themselves and with me, but

²⁷ The "Flower Duet" in *Lakme* (Delibes, 1887) is a case in point. As these dynamic relations are felt, and understood unconsciously rather than consciously (Hayles, 2017), take a moment to listen to and watch the cueing and alignments between the singers, between the orchestra and the singers, and among the conductor, the orchestra and singers in a rendition of this piece to feel the *more-than* that I speak of: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C1ZL5AxmK_A&ab_channel=WarnerClassics

interestingly with what some might call objects, for example, the microphone, they called Blue. Together we were the collective, collaborative assemblage of relations that produced the story.

Similarly, Springgay (2019) describes in *'How to Write as Felt' Touching Transmaterialities and More-Than-Human Intimacies*, how this notion of cueing and aligning extends to become something felt affectively as materiality and touch. Without going into affect theory, which is outside the scope of this work, there is a sense in what she writes about the “felt”, that tries to articulate a giving in to the immanent possibilities presented in the moment coupled with an anticipation imminent in the interval just before its resolution. I recall moments when the participants felt this discussing story ideas. One would get an idea that built on what another had just said, and she could barely contain herself with the excitement of the idea and the anticipation of telling her idea while she waited for the other participant to finish speaking.

In academic parlance, Springgay's (2019) work considers

how human and nonhuman matter composes (Haraway...2016)...[and how] this comingling that felt performs enacts what Alaimo (...2010; ...2016) calls transcorporeality. Connecting felt with theories of touch and transcorporeality becomes a way to open up and re-configure different bodily imaginaries, both human and nonhuman, that are radically immanent and intensive; as an assemblage of forces and flows that open bodies to helices and trans connections. (p. 59)

Here, Springgay not only acknowledges the nonhuman as integral to collective composition, but distills many dimensions of artistic inquiry, that is, its materiality, its touch, and its ability to touch, as well as the knowledges it makes possible, into a single word, *felt*. “Felt is activated not as a metaphor but rather poses questions about what writing does at the interstices between research and creation” (Springgay, 2019, p. 57). Or, as I understand it more generally, how creative processes and research methods support each other.

Gale and Wyatt's (2017) research also link this first movement, artist as more-than-one, with the second movement, art as research inquiry. The second movement towards recognizing the artistic process as a method of research is by no means a new idea, but it is generally not accepted by academics as a rigorous methodology or accorded the same legitimacy as other methods, such as the interview process, for example (Leavy, 2019a). This said, it seems incredulous to me that anyone would argue the validity of the insights made by some of the

world's great novelists,²⁸ simply because they did not arise from traditional forms of academic research. Writers of this caliber, no doubt conducted very attentive and detailed studies of the world they lived in, but perhaps did so as part of, or concurrent with the writing process, in ways like de Freitas (2003) explains,

As a fiction writer, I am always already writing; there is no collecting data before my act of interpretation. There is no temporal lag between event and story. My life experiences as a teacher and a researcher inform my writing, but they are not the “indubitable facts” to which my narrative must correspond. (p. 1)

Both de Freitas (2003) and Leavy (2019a) regard the writing of fiction as an act of research where “the writing practice is both the method of inquiry and the content” (Leavy, 2019a, p. 196). An artistic method of inquiry entails an iterative process of data collection from the lived world with data analysis to make the story world (Leavy, 2019d).

Although practitioners of fiction-based research, a branch of ABR, don't frame it this way, a story-making process that involves decisions about characters and plot, etc., resembles what Barad (2014b) calls a process of “cutting together apart” (p. 168). This concept is central to my research. Like other generative assemblages that perform in the lived world, story worlding also performs “a doing—the enactment of boundaries—that always entails constitutive exclusions” (Barad, 2003, p. 803). Story decisions enact a boundary-making by the story-makers that are exclusionary. A single story-making decision forecloses many story possibilities. What is included in a story world, what story characters do, and what makes a plot plausible are all decisions the author(s) makes based on an ongoing inquiry into and analysis of the data in question. This is discussed in greater detail in my analysis starting on page 116. For Barad (2003) and King (2003), as discussed in a previous section, decision-making must not only be “accountable” to the story/world itself in terms of coherence, but it must also be accountable to the audience it is conversing with in terms of the world it imagines and how players intra-act in it.

Taking a slightly different approach to creation as inquiry, novelist, Barbara Kingsolver (2017) suggests that story fiction “creates empathy, and empathy opens up new ways of seeing

²⁸ For example, Dostoevsky (1880).

the world” to help us hear bad news and find the courage to respond to that news (np). As young artists, working together, the youth in my research project as characters in their story had conversations about topics that could not be broached in other settings, topics, particularly about adult guidance/control. As I explain in my analysis, (see page 185), they used the story-making as a place or sandbox for those conversations and that collective inquiry. Their story characters, not the authors per se, had these conversations without reprisal in much the same way that Gabriel and Connell (2010) found that *renga*, a traditional Japanese form of collaborative authorship provided a forum for “a community of practitioners [to] explore dilemmas and views that would be unacceptable otherwise” (p. 509). The story-making in my study when operating as a sandbox allowed potentially necessary conversations to be had in a non-threatening way. I regarded the distancing factor that the story-making sandbox provided as a beneficial aid in these conversations.

The third movement focuses on research-creation/ABR as a process that also “generates” data/ideas using the artistic imagination as a powerful (social and material) engineering tool that Camargo-Borges (2019) calls *Imagineering*. Another way to understand this dimension of research-creation/ABR is to replace the phrase *data collection* (a qualitative research term) with *data generation* (a post-qualitative research term). This “means that it is the interaction among participants-method-team that promotes the emergence of new ideas and material with which to work” (p. 97). It made sense for me to use story-making within a research-creation/ABR framework because the participants and I were interested in reconciliation as a different way of imagining being or living in the world.

Drawing on Massumi, Irwin’s (2013) research connects the “creative and inventive potential” of stories to relationships, agency, and action supporting more equitable imagined futures (p. 168). Leavy (2016) concurs, saying story

grants us an imaginary entry into what is otherwise inaccessible. The practice of writing and reading [and telling and listening to] fiction allows us to access imaginary or possible worlds, to reexamine the worlds we live in, and to enter into the psychological processes that motivate people and the social worlds that shape them. (p. 20)

While my research relies on all three movements above, the generative imaginative possibilities of the third movement invited further consideration. For me, it raised questions

about the power of the imagination and whether the story the participants in my research created as speculative knowledge could influence the future? Further, I wondered whether the speculative knowledge their story produced could lead to social change and thus help to rectify past injustices?

I found answers to these questions in some unlikely places. One place was in the writings of Prigogine (2014), a chaos theorist (and Nobel laureate). Because chaos theory like posthumanism accepts the infinite connectedness of things and that the future is shaped by the million variables and connections both seen and unseen, Prigogine believed the future could *not* be predicted. However, he believed that our image of the future could make the world a better place in the here and now. He said that “What we do today depends on our image of the future, rather than the future depending on what we do today” (Prigogine et al., 2014, p. 11). By extension, the speculative knowledges produced by the story the participants made, can be thought to have made an impact on their world right now. Their story imagined a different future and it had a role to play in how one behaves in the world now. My research relies on this notion of story to imagine reconciliation futures that have the power to change social behaviours today.

To a lesser extent, I also rely on den Heyer’s (2005) notions of the imagination and its ability to effect social change. He suggests that imagination plays a role in historically informed truth and reconciliation education. For him, imagining trajectories of specific political behaviors allows one to envision the potential pitfalls or benefits that a course of action may lead to. den Heyer (2011) argues for a different kind of historical truth-seeking education that fosters an awareness of and sensitivity to social justice/action concerns in history students. His process is one that encourages students to *imagine* social justice/action futures.

Involved in this process, students not only come to appreciate their political and institutional obligations for reconciliation, but they also come to appreciate the importance and power of their personal agency in the reconciliation endeavor. The line he draws between imagination and social action has implications for my research because story-making is at its core a process of imaginative world-building that can envision social change—reconciliation—and impart that vision in compelling ways. Building on history education that accesses “students’ existing capacities to imagine a situation differently” my arts-based story research extended and applied den Heyer’s (2011) imagination-social action connection to story-making and explored how it might be used to facilitate reconciliation in non-history contexts (p. 168).

Students who imagine these trajectories are active in building worlds they think are just and that they want to live in. Similar to Prigogine (2014), St. Pierre (2017) acknowledges that the “[n]onconceptual forces of the world ‘not already contained in our projects and the ways of thinking that accompany them’ (Rajchman, 2001, p. 7) can teach us that a different world is already there, waiting to be thought and lived” (p. 696).

As already stated, research-creation/ABR generates imaginative knowledge (of possibilities) made material as art (Leavy, 2018a). Put another way, “imagination in research is meant to offer new intelligibilities and creatively construct new realities” (Camargo-Borges, 2019). Research-creation/ABR is routinely regarded as “world-making” because the purpose of the art creation process is to “generate alternatives that construct new knowledge that are sensitive to the specific context and useful for those involved” often as a collaborative and collective effort (Camargo-Borges, 2018, p. 94). My research relies on this conceptualization of story and imagination to influence how one perceives possibilities and reality.

In terms of usefulness and practicality, I return to the idea of story-making as an experimental sandbox. In their story sandbox, participants did experiment with a variety of realities and a variety of knowledges that I discuss later related to the principal, a character in their story. As I will show, they sometimes took back prior decisions or changed scenarios before committing to a specific way forward useful to their story and world-building.

Tangentially, the operation of a story world is consistent with Bakhtin’s (1981) operation of the dialogic imagination. His theory is premised on the need for common experiences or understandings between author and audience (or in this project, between authors and between authors and audience) for a story to create a dialog between the two, or between past and present. A shared imaginary, while not lived experience, is a shared vision upon which a dialog can be introduced and engaged in. The collaborative dialog the authors in my study engaged in with each other about their social environment as they discuss story ideas, created a set of common experiences for them and as Prigogine suggests, built behaviours—mutual respect and empathy because they were needed for their shared imagined future.

While I do not rely on reader response theory to inform my research, I mention it briefly here to indicate that what the theory teaches is not inconsistent with the academic literature I have chosen for my helpers, but it is dated and limited to text-based stories. However, we know from Rosenblatt (1993) that a story when read transacts with what a reader already knows and feels to extend his/her/their “efferent” (practical knowledge), or to experience something new

through an "aesthetic" relationship with characters and/or situations. Building on Rosenblatt, my research sought to examine how efferent-based transactions could be extended and applied to intercultural understanding. My research also tried to understand how the concept of aesthetic-based transactions could be applied by the authors to create compelling characters that evoke an empathetic response in readers and listeners.

Collaborative + Collective Story-Making by Children/Youth in School Settings

There are very few educational academics who study collaborative story creation with children/youth in schools, fewer still who study it as a making activity and fewer still who study it as collective story creation, and none that I am aware of who study it in the context of reconciliation. However, Rice and Mündel (2018) associated with the ReVision project out of the University of Guelph have hinted at story-making's connection to reconciliation. They mainly argue that story-making can/should be understood as a critical stand-alone qualitative methodology and in doing so, distinguish their argument minimally from Leavy's noncritical argument for the same. While they rely on posthumanists, such as Braidotti (2013) to inform their research, their work moves between qualitative and post-qualitative methodological concepts without much concern for some of their inherent contradictions. This notwithstanding, for me they make a significant contribution in how they develop the idea of "story-revising as a critical process for opening up conversations about injustice and new possibilities for being and becoming" (Rice & Mündel, 2018, p. 217). Canadian author, Will Ferguson (2013) also developed similar ideas for revision and editing in his award-winning novel *419*. I take up this notion of story revision as revised story decisions in my research.

And even though this section is positioned in the posthumanist part of this literature review, the only recent educational academic to study collaborative collective story creation with Primary school aged children/youth is Jaeger (2019) and she does not position herself as a posthumanist. This said, many of her ideas align with posthumanism.

Under the umbrella of collaborative writing, she distinguishes between side-by-side (individual writing with discussion partners) and co-writing. The latter is what I call collective story-making. Finding recent literature on collective (co-writing) story-making has been difficult for her as well. Citing Boon (2016) and Gort (2016) as the most recent studies of side-by side collaborative writing, she explains how "[m]ost studies examining co-composing processes [(collective) *sic*] were conducted prior to 2005 and this is true of all studies in which children spontaneously selected and composed with peers" (Jaeger, 2019, p. 4). Given this, she relies on

much older literature largely associated with the work of Daiute (1986; Daiute et al., 1993) and Milian (2005; Milian & Camps, 2005) to describe co-composing/collective interactions, from “planning (or the lack of same), negotiating (the back-and forth conversations required to make decisions about the text), narrating (reading the text aloud as they went along), communicating via nonlinguistic modes, [to] conducting process discussions” (p. 4). From this literature, she suggests three general characteristics of collective co-writing. The first is turn-taking, the second is conflict over content, and the third is a concern for social relationships and control of these relationships. Addressing the first characteristic, Jaeger (2019) turns to Lomangino et al. (1999) who say “whether students are discussing the next plot twist or putting pen to paper, turn taking is a key element of this process” (p. 203). As for the second characteristic, Jaeger (2019) points to the research of Deborah Wells Rowe et al. (2003) and Schultz (1997)²⁹ who suggest that there is inherent conflict in collaborative negotiation of content. I did not observe any such conflict in my research or in another story-making event I conducted some fifteen years ago, although Lemieux and Rowsell (2020b) do speak of it once. Jaeger (2019) attempts to qualify this conflict by leaning on Chung and Walsh (2006) who note that “[t]he decision-making of authors in a co-composing relationship *evolves* [my emphasis] from a more independent style where each child attempts to get her/his way to a more collaborative style in which decisions are negotiated; this is true even with very young children” (p. 6). Jaeger (2016) cites the literature of Dyson (1993, 2013), Rowe and Neitzel (2010), and Schneider (2003) in an earlier article, as support of the third characteristic, “[c]hildren often use their writing to support social relationships” (p. 112). In her 2019 article, she re-iterates saying “[c]o-authoring benefits peer relationships as it promotes group cohesiveness” based on Atwood’s (1992) publication called *Collaborative writing: The ‘other’ game in town*, that was published in the now defunct *The Writing Instructor*, in which Atwood argues for increased emphasis on collaboration in the classroom (p. 6).³⁰ Jaeger also paid attention to how a dialogic process was integral to collective co-composing citing Floriana’s

²⁹ I could not find the Schultz reference to verify but include it here as a reflection of what Jaeger says.

³⁰ I could not find the Atwood reference except as an abstract in the Eric database. It read “Compares the present educational system to the capitalistic economic system based on competition. Proposes an alternative system that provides society with a democratizing influence that features noncompetitive, collaborative learning”. (Eric HB) Atwoods views are certainly in line with posthumanist thinking.

(1993) discussion of ‘how these texts are talked into being as they become written documents’ (p. 242).

Unlike my participants who were female, Jaeger’s (2019) primary story-making participants were a group of four boys who were known in the classroom as the Heroes group. Despite the gender difference, we both found that the collective co-composing process highlighted the “agency, intensity, and commitment of which relatively young children are capable when given some freedom to control their time, space...and writing choices” (p. 7). Further, Jaeger (2019) notes that the Heroes group story made such a big impact on the other students in the class, that “[o]nce part of the story had been read aloud, more children chose to collaborate on a range of pieces: from additional superhero adventures to songs to epic romances. The Hero’s group supported the spread of this new phenomenon and classroom writing practices were altered as a result; their text helped generate texts written by others” (p. 24). While my research took place at lunch time, away from the two classes the participants in my research belonged to, I noticed the same phenomena. Both the study participants and their other classmates were eager to collectively make other stories with me. Sadly, COVID19 prevented that from happening.

While Jaeger (2016, 2019) is the only educational scholar to study story-making in a similar way to me, several posthumanist educational scholars have studied various aspects of or some combinations of collaborative collective story making by children/youth in a school setting. Most of these are in the context of digital literacies that involve an element of software coding with automated visual elements and audio (Lemieux & Rowsell, 2020b). Software coding was not a part of my research. However, there are some aspects of the story-making-coding research done by Lemieux (2021), Lemieux and Rowsell (2020a, 2020b), Rowsell et al. (2018), and Sheridan et al. (2020) that apply to my research.

Software coding adds a translation dimension to the story-making that my research did not have to deal with on one hand, and on the other hand, to reap the benefits of. As Lemieux and Rowsell (2020b) point out, the coding dimension of story-making helped students learn patience, but as Kuby et al. (2017) points out, multi-modal story-making with art materials did the same. She, however called it “persistence-ing” rather than patience. This suggests to me that multi-modality, be it working with concrete (paper, glue, etc.) or virtual (software) materials introduced a level of complexity that pushed students to learn about the limits and affordances of the materials they were using. It was this learning that brought them into a relationship with the materials. They were not so much interested in bending the materials to their will, although their

initial engagement with the material probably began that way, they were in the end more interested in the materials as co-creators and as a *material body* they came to know. Their learning involved an evolution in their relationship with these material bodies from one of human manipulation to one of human collaboration with the materials. Also, in both Kuby's (2017) and Lemieux and Rowell's (2020) research, the level of commitment by students to their respective projects might be understood as desire. This desire was responsible for the level of sustained commitment the researchers saw in their respective story(code)makers and which the researchers felt was necessary to bring into being. The materials-human relationship ultimately forged a respect for and a deeper knowledge of the materials their participants came to appreciate.

These same desires, sustained commitments, respect, and working together with some other ones/beings/things were the same forces at work in my study. In the planning stages of my research, I conceived that the participants would engage with the hero/ine's story template as a code of sorts in the same way that the story software coders did. Without getting too a head of myself, I saw a similar engagement between the hero/ine's story template, the participants, and their story, that I discuss later. As they learned about each other, a respect for our collective assemblage which included the story template as a material apparatus, developed much like that described by Kuby (2017) and Lemieux and Rowsell (2020) above.

Problem-solving skill development is often a benefit of maker projects. It has also become the focus of them pedagogically, thus blinding teachers to the relational and imaginative benefits within the making itself. An attunement to the materials, which for my research included people, technology, story apparatus, etc., is a way, Lemieux (2021) suggests, of "allowing makers to see themselves on par with the worlds they create" and to (re)consider "what is and what might be" (p. 3). Lemieux's (2021) idea that there is a link between thinking about more "socially just futures" and contemplating "these possibilities as credible, well-founded, and valuable sources of knowledge" is a link I could see as well when I conceptualized the story-making as an experimental sandbox (p. 3).

A pitfall ordinarily associated with making is the legacy of constructivist thinking. It "has generated distortions around perceived 'good' and 'bad' maker compositions" that need to be avoided (Lemieux, 2021, p. 3). Lemieux (2021), citing Strom and Martin (2017) suggests that this can be done "by looking at a constellation of elements that produce each other within an assemblage" (p. 7).

Taking a different perspective, Dobson and Stephenson (2017) understand story-making as a discourse that mingles with identity. Leaning on Gee (2007, 2015) they suggest that there is no separation between who we are and what we are do, thus making what we say and write acts of doing and making. While critical posthumanist wouldn't frame it in this way because of the focus on the individual here, the concepts informing this saying-doing relationship are much the same for posthumanists albeit in collective formations. Dobson and Stephenson's (2017) research is situated in what they term a Community of Writers much like the one described by Gee (2002) based on the work of Wenger and Synder (2000). The researchers understand "the fluid boundaries between one writer's text and another's within the Community can dialogise social languages within and across texts" thus circulating new terms and new ideas (Dobson & Stephenson, 2017b, p. 59). It is the agency of these texts/stories in such collectives or communities that have the potential for circulating concepts of social justice within a classroom or a school that is of interest in their work.

Other posthumanists, including PhEmaterialist³¹ Ringrose et al. (2018) and Cole and Osgood (2019) use art-making in a similar way to how I use story-making. For me, story-making, like art-making can be "vibrant forces in envisioning more social just futures" (Lemieux, 2021, p. 5). While participants in Cole and Osgood's (2019) glitter research did not regard their makings as art because of the experimental nature of their makings, their focus on what glitter *did* instead of *what* it was, made them attend to things that were ordinarily unattended to or dismissed as back ground noise. In like ways that I discuss later, participants in my research engaged in conscious decision-making as a kind of glitter by first attending to why a particular decision appealed to them, and then by focusing on what a decision *did* or enabled. They learned that all their story decisions were entangled, and that each decision enabled some things to happen in the story and denied other things from happening. However, the appeal of some decisions glittered more than others as I outline later in a table of decisions. See Table 1 in the Data Collection chapter. The

³¹ A web-based group dedicated to furthering feminist posthumanist material approaches to education and education research methodologies. They self-describe as "The P-h refers to Post-Human PHilosophy. "Phem," refers to multiple feminisms; "E" refers to Education in the broadest sense; "Materialism" comes from new materialist thought; The 'ph' is pronounced 'f' so that sound and letter bring posthuman and feminism together in one expression" on their website: <https://phematerialisms.org/>. They also host conferences and publish a journal titled Reconceptualizing Educational Research Methodolgy Journal several times a year.

ethics of glittering or not glittering as material decisions in story worldbuilding entangled participants in social justice issues related to Indigenous ways of teaching and knowing. Put another way in broader educational terms, “[e]ach body in the classroom is ethically entangled in the process of ... worldmaking” not just the story worlds the participants in my study crafted (Niccolini et al., 2018, p. 337).

Sheridan et al. (2020) address specific posthumanist ways that story-making data, processes, and product, might be collected and analyzed. They attended to particular “entanglements that surfaced” and specifically, to the dynamic intra-actions they produced, saying that they “offered a critical layer for ethical considerations on how humans, non-humans, and more-than-humans came to be interwoven” (p. 1289). In addition to the planned activities in my research, I too paid particular attention to dynamic reconfigurations within the group and within the story as they were intra-acted, for example, with the introduction of *Annie* as a character mentor in the participants’ story.

In summary, this section is especially rhizomatic due to the sparsity of literature directly related to my research. I have had to look to related constellations of practices and apply them to the practices that I planned and then used. That said, the literature I draw on in this section is in my view close enough to use, as are the authors/academics I draw on as mentors. As Peterson and Rajendram (2019) notes, “collaborative abilities often stem from a mindset valuing collective intelligence and distributed expertise and authority” (p. 29), so I too drew on scholars that share this view.

INTERLUDE:

MY THESIS STORY BETWEEN CHAPTERS 2-3

The Theoretical Framework chapter presented earlier roughly corresponds to the first part of the hero/ine's journey. It describes the ordinary theoretical framework of the researcher's academic world. It is meant to contextualize a particular academic worldview out of which the research questions for this project arose. It is from this ontological, epistemological, and ethical worldview, that the research journey began. It is framed more personally in the parts you have already read in Act 1: Departure as "*Limited Awareness in the Ordinary World*" and "*The Journey Calls: From Truth to a Desire for Reconciliation*."

What follows here is a continuation of a more personal account of my thesis journey story. I shall begin with a part called "*Uncertainty Before Accepting the Call*." The next part of the researcher's hero/ine's journey is concerned with developing a relationship with a mentor or mentors. The Literature Review in this thesis roughly corresponds to the fourth part of Act 1 called mentors. In addition to the mentors, I found in the literature, my specific research journey included "*Meeting Mentors Other than in Books and Seeing a Way Through*." I describe how these more personal mentors made it possible for me to accept the call to learn more about reconciliation and pursue my research project. Closing Act 1 is "*Accepting the Call and Crossing into a Different World: Committing to Journey as Story and Story as Journey*." This part tells a story about someone close to me who took a journey once and was surprised by what happened. The story is meant to remind me (and perhaps you too) of the way stories and journeys often have unpredictable endings, surprising developments, and unexpected relationships, and the ways they can get inscribed as learning for both self and community. This story is also meant to reminds us of how stories travel sometimes backwards in time to make sense of something in our past or forward as a vision of a future we want to make real in our day-to-day (King, 2013).

* * *

UNCERTAINTY BEFORE ACCEPTING THE CALL

Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene

—(Haraway, 2009)

A doctoral candidate is usually considered well under way in the PhD journey when her research proposal is accepted. This was not the case for me. In fact, a cloud that had developed during one of my first doctoral courses had only grown blacker and had all but starved my initial enthusiasm and excitement about undertaking my PhD of any light. What had started with a colleague mishearing and misunderstanding something I had said in class soon became vicious gossip despite the public efforts of many of my other classmates to quell these whispered attacks and despite my repeated attempts to make things right with my colleague. On more than one occasion a faculty professor who did not know me would make a point of suggesting to my face that someone who held what they thought to be my beliefs (from gossip) had no place in doctoral studies. I imagined that the prejudice that I was experiencing was not unlike what people of colour must experience every day but for them it must be far worse in both degree and persistence. While powerless against the gossip and prejudice, I had hope that given time and the opportunity to get to know me, those eager to see me quit or fail, would see *me*, not the gossip. I didn't want to end up like the other 60+ year old classmate who was also targeted by the same colleague and ended up quitting the program. What message would quitting send to my children?

I persevered. I smiled. I continued even when I failed my Comprehensive Exams despite receiving an A+ for the trial comprehensive exam I had written for the course designed to prepare us for these exams. I certainly felt like quitting at that point. But just at that moment, I received a SSHRC scholarship award notification via email. This external peer-reviewed acknowledgement spurred me on. I rewrote the failed exam, passed, then defended my comprehensive knowledge despite having an anxiety attack towards the end of my oral defense. I have no recollection of the last five minutes. I only know that my ears were ringing so loud that when I stepped out into the hall to allow the committee to deliberate, I had to hold the wall to get to the nearby washroom to throw up. Later, a former classmate found me collapsed and dazed in a hallway door well. He was able to get me back on my feet and back to the room where the defense was being held by the time my supervisor came out looking to call me back in.

Certainly, my confidence was shaken as I approached the task of writing my research proposal. While I drafted my research proposal, I was careful to address all the questions, suggestions, and comments my committee members and supervisor made. While almost all these

comments were good intentioned and meant to help, they began to steer my envisioned research in directions that I did not want to go, and to point me to towards the well-established and well-worn paths that many had trodden before me. I could see the merit in what they were suggesting; it just wasn't for me. Simply put, I was no longer confident that my original research questions were worthy of pursuing. And yet, I was certain that the research I was about to propose based on the formal feedback I received was research I was not interested in conducting.

I was curious about different ways of conceptualizing reconciliation that included critical thought, most certainly, but also posthumanist thinking, the embodied thinking of making, and the collaborative thinking needed to express a single collective, creative story. I was not interested in researching the kind of collaborative thinking that served individualistic ends or individual expression. This and other subtle differences in orientation gnawed at me. I tried to assuage myself by saying I would have other research opportunities after I graduated and that for now, I should go along to get along. However, given my age, I secretly knew my doctoral research would probably be my first and last academic research opportunity.

In the end, I deferred to their judgement and submitted a research proposal informed by literature that constrained the posthumanist, collaborative, and “maker” understandings of reconciliation and social change I wanted investigate. In retrospect, I see that the real problem at that point was a lack of courage on my part to ask for the help I needed to pursue the research I wanted to conduct. When my research proposal was finally ready for defense, I proceeded with hope in equal parts that it would pass because of the work I had put in and that it would fail to let me off the hook. It passed, but I wanted to quit. I just didn't see the point in continuing this way, but, and it was a big BUT, I had SSHRC funding and that was a gift that I knew I should not just throw away.

MEETING MENTORS OTHER THAN THOSE IN BOOKS AND SEEING A WAY THROUGH

I reached out to a Haida Elder and academic I knew, Dr. John Kelly, for advice. He validated my original vision for my research, but suggested I proceed with caution, reminding me that like the work of Indigenous scholars, one could only change academic ways of knowing one thesis at a time. He asked me to find the courage I needed to proceed. Help came in the most unexpected form but not surprisingly, masquerading as another failure.

I wrote my ethics proposal and when I submitted it, I found it needed serious revisions. My supervisor and I were called in to speak with the Research Ethics Board Chairperson, Dr. Barbara Graves. She reviewed a list of issues that needed to be addressed if I wanted to get Ethics approval. She suggested that I form a Research Advisory Committee comprised of at least one Indigenous Knowledge Keeper and at least one other senior educator known to the local Anishinaabe community as being supportive of the TRC. My supervisor had had a United Houma Nation Tribal Council appointed Research Advisory Committee when he was doing his doctoral research, so he whole-heartedly approved the recommendation (Ng-A-Fook, 2007).

After the meeting was over, I stayed on to chat informally with Dr. Graves as I had taken several courses with her and was interested in how she was doing. During our chat, it came out that I was having serious thoughts about quitting and my reasons for wanting to do so. She was encouraging and urged me to form the Research Advisory Committee and discuss with them the research I really wanted to conduct, (based on the literature I wanted to reference, and the philosophical framework I wanted to employ) then based on their feedback decide if or how to proceed from there.

I formed my Research Advisory Committee with the help of a colleague, Lisa Howell, who knew two of the people who had been suggested. Lisa introduced me to Sylvia Smith who agreed to be on my Research Advisory Committee and Sylvia introduced me to Francine Payer who also agreed. When I spoke with them and described the research I wanted to conduct, they were both supportive of me but also of the research. I began to believe in my project again. I rewrote my Ethics application after consultation with my Research Advisory Committee and it passed with only minor changes. I had the go-ahead to do data collection but more than that, my Research Advisory Committee had rebuilt my confidence and restored my enthusiasm for my research project.

A summary of the conversations held with my Research Advisory Committee and the Research Ethic Board is described in Chapter 3, Methodology.

* * *

***ACCEPTING THE CALL AND CROSSING INTO A DIFFERENT WORLD:
COMMITTING TO JOURNEY AS STORY AND STORY AS JOURNEY***

If this sounds closer to a mad hatter's tea party than scholarship, I can only reply that Alice's journey is, after all, a metaphor quite like the ones I will be describing.

—(Nortwick, 1996, p. 4)

Like many Indigenous stories that teach about the wonder, balance, and the fragility of the world, or about perseverance, the following story shared with me and my brothers by our aunt who was a life-long elementary school teacher, exemplifies crossing into another world and a view of education as the intersection of journey and story. It is a view that engages the physical and spiritual as well as the intellectual and emotional. It is a story about how affect and knowledge moved and transformed a body and soul. It is a travel story.

* * *

Clarence was heading back home to his small room in Ottawa. The train was packed and loud with the voices of other pilgrims who were also returning from St. Anne de Beaupré. His mother, Eva, sat next to him by the window. His friend Jack sat facing him. Like the other passengers, Jack and his mother were chatting. He was glad to listen, pleased his mother was so happy. He was excited too. He wanted to join in the conversation, but his stutter made it difficult, so he didn't. He let them talk and let his mind wander. Like every other devout Catholic he knew, including himself, his mother had hoped to make a pilgrimage to a holy place once in her lifetime, but never thought it would be possible. She was poor and a widow who had lost her husband years ago. She had raised her five children without a father for years and had shouldered most of the heavy work of farming the homestead by herself until the children were strong enough to help.

Life was hard but her children and her faith sustained her. While the family usually had enough to eat, there was never anything extra until Clarence got work in the city and started sending home money each month. Since then, Eva was able to buy lime to whitewash the farmhouse and black tea. These were her luxuries. Clarence made them possible. She was grateful, but she had no idea how frugally Clarence lived, nor the long hours he worked to make these luxuries possible. She had no idea that he sent most of his earnings to her. She didn't know

that any overtime money he was able to earn, he saved in the hopes of having enough some day to take her to the shine at St. Anne de Beaupré.

It had taken him about five years to save enough, but he had. Now they were travelling back home from having just made the pilgrimage. Clarence was content and he soon dozed off to the rocking and song of the train as it met and mingled with the rails below and the voices within.

He was startled to wakefulness by Jack who was nudging his shoulder and calling his name. Jack wanted to know if he wanted food in the dining car because Eva was feeling hungry. “Sure,” he answered, “but maybe you should go first to see if there are any tables. I don’t want Mother to get there then have to stand and wait.” Jack and his mother looked at each other in disbelief. Clarence hadn’t noticed it yet, but he hadn’t stuttered over any of the many words he had just spoken. As it happened, Clarence never stuttered again in his life.

This is a story of my father who at age 25 came to know his voice—of the *miracle* that happened on the train when he was on his way back from St. Anne de Beaupré,³² perhaps in answer my grandmother’s prayers said earlier that day.

The summer after my grandmother Eva died, Dad took our family on a road trip to St. Anne de Beaupré and two other shrines in Quebec. Nothing miraculous happened that I can remember. Perhaps Dad found solace going back there to remember his mother and the joy they shared that day; perhaps he needed only to remember the pilgrimage—the journey that made him a hero in his own eyes and rewarded him by allowing what he considered the voice of his God to speak without impediment through him. My dad never spoke of the miracle either before or after our family pilgrimage. My brothers and I never knew this story, or that our dad ever once had a speech impediment so profound that my aunts used to make fun of his stuttered prayers every night. My brothers and I, as adults could scarcely believe the story or the stuttering when we found out.

Clarence, as far as we, his children, were concerned, had always been a talker. He was known in town as the man who loved to talk, who never stopped talking, and who told stories. His propensity for talk made a kind of sense after we found that out about the pilgrimage and the miracle. It explained why he always seemed to be listening to the sound of his own voice and

³² Apart from being a holy place, the shrine at [St. Anne de Beaupré](#) is reputed to have healing powers.

why when he spoke there was always a joyous undertone—a self-conscious satisfaction—that expressed itself. It was as if he realized that his voice was a gift and that it might be taken away as quickly as it had been given. It would explain why he used it constantly and listened to it with pleasure, no doubt to make sure it was still there. Dad never lost his gift while he was alive, but ironically, he lost his hearing in his sixties and had to shout to hear himself.

ACT 2: NAVIGATING THE UNKNOWN WORLD AND INITIATION

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY - A PROPOSITION and AN EXPERIMENT

The ordinary is a thing that has to be imagined and inhabited. It's also a sensory connection. A jump.
—(Stewart, 2007, p. 127)

In this chapter, I describe the formation of my Indigenous Research Advisory Committee and how I worked with them. I describe the research recruitment process, the story-making apparatus and process, and my data collection processes that took place on 26 days over a period of three months. The concept for this writing project was to some degree based on a similar collaborative story-making project I conducted with four Grade 3 students in 2000 that produced a 50-page story called *The Missing Bone* (Bonnell et al., 2000). However, the design of my thesis research was informed by the goals of TRC (2015) Call 63.3, the feedback received from my Indigenous Research Advisory Committee, research-creation/arts-based inquiry and analysis processes, a critical posthumanist orientation, and a modified root-cause analysis approach.

FINDING ALLIES: THE INVALUABLE CONTRIBUTION OF MY RESEARCH ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Based on the recommendation of the Research Ethics Board (REB) I formed an Indigenous Research Advisory Committee (IRAC) to advise me and ensure that Indigenous and educational ethical protocols were respected in my design and data collection. The IRAC was comprised of Francine Payer, who was the resident Indigenous consultant for the school where the research took place and Sylvia Smith, a retired teacher who continues to work for Indigenous interests with non-Indigenous communities to promote TRC truth telling and reconciliation.

Sylvia has done extensive curricular and pedagogical work as a teacher and social justice activist regarding Indian Residential Schools in Canada. In 2008, as a graduate student at the University of Regina, she started a “project that has been taken up nationally: the Project of Heart. In fact, Smith won the Governor General’s History Award for Excellence in Teaching in 2011 because of this project” (Staff, n.d.).³³ Some of her work is on exhibit at the Human Rights

³³ Read more about the Project of Heart at <http://www.projectofheart.ca>

Museum in Winnipeg. She was also an honorary witness for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Francine Payer makes a sacred journey every few years called the Mother Earth Water Walk.³⁴ “The Water Walk is based on an Anishina[a]be ceremony. We walk to honor all the Nibi (Water) and speak to the spirits of the water so that there are healthy oceans, rivers and lakes for our ancestors and generations to come” (Lilley, 2019). According to Lilley (2019) in 2019, Francine Payer walked with several others along the “Kitchi Gami Sibi” (St. Lawrence River) from August 24 to September 21. In 2021, she walked 200 km in three days, August 19 to August 22, along the local rivers converging in the Ottawa-Gatineau area.

Deeply honoured that both advisors agreed to talk with me, I met them face-to-face using protocols of respect to explain my project and to ask if both would join my IRAC. The following outlines when and how we met and what we discussed regarding the research design and other considerations. It is taken from an email originally sent to the REB in response to questions they had.

I met with Sylvia once with Lisa Howell, at the time, a PhD student at uOttawa and former teacher at <school name> and then again with Francine Payer. The RAC meetings were as follows:

September 3, 2019: Meeting with Sylvia and Lisa. This meeting was organized by Nicholas Ng-A-Fook, my supervisor. During this meeting, Sylvia agreed to be a member of my Research Advisory Committee. We discussed the concerns the REB had with my application as it related to the Research Proposal that my Thesis Committee had approved. We also discussed the following suggestions the REB made about my Ethics application as outlined by Nicholas in his email to Lisa and Sylvia:

1. Establish an advisory committee comprised of an experienced teacher who has address Truth and Reconciliation in the classroom and an Elder who represents students at the school;
2. She then would need to go over the design with advisory committee; and

³⁴ Read more on the Mother Earth Water Walk at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/863741123975472>

3. She has also been asked not to do the project in the classroom, but rather as part of an extracurricular activity like a lunchtime club with 4-8 students who would be interested in participating.

Specifically, Sylvia, Lisa, and I discussed how a before or after school data collection time would exclude most of the Indigenous or local low-income children at the school from being able to participate in my research even if they wanted to because they usually had no alternate transportation to and from school other than on the school buses. Lisa mentioned that the French immersion students at the school came from more affluent families and could arrange with a parent to drop them off early or pick them up late which gave them more opportunities to participate in school projects that other populations did not have. We discussed and concluded that an after or before school research schedule would unethically favour the affluent and the non-Indigenous students, and that a lunchtime research time, other than during school hours would be the only ethical option for conducting my research at this school. Related to this, we discussed students' Monday and Friday frequent absenteeism resulting from non-local families travelling to their home communities for ceremonies and other events. It was determined that meeting Monday or Friday for data collection would prove problematic for me and that my research schedule should exclude those days.

We also discussed participant selection criteria. I learned from Lisa and later discussed with the principal, the school's preferred participant selection practice that favoured giving children with the greatest need or who could benefit the most, preference if the research/activity had the potential to increase a specific student's sense of self-worth. This selection practice involved informing the teachers about the research activity and asking them to provide the principal with the names of several children who might benefit from participating in the research activity. Sylvia, and later Francine Payer, felt that my research could be used to empower children. The phrase they used was "who could benefit most." The sense was that if the research could provide additional benefits to specific children without compromising the objectives of the research, then the participant selection process part of the research design had a moral obligation to provide this benefit. Further to this, it was thought that the principal would be aware of any pre-existing friction between students that might be potentially harmful to the children should they be put in a group together, and that his advice should be sought on the group's composition before a final decision was made regarding research participants. In other words, Sylvia and Lisa, and later

Francine Payer, recommended a purposeful participant selection process that was consistent with the school's "benefit most" practice.

According to Lisa, some children arrive at school hungry and more than occasionally without a lunch. For this reason, she recommended that providing lunch for the participants would not only benefit the children who may be hungry and without anything to eat, it would probably add to the quality of the research data I collected because the participants would have increased energy levels. Later, Francine said that given a lunchtime gathering, she thought that providing lunch to participants was necessary.

The meeting concluded with Sylvia and Lisa recommending that I approach Francine Payer, to ask her if she would be a member of my RAC. They also recommended Artistic Knowledge Keeper, Monique Manatch, an Algonquin member of Barriere Lake, who I contacted but who did not respond.

On September 20th, I met with Francine and Sylvia. Originally, the purpose of the meeting was for Sylvia to introduce me to Francine and for me to ask her to become a member of the RAC. The meeting ended up being much more than that. We discussed my research (design) in terms of research objectives, group size and composition, the collaborative and role-playing aspects of the story making process and its potential for relationship building, participant selection, research timing (lunch time), food, audio recording, scribing, Francine's [potential] involvement in the data collection and as a counselling resource should a situation arise during my time with the participants. Francine and Sylvia agreed with most aspects of my research design as I orally presented and discussed it with them. (I later provided this information in written and electronic form). However, they voiced two concerns. The first was about the short period of time that the lunch break afforded, and the second was students' ability to sustain interest over a three week or longer period, especially considering the coming hockey season. Francine expressed her genuine appreciation for the heavy curricular demands placed on students at the school, but despite this, felt that participants, if taken from class, for example, for two afternoons to make their story could overcome these lunchtime challenges we faced. She felt that students could still satisfy curricular objectives for language arts and social studies to justify this use of school time. We agreed that I should begin with the lunch-time sessions as proposed and evaluate this model at the end of the first week. In a later discussion with the principal, he indicated that some flexibility along these lines could be considered, if necessary.

In terms of authorship, there was an acknowledgement that students in some classes in the school, particularly the one that Lisa had taught, were already familiar with publishing collaborative class-written books. In some cases, author names were identified. Francine specifically mentioned a book of grandmother stories that students had authored, based on stories they had heard from their grandmothers. She mentioned that this had been a high interest activity with students and offered it as evidence that a story-making project, such as mine, could generate considerable interest. I seem to remember (although I am not 100% sure) that there was an expectation that the participants would want to share their story with others through digital print and audio publication. I asked Sylvia and Francine to shed some light on my recollection? Sylvia confirmed affirmatively.

On September 21st, I sent both Sylvia and Francine a copy of my Ethics application to review and comment on in terms of research design. It gave them an opportunity to confirm or question my understanding of our previous discussions. Both provided feedback to me over the phone. Apart from two phrasing issues, both were happy with the research design I had drafted and agreed that it reflected all that we had discussed earlier. Francine asked me to verify the ethnicity of the authors of the stories I planned to read to the children. I did that and sent her this information after we spoke together. I also reminded both Sylvia and “grandmother” Francine in the [Ethics application] email that I would be meeting with the protocol officer on Friday meaning there would likely be further changes. I assured them that I would send them an updated copy of the Ethics application to look at before submitting it.

Following our initial contact, each advisor was also sent a formal invitation and asked to formally accept or refuse the invitation via email. I also compensated both advisors for their time and invaluable support with an honorarium in keeping with standard rates established by the school and university.

The Story-Making Research Design as Apparatus

This short section sketches out my research design as an agential apparatus that simultaneously cuts together and apart the agents of my research (Barad, 2014). It articulates how the apparatus was used to assess/measure participant processes and actions. The agentic realist methodological considerations are summarized below:

1. I accounted for what comprised the physical/material apparatus, that is, how the apparatus was setup/arranged, what/who the participating agents were, and what (measurement) tools constituted the setup (Thiel & Jones, 2017).
2. I accounted for the hero/ine's journey story apparatus as a methodological discursive practice and tried to account for, together with other epistemological, ethical, and aesthetic apparatus that intra-acted with the story apparatus during my research project (Lenters & Smith, 2018).
3. I accounted for the management apparatus (intra-active processes) planned to push the story-making phenomena through the physical and discursive apparatuses. In other words, how the story-making was intended to operate (Fenwick & Edwards, 2012; Kaufmann, 2017; Kuby et al., 2019; Murriss, 2019; Stewart, 2013).
4. I accounted for the research apparatus, specifically the processes planned to collect and assess data as a research phenomena intra-acted (diffractively) with the story-making phenomena. That is, I accounted for when and how performative knowledge/data was collected and assessed (M. Sheridan et al., 2020).

The following sections describe, methodologically, the *who*, *when*, *where*, and *whys* of my research project. They are followed by a section on *what* happened and *how* it happened.

PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT: COMMITMENT TO THE JOURNEY

My recruitment strategy used purposeful sampling (Emmel, 2014; Gentles & Vilches, 2017) that selects for urban public schools where Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth are enrolled and educated together. One elementary school in the Western Québec School Board located in Gatineau met my recruitment criteria. The Indigenous students attending this school are typically not local having accompanied their parents to the Outaouais so that their parents can attend an educational institution or receive medical attention. There is a mix of Anishinaabe, Cree, Ojibwa, and Inuit who attend the school. However, Cree are the largest population of First Nations, Inuit and Métis students who attend the school.

In terms of participant recruiting, the school had a preferred research recruitment practice when Indigenous children are involved. The school's recruitment protocol begins with the principal formally inviting teachers in the selected grade range, which for me was Grades 4-6, to identify two students, one Indigenous and one non-Indigenous student who would 1) likely enjoy

being involved in the story-making project and 2) benefit from being involved. Teachers were sent this information by the principal by email. With the help of a teacher facilitator, I arranged a meeting with all prospective participants to tell them about the research project. I also invited the school's Indigenous consultant to come to lend a sense of trustworthiness to the project that I had not yet personally earned. She was known to all the students in the school, was well liked and certainly well respected. I had expected 12 students to show up at the meeting, but double that came. It seemed that there was high student interest in the project and that individual teachers found it hard to say "no" to that interest and allowed many more to come to the meeting.

At this meeting, I introduced myself, described the project, and told them when we would meet and approximately how long the story-making might take. I had not expected the lunch-time meetings to be as problematic as they turned out to be. It seemed that the school had a wide range of vibrant clubs that operated during the lunch break and my project was only one of many. Because I was asking for three lunch periods, many potential participants who had previous commitments to other club groups, withdrew. I was left with 10 interested students as possible participants. I gave those possible, prospective participants an information letter and two consent forms, one a student consent form and the other a parental consent form, to take home. I asked them to discuss the project with their parents and to seek their approval. I further asked them to return both forms, signed, to their home room teacher if they remained interested.

There was a pool of five students who returned the required consent forms. I was informed that two of these students had an antagonistic history which involved their respective parents. So, while I was willing to accommodate a group of five in the story-making project and I was willing to work with these pre-existing tensions, the school advised against it. I complied, and in turn asked their advice for which of the two to select. They gave me a name and I accepted their decision. Of the four multi-cultural participants, one was of Indigenous heritage. I had originally hoped for two + two. Knowing this and aware that I was willing to work with five participants, the facilitator teacher, approached an Indigenous student from her class personally to see if she might want to join the existing group of four participants I already had. In the end she declined.

SURVEYING THE LANDSCAPE: A METHODOLOGICAL OVERVIEW

As a group, four multi-cultural participants (one Indigenous) made a fictional story together using the hero/ine's journey template. The study consisted of each participant assuming a character for their story then role-playing their part in the 12-part story development journey.

The whole story creation process was audio recorded including all their collaborative story discussions, decisions, and story content. However, story decisions were also documented on paper. At the beginning of each story making session, participants reviewed the content of their story from the previous day and analyzed their story decision-making in terms of how their decisions opened and closed possible story paths or character actions. Periodically, I asked them to explain why they made a story decision, but this was less important to my research than having them examine *how* their decisions worked with and within the story-world they were creating. This process allowed participants to practice looking at the relationship that decisions have to the (story) world.

The participants used an making process/method based on maker space techniques of collaboration, reliance on community expertise, and iterative remaking/recrafting (Dougherty, 2012a, 2012b; Litts, 2015; L. Martin, 2015). It was combined with an arts-based research (ABR) method that Leavy (2019c) describes as continuous acts of inquiry followed by acts of analysis to create their story. This ABR method is one she uses as both an artist and a researcher to write her arts-based novels. Similarly, this method allowed participants to develop and expand their knowledge about the subject of their work and to develop some story crafting skills. Participants asked questions of the group and others, often generating data for their story that indirectly linked to Call 63.3 reconciliation concepts of empathy, mutual respect, and intercultural understanding. They assigned meaning to their data through acts of analysis as they collaboratively tried to seek out/figure out answers to their own questions. These acts of inquiry and acts of analysis also mirror the first two stages of Cajete's (1994) *Collected Rings of Indigenous Visioning* (Asking, Seeking, Making, Having, Sharing, Celebrating, Being) as antecedents to the Making ring.

During the story-making, participants engaged in many discussions both on and off topic. I audio recorded this situational data and later transcribed it and made notes. During these discussions, I looked for and noted instances of *intercultural* knowledge-building and appreciation, mutual *respect* in their story negotiation, and *empathy* for each other's personal

situations including historical legacies, all of which are central to TRC Call 63.3. For each instance observed and as a prelude to the diffractive analysis I planned, I noted the context that brought each instance into being or the prompt that specifically elicited it.

Related to all the methods identified here, Springgay and Truman (2018a) identify “(in)tensions” as a conceptual method not tied to any specific methodology but one that can infuse or overlay most methodological procedures propositionally.³⁵ Springgay and Truman (2018a) suggest that “If the intent of inquiry is to create a different world, to ask what kinds of futures are imaginable, then (in)tensions attend to the immersions, tension, friction, anxiety, strain, and quivering unease of doing research differently” (p. 204). As a methodological infusion/overlay/proposition then, methods need to be intentionally and critically attuned to “ethico-political matters and concerns” (p. 204) to make visible the tensions between accepted and marginalized thoughts and practices. I regard the before and after questioning I used, as examples of an intentional and (in)tensional conceptual infusion or overlay even though I designed the questions (*intentionally*) before speaking with participants. Although they may not agree with me on this point, in practical terms, I would argue that the logic of intent supposes purpose and intension presupposes matters that are in tension with one another; intent and often tension do not emerge spontaneously and thus connote elements of planning or forethought associated with the existing tensions. My purpose or intent in planning these questions was to illicit participants thoughts on five concepts that they may not have considered previously, at least not consciously in a sustained manner and probably not in dialog with others. In this sense, I hoped the *intention* of the questions would suggest new ways of thinking for them that were, perhaps, *in-tension* with other more familiar or conventional thought processes. I hoped that a juxtaposition of these thought processes could help them see the nuanced *intensions* of the words and symbols they used in everyday conversations. Further, I hoped that seeing these nuances in their language would help them choose their words (more) carefully, so as to convey intercultural sensitivity, empathy, and mutual respect.

³⁵ The term “intension” should not be confused with the term “intention” because they have very different meanings. Intension is a property connotated by a symbol or linguistic signifier---a metonymy of sorts; intention is the purpose or hoped for goal of a performed action. I respectfully wonder if Springgay and Truman may have confused these, either intentionally or not. It is clear, however, that they play with the word “(in)tension” to convey an idea of critical tension important in their work.

When and Where

Participant recruitment took place during the month of December. Data production began on January 07, 2020, and ended on February 25, 2020, although the participants and I met once again in March for a lunch-time celebration with pizza. We had planned to meet one more time in March, after the school's winter break to record the story as an audio story book but the school closed due to COVID-19, so this final meeting never happened. The research took place in an English-speaking Gatineau school but outside of the classroom at lunch time, three days a week, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. If the school was closed for some reason (PD days) on one of these days and everyone agreed, we met on either the Monday or the Friday to compensate. The rationale behind having meetings three days a week was to allow participants to schedule time away or time to socialize on the research off days. However, two weeks into the data collection, the participants approached me having talked between themselves before hand and asked if we could meet four days a week. They were enthusiastic and seemed eager and happy to be story-making. So, after talking with the principal and getting his ok, I agreed to meet with them four days a week. We added Monday to the schedule. This said, in fact, we only met four times a week once due to school activities or school closures.

As already mentioned, most classrooms were being used at lunch time by students and teachers for their clubs. Because of this, the only private location available for us was a small resource room that served as a teacher library and its much smaller anti-room that served as the caretaker's tool and cloak room. The walls of the innermost room where most of the research took place were lined with books and boxes. There was a large table in the middle of the room. Five chairs just barely fit in the space but with five bodies in those chairs only the people at the end of the table closest to the anti-room could move.

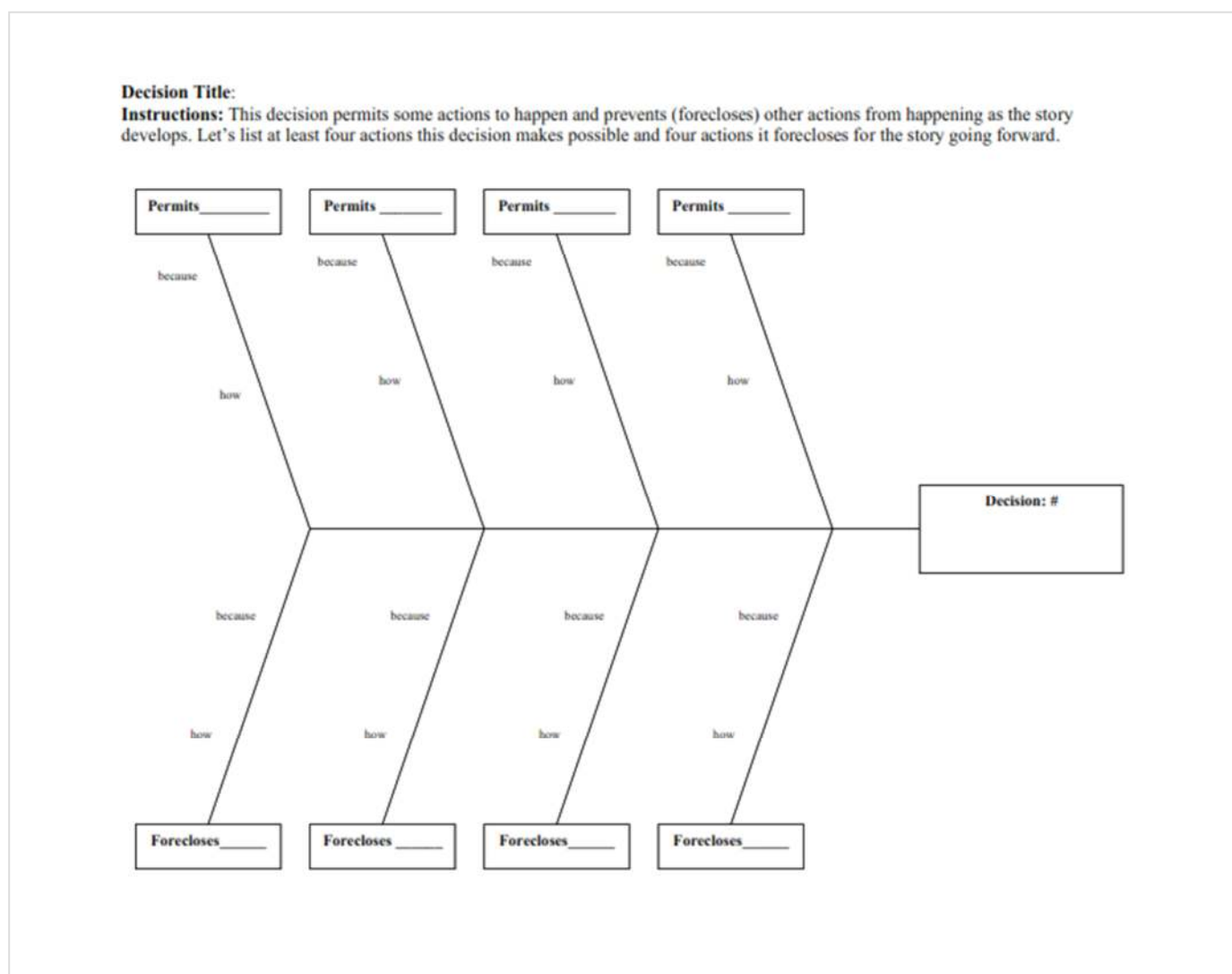
I tried to arrive 15 minutes early to set up my computer and the microphone which the participants called Blue. I would put up the chart of the Hero/ine's Journey as a reference which we used regularly. I would also set out a nutritious lunch which I provided everyday we met. See Figure 2 below.

Figure 2

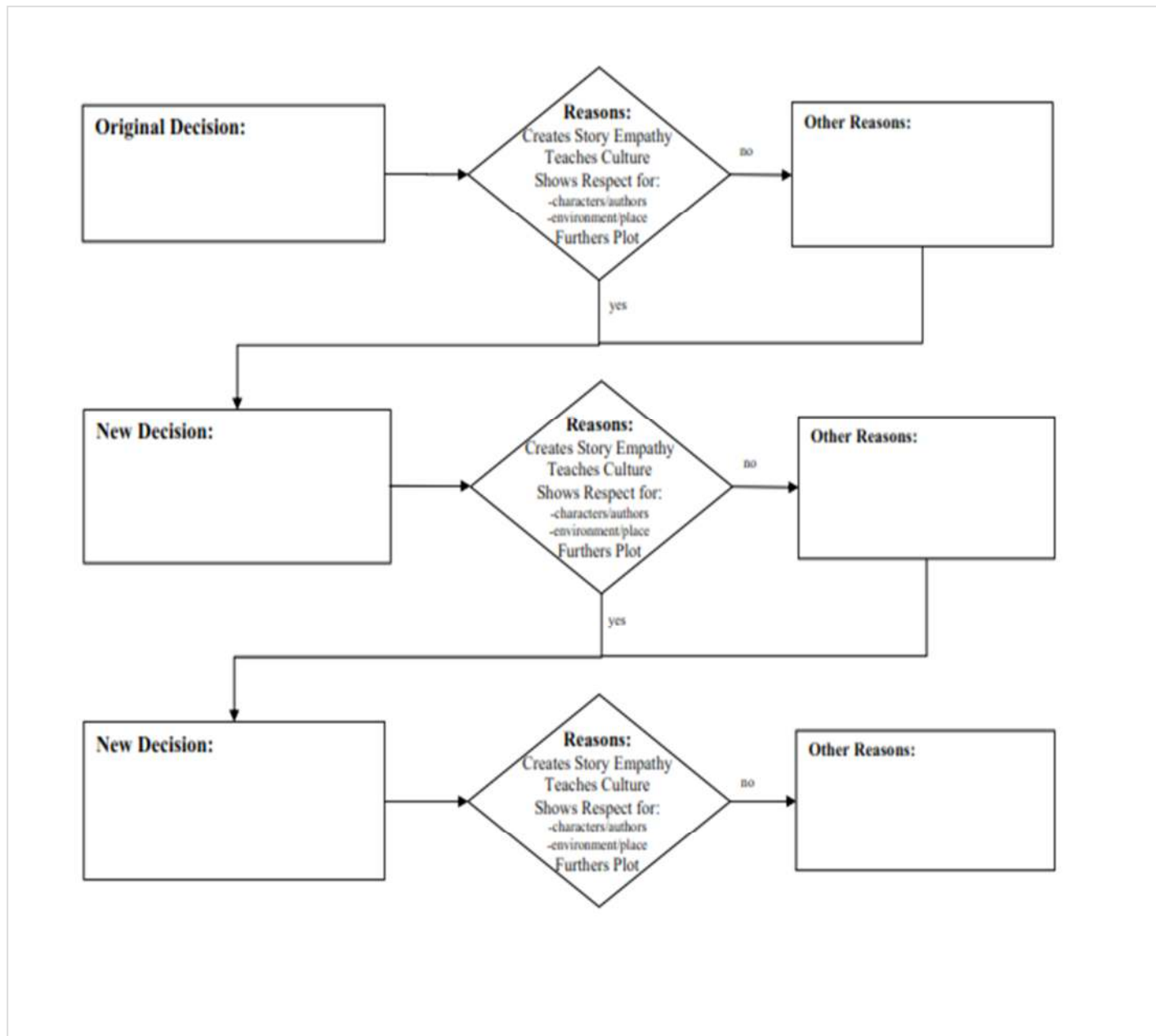
A Photo of Our Room Taken from the Anti-room Showing Computer, Mic, and Lunch



My design, which mixed several data collection methods already discussed, required advance preparation by me. I needed four tools. I needed one to record data specific to story decisions. For this, I chose a fish chart diagram tool based on Latino, Latino, & Latino (2011) root cause analysis work. The fish chart diagram tool (see Figure 3) worked well for recording story decisions and for making participants conscious of how their story decisions allowed some actions to proceed and how it foreclosed others.

Figure 3*The Fish Chart Diagram Template*

I also prepared a flow chart tool (see Figure 4) to record changes participants' decisions. In retrospect, I would not use the flow chart tool again unless it was redesigned. In its current form it was cumbersome to use and had limited application.

Figure 4*Flow Chart Diagram Template*

The third tool was a set of questions I needed for the before and after question interviews. The following same five questions were asked of the four participants as a group at the beginning of the data collection and at the end of the on-site research event. See Figure 5.

Figure 5*Opening and Closing Questions Template*

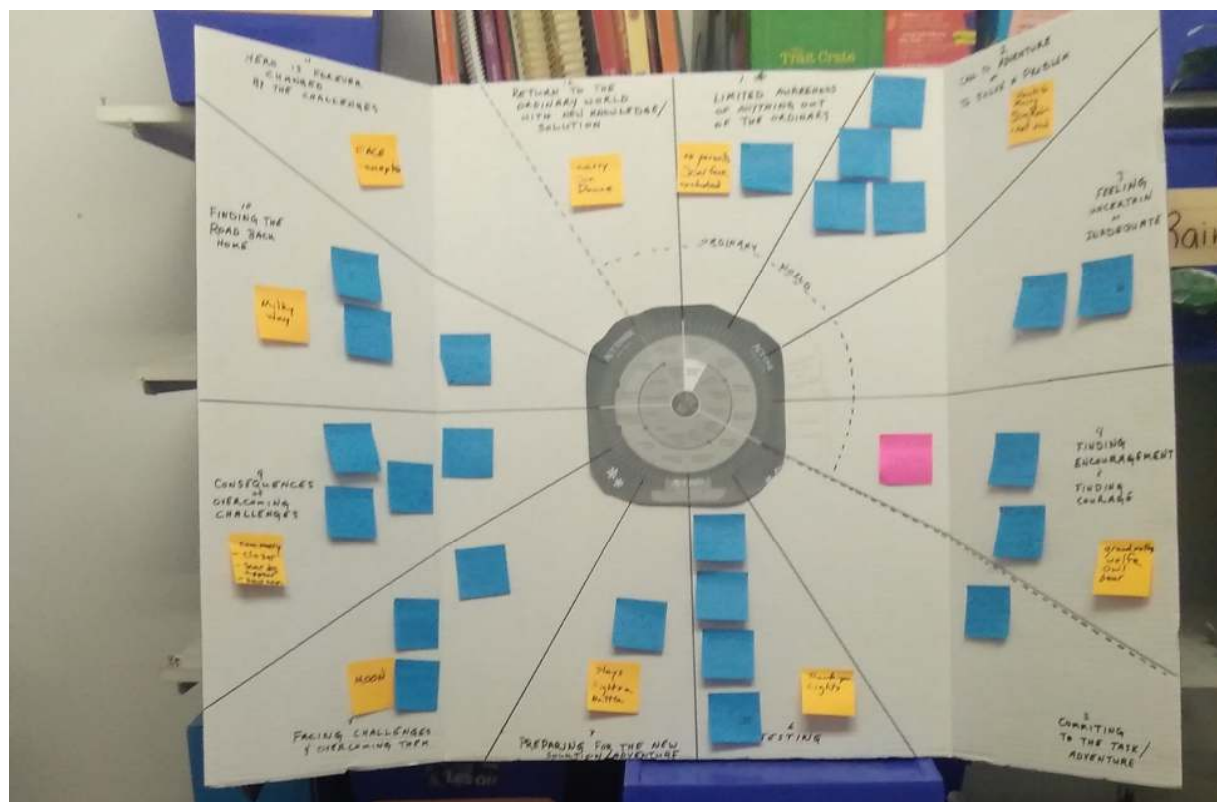
Opening and Closing Discussion Questions	
1.	Can children make important decisions? Why? Why not?
2.	When you meet someone different from you, should you be nice to them? Why? Why not? How would you do that?
3.	Is there is a difference between the decisions that happen in a story and the real-life decisions you make everyday? How are they the same or different?
4.	Can your everyday decisions shape the real world you live in? How? Why?
5.	Do think you can change the world (and make it a better place) by imagining a different one? How? Why?

I also prepared a large chart showing the three acts and the 12 distinct parts of the Hero/ine's Journey story framework. This chart was on display every time we met and provided a reference for the participants. See Figure 6.

Before data collection/production could begin, I also needed to select three stories to read to the participants that modeled the Hero/ine's Journey. They had to be short, and I wanted them to be primarily Indigenous. Two were taken from Indigenous sources: *The land, the storyteller, and the great cauldron of making meaning* told by Spence (2010) and *Scar face* as told by Cajete (2000). The third story was the one that four Grade 3 students had made with me titled *The Missing Bone* (Bonnell et al., 2000). As it turned out, the participants read the *Missing Bone* on their own.

Figure 6

Chart of Hero/ine's Journey Framework



Data Collection What and How

The first few days of data collection are discussed individually as they differ from the ordinary routine of the story-making methodology that soon established itself.

DAY 1: Contextualizing the Story-Making Activity and Reading the First Story

The research began with a group discussion of the five questions. This discussion together with our get-to-know-each-other back and forth, and overview of how I saw the project unfolding took most of the first day. We had time for me to start reading the *Scar Face* story as told by Cajete (2000) to the participants. Before the participants left for the day, I asked them to think about the story character they wanted to be, to give the character a name, to describe her physically and to describe her personality.

DAY 2: Analyzing the Model First Story and Thinking about their Component Parts

On Day 2, I finished reading the *Scar Face* story and together we reviewed the parts of the story I had read on the previous day. Next, I introduced the Hero/ine's Journey concept using the chart

I had prepared. We went on to discuss all the parts of the Hero/ine's Journey and tried to map the *Scar Face* story into each of these parts. We discussed and finally decided on which parts of the *Scar face* story belonged to each part of the Hero/ine's Journey. We used keywords written on Post-It notes to indicate where each part of the *Scar Face* story belonged. Although most North American children are unconsciously familiar with Hero/ine's Journey story format from watching movies, most are not conscious that this kind of story follows a stable progression of events. This task made that link conscious. Participants asked me to read *The Missing Bone* by child authors Bonnell, Ko, Chandan, and Wardle (2000). As we had taken more time to complete the previous exercises than I had anticipated, I offered the participant copies of the book to read on their own instead. Their homework for the day was to read *The Missing Bone* so we could discuss it later. As it turned out, we never did map out this or the *The Land, the Storyteller, and the Great Cauldron of Making Meaning* as told by Spence (2010). The participants didn't seem to need more practice with the Hero/ine's Journey mapping task. Later that day, I asked each of the participants to describe to me and the others in the group a bit about the character they had chosen for themselves. We were introduced to Stephanie, Sage, Navy, and Cedar. I asked if they wanted to give their characters a special power, a special ability, or just an aptitude for something. They didn't seem interested. I asked if they wanted to have a nonhuman character in their story, perhaps an animal. They decided that each of them would have a dog as a companion (so four dogs), but they never picked up on this thread as they were developing their story. Character discussions led to a preliminary discussion about the storyline they wanted to pursue for their own story. To that end, I asked them to think of a situation, a problem, or a mystery that captured their collective interest and which, at this point, did not have a predictable outcome.

DAY 3: Introducing the Practice of Cutting Together-Apart as Story Decisions

This day began with a brief discussion of how each story character's character would make some actions credible or even possible and how it would also limit them in doing other actions. For example, a shy character might not want to draw attention to herself with people she did not know but could be quite talkative with her close friends. The context would limit or allow specific action for this character. This led to a brief process discussion about the decision-point analysis exercise we would be doing on a daily basis. I explained that I would ask participants to assess specific story decisions of the day before for how they furthered and limited the story's unfolding, similar to how context for the shy character made some actions possible and others

not possible. Next, with the purpose of fleshing out the storyline for their story-making, participants discussed a number of possible scenarios they could develop, then worked on the story opening by bouncing ideas off of each other.

DAY 3.5/4 - 25: The Working Process

When story-making began in earnest, each participant, embodying his/her/their character often physically acted out her part (although this was limited by our space restrictions). This said, they always spoke out interactions with the other characters to investigate story ideas and push their plot forward. Participants used story discussions to exchange ideas about what was credible based on their own life experiences. These discussions always combined elements of seriousness and playfulness. They produced opportunities for peer-to-peer training beginning with acts of inquiry into specific aspects of their real world followed by an analysis of those specifics. Finally, they used their inquiry and analysis to generate of knowledge—data, for both personal and story use. They seemed to use these inquiry-analysis discussions to also find out and share personal information about members of the group.

After the inquiry-analysis discussion and role-play, when they collectively decided on a specific interaction or dialog, one of the four, audio recorded that story piece as a separate story file on a tablet I provided for this purpose. There were technical difficulties on some days (we never figured out why) that prevented them from audially recording their story. On those days, one of the four would take turns typing the story into a file on the tablet. The session microphone, Blue, connected to my laptop also captured the story recordings for research continuity, but only the story was recorded/typed on the tablet. For the most part, participants took turns recording the chunks of their story as it developed. Every night, I transcribed the audio recordings they made that day into text and added it to a master story file.

This process continued until the participants completed their story. Starting on Day 4, each day began with an assessment discussion of the story decisions of the previous day. Often this entailed me or a participant reading the transcription of what they had crafted the day before. This also served to refresh participants' memory about where they had left and where they now had to begin. Participants looked at the story decisions they had made and discussed what impact their decisions had on possible story actions or story paths.

DAY 26: Celebrations

In early March, the participants and I met to celebrate the completion of the story. I brought

pizza for us to enjoy together. During our lunch, I provided an electronic copy of the completed story to each author on a heart-shaped memory stick.

Figure 7

Heart-shaped Memory Stick Pendant



At that time, I asked the students who were in the teacher facilitator's home room class to deliver a copy of Campbell's (1949) *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, a book she had once told me she wanted to read for some years.

The participants also presented me with two cards that day.

Figure 8

Grade 5 Thank You Note

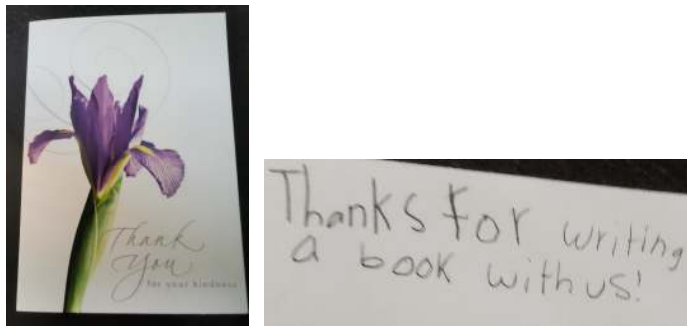


Figure 9

Grade 6 Thank You Note



Later that week, I returned to the school to say thank you to some of the staff and the principal who had been particularly supportive and helpful during my research activities at the

school. In appreciation, I also dropped off Amazon gift cards to the principal's office which I had purchased for the school at large and for the principal to distribute/use as he saw fit. I too, was given a gift, possibly the most unforgettable of the whole project. I ran into two of the participants in the hall that day on my out and I was immediately greeted with hugs and warm wishes.

Analysis Methodologies

I applied several analysis methodologies in my study to examine the story as a hero/ine's learning journey and as a fiction participants created, and to examine the processes they used to make it. The methodologies I use for my analysis include two arts-based approaches, one ABR-related research-creation/cartographic approach, a two-pronged, socio-cognitive and social actor, CDA approach, and a posthumanist diffractive approach. The latter is focused on the impact of differences, perturbations, and exclusions and the effects of making as tinkering, peer teaching, collaboration, non-competitiveness.

It is probably not a typical practice to integrate this many methodological and theoretical frameworks in a single research inquiry, but much less so to integrate qualitative frameworks with a primarily posthumanist one. The purpose of including such a variety is two-fold. First, I wanted the benefit of a diffractive reading of each through the others. Each framework provided a perspective of the story and set in motion a line of thinking that could then be read with another perspectival line of thinking, and so on. For me, this created a diffractive bonanza. I never once saw a tension between these perspectives that I felt I needed to resolve. My view was that each perspective added something to the research in much the same way that each of senses adds something to the experience of a walk.

Second, a story-making activity leaves behind a story and a story is material as LeGuin (1986) suggests and as Barad's (2012a) more directly discusses as material-discursive apparatuses. According to Dolphijn and VanderTuin (2012) "[n]ew materialism shows how the mind is always already material (the mind is an idea of the body)" and by extension, how the things the mind creates, such as stories, are also material" (np). It not only lives through interactions with readers and listeners, but it also lives in a dormant state most of its life as an object of immanent becoming waiting unchanged indefinitely for the next reader or listener. That dormant state does not negate the story's material vitality, but even new materialism, a branch of posthumanism, cannot adequately account for the immanent power in just this material configuration of words. I looked to other frameworks to understand this. CDA attempts to critically account for this

configuration of words, ABR tries to account for them artistically, while hero/ine's journey story arch attempts to account for them in a structural literary and pedagogical way.

ABR Analysis Methodologies

I begin with Leavy (2016, 2019a), then follow with Norris (2011) and Springgay and Truman (2018b). Using Leavy's (2016) approach, I analyze the story for resonance, audience accessible, imaginative engagement, aesthetics, structure and design, empathetic engagement, signature telling, and sensitive portrayals. In a chapter titled *Criteria for Evaluating Arts-based Research*, Leavy (2019a) outlines her seven criteria for evaluating academic arts-based research. The following list of criteria includes a summary of the guiding statements/questions she suggests be used for their analysis:

1. Methodology: Is a strong methodology provided and does it have precedence?
2. Usefulness, significance, or substantive contribution: "Does the work resonate? Does it ring true? Does it feel authentic" (p. 580)?
3. Public scholarship: "Have non-academic stakeholders [and audience] been involved..." (p. 580)?
4. Audience response: "The art has to be 'good' in order to evoke the desired response in audience members that promotes the real-world effect you intend...must get at the heart of the issue and present that 'truth'" (p. 581). Does it?
5. Aesthetics or artfulness: "Can the work be interpreted in more than one way? Does the work invite individuals to engage with it imaginatively?" (p. 581).
6. Personal fingerprint or creativity: Does the work have the single unique voice or style?
7. Ethical practice: "Do [characters] have depth?" and are they presented in a manner that is "culturally sensitive, so that we don't colonize those we aim to portray" (p. 582)?

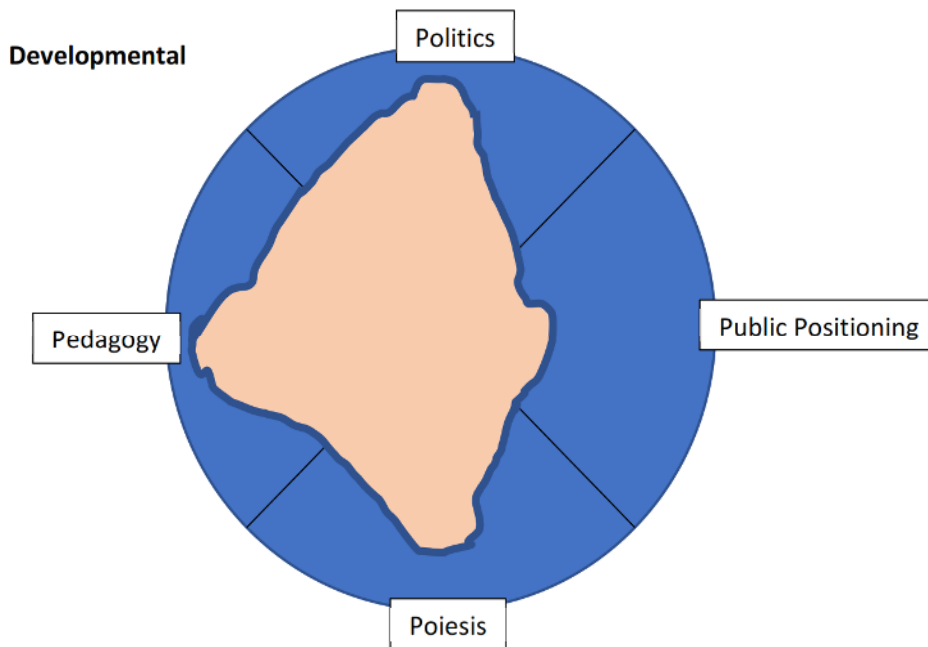
Using Norris' (2011) Four Ps approach I assess the story from four different positions on a four-quadrant wheel representing politics, public positioning, poiesis, and pedagogy. In his article titled *Towards the Use of the 'Great Wheel' as a Model in Determining the Quality and Merit of Arts-based Projects*, Norris (2011) outlines criteria for evaluating academic, as well as non-academic arts-based projects.

The Four Ps analysis starts with an assessment of the art in question, in this case the participants' story, from four different perspectives, politics, public positioning, poiesis, and

pedagogy. The assessment is graphically located as four points on a four-quadrant wheel, then the points are joined to form a single plane. The further the plane extends into each quadrant from the middle indicates the degree of influence it exerts on the artwork. According to Norris, determining where the story is in each quadrant depends on the perspective from which it is being viewed. Public Positioning plays an important part in this determination, and so the researcher must first ask, for what kind of audience was the art intended: private, personal, or public. For example, the poiesis (artistry) of a private or personal piece of art cannot be judged using the same criteria as a novel published in the public domain, nor can public art be evaluated for its pedagogical value in the same terms as private or personal creations. This method of analysis has two types of Politics. The first is what we ordinarily think of when we consider the *critical* aspects of an event or situation. The second is the politics of the art form, such as the hero/ine's journey and the constraints it imposes on the art-makers. The following is an example of a graphic that might be produced using Norris's analysis methodology.

Figure 10

Sample Graphic Produced Using Norris's Analysis Methodology



With Springgay and Truman's (2018b) research-creation analysis methods in mind, I take up a cartographic analysis method that was first used by Deleuze and Guattari (1987). A cartographic methodology examines, in this case, a piece of art, not by its content, but by its connection to other things/beings. It charts the answers to the following questions in graphic form (See Figure 14 for an example):

1. What does the art function with?
2. What connections intensify the arts presence as a differential force and intensify how broadly and quickly the art becomes known?
3. Into what systems does the art insert itself and how are those systems changed by it?
4. With what systems does the art converge and how is the artefact changed?

I analyze the story artefact by assessing how the story the participants' made connects with other objects, people, or systems and how it affects and is affected by them.

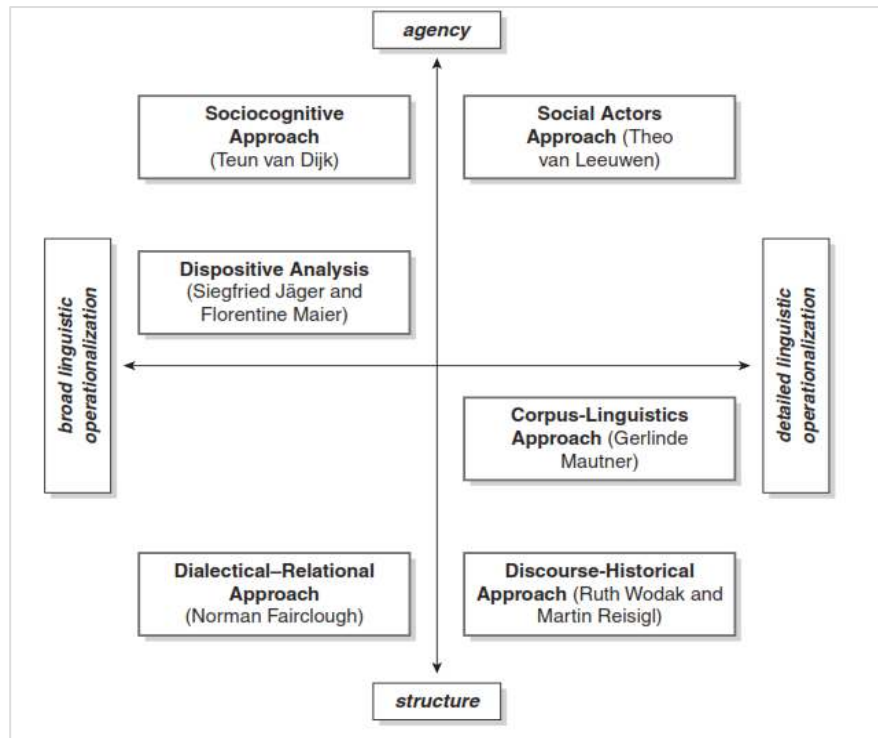
CDA Analysis Methodologies

I use two CDA approaches. The first is a socio-cognitive CDA analysis methodology used to examine the dialogic currency and the agency of words. With this methodology, language and word choices, and rhetorical inclusions and exclusions based on learned social behaviour are examined for their effects on a reader's or listener's thinking and the text (van Dijk, 1996). The second is a social actor CDA analysis methodology. This analysis method attends to the agency of individuals, things, and situations to affect the interpretation of texts and social situations, or in critical posthumanist terms, the material affects and agency of actors and systems (Scollon, 1976, 2001; Scollon & Scollon, 2004).

While there is always overlap between CDA ways of doing analysis, my analysis distinguishes between them using the axis lines drawn in the matrix in Figure 11. The matrix indicates that both these CDA approaches focus on an agential, rather than a systemic analysis. However, both analytic approaches are operationalized differently. A socio-cognitive analysis is sensitive, broadly speaking, to education and culture while a social actor analysis is more sensitive to the personalities and the specific contexts surrounding the text.

Figure 11

CDA Approaches Matrix (Wodak & Meyer, 2008, p. 22)



Using a socio-cognitive methodology to analyze the story artefact, I asked the following questions:

- How are contexts of perception foregrounded (Wittgenstein, 1968)?
- How does genre (hero/ine's journey) socially construct the artefact's discourse (Van Dijk, 1980)?
- What assumptions does the discourse make about what the reader or listener brings to the text to make meaning (Kwon, Clark, & Wodak, 2014; Shi-xu, 2014)?
- What discourses, signs, and metaphors are taken-for-granted (Hart, 2008; Hart & Lukes, 2007)?
- What are the unstated but assumed aspects of discourse (jellybeans are candy) and what are the accepted semiotic over-significations (green means eco-friendly)?

Using a social actor methodology to analyze the story artefact, I asked the following questions:

- What role, identity, and agency does the artefact enact within the social and cultural contexts of the school (Wodak & Meyer, 2008)?

- What are the contexts of social practice in which human actors, as well as the artefact interact with or are resisted within the social network of school (Scollon & Scollon, 2004)?
- How does the artefact enact a more balanced power distribution between learner and teacher (Kress, 2012)?
- How does an education problem-based engagement (hero/ine's story template) with familiar situations and language provide students with context, skill practice, and role playing opportunities (Gee, 2012)?

Posthumanist Analysis Methodologies

In general terms, my posthumanist analysis of the story-making processes, and to some extent of the story itself, uses a diffractive methodology. This methodology attends to how differences interact/intra-act with each other. I do this by analyzing the diffractive patterns (not patterns of sameness or similarity) produced by differences converging (Barad, 2014).³⁶ I first analyze the different components (people, template, school, and otherwise) that made up our group and which in, a single act of “cutting together-apart”, brought us together and separated us as a body from everything else (Barad, 2014b, p. 168). I use this to analyze the porous boundary formations created by the research apparatus/assembly and the impact these had on the research.

In a similar way, I also analyze the “story decisions” the participants made as a set of exclusions that built different stories and contexts for transformation and reconciliation. I continue by analyzing the diffractive impact that other unexpected forces (people, ideas, venue, etc.) had on our assemblage using the iterative story decision records to help me show the transformational impact that each of these unexpected forces had on us (Latino, Latino, & Latino, 2011).

Related to participants' story decisions and story worlding, I analyze how participants regard their individual or collective imagination as a future generating vehicle capable to enabling/rendering social change. I do this, in part, by examining the story world as a diffractive speculation and analyzing the differences between current realities and their imagined reality that

³⁶ “Diffraction/intra-action – cutting together-apart (one move) in the (re)configuring of spacetime-mattering; differencing/differing/ diffe' rancing” (Barad, 2014b, p. 168).

resonated as possible (Haraway, 2016b). In terms of collective making, my posthumanist diffractive methodology centred on an analysis of the group's collaborative ability to imagine, not four separate individual story worlds, but a common story and world, and what that said about consensus building and respecting personal boundaries.

In the context of boundaries, I analyze our group's sensitivity to change and our ethical responses to changes in the form of autopoiesis, then perturbations, and finally re-stabilization of the story-making apparatus (Barad, 2012a; Deleuze, 1994; Hayles, 1991; Lorenz, 1993; Manning, 2012a; Mitra, 2014; Prigogine & Stengers, 1984). I evaluate the ethical fitness of our assemblage as a performance and accountable praxis that marks matter that matters and identifies for whom these matters matter (Barad, 2003a, 2012a; Butler, 1990; Kuby & Christ, 2020).

A diffractive method also allows me examine the pedagogical forces at play in our group that typically are not present in a Language Arts classroom (Barton et al., 2018; Lemieux, 2021a; Lemieux & Lacelle, 2017; Lemieux & Rowsell, 2020b). This extends to a differential analysis between how participants saw themselves as collaborators, decisionmakers, peer instructors, and imagineers³⁷ in our group, but as less agential "students" in the classroom. I looked at the potential impact this differential could have on participants developing an on-going praxis of empathy, mutual respect, and intercultural understanding (Barad, 2007; de Freitas, 2017; Mazzei, 2014; Rosiek, 2018).

To summarize, I draw on three broad analytical methodologies, ABR, CDA, and diffraction, and specific articulations of these, to provide a multi-perspectival analysis.

³⁷ Rosiek, 2018

CHAPTER 4: DATA CREATION/PRODUCTION AND DATA COLLECTION

A charge passes through the body and lingers for a little while as an irritation, confusion, judgement, thrill, or musing. However it strikes us, its significance jumps. Its visceral force keys a search to make sense of it, to incorporate it into an order of meaning. But it lives first as an actual charge immanent to acts and scene—a relay.

—(Stewart, 2007, p. 39)

There is no difference between what a book talks about and how it is made. Therefore a book also has no object. As an assemblage, a book has only itself, in connection with other assemblages and in relation to other bodies without organs.

—(Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 4)

This chapter has two parts. In the first part, I open and close with a discussion about the answers to the five before and after questions. Between these book ends, I discuss the most significant data points of the story-making and reconciliation processes. In the second part of the chapter, I present the story the children made, called *The wHole Story Surrounding a Mysterious Hole in the Floor*, in its entirety, as data.

Remembering that *The wHole Story Surrounding a Mysterious Hole in the Floor* is just one of the hero/ine's journey stories unfolding in this thesis, it may be necessary in this chapter to take stock of, developmentally, of where all these stories are at. For example, in this chapter, the *story* that four Grade 5/6 youth made together is complete. The *story* of their making it and any reconciliation lessons learned directly from their story-making, are also complete. The thesis research *story* involving their *story* and its making is in its middle. My doctoral *story* composed of the research *story* and all the *embedded stories embodied* in this thesis are also still unfolding.

To understanding the participants' story of their story-making process in the context of the hero/ine's journey 12 stages, their actual story-making constituted the *Ordeal* stage. The second part of the chapter, where I present the story that participants made should be understood as the participants' knowledge production or *Reward* stage that ends Act 2. The answers to, and their reflections on the closing questions constitute their formal journey through Act 3, specifically through the *The Road Back* stage where they considered the implications and consequences of their story-making for reconciliation. The answers to some ad hoc and less-structured questions I posed regarding an absent participant served inadvertently as a final test of the reconciliation lessons learned, (*Resurrection* stage). It also suggested that they were ready to *Return* to the community with their new-found knowledge/*elixir* of intercultural understanding, empathy, and mutual respect.

It is probably worth repeating that the nomenclature I use to distinguish the participant from the character she plays in the story is as follows: The story character name is written in plain text when I refer to something the character says, while the participant's pseudonym, who is also the person playing the character, is italicized. *Sage*, for example, refers to the participant who plays the part of Sage in the story. While this may be confusing initially, in the long run, this nomenclature maintains the connection between each participant and her story character in my discussion.

Opening Discussion Questions

The opening questions and the participants' answers are given here verbatim, as will be the closing questions later. I use their character names to identify them and if any of the participants mention the name of another participant, I replace the participant's real names with her character name. The purpose of using before and after questions was to look for over-arching differences in participant attitudes, complex idea articulation, and views over the course of the project. For this reason, I felt it necessary to present the full three-pages of the opening questions transcript here so that it can be easily compared to the closing questions transcript.

I ask you to notice, the rather formal turn-taking of the participants and their rather awkward ability to articulate what seemed to me to be very sensitive and insightful responses. It also seemed to me that the participants had thought about the ideas involved in my questions on other occasions, but perhaps, had never spoken about them out loud or with another.

Question 1: Can children make important decisions? Why? Why not?

Sage: Children should because children can be trapped in their own mind, and they can't wait until they're older to change something that happened before.

Cedar: Children can make their own decisions because sometimes say, children like to wander around and [suppose] they see somebody that needs help, so what if they can't help. They go find an adult And so they ask for help. So maybe the adult will call somebody, or they would go and help out the person.

Navy: Honestly, I think children should make decisions because of sometimes a situation does need a child, like sometimes if is going on, like there was something happening on the street and the child was the only one there and then somebody else is getting hurt or something

then the child is like the only person that can actually talk. So, children can make a decision to tell what happened was this. So, they're kind of there to also make that decision.

Stephanie: It's how they shape their reputation, and their reputation goes on with their whole life. In business we won't behave—can't be a good person good businessperson if we don't make important decision as children.

Question 2: When you meet someone different from you, should you be nice to them? Why? Why not? How would you do that?

Sage: You should because even though someone's different they're still a person and they still have, like, the exact same mental space as you do. So, say I went up to one of my friends said that they're different and I don't want to be friends with them. If someone did that to me, I'd feel hurt and if someone did that to anyone else, they'd feel hurt.

Stephanie: If you think they're different, they're gonna think the same about you. You're different to them and if you just treat them bad, they will treat you bad too.

Navy: Well, it's basically like I—it's kind of the same as [Sage]'s—like if you tell someone like “Oh you you're different. I don't really like the different you” or something, then that kind of hurts that person because maybe they did want to change a little bit so then they're thinking “Oh well this person doesn't like how I changed” and that's rude and then that just cause fights.

Cedar: Hum, well first of all, you should actually treat people how they want to be treated and then second of all I don't get why really people would do that to other people because well.... It's because you...it's like you... so 'cause... if somebody did that to you you wouldn't like it so. Then if you also did that to somebody else then you already know how it feels like be hurting that way and whenever like a... 'cause... then it can keep on going on because maybe that person felt like really hurt by that comment you said about them. Maybe they'll say [something unkind] to somebody else when somebody says hi to them. They'll probably say the same thing then I'll keep on going and going and going.

Sage: I have another thing to add. Say you don't like someone 'cause they have a different ethnicity or race than you. That's just being the worst person. Like that's how people [come to] feel unconfident about yourself and feel insecure.

Question 3: Is there is a difference between the decisions that happen in a story and the real-life decisions you make everyday? How are they the same or different?

Sage: It depends on the story. If it's a realistic story everything is possible. People could treat people different ways. In stories there can be realities for some people.

Stephanie: I would like to say that when you read a story if the decisions that happened in a story are like what happens in your life... well it depends on what type of story.

Navy: Yeah, basically that and I mean like for some stories like I couldn't relate to what happened to people. Like in class, we would read a book and then at the end like say "Oh this relates to what happens with you or it reminds you of what" ... and then we would just like...right... it reminds us of this because in the book there is a point that it was the same point that you had in your life.

Cedar: Yeah. Like it does depend on what kind of story it is. So, like uh I can't really think... yeah [a story where] people make fun of people for their race. Do people accept that and walk away, or do they stick up for themselves say? So maybe it's like race and like in the book you get to a point where you can relate to somebody what somebody says. Or yeah, like somebody's decision on somebody else's race. So, like say somebody made a decision and maybe you've gone through that too. So, if it was true then we should probably stop doing that because you know how it can feel and how it effects [people].

Question 4: Can your everyday decisions shape the real world you live in? How? Why?

Sage: Everyone makes a decision every day and that changes who they are. For me, I could make a decision to be friends with someone but that friend could change it. So, you make a decision to join a club that could make you better at something. So, every decision you make, changes you even the littlest bit. Say someone asks if you want to read a book. You mainly learn a new word and that changes you, you know. Your everyday decisions shape the real world you live in so has the decision to come here.

Cedar: Like, well, say you heard somebody talking down about their self. I feel like it really does make a difference if you actually, like, tell them that they did a good job, or you shouldn't do that because, well, they're loved. Yeah 'cause maybe they're thinking that they weren't loved. Well, is kind of complicated to explain.

Stephanie: So, let's say someone doesn't like to recycle, so someone else takes the garbage off the ground and they do that every day. Then I change the world.

Navy: The thing is that sometimes it's good. Sometimes it is not like when we get told "no" [because] it would have led to something bad. Yeah, and also you're learning something new like if you got an answer or something and then they say no or something like that. ...If you ever get in trouble and you get in trouble then you'll know never to do it again.

Cedar: Hey, I don't think so. No, I was thinking... So, say it wasn't your turn to put away the dishes and it was somebody else turn. [Rebuttal stops and opinion starts] It's like you know how your parents are always there for you like when you are about to take your first step. Like when you were a little baby, you start to give up and think that you really can't do it but then you know how your parents always are like happy and like excited to see you, so you take your first step. Then if you fall down, they would come in 'cause they would always be there and to help you do other things you go through. So then, it's kind of like if you make a decision but then it's like when you fall down as a baby your parents or somebody else is always there to like lift you up and help you through things that you go through or the decisions you make.

Question 5: Do think you can change the world (and make it a better place) by imagining a different one? How? Why?

Sage: Again, you can change the world by imagining something new. Say imagine a new product that could help clean up all the garbage in this world. It could be a revolution and it probably would be able to get better over time which would change the world. It's the same as like making something you like. If you ended up being a doctor and you ended up finding a cure or something, then that basically change [by imagining a different world].

Navy: I'm just gonna go on with the doctor thing, so basically, you know how we can say that you're dreaming about being a doctor someday and you find a cure for something but even if you're older and you actually end up finding a cure for something. You can make a new world by thinking yourself 'cause then one day it might actually happen.

Cedar: Hey, well actually, um, somebody's decision actually did change the world because you know the four-ocean thing. These two guys they started off with something small 'cause whenever they went surfboarding, they saw all the garbage, like all the pollution, that was on like the shore. So then, it was just two guys who actually started picking up all the garbage and

throwing it out. After that, because it started off so small, just 2 people cleaning up a whole beach day after that day ... many people came and helped them.

Stephanie: If you have a great imagination, you could be like a scientist who would invent a cure. So yes.

Making Processes of the Yet Unknown Story: A Worlding (Making the Story Data)

In this section, I describe the story setting, the story characters, and the story plot, but more importantly, how the participants worked these out. I put no limitations on what kind of story the participants could make. My only rule, if you could call it that, was that whatever the story was or however the story branched because of their story decisions, it had to be believable in the story world where it was situated.

Setting

The story world the participants created was situated in their own school. As Kress (2012, 2015) suggests, setting influences the linguistic modalities a story employs. The story the participants made supported this claim. Events and happenings in this story were often centred on school events, such as detentions, and were based on actual school protocols. The ways and culture of this school, a literacy that students and teachers alike were familiar with, was the primary modality these participants used. It served as a baseline or touchstone for what could be understood by listeners and readers as normal, acceptable discourse, or unusual behaviors (Martens et al., 2018). The authors not only used this modality in their story making but also in their role-playing as story characters. In the detention room, for example, each character is tasked by the teacher to writing about why they got a detention. When the participants discussed this, they come up with reasons that seemed credible for both the character and for their school modality. They discarded those that weren't. See the following extract from this discussion on Day 3:

Sage: [to all] We were all put into a group, and we weren't doing our work so...

Navy: [to all] I could be reading a book off topic...

Sage: [to Navy] Say we're doing a test and I'm on my Phone and you're cheating.

Navy: [to Sage] No 'cause mine [referring to her character] is kind of like an innocent girl so I can be like reading since I really like to read or writing in my notepad

Even though the dominant modality in this story and its story-making was a school-based one, individual, cultural, and stereotypical modalities sometimes made an appearance, if not in the story, in participant discussions. One such appearance was expressed by the two Grade 5 students, one East Indian and the other Cree, both of whom were not permitted by family to carry a phone to school. They questioned the assumption that *everyone* carries two phones around with them. Carrying two phones, however, was true for the participant *Sage*, a Grade 6 student who produced two of them on the spot.

Cedar: [to *Sage*] “What do you mean you have an extra phone on you?... How is that possible? Since when?”

Sage: [to everyone in character] Doesn’t everyone do that?

Stephanie: [to everyone] It rarely happens. (Day 3)

This excerpt also shows how a participant used her character as a place of safety when asked to justify something that fell outside of their modality norms (Gabriel & Connell, 2010). *Sage* deflected *Cedar*’s direct questions by assuming the role of her character, indicated by a change in voice, to give her answer. It appeared that *Navy* understood why *Sage* carried two phones, but the reason why was never shared with the group. Further, *Navy* seemed unperturbed by the fact that *Sage* carried two phones and that she did not carry one; it was simply *Sage*’s normal.

However, the most striking example of a non-school modality they used in their story was one they held in common regarding affluence and in my opinion, an unrealistic sense of what it meant to be wealthy. Even though *Sage* had two phones and did appear to be more well off than the other participants, she did not come from a wealthy family. Her character, *Sage*, however, did. *Sage*, the character, lived in a mansion with an older brother, her parents, and a dog named Rudolf. Because her parents were seldom home, the family had a butler and a cook who looked after the children. *Sage* also had jewelry. Not only does *Sage* play the part of the “rich kid”, but the other characters play off of what seemed to be a shared imaginary about wealth. For example, when participants are thinking their story should have a planning sleep-over on Day 5, *Navy* asks: “We would go to whose house?”

Sage: Mine.

Cedar: So, we go to your house 'cause apparently you didn't wanna sleep in ours because you're the typical rich kid.

Sage: [in character] It's not sanitary enough. My maid will clean the rooms. We will have separate rooms.

Cedar: You could have like like 5 showers.

Sage: [in character] You all can sleep in separate beds and my maid will clean it the next morning.

A little later on, *Navy* spins a possible storyline with this imagined affluent modality:

We'll all go up to Sage's room and then you [Sage] ... would be like "Make sure to sanitize your hands first before coming in my room" and everything. And then she's like "At the same time you should really actually take a shower or bath or something."

In their affluent imaginary, rich people were very clean, lived large, had ostentatious shows of wealth, were professionals (ex. lawyer), spoke like *their* normal was everyone's normal, had servants, and didn't spend a lot of time with their kids. Finding it very interesting to observe how this imaginary was shared, inscribed, and used to carry the plot, I never asked participants to explain how they came by these notions or why they thought them real for fear of polluting the unfolding of this imaginary. I came to suspect, however, that they were based on stereotypical TV portrayals of wealth for two reasons. First, they all told me they watched a lot of TV, and second, when they didn't have firsthand experience, they would use TV constructs or personas to make sense of an event or person. For example, having no real idea of what a researcher was like, the two Grade 6's who watched *Grey's Anatomy* regularly, mentioned once that I was like the character, Meredith Grey. I asked what made them think that and they answered it was because I dressed like her.

Heroine Characters

The participants' chosen characters closely resembled the four individuals making the story, or people they knew. Some of the characters had fictional embellishments, as with Sage being the "rich kid." The four main characters/heroines are self-described as follows:

Navy

My personality is with the age ranges like 13 to 17. OK14. Um my description... She is sometimes mean but like as in like demanding. Shy but usually tired. She likes to write, and she reads a lot of books, and she usually walks around with a book. So, she would have black hair green eyes, usually wears dark clothing, sometimes sometimes a little mean again as in demanding. She likes to read books, so she carries around a

book in her pocket. She keeps a journal in her coat pocket as well. She is white and she's again usually sleepy. And she's like a nerd, kind of like smart. Whenever she talks...whenever she like says something in class she says it in a low voice but whenever she's with her friends she's very talkative.

Cedar: ... like like really *Stephanie*! (Day 2)

Stephanie

Stephanie is nice, ...cheerful...kind...

Cedar: ...Like I need a pencil she's just like I got you bro.

Me: So, what else?

Stephanie: Smart, cheerful, kind, helpful

Cedar: Is she though? Just kidding, just kidding.

Stephanie: She's 13...funny

Cedar: Hyper?

Stephanie: Yeah [said in a fanciful way, like she was trying on the idea].

Sage: What does she look like?

Stephanie: She's got long blonde/brown hair... She wears glasses.

Cedar: I wear glasses and I always forget them all the time.

Stephanie: She likes to do art.

Cedar: That's just a copy of me.

Stephanie: She wears bright clothing. ...She likes to play video games. (Day 2)

Cedar

Cedar: Is it, is it OK if I name my character Tobacco?

Me: Whatever you want...

Cedar: I'll be named after medicine. OK, yeah, [excited by a new idea] my name can be Cedar. ... I will be 14. She is funny, protective, strong, likes art, is hyper. She likes animals. A wolf, that's my favorite animal. And she likes nature and the colour blue. She likes to embrace her culture.... (Day 2)

Sage

My name is Sage. OK. I made a last name just in case we needed one. ...1st her last name is Magnolia. Her personality is sassy, kind, fierce, outgoing, outstanding, smart, interesting (as in curious), careful, and calm and strong mentally. Black hair and freckles, ripped jeans. Her race is White. Her favourite colour is teal. She has a dog, and his name is Rudolf. (Day 2)

Other Characters

The non-heroine characters were only loosely based on actual people. These included the characters of the principal, their parents, Annie, and Logan/Sam, the boy the heroines help.

The Principal, Mr. Davidson

The character of the principal did not seem to be based on anyone concrete which might explain how participants were able to reconceptualize the character of the principle and bend it into any shape they wanted.

Parents

Participants didn't seem to have a relationship with their parents where they could talk about risky or not-expected behaviours. As a group, they did not appear to have well-formed ideas about adults' concern and motivations for children. While, only one participant, confided that she didn't like her mother, it seemed to me that, except for the Cree participant, all saw parents as problematic and not as people they could rely on. At one point in the story-making when the hero/ine's journey story template required them to seek advice from a trusted other, none of them chose a parent. They chose instead, a brother, an uncle, an aunt, and a grandfather.

Grandmother Kookum Annie

Kookum Annie is an Indigenous Elder character in the participants' story. She was loosely based on an older Indigenous woman *Annie* who came to the school to speak to students on occasion. *Annie* was familiar to the children of the school. She was respected and considered kind and wise. Kookum Annie, the character, was strongly based on the Indigenous participant's personal experience with her own grandparents and Elders she knew.

Logan (who started out as Tom)

The character of the teenage boy the heroines helped, seemed to be a composite based on fantasy and hope. In one way, he embodied the growing pains the participants were starting to experience in terms of self-direction, career ideas, and dealing with authority figures. In another

way, he was what the participants, as young female, almost adolescents, imagined a boy that they could be friends with would be like and what his physical appearance might be.

At first, the participants had fun with this character. “Poop” was on their mind that day, so Tom/Logan who didn’t have a name at this point was a pooppy brown caricature with a nondescript personality. He had brown eyes, mustard brown bleached hair. He was 6’2” tall. He wore flip-flop sandals and brown shorts (Day 6). Later, Tom’s name changed to Logan. At that point, Logan took on real characteristics and a real personality. He morphed into a medium height 17 year who had strawberry brown hair and brown eyes. He wore an open shirt and shorts. He was somewhat shy and very respectful. He was sensitive and a visual artist whose paintings focused on environmental concerns, particularly air quality.

The Plot

At the beginning, all the most promising storylines were set at the school and involved the suspicious behaviour of the school principal, a detention, a key, and a missing floorboard. The participants entertained story ideas concerning the principal as possibly having an “evil twin”, of being a duplicitous principal with an evil agenda, or of just being a mean, uncharitable, self-serving, and possibly “wicked” principal. In every version of a storyline, they came up with, the principal wasn’t the good guy. After much on-going discussion, participants decided that their story was going to focus on what the principal was hiding and why.

Convergence and the Transformative Principle for the Principal

In the hero/ine’s journey template, there is a time at the end of Act 1 and Act 2 where the uncertain hero/ine, asks a trusted other for advice. In the participants’ story, this happens when the heroines are trying to decide whether they should go into the school basement by themselves to investigate who is down there. Each character decides to telephone one trusted person for advice. Sage calls her slightly older brother who is in Grade 9. He tells her to “go for it”. Navy calls her much older aunt who tells her much the same thing, adding not to get caught. Stephanie calls her uncle who tells her to stay calm and to come home. Cedar calls her grandparents. Her grandfather tells her to be careful and get to the bottom of things. Her grandmother tells her to bring home groceries and that she won’t tell her mother.

For the story to go forward, the characters need to go down into the basement, but Stephanie’s character is forbidden by her uncle. The plot needed to account for this to keep Stephanie in the story. Given this problem, and the fact that for me, as a mother, I did not find all the answers they made up for their adult mentors to be very believable/realistic given what I

know of parents and caring adults generally. I challenged the participants on this point the next day. I suggested that they ask *Annie* for her advice as their trusted other. She was a real person who could give a real answer as a parent. Although I had not thought about it during my research planning, I reasoned now that she might introduce an Indigenous cultural dimension to the question/answer that might further “intercultural understanding” (Call to Action 63.3). The participants agreed and I offered to send *Annie* an email recapping the story so far and to ask her what she would say if the characters had telephoned her for advice. What follows is the email I sent.

Le vendredi 17 janvier 2020 13 h 50 min 02 s HNE, Carol Lee a écrit :

Hello *Annie*

The children's story-making is progressing well. What great story makers they are!!! The story is not finished yet but each day we circle back to parts that are perhaps not as strong as other parts. I thought they could benefit from asking you a question that they ask other characters in their story. I discussed it with them and they agreed. In fact, they were thrilled. I am writing to you for them.

In their story, they ask mentors they can trust for advice. So here is the story gist that builds to this question:

The characters, Sage, Cedar, Stephanie, and Navy are in an after-school detention together when Stephany inadvertently kicks a floorboard loose. When she tries to put it back, she discovers a hole in the floor and a key. Stephany shares her discovery with the rest of the detention group. They are curious and decide that Sage should keep the key on a chain she is wearing around her neck. Because the detention teacher left the room and has not come back, the group decides to try to leave the detention early. While sneaking out they hear the principal's voice and hide themselves so as not to be spotted. They watch him pass outside and lose sight of him when he ducks behind a dumpster. They think he is coming back and that he might check up on them, so they decide to go back to the detention room to avoid getting into more trouble. Back in the room they decide to look at the hole under the floorboard again. They begin to wonder

what part of the school is under the room and decide they have never seen a basement room under that part of the school. However, their curiosity is really peaked when start to hear voices coming from below and realize that one of the voices is the principal's. They are surprised and a bit scared of the principal at this point. They were right, the principal did come back to check on them and when he does, he notices the key hanging from the chain around Sage's neck but does not attempt to get possession of it. He only comments on the key and dismisses the kids from detention. Outside, the kids wait for him to leave in his car then go to the dumpster to see what is there. They find a door and wonder if they should try to get into that basement room the same way the principal did to investigate. Afraid but curious they weigh the pros and cons. They can't decide if they should or shouldn't, so they decide to phone trusted individuals to ask for advice. A brother of one of the girls says, "Go for it." Someone else, tells them to stay away and go home.

So, this is the point at which the authors now want to phone you *Annie* to ask for your advice. What would you tell these characters to do if they called you? Investigate or not? Come and help them or leave them to their own devices?

If you can send me your answer, I will read it back to the kids on Monday, OR if you wanted to come to the school on Monday at lunch time to deliver your answer in person, that would be excellent too. Let me know.

Thanks *Annie* for your consideration in this. I hope you are well.

Best regards

Carol

Annie responded by coming to visit with the students in person to give her answer. Her response was less an answer than it was a discussion with the participants to make them think about the consequences of their actions. During the discussion she not only offered the participants opportunities to weigh the consequences of doing vs not doing, but also gave them opportunities to consider factors that might mitigate potential danger. Our discussion with her changed the course of the story for the participants but also change me as a woman, a teacher, and as a supporter of children's rights to self-determination.

Like most mothers, the desire to protect children in the face of danger is strong for me. My first reaction, an instinctive response really, to the characters' fearless go-forward desire to enter the basement was a hard mental "No" despite my equally strong belief that children can and should make their own decisions. I came face to face with a personal dilemma that was starting to look very much like hypocrisy to me. More on this in a moment.

When *Annie* came that Monday, she began by acknowledging she was an adventurous spirit, that she had done some things in her youth, that in retrospect, could have been dangerous. She put the participants and me at ease by reframing potential danger as informed decision making, saying:

You know, you get older, and you start thinking...so the things that I've done could have been so dangerous. But you know what, YOU have to think. And not because I don't want to give you a definite answer [to the question, should the characters go to the basement on their own] but I think you have to question yourself. What would be the consequences, right? 'Cause for me it's always about consequences. So, what could be some of the consequences? ...Who would be able to tell me what some of the consequences would be, besides the fact that you could get in trouble from the school.

And, as if to speak to my dilemma directly, a dilemma I had not shared with her, she next asked the participants to consider whether it is always a good thing to get involved or interfere in the affairs of others. She framed this question not as a human desire to help, but as a maternal desire, saying:

You know sometimes we see something happening right, and do you think that it's our place to always interfere? [Do] you think we should always interfere with other people? You know we want to help because, especially as girls, right, as young girls it's in our heart; it's in our it's in our gene[s]; it's in every part of our body. So, I want to save other people. It's part of who we are because, you know, we are all born as mothers and grandmothers. And throughout their young years, [as girls] we're learning to become a mother. So, of course, when we see someone that needs help, we always want to go but is it always wise to interfere in other people's [lives]?

Yes, yes. She was certainly speaking to me personally, but she was also imparting some of her cultural ways of knowing about motherhood and mothering too. It was comforting for me to hear this. For the participants, this maternal explanation for their desire to help, must have seemed

self-evident because they did not question it. Rather, they focused on the “is it always wise to interfere in other people’s [lives]?” part. They did not appear to see any conflict with being a mother someday and their current preoccupation with choosing a career path for themselves. Also, they did not appear to know that *Annie* was expressing a cultural world view that ran counter to dominant North American views of women.

In addressing the wisdom of interfering, *Annie* gave an example of when it would be better to not interfere. She then raised questions about if, when, and how one might interfere when a dangerous situation is involved. *Annie* continued, saying

Interfering could sometimes make things worse. Yes. I'll give you a good example. If you have two children...four years old and they're playing. And all of a sudden there's this one toy, right, and the two child they're fighting for it, right. If you observe them and you don't interfere, they will eventually settle this on their own. If you interfere, you're going to have them both crying. And then who are you to decide who's supposed to have that toy right? Cause they may have seen it at the same time. So sometimes it's better to just let things run. But then, when someone is in danger, then it's a big question right? Should we tell someone? Should we interfere? Should we try to help? And are we supposed to ask him if he wants us to help?

At no time did she tell the participants what they should do. Instead, she tried to steer the discussion away from all-or-nothing approaches and towards nuanced solutions. She made a point of saying that she was pleased that the approach she had envisioned as a solution to the basement problem was one that the participants came up with themselves. In the end, the participants decided they would have another adult character in the story, Grandmother Kookum Annie, as an external fail-safe. They decided that one of the participant’s characters would call Grandmother Kookum Annie to say all was fine by a specific time. If Grandmother Kookum Annie did not get the call, she would notify the police. Further, they decided that two of the participants’ characters would go down into the basement while two stayed at the top in the open doorway. They decided to also use their phones as walkie-talkies so that the girls at the top knew what was happening with the girls below.

What happened the day after *Annie* visited, was completely unexpected. The participants started thinking about the principal differently with some encouragement from *Annie*. *Annie* had sent me an email after she visited with a follow-up thought. She wrote:

Something I forgot to ask or mention... they said that the principal noticed the key but doesn't tempt to take it... I think if they noticed that he saw the key... the key has to be discussed... so what about the key?... maybe the key opens another door in the basement or maybe the key opens a treasure box lolll and maybe the principal is preparing a big happy surprise for the school and not something scary lol and then again.....

have fun (January 20, 2020)

I shared this email with the participants.

In the context of trying to figure out how to story the *key*, participants began to entertain ideas of the principal being a good guy. The following transcript not only shows the beginnings of this transformation, but it also provides an example of how the participants engaged in collaborative decision-making.

Carol: OK so I think you've decided about the key, that is not going to be a big thing around your neck, but is it something that maybe the principle left?

Navy: [We] agree on the part where the principal, like, [is] not really like this [meaning a bad person]. He cares for the kid and doesn't want him to ...

Sage: The kid agrees to stay down there 'cause he has no family to run to [because they are] controlling. ...The principle is basically like the only [one who] listens. ...

Navy: The principal can be like the principal [but the] boy could be like [a son to him]. ... Always called him son.

Sage: Yeah. ...We can decide they are in really good relationship.

Navy: Yeah. OK, wouldn't he be living with him at his house then?

Stephanie: Maybe not.

Unknown, perhaps Cedar: No. No.

Navy: Oh yeah 'Cause he can't come out right? 'Cause his parents sent the police looking out for him and he doesn't want to [to be found]. 'Cause his parents are controlling as in like really demanding.

Cedar: And why would they not search the school?

Sage: Like do the police ever come to our school? And be like, you know what, there's a kid missing, and I think he's in the basement of the school?

Cedar: It's been like a couple of months, so the police are everywhere looking for him all around town.

Sage: Hey Cedar, maybe they knew that the principal and him had a really good relationship. ...So maybe, sometime you can add to the story where the parents visit the principal and ask him maybe.

Navy: We can put that in this part. Yeah. OK. That's good. OK.

Carol: So, the key that's under the floorboards, although it's odd that it's there, [it] probably had to [have] been put there by somebody from underneath.

Sage: So, it was hidden from the rest of the world.

Carol: But it wasn't hidden from the people that were below. Would that be a reasonable assumption?

Navy: Yeah. ... If the boy underneath had access to a key he could leave whenever he wanted to. (Day 6)

Being able to visualize the material setting, as with the key, the participants were able to draw inferences and make logical conclusions. In this case, they reasoned that a bad principal would not have made a key available to a captive. Therefore, the person in the basement was probably not a captive. They seemed to find it easy to piece together all the details of their story so far and make it consistent with the idea of the “good” principal.

Decision-making

In terms of showing the decision-making process, the transcription excerpt above is typical. It shows the participants playing with possible scenarios and moving towards a decision in three significant ways. The first way is a cumulative building on each other's suggestions, as with *Stephanie* suggesting the possibility of other possibilities, and *Sage*'s suggestion that the boy's parents visit the school as a response to *Cedar*'s thoughts about a long search time. The second is the introduction of a related thought that has not yet been considered by the group, as in *Cedar*'s question about the police searching the school. The third is a recognition of the logic or illogic of a suggestion. For example, *Navy* recognized the illogic of the boy living at the principal's house. Another example is *Sage*'s initial dismissal of *Cedar*'s question based on the logic of her experience with police never coming to the school, then recognition of the possibility of a school search given *Cedar*'s further elaboration.

The following table indicates the story decisions made by participants that were recorded on paper decision charts. It also indicates whether the decisions were made individually or collectively, and using their own words, indicates what made these story decisions “glitter” and appealing to the participants as good decisions to make. Of course, there were other decisions made along the way, for example, the mystery person’s name change from Tom to Logan, that were not captured on the decision charts because they did not influence the story in any meaningful way.

Table 1

Table of Story Decisions

Decision	Collective/Individual Decisions: What decisions allowed and why this appealed (glittered)
Character names, age, personality, and physical description	Individual by each participant.
Setting: school, after school detention	Collective: allowed characters to “form as a group, rekindle old friendships, and identify as trouble-makers.”
Reasons for detention	Individual but group sometimes suggested alternatives. Sage’s reason allowed the idea of “extra punishment” for her.
Disclosure of detention to parents; anticipating parent displeasure	Individual but the collective outcome was the same. Allowed parents to be “caring and concerned” instruments of “punishment” like school authorities.
Bored in detention and browsing room	Collective: allowed characters to be “curious, acknowledged boredom as real reason to snoop” even though they knew it was “wrong” and potentially “dangerous”.
Discovery of key and voices in the basement	Collective: allowed for “mystery and excitement” at school, and for an “evil principal.”
Story problem: Evil principle keeping someone against their will in the school’s basement	Collective: allowed story to have “purpose and a mystery to solve” and allowed characters to react to “something new.”
Following the principal and finding secret door	Collective: allowed characters to ask, “what the principal was hiding and why.”
Mystery person is principal’s evil twin	Collective: allowed story to talk about “principal’s weaknesses, how good and bad imitate each other, how characters

	can get confused, or how twin can act disguised as principal.” They abandoned this decision.
Who to ask for advice about entering the basement	Initially individual then collective decision “to ask Annie.” Allowed for an Indigenous way of teaching perspective that was non-authoritarian and “respectful.”
Changing Mr. Davidson to the nice guy principal instead of the villain principal This decision was a 180° turn by participants in characterizing the principal following a visit from mentor <i>Annie</i> .	Collective: See the transcript excerpt starting on p. 130.
Two stay up while two go down into the basement	Collective: allowed for “even distribution” for “safety” and allowed the characters at the top of the stairs to “call/go for help” if needed.
Surprise at seeing the figure in the basement and running out	Collective: allowed both the mystery person and the main characters to be “surprised” and allowed the possibility that the “mystery person had left.” Allowed the main characters to botch their attempt, “rethink” the situation and “try again.” Learn from their mistakes.
Agreement to return to the basement	Collective: allowed main characters to be “curious” and continue to engage in an “adventure”. Allowed the “story to be interesting”.
Sleep over at Sage’s mansion	Collective: allowed them to “plan” without parental interference, allowed them the means of providing “food for mystery person”, allowed “Sage to be a rich kid” and explained the “two phones.”
Taking mystery person food	Collective: allowed main characters to think about the well fare of another and allowed them to consider his “vulnerability” and that he might be “hungry but can’t leave to get food.”
Chef/nanny helps with food	Collective: allowed readers to see a non-parent, non-teacher, child-adult interaction that was supportive because it was “paid for”. It also allowed reader to see the main characters not as children but as people who get to boss adults and contexts where they determine their own actions.

Setting up a knocking signal	Collective: allowed the mystery person to “respond/communicate” with the main characters without endangering himself and to express his “discomfort” or agreement with the suggestion that they “meet him downstairs.” Demonstrated respect for him.
Sharing food with mystery person	Collective: allowed main characters to set a tone for “communication and comfort” which could lead to “getting to know” the mystery “person better.”
Mystery person is 17.	Collective: allowed the mystery person to be a “former student, to be hiding from his family, to have controlling parents, and for the principal to be nice.” It allowed the possibility of him “running from a crime”. I didn’t allow him access to “outside because police might be looking for him.”
Keeping Logan’s secret	Collective: allowed characters to demonstrated “friendship over duty,” prevented “Logan’s parents” from calling the “police on the principal,” and ensured that the “parents would not interfere with Logan’s” introspection.
Characters finding out that Mr. Davidson is the nice guy principal	Collective: allowed Logan safety “protection,” kept “Mr. Davidson within the law,” and allowed the main characters to learn that one “shouldn’t judge a person without having information.”
Logan and parent conflict	Collective: allowed a “believable explanation” for why Logan was in the “school basement” and allowed the main characters “to help” someone who was still considered a minor (child) under the law.
No to being a doctor	Collective: allowed Logan to engage with his own “passions” and his right to self-determination. Allowed the readers to see that for Logan to agree to become a doctor, would mean he would have to “work hard for tuition money,” thus leaving him “little time to paint.”
Visual artist	Collective: allowed Logan to be figured as a “sensitive, creative” type of person, whose talents might “make him famous someday.”

Logan's awareness of parents' worry	Collective: allowed main characters to appreciate Logan's "love and concern for his parents," and that the actions Logan took to make them "worry" were not taken trivially. It allowed the main characters to see that making a considered decision was "important" and necessary.
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The Workings of The Story-Making Apparatus

Most of our initial processes were the ones described in the methodology chapter, although these had been modified somewhat from my initial conception of them. The reason being, that in the early days of the research data collection/production phase, we were forced to learn how to manage/cope with the short period of time we had at lunch. Fifty minutes did not allow us to schedule distinct times daily for story plotting and story making so we adjusted in an ad hoc manner. When I saw participants' energy levels reduce, we would switch them from plotting to making and back again. This said, I did reserve the beginning of our time together each day for a conscious review of the story worlding decisions made the previous day and for a discussion of the implications of these decisions on the story world they were creating. I found it interesting that on Day 19 towards the end of session but during a rather intensive story making part, *Cedar* stated, "I like the questions" and by this I took her meaning to be, "I like the questions [better than the story-making]." In the first part of the session, I asked participants questions about their rationale for making specific story choices and *Cedar* was consistently a vocal contributor. During the story-making part, she was more reticent.

Even though most processes were performed as planned, there were some unexpected performances of those processes by participants that contradicted the literature on collaborative story-making. For example, specifics of their story developed not through turn-taking as the literature predicted or in the way the opening question and answer session had unfolded. It developed most often through a completely unstructured and enthusiastic banter. Participants often talked *into* one another's talk which should not be confused with talking *over* one another where the loudest is the voice heard. This "talking into each other" was something no one seemed to mind, although the participant playing *Stephanie*, did it less than the others. Because of this, when I saw that *Stephanie* wanted to say something and had been courteously and patiently waiting for the right moment to interject her idea, I would help to make a space for her

by gesturing to the others or by saying something like “What would Stephanie think about that?” I would characterize the participants’ banter as one that interspersed serious story-making with jokes, playfulness, and talk about the food they were eating.

The kinetic (playing the part of another as a character) and body languaging aspects of participants’ role-playing seemed to help participants build upon the dialog or action that had just taken place and in this way to empathize, as with theatrical improv (Lenters & Smith, 2018). Characters would sometimes take up the position proposed by the dialog or action that came just before, like Cedar entering a room, or Stephanie sitting with an innocent look on her face, so that others could visualize the gestures then add to them (Gerdes, 2011; Matravers, 2017). It also made elements of their story real by helping them evaluate how engaging or believable the dialog was (Cohen et al., 2016; Maxwell, 2017). For example, on Day 13, the participant playing *Navy* reads back the story, saying “Cedar kept watch. ‘I hear something in the hallway. Hide,’ whispered Cedar.” The participant playing *Sage* says “Well you don’t wanna hide. You wanna like act like you’re just sitting down for the detention.” *Navy* suggests, “So maybe not hide but or just be like ‘Sit down now.’”

Participants’ Acts of Inquiry and Acts of Analysis

As Leavy (2017) points out, story-making is often a research activity—a finding out and thinking about process. Participants’ acts of inquiry throughout the story-making process with their fellow authors not only generated data for their story, but also generated data about each other, about how each one lives, about their personal struggles and special moments, etc.

I looked for instances of such acts of inquiry as evidence of the participants generating data for each other about each other’s cultures. I sometimes heard, “Is that true?” or “Is that you?” remarks from two participants, *Cedar* and *Navy*, followed by a short pause that suggested that one had just realized some reality about the last speaker that they didn’t know before. Their “Is that true?” questions were rarely answered directly. It seemed they were treated as rhetorical questions, and that everyone in the room assumed that what was said was true.

While I had hoped that participants would generate data about how respect is uniquely demonstrated in each of their own cultures as they interacted with each other and with the story characters, what I saw was something different. I saw unique cultural expressions presented by various participants, but I was not certain that these expressions generated data (knowledge) as conscious acts of inquiry on the part their fellow participants. For example, *Stephanie* showed respect by not interrupting other speakers which I understood to be a result of her East Indian

cultural up-bringing. What I am not certain of is, if the other participants perceived this as a cultural attribute or as shyness. I perceived it as cultural because she certainly had lots to say to me one-on-one.³⁸ *Stephanie* also spoke of the importance of cultivating a good “reputation” (Day 1) which I also perceived as cultural. At one point, *Cedar* joked about *Stephanie*’s shyness. However, when *Cedar* realized that it wasn’t a joking matter for *Stephanie*, she apologized, saying “Just kidding. Just kidding. Sorry”.

At times, *Cedar* also revealed things about her Cree culture or more broadly about Indigenous ways of knowing. On Day 1, she said “well first of all, you should actually treat people how they want to be treated and then second of all I don't get why people would really do that [do something mean] to other people.” While *Cedar* did not specifically mention ethnicity, *Sage* sensed that racism was part of what *Cedar* was talking about and responded to it saying “I have another thing to add. Say you don't like someone 'cause they have a different ethnicity or race than you. That's just being the worst person. Like that's how people feel unconfident about yourself and feel insecure.”

While *Sage* did not explicitly pick up on the cultural data *Cedar* provided, that of treating people how they want to be treated, (an Indigenous view) as opposed to treating people as you wish to be treated (a Euro/North American view), she did sense that the treating people badly part was culturally related. She appeared to understand the racism *Cedar* was alluding to and empathized with her. *Sage*’s empathetic response seemed to open a space for *Cedar* to talk more about racism, albeit in the third person. Clearly, racism was a subject on *Cedar*’s mind but perhaps not one she was ready to own with this group by using first person stories. In the planning phase of my research, I had also hoped that participants would generate data about social inequities they had experienced and, in this way, develop empathy for each other’s struggles and achievements. It didn’t always happen this way like with the example above. There were variations on how this was done, but I saw that they often showed empathy towards each other. Another example involved *Sage* and *Navy* and a completely unrelated event, a school ski trip.

³⁸ There was one day, Day 22, when she was the only participant.

On Day 5, *Sage* tells us she won't be here tomorrow because she is going to New York. I respond by saying "Wow, I haven't ever been there," while *Navy* tells us "I've never been anywhere besides here." *Cedar* comes off as the world traveler saying she has "gone to Montreal, to Calgary, to Edmonton, and Manitoba." *Navy* qualifies her statement adding "I went from home to a hospital once and then I went back home. And that was probably one of the biggest trips I've ever had." With this context in mind and aware of *Navy*'s family financial circumstances, I learned on Day 19 that *Sage*, whose parents had paid for her ski trip, used her own money to pay half the fare for *Navy* so that she could go on the school ski trip too. While this example, does not illustrate cultural understanding between Indigenous and nonIndigenous people, I think it is fair to say that *Sage*'s understanding of *Navy*'s economic situation, a culture of poverty, led her to empathize with *Navy* never having gone on a trip. Her empathy led her to take action that changed *Navy*'s world.

In sum, the participants used our story-making apparatus and the processes operating within it, to learn what was real for some but not for others, for example, racism, opportunities to travel, or going skiing, and in doing so learned about each other's world/culture, and in some cases, the markers of respect in each, for example, treating people how they wanted to be treated, cultivating a good reputation, or joking/not joking about another's foibles. This said, of the Call 63.3 actions, cultural understanding, mutual respect, and empathy, empathy, was the unprompted behaviour I saw participants exhibit most consistently with each other. For example, in a big way with *Sage* helping to pay for *Cedar*'s ski trip, or in small ways by sharing food or by verbally supporting each other's reasons for behaving in a certain way, with regard to lateness or absenteeism, for example, in their casual chit-chat with me before or after our formal sessions. They consistently conveyed to me a sense of trust, acceptance, and empathy for each other's actions and the reasons for those actions.

In terms of cultural understanding, when cultural knowledge was presented by *Annie* as statements of fact, understanding followed but I was not sure that it was interpreted as a cultural knowledge, or simply as a universal truth. I am also not sure whether the participants understood *Annie*'s probing questions as a cultural teaching style or just her way. Regardless of how conscious participants were of the distinctly cultural knowledge *Annie* and *Cedar* modelled and imparted, they were none-the-less affected by it. In terms of mutual respect, participants' respect for *Annie* was unwavering and greater than what they showed to each other in terms of consistency. The participants considerable respect for each other seemed to be more than what

they had for their teachers and other authority figures in the school. While they sometimes made fun of their teachers, they always defended the actions of the group members.

From a conceptual perspective, the participants used the story apparatus to take in and consider new information, for example, from *Annie* and to generate data, regarding fairness, authority, and their personal rights and agencies as legal minors. From a mechanical story-making perspective, they used the story apparatus to generate data about story craft and plot/character plausibility.

Dynamic Unplanned Additions/Changes to the Apparatus

There were five unplanned parts of this research project that had an impact on it. The first was the participants' request to spend more time together in this activity. They asked that we meet four days a week. The principal agreed and saw this as a positive indication of the participants' enjoyment of and commitment to the project. In fact, we rarely met more than three times a week.

The second unplanned part, as already discussed, was the participants' discussion with *Annie* and their later inclusion of Grandmother Kookum Annie as a story character. *Annie's* influence was such that she changed the course of the story the participants were making by simply asking them the right questions. As a character, Grandmother Kookum Annie was meant to provide the cultural knowledge of an Elder in the story, as understood by the Cree participant. The character of Grandmother Kookum Annie, whose wisdom and knowledge were always valued, was meant to impart importance to Indigenous ways of knowing.

The third unplanned part had to do with our setting. We had to move our meetings room from our tiny, private room to the (very public) school library for two days starting on Day 15, Feb 05, 2020. This was disruptive on many levels. We couldn't record our sessions properly because there was no extension cord available for us to use. Teachers and students were constantly coming in and out which caused distractions for the participants who already had focus and attention issues. In the end, we used this time to review the story so far. We reread the story and reviewed key story decisions to determine how the story could unfold. We also discussed what characterized the story world they were creating in terms of what was possible in this world and what would be inconsistent with it. I made notes on the Allows and Forecloses sheets. It was the best we could hope to do. This said, it did give me an opportunity to see *Cedar* interact with her younger brother.

On the second of the two days that we had to meet in the library, *Cedar*'s brother sat in the library and began observing our session. He inched closer by degrees until his chair was up against our table. Some of the other participants started giving him looks that suggested he didn't belong. Noticing those looks, *Cedar* fiercely defended his right to be in the library and to sit wherever he wanted to. The other participants accepted him immediately after this and respected his presence for the rest of that day's session.

The fourth had to do with *Cedar* personally, who was clearly proud of her Cree heritage. At a point later in the research project, *Cedar* was honoured by being selected with a few other Indigenous students from the school to participate in a traditional group dance that was to be performed as part of the Nomad show at the National Arts Centre. She was excited to be part of that special event and especially proud that she was Indigenous—that she was Cree. She would have to be away from our story-making on certain days, I was told, officially.³⁹ Although this was not ideal for us as a story-making group, everyone was happy for her. The first library day was one of those days and it was also the day *Cedar* was dismissed from the line-up for behavioral issues by the teacher leading the group. I did not know it at the time. She told me later she had been unfairly blamed for disrupting a practice session. True or not, she was not the same girl after that. She appeared sad and angry. She was also quarrelsome with authority figures, including me, on one occasion. Other teachers must have experience it too, because she was almost constantly in lunch-time detention after that and didn't seem to care if she was.⁴⁰

However, a fact I find interesting in retrospect, is that *Cedar*'s brother came to the library on that second day when *Cedar* was with the group. I wonder now if he was there because he was simply curious about the story-making or had he come to give moral support to his sister following the unfortunate event of the day before, an event he presumably knew about and about which we still knew nothing. If the latter, their mutual respect, and solidarity was admirable and note-worthy. I am not sure if it was cultural. Maybe.

The fifth had to do with an unexpected guest, a new girl to the school. *Sage* brought her once to our lunch-time session. *Sage* had been assigned her mentor for the day and felt she could not

³⁹ There was official school support for this dance activity.

⁴⁰ I would have to get permission for her to leave the detention to join us, which she did. She had to serve the detention at another time.

abandon her at lunchtime. I agreed. *Sage* asked if the new girl could come again. I explained that she and her parents would have to sign the research approval forms first and that we needed to ask the other participants if it was ok with them. I gave the new girl the approval forms, but she never returned.

In summary, the story-making processes, also known as the story-making apparatus, not only identified the makers and all their characters, the setting and story plot, it also provided a context, a structure, and a way of understanding the steps needed. As an apparatus, it also influenced the kind of data that could potentially be produced and that was produced. While apparatus elements may be shared by many stories, every story-making apparatus is different, and it is this difference that makes a story unique. This part of this chapter has outlined keys parts of this specific story-making apparatus.

The actual story produced with(in) this apparatus is presented below. Please enjoy. It is followed by the data collected through the closing questions.

The Story is Made! **(Participants' Story as Data Production)**

When one writes, the only question is which other machine the literary machine can be plugged into, must be plugged into in order to work.

—(Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 4)

The wHole

Story

**Surrounding a Mysterious Hole
in the Floor**

A short story by:

Vanusha Jayabalan

Alora Gamache

Kharis Bercier

Payton Arzillo

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“Stephanie. Navy. Sage. Detention!” yelled the teacher pointing towards the door.

At that moment the classroom door swung open fast and loud. Everybody’s heads turned to see Cedar bust through the door, her arms above her head and her mouth opened wide. She started to shout out an exuberant “What’s up” but seeing the teacher giving her a dirty look, she decided to cut off her greeting mid-word, “WHaaa...”.

Cedar muttered a resigned “Oh no,” under her breath.

“You too Cedar. Out!”

Just then, the end of the day bell rang.

The four girls ran down the hall laughing and clinging arms in fear of being separated by a bunch of kids running every which way. They swung into the detention room, their hands grasping the walls as they entered bumping up against each other. Panting, they giggled some more until their voices were no longer out of breath.

The detention teacher waited for them. “Sit down,” she said firmly, and they did.

They stared at each other making faces and tried not to laugh as they waited for the buses to leave. When the last bus pulled out of the parking lot, the teacher told them to wait while she asked the principal to call their parents.

“What do you guys think your moms and dads are going to say,” asked Sage.

“I’ll probably be grounded,” said Navy. “Me too,” echoed Stephanie. “For sure, I’ll be grounded too,” added Cedar.

“What about you, Sage, what are your parents going to say?” Cedar inquired.

“They will probably send the nanny to the school for me because they’re gone on a business trip and are too busy,” said Sage.

As they spoke to each other, the teacher came back in and explained that the principal would be checking in on them soon. “In the meantime,” she commanded, “take a piece of paper and write down why you were sent here to after school detention,” then, she left the room. Her steps echoed down the empty hall as she walked away.

Stephanie wrote,

I am in detention because I was reading and not listening.

Navy wrote that she was writing a story when she was supposed to be in class. Sage wrote that she was on her phone texting her BFF. She also complained that her phone had got taken away in addition to having got a detention. “Double the punishment,” she thought, “Unfair!” but she didn’t write that. Cedar wrote that she interrupted the class by kicking the door open.

After they finished writing their detention reasons, they put their sheets of paper on the teacher's desk and waited for her to come back or for the principal to come to let them go home. They waited and waited for someone to come but no one ever did. They waited and waited some more.

"It is getting boring around here. Who wants to browse around?" asked Sage, meaning, who wants to go snooping.

"I agree with the first part, about it getting boring, but *browsing*..." she paused, "I don't know...we might get caught," cautioned Stephanie.

Cedar stood up and peaked out of the window. She noticed that the detention teacher's car was gone. "It's gone. Her car is gone."

"Really!" exclaimed the others. "Is anyone else here?" they wondered out loud to each other.

"I'll check the hall," volunteered Navy.

It was clear, they took that as permission to start snooping around the teacher's desk. After a while Stephanie got bored of that too. She returned to her place at the table to sit down again. Shuffling her feet, she sat impatiently waiting for something to happen while the others were doing their own thing. All of a sudden, she felt something under her feet move. She tried to stand up to investigate but something stopped her chair from moving. Sage came over to help her.

A floor tile had come loose and the part of the tile that lifted was blocking Stephanie from moving her chair. Soon everyone had gathered around Stephanie to investigate. Stephanie bent down and knocked on the tile. Sage thought that it sounded hollow, so Navy kicked at the tile until it lifted up completely. To their surprise what they saw underneath the tile was a hole that seemed to lead to a room below. As Sage watched the others, she saw something that looked shiny. Maybe just dust, she thought, but pointed in its direction anyway. Navy poked around. In the dirt she found a key wedged under the next tile.

"Why don't you just pick it up?" asked Cedar.

"You know I'm not touching that," exclaimed Sage in a disgusted voice, "As if..." she thought, "anyone expected her to do it."

"I'll get it," said Navy as she picked up the key and wiped it off with her hoodie.

"Should we give it to someone or keep it?" asked Stephanie. "And who's going to keep it if we do?" she continued.

"Keep it!" the others all answered together.

"Hey, why don't you put it on your necklace," suggested Cedar, nodding in Sage's direction.

“Clean it again and maybe, just maybe, I will,” said Sage. “OK. Pass it.”

Navy cleaned it off again then passed it to Sage who put it on her necklace. She made sure to hide it under her shirt so that the principal wouldn’t see it should he ever come back.

Cedar kept watch on the hallway.

“Guys! I hear someone in the hallway! I think it’s the principal. Sit down!” whispered Cedar in a panic.

They all ran to their seats. They listened as echoing steps approached the door. It *was* the principal. They had learned to recognize his footsteps. But it was also a false alarm. He kept on walking past their door. They heard the familiar clunk of the outside door opening and the familiar ca-chunk as it closed shut. All the girls ran to the window and from behind the curtain they watched him go behind a garbage dumpster for some odd reason.

“I wonder what he is doing?” wondered Stephanie out loud, speaking for all of them.

Suddenly, they heard voices from below them. The voices were coming from the hole. Stephanie put her index finger in front of her mouth and motioned everyone to move backwards. She reasoned that if they could hear the voices, then the voices could hear them as well. They all moved backwards quietly. As they did Stephanie tripped on her laces.

Bang, crash, boom. A table moved, a chair toppled, and Stephanie cried out. But Stephanie who always kept her cool under pressure, took control of the situation.

“Guys help me up,” she whispered in alarm.

“Sage, put the tile back quickly.”

“Just in case he comes to investigate,” she added.

Sage quietly replaced the tile and put a desk leg over top it. They all shuffled back to their seats quietly thinking that the principal would come. Sitting in their seats like angels they pretended nothing had happened. At that moment, the principal came in.

“What was all that racket?” he demanded to know.

“Sorry, Mr. Davidson, it won’t happen again,” explained Navy, “Sage accidentally dropped her backpack and it hit a chair when she handed in her detention paper.”

She pointed to the papers on the detention teacher’s desk. The girls all thought that it seemed like a reasonable explanation. The principal looked around. He didn’t say so, but he looked like he didn’t believe them. His gaze stopped when he looked at Sage.

“What is that on your necklace?” he asked her.

“What necklace?” she answered pretending not to know what he was talking about. Looking down she noticed that in the scramble the key was now on the outside of her shirt.

“What’s the key for?” asked the principal being more specific this time.

“Oh, it’s just the key to my bedroom door,” she said trying to sound casual and as if nothing was out of the ordinary even though her heart was beating very fast.

The principal looked around some more. “Where is Miss B.?” “Oh right...” he answered himself remembering something.

“Can we go home now?” asked Navy.

“Why of course you can,” he answered. “I’ve got to go too.”

As he went out, the girls got ready to leave. Outside, the girls waited for the principal to come back out. When he did, he said goodbye to the girls and headed to his car. The girls couldn’t wait to talk to each other in private.

“What just happened?” they all asked each other.

“That was the principal we heard, right?” asked Stephanie trying to confirm the facts.

“Absolutely!” “For sure!” “Yes!”

“And he was talking to someone?”

“Yes,” they all agreed.

“And he did disappear behind the dumpster?”

“Right.” “Right.” “Right.” they each confirmed.

“Who was he speaking to?” asked Sage.

“I don’t know,” answered Cedar. “Does anyone know?”

No one did.

“Should we go find out?” asked Navy seeing that Cedar seemed concerned about the person behind the other voice. “He might need help.”

“I don’t know. It might not be safe,” cautioned Stephanie. “We could look behind the dumpster anyway,” she volunteered in a hopeful voice.

They all agreed to do that and ran over. To their surprise, hidden behind the garbage dumpster was a door. It was smaller than most doors they were used to seeing which probably accounted for why had never noticed before, not to mention that it was surrounded by garbage. Navy tried to turn the doorknob.

“It’s locked!” she announced to the others.

That the door was locked shouldn't have surprised them, it was a school door after all, but it did. Without realizing it, they each took in a loud gulp of air and stepped back. Each one was wondering what she should think about that fact. Was the other person whose voice they heard the principal talking to, locked in? Trapped? Held captive? Sage was the first to speak.

"Did the principal lock him in?"

"No, he wouldn't do that, would he?" asked Stephanie nervously.

"No, no, well maybe..." answered Navy.

"Maybe he is secretly evil!" added Cedar in a hushed voice that was totally unlike her.

It was hard to imagine, but that was a possibility they needed to consider.

"Maybe, just maybe, the person behind the door is evil and principal locked him up to protect us kids at school," offered Navy, her writer's imagination catching fire.

Evil was now on everyone's mind.

"What should we do?" they asked each other over and over, "What should we do?"

Sage reminded them about the key. They decided to see if it fit the lock on the door. It did. But instead of helping them decide what to do next, it made matters worse. Now they could actually decide to go in or not.

"I want to stay safe. I'll stay on the lookout if the rest of you decide to go in," announced Stephanie.

"Should we go check it out?" asked Navy, pretending to be braver than she actually felt.

"Well, if we end up going down there, then I'm not going to be one of them. Here, take my spare phone just in case," said Sage handing it to Cedar.

Cedar spoke up. "Before we do anything, we should probably call someone to tell them where we are and see what they think we should do."

It was a good idea. Everyone was a bit relieved that they had put off making a decision to go down or not. Each girl agreed to call someone she trusted to ask for advice. Since Cedar had the phone, she called first.

"I'm calling my grandfather" she told the other girls.

"Hi, Mushuum... Yeah, I'm still at school..." her voice trailed off and there was a pause then she said

"OK" and hung up. "He wants me to call back in 10 minutes. He's helping my Kookum with something."

“I’m going to call my uncle,” said Stephanie to everybody in a quiet voice. She dialed the number. The phone rang, but her uncle didn’t answer. Stephanie passed the phone to Navy who called her Aunt Payton.

“Hey Auntie. Yes, its Navy. Yes, I am OK.”

Navy listened in silence for a while then said, “Bye. Thank you. I love you, too.”

“So, what did she say?” asked Stephanie. “She couldn’t say much because she’s going to class and if she is late her college professor will get mad at her,” said Navy.

She passed the phone to Sage.

“Hey, brother. Okay, so there’s this thing happening at school, and we want your advice.”

She explained the situation in detail.

“Well,” she concluded, “We’re wondering if we should go down there?”

“... Cuz, I want someone to know where we are in case, we get kidnapped or something. ... Okay. Yeah, I’ll tell them. Bye.”

“So, what did your brother say,” asked Cedar.

“He said to go for it. And he said he would call the police if I didn’t come back before bedtime,” answered Sage.

“I think we should call somebody else,” said Stephanie.

“Who?” asked Navy.

“What about Kookum Annie?” suggested Cedar. “She and my Mushuum are good friends,” continued Cedar.

Grandmother Kookum Annie was the school Elder. They could trust her. She was always full of fun, and they knew she would know what to do. Cedar grabbed the phone and dialed Kookum Annie’s number.

Cedar put the phone on speaker so they could all talk and listen together. Grandmother Kookum Annie answered and together they told her everything that happen.

Kookum Annie told them that when she was their age, she was very adventurous. She admitted that she probably would have gone down to investigate, had the situation happened to her. However, her advice to them was more cautious.

She told them that it was important to look at the facts carefully and to be sure to be accurate and honest with themselves.

“Be sure that you understand what you are about to do. Make sure to think of all the possible consequences before you act. Think about the consequences for your family and friends. Think

about the consequences for the person in the basement. Think about the consequences for the principal. And, above all, make sure to be safe,” she advised.

“Did you call anybody else?” continued Grandmother Annie.

“Well, Sage called her brother who said, ‘go for it’. Cedar called her Mushuum, Stephanie called her uncle, and I called my aunt, but they couldn’t talk with us when we called,” replied Navy.

“If you go, you must let me know before you go down into the basement and promise to call me right after. Can you do that?” she asked.

They all promised. After considering Kookum Annie’s advice, they decided to investigate. They called her back and told her their plans. Sage unlocked the door. They all saw a staircase leading down.

“Who wants to go down?” asked Stephanie.

“I’ve reconsidered, I want to stay up,” said Cedar.

“I know this isn’t like me, but I guess I’ll go down,” said Sage.

“If you’re going, I’m with you, then, I guess,” said Navy.

Stephanie took out her phone and both she and Sage exchanged numbers, so that they could contact each other, just in case. Stephanie kept her phone out as Sage and Navy set out on their way down the stairs.

“It’s dark. So here, let’s use the light on my phone,” suggested Sage.

Sage turned on her phone light and they kept on walking ahead. Finding it difficult to see well, Sage let out an exhausted and dramatic sigh. So, when they thought they had reached the bottom of the staircase, they really hadn’t. They started walking as if there were no more steps to go down, but unfortunately, they were wrong.

Sage tripped over her feet on the final step. Her phone dropped. Adding to the confusion, Navy accidentally tripped over Sage and fell too. While they were slowly getting up, they looked around at their surroundings. Where the phone fell made it possible for the two girls to see into the whole room. They saw a figure of a person not so tall, but not so short. Startled, the girls screamed at the top of their lungs frightened to see the person standing right there. They scrambled to get on their feet again and noticed that the figure had started running away in the opposite direction. They looked at each other for a few seconds frozen in confusion and then started sprinting up the staircase.

Cedar and Stephanie were surprised to see the two girls come back up so soon. They both asked what happened. We heard a lot of noise down there. Still confused the two girls, Sage and Navy, tried to answer. Sage with speechless, so Navy started to talk about what happened.

“There is some odd person down there. We don’t know if it is a man, a teenager, or a boy. We got frightened when Sage dropped her phone and the light shone on him.”

“Are you sure... hmm, I mean, how do you know it’s a man?” asked Stephanie.

“That’s true. I can’t say for sure. I just thought it was a man,” said Navy.

Cedar stood there with the others as still as a statue still speechless.

Navy continued, “We got so scared that we screamed. Then the man got frightened and ran away. Or at least we think it was a man, and we ran up the steps as fast as we could.”

“Are we going in again?” asked Navy.

Stephanie spoke up, “Maybe we should make a plan first?”

“So, how about we have a sleepover at my place to figure out what to do next,” offered Sage.

Sage remembered her promise to Grandmother Annie and called her back. The other three girls called their parents asking them if they could go to Sage’s house for a sleep over. Their parents agreed and gave the girls permission because they all knew Sage’s family. Sage had moved from the neighborhood where they had all grown up together, so they were going to her new house that they had never seen before.

When Cedar, Stephanie, and Navy arrived at Sage’s new house, their eyes popped, and their jaws touch the floor. It was like looking at a mansion, the house was so big and beautiful.

“Is this your new house?” Cedar asked with her eyebrows raised.

“Let’s go!” exclaimed Navy.

The three girls ran into the house behind Sage. Stephanie wanted to start planning right away. She was impatient and started sprinting to the staircase. She didn’t notice the floors were still wet and slipped. All the girls laughed and proceeded to help Stephanie up. They made their way up stairs and looked around for Sage’s room.

“Which room is yours?” ask Navy.

“Well, I have three of them that I can use, but would you like to go to the one that has more, you know planning stuff?” she answered with a question. “Cuz, that’s the one to the right,” continued Sage.

They headed to the room Sage was pointing to. Stephanie, still very eager to get planning, tried to hurry the others.

“Chop chop” she said, in a voice that was a little louder than she usually used.

They all thought for a minute, then Stephanie suggested what seemed to be the most obvious thing to do.

“Maybe we should try knocking at the door first.”

“Do you really think the person is going to hear that?” asked Sage, rolling back her eyes.

“Maybe he ... *she* will,” replied Stephanie uncertain now about her suggestion.

“To be honest Stephanie, it’s a good idea but I think we should open the door and just call from the top of the stairs,” said Navy. “Politely,” she continued, “We don’t want to bug whoever is down there.

“If that doesn’t work, how about we just go down?” suggested Cedar.

“But why?” asked Stephanie. “He might be dangerous. Do we even want to go back down?” she remarked nervously.

“We want to know whose is down there and if he’s okay. Anyway, now that I am thinking about it, I don’t think the person is dangerous. The person was scared of us too,” reasoned Sage.

“What if we offer him or her [or them] food? Maybe *the person* hasn’t eaten and is hungry,” said Navy.

They all thought that bringing the mystery person food was a great idea.

“Can we go down to the kitchen and make something for him?” asked Cedar looking at Sage.

Sage agreed. All the girls headed downstairs to the kitchen and had Sage’s chef help them make food. The girls discussed what they were going to make and take. Sage suggested spaghetti but reconsidered. Too messy.

“Crackers and cheese, grapes and bread,” suggested Cedar.

“And maybe a couple bottles of water,” suggested Stephanie.

They all agreed and started to prepare the food. Sage and the rest of the girls were aware that they were getting hungry too, but they were too excited to cook so they asked Chef Donny who worked at Sage’s house to make them a quick meal. He made them spaghetti.

After they ate, they check the time. It was later than they expected. They took the cheese platter out of the fridge and headed out quickly, grabbing their sweaters on the way cuz it was

getting kind of cold. Sage lived close to the school so in about a five-minutes they had walked back there. They went straight to the door behind the dumpster.

Sage unlocked the door with key. Slowly she opened it and shout out.

“Is anyone down there?”

Nobody replied. They wondered if he was down there or if he had gone. Sage had an idea.

“Maybe he’s not comfortable talking to us,” she suggested.

With this in her mind, she slowly walked towards the staircase and shouted out again. This time she said “There are four of us up here. We’re just kids who go to this school. Knock on the staircase two times if you are okay with us coming down to meet you and knock one time if you don’t feel good okay with it yet.”

All the girls heard one knock. Navy stepped closer to the stairs and called out.

“We have food for you if you want it. We only want to talk to you. Do you think we can come down?” she asked. “Knock twice if you think so.”

There was a pause then person at the bottom of the staircase knocked twice. The girls stared at each other, still a little nervous, then they all started down the long steep staircase. Step by careful step this time so that Sage and Navy wouldn’t fall over each other as they had done before. When they got to the bottom, they saw a tall skinny figure, a teenaged boy with medium length hair, dressed in cargo shorts and a baggy t-shirt. Navy was the first to speak.

“Hi, my name is Navy, and these are my friends Cedar, Stephanie, and Sage” as she pointed to each person in turn.

“Hi,” he quietly answered.

“What’s your name?” ask Stephanie.

“My name is Logan,” he said in a quiet but steady voice.

“Would you like some food?” asked Stephanie.

Logan nodded his head in response.

“We also have some water for you,” said Sage.

Navy put a blanket on the basement floor, and they all sat down. Stephanie placed the platter of food in the middle of the blanket and handed out water bottles for everyone. Logan quickly grabbed some cheese and crackers and ate them *voraciously*. The girls let Logan eat. Once he was finished, Cedar was the first to ask the question that was on everyone’s mind.

“Why are you down here?”

Without giving Logan a chance to answer, Sage asked, “Did the principal lock you down here? We can give you this key that opens the door above so you can leave at any given moment,” she added.

“Oh, that’s where it went,” said Logan with a sigh of relief. “I thought it was lost when I couldn’t find it in the usual place where I keep it.” He paused for a moment then continued, “But to be honest, I don’t want to answer your question right now. It’s a long story. Maybe later.”

Moving on, Navy asked, “How old are you?”

“I am 17 years old,” replied Logan.

“Do you have any family?” asked Cedar.

“Yeah, but I don’t really talk to them now,” replied Logan.

“We heard the principal talking to somebody. Was that you?” asked Navy.

“Yeah, that was me and Principal Davidson talking,” replied Logan.

“So, he knows you’re here? Is he keeping you here against your own will?” questioned Navy.

“Yes, he knows and no he’s not keeping me here. It’s my choice. He is going to help me. We are going to talk about it later tonight.”

“What do you mean he’s helping you?” asked Sage.

“Well, he found me this morning, then brought me some food at lunch time,” replied Logan. “He gave me the key to this place so I could lock myself in for my own safety. He is just concerned and wants to help me. He knows me from when I went to school here. I guess he liked me back then.”

Logan continued, “I snuck in here on Saturday after I ran away from home. Mr. Davidson said he would feed me and keep me safe so that I would have time to think about things and figure out where I want to go. He said he wouldn’t tell my parents until we had a chance to talk.”

He paused. “So now you know too. Please don’t tell anyone I’m here.”

The girls promised.

“So why are you here. Why did you run away from your family?” asked Cedar.

“My parents didn’t really support my dreams and I thought I was old enough to know what I wanted to be. So, I ran away to think about what I should do,” he answered.

“What did they want you to be? What do you want to be?” asked Stephanie.

Logan’s eyes looked up and he smiled. “I want to be an artist. My parents want me to be at the doctor.”

“What kind of artist are YOU?” asked Cedar.

“I am a visual artist. I like to paint the sky. I like painting with the colour blue. The sky makes me, and other people think of the air which is so important for our environment,” he answered.

“Why did your parents want you to be a doctor?” ask Navy.

“They thought it would be good for my future,” replied Logan.

“Why couldn’t you be a doctor and an artist at the same time,” wondered Navy out loud.

“Becoming a doctor will take too much time,” replied Logan.

There was a pause before Stephanie started up the conversation again. “Don’t you think your parents are a bit worried?”

“Yes, I think they probably are. They act like they don’t care but I think they do. Still, I need to think without any pressure,” answered Logan.

“So just to be clear, the principal is the good guy here and your problem is with your parents?” asked Sage.

“Pretty much. Yeah,” answered Logan.

“Is there any way we can help?” asked Sage.

“What do you mean, help?” replied Logan.

“We could talk to your family with you about the situation,” said Sage.

“I don’t know if I want to be found just yet,” said Logan.

“Would you like us to stay down here with you until the principal comes back?” asked Navy.

“I don’t know if the principal would be okay with that but I’m okay with it, so yeah, sure,” replied Logan who seemed more relaxed with the girls now. Everyone chatted and waited for the principal. Soon they heard the door open. The principal came down the stairs. He was surprised to see the girls there.

“Logan” he started, “Why are these girls down here? I asked you not to let anybody in,” continued the principal still in shock.

“I’m sorry, they had my key and let themselves in, besides, they brought food,” replied Logan.

“Here, I brought you food too,” holding up a McDonald’s® bag he took from his backpack.

“McDonald’s! yelled Logan, obviously still hungry.

He grabbed the bag and sat on the blanket with the girls, talking between bites.

Finally, the principal addressed the girls. "I'm sorry to say this, girls, but you're going to have to leave now because Logan and I need to talk in private."

Before the girls could get up to leave, Logan asked them to wait. Looking at the principal, he said,

"They can stay if they want to. Its ok with me. After all they know the whole story anyway. Is it ok with you?"

"Oh, okay then, of course, if that is what you want," said the principal hesitating for a moment.

"So, Logan," he started, "What are you going to do? You know you can't stay here unless I tell your parents where you are. Is that what you want so you have some space and time to think?"

"Yes. I think I still need a little more time to think about what to do," replied Logan.

Sage checked the time. It was later than she expected.

"I think we need to go back to my place before someone starts to worry and calls your parents or mine. Who knows what will happen then?" she declared.

They all knew what she meant, even Logan. He looked disappointed but knew they had to go home.

"It was nice talking to you guys," he said.

The principal and Logan waved as all the girls headed up the stairs. They headed back to Sage's place to continuing their sleepover. When the girls got there, they went to sleep quickly. It had been an eventful day to say the least. They woke up early in the next morning and got ready for school in record time. Sage told her nanny that they were leaving early, and they headed out the door. As they walked to school they talked and wondered if Logan was still in the basement.

"Do you think that Logan is okay?" ask Sage.

"I think he's okay or will be ok," replied Stephanie in a hopeful voice.

When the girls arrived at the school, they approached the door behind the dumpster and knocked. Nobody answered so the girls decided to go to the principal's office to ask if Logan was still in the basement. When the principal opened his door, he was slightly confused seeing them at school so early.

"Good morning girls," he said.

"Good morning Mr. Davidson.

“We were wondering if we can visit Logan if he is still here,” asked Sage. “We want to see if he’s okay,” she continued, speaking for all the girls.

“Sure. He’s here and I’ll grab the key and unlock the door for you. We can check up on him together,” offered Mr. Davidson.

They walked down slowly and quietly into Logan’s room not wanting to disturb him in case he was sleeping. When they reached the bottom of the stairs, they saw Logan sketching on the inside of the paper bag that had carried the hamburgers.

“Hi Logan.”

After they finished greeting each other, Stephanie asked him, “Are you ready to go home today?”

“Yes, I am. My parents should know now that I am serious about pursuing my dreams. I’ve also had time to consider their concerns. I might even think about being a doctor someday, but not at the moment,” replied Logan.

“Do you want us to come with you when you go back home?” asked Cedar.

“I feel like I should do this by myself,” said Logan.

“When are you going? What are you going to say to them?” asked Navy.

“I’m going to go just before school ends so that the kids here don’t see me coming out of the basement. I think I’m going to tell my parents that I want their support, but my career has to be my choice. I’m going to tell them that I don’t want to leave their house, but I will if I have to. I’m going to tell them that they won’t be able to change my mind and that I want them to respect my choice. What do think of that?” he asked, looking at the girls.

“It sounds perfect. But Logan, we’re concerned about you, so will you agree to come back here this evening to tell us how everything went?” asked Stephanie.

“Sure, let’s say 6:00 o’clock,” he suggested, “and I can tell you what happened,” he finished.

The girls headed out, leaving Logan to his sketching. Everyone waited for school day to end anticipating Logan meeting with his parents. The girls then waited for 6:00 o’clock to come to find out what had happened with Logan’s parents.

All the girls met back at school at 6:00 o’clock. In the distance they saw Logan coming to meet them. They ran as fast as they could towards him. As they got closer, they could see a bright smile on his face and a sparkle in his eyes.

They all started talking at the same time and then started laughing cuz they all stopped talking at the same time too. Logan told them that his parents had missed him a lot and were

prepared to accept his decision even though they didn't approve of it. Logan understood that they cared for him and wanted him close. He said he felt accepted in his household again. The girls were a little surprised that it went so well for Logan, but they were very happy for him. They gave him a big group hug.

That day, Logan and the girls promised to stay friends and to hang out together sometimes, and they did. After that day, Stephanie, Cedar, Navy and Sage made a point of stopping to talk with the principal whenever they saw him in the halls at school. They could hardly remember they had once thought that maybe the principal was evil and creepy. Like Logan, they too were developing a good relationship with the Mr. Davidson. Logan had been a good example for them, and they learned from him not to think people are creepy just cuz they seem like it at times.

After a few months had passed and things returned to normal for the four girls, they got a special invitation from Logan. He was inviting the girls to his first exhibition. The principal was opening the school for the event.

Seeing his paintings on the wall, row on row, the girls were happy to share this moment with him and the principal. The girls enjoyed the evening looking at Logan's paintings and giggling with him. They even picked out their favourite painting and asked Sage's dad to buy it for the school.

"They're amazing," said Sage and everyone agreed.

The End

Closing Discussion Questions

In my analysis, in the next chapter, I will compare participants' opening and closing answers to the questions I asked them, but here, I provide only their responses. As you will notice, their closing answers have a very different character than their opening answers. In fact, in repeatedly listening to the transcripts, I found I was unable, at times, to distinguish speakers, no matter how hard I tried. Participants finished each other's sentences and at times two of them spoke the same words at the same time. You may also notice that there are explicit references to Indigenous youth activist, Shannen Koostachin, and a more active sense of child agency as praxis. Further, when they explain a point, they often make their examples specific to me, because it was me, they were addressing as their audience. It seemed to me that their answers were based on considerably more thought than the answers they gave to the opening questions.

Note: Stephanie was away for part of the closing questions, unfortunately.

Question 1: Can children make important decisions? Why? Why not?

Sage: Because, because look at us now. Like, you ...another thing Shannen's Dream. Yeah, she made it. She made a big decision yeah and she made a big decision that changed a lot. That changed a lot and that means a lot to a child that they can make a decision. **Navy:** Anybody, anybody can. It's like it's like saying **Sage:** Carol you cannot make a decision because of that red scarf. And I forgot or whatever you can't prevent someone from something 'cause **Navy:** their age, skin color, or ethnicity. Why do people judge about their colour. **Sage:** It's like, it's like you're preparing them for something they're gonna have to make when they're older. They're going to have to make important decisions. They are going to have to do things.

Question 2: When you meet someone different from you, should you be nice to them? Why? Why not? How would you do that?

Cedar: Yes, of course. **Sage:** because they're still human and who cares if they have a disability. **Navy:** Yeah. **Sage:** who cares if they have a disability or their race or their ethnicity or what color their hair is or what sexuality they have. They're still a person. It's like saying I can't wear a green scrunchy because I'm a female or because I have brown hair or brown eyes.

Sage: Well, well you'd show them around or you introduce yourself, introduce a few people to them. Like tell them like, say people they just want to stay away from, or they just don't want

to be near, like people that cause trouble. **Navy:** Yeah. **Sage:** you should, you should be kind to them. Just you don't want to hang around someone that does things that you don't like or says things that make you feel weird or does make you feel uncomfortable. Other people can do what they want but you still have to be nice to someone if you don't like them. **Cedar:** Ahh.

Question 3: Is there is a difference between the decisions that happen in a story and the real-life decisions you make everyday? How are they the same or different?

Sage: Well, when I said that I'm going to live in a mansion. I do not live in a proper mansion; I do not have a butler; I am not in Grade 8. The decisions, I find a few of us in the story wouldn't actually [make] go down. and we won't associate with someone we didn't know.

Cedar: Our decisions, most of the time lead to people agreeing in the story and normally most people are not agreeing. We have more of our friendship and more of like a connection that like will make us agree to most things, but I don't think all of us would agree to some of the choices we made [in real life]. **Navy:** Yeah, that that's very true. **Sage:** So, in the story had a connection. So, with Logan [character in participants' story] we would say yes to more things together. **Cedar:** Yeah. **Navy:** And if it was real life and you just like met someone and they are saying "Hey do you wanna go to Los Angeles" or something yeah like that. If somebody is saying that to someone they didn't know for a while, like there wouldn't be that connection. Like somebody you just met like a month ago and says, "Do you want to go to Los Angeles with me" and you'd be like, you wouldn't say "Yeah of course" because you wouldn't really know that person maybe they could be like kind of bad. If you're like older like in your 20s... **Cedar:** You wouldn't? No! Yeah, you wouldn't say yes because you don't know that person. **Sage:** But if you were closer to that person maybe...

Stephanie: In a book the answers may be very simple. It depends on the story, like is it really unbelievable or believable. too. **Sage:** You can make the decisions, say yes to flying a crocodile [in a story] but would you do that in real life? **Navy:** No. I wouldn't even do that to my close friends? **Sage:** Would you eat a crocodile? **Stephanie:** Yeah 'cause in that [story] world going to fly a crocodile was OK. **Sage:** I can't say for real life 'cause I've never had fun flying crocodiles to some places. **Cedar:** WHAAAAAAT? **Navy:** Yeah, well I'm going eat 3 pizzas, not crocodiles.

Question 4: Can your everyday decisions shape the real world you live in? How? Why?

Cedar: I'm not sure, like God, but Jennifer Grant, like she wanted to like stop climate change. Like I'm not sure, what she wanted, like I can't remember much about it but like she wanted to stop climate change. **Sage:** [whispers helpfully) What did she do? **Cedar:** But like it's sort of like you can make climate change in a story, but can you really do in real life right now? **Navy:** Like nooooooooooooo. It's like doing a little bit. I think that helps anyway. **Cedar:** It might help a lot, I don't know.

Stephanie: If you help homeless people, every day, they might find a job and help their family.

Navy: well yeah picking up garbage or maybe using less water. Sometimes people do that, like washing your hands. Or like if you brush your teeth some people like leave the water on while brushing and then some people, they always like turn it off. I used to keep it on, now I turn it off.

Question 5: Do think you can change the world (and make it a better place) by imagining a different one? How? Why?

Cedar: They changed the world by imagining a different one. ...**Navy:** It doesn't stop people from littering! But it is just something. **Sage:** You can make a website like there's these guys made or like these bracelets they made out of recycled plastic. It was only a dream they had, and they did it, and it helped to change the world.

INTERLUDE:

**CONVERGENCES of HERO/INE’S JOURNEY and THESIS STRUCTURES with
MY RESEARCH JOURNEY and PARTICIPANTS’ STORY-MAKING JOURNEY**

Act 2 of the hero/ine’s journey has two parts. Chapter 3, the Methodology chapter corresponds to Act 2, Part 1 of the hero/ine’s journey called *Navigating the Unknown World* (or *Descent*). This first part of Act 2 also has two sections: *Tests, Allies, and Enemies* (or *Learning How Things Work in the Other World*) and *Anticipating and Preparing for the Work to Come* (or *Approaching the Inmost Cave*). Chapter 4, the Data Creation/Production and Data Collection chapter corresponds to Act 2, Part 2 of the hero/ine’s journey called *Initiation*. This second part of Act 2 also has two sections, the Ordeal and the Reward. *The Ordeal* section for participants describes the multi-level challenges associated with the story’s making, and *The Reward* section for participants presents the completed story as artefact.

While both parts of Act 2 are important to my research, the Methodology chapter maps perfectly onto Act 2, Part 1 of the hero/ine’s journey structure as it pertains my research journey. They intersect. Act 2, Part 1 of my research journey and the Methodology chapter are primarily about navigating the unknown depths of the academic research world in terms of Ethics approval, finding support in the REB, making allies with the members of my Indigenous Research Advisory Committee, preparing for the planned in-person research event. The role of participants in Part 1 of Act 2 is minor and revolves around getting and giving permission to be part of the story-making research.

However, Part 2 of Act 2 features the participants, their task of making a story (the ordeal) and their reward, the completion of the story. While I was active throughout Part 2, my role as researcher in the story-making was minor compared to the role of the participants as they worked through all twelve parts of the three-act hero/ine’s journey story structure. From the perspective of the participants, their learning (hero/ine’s) journey took place solely in Act 2, Part 2 of my research story.

Act 2, Part 2 of the hero/ine’s journey structure maps perfectly onto Chapter 5 of the thesis structure. From the perspective of my research story, I shared in the ordeal and reward of the participants, but I had also collected data (my ordeal) that collectively the participants and I had produced data together. I recorded and documented. My reward lay in having all the data I needed to conduct an analysis. While we were all happy with our accomplishments, we all also

experienced a sense of relief at now being on the other side having done the work. However, for me, my hero/ine's (research) journey was still far from complete.

ACT 3: THE RETURN

CHAPTER 5: AN ANALYSIS OF THE STORY, ITS MAKING, AND THE PRODUCTION OF RECONCILIATION AND OTHER KNOWLEDGES

...it matters what matters we use to think other matters with...

— (Haraway, 2016, p. 12)

In this chapter, I analyze the story made by the participants using two arts-based research evaluation methods taken from qualitative scholars, Patricia Leavy (2019a), and Joe Norris (2011). I also conduct a limited post-qualitative cartographic analysis of the story artefact, based in part, on the works of the Springgay and Truman (2018c) and Lemieux (2021b) who draw on Deleuze's (1998) principles of cartography. As well, I evaluate the story using two CDA perspectives, those being a socio-cognitive one and a social actor one. However, the main trust of my analysis examines the story through a posthuman lens using diffraction, and the story-making *processes* through a research-creation post-qualitative lens.

Chapter Structure

This chapter is structured as three parts. In the first part, I conduct two arts-based research and one cartographic analysis of the story as an artefact that will live on independent of a direct connection with its authors as both art and research data. Using Leavy's (2016) approach, I analyze the story for resonance, audience accessible, imaginative engagement, aesthetics, structure and design, empathetic engagement, signature telling, and sensitive portrayals. Using Norris' (2011) Four Ps approach, I assess the story from four different positions on a four-quadrant wheel representing politics, public positioning, poiesis, and pedagogy. Using Springgay and Truman's (2018b) concept of speculative middles taken from Deleuze and Guattari (1987), I further analyze the story artefact by assessing how, as a book/document/discourse, the participants' story connects with other systems and how it affects and is effected by those systems.

In part two, I conduct a posthumanist-oriented critical narrative/discourse analysis (CNDA) of the story artefact. I use two CDA approaches. The first is a socio-cognitive CDA approach that focuses on the effects of culture and education, particularly language and how word choices, or rhetorical inclusions and exclusions affect thinking (van Dijk, 1996). This approach, I believe, is related to relational dialogics in posthumanist terms. The second is a social actor CDA

approach that focuses on the agency of individuals or artefacts to affect social contexts (Scollon, 1976, 2001; Scollon & Scollon, 2004). This approach is related, I believe, to material agency in posthumanist terms.

In part three, I analyze the story-making intra-active processes and to some extent, the convergences between the story itself and its making, from a post-qualitative research-creation perspective and from a posthuman, diffractive perspective, focused on differences. By this I mean that I examine the changes I saw in the participants as a result of the research (research-creation) particularly related to furthering reconciliation as cultural understanding, empathy, and mutual respect. I do this, by looking at their answers to the before and after questions and by looking at specific discussions and events that happened throughout the research.

From a diffractive perspective, I analyze diffractive patterns produced by differences converging with each other (Barad, 2014).⁴¹ This means I analyze how different materials and beings shaped this research project and assembled us as a system, within other systems and close to other systems. I specifically analyze how we were assembled as a story-making research apparatus and how, in turn, we were assembled by it. This involves analyzing our research apparatus as an assemblage/system. Our assemblage not only included the material collection of participants, researcher, community, and environment, it also included the intensive intra-play of concepts and beliefs, such as, the hero/ine's journey as a learning template and maker-based values, to name two. Therefore, as part of this analysis, I also identify and foreground a limited set of intentions/intensities of our assemblage/system/apparatus that mattered by giving examples of what and how they mattered and for whom they mattered (Barad, 2003; Springgay & Truman, 2018c).

Our apparatus, as a set of different intra-acting *forces* "cutting [us] together-apart" to form our specific open and relatively stable homeostatic assemblage/system serves as starting point for my diffractive analysis, although Springgay and Truman (2018b) would not call it a beginning but rather a speculative middle (Barad, 2014b, p. 168). It continues as an analysis of the diffractive impact that other unexpected forces had on our assemblage. I assess how these forces

⁴¹ "Diffraction/intra-action – cutting together-apart (one move) in the (re)configuring of spacetime-mattering; differencing/differing/ diffe' rancing" (Barad, 2014b, p. 168).

made their presence felt, exerted influence, and transformed our story-making assemblage/system/apparatus (us) as we intra-acted with them. I use the participant-made iterative story decisions I recorded to help me show the transformational impact each of these unexpected forces had on the story, or research apparatus (Latino, Latino, & Latino, 2011). In terms of assessing a cumulative transformational impact, I conduct a comparative analysis of participants answers to the five before and after questions to help me gauge the extent to which students changed (became different).

Related to participants' story decisions I try to assess whether their daily practice of linking conscious decision-making to story worlding helped them to link conscious decision-making to real-life worlding as well, especially as it pertained to becoming respons-able and respons-ible for choices. Related to story worlding, I try to assess whether participants consciously regarded their individual or collective imagination as a future generating vehicle capable to enabling/rendering social change. I do this by examining the ways in which the story-makers built their story world as a diffractive speculation between current realities and an imagined possible reality.

My diffractive analysis of the story-making process includes an analysis of maker-based elements, such as, tinkering, peer teaching, collaboration, non-competitiveness. I include this in my diffractive analysis for three reasons. First, the maker-based practices of this research constitute a different practice than that ordinarily used in Language Arts classes for teaching and learning story-making and writing skills (Barton et al., 2018; Lemieux, 2021a; Lemieux & Lacelle, 2017; Lemieux & Rowsell, 2020b). For example, student collaboration in a classroom setting happens frequently in the thinking part of the "thinking-making-doing" learning model but less frequently at the making and doing parts. Second, from a maker perspective, the purpose of our story-making process was not an individual assessment of each student involved (a practice typically occurring in schools). Instead, the purpose was to develop the group's collective and collaborative ability to iteratively imagine a different world, albeit a story world, and become conscious through a process of iteration of how agential forces such as decision-making structure and hold those worlds together or disassemble them. My analysis also assesses

how participants' intra-actions as collaborators, decisionmakers, and imagineers⁴² work with genre-specific story elements to develop participants' knowledge of empathy, mutual respect, and intercultural understanding (Barad, 2007; de Freitas, 2017; Mazzei, 2014; Rosiek, 2018). Third, because “making” figures as a necessary third stage in Cajete's (1994) *Collected Rings of Indigenous Visioning: Asking, Seeking, Making, Having, Sharing, Celebrating, Being*.

I conclude my diffractive analysis with an assessment of how bringing together the hero/ine's journey praxis with an intentional TRC (2015) Call 63.3 praxis allowed me, and to some extent participants, to produce insights by reading one through the other. This reading of both through the other, foregrounded aspects of Indigenous cultural practice and Indigenous cultural knowledge that created opportunities for us to appreciate Indigenous ways of knowing, the need for mutual respect (between all beings) and the need for empathy with those who have not been respected.

Analyzing the Story through Arts-Based Research and Cartographic Lenses

*It is a question of producing within the work a movement
capable of affecting the mind outside of all representation*

—(Deleuze, 1994, p. 8)

In this part, I analyze the story artefact using three ABR/research-creation approaches to highlight the differences and convergences between them. In organizing my ABR/research-creation analysis this way, I ultimately read each approach through the others for insights, thus creating a diffractive analysis overlay consistent with my posthumanist research framework and orientation. I begin with Leavy (2016, 2019a), then follow with Norris (2011) and Springgay and Truman (2018b).

Criteria-based ABR Approach

In a chapter titled *Criteria for evaluating arts-based research*, Leavy (2019a) outlines seven criteria for evaluating academic arts-based research. They are:

1. Methodology
-

⁴² Rosiek, 2018

2. Usefulness, significance, or substantive contribution
3. Public scholarship
4. Audience response
5. Aesthetics or artfulness
6. Personal fingerprint or creativity
7. Ethical practice

These criteria are valuable to scholars from the perspective of academic credibility, but some of the criteria have limited applicability and relevance from the perspective of the story's readers. The story-makers in my research project, while they employed acts of inquiry together with acts of analysis to develop plot and characters (an ABR fiction-based method) to make their story, an evaluation of their story-making methodology remains outside the concern of most of their story readers.

This said, after a close reading of Leavy's chapter, I was able to distill a more nuanced and more relevant list of criteria to evaluate the participants' story artefact. My distilled list, all taken from Leavy's chapter, are more appropriate for analyzing the participants' story. The criteria are resonance, audience accessible, imaginative engagement, aesthetics, structure and design, empathetic engagement, signature telling, and sensitive portrayals.

Related to point 2, Leavy suggests the following guiding question for analysis: "Does the work *resonate* [my emphasis]? Does it ring true? Does it feel authentic?" (p. 580). The participants' story resonated, I was told, with their classroom peers and with me as I remembered myself at their age. Their story addressed concerns close to their hearts, such as, career choices, authority figures, justice, risk, empathy, and respect. While these concerns were not directly related to furthering Indigenous cultural understanding, an Indigenous perspective provided by *Annie* framed these concerns in the story. For example, in the story, characters made decisions for themselves by evaluating the possible positive and negative consequences of their acts. They reconciled their desire to be helpful with a need to be cautious. They considered alternative points of view and entertained the thought that things may not be as they appear, especially as it concerned the principal. As a non-Indigenous person, I cannot claim that the story resonated with an Indigenous value system, but it seemed to me to have.

Related to point 3 and 4, Leavy suggests asking "Have non-academic stakeholders [and audience] been involved...?" (p. 580). The participants did involve *Annie* and to some extent relatives, friends, and teachers who all to a greater or lesser degree provided verbal input and

feedback on their story ideas. Some input/feedback was provided during the making process, and some was provided after the story was made and read to others in the school and at home.

However, related to point 4 only, Leavy suggests an alternative set of guiding questions that gets more at the literary rather than the research side of things. “Can the work be interpreted in more than one way? Does the work invite individuals to engage with it imaginatively?” (p. 581). While the participants’ story was not crafted to be open to multiple interpretations, it does ask readers to engage with it imaginatively. It asks them to imagine a world in which adults are not authority figures, but advisors who listen to them, who are empathetic and find ways to support them, who help them see things from multiple perspectives, and who ultimately respect their decisions concerning the interests they have or the careers they want to pursue.

Related to point 5, Leavy says “The art has to be ‘good’ in order to evoke the desired response in audience members that promotes the real-world effect you intend...must get at the heart of the issue and present that ‘truth’” (p. 581). While I strongly object to the orientation of this statement, I agree that art has to be “good” as she says, although I am at a loss at how to define good. However, I think good art depends, in part, on the design and structure of the story. In this case, the hero/ine’s journey, a cross-cultural story structure, was given to participants to use and the artistic efficacy of this structure used around the world for thousands of years is not in question. The story might also be evaluated as good art, Leavy suggests, by using the following guiding questions: “Are you moved by it? Are you engaged by it?” (p. 582). What is implied here is an empathetic engagement. The artefact conjured a story world that I found compelling and sufficiently life-like that I thought readers could identify with the issues foregrounded in this world. For example, I found myself rooting for Logan as I read the story and found myself wanting to see one of his blue paintings even though I knew that outside the story none existed. Also, I was moved that the characters first concern was to provide Logan with food as an empathetic gesture because they thought he would be hungry and not just because they hoped it would demonstrate their good intentions. This empathy morphed into a genuine desire to get to know him, and his story (a form of cultural understanding) as demonstrated by their desire to share a meal with him as a community of supportive beings.

While Leavy (2019a) does not distinguish here between art/story content and art/story execution, in this story making project, I must. The content was crafted solely by the participants, but its execution had my help as an editor. I justify this intervention because of the serious time constraints imposed on us by the lunch-time research setting and because literary

crafting was not the focus of the research. In a classroom setting, where more time can be allocated to editorial training and sustained editing, students might edit their own story and test its crafting impact on new readers iteratively to maximize the learning potential of the story-making task.⁴³

Related to point 6, the story does not seem to carry a single unique voice or style, but a rather the collective voices of its authors/makers in explicit or implicit dialog with the voice of *Annie*. Her caring spirit and absolute belief in the youths' (both participants and characters) ability to act well based on their imagination and evaluation of consequences, runs throughout the story. This dialog affects how the characters react and think about their world and what they can do in it. Towards the end of the story, when Logan finds the courage to talk with his parents, with the support offered by the principal and the four main characters, speaks to the power of a caring and supportive community that *Annie* demonstrated by physically coming in to speak to the participants as a mentor. Again, at the end of the story, when Sage gets her father to buy one of Logan's paintings, we, as readers, feel Kookum Annie's caring spirit and "imagine the consequences" orientation she has on the characters. This regard for care and consequences defines the story. The parting thought of the story, given by Sage, is the ability of youth to be agentic changers of the world. That is, Sage imagines the positive consequences on Logan and the school community, of someone buying one of Logan's paintings and donating it to the school so it can be hung there. She then acts to persuade her father to buy it.

Related to point 7, ethical practice, Leavy suggests art-based research must have a multi-dimensional orientation. She asks, "Do [characters] have depth?" and are they presented in a manner that is "culturally sensitive, so that we don't colonize those we aim to portray" (p. 582)? Both Grandmother Annie and Cedar, Indigenous characters in this story, are presented using their own words and placed in story situations that simulate the real-life context in which *Annie* and *Cedar's* words were spoken.

The story artefact analyzed as a qualitative-oriented ABR using Leavy's approach, suggests that the participants' research (their acts of inquiry and acts of analysis) which the story

⁴³ My editor smoothing was approved by participants on an on-going basis when we read what was written on the previous session.

describes, reflects how participants grew their knowledge of the world and themselves. In turn it offers the academic community this knowledge as a story that doubles as a form of pedagogical scholarship. As scholarship, their story indicates a commitment to story-making as a methodology and ethical practice. It also carries a distinctive Indigenous voice in conversation with four youth and invites multiple cultural perspectives. Finally, it engages with stakeholders and to a limited degree, audiences, and is compelling and believable.

Perhaps of lesser importance, participants found the hero/ine's journey model they used to be productive for story-making. Having never worked with this model before, participants inquired into the value of the model at each of the 12 stages of the hero's journey asking does this stage work for us and our story. The fact that the story artefact exists at all, suggests that in their analysis the hero/ine's journey was a useful model for furthering the making of their story. Also, participants' story-making indirectly inquired into the value of the hero/ine's journey as a learning model or an approach for learning something new. As participants developed each act of the story/learning arch, they had to answer the implicit question asked in Act 1, Does learning require a conscious desire and decision to leave the known world despite the risks involved with entering the unknown world? Of Act 2, they had to ask and answer, Does learning require the learner to find knowledgeable mentors to help them develop the skills they will need to navigate the unknown world? Of Act 3, they needed to answer the question, Does learning come with an ethical obligation to bring what is learned back to the known world? In summary, because the participants' story content directly answers the overarching questions of each Act, this suggests that the hero/ine's journey was a useful model for participants to use to learn about the necessity of a personal commitment in learning, how they and their knowledge fits with their community, and how to make stories in the process.

Four Ps-based ABR Approach

Words and phrases mean different things in different cultures. In my tradition, instead of bifurcating life with oppositional nouns like "health" and "sickness" we only use the positive term "health." The way we describe a specific condition is "We are moving toward" or "We are moving away from health." Location and direction are the critical elements.

—(Underwood, 2000, p. xiv in Norris, 2001, p. 2)

In an article titled *Towards the Use of the ‘Great Wheel’ as a Model in Determining the Quality and Merit of Arts-based Projects*, Norris (2011) outlines criteria for evaluating academic, as well as non-academic arts-based projects using Underwood’s (2000) non-dualistic understanding of how a thing or event moves towards or away from of a shared idea of a concept such as health, or for Norris, a shared idea of the following concepts as they relate to arts-based research/projects:

1. Politics
2. Public Positioning
3. Poiesis
4. Pedagogy

While this approach attempts to unseat the power of a dualist understanding in arts-based assessment, which I applaud, it also introduces serious concerns for me around whose definition of these concepts one uses, to what extent these concepts are shared, and how these concepts are always culturally laden. None-the-less, Norris’s approach might be thought of as a qualitative + approach. It tries to pay more than lip service to Indigenous world views in attempting to integrate them in an assessment/analysis model that values notions of perspective rather than getting at the “truth” of a matter (Leavy, 2019a). I take up Norris’ assessment/analysis model here, in part, because it consciously considers the role a template/genre, like the hero/ine’s journey, has on what story can be told, how it is told, and how it is critically political. Further, I think Norris’ model adds an intermediate position in the movement of ABR from a strictly qualitative to a post-qualitative research-creation position. In this way, Norris’ assessment/analysis model provides an evolutionary perspective on research using art production, by including a critical orientation, and perhaps an Indigenous perspective even if it is a co-opted one.

As already explained, Norris’ (2011) Four Ps analysis starts with an assessment of the participants’ story from four different perspectives, politics, public positioning, poiesis, and pedagogy, followed by pinpointing a location for each on a four-quadrant wheel. According to Norris, determining where, in each quadrant, the story is located, depends on the perspective from which it is being viewed. Starting with public positioning, story-specific analysis related to each perspective is provided below. However, before analyzing the artefact’s public positioning, I first had to choose the audience for which the story was intended from the following three options: private, personal, or public. The participants’ story was intended for a personal

audience. As a personal artefact, the story was not open to public scrutiny and therefore could not be judged using the same criteria as say, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (Rowling, 1997).

From a personal audience perspective, I located the story's public positioning position as a point in the middle of its own quadrant because the story artefact was meant to be shared with the participants' friends, family, and school community as personal art, but also provided as public data for my research. From this public position perspective, what was learned or could be learned from the artefact makes pedagogy the dominant analysis point. Participants learned through their story-making about themselves as agential beings and decision-makers and conveyed this knowledge via their characters. They also learned about themselves as already capable and accountable young women, through the lens of an Indigenous world view while in conversation with *Annie*. To some degree this was also conveyed through the character of Grandmother Kookum Annie in the story but not as strongly as it might have been given the influence *Annie* had. Participants also learned to identify and recognize the components in a hero/ine's journey story, but as novices they were only able to accomplish limited artistic crafting or poesis in their story-making. This said, the reading or listening audience might also learn from the story artefact that young people can shape their own futures and can shape the world they live in. They might also learn that seeking out an Indigenous mentor for guidance may be prove beneficial in terms of increasing cultural awareness and providing alternate perspectives to their own. While I don't appear as a character in the story, my desire to learn by way of my research, created the environment for the story-making to happen and for the artefact to be made. So, I include this too as part of the pedagogical impact of the story artefact.

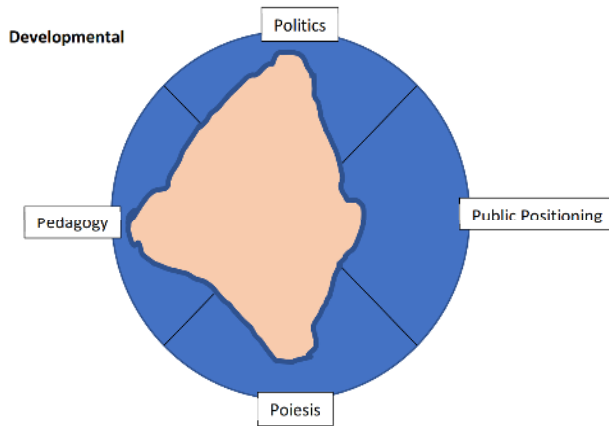
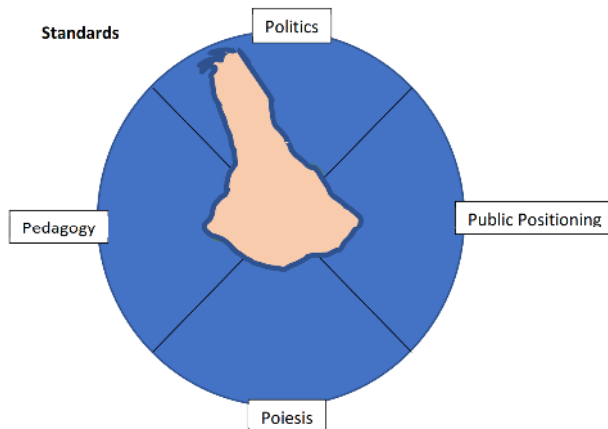
For Norris (2011), there are two types of Politics. Politics A is the kind that we ordinarily think when we consider the critical aspects of an event or situation. That is, what is said and not said, whose voices are present and whose are not, what is figured as acceptable and what is figured as unacceptable and the systemic conditions that make them so. Politics B might be understood as a politics of the art form; what an art critic or book reviewer might say and why. It also suggests the types of constraints imposed on the art-makers. In terms of this artefact, the hero/ine's journey story framework used by participants clearly falls under a B-type politics. Because this framework was employed, the artistic license of the story-makers was ultimately limited by it. However, given the multicultural and global use of this framework as a teaching and learning tool, I determined from the outset of my research that there was a considerable

amount of flexibility already built into the template to justify its use. Further, the structure that this framework was able to provide to participants, when weighed against the potential flounder novice story-makers might have experienced with a structural *carte blanche*, also justified my imposition of this politics. In terms of Politics B, the artefact might be understood as significantly constrained by the 12-part hero/ine's journey process. Setting aside the politics of the hero/ine's journey framework and its intrinsic and possibly simplistic step-by-step learning process for the moment, it did create a space for including Indigenous ways of knowing by way of the mentor which had a ripple and diffractive effect on the story and its making.

In terms of Politics A, the artefact indicates a politics consistent with the values of TRC (2015) Call 63.3. It cultivates cultural understanding through Annie, it shows the four main characters having empathy for Logan, and demonstrates mutual respect between Sage, Cedar, Navy, Stephanie, Logan, and Mr. Davidson. It includes the voices of Indigenous and nonIndigenous characters, and it positions a politics of child agency as a reasonable counterpoint to the usual power and authority expected of a principal. The principal in fact, models an adult person who is in a position of authority but who chooses to distribute his power with his students. He only acts as an authority figure with Logan's parents.

As the final step in using Norris' analysis approach, I needed to heuristically synthesize these perspectival points on a single wheel and connect the points to form a shape. Unable to synthesize these points on a single wheel, I rendered two figures. The first, Figures 12, is developmentally oriented and the second, Figure 13, is standards oriented. Figure 12 indicates that when the story-making process is analyzed as a learning/teaching tool—pedagogy, it occupies a significant area in three quadrants: Politics, Poiesis, and Pedagogy. This is because the participants learned and cultivated mutual respect as a political end and cultivated poiesis by learning how to create empathetic characters to compel classroom audiences.

Figure 13 indicates that an evaluation of the artefact against the ordinary standards of good crafting, good storytelling, good teaching tool, and substantial public reach covered very little area in three of the quadrants: Poiesis, Pedagogy, and Public Positioning. However, by ordinary standards, the artefact's political sensitivity to mutual respect occupied a considerable area. Considering the area of the two shapes, a developmental analysis of the artefact is, perhaps, the best way of assessing the *worth* of the participants' story.

Figure 12*Developmental Area***Figure 13***Standards Area*

The story artefact, analyzed using Norris' approach, suggests that the story-making research had pedagogical value for participants and for me as research data, but contributed little to the Canadian literary canon.

Cartographic Research-Creation-Based Approach

I analyze the story artefact in this section using a cartographic approach, and by situating the story as a speculative middle, a concept that Springgay and Truman's (2018b) developed based on Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) work. This analysis extends the scope of a research-creation event to include the interactions the art (as artefact) produces outside the research event. I argue that as a speculative middle, the intensities experienced by the story-makers inside the research

event are not going to necessarily be the same as those experienced by the readers/listeners interacting with the artefact outside the event, and therefore, these intensity differences merit consideration. In Deleuzian terms, they are the connections the story machine makes with other machines/systems.

For Springgay and Truman's (2018b), an analysis of the story artefact may seem beside the point because in a research-creation project, what is important is not the art produced, but the knowledge produced by participants and researcher through the art while it is being created. As such, they might regard the story artefact as a somewhat incidental and relatively unimportant result of the research. However, because the story artefact lives on materially for readers and listeners with its own agency outside of the research event, an analysis of how the story artefact produces knowledge as it interacts with other materialities, such as readers, can't/shouldn't be ignored. To be clear, what follows is not a content or literary analysis, but rather, an analysis of what the story artefact as book/document/discourse connects with, or as Deleuze and Guattari (1987) say,

We will never ask what a book means, as signified or signifier; we will not look for anything to understand in it. We will ask what it functions with, in connection with what other things it does or does not transmit intensities, in which other multiplicities its own are inserted and metamorphosed, and with what bodies without organs it makes its own converge... (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 4)

In terms of my analysis, I chart the answers to the following questions (and as outlined above):

1. What does the artefact function with?
2. What connections intensify the artefact's presence as a differential force and intensify how broadly and quickly the artefact becomes known?
3. Into what systems does the artefact insert itself and how are those systems changed by it?
4. With what systems does the artefact converge and how is the artefact changed?

Related to point one, the artefact functions in a general way with private readers, public readers and with a listening audience, and because it is an electronic artefact, it functions with electronic displays and with electronic audio reading devices. It does not function without these. In more specific ways, it functions with at least two classrooms, one school, four families, a multitude of authors' friends, and my thesis.

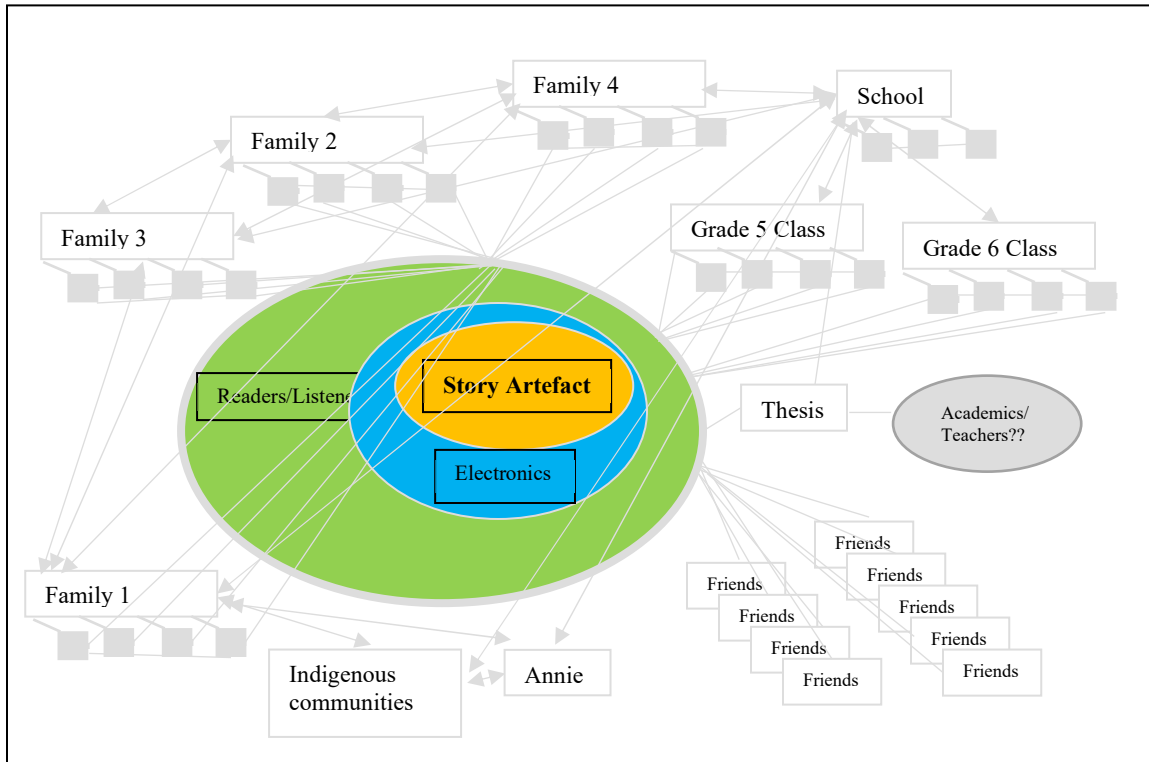
Related to point two, the story artefact's presence becomes known, and its sphere of connections broadens primarily through family members, class members, similar-aged friends. Certainly, most class members are youth, as are some family members, and the authors' friends are too. Thus, in this analysis, the intensity (force) of the artefact is amplified by its connection to youth. Later, after my thesis is written and made available to the public, the story artefact may engender intensive connections with academia or teachers, or it may not. However, if the thesis does connect with these bodies as intended, the story artefact may intensify its function as a model for youth-based story-making, or hopefully as a model for story-making reconciliation.

Related to point three, the story artefact inserted itself into the school and classroom communities and perhaps, into the teacher community at the school. Given the interest expressed by my research participants to make another story and the interest expressed by non-participant students in making a story for the first time, suggests that the school community was changed by the simple existence of the story artefact. Students in Grades 5 and 6 level were more confident in their ability to make an engaging story than they were before the research began.

Related to point four, the story artefact converged with a body of student-authored books at the school, and it converged with the body of stories *Annie* could use with Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. It is not clear if or how the artefact changed in either of these contexts.

The cartography in Figure 14 maps how the artefact, as a speculative middle, made connections to bodies (bodies without organs to use a Deleuzian term, or systems) around it. Some connections were more intense than others, and as the cartography indicates, it gathered differential force with youth, which incidentally, was the intention of the story-makers. The story artefact connected with other forces (bodies without organs) some which were institutional, such as the school's operational value and belief systems, and some of which were cultural, such as views on agency, authority and mistakes, that seemed to have made a difference for beings at the school.

To summarize this part of the chapter, the artefact was analyzed using three established ABR approaches ranging from qualitative to post-qualitative. Each approach brought attention to the different agencies enacted by the artefact as a product of ABR. Leavy's approach assumed a more traditional notion of literary quality and some idea of a fixed representational truth embedded in the content of the story. I believe, she cleaves to these established notions of quality and truth because for her, an artefact must first be perceived (have agency) as research by the academic community before it can be accepted by a general adult public as research expressed

Figure 14*Story Artefact Cartography*

through art. By contrast, the artefact produced in this research event, while it may, at some future time, have limited agency in the academic community, has already enjoyed school-wide distribution and thus the agency of the story content is not contingent on established understandings of quality or truth. Its agency is contingent on the story world it creates and how well it conveys conditions its readers/listeners know to be true, namely the relationships between authority figures and children. However, the agency of the making process that was instrumental in producing cultural knowledge remains background.

Norris' approach, while not abandoning the notions of literary quality or fixed representational truths that Leavy speaks to, argues that perspective, particularly an educational perspective and a political perspective, needs to play a larger part in assessing the quality of the artefact's artistic content. For him, educational value and the development of critical political positioning play agentic roles in assessing the quality of the artefact's content and its audience suitability. As such, the story content of this artefact, positions Grandmother Kookum Annie, as the most trusted adult figure. This is a political statement of the trust that the characters invest in her. In the story's educational and political unfolding, a trust in her engenders the characters'

trust in other worthy adults, namely, the principle. It is the principle who is then able to affect changes in other adults, namely Logan's parents. A culture of trust and the generation of trust between children and adults is the most developed educational and political agency running through the participants' story content. It is note-worthy that this culture of trust, important to the participants, began with *Annie*.

The cartographic analytical approach which situates the artefact as a speculative middle, ignored the content of the artefact altogether and looked instead at how it connected and perhaps changed the world through those connections. The story became a force first for its authors, then very quickly for the youth of the school and their families. While the artefact's effects on students, other than the authors, were not studied, because the story spread quickly in the context of the school suggests that it had considerable agency in connecting with many students on some level.

Although, I was not looking for commonalities, I noticed that in each of the three different analyses, child/youth agency was significantly foregrounded. I will take this up again at the end of the chapter.

Analyzing the Story through a Critical Narrative/Discursive Lens

Two CDA approaches, socio-cognitive and social actor relate to a posthumanist understanding of my story-making research. The socio-cognitive approach analyzes the dialogic currency of the story artefact as a function of the personal, cultural, and social knowledge used to produce the text by the authors and the personal, cultural, and social knowledge used by readers/listeners who interact with the text artefact at a later time (Gee, 2014; Halliday, 1985; Rogers & Schaenen, 2014; van Dijk, 2006; Wodak, 2002). The social actor approach analyzes the agency of the text in the story artefact as a function of specific actors or contexts. In this case, the agency of a story is influenced by who the authors are in social standing thus making what they say and don't say important, and by who is taking the story artefact up and making meaning with it, as well as by where, when, and how the text as story artefact circulates (Fairclough, 2003; Leeuwen, 1996; van Dijk, 1980, 1996, 2014; Wodak, 2012).

Possible posthumanist correlatives for text agency and dialogic currency are found respectively in new materialism which focuses on matter as vibrant and agential, and critical posthumanism (Bennett, 2009; Coole & Frost, 2010a). Critical posthumanism focuses on the force of social, artistic, and ecological discourses etc., to temper what can be said, what can be heard, and what is silenced or removed from view (Barad, 2012b; Braidotti, 2016b; Braidotti &

Regan, 2017; Davies, 2018; Francesca Ferrando, Gisella Sorrentino, & Elena Cappanera, 2019; Hackett & Somerville, 2017; Manning, 2012a; Masny, 2015; J. L. Rosiek, Snyder, & Pratt, 2020).

Socio-Cognitive Approach

Using a socio-cognitive approach to analyze the story artefact, I examined

- how contexts of perception are foregrounded (Wittgenstein, 1968)
- how genre (hero/ine's journey) socially constructs the artefact's discourse (Van Dijk, 1980)
- what assumptions the discourse makes about what the reader or listener brings to the text to make meaning (Kwon, Clark, & Wodak, 2014; Shi-xu, 2014)
- what discourses, signs, and metaphors are taken-for-granted (Hart, 2008; Hart & Lukes, 2007)
- what are the unstated but assumed aspects of discourse (jellybeans are candy) and what are the accepted semiotic over-significations (green means eco-friendly)

Related to point one and point three, there is perception of teachers by students of them being unfair and of objectifying students to some degree. Sage's detention note and her thoughts about the note embody these two perceptions.

Sage wrote that she was on her phone texting...She also complained that her phone had got taken away in addition to having got a detention. "Double the punishment," she thought, "Unfair!" but she didn't write that.

Sage takes for granted that a detention discourse for teachers' values contrition and does not welcome teacher criticism.

Related to point four, there is also a perception by students of school principals being somehow innately evil or sinister. This perception is so strong and so generally understood by the students in this story, that they fail to consider the principal as a person on his own merits until much later in the story when Logan tells them Mr. Davidson is helping him.

"So just to be clear, the principal is the good guy here and your problem is with your parents?" asked Sage.

There is a sense in the story that this perception of principals is well understood by a school-age audience. If this, in fact, is the case, I suggest that the "principal discourse" is a socially performed one on the part of principals and a socially learned one on the part of students. It may

be construed as an instrument of authority used to engender a sense of fear in students, thus making control over them easier.

Related to point three, but particularly point five, there is an unstated assumption about parents. They worry. However, the authors also over-signify worried parents saying that parents when they worry become unpredictable. The characters make this known when talking to Logan and the principal.

I think we need to go back to my place before someone starts to worry and calls your parents or mine. Who knows what will happen then?" she declared.

They all knew what she meant, even Logan. He looked disappointed but knew they had to go home.

Related to point three, the authors assume their readers know the meaning of BFF, texting, and know that personal portable phones are devices many students bring to school when they say in their story "...she was on her phone texting her BFF." The authors assume (probably unknowingly) that their readers must live in populated areas for them to have mobile phone service and have a degree of affluence to have their own personal device to appreciate getting caught for texting in class. Aside from these assumptions that have critical and likely cultural implications, there is an unspoken temporal state of relevance implied by the use of the BFF acronym. It is implied that when a reader doesn't know the meaning of BFF, it is unlikely that the story artefact will connect with youth their age. The use of the acronym, the reference to texting, and the controlled use of phones at school could also speak to the authors current cognitive state, meaning their inability to imagine a date in time or a time in their personal development when these things could cease to be relevant. Either way, the artefact has a time stamp and a lifespan determined by the use of these terms and ideas.

The authors also assume that their school-age audience understands that detentions are events created for the teachers' benefit to make them feel in control and are only inconvenient for students in so far as parental censure is likely to result. However, students know that they have no transformative value. In fact, they are events of student ridicule to be laughed off, as suggested by the characters laughing as they made their way down the hall to the detention room. Importantly though, the text suggests that detentions create spaces where like-minded students can recognize each other and later bond and make friends with each other as happened in this story. The reader might assume, correctly, that the story takes place in September, inferred by

Logan's summer clothing, when students are still in the process of learning about who they have been thrown into class with and who their allies are.

Related to point two, the hero/ine's journey story template while regulating story development and limiting story line innovations, also promotes learning and learning from trusted mentors, as a way of handling the curiosity, excitement, and fear of facing the unknown. The story template also provides a framework for breaking down a specific task into 12 manageable steps. It provides a view of learning that suggests the community can help, and that the community in the end benefits from student learning too. The template also implies ultimate success but not without challenges, so in this way, it is a template of encouragement and perseverance. This is not a dystopian template and may lead readers to believe that any problem can be solved, which of course, is not the case, but it is a hopeful and practical learning template.

Social Actor Approach

Using a social actor approach, to analyze the story artefact, I examine

- what role, identity, and agency the artefact enacts within the social and cultural contexts of the school (Wodak & Meyer, 2008)
- what were the contexts of social practice in which human actors as well as the artefact interacted with or resisted within the social network of school (Scollon & Scollon, 2004)
- how the artefact enacted a more balanced power distribution between learner and teacher (Kress, 2012)
- how an education problem-based engagement (hero/ine's story template) with familiar situations and language provides students with context, skill practice, and role playing opportunities (Gee, 2012)

Related to point one, authorship for some, perhaps many, students in the school, is a prestigious title to claim. It is a claim that can only be substantiated by the artefact. Thus, the artefact played a role in forming the identity of the authors who made it, both as they saw themselves through this accomplishment and as others saw them. The artefact also had a role to play in asserting the transformational force (agency) youth can exert on the world given the right kind of guidance. The authors were held in high esteem by their peers and as a result they were poised, before COVID and the school closed, to become story-making leaders for peers who wanted to make a story for the first time. They would have become teachers in their own right.

Related to point two and three, the role Grandmother Kookum Annie played as a trusted mentor and teacher, placed Indigenous ways of knowing at the center of the story, as did *Annie's* teachings with the story's authors. Therefore, as the story artefact is circulated and read, the centrality of Indigenous ways of knowing is also circulated. In this small way, the artefact promotes Indigenous cultural wisdom, and regards it as important to all the student characters including the settler student characters who respect it.

However, what Grandmother Kookum Annie teaches also redistributes the balance of power both inside and outside of school. She reminds the characters that they alone are accountable for their decisions and that no one can make decisions for them.

She told them that it was important to look at the facts carefully and to be sure to be accurate and honest with themselves.

“Be sure that you understand what you are about to do. Make sure to think of all the possible consequences before you act. Think about the consequences for your family and friends. Think about the consequences for the person in the basement. Think about the consequences for the principal.

In a similar way, Logan's considered decision to run away, not only asserts his agency but enacts his own version of a parent-child power redistribution. He explains this to the four girls in answer to Stephanie's question concerning whether his parents would be worried.

“Yes, I think they probably are [worried]. They act like they don't care but I think they do. Still, I need to think without any pressure,” answered Logan.

While Logan didn't have a solution to his problem initially, he knew what he needed to do to develop one—to think alone without pressure.

Related to point four, Gee (2012) observed that most writing at school is decontextualized but that in real life, “[t]here is no such thing as decontextualized language” (p.11). There is only language that is heavily contextualized and social. The artefact was not just any old story in the school library. In the context of specific classrooms or the school in general, it was the story that these four students made and that other students wanted to read because of this and them. Within the covers of the artefact, the authors built a context within which their story could unfold, and within which their story was believable. The language of the artefact was highly contextualized by the story world created by it. The story language could be readily understood because the story world imitated real-life social situations at school and real-life emotional situations for

youth around the characters' age. The story also used a framework of educational concepts and associated language that youth would be familiar with, namely problems that need to be solved and skills that needed to be developed and practiced.

To summarize this part of the chapter, agency and context are highlighted in both the socio-cognitive and social actor CDA analyzes of the artefact. While I regard agency and context as significant in any analysis of any story, there are problems and advantages associated with a critical discourse analysis to produce knowledge about the artefact. The primary advantage of a CDA rests in the fact that the words of the story do not change over time; they are stable. However, it is this stability that also creates problems. For example, a CDA analysis is always concerned with the interaction between the researcher *now* and an artefact, independent of when the story was created. A social actor analysis does not generally account for the interaction of a reader now and a story written back then that a literary analysis might. While the story does not change, the times and the people interacting with it are in flux. The artefact/story is always already situated in a space that is different from the authors' and always different for everyone reading/listening to it. The artefact, because it is a construction made by social and individual relationships at a specific point in time and in a specific space, its agency is contingent on the context of the readers and those interacting with it. For example, it may be hard for readers today to conceive of a story being written on typewriters or by hand, typeset and printed, but even this change in context influences how an artefact is taken up and who might take it up. Thus, an artefact's agency must be expected to scale and change shape in different ways and at different rates from reader to reader depending on context and time. It may even cease to be relevant and lose most of its potential for agency. It may be lost or die.

Perhaps the real value of a CDA or any analysis of an artefact is that it reminds us that time and place do not live outside the artistic creation or the reader/listeners' appreciation of it. It suggests that oral traditions for story telling are perhaps more sensitive to this reality. An oral storyteller, while remaining true to a story, can contextualize it for the audience, can foreground some aspects that perhaps the audience needs to be reminded of, and generally personalize it for the here and now, and the audience. In many ways, a CDA seems more appropriate for oral (story) discourses than for text-based artefacts because when analyzing text artefacts, it is so easy to forget as researchers that while situations, relationships, and contexts might be similar, they are never the same.

Analyzing the Story-Making through Posthumanist and Post-Qualitative Lenses

The first two parts of this chapter focused exclusively on an analysis of the artefact. For some researchers, the artefact/story could represent the sum of the research. I don't dispute this in principle, but what I do take issue with is the lack of transparency the artefact affords into the processes that made it. While arts-based research (ABR) does attend to some aspects of the making process, they do not look at how particular assemblages produce a text/story, nor do they look at how the making process changed the makers. For my analysis of the making process, I do not rely on qualitative ABR approaches, nor do I use the same post-qualitative analysis approach that research-creation uses. My analysis attends to the story-making processes in a radically different way; I use a posthumanist approach.

My posthumanist, post-qualitative analytical approach draws heavily on education scholars like Snaza (2019), Taylor (Taylor, 2016), Lemieux (2021; Lemieux & Rowsell, 2020a, 2020b; M. Sheridan et al., 2020), Cedar (2016), Sommerville (2017; Hackett & Somerville, 2017b; Somerville et al., 2020), Kuby (2018), Prophet (Prophet & Pritchard, 2015), Murriss (2016), Osgood (Moxnes & Osgood, 2019). These scholars have adopted Haraway's (2013) and Barad's (2014) articulation of diffraction as a method of analysis. Like Barad (2007) and many of the educational scholars listed above, I also use diffraction to analyze the porous boundary formations created by the research apparatus/assembly and the impact these have on the research. Looking at the workings of the apparatus within these boundaries, I draw on education scholars like Sidebottom (2019, 2018b), Klich (2012), Rice and Mundel (2018), Snaza and Weaver (2014), Taylor (2016) who have adopted Braidotti's (2018) idea of subjectivity formations to analyze the constitution of the apparatus/ assemblage. Further, I draw on education scholars, Anette Gough and Noel Gough (2017) and Weaver (2018, 2015a) who follow Hayles (1999, 2006).

As well, I enlist the work of Bennett (2012), Coles (2015), Luhmann (1995), Maturana (n.d.), Prigogine (2000), and Wolfe (2008) to help me determine, then analyze what aspects of the story-making kept the process going as a stable and autopoietic process, what changed the process, and what disassembled it. Looking at boundaries in a different way, I analyze their sensitivity to perturbations and how new forces entered the research and influenced or changed the behavior of the apparatus/assemblage (Deleuze, 1994; Hayles, 1991; Lorenz, 1993; Manning, 2012a; Mitra, 2014; Prigogine & Stengers, 1984). Related first to the autopoiesis of our assemblage, then to the perturbations it experienced, and finally to its re-stabilization as a story-

making apparatus, I analyze the assemblage's ability to respond to the stable and changing forces in an ethical way (Barad, 2012a).

I also analyze the hero/ine's journey template, as both a subjectivity and a force, to evaluate the ethical fitness of the apparatus/assemblage as a performance that marks matter that matters and for whom (Barad, 2003a, 2012a; Butler, 1990; Kuby & Christ, 2020). I also take a closer look at how the "story decisions" the participants made can be analyzed as a set of exclusions. I analyze these exclusions as an extension of and in the context of diffractive boundary formation. Related to the analysis of story-making decisions, is an analysis of how individual and collective decision-making as a selective and conscious set of exclusions built different contexts for transformation and reconciliation.

In consideration of the assertions above, the main parts of this section are discussed fully under the following headings:

- Analyzing the Story-Making Context as Posthumanist Diffraction
 - A Diffractive Analysis of the Story-Making and/as Research Apparatus
 - Boundaries and Subjectivities
 - Embedded and Embodied Systems
 - Sensitivity to Perturbations
 - A Diffractive Analysis of the Ethical Responsibility and Response-Ableness of the Participants and the Story
- Analyzing the Story-Making as Agential Mattering
 - Marks that Matter and Agential Reciprocity
 - Marks of Self-Determination and Responsible Decision-Making
- Analyzing the Story-Making as World Building Exclusions (Decisions) by Makers
 - Exclusion: Bad Word or Wrong Word?
 - Decision-Making
 - Experimental Decision-Making and Tinkering to Get It Right
- Analyzing the Story and the Story-Making as Instrument of Reconciliation
 - Reconciliation through Praxis

Analyzing the Story-Making School Context as Posthumanist Diffraction

A diffractive analysis examines what happens when two or more different forces meet. If, as Deleuze asserts, “Intensity is difference”, a diffractive analysis needs to also examine the intensity of the forces meeting and the assemblages they meet in (Deleuze, 1994, p. 223). School, as the location of this story-making, needs to be examined as a differential force.

The school where this research took place, like most other schools in Canada is/was entrenched in a settler colonial view of education with its classrooms, books, authority figures, etc. The principal attempted to make space for Indigenous cultures within this settler structure by bringing people like *Annie* to speak with students generally and support Indigenous students’ educational needs, specifically. As much as the school may have wanted to be inclusive, it adhered to a system of education that was significantly different from and perhaps at odds with traditional Indigenous systems of education despite being located on the unceded territory of the Algonquin peoples. Children of various Indigenous cultures serviced by this school were legally compelled to attend it whether they or their parents wanted it or not. From a different perspective, children of settler parents had an opportunity to interact with students from several Indigenous cultures, to learn with them and in the process get their “take” on or reaction to various concepts or modes of learning. This said, the school system favoured settler ways of knowing and privileged them, and without denigrating Indigenous ways of knowing, although it did not seek to incorporate Indigenous ways of teaching and learning in the school’s day-to-day practices.

In one unfortunate incident that affected the Indigenous participant in my project, the force of the school’s settler value system which favoured the rule of adult authority was used to justify her exclusion from a dance performance she wanted to be part of. Apparently, she misbehaved, although she insisted, she did not, and was removed from the group. It seemed to me that in this case, it was more important to the adult leaders to have a flawless performance on stage without this student than it was to have a potentially less perfect performance but have this girl *learn* the importance of working with the other dancers to make the performance the best it could be. It seemed to me, that worst case, even if her behaviour would have caused her to mess up on stage, her own regret/embarrassment that might have resulted would have been a valuable lesson to for her to learn. It might have been a lesson the others associated with the dance group, including the adults, could have been prepared to allow. It surprised me that even in the context of a school where learning and child wellbeing are assumed to be primary and where this child was known,

it was put second to the quality of the performance for an audience of people at the National Arts Centre they did not know. The diffraction between this student's desire to be part of this Indigenous group through this dance performance intra-acted with the results-orientation of the school and teachers to show how the educational systems failed to teach her how to be her best. Instead, it taught her that she had failed and did not belong to the group she thought she belonged to. While this diffractive intra-action was devastating for the student involved, it clearly showed how settler colonial schools privilege results over learning.

Examined differently, but still diffractively, one can see that when an assemblage or systemic force, such as school, intra-acts with embedded assemblages, such as an Indigenous dance group, that several outcomes might arise. In one case, the cultural pride from which the dance emerged and the value system that the dance embodies is changed by the settler values of the school that embeds it. In another case, the school values might be changed by the Indigenous values embedded in the dance. In other cases, both value systems may experience some change, or none at all. What happened in this case, seems to have been the first case; the force of the values of the embedding assemblage (school) were accepted.

From a critical perspective, the intersection of unequal power forces, but particularly the ones between adult and child in a school context, merits further examination as diffraction. It is interesting that adults who exist in fewer numbers at school overwhelm the differential power force of the children despite the children's greater numbers. Simple math would suggest that it should be otherwise. Using the following image, Figure 15, of diffracting rain droplets to illustrate my analysis, one can see that even the force of the largest raindrop cannot overwhelm the collective forces of all the smaller ones.

Figure 15

Diffractive Patterns of Small and Large Raindrops in a Puddle



Note: "[flac, flic, flop](#)" by [sinkdd](#) is licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND 2.0](#)

Extending this metaphor, while the teacher may be just one raindrop in a classroom, in the larger educational context, the teacher is also immersed in the water fabric of the forming puddle. Unlike the children, the teacher *is* also the educational pool that puddles school policy, provincial curriculum, concepts of settler education held in the Canadian imaginary (Anderson, 1991). Further, the teacher is in and of the pool by choice. Unlike their teachers, students may not have chosen this form of education for themselves. As a result, one can imagine two kinds of diffraction happening. One is a diffraction of students intra-acting with each other *across* the surface of the pool as raindrops and the other is of students intra-acting with teachers as a vertical diffraction below the surface of the pool. Even as students are absorbed into the pool, their lack of choice about their schooling keeps them apart, to some degree, *from* the educational system that engulfs them rather than as a part *of* it like their teachers are.

I saw evidence of this in the negative, much like the renga research did (Gabriel & Connell, 2010). The participants in my research never once openly discussed their displeasure or disapproval with the way the school or educational system operated, and even openly praised the home-room teacher of two of the participants, Mrs. S., but their collective story indicates, in the positive, something other than approval of the school system, although the story continues to acknowledge “good” players in the system. The participants used their characters in the context of story-making sandbox to ridicule school practices, evaluate individual adults/teachers, and discuss what they thought educational support should look like. The story allowed idea engagement and exchange by the story characters that they seemed unwilling to engage in as participants.

Story excerpt where disapproval of school practices is discussed:

When the last bus pulled out of the parking lot, the teacher told them to wait while she asked the principal to call their parents.

“What do you guys think your moms and dads are going to say,” asked Sage.

“I’ll probably be grounded,” said Navy. “Me too,” echoed Stephanie. “For sure, I’ll be grounded too,” added Cedar.

“What about you, Sage, what are your parents going to say?” Cedar inquired.

“They will probably send the nanny to the school for me because they’re gone on a business trip and are too busy,” said Sage.

As they spoke to each other, the teacher came back in and explained that the principal would be checking in on them soon. “In the meantime,” she commanded, “take

a piece of paper and write down why you were sent here to after school detention,” then, she left the room. Her steps echoed down the empty hall as she walked away.

Stephanie wrote,

I am in detention because I was reading and not listening.

Navy wrote that she was writing a story when she was supposed to be in class. Sage wrote that she was on her phone texting her BFF. She also complained that her phone had got taken away in addition to having got a detention. “Double the punishment,” she thought, “Unfair!” but she didn't write that. Cedar wrote that she interrupted the class...

Story excerpt where support and non-supportive adult/school practices are discussed:

“We heard the principal talking to somebody. Was that you?” asked Navy.

“Yeah, that was me and Principal Davidson talking,” replied Logan.

“So, he knows you’re here? Is he keeping you here against your own will?” questioned Navy.

“Yes, he knows and no he’s not keeping me here. It’s my choice. He is going to help me. We are going to talk about it later tonight.”

“What do you mean he’s helping you?” asked Sage.

“Well, he found me this morning, then brought me some food at lunch time,” replied Logan. “He gave me the key to this place so I could lock myself in for my own safety. He is just concerned and wants to help me. He knows me from when I went to school here. I guess he liked me back then.”

Logan continued, “I snuck in here on Saturday after I ran away from home. Mr. Davidson said he would feed me and keep me safe so that I would have time to think about things and figure out where I want to go. He said he wouldn’t tell my parents until we had a chance to talk.”

Returning to the metaphor above concerning the educational pool but thinking now about the mechanics of the power differential between students and adults at school and how it is maintained, I suggest that the collective organization of thought and practice around schooling by teachers, curriculum, and policy versus the individual practices of students may be a contributing factor. Even though the educational pool is made up of all the raindrops, students, teachers, policies, etc., it is stronger as a collectively organized, (settler colonial) social force than any one raindrop that gets included by it. Children do not have the mechanisms to organize collectively in the same way as the educational system does and are thus unable to assemble the

force of their greater numbers in any significant way. However, children do recognize the power differential between themselves as children and their teachers and respond to the unfairness of the situation routinely with resistance expressed as a “you can’t tell me what to do” kind of disobedience.

Thinking further on how schools and teachers mobilize their power on a day-to-day basis to control and manage unacceptable student behavior, two other realities became apparent. The first is related to student punishment and the second is related to how students respond to a rebalancing of power. The first concerning punishment suggests that the school exercises effective control over children by isolating those who disobey from the group for punishment/detention, however, not before the punishment is announced to the larger class group, presumably to warn the obedient children of what will happen to them should they disobey. The disobedient child might be likened to the diffractive interference of the rock shown in the second image below.

Figure 16

Diffractive Patterns Around Isolated Objects



Note: "[wave diffraction and interference](#)" by [wanderflechten](#) is licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND 2.0](#)

Some educators, like Nicole Bell (2011) and Low et al., (2016) suggest that schools generally reward conformity, sameness, and in a word, homogeneity. I suggest that these rewards also help to maintain school/adult control of students. For example, I observed no instances of the school rewarding social nonconformity, difference, or heterogeneity while I was there. It is,

therefore, *not insignificant* that the participants' story begins with the exercise of this control by a teacher, with its resulting punishment announcement, and students' subsequent isolation for the execution of the detention punishment for nonconforming behaviour. Further, like the dance performance example above, I saw similar displays of adult power through punishment in other school situations. For example, two participants were prevented from coming to one of our lunch-time gatherings as punishment for failing to present a note to the lunchroom supervisor giving them permission to attend our session on a different day even though it was well known by all that these students were participating in this project.

The second insight concerning the rebalancing of power emerged because of *Annie's* radically different Indigenous way of teaching approach and the way the participants responded to it. Instead of telling the participants to do something this way or that way, she recognized her responsibility as an educator to ensure children practice independent decision-making as well as their right to self-determination by refusing to make recommendations or decisions for them. She only counselled them to think of the impact and potential consequences of their decisions before making them and to be accountable for those decisions afterwards. Almost immediately, the participants responded to this rebalancing of power and changed the trajectory of their story from one focused on the principal as a villain to one focused on the principal as an ally. While this school, by all accounts was more sensitive to Indigenous educational needs than most, I could not ignore the force of colonial settler values that informed and formed the context of the public school system where I conducted my research.

A Diffractive Analysis of the Story-Making and/as Research Apparatus

Just as an analyze of the story-making processes cannot be separated from the context of the school, it is also the case that the story-making processes cannot be separated from the operation of my research apparatus. By research apparatus, I mean the specific arrangement of my research in terms of time, place, people, materials, concepts, templates, etc. used. It includes the research design and the unplanned aspects of the research project, but more importantly, it includes the relationships between all these moving parts. As such, my research apparatus outlined the contours of our research assemblage, as well as the operation of the research measurement tools within it. In specific terms, my research apparatus included the school environment, the small room we met in, the time constraints imposed on our meetings, the nervous energy and hunger of the participants due to when we met, hallway distractions, a barrage of PA announcements, the heat generated by the computer, tablet, and five bodies especially when the door was closed. It

included the hero/ine's journey template, the model story we read together, the recording devices, the participant banter and discussions, story decision-making, and us: me, the four students and *Annie* on one occasion.

While this list is far from comprehensive, it is meant to give a sense of the complexity of my research apparatus as I understand it. For me, any change to any one of these conditions in our assemblage would necessarily change the apparatus and thus the outcomes of the research I recorded. This is to say that the marks left on the story, the school, the people involved, etc., that is, the marks I recorded, were not just a result of the dynamic story-making processes we performed, but they were also influenced, in part, by the research measurement tools I put in place. I saw, heard, and felt what the measurement tools allowed me to be sensitive to.

[A]pparatuses are not mere static arrangements in the world, but rather apparatuses are dynamic (re)configurings of the world, specific agential practices/intra-actions/performances through which specific exclusionary boundaries are enacted.

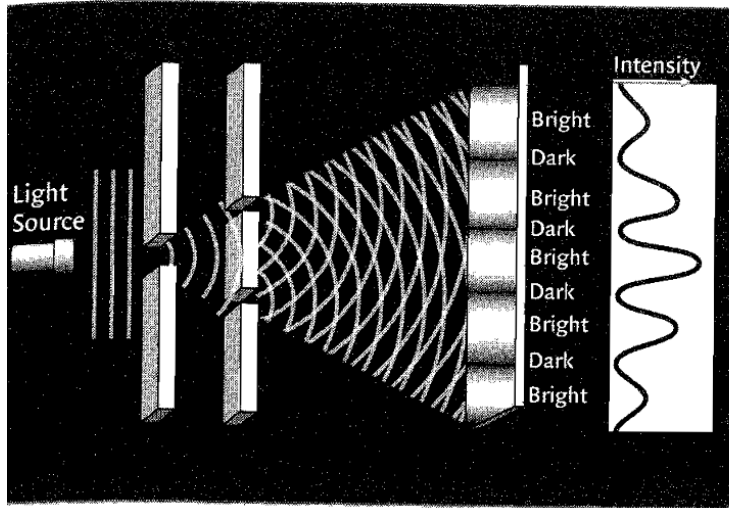
Apparatuses have no inherent "outside" boundary. This indeterminacy of the "outside" boundary represents the impossibility of closure...Apparatuses are open-ended practices. Importantly, apparatuses are themselves phenomena. (Barad, 2003b, p. 816)

As Barad (2003b) shows with the two-slit experiment, illustrated below in Figure 17, boundaries are porous. This said, the primary focus of my diffractive analysis pertains to the boundaries formed by the apparatus around the research, the subjectivities formed with and within the assemblage/apparatus, and how these subjectivities intra-acted by way of the porous boundary with other subjectivities not initially part of the assemblage. Diffraction marked the locations where boundaries met and produced something different. Some of these boundaries were cultural while others were material.

"[D]iffraction patterns illuminat[e] the indefinite nature of boundaries—displaying shadows in "light" regions and bright spots in "dark" regions—the relation of [differences] is a relation of "exteriority within" (p. 803).

Figure 17

Two-slit Experiment showing Diffractive Interference Banding and Intensity Wave



Note: Taken from Meeting the Universe Halfway (Barad, 2007, p. 82)

Not only does the illustration above show the indefinite boundaries of an apparatus as bright and dark areas, but it also shows the specific marks of this specific apparatus setup on the measurement panel as intensity. Every apparatus makes visible what it is setup to attend to—to detect. The narrower the attention field of the apparatus is, the less the apparatus is able to detect intra-actions in a wider field that may be affecting it.

Boundaries and Subjectivities

Given the objectives of my research related to TRC (2015) Call 63.3, my apparatus had to be sensitive to cultural differences. This meant I had to analyze the cultural differences at play and how they intra-acted diffractively together in the assemblage and across assemblage boundaries to form subjectivities.

My research project had one participant of Cree heritage, one participant of East Indian descent, one participant of Italian descent, and one participant whose heritage was not made known. It also had an ad hoc, short term, Indigenous participant in *Annie*. The initial assemblage of the story-making process did not include *Annie*, but the boundaries of our assemblage were porous enough to include her when she became needed, as a mentor consultant. Note that the same assemblage, due in part to the research ethics I had agreed to, was not porous enough to accept two other participants mid-process without the requisite consent forms.

Once physically part of the story-making assemblage, *Annie*, when she visited, shared her cultural understanding of what it meant to be a girl, an adult woman, a mother, and grandmother not as four distinctive states but rather as one that spanned linear temporal boundaries. This state was tied to learning and skill development but was not conditional on it. In the context of helping others, she said:

You know we want to help because, especially as girls, right, as young girls it's in our heart; it's in our it's in our gene[s]; it's in every part of our body. So, I want to save other people. It's part of who we are because, you know, we are all born as mothers and grandmothers. And throughout their young years, [as girls] we're learning to become a mother.

I use this example from *Annie* to illustrate how in the context of this assemblage, the boundaries of her culture were porous enough to allow her to share some parts of it with us, and our cultural boundaries, as participants and researcher were porous enough to take in what she had to say and to be affected by it.

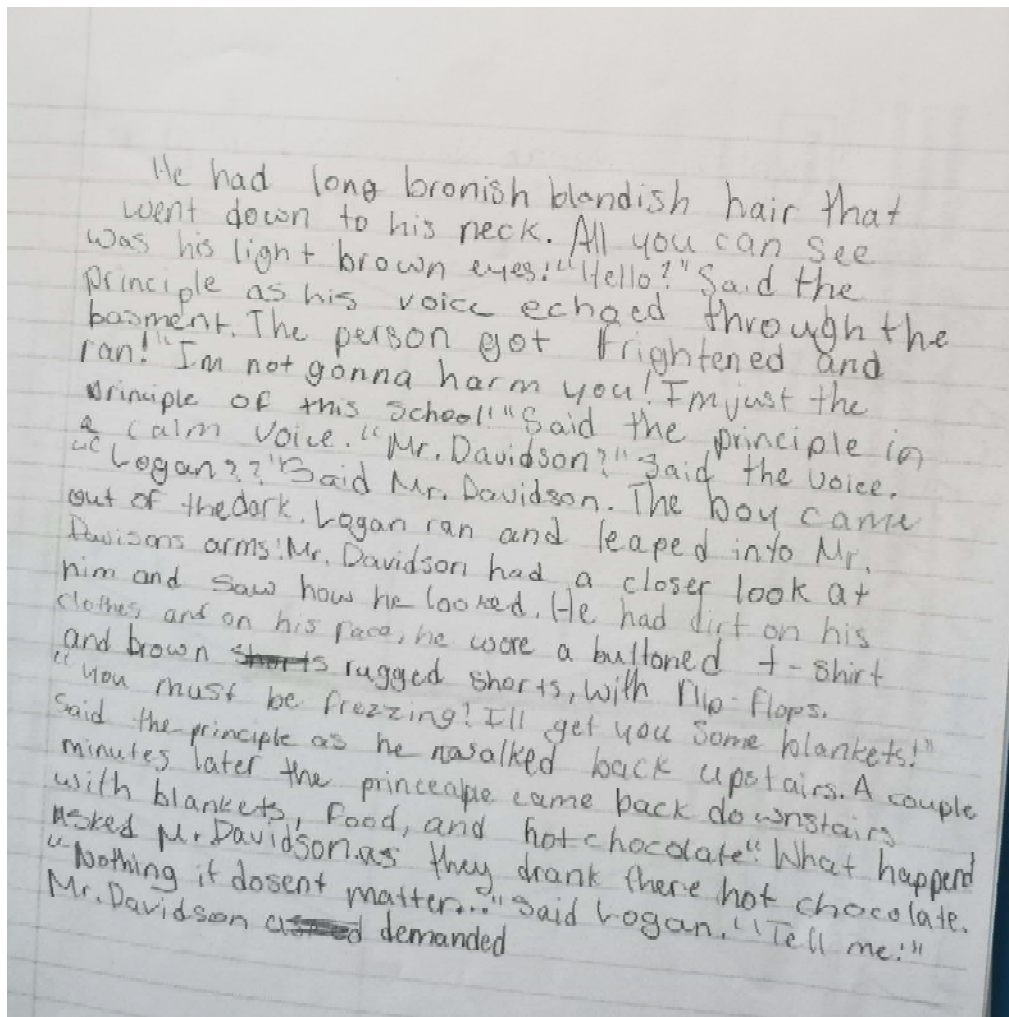
Abstractly, I was familiar with what *Annie* was saying, but I had never had it made as personal and real for me as “we are all born as mother and grandmothers.” For me, and I suspect for the three settler participants, these were words we had never heard before and the thoughts about ourselves they produced, we had never thought before. The cultural differences between Indigenous and settler Canadian figurations of being female could not have been more pronounced. And yet, we felt the intensity of her different ways of knowing, took them in, thought about them, and ultimately responded to them. As a result, or to use *Annie*'s word, as a “consequence”, the collective subjectivity of the assemblage changed that day. While *Annie* never joined us again, our story-making assemblage remained altered by her visit.

In her physical absence, but with her attached presence in this new subjectivity, participants, responded concretely to her counsel about consequences and being accountable. They also responded to the respect she showed them as agential beings (described earlier) thus making them open to her suggestion that teachers and leaders could be helpful allies. As already mentioned, participants were so open to her suggestion, they were ready to imagine a world in which these values were played out in the story. This openness or boundary porousness was most notably signalled by the participants changing the evil character of the principal—the act that changed the shape of their story.

Digressing for a moment, in perhaps an ethnographic fashion, I describe, in the following paragraphs, the shape of some of the subjectivity formations in our group. Other than the significant subjectivity of *Annie*, participants and story characters subjectivities also formed. The participant playing the character *Stephanie*, for example, was an extremely quiet and reserved person. Compared to the other participants, she rarely spoke. She never tried to make her presence felt in the group, although she did contribute to discussions when prompted. I don't think it was conscious on the part of her fellow participants, but it is interesting that in the story, her character had almost the greatest number of speaking parts—28. I suspect that the three other participants wanted to show her that they valued her voice and considered what she had to say as important. Only *Navy* had one more speaking part than her at 29. *Cedar* had 19 and *Sage* had 23.

In terms of verbal discussion and banter, *Cedar* was the loudest and most animated. She sometimes positioned herself center stage but always assumed responsibility to carry the conversation when the others were letting it die. She cast herself as a clown, and she was very often funny. However, even though she cast herself as a clown, the group cast her differently, less as clown and more as “jester” in the medieval sense. In this jester sense, her role/subjectivity within the group was to produce incisive social commentary, funny or not.

Sage's subjectivity was that of the popular kid, but a *kind* popular kid. She was the most talkative of the group and others often gave her the floor when she wanted to speak. *Navy* was the subjectivity most attended to when she spoke. In terms of home life, the other participants knew she carried a lot of responsibility for the well-being of her siblings, so when she got excited by an idea and let herself get carried along by it, they listened and were happy for her. Her perseverance and frequent bouts of joy seemed to inspire the others. *Navy* was also the writer in the group and respected for it. On two occasions, she prepared text and brought them to present to the others. On one occasion, she prepared a short description of the mystery boy she called Logan and some possible plot scenarios. Many of her ideas, including the name of the boy, she proposed, were integrated into the story.

Figure 18*Navy's Story Ideas and Text*

The Wealth Subjectivity. At first, I found it strange that the group created a seriously flawed imaginary subjectivity around what wealth and affluence looked like. *Sage*, more than the others, embraced this subjectivity. For example, *Sage* the character, had a nanny, a butler, a chef, and a housekeeper. She had a big house with many bedrooms that she lived in with brother and mostly absent parents. The group's concept of affluence appeared to be drawn from American television shows rather than real experience. None of these participants were affluent or lived in a family where money didn't matter. As I mentioned earlier, in the absence of any real experience or real knowledge, the participants substituted TV fictions in their place to understand these gaps. Boundary porousness did not work in their favour when faced with such social unknowns.

Embedded and Embodied Systems

In this section, I return to the transcription above from *Annie* to analyze her concept of embeddedness and embodiment. I contrast it with similar system concepts that participants were familiar with. Enlarging on the specific systems at play during the story-making, my analysis found that the story-making progressed in a stable way by developing autopoietic feedback mechanisms explained below.

Systems Within Systems. The idea of groups within classrooms and classrooms within a school were embedded concepts the participants were familiar with. Participants seemed to understand our story-making group in a similar way. It didn't stand outside the school; it was embedded by the school but had its own subjectivity and ways of operating that were different from that ordinarily experienced at the school. They knew this intellectually. They knew that the recording equipment, computer, tablet, and even the lunch I provided were embedded in the larger thing called research. They knew that the characters and the plot, for example, were embedded in the story. The idea of embodiment, however, seemed to be only understood, when it was at all, more intuitively. "Blue" was the name they called the recording globe that stood on a table-top tripod. Even though Blue would have been regarded as a thing by most people, the participants clearly regarded it as having an embodied personality. Each of them routinely greeted Blue when they entered our tiny room often touching Blue at the same time. When *Annie* said "as young girls it's in our heart; it's in our it's in our gene[s]; it's in every part of our body" the participants related to the heart felt and body felt experiences she referred to without seeming to appreciate that the body knows in many ways that are not always with the brain. They knew that touching Blue (exchanging by way of porous boundaries) was a way of knowing Blue and of being known by Blue, but I doubt they would have intellectualized it that way.

This said, our assemblage fell into a routine that soon became embodied. We'd chat until everyone arrived or was accounted for, then participants would start to eat as I began to ask them about the previous day's decisions. After that, I'd ask them what the characters were doing today. They would chat a bit about where they were in the story to refresh their collective memories. Sometimes, they would ask me to read the part of the story they had made the day before to help them situate themselves. When they all agreed where they were in terms of story, I asked them to identify where in the 12-part hero/ine's journey their story development was. After answering, they would then start talking about what should come next. When they decided, they would craft the words to tell it and record it on the tablet. The serial completion of one task,

triggered the beginning of the next. As Weaver (2018) might say, our assemblage operated as a system. Our routines created feedback loops. As we practiced these routines, we began to embody them. These feedback loops not only propelled us forward, but they also provided us, collectively, as an assemblage/system, with feedback on the health and progress of our story-making. Interestingly, as Weaver (2018) points out through Wynter (2014; Wynter & Mckittrick, 2017), the feedback loops (autopoiesis) we created imposed their own reality on us as well.

Wynter's alternative calls for "the autopoiesis of being hybridly human" which she coopts from "Maturana and Varela, who wrote the book *Autopoiesis and Cognition*" (Wynter and McKittrock 2015, 27). Maturana and Varela play an important role in Wynter's thinking because their concept of autopoiesis starts a revolution in cybernetics and numerous other fields within the sciences when they posit that it is not reality that imposes images upon the individual but it is the individual who constructs a reality within their minds and imposes it on an outer reality. (Weaver, 2018, pp. 143-44)

For Wynter (2014, 2017), this implies a critical posthumanism that I do not discuss here, but as it speaks to my research, it suggests that what the mind imagines, like a story, can affect and alter an outer reality. This means that a story can affect larger systems in which the (story) assemblage is embedded. Thus, stories and in this case, the processes of story-making can initiate, then regulate change through feedback loops that may become social habits if practiced.

Time Within Time. As mentioned earlier, not only did what *Annie* say about being female and being a mother resonate with me, what she implied about time resonated even deeper. Perhaps for me, more than for the participants, I was intrigued by how she framed time as porous and multi-temporal. For her, time was at once both linear and nonlinear. It was linear and spatially specific when she referred to girls learning to become mothers. It was nonlinear and spatially indeterminate when she said we were "all born as mothers and grandmothers." What made it even more intriguing for me was that I remembered reading about the same indeterminate concept of time expressed by *Annie* in two articles and a book chapter by posthumanist scholar, Karen Barad. Barad is a particle physicist and brings this perspective to most of her writings and talks. Could it be that some Indigenous cultures and particle physics understand time (and matter) in similar ways and in counterpoint to classical Newtonian notions of time taught in settler schools?

Barad (2017) explains how this indeterminate time mattering exists in the context of science. Citing several experiments, she describes what scientists now know and accept as vacuum fluctuations. This strange phenomenon might provide a “scientific” explanation of how *Annie’s* culturally informed knowledge can also be understood. The concept of the void as a spatial and temporal simultaneous emptiness and non-emptiness is key to this understanding.

The vacuum isn’t empty, but neither is there any-thing in it. Hence, we can see that indeterminacy is key not only to the existence of matter but also to its nonexistence – that is, to the nature of the void. In fact, this indeterminacy is responsible not only for the void not being nothing (while not being something), but it may in fact be the source of all that is – a womb that births existence...The vacuum is far from empty; rather, it is flush with yearning, with innumerable possibilities/imaginings of what was, could be, might yet have been, all coexisting. (Barad, 2017, p. 78)

In an earlier work, Barad (2012) explicitly links the idea of a self, in *Annie’s* sense of “being born mothers and grandmothers” to the indeterminacy of time and material being. Although I don’t go into it here, she also “reclaims reflexivity” as an important element of posthumanism, a view not generally accepted by post-qualitative scholars (De Freitas & Walshaw, 2016, p. 162).⁴⁴ Barad (2012) suggests that

Matter is an enfolding, an involution, it cannot help touching itself, and in this self-touching it comes in contact with the infinite alterity that it is...What is being called into question here is the very nature of the “self,” and in terms of not just being but also time. That is, in an important sense, the self is dispersed/diffracted through time and being. (pp. 5-6)

It is interesting that both *Annie* and Barad refer to the feminine, one with mothers and grandmothers and the other with the womb. Regardless, *Annie* introduced the settler participants to her understanding of a time-matter relationship that was culturally informed. While the settler participants gave me no indication that they took up this cultural information, I suggest that in the spirit of *Annie’s* and Barad’s view of time-mattering, the idea was planted in the unconscious

⁴⁴ While qualitative research places too much importance on reflexivity, in my view, and posthumanism research, not enough, I align myself with Barad in this respect. It is the reason I provide both qualitative and posthumanist analyses in this chapter.

void of their embedded selves, and if it was, they might still remember her words in some future and inquiry about what they meant.

In a related way and in terms of settler educational systems, Pedersen (2015) suggests that different figurations of time and matter need to be taught in schools with the following question:

How does the linear time axis built into the logics of education (and the education system) relate to the possibility of planetary destruction and the mass extinction of species (the human species included)? (Pedersen, 2015, p. 70)

Of course, her rhetorical question also suggests that a reconceptualization of time, or at least an eye to the future is needed if we want to stop or reverse the effects of climate change leading to the sixth mass extinction. It would be in our own best interests to do so.

Sensitivity to Perturbations

Continuing with Pedersen, her question above assumes that we, as humans need to make changes to our systems of doing things, and that we, as educators need to make changes to educational systems to support new ways of thinking. Prigogine's (1984) or Lorenz's (1993) might understand the introduction of change as a perturbation (not disruption) in the system (Prigogine & Stengers, 1984). It follows that I needed to look at the boundaries of our research assemblage from a different perspective by analyzing its sensitivity to perturbations. I needed analyze how new forces entered the research and influenced or changed the behavior of the apparatus/assemblage.

Not all perturbations will significantly influence or change a stable system. The feedback loops (autopoiesis) developed by a system can act as a safeguard against perturbations and help it deal with untimely forces that might threaten its structure or existence. For example, some toxins that enter the body's blood may be recognized as harmful and eliminated by various organs thus returning the system to stability.

However, systems may be able to adapt to some perturbations and change in response to them up to a certain point. For example, in response to increases in global temperature, I've noticed that the number of times many of my plants bloom each summer has increased from once to even three times in some cases. These plants have adapted to these temperature changes, but it is uncertain how long they will be able to continue to do so. Other perturbations may cause an immediate collapse of the system and distribution of its constituent, embedded parts. Still others may cause the birth of some novel new assemblage.

Annie, in the context of our assemblage, was a social perturbation. Our assemblage was able to adapt to her cultural teachings (perturbation) as learning and experience a constitutive change as a result. Her perturbation was welcomed and appreciated. There is no need to repeat the tale of how she changed our story-making assemblage. However, it is interesting to note, that while she changed the constitution of the assemblage, she did not change the routine processes of our story-making. The participants, by contrast, *did* change the routine story-making processes, especially with their absences. There was one day when *Stephanie* was the only participant who came; all the others were away from the school. There was, of course, no participant discussions that day, only her discussion with me. On one other occasion participants wanted to have the whole story read back to them. This changed our story-making routine process for the day. It left little time to do other work that day, but it did set us up to start *making* first thing the following day. These slight and internally triggered perturbations did not disturb our larger, general routine. They were perturbations the system could absorb and adapt to without changing its constitution even though members might be physically absent. These slight perturbations might be understood as the system's responses within its internal degrees of freedom. Larger perturbations, such as *Annie's* visit, might be understood as the system's response to external degrees of freedom in which constitutive changes occurred but did not disassemble the structure of the assemblage.

As a side note, we did experience a perturbation large enough to disassemble our assemblage. This happened when the participants finished making their story and we disbanded. Understood as a perturbation, this event created a *chaotic* break. In contrast to this break-down where the embedded, constitutive subjectivities are no longer held together as an assemblage, chaoticians, such as Lorenz (1993) have found, the embodied information (knowledge) of the system is never lost. The embodied knowledge of the system persists in its dismembered parts at different scales which, 1) allows the system to reassemble if conditions are right, or 2) allows new systems to form with this embodied knowledge. This may go some way in explaining the persistence of Indigenous knowledges because of or despite the disassembly of many Indigenous communities at the hand of settler colonialism. It might also explain how ancestral trauma continues to be felt in the here and now as intergenerational trauma.

Chaos theory also gives rise to phenomenon like Mandlebrot's (2010) self-similar fractals.

Figure 19
Self-Similarity



Note: "Mandelbrot" by [snowpeak](#) is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#)

Removed from the context of my research, participants might reproduce our story-making processes in other assemblages and make different stories in a similar way—hence self-similarity. In fact, had it not been for COVID, participants and I had planned to have them lead story-making sessions with their peers.

Diffractionally reading some of the intra-actions of my research through systems and chaos theory has provided me with some insights into how critical social change might be understood and enacted more effectively. I have noted four types of perturbations in my research, each of which created different changes for our research assemblage. Similarly, social systems are likely to respond to different kinds of perturbations too. My analysis suggests that social change on a larger scale, for example, in a school system may respond differently to various types of perturbations, such as those affecting internal degrees of freedom, external degrees of freedom, and those that evolve into chaos dispersion, or fractal birth. Much of current critical thought does not account for the exercise of these *types* of perturbations. It does not account for the type of perturbation in terms of understanding what type is needed to affect the desired (intended) social change, nor does it attempt to match the type, degree, and scale of the force needed for these changes. Instead, blanket critical conceptual thinking around terms, such as, *resistance* or *disruption*, are applied to all manner of social change contexts together with their negative and combative connotations. My critically oriented research suggests that a more nuanced approach to creating social change through an understanding of perturbations is needed. Further, my

research suggests that social change does not necessarily need to be framed as negative or combative to be critical. There was no social *resistance* experience by us as an assemblage while we were being socially transformed by the Indigenous ways of teaching by *Annie*.

A Diffractive Analysis of the Ethical Responsibility and Response-Ableness of the Participants and the Story

In this section, I analyze the assemblage's ability to respond to the stable and changing forces (perturbations) of the story in an ethical way within the confines of the hero/ine's journey template (Barad, 2012a). Considering *Annie's* sense of time, care, and matter, as already described, I look at how participants and their story did or could have responded ethically to the context of intergenerational trauma present in Canada today. Ignoring it, for me, could never be an option. What Barad (2017) describes in the context of the atomic bombs dropped in Japan during the World War II, applies here too.

I have argued that... while the past is never finished and the future is not what will unfold, the world holds the memories of its iterative reconfigurings. All reconfigurings, including atomic blasts, violent ruptures, and tears in the fabric of being – of spacetime-mattering – are sedimented into the world in its iterative becoming and must be taken into account in an objective (that is, responsible and accountable) analysis. (Barad, 2017, p. 73)

Ethical responsibility, including an ethical responsibility for reconciliation is directly related to an *ability to respond* as described earlier. In this regard, the hero/ine's journey template used for the participants' story-making did not preclude their own or the story's ableness to respond to the intergenerational trauma experienced by Indigenous peoples in Canada. While their story did not directly address intergenerational trauma at all, under *Annie's* influence it spoke to things related to this trauma. It spoke to *resilience*, the need for *self-determination*, and incorruptible *kindness*. Further, in the character of Logan, it spoke to a will for *honesty* with oneself and others, as well as to an *affirmative*, noncombative desire for *(re)conciliation* as an *equal* with the powers trying to exert a controlling and contrary force.

The participants in my research and their story changed in response to and perhaps, with *Annie*. Participants revisited their earlier decisions to cast the principal as the villain and instead made a villain of the system entrenching a diminished value of children and other beings as less than fully human. Although they did not name this system, it *is* the same system that did and, in

many ways, still does perceive Indigenous people as less than fully human, or at least not as deserving human as settler humans. In casting a settler value system (settler colonial schools) as the villain, instead of the principal, participants took responsibility for their own prejudgment of the principal that figured him as evil; figured him as someone to be feared as the educational system wanted him to be. In stepping out of this settler educational system of beliefs, in this way, participants began to evaluate the ethical fairness of this system with regards to the way it treats children, even older teenagers. Their story makes it clear that the system treats them as lesser humans and that they didn't like it. Their story also makes clear that they felt an ethical responsibility to support Logan in any way they could, and in any way, he agreed to. As *Cedar*, the Cree participant said on the first day, "Hum, well first of all, you should actually treat people how they want to be treated."

Ethical responsibility also extends to the ones who are not here, be they dead, yet to be born, or simply absent. Drawing on Derrida, Barad (2014) suggests that

No justice [...] seems possible or thinkable without the principle of some responsibility, beyond all living present, within that which disjoins the living present, before the ghosts of those who are not yet born or who are already dead, [...]. Without this non-contemporaneity with itself of the living present, [...] without this responsibility and this respect for justice concerning those who are not there, of those who are no longer or who are not yet present and living, what sense would there be to ask the question 'where?' 'where tomorrow?' 'whither?'. ⁴⁵(Derrida in Barad, 2014b, p. 183)

While *Annie* alluded to these temporal responsibilities, as already mentioned, this concept was either too foreign for the settler participants to take up in a meaningful way in their story, or one they felt as a group, unable to address. Perhaps *Annie* did plant the seed of this thought in their heads though.

In a limited way, the participants' answers to the closing questions suggests that by the end of our time together they had already begun to consider one's responsibility to those who are not here. In one of her answers, *Sage* makes a reference to Shannen's Dream. It was Shannen's

⁴⁵ Footnote 75 in the original: Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p.xix

advocacy for Indigenous schools in reserve communities and ultimately her death in a road accident related to travelling for school outside her community, that helped bring about the changes she wanted. The participants seemed to understand that Shannen's activism was never only about her own needs being addressed (although triggered by her own experience). It was always about the students *not there*, who were not yet travelling outside the reserve for school, and about the students *not there*, who in the past were denied an education because they were unable to travel. Even with participants' understanding of Shannen's activism and what it meant for those not there, I do not believe that any of the participants felt this kind of responsibility to those who not there as future readers/listeners of their story, but they may have.

Analyzing the Story-Making as Agential Mattering

The story the participants made was set in a world not (yet) here. They imagined a world in which children, youth, and almost adult teenagers are *not* repeatedly treated as beings without the right to self-determination and without the capability to make decisions for themselves. The marks of these "real" world denials were registered in the story despite the story being performed in this imagined world. Despite the presence of these marks, it follows that participants developed performative knowledge while making their story about how this world might work should it ever exist. In this section, I analyze the agential marks registered in the story by participants, and the agential marks left on participants by the act of story-making.

Marks that Matter and Agential Reciprocity

The act of story-making provided participants with a place—a sandbox of sorts—in which their characters, not only could say things they would not (discussed earlier), but it also allowed them to experiment with possible realities to see how viable those realities might be or under what conditions they could become viable. They learned how people and things would need to intra-act/behave/perform if such a world were to exist. They develop knowledges about such performances through the story-making process. For example, in the imaginary story world participants created, there was no room for a principal who wasn't an ally. There was no room for parents who didn't love and trust their children enough to let them make their own decisions even if the alternative was their absence.

The longer participants worked in this story world, creating events and dialogs for their characters, the more they practiced the values of this story world. The more participants' characters practiced the behaviours associated with these values; it follows that the participants also practiced these behaviors vicariously. This performance practice marked the participants as

the practice of anything does. Praxis not only made the workings of the story world known, but it also made it familiar. This familiarity had the effect of changing what began as wishful worlding (dreaming) into a belief that such a world could exist. Participants talked about this very thing in answer to one of the closing questions. In the context of Jenny Grant and her environmental partners, they had the following exchange:

Cedar: They changed the world by imagining a different one. ...

Navy: It doesn't stop people from littering! But it is just something.

Sage: You can make a website like there's these guys made or like these bracelets they made out of recycled plastic. It was only a dream they had, and they did it, and it helped to change the world.

This said, I am not sure participants would figure their practice with/in the story world as a force they could put to work in the “real” world to change it. However, in my mind, there is no doubt that they would support someone at odds with their parents regarding career choices. Further, because of their practice with these situations in the story world, they might very well feel confident enough to offer suggestions, if asked, about how to work things out.

In contrast to the world participants actually lived in, one in which many systems including the educational system treated them as lesser humans, their story is marked by the differences between these two worlds.

Marks of Self-Determination and Responsible Decision-Making

Self-determination together with the ability and responsibility for making decisions were the matters that participants felt mattered most in their story. They left marks in the story. Like Freire (2005) suggests, dehumanization “marks not only those whose humanity has been stolen, but also (though in a different way) those who have stolen it” (p. 44). The marks of “those who have stolen it” have already been analyzed in the introduction to the section titled, Analyzing the Story-Making Context as Posthumanist Diffraction.

In terms of the ones “whose humanity has been stolen,” a mark that the story registers is distrust of authority figures and their motivations. We see it first with the classroom teacher, then in the detention teacher, then with their own parents as they speculate about parental reactions to the detention, then with the sinister goings on of the principal, and later with Logan’s parents. Another mark the story registers is how little trust adults have in youth’s ability to make well

thought-out and informed decisions especially when they differ from their own. Related to this, is the mark that privileges adults as superior to children.

As readers of the story, we see trust as the mark the story is hinged on. In the story, Grandmother Kookum Annie's trust in the young characters' ability to make and be responsible for the consequences of their own decisions changes the young characters. We see them make informed decisions, we see them fumble them, but we also see them recover from some spur of the moment decisions and keep on going. We later see them trust in Logan's ability to make similar responsible decisions. We see that the marks related to adult trust and non-trust in children's decision-making ability have a direct co-relation to the story characters' willingness to seek out advice from the adult community. As educators, we know that when students are driven to seek knowledge, that is the time when they are most receptive to it, therefore a condition such as trust which increases student receptivity should be a mark we see often in education (Drake & Chi, 2021). Sadly, trust in students is not a hallmark of settler colonial education, as I witnessed it.

Making decisions for oneself, or with others when it applies, is a mark of self-determination. My analysis of both the marks on the story (and the marks that *Annie* left on the participants that readers/listeners of the story don't see) suggest that an Indigenous way of teaching children as equal beings resonated with the participants in my research. When *Annie* insisted that participants determine a path for themselves and make their own decisions, participants had to think deeply, widely, and plan. Having to make their own decisions also had the effect of making them generous in spirit (ex. principal); it made them aware of their vulnerability (ex. safety safeguards put in place); it made them realize they were not alone and that they could count on advice from the community if they asked for it (ex. request to principal and Sage's father). In my analysis, *Annie's* approach to children's education, one in which students practice decision-making and asking for guidance, is one that works pedagogically because it didn't leave marks of dehumanization on the participants.

Analyzing the Story-Making as World Building Exclusions (Decisions) by Makers

All making, even art, involves construction of some sort. At its most basic level, this means deciding what materials or concepts to use. It also means deciding what to exclude. A discussion of constitutive exclusions at a time when *inclusive* education is a curricular buzz word may not be a prudent endeavor, but it is one that needs to be addressed as it relates to ethics, specific cultural knowledges, and my research. I analyze this aspect of making not just from a creative or

artistic making perspective, but from a mundane perspective that sees day-to-day living as a *making* filled with myriad decisions that exclude a million things/beings. With an eye to how we make ourselves through a series of exclusionary decisions everyday—decisions with ethical implications and consequences, I analyze the effectiveness of our daily review of story decisions as a consciousness-raising activity and teaching tool. I also analyze the simple mechanics of making from a maker perspective and show how it overlaps with decision-making processes and other processes already discussed.

Exclusion: Bad Word or Wrong Word?

In a making environment, what is excluded is always an infinitely greater set than what is included. If only for this reason, exclusion is a concept that might be taught more explicitly in schools from a critical perspective, in the same way that inclusivity is. Between the two concepts, inclusion and exclusion, inclusion is the easier concept to teach because it is blanket. Exclusion is a more difficult concept to teach because it can involve and often does involve ethical discernment. Exclusion is not synonymous with marginalization, although an exclusion can marginalize, and this must be taught. However, most exclusions resulting from our day-to-day decisions are not of the marginalization kind, but exclusions *do* have consequences all the same and this too needs to be taught. In my analysis, a story-making activity is one of the simplest ways to teach concepts of inclusion and exclusion.

Stories build worlds in which characters interact with events and others. Worlds operate in specific ways that allow some forms of life and some ways of living, and do not allow others. For example, as our earthly world changed from a sulfur and methane-based atmosphere to a nitrogen and oxygen-based one, so too did the life on earth; some forms and ways of living were denied while others were allowed. Stories operate as worlds within worlds. Thus, story-making might then be a way for story makers (students) to examine the working of a/the world to see what matters in its composition and its *doing*; what is allowed and denied and why (Camargo-Borges, 2019). In making a story, authors must decide what things are allowed and what things are excluded, to be able to figure out how the story world works.

Inevitably, they figure out that all their characters have agency, otherwise, why would they be there. The events and happenings in the story have agency too and may be such that they create situations beyond the characters' ability to manage them. Inevitably, they figure out the decisions the characters make, shape, and affect the story world they live in. Inevitably, they figure out that decisions allow the plot to follow some paths and prevent it from following

others. Inevitably they figure out that the specificity of the setting is not only important, but allows some decisions to be made, makes some unnecessary, and prevents others. Inevitably they figure out that every story decision has consequences and most of those have ethical consequences.

Decision-Making

Building story worlds where students can experiment with ideas and decision trajectories in a place—a story sandbox—where the consequences of those ideas and decisions can be examined in a relatively safe way, is not very different from the kind of thinking humans do on a decision-by-decision basis anyway. The difference is that stories can hold more of these decisions, their relationship to other decisions, and their consequences over a period of time, and display them all at once allowing one to see a/the bigger picture all at once. This is not a view of outside looking in, but rather a view of one from inside slowing turning to see as many perspectives as possible. It is also not unlike what *Annie* counselled participants do, that is, to consider all the consequences; it is just on a larger scale than a single decision.

Participants considered the impact of their story decisions, on a decision-by-decision basis but with the whole story in mind, on a daily basis. Participants sometimes paid lip service to this part of the research process, but for *Cedar*, it was the part she liked best, she told me one day. Regardless of how they felt about doing it every day, it was during one of these times that participants decided to change the principal from villain to ally. It was during one of these times that *Cedar* changed her mind about her character going down into the basement to investigate. As I had hoped, participants used this conscious evaluation of their decisions, in their story as a way of doing what *Annie* had counselled them to do. In the story, it happened when the characters were at Sage's house.

“Maybe we should try knocking at the door first.”

“Do you really think the person is going to hear that?” asked Sage, rolling back her eyes.

“Maybe he ... *she* will,” replied Stephanie uncertain now about her suggestion.

“To be honest Stephanie, it's a good idea but I think we should open the door and just call from the top of the stairs,” said Navy. “Politely,” she continued, “We don't want to bug whoever is down there.

“If that doesn't work, how about we just go down?” suggested Cedar.

“But why?” asked Stephanie. “He might be dangerous. Do we even want to go back down?” she remarked nervously.

“We want to know whose is down there and if he’s okay. Anyway, now that I am thinking about it, I don’t think the person is dangerous. The person was scared of us too,” reasoned Sage.

“What if we offer him or her [or them] food? Maybe *the person* hasn’t eaten and is hungry,” said Navy.

They all thought that bringing the mystery person food was a great idea.

“Can we go down to the kitchen and make something for him?” asked Cedar looking at Sage.

Sage agreed. All the girls headed downstairs to the kitchen and had Sage’s chef help them make food. The girls discussed what they were going to make and take. Sage suggested spaghetti but reconsidered. Too messy.

“Crackers and cheese, grapes and bread,” suggested Cedar.

“And maybe a couple bottles of water,” suggested Stephanie.

They all agreed and started to prepare the food. Sage and the rest of the girls were aware that they were getting hungry too, but they were too excited to cook so they asked Chef Donny who worked at Sage’s house to make them a quick meal. He made them spaghetti.

Together the characters, re-evaluate a previous decision to go down into the basement, evaluate ways to minimize any potential danger to themselves, decide on politeness, and an offer of food. Even the spaghetti decision, while adding a bit of humour to the story, demonstrates how decisions were reworked to better advantage.

In my analysis, the acts of evaluating story decisions regularly had a positive effect on the story as shown above, and on participants. Participants’ daily practice in evaluating the consequences of their decisions, in the short time we were together, became a habit. It is unknown to me if they carried this practice into their day-to-day lives outside our research assemblage. I hope they did.

Experimental Decision-Making and Tinkering to Get It Right

The simple mechanics of making from a maker perspective, take up experimentation, tinkering, and testing for soundness in what maker scholars call an iterative process (Bowler, 2014; Kurti et al., 2014; Wohlwend et al., 2017). There were many features of the maker movement that I adopted for the design of my story-making research. It is not a surprise then to find that the story-making in my research was an *iterative* one, that it tapped *community expertise* by way of *Annie*, encouraged *peer teaching*, or that it was *collaborative*. This kind of making operates in the spirit of a creative commons rather than as a vehicle for personal gain through legal instruments, such as, copyright, licenses, and proprietary patents. Maker behaviors favour co-operation and collaboration over competition. They do not support the kind of career-oriented skills development popular in provincial assessment-based curriculums.

I should note that not all makers work in groups to make a single creation as the participants in my research did, but makers, understood in the context of the maker movement, almost always work collaboratively. Collaboration, as an instrument of reconciliation, is analyzed in the next section.

Analyzing the Story and the Story-Making as Instruments of Reconciliation

I begin this part of my analysis by stating that *decolonialization* is not a term I am comfortable with, and a personal ethic obliges me not to use it. A better term for me, like Bignall (2018), is *excolonialism*. I use the term, excolonialism, for two reasons. First, it signifies my desire to exit from oppressive settler colonial systems but also signifies an openness to a variety of forms of exit, including exit through collaboration. Second, it avoids the use of words that connect decolonialization to the form of critical thought and critique operationalized as “oppositional struggle” and thus, with conflict (Bignall, 2014, p. 340). As Barad (2012a) points out,

critique is a tool that keeps getting used out of habit perhaps, but it is no longer the tool needed for the kinds of situations we now face...Critique is too easy, especially when a commitment to reading with care no longer seems to be a fundamental element of critique. So as I explain to my students, reading and writing are ethical practices, and critique misses the mark...Critique is all too often not a deconstructive practice, that is, a practice of reading for the constitutive exclusions of those ideas we can not do without, but a destructive practice meant to dismiss, to turn aside, to put someone or something down—another scholar, another feminist, a discipline, an approach, et

cetera. So [it] is a practice of negativity that I think is about subtraction, distancing and othering. (np)

Even before reading Bignall, I spoke at a conference about a need to reframe critical social change from that of resistance, protest, conflict, or confrontation. Like Barad (2012a), I saw critique as negative and that it embraced a fight mentality and combative orientation to social change that as a mother, I couldn't readily take up, except possibly as a last resort, but certainly not as a first go-to.⁴⁶

Bignall's (2014) position is much like my own. She argues that

In modern and contemporary critical politics, social transformation is conceptualised primarily in terms of struggle and opposition rather than collaboration...This kind of political engagement is limiting when considered from the transformative perspective of 'excolonialism', which I conceive as an 'exit from colonialism' that calls for collaboration across and between cultural differences. (p. 340)

The story-making process in my research was initially conceived as way for participants to collaborate and thus facilitate cultural exchanges, mutual respect, and empathy. Specific to TRC (2015) Call 63.3, I had imagined that participants from various backgrounds and ethnicities might, in the process of building something together, teach each other about the other's culture. This happened less than I had hoped. *Cedar* only directly shared the cultural importance of grandparents with the group, saying they were ones a person would go to for advice. She also shared her grandparents' familiar titles of Kookum and Mushuum. She also conveyed the significance of cultural group dancing. She only indirectly shared how friendship is expressed as an ability to laugh with another about their character foibles, and the importance of the "trickster," a role she sometimes assumed, in keeping people alert. While these were important cultural sharings, it was during participants' collaboration with *Annie's* that the most noteworthy cultural exchanges occurred with respect to Indigenous ways of teaching and learning.

Participants showed evidence of understanding this when they took in the values and behaviors she counselled and used it to envision a world they wanted to live in together. Through

⁴⁶ For a published version of this critical argument, see my forthcoming article in the Fall 2022 Cultural and Pedagogical Inquiry titled *Too much trouble*.

their collaboration, participants negotiated this understanding as a shared vision for the story. Their shared vision was for a school that had exited from a colonial settler system and the attitudes that those systems currently hold towards children. They envisioned a school that treated them more equitably—a place where they were treated more like how *Annie* treated them, as capable self-determining individuals, and with respect, kindness, and empathy. I argue that their envisioned world, was one freer of the settler colonial values that dehumanize them as children, and as such might also be a world free from the values that dehumanize Indigenous peoples. These values overlap in terms of who counts as full human in settler colonial systems of thought. Posthumanists would argue that settler colonial thought is informed by Enlightenment Humanism where the ideal human is still white, male, able-bodied, etc. (Braidotti, 2019b).

While the participants did not share much in the way of their culture with each other, they did share personal knowledge with each other that was culturally informed. They embodied the values of empathy born of an understanding of each other's personal lived cultures and they showed each other respect almost all the time. When they learned about each other's home life, they empathized with the personal challenges each faced, for example, the impact of *Navy's* father's work schedule, or *Sage's* preference to live with her father instead of her mother, or *Cedar's* sense that she had been rejected by the people she felt she belonged to when she was removed from the dance group, or *Stephanie's* fear of bring shame to herself and her family. Their empathy extended to a genuine care for each other's well being. For example, they not only shared their own food brought from home with other participants who didn't bring any, they specifically brought food they knew a particular person would like. That food was sometimes eaten at lunch with the food I brought, but often it was taken away, presumably to be eaten later, perhaps at home.

Their demonstration of mutual respect was also more on a personal rather than a cultural level. For example, when *Cedar* pre-emptively defended her brother's right to sit with us on one of the two days we had to convene in the library, the others respected her position without question. On another occasion, *Cedar* changed her mind about the role her character would play at one point in the story. Cedar was supposed to go down into the basement with Stephanie, but later, on a different day, she changed her mind. Even though we had recorded this decision, she made a point of saying that she didn't want her character to go down anymore. She did not provide a reason, but she was emphatic. The other participants respected her decision, and the story was composed so that she and Stephanie stayed at the top of the stairs.

As I have already discussed, there were aspects of *Annie*'s cultural sharing specifically related to temporality that the participants seemed unwilling or unable to take up in their story. Apart from this one piece of cultural information, the participants seemed particularly attuned to the cultural values *Annie* presented. They incorporated these values in their story and practiced them in the making of their story. In this sense, the collaboration between participants and *Annie* better served the reconciliation goals of TRC (2015) Call to Action 63.3 than the collaboration between participants.

There was, however, one cultural omission in the story that I noted. *Annie* told participants that a character like Kookum Annie in their story, would likely offer to "put down tobacco for their [the characters'] safety" before they entered the school basement. This didn't get captured in the story and would have been, in my opinion, a nice detail to have been put in. I think the participants simply forgot about this. Even the Cree participant, who would have been aware of its cultural significance, did not suggest it for the story.

To conclude this part of my analysis, I suggest that the world the participants imagined and built in their story was heavily influenced by *Annie* and as such the reconciliation concepts of TRC (2015) Call 63.3. Their story embodied them. However, it is unclear to me if participants were consciously aware of, or would have been able to articulate, this newfound sensitivity to Indigenous ways of knowing that they took up from *Annie* as mutual respect, empathy, cultural understanding.

Analysis Summary

I first analyzed the story artefact and then the story-making processes. The story artefact was analyzed from three general perspectives: ABR, research-creation, and CDA. The story-making processes were analyzed primarily from a posthumanist perspective. This said, there was some overlap between the artefact analysis and process analysis because of the dependency of one on the other.

The three analyses of the artefact from a qualitative ABR and post-qualitative research-creation perspective all found that cultural sensitivity and child/youth agency was significantly foregrounded. Using Leavy's (2019c) qualitative-oriented ABR approach, I first found that the participants' story-making was in fact research on their parts. Their acts of inquiry and acts of analysis, which their story documents, reflects how participants grew their knowledge of the world and themselves. I also found that their story, when analyzed using Leavy's criteria indicated an ethical sensitivity. It carried a distinctive Indigenous voice in conversation with four

youth, it invited multiple cultural perspectives, and engaged with an Indigenous stakeholder. Further, as a story, it was compelling and believable. Thus, on many levels, the story artefact met Leavy's criteria for fiction-based ABR (Leavy, 2019c).

I found the story artefact, when analyzed using Norris' (2011) approach, similarly indicated that participants grew their knowledge of aspects of Indigenous culture and grew their knowledge of themselves in conversation with Indigenous culture. I found that the story was artistically constrained (Norris' Politics B) by the hero's journey template, but in terms of his Politics A, social politics, the artefact's politics were consistent with the values of TRC (2015) Call 63.3. The story included the voices of Indigenous and non-Indigenous characters, and it positioned a politics of child agency as a reasonable counterpoint to the usual power and authority of adults at school and at home.

Using a cartographic post-qualitative analysis to evaluate the story from as research-creation as taken up by scholars such as Springgay (2018b), I mapped the connections the story established and found that the artefact connected with many members of the school community, especially other children attending it. This analytical approach situated the artefact as a speculative middle and ignored its content altogether. Thus, analyzed only for the connections it was able to make and the speed with which it made those connection, I found the story was a force with considerable agency in its ability to connect to and with many students on some level.

The critical discourse analysis (CDA) I conducted, although admittedly limited, found a number of unstated realities operating throughout the story that the authors assumed everyone who read the story would know. They included, among others, the following: principals are mean, parents worry too much, teachers underestimate their students. I also found that the mention of texting or mobile phones, date the story artefact and contextualize it. Without the reader knowing what these things are or their value, the story loses its currency and to some degree, its meaningfulness. Thus, from a cultural perspective, oral storytelling is more sensitive to changing realities in that an oral storyteller, while remaining true to a story, can contextualize it for the audience if certain assumed story realities no longer exist. I suggested, based on that finding, that oral storytellers are better able to personalize a story for the here and now or for specific listeners, and foreground some aspects of a story that perhaps the audience needs to be reminded of.

My posthumanist, and primarily diffractive, analysis of the story and its making processes found that my research project was deeply embedded in the systems of the school, the school

system, and settler views of education. As a limitation of my design, I acknowledged that my research project when understood as an apparatus, made visible what I set it up to attend/detect, thus was not able to detect intra-actions in a wider field that may be affecting my data. That said, I found that *Annie* and the cultural values she imparted had a profound effect on the story the participants made. I found that she not only affected the participants' hearts and minds but that through her teachings, she infected them with a sense of their own value and agency.

The participants' story inquired into adult control of children and their right to self-determination as individuals and collectively as children. While their story does not directly address Indigenous concerns in settler Canada, it does address concerns that overlap with them. One concern being the control of settler colonial systems, in this case, the educational system. Participants begin their story with a teacher exercising control over four students. She uses an authority to do this that she believes she has been given to her by the school, the school system, and perhaps even the students' parents but importantly, not given by the students. As the participants' story unfolds, it looks at children's right to self-determination, specifically in the character of Logan.

My diffractive analyses attended to differences and how differences intra-acted to make differential patterns, unlike qualitative analyses that look for patterns of similarity.⁴⁷ For example, I found that teachers exercise control over students, when it is not given freely, by punishing them for nonconformity, for not doing as the others are doing, and for not being the same as everyone else. A desire for sameness or homogeneity, let alone enforcement of it, is dehumanizing (Freire, 2005). Teachers use the punishment announcement to shame the different and to warn the conforming others, then use student isolation for the punishment (detention) to marginalize them physically and socially.

In my analysis, *Annie's* radically *different* teaching approach provided participants with an educational alternative to the settler colonial control and punishment approach, at least in the confines of our research room. Instead of telling the participants to do something, she not only recognized their right to self-determination as children by refusing to make recommendations or decisions for them, but she saw it as a pedagogical opportunity for her to teach in an Indigenous

⁴⁷ That said, I firmly believe that it is hard to see one without the other.

way and an opportunity for the participants to experience that way of teaching and learning. She counselled them to think about the impact and potential consequences of their decisions before making them and to be accountable for those decisions. Almost immediately, the participants responded to this rebalancing of power and changed the trajectory of their story from one focused on the principal as a villain to one focused on the principal as an ally.

I also analyzed *Annie's* pedagogical differences and their effects as perturbations. I found that there were at least four different kinds of perturbations that affected the story-making process, *Annie* being one of them. Yet conventional critical thinking does not attend to perturbation nuances and so is unlikely to benefit from a consideration of what kind perturbation is needed to effect a specific social change. In consideration of this, I found that opposition, as the dominant concept of critical thought and critical pedagogy would have been wholly inadequate to the task of changing participants way of thinking, as *Annie's* way did. As such, I had to look elsewhere for the critical analysis tools to understand my research because I could not find what I needed in the critical literature. I looked to autopoiesis and chaos research and read it through the critical literature for insights.

Further, Wynter (2014) suggests that what the mind imagines can affect reality. I found this to be the case. I analyzed the agential marks registered in the story by participants, and the agential marks left on participants by the act of story-making. By living in their story world, a fictional imagining, the story-making initiated a practiced habit of mind. This habitual behavior, including their daily examination of story decisions, also had the effect of changing what began as wishful worlding (dreaming) by participants into a belief that such a world as in their story world could exist. Their answers to the after questions indicated this, for example, when they talk about Shannen's Dream becoming reality.

Examining this habit of mind further, specifically participants' conscious review of story decisions created a conscious habit of looking at inclusions and exclusions. With an eye to how we make ourselves though a series of exclusionary decisions everyday—decisions with ethical implications and consequences, I also analyzed the simple mechanics of story-making from a maker perspective and showed how it overlapped with decision-making processes. It is not surprising that I found, like other maker projects, that the story-making in my research was *iterative*, that it tapped *community expertise* by way of *Annie*, contained *peer teaching*, and that it was *collaborative* (Lemieux & Rowsell, 2020a; 2020b). While this kind of making operates in the spirit of a creative commons, it presents a very different perspective on education to those

expressed in provincial curriculums intent on building work-ready citizens for a competitive world.

Finally, I analyzed the story-making as an instrument of reconciliation. Building on the concept of collaborative praxis and non-confrontational paths to social change, I engaged with excolonialism. I found that participants' collaborations with *Annie* and with each other produced a story that was sensitive to reconciliation concepts embodied in TRC (2015) Call 63.3: cultural understanding, mutual respect, and empathy.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, I return to my overarching question, “What will a small multicultural group of students (including an Indigenous student) working together as story-makers learn about one another and reconciliation?” to discuss and summarize my findings. Following that, I review, the questions that arose from the overarching question. They were: In what ways does collaborative story-making a) provide an opportunity for students from different cultures to learn from each other about each other’s culture, b) enable students to imagine more equitable futures in which they are empowered by their collective agency to make it happen, and c) provide a model for real-life practices that include being accountable and responsible for the decisions one makes in relation to others? I answer these questions respectively in the follow subsections below: a) Learning From Each Other About Different Cultures, Mutual Respect, and Empathy, b) Making Real, Imagined and More Equitable Futures Collectively, and c) Forming Ethical Decision-Makings Habits by Practicing Story-Making Decisions. In consideration of both truth and reconciliation, I hope the answers to these questions are framed in the tone I set for my thesis with the first attribution, “Truth is vital but without love, truth is unbearable” (The Two Popes, 2019, 1:43:35).

Addressing Questions

My collaborative story-making research project was designed to bring a small group of students from various cultural backgrounds, including one from a Cree culture, together to see how proximity with each other and a focus on a single, collective, making task could further the educational reconciliation goals of TRC (2015) Call 63.3. Those goals were to provide students with opportunities to develop “intercultural understanding, empathy, and mutual respect” (p.7). Specifically, I wanted to see if a collective story-making activity could help them develop an understanding of Indigenous and settler cultures and encourage a mutual respect for these cultural differences. Further, I wanted to see if the activity could help them develop empathy for Indigenous individuals and peoples who experience(d) loss, abuse, and other intergenerational impacts of settler colonial policies and practices, such as, Indian Residential Schooling, the Sixty’s Scoop, because their culture was neither understood, nor respected. I begin by addressing my overarching question.

Reconciliation Understood through a Collaborative Story-Making Praxis

The literature reviewed earlier suggested that reconciliation could be understood separately as a collaboration, a praxis, and as story. My research combined all three elements. In the rest of

this section, I outline how my research can be understood as reconciliatory and how my research contributes to the body of reconciliation literature using these three ways of knowing. I begin with collaboration.

The reconciliation path Korteweg and Fiddler's (2019) chose for themselves was through one of sustained collaboration, as equals over an extended time period to work on a set of common deliverables. The same was true of Daniels, Deer, Donald, Low, and Wiseman (2019) who came together as editors in a cross-cultural collaboration to produce a special issue journal publication but for a short duration. The participants in my study enacted their own version of this with 25 meetings over an eight-week period in which they created a single story. Like with Korteweg and Fiddler (2019), participants' story-making was perceived as a collaboration between culturally different individuals with equal say and value in the task. This sustained collaboration combined with the social act of eating lunch together on these days, provided participants with an opportunity to share things about events at the school and events in their lives. The Grade 5 girls and the Grade 6 girls got to know each other over time which hadn't happened before my research project brought them together. They built relationships with each other gradually, but that relationship building was characterized first as a focus on what different skills each could bring to the common task rather than on psycho, socio, and economic similarities, like personalities or common histories that often bring people together. Being equal contributors in a common task set that aside for a while and allowed them to see each other's individual differences before they saw what they had in common with each other. Despite this or perhaps because of this, they became friends; friends who never did act contrary to their personalities while I was with them or differently in terms of character from the way they acted on the first day of the project. In this collaboration, individual participants did not become a single voice; they each kept their distinctive voices. Although, as already mentioned, towards the end of our time together, they began to anticipate what each other was going to say and to build on it to produce what seemed to me to be multi-vocal, continuous, and layered dialogs that seldom broke for distinct turn taking.

While collaboration between people of different cultures, including Indigenous cultures and settler cultures can go some distance in building mutual respect between different peoples and deter practices that try to assimilate nondominant cultures into the dominant one, they may not be enough. Bell (2011) suggests that without an understanding of "Indigenous and non-Indigenous worldviews and values, ... [students] will never be effective change agents toward

healthy cross-cultural relations” (p. 383). Maddison et al. (2016) also suggests that “relational concerns” need to be central to “reconciliation efforts” and that relationship building needs to be the focus of reconciliation efforts in the classroom (pp. 34-35). The learning that Bell (2011) and Maddison (2016) speak of are not simply those that engage conscious knowledge, mutual respect, and empathy as separate threads, but that engage them as inseparable threads—as a braid. It is not surprising that the TRC Call 63.3 combines these three kinds of learning together because the head (conscious knowledge), the spirit (mutual respect), and the heart (empathy) direct the physical (praxis).

The participants in my study demonstrated significant empathy for each other’s personal situations as these became known to the others in the group or as events developed over the weeks. As previously discussed, when participants learned about each other’s home life, they empathized with the personal challenges each faced, including *Cedar*’s elation when she was selected for the dance performance, then her sadness when she was removed from the dance group and felt rejected by the people, she felt she belonged to. Their empathy extended to a genuine care for each other’s well being and a very deep concern for *Cedar* after her dance group experience. They each mentioned to me, how they thought it was so unfair for her and how they wished that teachers would consider her subsequent “bad” behavior as her way of coping.

Although, there were some cultural sharing between the participants, particularly between *Cedar* and the other participants around the role of grandparents in her Cree culture, most of the Indigenous cultural knowledge was delivered by *Annie*. She too spoke about the importance of grandparents and ancestors, but also how they connected to the lives of girls and mothers. However, her greatest cultural gift to us was her way of teaching that nurtured careful consideration and responsible decision-making in the participants. As Brant-Birioukov’s (2017) asserts, a praxis of learning to produce cultural understanding must continue past the teacher education stage and move into the classroom where it must be enacted ethically. In a way, our dialog with *Annie* not only expanded our knowledge and understanding of her culture but gave us insight into and an opportunity to practice her culturally different way of learning at school, if not in the classroom.

While I agree with Battiste (2013) who suggests that Canadian public education is so steeped in settler discursive practices that it cannot help but undermine reconciliation regardless of the content or the best intentions of teachers, my hope is that self-contained activities, such as the story-making activity I conducted, can introduce students of all cultural backgrounds to

Indigenous teaching practices with the help of Indigenous adults/Elders. Not only might settler-colonial education benefit generally from the inclusion of Indigenous teaching practices in its curriculum, but it would also signal an openness to reconciliation as a school praxis. It would also signal an awareness of how many Indigenous communities value children differently than settler-colonial communities and perhaps encourage schools where Indigenous children are taught to consider these differences and take them into account in the curriculum.

In the next three sections, Learning From Each Other About Different Cultures, Mutual Respect, and Empathy; Making Real, Imagined and More Equitable Futures Collectively; and Forming Ethical Decision-Makings Habits by Practicing Story-Making Decisions, I summarize the implications of my study for educational researchers and teachers.

Learning From Each Other About Different Cultures, Mutual Respect, and Empathy

Participants, except on one occasion, always showed each other respect on a personal level, as understood in settler-colonial terms. The only exception I noted was made early in the project by the Indigenous student who challenged the authenticity of another participant's quiet behavior. It was said in a joking way and the participant who made the comment apologized for it as soon she realized it was taken as a reproach. Her supposedly "disrespectful" behavior seemed inconsistent with her beliefs on such matters because she stated explicitly once that people should be treated as they wished to be treated. I wondered at the time if some other "non-disrespectful" cultural force might have been at play regarding how the Indigenous participant understood humour as part of her culture. I wondered if what was taken as a slight, might have been spoken as a sign of acceptance, or as a test, remembering the playful ribbing I received by members of the Cree community I lived in by those who had come to know me and who felt comfortable enough to ridicule my foibles while nudging me on the shoulder. Accepting this ribbing in the spirit it was intended was a trust test of sorts. Trusting that the community would not hurt me, made it possible for the community to accept me on some level. This is all to say that mutual respect involves, I believe, an element of trust in the other's good will. While this trust may not have been there at the beginning of the project, it developed. *Cedar's* role as social commentary comedian/jester became a trusted and accepted role/subjectivity in our group as did *Stephanie's* reticence.

The opportunity to talk about Indian Residential Schooling system and the intergenerational suffering it caused, never arose in the research group's time together. So, empathy in this respect was never explicitly demonstrated. However, participants showed empathy for *Cedar* on a

personal level when they learned she was no longer part of the dance group. They made allowances for her angry outbursts in class and story-making nonattendance at times after that. They understood she was hurting and wanted me to understand in no uncertain terms that her nonattendance was not a sign of disrespect or a result of a lack of commitment, but rather because she was getting more lunch-time detentions for these outbursts. I asked the group once if she had lost interest in the project and they vehemently defended her commitment. I was reassured and gladdened by their defense of her.

There were only a few examples of participants learning about each other's culture from each other. *Cedar* taught the group the terms she used to refer to her grandparents, Kookum and Mushuum. She also taught her sense of family when she vigorously defended her brother's right to listen to our discussion when we had to hold our gathering in the library. *Stephanie* also taught the group about the importance of ambition and reputation in her family's East Indian culture. In retrospect, I think that having at least two people from the same culture in the group would have increased the likelihood of cross-cultural information exchange. Participants of same culture might have talked between themselves, and the others might have listened and asked questions about what they were hearing, thus prompting discussion about culture differences, but as it was, this did not happen. Cultural information exchange between participants was less what I hoped it might be.

However, as chance had it, *Annie* was able and willing to share her cultural beliefs and practices with the group in the role of a mentor. This was an unplanned and an unanticipated kindness that she provided. She taught us so much and was so influential that the whole story-making changed because of her. If I were to design this research anew, I would definitely plan to have a Knowledge Keeper, preferably, an Elder, act as a story-making mentor. I would recommend this adjustment to any teacher wanting to take up story-making with the hero/ine's journey template to further the goals of TRC (2015) Call 63.3.

Making Real More Equitable Futures Imagined Collectively

The more equitable world participants imagined for themselves, one in which children were respected for the agential beings that they are, was made real in their story world. It was made real in the story by way of a shift from a settler-colonial view of children that the school and no doubt some of their parents held, to a more Indigenous view of children and education as set out by *Annie*. This shift had real-life impacts as well as impacts on the story as already discussed.

While I am sure participants had heard words from authority figures before my research about being responsible for their actions, it seemed that because there was the shift away from authority figures making decisions for youth and a shift towards youth making decisions for themselves, a change in the youths' attitudes towards authority figures also happened. A closer look at this shift begins with the way teenagers are often figured as defiant, challenging, and opposed to the good reason of authority figures in settler-colonial communities. This defiance is understood by parents as something to be expected or even a right of passage. However, as participants' story development showed, their combative and defiant stance at the beginning of the research towards teachers and the principal stopped after *Annie's* visit. Perhaps *Annie's* treatment of and trust in the youth as responsible decision-makers played a role in this shift.

In *Annie's* cultural world and in the participants' story world where beings have the right to self-determination, oppositional forces are not figured as the child who opposes parents, teachers, or the system, but the adults who oppose the rights of children. We see this with Logan's parents particularly. In the story, the youth characters' behaviour towards adult authority figures is affirmative, respectful, and non-aggressive, while the adults who opposed the youth characters' rights are figured as aggressors.

Another aspect of this shift towards responsible decision-making and away from dependence on and obedience to authority figures, is the way in which youth become more willing to reach out to more experience people in the community for help. In the story world, the main characters collectively supported Logan as he tried to figure out a way to be true to his own path and be respectful and kind to his parents, who he knew loved him but who opposed his right to self-determination. The characters did not do this alone. They not only worked together but found allies in the characters of the principal, Sage's caretakers, and Grandmother Kookum Annie to help them help Logan.

Perhaps there are lessons to be learned by teachers and parents by examining this shift, especially if this shift made youth more responsible, less oppositional, more open to community expertise, and happier. It might, however, just be coincidental that participants changed their attitude at just the point in the research that *Annie* entered and that the change happened for no reason at all. My research cannot say definitively. Regardless, participants' shift in thinking made them understand their responsibility for making carefully considered decisions, being accountable for them, and if they made decisions in this considered, accountable way that *Annie*

taught them, their actions, which may be considered disobedience in the eyes of some, would in fact be, ethical and responsible actions.

Taking into consideration the cross-cultural collective aspects of the participants' story, the story envisions a more equitable future for youth at school and beyond. It seems to indicate that from their perspective, resisting another's rights to self-determination, not only can cause social injustice, but prevents youth from seeking out and nurturing relationships helpful to them.

Forming Ethical Decision-Makings Habits by Practicing Story-Making Decisions

While it is impossible to know how effective or how lasting a praxis of evaluating story decisions was on real-life decision-making, the daily practice of evaluating story decisions did provide participants with a model. The model asked participants to identify paths or behaviors the decision allowed and for whom and what paths or behaviors were prevented. The model also made apparent the relationship between decisions and their potential long-term effects within the story world. As already discussed, in the context of the story, participants got into the habit of thinking about the consequences of their decisions, not only as a linear path forward for the story but also as a set of exclusions, with far reaching critical implications sometimes. Judging from the answers participants gave to the final questions, and to some extent the initial questions, they saw the connection between decision-making and world-building. By the end of our time together, they were better able to understand how exclusions shape real worlds as well as story worlds.

What was Learned and Final Thoughts

This research confirmed Blackstock's (in Howard, 2016) assertion that children have an "inherent low tolerance for inequality" and as such, it behooves me and other settle-colonial educators to see the world through children's eyes so we can perceive inequality as they see it. As educators we not only have the responsibility to teach children what they want/need to learn, but a responsibility to learn about social justice from them because as Bell (2011) and Blackstock (2016) suggests, they are ideally suited as agents for the social change needed to bring about the reconciliation put forth by the TRC (2015).

From a critical posthumanist perspective, my research also suggests that we as educators and parents need to teach children how to make informed decisions for themselves that account for the exclusions and inclusions they involve and encourage them to practice these skills at every turn. Further, as a gesture towards reconciliation at a systemic educational level, settler-colonial curriculums might begin developing decision-making teaching and learning literacies in

consultation and collaboration with Indigenous Elders so that critical decision-making skills can be taught in public schools. The development and implementation of such literacies may help schools exit from an exclusively settler-colonial way of practicing education thus offering multiple ways of learning to students and positioning Indigenous ways of teaching and learning on par with settler-colonial ways.

Also, the gap in the posthumanist and reconciliation pedagogical literature around decision-making as a teachable literacy suggests that further research could be done in this area. My research suggests that a good starting point for such further research could begin with a robust understanding of the relationship between exclusions and decision-making that theoretical posthumanism provides (Barad, 2017). Further, my research suggests that in an educational context, re-conceptualizing decision-making, and perhaps, reconciliation, as literacies may help re-orient the teaching of reconciliation in the classroom and push it towards more practical, practice-based activities. I can envision research around a decision-making literacy concerned with boundary formation (inclusion/exclusion) having potential implications for thinking about reconciliation as a *reconciliation literacy*.

My experience with *Cedar* suggests that settler-colonialism as a cultural practice is still real and present in our schools. The effects of settler colonialism, as a performance of Humanist values as noted by Braidotti, (2019b) and cultural genocide as noted in the TRC (2015b) continue to marginalize Indigenous cultures, knowledges, perspectives, histories, and contemporary issues by privileging settler-colonial educational values in the schools where Indigenous children attend. This said, and not anticipating great future educational reform, there is room for further research in the current school system to better understand excolonialism as a more praxis-oriented addition to truth and reconciliation education, than decolonialism as a position or stance. I see a potentially productive convergence between Kuby's (2018) work around "knowing, becoming, doing" and Bignall's (2014) work around excolonialism as a point for further study into a classroom-based pedagogical excolonialism.

Personal Learning

While I held my current view of children as being fully formed humans with rights long before I began my doctoral studies, it is on this point that I found I had the most profound learning experience related to understanding, respecting, and valuing Indigenous culture. I knew from my time living in a Cree village, that children when they first exit the home on their own initiative, around the age of two, are considered individuals who could and should make

decisions for themselves. This not to say they were left on their own. If anyone in the community thought that the child was putting him/herself in danger, someone would explain the risks and leave the decision to the child to either continue or stop. I asked about this once when I saw a very young child carrying a knife and it was explained to me.

Even so, knowing what I did, when the story characters were at a point in their journey to ask a trusted other for advice, I rejected the dialogs being proposed with some of these fictional trusted others, as unbelievable. From a settler mother's perspective, they were unthinkable. No parent, aunt, or uncle, in my view, would encourage a child to put him/herself at risk by going into the potentially dangerous situation with other kids, that being the basement. (If I am honest with myself, just thinking about it still makes me catch my breath.) I felt I had to intervene and ask whether participants thought that such dialogs were believable. I told them, as a mother, it was not believable for me and I thought we should ask a real, not fictive, other person. That real person was already a trusted other. It was *Annie*. Her response was not quite the one I expected, but like the participants, I accepted it. From that point forward, I examined the integrity of my beliefs and looked at the fullness of *Annie's* teachings. I examined her teaching approach with the participants concerning the story situation, and with me. I knew she was talking to me as much as, or more than, she was speaking to the participants especially when she talked about mothers and mothering. I changed as a result. The participants changed because of her teachings too, as I've already discussed in detail but also, I suppose, indirectly to my change as well. I learned on the day of *Annie's* visit to honestly accept the participants' story decisions without question. This was their story after all. The paradox is that if I hadn't felt the way I did as a settler-colonial mother, we wouldn't have asked *Annie* for guidance, and we won't have learned what we did from her. The story would have been very different. Funny how life is paradoxical that way.

Contributions and Further Study

I anticipate that my story-making reconciliation research adds to a small but growing repertoire of teacher-led and potentially child-led activities that can support reconciliation (TRC, 2015a) by recognizing the power and value of children's voices and imagination in effecting social change (FNCFCS, 2020). As already mentioned, I would design another similar story-making activity by arranging for an Elder to come and be the mentor the participants asked advice of, to ensure that the story carries a strong Indigenous voice.

In terms of potential contribution to the academy, I suggest that my approach in using a multi-design methodology focused on catching differences allowed me to see the intra-action of different forces and how they came to changed things. In my view, a differential approach, rather than an approach that identifies pattern of similarity aligns better with the aims and objectives of effecting social change. However, coupling qualitative approaches with post-qualitative and posthumanist approaches as I did, not only allowed me to account for both the differential and reflexive gaze, but to appreciate the differences in perspective they created as they intersected with each other.

Another contribution, I think my research makes, although I doubt that it will be taken up in a meaningful way, concerns the conceptualization of *perturbations* as an instrument of critical thought in the pursuit of social change. It, together with other more affirmative and collaborative critical thinking approaches, such as Bignall's (2014) nonconfrontational, collaborative excolonialism, might be used in critical academic writings and in critical research undertakings. Not only could it possibly support lesser-known dimensions of critical academic thought, but it might also provide a counterpoint to a critical thinking that centers resistance, interruption, problematizing, and such like concepts, as the primary ways of approaching social change. This is an area of study I hope to pursue on-going.

On a personal note, I have come to see that my choice to use diffraction as my primary analytical tool is also a poetic crafting tool that I've been using since a very young age. In fact, diffraction is the very stuff of poetry. As a poet, I have been juxtaposing images and metaphors, writing one through the other so that the reader responds to more than the words, and often to what words can't convey by themselves alone. See Appendix B for a personal example. The parallels that I see between diffraction and poetry,⁴⁸ I will write about more fully in the coming years.

Finally, in terms of future study, as I've read more Derrida and tried to understand what he means by aporia and hospitality, I find myself thinking more and more about what *Annie* said, "we are all born mothers and grandmothers." I think that there are connections here that link

⁴⁸ I do not mean what some call poetry which for me is merely, prose with non-traditional spacing and line breaks.

Barad (2017), Derrida (1993) and the thinking of *Annie*. This is an area of philosophical research I also mean to pursue. The following quotation speaks to this particular interest:

In fact, the ‘other’ – the constitutively excluded – is always already within: the very notion of the ‘self’ is a troubling of the interior/exterior distinction. Matter in the indeterminacy of its being un/does identity and unsettles the very foundations of non/being. Together with Derrida, we might then say, ‘Identity... can only affirm itself as identity to itself by opening itself to the hospitality of a difference from itself or of a difference with itself. Condition of the self, such a difference from and with itself would then be its very thing...the stranger at home’.⁴⁹ What is being called into question here is the very nature of the ‘self’; all ‘selves’ are not themselves but rather the iterative intra-activity of all matter of time-beings. The self is dispersed/diffracted through being and time. (Barad, 2017, p. 80)

I see my study moving towards a better understanding of how *Annie*, Barad (2017), and Derrida’s (1993) work converge, and I would like to follow up on the “time” seed *Annie* planted in my head.

In sum, I see my research as having made contributions to reconciliatory teaching practices that did/do promote mutual respect, empathy, and cultural understanding. It confirms Blackstock’s (2016) view that children hold the key to social change and as such we must listen to what they have to say. My research also showed the transformation power of Indigenous ways of teaching in this instance of story-making and how it might be implemented in other contexts. It also showed how attending to and creating perturbations, not critical disturbances and disruptions, can be used to make and fine tune social change in nonconfrontation ways. Further, as the transformative example above suggests there may be good reasons for developing and implementing decision-making and reconciliation literacies in collaboration with Indigenous Elders. If such literacies were created and implemented, they might raise the profile of Indigenous ways of knowing in public schools to a place where they are considered on par with settler-colonial ways of knowing and thus promote reconciliation at an educational system level.

⁴⁹ Footnote 38 in the original refers to: Jacques Derrida, *Aporias*, Palo Alto, Stanford University Press, 1993, p10.

INTERLUDE:

THE JOURNEY BACK and the RESEARCH STORY YET TO COME

This interlude chapter returns the reader again to the hero/ine's journey story and its development. Like the first interlude, it includes not two, but three, story parts not typically included in a thesis. The first part is concerned with the *Road Back* where I, as researcher, consider the implications and consequences of what I learned from the research project. The second part, called *Resurrection*, is concerned with any final tests or events that confirm what I have learned. These tests and events are meant to solidify the new knowledges that transformed me and made me into someone new. Finally, the third part, signals a *Return to the Community* with these new knowledges. This chapter, like the first interlude chapter refocuses the action of the thesis on its moving parts.

The road back has been both a personal one and an academic one. The personal journey back has been a slow introspective one, which is to say, the one I spent thinking about and writing my thesis. It was a time of assessing what I had learned and how best to share it. A significant part of this personal journey was also spent conducting my analysis.

The academic journey back to the educational academic community in general, the Faculty of Education at the University of Ottawa, and specifically to the gaze of my supervisor and committee members was an emotionally apprehensive one. It entailed a significant number of false starts followed by thesis writing stops for thinking and rethinking, then some chapter writing loop backs, but finally, a belief and confidence in the structure I decided to use for my thesis document, and a commitment to draft it to completion.

It also involved joining a group of similarly situated doctoral candidates to write for six hours (plus) every day. Every day began the same. We chatted for 30 minutes offering our support and commiserations to each other and declaring our objectives for the day. We then sat in a Zoom session for the rest of the day as we wrote. It surprised me that in this academic writing context, I worked and wrote better than on my own, even though I sat at the same desk and worked on the same computer both before and after I joined the group. I never would have guessed that I needed this sense of academic community or that I would enjoy it so much, but I did, and I do. When this is all done for them and for me, I will miss them. Maybe we will stay in touch. I hope so. A circuit of Bar-B-Qs at each of our homes has been brought up more than once after COVID and after each of us defends. So, maybe.

This interlude chapter ends my thesis story here in this document, but my research story is not yet complete. I have yet to defend my thesis and to see if others find my work helpful. In terms of the research journey yet to come, I now need to prepare for the second part of the hero/ine's journey, the *Resurrection* or final test in the form of my oral defense. If I successfully pass this last test, my dissertation will be added as a small piece to the academic body of work on reconciliation education and the submission of my dissertation will constitute the final part of my hero/ine's research journey, *Return to the Community*. Hopefully, the work in this document will provide teachers and scholars with something new to think about or something new to try with students as we all try, as educators, to live up to our reconciliation responsibilities as outlined in TRC (2015) Call 63.3.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

A CDA is useful in identifying what stories get told, who tells them, who makes them, and what patterns and devices characterize plot, and characters (Fairclough, 1995; Scollon, 2001; van Dijk, 2001; Wodak, 2008). As a research practice, CDA grounds itself in a qualitative reflexive epistemology (Rogers, 2005). It holds that the researcher is “inherently part of [the research] and influenced by social structure, and produced in social interaction” (van Dijk, 2001: 352). So too is the research. Social structure influences the way in which data is collected and understood, how a research question is selected and framed, and how research results are described and explained through theories, language, genre, and theories of language and genre. Even the diction used in a research article can carry “important ideological functions such as deleting agency” (Billig, 2008, p. 1) and reification, both of which convey socially implicit value. As Tuen van Dijk writes, “discourse analysis, [is] socio-politically “situated,” whether we like it or not” (2001, 352).

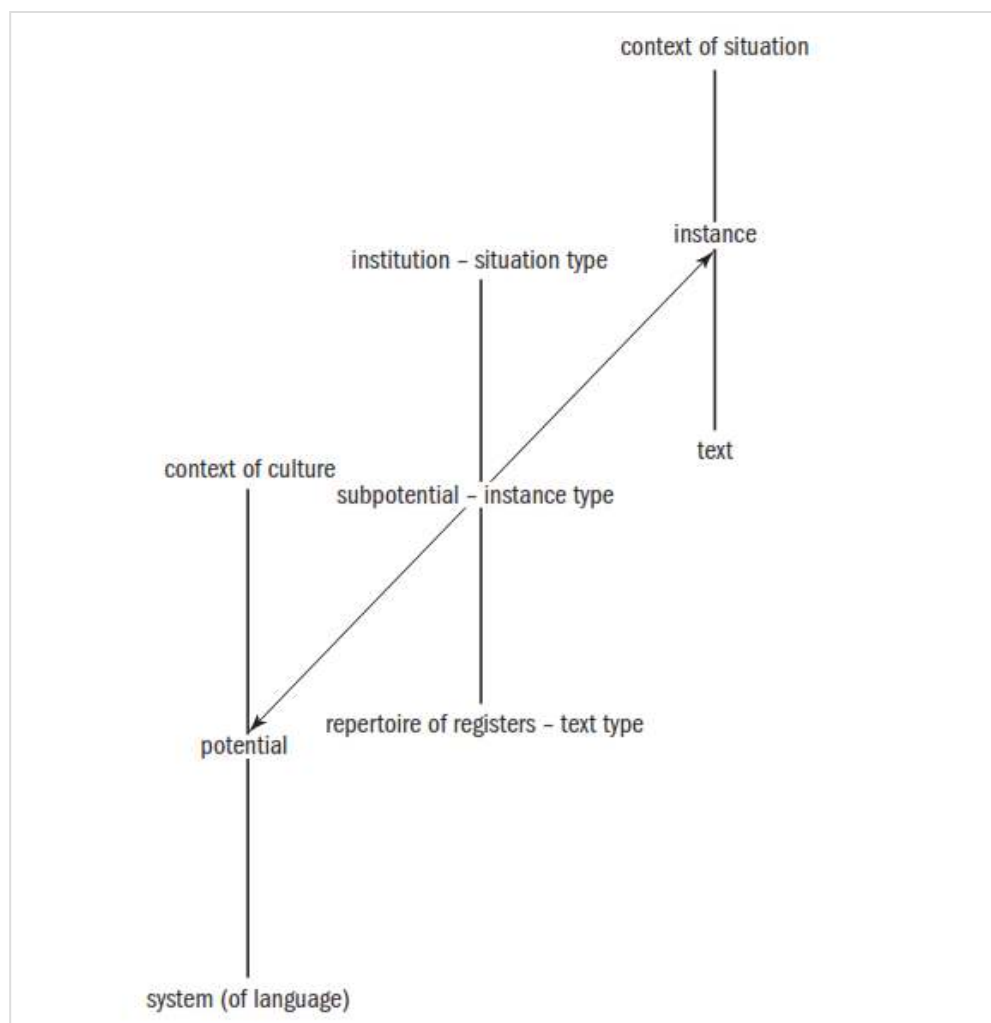
Different theoretically-based CDA approaches and methodologies contextualize⁵⁰ discourse differently by foregrounding specific aspects of context over others (van Leeuwen, 2008). There are four main CDA approaches, each championed by one or more researchers: discourse-historical by Ruth Wodak, dialectical-relational by Norman Fairclough, socio-cognitive by Tuen van Dijk, and social actor by Theo van Leeuwen, James Gee, and Gunther Kress. It is useful to understand these four approaches as social constructions with positions in an imaginary critical-noncritical matrix that has an actor axis (a social structural $\leftrightarrow$ personal agency continuum) and an action axis (a private $\leftrightarrow$ institutional continuum) (Wodak & Meyer, 2008, p. 22). Each critical approach favours specific contextual perspectives of inclusion and exclusion in current (and applied) educational research. See Figure 24 for Halliday’s (1985, p. 28) visual representation of how context influences a CDA in general terms. The following is a specific example of his general principles. If verbal praise is given to an individual employee by a manager at a live company-wide town hall meeting simultaneously broadcast to all campuses

⁵⁰ ...or sometimes recontextualized through multi-modal discourses

world-wide, this would be an example of context of situation. The context of culture would look at the reception of this communique at each of the branch offices to show how in China it might be considered in bad taste and reflect poorly on the judgement of corporate management, and how in Ottawa it might be considered a small gesture of appreciation that if not followed up with an increase in salary or a promotion is considered an empty gesture.

Figure 20

Cline of Contextual Instantiation (Halliday, 1985, p. 28)



Looking at the context of a discourse artifact reveals interdependencies and inter-relatedness between component pieces. Bakhtin's (1993) discusses this as both context and embedded relatedness that at times operate on different scales. It also speaks to a kind of scalar patterning that brings to mind the Mandelbrot's (2010) fractals. However, the critical orientation of a

discourse often directs the overarching contextual framework for its analysis. An “ideological critique focuses on the effects of discourse on social structures of power, rhetorical critique on persuasion in individual texts or talk, [and] strategic critique focuses on how discourse figures within the strategies pursued by groups of social agents to change societies in particular directions” (Fairclough et al., 2004). In my view, a thorough analysis of any discourse must contextually exam it from all three critical perspectives which my forthcoming analysis does. I also analyze the story artefact produced through my research to determine where in the dialectical-relational and discourse-historical matrix it is positioned.

Dialectical-relational and discourse-historical approaches share a structural orientation. Analysis with a structural orientation looks at schools as social structures, in terms of policy, organization, authority, to understand the impact on personal agency (students, parents and teachers). Contextualization of normative social structures in the research is generally not very detailed (Wodak & Fairclough, 2010).

Socio-cognitive and social actor approaches share an orientation of agency. From this orientation research looks at discourses of personal agency (by students, parents and teachers) for example, individual researchers, teachers or learners that should/could influence education as a social institution. Contextualization focuses on difference between the norm and the exemplary (Djonov & van Leeuwen, 2011; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).

Dialectical-relational and socio-cognitive approaches share an orientation toward broad operationalization. From this orientation, analysis looks at the production of macro-level discourses (such as curriculum documents, educational research or white papers) to explain the discreet discursive behavior of learners and teachers. Contextualization of value systems, such as political correctness or the newest and best educational theories that factor in school-related decision-making, are prioritized (Lingard, 2007). For example, the theories of Lakoff and Johnson (1980) signaled a change in the thinking system of the day to an embodied view of discourse that had a significant impact on the thinking of the socio-cognitive-linguistic discourse community (Fish, 2011). The TRC and Indigenous academic thought might be considered modern day examples.

Discourse-historical and social actor approaches share an orientation toward detailed operationalization. From this orientation, analysis looks at the production of individual micro-level discourses, such as narratives by student dropouts, teacher burnouts, L2 literacy achievers,

to make generalizations about schooling trends at a larger scale. Contextualization of an individual's identity, behavior and decision-making, are prioritized (Buchanan, 2012).

As a matter of practice, dialectical-relational and socio-cognitive approaches use mostly existing texts for their analysis. The advantage of using existing texts/discourses is that they are already recorded and “non-reactive” (Wodak & Meyer, 2008, p. 28) and as a result are regarded as more resistant to researcher tampering. Social actor and discourse-historical approaches are more likely to gather data from fieldwork and use ethnography as a “pre-condition” (Wodak & Meyer, 2008: 28) for the use of existing texts/discourse to augment research. The advantage of using ethnography (Kress, 2011) and field interviews in a CDA is that it allows the researcher to collect data from individual that typically do not have a voice or a text to speak with. The use of ethnographic research methods recognizes that existing texts have associated “power” histories that can silence some voices and displace others (as in journalistic selection practices that favour one story over another for publication) and tries to avoid these situations (van Dijk, 2001, p. 356).

Appendix B: Dismembered Parents

DISMEMBERED PARENTS

By Carol Lee

There is no drug

to heal the times,

the times

a bruised number

punctures the skin of a personal statistic

punctures vein hope

and bleeds up a needle through time

and again.

There is no drug

that can fix the hand-of broken hours and faceless minutes

relocate the dislocated

the fingers of our time together

bent shapeless now

but still out-stretched

with imperfect reaching > back <

out to you

to somewhere in another time

to stop the stop watching of you-r you-th.

to stop my dismembered longing

to gather you up in my arms

to exchange arms with you; to disarm you

to watch your smile become dizzy laughter as I twirl you
around and around

and make you a child again.
to pull you back from the grave
danger and folly
to fill a dismembered hug with more than memories of
re-membered happiness.

There is no drug for all this.

only this: a-gon-y-ou

these streets
this autumn
and so many fallen leaves.
And we, dismembered parents—blown, fragmented, torn.