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Navigating the Wilderness Between Us: Exploring Ecological Métissage as an Emerging Vision for Environmental Education in Canada

by

Gregory Edward Lowan

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ABSTRACT

This study entailed a physical and philosophical journey that explored the relationship between Western and Indigenous knowledge and philosophies of Nature. Guided by the overarching question, “Is it possible to blend Western and Indigenous knowledge and philosophies of Nature?” the author developed the concept of *ecological métissage* and explored other eco-pedagogical philosophies and practices that seek to articulate and embody the “Third Space” (Richardson, 2004) between Western and Indigenous philosophies and practices. Other major themes explored included Métis culture and identity and Canadian cultural and ecological identity.

Over a period of six months in late 2010 and early 2011, the author travelled across Canada employing a methodological métissage comprising a blend of interpretive and Indigenous narrative research approaches to explore the life histories, cultural and ecological identities and philosophies, and professional experiences of ten intercultural environmental educators. This journey produced profound dialogues and meta-dialogues between the researcher, the participants, and the literature.

Participants’ narratives were kept intact and initially presented as short biographies to respect the integrity of their stories (Kovach, 2010) before the author provided his interpretations. Notable findings included the clarification of the relationship between Western and Indigenous knowledge and philosophies of Nature as one with the potential for bricolage (integration) but not absolute métissage (blending) unless Western perspectives other than science, such as deep ecology and bioregionalism, are also considered. Implications for practice were also presented.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my son, Cedar Koji ((湖児), who was born in the final year of this research journey, and my wife and partner, Miho. Thank you for your endless support, keeping me grounded, and reminding me of what is most important in life.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Prelude: A Tale of Two First Nations

Two Aboriginal[1] communities in western Canada, Alberta's Saddle Lake First Nation and T'Sou-ke First Nation on Vancouver Island, have recently been capturing the attention of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal leaders, scholars, and educators, due to innovative environmental initiatives.

In Saddle Lake a revolutionary, low-impact water treatment system has attracted interest from other remote Aboriginal communities (Narine, 2009). Saddle Lake was once a highly polluted body of water—community members had to boil all of their water prior to consumption. After repeated appeals, the community received financial assistance from the federal government to clean up the lake and develop a new water treatment system. Against the advice of the government and industry experts, Saddle Lake partnered with researchers from the University of Alberta to develop a revolutionary water treatment system (Narine, 2009). The project managers were influenced by the vision of their Elders to embrace modern science guided by traditional wisdom. As one participant commented, "It's always been a desire of the Elders to embrace sound science and … traditional holistic teachings to fashion healthy drinking water" (Narine, 2009, ¶ 6).

Rather than using chemicals to treat their water, further tampering with the highly disturbed ecosystem, the Saddle Lake team developed a system that uses a non-invasive

[1] In order to recognize and honour the importance of certain terms and concepts, I follow Métis scholar Fyre Jean Graveline's (1998) example by capitalizing them in this study. These terms include: Aboriginal, First Nations, White, European, Western, Indigenous, Métis, Land, Earth, and Nature.

integrated membrane filter (Narine, 2009). Saddle Lake's treatment system has been highly successful and is now in high demand across Canada. The project's managers are presently busy sharing the technology with other Aboriginal communities.

T'Sou-ke First Nation, in cooperation with industrial and governmental partners, also made headlines recently for developing the largest solar energy project in British Columbia (CBC, 2009; Kimmett, 2009). T'souke's solar committee members were motivated by a desire to become a self-sufficient community capable of providing their own energy and food; they successfully collaborated with renewable energy experts such as solar contractor Home Energy Solutions to make their vision a reality (Kimmett).

Located on the southern shores of Vancouver Island, the community is now able to generate enough energy to power 25 homes and several administrative buildings. At times they generate so much electricity that they are able to profit by redirecting surplus power back into the provincial grid. The community has also installed solar hot water tanks on some homes and buildings and plans to develop wind power and an organic farm in the future (CBC, 2009).

Nine Band members also underwent culturally sensitive training with First Power, a solar power developer that employs Aboriginal pedagogical approaches, to become certified solar panel installers. As one participant described, "We learned by doing. They took a group to each house and would teach us on an actual system. Having everything right there in front of you made it a lot easier" (Kimmett, 2009, ¶ 20-21)

Chief Gordon Planes commented that the project was also guided by the traditional Potlach mentality of generosity; they are already actively sharing their experiences with other communities, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal alike, and hope to be an example for others to follow (CBC, 2009). As Kimmett (2009, ¶ 5) notes, "supporters call it the

beginning of a renaissance for First Nations; a way to connect with the land in a totally new way plus gain energy autonomy."

Might these two examples provide a vision for the future of environmental education in Canada? How might we authentically and respectfully combine Indigenous wisdom and knowledge with Western science and technology to address contemporary ecological issues?

Background

Motivated by recent environmental initiatives like Saddle Lake's water treatment system (Narine, 2009) and T'Sou-ke First Nation's solar energy project (Kimmett, 2009) and inspired by examples of cultural métissage in Canadian history (Saul, 2008), the purpose of this study was to explore "ecological métissage" as an emerging vision for environmental education in Canada. The concept of ecological métissage arises from Thomashow's (1996) description of "ecological identity," as the way that we understand ourselves in relation to the natural world, and an understanding of "métissage" as the mixing or blending often associated with culture or ethnicity (Chambers, Donald and Hasebe-Ludt, 2002; Nguyen, 2005; Pieterse, 2001). For the purposes of this study, ecological métissage denotes a blending of two or more ecological worldviews at a personal and/ or cultural level as represented in personal identity, philosophies, and practices.

The impetus for this study arose from my master's research that critically examined Aboriginal outdoor and environmental education in Canada (Lowan, 2008, 2009). A dominant theme that emerged in the study was the relatively unexplored potential for intercultural learning between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students and instructors in

outdoor and environmental education settings. This theme is also supported by an increasing number of scholars and educators who advocate for the integration of Indigenous and Western knowledge in our collective attempts to address the world's current ecological crises (Henderson, 2007; Knudtson and Suzuki, 1992; Sharkawy, 2008; Turner, 2005; Vikander, 2007; Snow, 2005; Lefort and Marshall 2009). Indigenous (Kazina and Swayze, 2009; Snow, 1975/ 2005; Swayze, 2009; Wilson, N., 2008) and non-Indigenous (Davis, 2007, 2009; Lertzman, 2002) environmental educators alike are working to bridge cultural gaps as well as to revive and preserve Indigenous traditions and ecological knowledge, ever conscious of the delicate balance between respectful sharing and misappropriating or misusing Indigenous knowledge (Hermes, 2000; Simpson, 2004),

Personal Background: Positioning Myself

Absolon and Willet (2005) explain that positioning, or introducing oneself in detail, is an important aspect of relationship building in Aboriginal contexts. Similar to the Cherokee-American writer Louis Owens (2001), I am, "a person of deeply mixed heritage and somewhat unique upbringing" (p. 11). While my European name is Greg Lowan, several years I ago was also given the name "Dohdohniné" (Sweatlodge Man) by Ojibwe Elder Ralph Johnson. I am a proud member of the Métis Nation of Canada and have Métis roots from both my mother and father as well as Norwegian, and Swiss ancestry respectively. The four streams of my family converged on the North American prairies in the 1800's and early 1900's.

Growing up on the foothills and eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains in the city of Calgary, where the Bow River meets the Elbow River, I was raised conscious of my unique family history. Tales of Métis ancestors using traditional plant knowledge to cure

neighbours' ailments intermingled with stories of Norwegian relatives singing Lutheran hymns of gratitude as rain nourished their parched Saskatchewan grain fields. This métissage of family stories has always intrigued me.

Despite being raised in a city, my childhood was a métissage of urban and rural environments; I was fortunate to spend a considerable amount of time exploring the mountains, forests, rivers, and coastline of western Canada as a child. My parents took every opportunity to leave the city for our cabin in central Alberta, the nearby mountains, or to visit relatives on British Columbia's west coast. During my elementary school years, I was often removed from school to accompany my father on outdoor education trips that he led for junior high school students. As I grew older, I participated in countless sailing, hiking, fishing, canoeing, orienteering, and skiing excursions both with my family and school. Looking back, I realize how those early experiences deeply influenced my personal and professional journey.

My academic journey began with primary and secondary education in Calgary including several years of French immersion. My undergraduate training included diverse areas such as the social and biological sciences, kinesiology, and Japanese. I subsequently undertook additional undergraduate training in the fields of outdoor, environmental, health, physical, and Aboriginal education. My master's degree focused on the applications of decolonization theory in outdoor and environmental Aboriginal education programs (Lowan, 2007a, 2008, 2009). As previously indicated, the theme of intercultural learning in outdoor and environmental education that emerged in my master's research provided the impetus for this study.

Over the past fifteen years, my professional experiences have been based primarily in educational environments. My first experiences were gained during summers teaching water safety and swimming. I also spent time in my late teens as a volunteer camp counselor. Post-undergrad, I returned to Canada after a year of teaching high school English in rural Japan and began my career as an outdoor and environmental educator in earnest. The past ten years have seen me facilitating an outdoor pursuits program for adults with developmental disabilities (Lowan, 2007b), working with Aboriginal youth on extended expeditions in the northern boreal forest (Lowan, 2007a, 2008, 2009), and teaching and guiding youth and adults in the foothills and eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains by ski and canoe. I currently teach qualitative research methods and Aboriginal, multicultural, and outdoor and environmental education in the Faculty of Education at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, Ontario.

My family, academic, and professional experiences have all influenced my growth and development as an educator. I drew on them in crafting this study while attempting to maintain a reflexive self-awareness (Lotz-Sisitka, 2002) of my own role in and influence on the research journey.

In this study I take the position of a Métis Canadian exploring the concept of ecological métissage. As a Métis, I find the concept of ecological métissage especially interesting. However, my intention is not to be exclusive—my experience is that there are a growing number of people from many cultural backgrounds including First Nations (Snow, 1977/ 2005), Métis (Swayze, 2009), and non-Aboriginal (Snively, 2009) who embrace a similar perspective.

Canada: A Métis Nation?

During the early stages of this study I was intrigued by the work of Canadian philosopher John Ralston Saul (2008). In *A Fair Country*, Saul challenges the notion of Canada being founded by only two nations (French and British) and proposes that we are, in fact, a "métis" nation. Saul emphasizes the long forgotten and largely ignored Indigenous foundations of Canadian society. He suggests that Canada is, in fact, a culturally and linguistically "métis" society. He states:

> We are a métis civilization. What we are today has been inspired as much by four centuries of life with the indigenous civilizations as by four centuries of immigration. Perhaps more. Today we are the outcome of that experience. As have Métis people, Canadians in general have been heavily influenced and shaped by First Nations. We still are. We increasingly are. This influence, this shaping is deep within us. (p. 3)

Saul suggests that for the sake of our collective Canadian ecological, political, linguistic and socio-cultural identities, we must dust off centuries of denial and embrace our common Aboriginal heritage. He proposes that a cursory examination of our justice system, political structure and history, as well as Canadian French, English and Aboriginal languages will quickly reveal the inextricable influence of Canada's founding cultural groups on each other. Saul suggests that living with cultural complexity was, and continues to be, one of Canada's unique strengths. We inherit this from our Aboriginal forebears who had learned to navigate a complex multicultural landscape long before the arrival of the first Europeans. In his introductory comments, Saul proposes that:

> A dancer who describes himself as a singer will do neither well. To insist on describing ourselves as something we are not is to embrace existential illiteracy. We are not a civilization of [purely] British or French or European inspiration. We never have been… To accept and even believe such fundamental misrepresentations of Canada and Canadians is to sever our mythologies from our reality… We are a people of Aboriginal inspiration organized around a concept of peace, fairness and good government. That is what lies at the heart of our story, at the heart of Canadian mythology, whether francophone or anglophone. If we can embrace a language that

> expresses that story, we will feel a great release. We will discover a remarkable power to act and to do so in such a way that we will feel we are true to ourselves. (p. xi-xii)

As a Canadian of mixed Aboriginal and European heritage, I find great resonance with Saul's thesis. However, Saul's comments and his liberal use of the term "métis" might seem overly optimistic to some due to the undeniably negative impact of European colonialism on Indigenous cultures, languages, and health. The effects of colonization were and continue to be devastating and wide-ranging for Aboriginal peoples (Adams, 1999; Bastien, 2003; Battiste, 1998, 2005; Simpson, 2002; Graveline, 1998). Colonization has disrupted cultures, destroyed languages, and dislocated Indigenous peoples around the world from their languages, traditional lands, and ancient practices. However, as Marie Battiste (1998) suggests, Indigenous people are resilient and we are now witnessing the re-emergence and rebuilding of Indigenous communities. As part of this healing process, many Indigenous leaders are facilitating the revival of traditional knowledge not only for the benefit of Aboriginal peoples, but also for the rest of society (e.g. Barnhardt and Kawagley, 2005; Snow, 1977/ 2005). Barnhardt and Kawagley (2005) state:

> Indigenous peoples throughout the world have sustained their unique worldview and associated knowledge systems for millennia, even while undergoing major social upheavals as a result of transformative forces beyond their control … The depth of Indigenous knowledge rooted in the long inhabitation of a particular place offers lessons that can benefit everyone, from educator to scientist, as we search for a more satisfying and sustainable way to live on this planet. (p. 9)

As Barnhardt and Kawagley (2005) suggest, Indigenous people developed highly sophisticated and intimate understandings over thousands of years of this land that we all presently inhabit. Amidst the plethora of contemporary ecological concerns, wouldn't it make sense to deeply consider Indigenous knowledge and perspectives? Saul's (2008) thesis may be seen as an invitation for us to revisit history, acknowledging the wrongs that

were committed, but also recognizing inspiring examples of intercultural co-operation and métissage, moving forward to collectively re-imagine our cultural and ecological future.

La Metis des Grecs: A Trickster Tale

I was also intrigued in the early stages of this study by the Ancient Greek concept of *metis*[2] (pronounced "meh-tiss"), a subtle, oblique, and intuitive form of knowledge that was once widely recognized and celebrated but eventually suppressed and ignored by Western societies due to its associations with femininity and Nature (Dolmage, 2009). Détienne and Vernant (1974/ 1991) suggest that:

> There has been a prolonged silence on the subject of the intelligence of cunning [metis] … from a Christian point of view, it was inevitable that the gulf separating men from animals should be increasingly emphasized and that human reason should appear even more clearly separated from animal behaviour than it was for the ancient Greeks. (p. 318-319)

Similar to the Trickster figures in many North American Aboriginal cultures (Graveline, 1998; King, 2003; McDermot, 1993; Moore, 2004; Reid and Bringhurst, 1996), examples of metis in Greek mythology and philosophy often involve the *dolos* (tricks or ruses) of animals like the fox, the octopus, or the squid, able to turn itself inside out.

As a Métis person, I was struck by the etymological similarity of Métis with the Greek term metis. Dolmage (2009) states:

> The French word *métis* is related to the Spanish word *mestizo*, both coming from the Latin word *mixtus*, the past participle of the verb *to mix* and connoting mixed blood. In critical theory the concept of *métissage* also locates and interrogates the ways that certain forms of knowledge have been relegated to the margins… *métissage* … etymologically linked to *mêtis* and meaning mixture or miscegenation, has been used as a critical lens through which one might observe issues of identity, resistance, exclusion, and intersectionality. (pp. 24-25)

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[2] In this study "Métis" refers to the Métis people of North America, while "Metis" will be understood as a figure from Greek mythology, with "metis" denoting a recognized form of knowledge in ancient Greek society.

Dolmage also suggests that:

> The form of the word itself [metis] is a kind of trick: the Greek words *me* and *tis* mean “no man” or “no one”. But the two words put together label a particular someone: the sort of person whose identity can be elusive, who is unpredictable but resourceful and clever. (p. 5)

Dolmage’s etymological observations resonate strongly with my own thoughts and experiences as a Métis Canadian. Being a bi or multicultural person has distinct advantages, but it may also create the feeling that Dolmage alludes to of being “no one”, someone who doesn't quite fit in a particular social or cultural milieu, but somehow seems to function effectively anywhere.

Throughout Canadian history, Métis people have often been intercultural mediators, deftly navigating between and mediating European and Aboriginal cultures (Saul, 2008). Many Métis embodied the Greek concept of metis in their intuitive understanding of the dynamic relations between the myriad of European, Aboriginal and other cultures that came together to form what we know today as Canada.

Explorations into the Greek concept of metis and reflections upon Saul’s (2008) proposal that Canada is a historically “métis nation” led me to wonder what characterizes intercultural environmental educators in Canada today? Who are these cultural “border crossers” (Hones, 1990; Nguyen, 2005; Pieterse, 2001)? What led them to their chosen vocation? What makes them effective? And how might they be reshaping Canadian ecological identity? These initial musings eventually crystallized in the form of the guiding research questions below.

Research Questions

Motivated by my personal, professional, and scholarly background and key concepts such as the rising interest in and growth of intercultural environmental education, the legacy of métissage in Canada, and the role of intercultural border crossers as introduced above, the overarching question framing this study was: *Can Western and Indigenous knowledge of the natural world be blended theoretically and in practice? If so, how?*

Additional guiding questions included:

1. *What characterizes the ecological identities of contemporary intercultural environmental educators?*
2. *Do they embody ecological métissage? If so, how?*
3. *How might the concept of ecological métissage reshape environmental education in Canada?*

As presented and discussed in the following chapters, these questions provided an initial framework to explore and expand upon controversial and under-explored issues and concepts in contemporary intercultural environmental education in Canada. They also provided me with a guide to interpret the experiences and perspectives of the ten intercultural environmental educators from across Canada that I had the privilege to interview as presented in Chapters Six and Seven.

Outline of Chapters

The following three chapters explore the concepts introduced above through a review of literature. Chapter Two addresses the topic of ecological identity—how we see ourselves in relation to the natural world (Thomashow, 1996)—from a Métis Canadian

perspective. In Chapter Three, I explore several instances of cultural and linguistic métissage in Canadian history and argue that, rather than providing an explicit template, examples of métissage from the past offer us insight into a “Third Space” mentality (Richardson, 2004)—the *mindset* required to successfully bring together Indigenous, Western (and possibly other) knowledge, philosophies, and practices. Chapter Four further examines contemporary theories, practices, and issues, related to the integration or blending of Western and Indigenous knowledge and philosophies of Nature. Examples of contemporary intercultural environmental education programs in Canada are also presented. The methodology and methods employed in this study are described in Chapter Five. Chapter Six is a presentation of findings in the form of ten short interpretive biographies. Interpretation and discussion of the findings in relation to my original research questions are presented in Chapter Seven.

CHAPTER TWO:

ECOLOGICAL IDENTITY: ONE MÉTIS CANADIAN'S PERSPECTIVE

Exhausted from a day of hiking under the blazing prairie sun, I shrug off my backpack and flop down onto a bed of golden grass. As I lay staring up into the vast sea of sky above, something catches my eye. I soon realize that it is a red-tailed hawk, my spirit animal and protector. The hawk circles lazily, peering down at me as I settle in for a quick nap.

As I drift off to sleep, I reflect on the interconnection of all things. The Elders say that we are all related, all connected, two-leggeds, four-leggeds, and swimmers alike. Gazing up at the circling hawk, I am reminded of this connection. I also understand this relationship from a physical perspective; as I reach skyward, I know that vibrating atoms in my fingertips are interacting with gas molecules in the air, creating small rippling airwaves that will eventually bump into the outstretched feathers of the hawk. Can he/ she also sense this connection?

How is cultural identity related to ecological identity? What are the main influences on the development of ecological identity? Is there a singularly identifiable Canadian ecological identity? Or are there multiple identities? This chapter addresses these kinds of questions from my perspective as a Métis Canadian using Mitch Thomashow's (1996) descriptions of ecological identity as a framework for discussion.

Thomashow (1996) defines "ecological identity" as:

> All the different ways people construe themselves in relationship to the earth as manifested in personality, values, actions, and sense of self … It also includes a person's connection to the earth, perception of the ecosystem, and direct experience of nature … Each person's path to ecological identity reflects his or her cognitive, intuitive, and affective perceptions of ecological relationships. (p. 3)

An exploration of ecological identity leads us to questions such as: Do you see yourself as part of Nature, on equal terms with animals, plants, and rocks? Or maybe you are part of Nature, but slightly superior? Perhaps you feel repulsed by the idea of considering yourself as part of Nature and you think that humans are meant to rule and control the rest of the Earth? What experiences and influences (culture, religion, family, childhood adventures, education) might have shaped your ecological identity?

Thomashow (1996), an American professor of environmental studies, explains that he begins each semester by leading his students through a series of activities designed to help them explore their own ecological identities. He states, “In formulating an ecological identity, it is crucial to understand where you fit in the broad spectrum of environmental thought” (p. 29). Thomashow relates that every year he observes various strains of environmentalism emerging in his classes. He also describes the ongoing influence of early environmental “archetypes,” such as Henry David Thoreau, an introspective naturalist famous for living a simple self-sustaining life in New England in the mid 19th century, John Muir, an adventurer and outspoken preservationist in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and Rachel Carson, an ecologist famous for sharing emotionally-charged scientific perspectives on issues such as the harmful impacts of unabated insecticide-use with society at large in the mid-twentieth century.

Thomashow (1996) also discusses the influence of more recently articulated perspectives such as Deep Ecology, moving beyond the predominantly intellectual field of scientific ecology to examine our emotional and spiritual relationships with Nature, Bioregionalism, living in awareness of and response to our geographical and cultural surroundings, and traditional Indigenous worldviews on how his students orient themselves.

In this chapter I explore and expand upon the archetypes and concepts above. I also review literature related to the formation of ecological identity from Western and Aboriginal perspectives. This chapter concludes with a discussion of ecological identity in the Canadian context in order to situate this exploration in relation to the present study.

An Ecology of Terms

Before proceeding with this discussion of ecological identity, it is important for me to provide some background regarding my understanding and use and of key terms such as "environmental", "ecological", "wilderness", "Nature", and "the Land".

Ecological and Environmental

While often used synonymously, a closer examination of the terms "ecological" and "environmental" reveals related, but distinctly different, meanings (Brown, 2009; Thomashow, 1996). "Ecological" carries scientific connotations and generally denotes the complex web of *relationships* in the natural world. Sumara, Davis, and Laidlaw (2001) state:

> *Environmental* and *ecological* announce two very different ways of thinking. "Environmental" implies a separation of observer and observed, as it points to concerns with surroundings. In contrast, "ecological" is about relationships, with particular attention to the complex co-evolutions of humans and the more-than-human world. (p. 148)

Brown (2009) also highlights the potentially scientific connotation of the term "ecological":

> Ecology is a relatively new branch of science housed in the discipline of biology…[that] involves the scientific study of both the structural and functional components of the environment, and of the relationships between organisms and the environment. (p. 28)

As is presented above, Sumara *et al* suggest that, "environmental" refers to a more *human-centred* perspective on the natural world. For example, Brown describes "environmental science" as, "the scientific study of human interaction with the environment and the associated problems that occur" (p. 28). He also posits that the term "environmental studies" is used to describe inquiry into human interaction with the environment in fields as diverse as law, policy, science, and literature.

Brown (2009) concludes that “environmental education” is therefore the wide-ranging and interdisciplinary pedagogical application of environmental science and environmental studies (pp. 28-29). In this study the term “environmental education” is used to describe human-centred pedagogical efforts aimed at enhancing students’ awareness and understanding of the human and more-than human world *around them*. Similar to Sumara *et al* (2001), I employ the term “ecological” when paying specific attention to the interconnected *relationships*, human-related and/ or otherwise, inherent in Nature.

Wilderness, Nature, and the Land

The use of “wilderness” in the title of this study is intentional; “Navigating the wilderness between us” challenges and speaks to both sociocultural and ecological concerns. It underlines the unifying intention of this work—a journey through the existential and literal “wilderness” of the Canadian socio-ecological landscape that contests the mutual exclusivity of Western and Indigenous epistemological and ontological approaches.

Carolyn Merchant (2004) states:

> The term *wilderness* derives from Teutonic terms dating back to the eleventh century, such as *wildern* (wild savage land) … and *wilddren* (wild man). Wilderness was a place in which travelers might lose their way and wander aimlessly without destination ... But *wilderenes* and *wylderne* could also mean a retreat, a place to worship … (p. 68)

These two interpretations of “wilderness” may seem inherently contradictory at first glance, however they are, in fact, complimentary; viewing wilderness as a “wild savage land”, a refuge, or both implies that wilderness is something “other”, something separate from humanity.

American poet and environmental philosopher Gary Snyder (2003) also discusses the terms “wilderness” and “Nature”. He comments:

> The word [Nature] gets two slightly different meanings. One is “the outdoors”- the physical world including all living things. Nature by this definition is a norm of the world that is apart from the features of products of civilization and human will … The other meaning, which is broader, is … the physical universe and all its properties [including humans and their creations]. I would prefer to use the word *nature* in this sense. But it will come up meaning “the outdoors” or “other-than-human” sometimes even here. (p. 8-9)

Like Snyder, I prefer to interpret the term “Nature” as, “the physical universe and all its properties” *including* humans and human activity. However I, along with the participants in this study, also use it at times to describe the “physical world including all living things” separate from human endeavours. Snyder elaborates on the relationship between “Nature” and terms such as “wilderness” of “the wild”:

> Although *nature* is a term that is not of itself threatening, the idea of the “wild” … is often associated with unruliness, disorder, and violence ... When we think of wilderness … today, we think of remote and perhaps designated regions that are commonly alpine, desert, or swamp. Just a few centuries ago, when virtually *all* was wild in North America, wilderness was not something exceptionally severe … There were human beings, too: North America was *all populated* … Nature is not a place to visit, it is home. (p. 6-7)

“Wilderness” is a contested term that carries strong Western, anthropocentric connotations (Merchant, 2004). It implies a mythically forbidding untamed “otherness”, threatening to humans, but alluring nonetheless (Merchant, 2004; Snyder, 2003). Many Indigenous scholars also challenge the use of “wilderness” to describe areas relatively undisturbed by humans because, for Indigenous peoples, “the Land”, which includes all the physical and metaphysical elements of Creation, is not viewed as wild and forbidding, it is, as Snyder (2003) suggests, home (Cajete, 1994; Snow, 1977/ 2005). In congruence with this perspective, I avoid the use of the term “wilderness” in favour of terms such as “Nature” or “the Land” to describe the natural world in this study.

One strategy for deepening our understanding of the relationship between cultural and ecological philosophies is to explore the role of "formative" or "significant" life experiences on the development of ecological identity (Thomashow, 1996). This is the focus of the following section.

Formative Experiences

> *"We learn to see the world through perceptual lenses formed by heredity, upbringing … religion … We are not outside of or on top of the web of living things; we are deeply embedded in and utterly dependent on it for our survival and well-being." (Suzuki & Moola, 2008)*

In addition to the sociocultural influences described above by Suzuki and Moola (2008), Thomashow (1996) suggests that people form their ecological identities through, "childhood memories of place, perceptions of disturbed places, and the contemplation of wild places" (p. 30). He also discusses what he describes as the "two different, but connected paths" that many people follow as they gain ecological awareness:

> For some, it is a cognitive understanding of scientific ecology that leads them to this view. They use this knowledge as a means to extrapolate principles for living and as a way to understand their place in the world. Yet some people arrive at notions such as interconnectedness and interdependence from a purely experiential perspective. They have had experiences in nature or connections to the earth that have allowed them to understand ecological relationships from a more intuitive approach. Of course these different approaches are not polarities; they merely reflect two different ways of knowing. (p. 22)

I personally feel that the journey to my current ecological consciousness involved both of the paths mentioned above. Direct experiences with the Land have always been a highly influential part of my life, while my cognitive understanding of Nature has also been enhanced through formal and informal studies in science and environmental education. Perhaps the paths sometimes twist and crossover each other like a braided rope or double

helix? This is a good way to describe this synergy. At first I thought it was a statement, but now I see it works as a question, too. An excellent example of these two influences embodied in a single initiative is Lakehead University's OE3 (Outdoor, Ecological, and Experiential Education) Bachelor of Education program. I had the good fortune to participate in the OE3 program both as a student and teaching assistant. OE3 consists of a combination of formal and informal school-based learning along with hiking, canoeing, and winter camping excursions on the Land. This blend of academic and experiential approaches addresses both of the paths described by Thomashow (1996). I can confirm from experience that such initiatives are fertile ground for transformative experiences for people like myself who learn both academically and experientially. However, as Thomashow describes, I am also keenly aware that some people may learn more from one way than the other. As educators, it is important for us to be aware of such nuances in order to facilitate a variety of learning experiences for our students.

Thomashow's (1996) comments on the intellectual and experiential paths to ecological identity remind me of Tewa scholar Gregory Cajete's (2000a) discussion of the metaphorical and rational mind. Cajete explains that traditionally, both a metaphoric and a rational mind were cultivated in Indigenous North American societies. The metaphoric mind encompasses the world of storytelling, spirituality, and metaphysics. The rational mind entails, as Nakoda Chief John Snow (1977/ 2005) also suggests, studying the world to reveal truth and that, " the man who learns well the intricate pattern of nature will live a good life and a useful one to his people" (p. 204).

Several other scholars have explored formative influences on ecological identity. For example, Corcoran (1999) interviewed contemporary environmental educators and found that the primary influence that led them to an ecologically oriented worldview was

extended and repeated time spent outdoors as children. He also found that role models had a significant impact on the development of an empathetic ecological identity. Palmer, Suggate, Robottom, and Hart (1999) and Sivek (2002) also had similar findings in studies of formative influences on adults' and teens' (respectively) ecological identities.

Loughland, Reid, Walker, and Petocz (2003) found that early elementary students had a strong connection to the natural world. However, they also found that this sense of connection was negatively related to an increased exposure to science education. They suggest that as students were increasingly exposed to Western-science style education their views of Nature shifted from *relational* to *objective*. Loughland, *et al.* propose that a central aim of contemporary environmental education should be to preserve and restore a relational understanding of Nature. They state:

> Current environmental education requires a reorientation. Environmental education as it exists now in … schools … separated into the discrete curriculum areas of Biology and Geography, may not be very effective in creating opportunities for young people to integrate ecological values into their thinking. As it stands, they are subjected to an education system underpinned by the anthropomorphic values … animals are organised into hierarchies, both plants and animals are regarded as pets or pests … nature is constructed as a 'scene' to be viewed from the windows of our cars, or through the television screen. (p. 14)

Other scholars of environmental education critique the literature available on formative or significant life experiences as being too general in its exploration of topics such as the perceived impacts of early childhood outdoor experiences, environmental education programs, mentors, playsites, parents, or learning resources on students' ecological identities (Payne, 1999). Payne also suggests that greater precision is required in articulating the potential applications of such research. He explains further:

> A good example is the category of 'outdoor/ nature experiences'. At the moment this finding is far too general and needs sharper characterization … Some outdoor experiences may, in fact, be detrimental to the environment and create considerable anxiety for leaders and participants. (p. 368)

This is an important concern to consider—would a childhood filled with recreational off-road vehicle excursions result in a similar ecological identity as one spent travelling on foot or by canoe through similar terrain? And how would either of these compare to one spent playing video games and watching television?

Payne (1999) also suggests that discrete short-term experiences for those who are new to and uncomfortable in the "outdoors" can actually be detrimental to their environmental attitudes. My own experiences leading groups of youth and adults on hiking, skiing, and canoeing excursions outside of the city support Payne's observation; while some students who are new to the outdoors are immediately enthralled with and intrigued by these experiences, others are extremely nervous and fearful and ultimately relieved at the conclusion of an excursion. As an outdoor educator, one must be very aware of these kinds of feelings on the part of their students so as not to overwhelm them. In my experience, programs that introduce students slowly and repeatedly to outdoor environments over extended periods of time facilitate the highest levels of student retention and satisfaction. As Payne indicates, there is a strong correlation between such feelings towards the "outdoors" and ecological identity. If you are afraid of Nature, how will you be able to experience a deep sense of connection and embeddedness?

Payne (1999) also notes that, "conversely, those who are urban conservationists may have had very little to do with [outdoor] formative experiences described as significant" (p. 370). My experiences also indicate that this is true; I have met many people who, despite having spent little time outside of the city, express a deep commitment and feeling of connection to Nature.

Noel Gough (1999) also discusses the importance of negative experiences in stimulating environmental activism later in life. For example, witnessing the effects of sewage dumping in a river as a child might lead you to join a water awareness campaign as a young adult. Part of my own motivation to pursue a career as an environmental educator is based on such experiences; for example, I can remember kneeling and dipping my face directly into glacial streams in the Rocky Mountains as a child, encouraged by my parents to quench my thirst without fear of illness or disease. As a guide in my twenties, I visited the same streams with clients and students, but had to stop them from drinking the water due to high levels of bacteria and chemical pollutants caused by increased and under-regulated human activity in the valley upstream. These kinds of experiences have added to my convictions as an environmental educator.

Similar to Anishnaabe scholar, Robin Cavanagh (2005), Dillon, Kelsey and Duque-Aristizabal (1999) also remind us that our identities develop in stages throughout our lives. For example, rebellious behaviour during one's teenage years may not be an accurate predictor of adult beliefs and values. Following this line of thinking, it would be fair to argue that a teenager expressing anti-ecological views, for example, may simply be doing so to distinguish themselves from their ecologically minded parents, and as an adult may in fact assume an empathetic ecological identity.

Annette Gough (1999) astutely suggests that there are also significant differences between generations, so we must be cautious before applying the findings of significant life experience research with, for example, middle-aged adults, to designing environmental education programs for elementary students. Gough argues that contemporary youth culture must also be taken into account. In our increasingly technological society, her comments seem appropriate; perhaps it is more difficult today to entice youth (or adults) away from

their iPods, iPads, and iPhones than it was ten or twenty years ago. However, my experience as an outdoor and environmental educator indicates that, under the right circumstances, it doesn't take long for youth or adults to acclimatize to outdoor learning environments and quickly forget about high-tech possessions when presented with the beauty of a Rocky Mountain sunset after a long day of hiking, or a refreshing swim in a boreal lake after a hot summer's day of canoeing. While being aware of and utilizing contemporary technologies to enhance outdoor and environmental education programs is valid to a certain extent, I believe that nothing can replace real world experiences; they are age and time-less.

Noel Gough (1999) encourages significant life experience researchers to move beyond repeating and verifying what we already know. He challenges us to learn from, but ultimately surpass our own and others' experiences when envisioning future environmental education programs and initiatives. For example, Gough states:

> If we are to use autobiographical methods in environmental education research, we should try to do so in a way that generates new possibilities for educational experience, rather than merely replicates the experiences of a previous generation. (p. 407)

Dillon *et al* (1999) also challenge the overly positivistic nature of some significant life experience research, reducing human experience to quantifiable categories that are questionable at best, and remind us that human identity is a highly complex concept and state:

> As well as being a personal psychological construct, identity is also associated with a group characteristic, which may be corporate and/ or cultural in origin. This duality is key to understanding how particular experiences might affect individuals later in life. (p. 397)

Dillon, *et al*. (1999) also comment that many of us take on different identities in different contexts—at work, at home, or with our siblings. Payne (1999) also suggests that

greater attention must be paid to the subtleties of different cultural contexts when considering the applicability of significant life experience research. He notes that, “there is no mention of how these significant life experience research findings might ‘translate’ into culturally sensitive and contextually specific curriculum and pedagogical practices” (p. 366). Payne (1999) also suggests that further biographical research into significant life experiences will help to clarify some of the many areas of concern presented above. These kinds of methodological considerations will be explored in greater detail in Chapter Five.

Thomashow (1996) comments that understanding the history and characteristics of different ecological worldviews is a large part of ecological identity work. He also encourages us to work towards bridging these views for the benefit of ourselves and the rest of Nature. The remainder of this chapter is devoted to exploring the various archetypes and streams of environmentalism mentioned by Thomashow that are applicable to this study. I conclude with a discussion of Canadian ecological identity informed by these explorations.

In Conversation With the Archetypes

Following Thomashow’s (1996) suggestions, I set out to familiarize myself with the various streams of environmental philosophy that I found the most appealing, attempting to clarify exactly where I fit on the spectrum of environmental thought. Being more familiar with the areas of Deep Ecology and Indigenous philosophy, I began with the archetypal figures mentioned by Thomashow: Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, and Rachel Carson.

As I discuss in detail in the following, I had heard and read many of Thoreau and Muir’s famous quotes and passages in the past and felt fondly familiar with the general tone of their work as founding figures of environmental philosophy in North America. However

upon further investigation, I was somewhat surprised to discover that, while I appreciate some of their observations and philosophies, I found myself distracted by certain aspects of their beliefs. Applying a socio-critical lens to the works of Thoreau and Muir reveals Euro-American ethnocentrism to a degree that even their most ardent admirers may find unsettling. Can we simply dismiss this as representative of general societal beliefs of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and focus on the other more admirable aspects of their beliefs? Or should we deeply consider the fundamental contradictions present in the beliefs of men who, on one hand criticized North American society from an environmental standpoint, while simultaneously presenting culturally superior and offensive attitudes towards non-European American people?

I experienced a less impassioned response to Rachel Carson as I did not find her work to be culturally insensitive or offensive and I appreciate her advocacy efforts to share a scientific perspective on ecological issues motivated by a deep caring for the Land with the general public. However, her belief in and commitment to using Western science approaches, albeit creative ones, to solve ecological problems originally *created by* Western science does not entirely resonate with my own perspective either. As will be discussed in later sections and chapters, I question what other cultural and intellectual traditions, such as those developed by Indigenous peoples over thousands of years, might offer as alternatives to Western worldviews and technology. In the following I expand upon my concerns with the legacy of Thomashow's (1996) "archetypes".

The Introspective Naturalist: Henry David Thoreau

Henry David Thoreau is famous for casting off the complications of town-life in Concord, Massachusetts to live in a one-room cabin on Walden Pond. A classically educated man, Thoreau set out to prove that one could live a simple, but fulfilling life without the trappings of modern society. As he says himself in *Walden* (Thoreau, 1854/ 2006, p. 97):

> I went into the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived.

Thoreau built a one-room cabin, planted a large garden and caught fish in Walden Pond to feed himself (Thoreau 1854/ 2006). He would routinely venture into nearby Concord, only two miles away, for basic supplies, but for the most part he created a self-sufficient life that he maintained for two years. *Walden* remains an inspiration for those wishing to go "back to the land" to a more simple existence. Thoreau's quotes abound and his criticisms of modernity and industrialization remain relevant even today. His sense of humour and reflective nature are revealed in quotes such as the following:

> Men think that it is essential that the *Nation* have commerce, and export ice, and talk through a telegraph, and ride thirty miles an hour, without a doubt, whether *they* do or not; but whether we should live like baboons or like men, is a little uncertain … (Thoreau, 1854/ 2006, p. 98)

When I set out to acquaint myself with Thoreau's work, I was familiar with his popularly celebrated persona as presented above; as I made my way through the opening chapters of *Walden* (1854/ 2006), I was not overly surprised by its content. However, I soon came upon a somewhat disconcerting passage where Thoreau describes a Canadian acquaintance. Thoreau condescendingly describes him as:

> A Canadian, a woodchopper and post-maker … who made his last supper on a woodchuck which his dog caught. He too, has heard of Homer, and, "if it were not for books," would "not know what to do rainy days," though perhaps he has not read one wholly through for many rainy seasons … To him Homer was a great writer, though what his writing was about he did not know. A more simple and natural man it would be hard to find. (p. 156)

He later provides further denigrating description of the Canadian:

> He was cast in the coarsest mould; a stout but sluggish body, yet gracefully carried, with a thick sunburnt neck, dark bushy hair, and dull sleepy blue eyes, which were occasionally lit up with expression … He interested me because he was so quiet and solitary and happy withal; a well of good humor and contentment … overflowed his eyes … In him the animal man chiefly was developed … But the intellectual and what is called the spiritual man in him were slumbering as in an infant. He was so genuine and unsophisticated that no introduction would serve to introduce him, more than if you introduced a woodchuck to your neighbour. (p. 157-159)

Thoreau concludes:

> His thinking was so primitive and immersed in his animal life, that, though more promising than a merely learned man's, it rarely ripened to any thing which can be reported. He suggested that there might be men of genius in the lowest grades of life … who are as bottomless even as Walden Pond … though they may be dark and muddy. (p. 163)

I found myself insulted by Thoreau's condescending and patronizing description of his Canadian acquaintance. While Thoreau seems to view him with a certain fondness, he is most certainly disrespectful in his portrayal of the Canadian as a jolly simpleton who lives close to Nature, but is largely illiterate and incapable of carrying out a simple neighbourly conversation. I also found it interesting that, despite being a passionate advocate of Nature, Thoreau certainly seems to view himself as superior to the Canadian who he portrays as animal-like in a derogatory fashion. It was difficult to discern if Thoreau was merely describing this one man or presenting a stereotype of Canadians in general, however further investigation satisfied this question—as will be discussed shortly.

There were other passages in *Walden* that made me uncomfortable. For example, Thoreau commonly refers to Aboriginal people as “savages” and at one point lists them along with animals as counterexamples to “civilized society”. For example, Thoreau states:

> A comfortable house for a rude and hardy race, that lived mostly out of doors, was once made here almost entirely of such materials as Nature furnished ready to their hands … In the savage state every family owns a shelter as good as the best, and sufficient for its coarser and simpler wants; but I think that I speak without bounds when I say that, though the birds of the air have their nests, and the foxes their holes, and the savages their wigwams, in modern civilized society not more than one half the families own a shelter. (p. 30-31)

I found myself perplexed again by the contradictory nature of Thoreau’s reflections. On one hand, he seems to be complimenting Aboriginal peoples on the ingenuity of their shelters, however, he concludes his thoughts from an unmistakably ethnocentric perspective that negates any genuine admiration (somewhat patronizing in itself) that he may have expressed.

A Yankee in Canada

One of Thoreau’s short travel memoirs, *A Yankee in Canada* (1961), later confirmed my misgivings and questions about Thoreau’s opinions of Canadians and Aboriginal peoples. Much less-popular and, I’m assuming, little known in Canadian circles, *A Yankee in Canada* (1961) describes a brief journey that Thoreau undertook by train from Concord to Québec in 1850. *A Yankee in Canada* contains a mixture of Thoreau’s relatively favourable reflections of Canada’s physical landscape juxtaposed with condescending observations of Canadian people, European and Aboriginal alike.

Thoreau (1961, p. 13) begins his observations somewhat humourously by stating, "I fear that I have not got much to say about Canada, not having seen much; what I got by going to Canada was a cold." However, he soon begins to expresses his discomfort with the changing cultural and linguistic environment during the train journey north. Despite having a French father himself, Thoreau forebodingly comments:

> The number of French-Canadian gentlemen and ladies among the passengers, and the sound of the French language, advertised us by this time, that we were being whirled toward some foreign vortex. (p. 19)

Upon arriving at a train station just across the Canadian border, Thoreau (1961) observed with disdain:

> Two or three pale-faced, black-eyed, loquacious Canadian-French gentlemen … shrugging their shoulders; pitted, as if they had all had the small pox … a rather poor looking race clad in grey homespun, which gave them the appearance of being covered with dust. (p. 20-21)

Further on Thoreau expresses admiration for the architecture and solemnity of Notre Dame cathedral in Montreal. However, he also observes of the parishioners:

> Presently came in a troop of Canadians, in their homespun, who had come to the city in the boat with us, and one and all kneeled down in the aisle before the high altar to their devotions, somewhat awkwardly, as cattle prepare to lie down, and there we left them … It is as if an ox had strayed into a church and were trying to bethink himself. (p. 23)

Similar to his earlier comments in *Walden* where he patronizingly compares his Canadian acquaintance to animals, Thoreau, despite being a passionate defender of Nature, reveals a superior attitude towards animals, the ox in this instance, when he uses them to create a condescending metaphor. He concludes his observations of Notre Dame by commenting:

> I was impressed by the quiet religious atmosphere of the place. It was a great cave in the midst of a city; and what were the altars and the tinsel but the sparkling stalactites, into which you entered in a moment, and where the still atmosphere and the sombre light disposed to serious and profitable thought. Such a cave at hand, which you can enter any day, is worth a thousand of our churches which are open

> only on Sundays … [However,] in Concord, to be sure, we do not need such. Our forests are such a church, far grander and more sacred. (p. 24)

While I agree with Thoreau that forests are wonderful places to commune with the natural world, I find myself overly distracted by the harsh and condescending nature of so many of his other comments to appreciate such wisdom.

Later in *A Yankee in Canada* (1961), Thoreau makes the following interesting observations about the métissage of French Canadian and Aboriginal cultures:

> The French Canadians do not extend or perpetuate their influence. The British, Irish, and other immigrants … have imitated the American settlers. [The French] reminded me of the Indians … whose habits of life they themselves more readily conformed than the Indians to theirs … Thus, while the descendants of the pilgrims are teaching the English to make pegged boots, the descendants of the French in Canada are wearing the Indian moccasin still. The French, to their credit … to a certain extent respected the Indians as a separate and independent people … (p. 84-85)

The passage above only represents Thoreau's personal opinions, but they are certainly congruent with others such as Karahasan (2008) who note the more open-minded attitudes and higher incidence of métissage with Aboriginal peoples and culture of early French Canadians when compared to their British contemporaries. Again, I found myself perplexed by the contradictory nature of Thoreau's beliefs when he expresses admiration for the French who, "to a certain extent respected the Indians as a separate and independent people", after expressing such scorn and contempt for French-Canadians and Aboriginals in other passages.

Thoreau's prose and poetry relate pastoral examples of simple living, patient natural observation, and peripatetic wandering. They have endeared him to many and earned him archetypal status in North American environmental circles (Thomashow, 1996). However, I find it personally challenging to align myself with Thoreau based on the inconsistency of

his attitudes towards people different than himself, most specifically Canadians and Aboriginal peoples.

The Adventurous Advocate: John Muir

In the late 19th century John Muir emerged as another strong voice in North American environmental philosophy (Thomashow, 1996). In contrast to Thoreau's relatively peaceful life of travel and meditative reflection, Muir was a rugged mountaineer who gained his inspiration from extended journeys on foot through North America's most dramatic landscapes (Thomashow). Originally from Scotland but raised on a farm in Wisconsin (Muir, 2001), Muir's passion for the North American landscape led him to become an outspoken advocate later in life, campaigning at all levels of government for the preservation of America's natural places. Like Thoreau, Muir has become an iconic figure of North American environmentalism, inspiring generations of mountaineers and environmental advocates alike (Thomashow).

Muir's public profile was raised in part through his association with American president Theodore Roosevelt (Thomashow, 1996). Despite spending extended time together on camping trips, Muir and Roosevelt differed in their views on Nature. While Muir advocated for the *preservation* of Nature for its own sake and opposed its destruction at all costs, Roosevelt took a *conservationist* perspective, viewing Nature with fondness, but ultimately as a resource for humans to use as they please (Thomashow). Thomashow suggests that preservationists are often criticized for being elitist, idealistic and impractical while conservationists are seen as cold-hearted, unfeeling pillagers of the Land. This

tension will be explored in greater detail later in this chapter in relation to other contemporary Western ecological philosophies.

Muir's work evoked in me a much less vehement reaction than that of Thoreau. I admit to being inspired by many of Muir's passages and quotations describing his adventures and reflections on the North American landscape. Like Muir (2001), I believe that there is much to be gained when we:

> Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their own freshness into you, and the storms their energy, while cares will drop off like autumn leaves. (p. 311)

However, I did not find Muir's beliefs entirely consistent either. I was surprised to discover that, albeit in a somewhat less disdainful manner than Thoreau, Muir also displayed an attitude of ethnocentrism and superiority towards Aboriginal peoples and African and Asian Americans.

For example, at one point in *Camping Among the Tombs*, Muir (2001) reveals his disdain for African Americans whom he describes as "Idle negroes" while searching for a peaceful camping spot:

> Idle negroes were prowling about everywhere, and I was afraid … when I suddenly thought of the graveyard. "There," thought I, "is an ideal place for a penniless wanderer. There no superstitious prowling mischief-maker dares venture for fear of haunting ghosts. (p. 90-91)

In *My First Summer in the Sierra*, Muir (2001, p. 108) relates a story of driving sheep for several days in the Sierra Mountains with a small group of men. He provides detailed descriptions and the names of his Euro-American companions, but dismissively refers to the others as, "a Chinaman and a Digger Indian."

In other places Muir expresses a romantic and somewhat patronizing attitude towards Aboriginal cultures, but never describes engaging for any significant length of time with an actual Aboriginal person. For example, in *The Indian* Muir (2001) reflects:

> How many centuries Indians have roamed these woods nobody knows, probably a great many … Indians walks softly and hurt the landscape hardly more than the birds and squirrels … while their enduring monuments, excepting those wrought on the forests by the fires they made to improve their hunting grounds, vanish in a few centuries. How different are most of those of the white man … roads blasted in the solid rock, wild streams dammed and tamed and … led along the sides of canons and valleys to work in mines like slaves. (p. 117)

Similar to Thoreau, Muir seems to have had a romantic attitude towards Aboriginal cultures that he juxtaposed at times with Western society. However, his perspective also reflected Eurocentric judgment that remained largely disconnected from actual interaction with living, breathing Aboriginal people. For example, in *The Story of My Boyhood and Youth* Muir (2001) describes finding one of his family's pigs shot by, they presumed, a local Aboriginal person. He relates:

> One of them was missing and we supposed, of course that an Indian had shot it for food … One of my father's hired men told us that the Indians thought nothing of levying this sort of blackmail whenever they were hungry. (p. 34)

As I expressed earlier, I still have warm feelings towards Muir's legacy. I appreciate the spirit of much of his work. However, I remain somewhat conflicted due to his, at times, dismissive, condescending, and romantic portrayals of non-European peoples.

The Impassioned Ecologist: Rachel Carson

Many scholars point to American ecologist Rachel Carson's (1907-1964) publication of *Silent Spring* (1962/ 2002) as the beginning of the "environmental movement" (Thomashow, 1996). Carson's concern for the ecological impacts of DDT spraying raised considerable controversy. Those in favour of the unbridled growth of the insecticide industry, preferably termed "biocides" by Carson (1962/ 2002, p. 8) because of the all-encompassing destruction that they engender, did not take Carson's critiques lightly and *Silent Spring* was met with a wave of dissent from the spheres of industry and science alike.

Carson combined a deep love of Nature with the studied precision of a scientist (Thomashow, 1996). Thomashow suggests that Carson is the prototypical post-modern ecologist, an identity assumed by many since. Like Thoreau and Muir before her, Carson has become an iconic figure in the environmental movement. Carson's impassioned approach to sharing the results of the science of ecology remains a touchstone for contemporary scholars and activists. She believed that people had the right to be informed of the results of scientific inquiry in order to make informed decisions themselves. As Carson (1962/2002, p. 13) said, "The public must decide whether it wishes to continue on the present road, and it can do so only when in full possession of the facts."

A review of *Silent Spring* (1962/ 2002) reveals Carson's approach of combining scientific details with impassioned philosophical observations and questions. Carson presents her arguments against insecticide use in a narrative format, sharing the results of numerous scientific studies in accessible language for a non-scientific audience, appealing to readers' analytical *and* emotional sensibilities. For example, Carson comments:

> The history of life on earth has been a history of interaction between living things and their surroundings … Only within the moment of time represented by the present century has one species—man—acquired significant power to alter the nature of his world … The most alarming of all man's assaults upon the environment is the contamination of air, earth, rivers, and sea with dangerous and even lethal materials … The rapidity of change and the speed with which new situations are created follow the impetuous and heedless pace of man rather than the deliberate pace of nature. (p. 5-7)

As expressed above, Carson (1962/ 2002) questioned the infinite growth-mentality fuelling the science of her day and she raised serious concerns about the long-term effects of "progress" in areas such as chemistry and nuclear physics. Considering the mounting evidence against insecticide and pesticide-use (e.g. London, Nell, Thompson, and Myers, 1998) and the genetic modification (e.g. Séralini, Cellier, and Spiroux de Vendomois, 2007) of plants and animals, Carson's comments below seem somewhat prophetic:

> Along with the possibility of the extinction of mankind by nuclear war, the central problem of our age has therefore become the contamination of man's total environment with such substances of incredible potential for harm—substances that accumulate in the tissues of plants and animals and even penetrate the germ cells to shatter or alter the very material of heredity upon which the shape of the future depends. (p. 8)

Silent Spring presented scientific data in an energetic narrative format that may seem familiar to contemporary readers, but was a new approach in the 1960s (Lytle, 2007). Passages such as the following display Carson's (1962/ 2006) talent for communicating ecological facts and philosophical commentary in an accessible way for scientific neophytes:

> Water, soil, and the earth's green mantle of plants make up the world that supports the animal life of the earth. Although modern man seldom remembers the fact, he could not exist without the plants that harness the sun's energy and manufacture the foodstuffs he depends upon for life. Our attitude toward plants is a singularly narrow one. If we see any immediate utility in a plant we foster it. If for any reason

> we find its presence undesirable or merely a matter of indifference, we may condemn it to destruction forthwith. (p. 64)

Carson advocated for deeper awareness of the *relationships* that make up the natural world rather than isolating and discretely studying its individual components. For example, she comments:

> Seldom is the question asked, What is the relation between the weed and the soil? Perhaps, even from our narrow standpoint of direct self-interest, the relation is a useful one. As we have seen, soil and the living things in and upon it exist in a relation of interdependence and mutual benefit. (p. 78)

Carson believed that humans were part of Nature and that we have the power to alter it to our own ends. However, she also reminds us that our meddling can also end in disaster for ourselves and other living creatures:

> The balance of nature is not a status quo; it is fluid, ever shifting, in a constant state of adjustment. Man, too, is part of this balance. Sometimes the balance is in his favour; sometimes—and all too often through his own activities—it is shifted to his disadvantage. (1962/ 2006, p. 246)

However, despite her criticisms of its misuse, Carson proposed that science, in combination with informed and empathetic reasoning, could still provide solutions to ecological issues. Carson pointed to emerging examples of scientists working *with* Nature rather than against it, using what she described as, "*biological solutions,* based on understanding of the living organisms they seek to control, and the whole fabric of life to which these organisms belong" (1962/ 2002, p. 278).

Carson describes alternatives to insecticide use that "seek to turn the strength of a species against itself" (1962/ 2002, p. 279). One example that she describes is a project in 1954 that involved successfully fighting screwworm infestation of cattle on the island of

Curaco. Laboratory-raised, sterilized male screwworms were released en masse in the hope that they would eventually replace the resident population, eventually leading to species extinction due to their inability to reproduce. The experiment was successful and screwworms were soon eradicated on Curacao.

While I am impressed by the ingenuity of the scientists in the case above, I disagree with Carson in that I still find their approach overly invasive. Is this really a plausible and ethical "biological" alternative to insecticide-use? Is it too late—have we already meddled too much to simply step back and let Nature run its course again? Or perhaps I am being overly idealistic, since, being part of Nature, must we not interact with its other inhabitants in order to survive? How can we do this in a way that preserves and celebrates humanity without destroying the rest of Nature? Carson (1962/ 2002, p. 64) answers, "Sometimes we have no choice but to disturb these relationships, but we should do so thoughtfully, with full awareness that what we do may have consequences remote in time and place."

Exploring the work of "environmental archetypes" (Thomashow, 1996) like Thoreau, Muir, and Carson has deepened my understanding of the origins of key streams of environmentalism in North America. While I don't agree with any of them completely, I can relate to certain aspects of Thoreau's naturalism, Muir's adventurous spirit, and Carson's impassioned scientific perspective. However, this exploration helped me to realize that Deep Ecological, Bioregional, and Indigenous perspectives have been the primary influences on the development my own ecological identity. These areas will be explored in detail in the following sections.

Deep Ecology

As the scientific fields of ecology, wildlife biology, and other related areas grew in the West, a new group of scholars emerged—the deep ecologists. Inspired and led by the late Norwegian scholar and educator Arne Naess (Drengson, 2008), deep ecologists advocate for a more embodied and reflective approach to ecology, placing humans in the circle of life with the rest of the natural world, rather than outside of it as detached "shallow ecologists" (Stibbe, 2004, p. 243). As John Seed (2007) states, "In contrast to reform environmentalism which attempts only to treat some of the symptoms of the environmental crisis, deep ecology questions the fundamental premises and values of contemporary civilization" (p. 9). Norwegian-Canadian deep ecologist Alan Drengson (2008, p. 8-9) explains further:

> Deep ecology supporters appreciate the inherent value of all beings and of diversity … Naess sees the deep ecology movement as one of many international grass roots liberation movements of the twentieth century for social justice, peace, and ecological responsibility. For Naess, free nature is critical to cultural flourishing, community health, and personal self-realization.

Naess felt that a paradigm shift was required in order for the Western world to truly address and solve its ecological (and social) challenges (Drengson, 2008). He exhorts us to view ourselves as *part of* the web of life on a physical as well as a moral and spiritual level (Naess and Rothenberg, 1990). Naess emphasized the distinction between shallow and deep ecology and rejected shallow ecological approaches as perpetuating the anthropocentric traditions of the West. He described the shallow ecology movement as a superficial "fight against pollution" and "resource management" with the central objective of "the health and affluence of people in the developed countries" (p. 28). Drengson (2008) explains further:

> Supporters of the shallow ecology movement do not question deeply but focus on short-term, narrow, human interests. They only tinker with the built systems, but do not question their own *fundamental* methods, values, and purposes. They do not look deeply into the nature of our relationships with each other and other beings. They assume that we can do fine without making basic changes. (p. 26)

Naess (Naess and Jickling, 2000) also expresses a gentle sense of humour and acceptance of imperfection. For example, he encourages us to not be overly harsh in our judgment of others. He states:

> Never moralize. Sweep before your own door. We are all sinners. Some people are good at certain things, others are very good at other things, and scarcely anybody is very bad in every way environmentally. The earth is fantastically rich; you can have some of your bad habits—but there are limits. (p. 52)

Deep ecology argues for a more humble humanity. It exhorts us to experience the world as a whole, recognizing the inherent rights of other people and beings and living accordingly (Naess and Rothenberg, 1990). This emphasis on the importance of both cultural and ecological diversity is reminiscent of Canadian ethnobotanist Wade Davis (2007) who urges us to preserve the ecosphere as well as the *ethno*sphere, recognizing the inherent value of both ecological and cultural diversity. Well-known American deep ecologist Joanna Macy (2007) also explains that:

> Diversity is a source of resilience. This is good news because this time of great challenge demands more commitment, endurance, and courage than any one of us can dredge up out of our own individual supply … The acts and intentions of others are like seeds that can germinate and bear fruit through our own lives, as we take them in and dedicate that awareness to the healing of our world. (p. 29)

This belief in diversity also extends to an emphasis on locally generated viewpoints. As Drengson (2008) explains:

> The … principles [of deep ecology] are supported by people from diverse backgrounds who are, for example, Buddhists, Shintoists, Taoists, Shamanists, Christians, and ecofeminists. They each have their own personal ecosophy ... This sense of global solidarity helps us persist in our efforts. Exactly what policies and

> actions we undertake depends on our personal situation, cultural context, and individual place. *No single solution can be applied to every place.* (p. 30)

This emphasis on the strength of diversity is reminiscent of certain Indigenous scholars such as the late Nakoda Chief John Snow (1977/ 2005, p. 23) who comments, “The creator created diversity amongst plants, animals, and people. So isn’t diversity a good thing?”

Ecosophy

Naess also encouraged each of us to develop our own ecological philosophy or “ecosophy” (1990, p. 163). Naess’ personal ecosophy, “Ecosophy T” was developed at his mountain cabin retreat, Tvergastein. In order to deepen our connection to the rest of the natural world and achieve self-realizations, Naess emphasizes that each us must develop our own ecosophy in response to our local surroundings and Drengson (2008, p. 40) suggests that, “living our ecosophy is a deep, long-term commitment to our home place.” Our ecosophy, in turn, will guide us in our responses to environmental issues. One can see a similarity here with the importance of place in Indigenous cultures, ancient symbiotic connections developed with particular geographical areas (e.g. Cajete, 1994). This concept will be elaborated on in further detail later in this chapter. While conducting this review of literature, I also realized that this study has, in a way, helped me to articulate my own ecosophy based on the concept of ecological métissage that is rooted in my perspective as a Métis Canadian.

Deep Ecology in Practice

Critics of deep ecology suggest that while it is a powerful philosophy, it is not particularly practical (Devall, 1988). Drengson (2008, p. 40) also suggests that, " abstract knowledge is not sufficient for a full life."

So, what *does* deep ecology look like in practice? Devall (1988) provides tangible examples of how deep ecology can be realized in everyday life. He suggests that practicing deep ecology can include everything from careful ecological fieldwork, to public activism, to the groceries that you buy. Like Naess, Devall encourages each of us to interpret deep ecology through the lens of our own unique ecosophy as we develop our ecological sense of self. To use research terminology, deep ecology is a methodology and it is up to each of us to develop our own methods.

Eminent interdisciplinary scientist and scholar Fritjof Capra has also sought ways to embody a deep ecological philosophy in practice. In *The Hidden Connections* (2002), Capra states:

> At the beginning of the 1980s … the new vision of reality that would eventually replace the mechanistic worldview … was by no means well articulated. I called it …"the systems view of life," … and I also argued that the philosophical school of deep ecology, which does not separate humans from nature and recognizes the intrinsic values of all living beings, could provide an ideal philosophical, and even spiritual, context for the new scientific paradigm. Today, twenty years later, I still hold this view. (p. xvii)

Capra's comments demonstrate how deep ecology might appeal to more scientifically minded scholars. However, what about those who are not scientists? Are there any inspirational models to draw from? The following discussion of the Norwegian tradition of *friluftsliv* is one such example.

Friluftsliv

Friluftsliv, literally "free air life" is "a philosophical lifestyle based on experiences of freedom in nature and … spiritual connectedness with the landscape" (Gelter, 2000, p. 78). *Friluftsliv* is a Scandinavian cultural tradition that provides us with a recreational example of deep ecology in practice. Drengson (2008) explains:

> It is said that anytime during a weekend [in Norway], over half the people will be outdoors doing something in nature … Norwegians strongly identify with their land and free nature. Though an advanced and sophisticated country in education and technical skills, it keeps older traditions alive … Norway has an amazing number of very old buildings, boats, and ships that are in use and in fine shape … The traditional arts and crafts are [still] practiced in the villages … passed on from person to person … not taught in texts. (p. 23)

Gelter (2000) notes that "Friluftsliv is about love and respect for Nature … features that can only be learned through experience" (p. 83). He suggests that *Friluftsliv* has its roots in the Scandinavian "self-image" as "a nature loving people" (p. 79). He also describes the influence of the romantic "back to nature" (p. 79) movement in the eighteenth century, a reaction to urbanization and industrialization, as highly influential in the development of *Friluftsliv* as it is currently understood and practiced throughout Scandinavia. Gelter describes *Friluftsliv* as a combination of artistic, musical, and physical endeavours with a common aim to, "reconnect with Nature and the old Scandinavian outdoor tradition[s]" (p. 79). He notes that, in the past, those in the upper classes often didn't have the same tangible daily connection with Nature experienced by fishermen, hunters, or farmers.

Gelter extrapolates from an educational perspective that:

> Friluftsliv is a link between natural history and philosophy, linking … knowledge of yourself and the surroundings into an understanding of the world. [It] may have the same ultimate goal as environmental education, but does not use any educational institution as educational aid, except nature itself. (p. 90)

However, Gelter also emphasizes that *Friluftsliv* is a primarily recreational activity. According to him, activities such as berry picking, plant collection, or fishing may detract from one's deep experience of Nature. He notes that, "utilizing natural resources is not genuine *friluftsliv*, although great emotional and spiritual experiences may arise through these activities" (p. 81). Gelter also comments that:

> There are aboriginal people who live in nature. In a philosophical way they live *friluftsliv*, but the word does not imply an aboriginal lifestyle … It is not living outdoors per se that is Friluftsliv. In fact, today most people (but not all) who pursue Friluftsliv are urban people (p. 81)

I disagree with Gelter's previous assertions. They highlight a similar tension as the preservation/ conservation debate in North America as illustrated in the relationship between John Muir and President Theodore Roosevelt, emphasizing the perceived elitist nature of preservationist outdoor enthusiasts from urban areas who view Nature merely as a playground for weekend adventures (Thomashow, 1996).

In his previous comments, Gelter (2000) also notes that, in his opinion, while Aboriginal people may live in a way that embodies *Friluftsliv*, the word itself does not imply such an approach. I find this assertion somewhat ridiculous—would it not be the ultimate realization of a philosophy such as *Friluftsliv* to live it on a daily basis rather than only on weekends and holidays? I would argue that this is not the full embodiment of a deep ecological lifestyle; it is only an intermittent commitment to such a path.

Friluftsliv has gained the attention of outdoor and environmental educators around the world and a greater diversity of voices, including North American Aboriginal scholars, have provided their opinions on its merits and weaknesses. For example, Emily Root, a Euro-Canadian, and Kaaren Dannenman, a Norwegian-Anishnaabe Canadian, (2009)

challenge the Eurocentric foundations of outdoor, environmental, and specifically *friluftsliv*-inspired education when they suggest that:

> Friluftsliv … and outdoor/ environmental educators must learn to recognize and address ecological destruction and socio-cultural oppression as intertwined issues, both stemming from a Western colonial worldview. (p. 3)

With a view to the future, they also astutely question:

> How might the Friluftsliv tradition become a site for respectful dialogue, culturally responsive education and identity awareness? In what ways might we as Friluftsliv scholars and educators confront our own privileges, assumptions and biases, and why is this important? Can Friluftsliv scholars and educators contribute to the complex goal of meaningful reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples working toward a healthy, vibrant land? (p. 4)

As a Métis Canadian with Norwegian roots, I find resonance with Root and Dannenman's (2009) perspective. I believe that Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators *can* authentically collaborate to reshape contemporary environmental education through a critical and constructive lens; Root and Dannenman's partnership is an excellent example of this growing movement.

Learning about deep ecology and *Friluftsliv* has helped me to gain a deeper understand of my own Norwegian roots. Family stories of my Norwegian great-grandparents, devout Lutheran farmers who deeply honoured and rejoiced in Nature, seem more real to me now. I also think of my grandmother, their daughter, who cross-country skied well into her seventies. In my earlier years these stories seemed strange or quaint to me; I thought that they were just further examples of the quirkiness and eccentricity of my mother's Norwegian-Métis family. However, now, having a greater understanding of Norwegian culture and traditions like *Friluftsliv*, I can place these stories in a deeper context. It also helps me to understand my own deep compulsion to do something physical outside on a daily basis, something that was cultivated in me from infancy by my parents. I

also find resonance with the value of preserving and honouring the past through traditional craft, an area that I have become increasingly intrigued by in recent years.

Deep ecology resonates strongly with my own beliefs and experiences. I am drawn to its emphasis on cultural diversity, the importance of developing your own, locally generated ecosophy and Naess' and others' exhortations to deeply reflect upon how we relate to the rest of the natural world, fundamentally questioning the premises of contemporary Western society. Deep ecology also appeals to my intrigue with Canada's Métis past (Saul, 2008) and the potential to cultivate a uniquely Canadian ecosophy in the future. The following section explores bioregionalism, a school of thought that relates to deep ecology in its emphasis on fostering and developing awareness of and deeper relationships with local ecosystems, but also provides more detailed discussions of how this approach can manifest itself in practice.

Bioregionalism

Where does your drinking water originate? What soil dominates your region? Which birds stay for the winter and which migrate? What are the most common fish? Or trees? When are the blueberries ready for picking? Who are the Indigenous people and how did they traditionally sustain themselves? What are the boundaries of their territory? Which "bioregion" do you identify with? The eastern foothills of the Rockies? The Okanagan Valley? The Gaspé? These are the kinds of questions that inform the concept of Bioregionalism (Charles, Dodge, Milliman, Stockley, 1981), another concept that informs the present investigation into ecological identity.

Thomashow (1996) comments that:

> The basic premise of bioregionalism is that ecological considerations should determine cultural, political, and economic boundaries. Although it is unclear how such boundaries could be formally delineated (based on watersheds? landforms? species composition? psychological influence?), it is instructive to experiment with various criteria. (p. 61)

McGinnis (1999) also notes:

> Bioregionalism is not a new idea but can be traced to the aboriginal, primal and native inhabitants of the landscape. Long before bioregionalism entered the mainstream lexicon, indigenous peoples practiced many of its tenets … however, population growth and new technologies, arbitrary nations/state boundaries, global economic patterns, cultural dilution and declining resources are constraining the ability of indigenous (and nonindigenous) communities to maintain traditions consistent with their past. (p. 2)

Thomashow and McGinnis' comments illuminate the fundamental premise of bioregionalism—that ecology, rather than artificially imposed geopolitical borders often based on "imperial land use patterns" (Thomashow, p. 61), should be the main reference point for learning how to "reinhabit" (McGinnis, p. 3) socio-ecological systems. Thomashow also highlights the complexity of deciding exactly how to define a "bioregion" in sociocultural and/ or ecological terms and suggests that experimentation with various approaches is required. A review of literature reveals that these two areas of discussion predominate past and present bioregional scholarship. As McGinnis' (1999) introductory comments above illustrate, some bioregionalists also point to Indigenous peoples and knowledge as embodied exemplars, but don't often delineate exactly what it would mean to authentically engage with one and another. As I discussed in the previous section, scholars like Root and Dannenman (2009) suggest that one key to this process is collaboratively acknowledging and examining colonial and Indigenous understandings of the Land.

What is a Bioregion?

Thomashow (1996) comments that providing a concise description of bioregionalism is a somewhat challenging task due to the difficulty of deciding how to define a *bioregion*. This discussion can be traced back to early bioregional scholars like Jim Dodge (1981) who states that, while contemporary academic discussion of bioregionalism may be in its relative infancy, it has been *practiced* around the world for millennia:

> I want to make it clear from the outset that I'm not at all sure what bioregionalism is. To my understanding, bioregionalism is an still in loose and amorphous formulation, and presently is more a hopeful declaration than actual practice … [However] bioregionalism is hardly a [new] notion, it has been the animating principle through 99 percent of human history, and is at least as old as consciousness. (p. 6)

My recent inquiries into this area have revealed that bioregional scholars and practitioners have progressed considerably in their understanding and application of bioregionalism since Dodge made the statement above. However, many (e.g. Thomashow) still refer back to Dodge's 1981 article as a reference point for understanding bioregionalism.

Dodge (1981) refers to the etymological roots of "bioregionalism" to suggest that the essence of this concept is "life territory" or "government by life" and proposes that we would be wiser to live our lives with a more local-focus, shaping and participating in government, education, and other sociocultural institutions and practices in response to our surrounding ecological and cultural systems rather than based on remotely devised and administered governmental policies, concepts, and politically boundaries.

Dodge's (1981) comments lead me to reflect, on the logic and/ or illogic of some of our political boundaries in Canada. For example, the central and southern portion of the British Columbia/ Alberta border makes ecological sense to me; it follows, more or less,

the continental divide of the Rocky Mountains and its attendant watersheds. However, when one considers the northern portion of the Alberta/ British Columbia, or the Alberta/ Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan/ Manitoba, or Canada/ U.S. borders in the Western provinces, it is hard to discern the eco-logic of these arbitrary divisions.

Dodge (1981) suggests that in order to understand bioregionalism, we must first come to an understanding of what is meant by a "bioregion". He proposes that there is no single way to define a bioregion; rather, Dodge suggests several different approaches and encourages each of us to consider which one, or combination of several, is most appropriate for our home territory. As presented below, Dodge's strategies range from scientific to sociocultural. They include a variety of concepts such as biotic shift, watersheds, and traditional Indigenous territories. Along with other bioregional scholars like Aberley (1999), he emphasizes that there is no replacement for embodied experimentation with each of these strategies in order to discover which approach is most appropriate for individual regions.

Biotic Shift

One strategy that Dodge suggests is studying "biotic shift"—quantitative assessment of the presence and frequency of plant and animal species. For example, Dodge suggests that if there is greater than approximately 25% difference in plant and animal species between two areas, they constitute different bioregions. This approach is reminiscent of the definition of "biomes" provided in an introductory ecology textbook: Molles (2002, p. 14) defines a biome as:

> Major divisions of the terrestrial environment … distinguished primarily by their predominant plants and … associated with particular climates. They consist of

> distinctive plant formations such as the tropical rain forest biome and the desert biome … the natural histories of these biomes differ a great deal.

Like Dodge's definition of "biotic shift", Molles' description of a biome relies primarily on differences in climate that result in differences in plant and animal life. Molles also highlights how these differences shape the habits and experiences of human and other-than-human creatures. Scientific concepts such as biomes and biotic shift provide us with an interesting lens to view the planet, but are they adequate tools for fully describing the "life territories" of humans and other creatures? For example, the boreal forest spans across the northern hemisphere, covering 11% of the globe (Molles, 2002); while there may be similarities in the human cultures across this vast area, few people would consider themselves to be "local" to the entire boreal forest. So, what are some other possible definitions of a bioregion?

Watersheds

Dodge (1981) lists watersheds as another possible determinant of bioregions. However, he notes that one of the shortcomings of this approach in many parts of the world is that certain watersheds extend over thousands of kilometres, far beyond the conceivable "life regions" of most people. Dodge's comments remind me of North American river systems like the Saskatchewan or the Mississipi that cover vast areas, comprised of countless tributaries spanning thousands of kilometres. However, Aberley (1999) notes that cross-border bioregional initiatives have been established in the Great Lakes region, for example, between the United States and Canada.

Scholars from other parts of the world like Yuko Oguri (2010) of Japan also remind us that in some areas, watersheds are much smaller and thus *can* be representative of

traditional bioregions. In a recent presentation, Oguri described how watersheds in Japan are often quite short due to the volcanic island terrain of much of Japan, where steep river valleys end abruptly at the coastline after journeys as short as ten kilometres or less. Oguri proposes that these micro-watersheds have shaped Japan's socio-ecological climate for thousands of years, sometimes creating distinct regional differences in language, culture, flora, and fauna from one valley to the next. Oguri's current work focuses in part on reviving and preserving awareness and practice of cultural and ecological traditions in these distinct "bioregions".

Traditional Indigenous Territories

Dodge (1981) also recognizes the powerful spiritual and/ or emotional connection that some cultures have to certain landforms or geographical areas. He proposes that this is another possible way to approach bioregionalism. Dodge's comments remind me of Cajete's (1994) description of the Tewa people's connection to Tsikomo, the sacred mountain from which they draw individual and cultural inspiration and strength. Cajete (1994) also comments on the unique relationships that Indigenous groups around the world have developed with specific geographical territories through centuries of inhabitation:

> Every cultural group established this relationship to [their] place over time. Whether that place is in a desert, a mountain valley, or along a seashore, it is in the context of natural community, and through that understanding they established an educational process that was practical, ultimately ecological, and spiritual. In this way they sought and found their life. (p. 113)

Based on the concept outlined by Cajete above, many bioregional scholars (e.g. Dodge, 1981; McGinnis, 1999) have proposed that one of the most appropriate models for

bioregionalism is to consider traditional Indigenous territories and traditions. For example, Stephanie Mills (1981) states:

> Over time, indigenous people have evolved ways of living in place which permit local self-reliance without a violation of the planet's integrity. Their rules for living are simple poetry in languages which give voice to the spirit of the land … That is why when a Native American leader … calls on us to make common cause with Indians and support their treaty rights, we might look on doing that as the ultimate pragmatism, an opportunity to share some vital and time-tested bioregional technique. (p. 4)

While early bioregional scholars like Mills and Dodge mention these concepts using hypothetical language, more recent scholars such as McGinnis display genuine efforts to understand and connect with Indigenous peoples and traditions. Aberley (1999) emphasizes that the best way to understand bioregionalism and to define bioregional boundaries is to learn from the people who have lived there the longest. The following section explores this topic in greater detail.

Bioregionalism and Indigenous Peoples

Several bioregional scholars emphasize learning how to re-inhabit bioregions by studying and engaging with Indigenous traditions (e.g. Aberley, 1999; Dodge, 1981; McGinnis, 1999). While this perspective may have been somewhat shallow in the early years of bioregional scholarship, it seems to have taken on an increasingly authentic character.

In the early years of bioregional scholarship, proponents like Dodge (1981, p. 10) made overly general and somewhat patronizing statements such as, "I think the main influences [on bioregionalism] are the primitive/ animist Great Spirit tradition, various Eastern and esoteric religious practices and plain ol' payin' attention."

However, in more recent times, some bioregionalists seem to have progressed from hypothetical and patronizing ideals to a more genuine understanding of Indigenous peoples and traditions. For example, McGinnis (1999) relates a much stronger understanding of the Indigenous Chumash inhabitants of his coastal northern Californian bioregion. McGinnis shares fairly detailed cultural knowledge, philosophies, and practice. For example, he relates:

> In my coastal bioregion, a wealth of images, sensations and feelings are produced by the intermingling of the sea, maritime community and landscape. A mosaic of habitats support a number of creatures that interact to form my community and place … Where I live, Chumash ceremonial dances such as the Swordfish Dance, the Fox Dance, the Barracuda Dance and the Seaweed Dance were … founded upon "direct observation" of the relationship and partnership that existed between culture and nature. Each dance represented a culture's knowledge of place … The several languages spoken by the Chumash mirrored the ecologically and culturally diverse system … The Chumash languages exemplified a healthy maritime partnership with the landscape. (p. 1-2)

However, it is unclear how much McGinnis has actually engaged with Chumash people.

Aberley (1999) provides further discussion of the connection between the ecological and cultural aspects of bioregionalism:

> The successful growth of socially-just cultures rooted in the protection and restoration of ecosystem health requires a deep understanding of cultural tradition. The way to the future can be found by adapting genetically familiar ways of life practiced by ancestors and surviving indigenous peoples, not in mutating humans into endlessly replaceable cogs in a machine. The focus here is on a "tribe of ecology" instead of the nation-state; a campfire circle instead of the nuclear furnace; localized rituals instead of consumerized Christmas; touch, song and shared experience instead of the narcosis of television-induced monoculture. (p. 15-16)

Referring more specifically to Indigenous peoples, he continues:

> Bioregion-based cultures are knowledgeable of past and present indigenous cultural foundations, and seek to incorporate the best elements of these traditions in "newly indigenous" or "future primitive" configurations. (p. 37)

In his comments above, Aberley emphasizes the importance of authentic engagement with and understanding of Indigenous and other long-time inhabitants in reviving bioregional

practices. He also highlights the spiritual and emotional aspects of bioregionalism, reminding us that bioregionalism is more than a shallow ecological endeavour. Aberley also emphasizes the participatory nature of bioregionalism:

> Bioregionalism is best understood when viewed from the "inside," not from reading one or several texts. Gatherings should be attended, ephemeral periodicals reviewed, restoration projects participated in, and place-based rituals and ceremonies shared. (p. 32)

While I think that there is great promise in the concept of bioregionalism and am somewhat inspired by the perspectives of scholars like Aberley, McGinnis, Thomashow, and Dodge, I am hesitant to support them without question. Reviewing bioregional literature has reminded me of the importance of participating in local cultural events, visiting the farmer's market every Saturday, and continuing to learn and share the stories and traditional knowledge of my home area(s). However, terms such as "future primitive" (Aberley, 1999) raise concerns for me regarding misappropriation, misinterpretation, and misuse of Indigenous knowledge and traditions (Simpson, 2004). As these scholars themselves have also emphasized, theoretical musings are not sufficient; in order for concepts such as bioregionalism to authentically succeed as socially-just ecological movements, authentic engagement between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples and deep consideration of Indigenous philosophies and knowledge is required. The following section explores the perspectives of key Indigenous scholars.

Exploring Indigenous Perspectives

As has been discussed in previous sections of this chapter, many contemporary scholars, both Indigenous (e.g. Laduke, 2002; Snow1977/ 2005) and non- Indigenous (e.g. Davis, 2007, 2009; Henderson, 2007; Knudtson and Suzuki, 1992; Turner, 2005) suggest

that a key component in addressing the world's ecological crises is recognizing and incorporating Indigenous knowledge and philosophies of Nature into contemporary environmental efforts. As Euro-American philosopher Thomas Berry (1999) says:

> Here in North America it is with a poignant feeling and foreboding concerning the future that we begin to realize that the European occupation of this continent … has been flawed from the beginning in its assault on the indigenous peoples and its plundering of the land. (p. 2)

These kinds of romantic statements are most likely not new to most readers. As was stated earlier, Euro-North American environmental philosophers such as Thoreau and Muir have been advocating for the consideration of Indigenous perspectives since the nineteenth century. Unfortunately, as was also demonstrated in my examination of the works of Thoreau and Muir, such calls have too often been made from culturally myopic and ethnocentric perspectives. However, I believe that there has been a shift recently from romanticizing Indigenous peoples, philosophies, and knowledge to genuine *engagement.*

For example, I was recently invited to deliver a keynote presentation at a weekend gathering of outdoor and environmental educators based on the theme of "Learning to Live Well on This Land" (Lowan, 2010a). The conference was comprised of a series of presentations by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people engaging with this theme from various perspectives through various methods of practice. The weekend went well from my perspective—inspiring stories and teachings were shared, difficult topics were breached, and much laughter was heard. As a Métis Canadian, I came away feeling hopeful for the future of outdoor and environmental education in Canada. However, as Kincheloe and Steinberg (2008, p. 152) astutely comment:

> We simultaneously heed the warning that the emerging Western academic interest in indigenous knowledge may not be a positive movement if such knowledge is viewed as merely another resource to be exploited for the economic benefit of the

> West. Understanding this admonition, we frame indigenous knowledge not as a resource to be exploited but as a perspective that can help change the consciousness of Western academics and their students while enhancing the ability of such individuals to become valuable allies in the indigenous struggle for justice and self-determination.

As Kincheloe and Steinberg allude to above, in order to avoid the commoditization and misappropriation of Indigenous knowledge, it is crucial that those interested in authentically engaging with Indigenous perspectives engage with Indigenous peoples in order to gain a genuine understanding of Indigenous perspectives. These and other related issues are explored in greater depth in the following two chapters. However, before such a discussion can occur, it is important to explore Indigenous perspectives in greater detail.

The Importance of the Land

> *Long ago my ancestors used to go to the mountaintops to pray. (Snow, 1977/ 2005, p. 3)*

Connection to the Land is a foundational characteristic of most North American Aboriginal cultures (Cajete, 1994, 1999, 2000a; Simpson, 2002). Central to this concept is recognition of the ancient symbiotic evolution of Indigenous languages, cultures and worldviews within specific geographical areas. The result of this connection is similar to what many contemporary Western scholars call a “sense of place”, a strong feeling of connection to a particular geographical area (e.g. Curthoys, 2007; Watchow, 2006). However, an Indigenous sense of place goes beyond simply feeling at home on the Land. For example, the late Nakoda Chief John Snow (1977/ 2005) comments:

> The Rocky Mountains are sacred to us … These mountains are our temples, our sanctuaries, and our resting places. They are a place of hope, a place of vision, a place of refuge, a very special and holy place where the Great Spirit speaks with us. *Therefore, these mountains are our sacred places.* (p. 19)

For the Nakoda people, the Rocky Mountains are not simply home; they are a sacred place of worship, akin to a Christian church, a Muslim mosque, or a Jewish synagogue. Tewa scholar Gregory Cajete (1999) elaborates:

> The Americas are an ensouled and enchanted geography, and the relationship of Indian people to this geography embodies a "theology of place," reflecting the very essence of what may be called spiritual ecology … Through generations of living in America, Indian people have formed and been formed by the land … The land has become an extension of Indian thought and being because, in the words of a Pueblo elder, "It is this place that holds our memories and the bones of our people … This is the place that made us." (p. 3)

As Cajete indicates, an Indigenous sense of place informs all aspects of a cultural worldview. Others (e.g. Simpson, 2002; Dei, 1996) point to the co-evolution of Indigenous languages with specific geographical areas. The environmental values of Indigenous cultures are often represented in languages and stories. As Cajete (1999) explains:

> The myths of Indigenous people in North America are replete with animal characters that embody the people's understanding of what it means to live in reverent relationship with animals and the natural world … Each illustrates the fact that all living things and natural entities have a role to play in maintaining the web of life. (p. 10)

Cajete's comments also speak to the interconnected nature of North American Indigenous epistemologies.

An Interconnected Worldview

> *Our philosophy of life sees the Great Spirit's creation as a whole piece … Man is a complex being of body, mind, and spirit. (Snow, 1977/ 2005, p. 9)*

Inherent in most Indigenous worldviews is recognition of the interconnectedness of all people, living creatures and bioregions; this interconnection is often represented by the Medicine Wheel (Cajete, 1994, 1999; Snow, 1977/ 2005). The Medicine Wheel is typically

divided into four sections. These four sections are usually marked by four colours—most often red, yellow, white, and black. The Medicine wheel is a representation of many aspects of the Indigenous worldview. It represents the four seasons (Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter), the four directions (East, South, West, and North), the different people of the world, and the different aspects of human life (spiritual, emotional, physical, and intellectual) (Snow, 1977/ 2005). Implicit in the Medicine Wheel is an understanding of interconnection. Spring blends into summer that fades to fall and eventually winter. Definite boundaries do not exist. I've often thought that the Medicine Wheel might be even better represented by a swirling blend of the four colours to represent the fluid connection between each quarter.

Figure 1. Medicine Wheel (Curve Lake First Nation, 2010).

Chief John Snow (1977/ 2005) elaborates on the importance of the circle:

> A circle was interpreted in theory as a whole or something complete. The sun comes to a complete circle in a year. The moon is round like a circle. Therefore, the religion of the Great Spirit is based on a circle … All things in creation are related to His huge circle and all have a part to play in the universe. (p. 11)

Cajete (2000) adds that in Tewa culture (among others), there are actually seven directions—the four cardinal directions, the Sky above, the Earth below, and you in the centre. The Medicine Wheel is a very useful tool for relating the Indigenous worldview.

Chief John Snow (1977/ 2005) relates how an interconnected worldview influences Nakoda spirituality and healing practices:

> The medicine man who understood the relationship of the body, the mind, and the spirit of man to the Great Spirit could be a great healer … Such wisdom was acquired through a lifetime of study, experience, and prayer. (p. 10)

Little Bear (2000a) also discusses how the concept of interconnected wholeness extends to individuals. Little Bear suggests that being a generalist is a desirable quality in many Aboriginal cultures because it implies a sense of balance and totality within an individual. Within a community, people still have individual specialties, but being self-reliant is also highly respected.

The cyclical and interconnected worldview of Indigenous North American cultures is also illuminated in the concept of "All My Relations" (Durst, 2004; Pepper and White, 1996; Simpson, 2004). The term, "All My Relations" is often used to close a prayer in a similar manner to the Christian "Amen". It suggests that we are all related—humans, birds, fish, rocks, plants, water, and trees. Cajete (1999, p. 4) explains that, "an ecological sense of relationship encompassed every aspect of traditional American Indian life". Siksikaitsitapi (Blackfoot) scholar Betty Bastien (2003) further explains that:

> The fundamental premise of *Niitsitapi* [Blackfoot] ways of knowing is that all forms of creation possess consciousness ... All knowledge and wisdom comes through alliances with insects, animals, and plants … knowledge is revealed through nature … Animals are a major source of knowledge, because their knowledge of the natural world exceeds that of humans. (p. 42-43)

According to Cajete (1999), this respect for and deep sense of relationship with the greater-than-human world results in a feeling of kinship and responsibility: "Indigenous

people felt responsibility not only for themselves, but also for the entire world around them (p. 11)". Bastien (2003) explains further that:

> This way of being is constantly mindful of the interrelatedness and interdependence of our relationships. For example, by learning to respect the natural world, one becomes knowledgeable about the properties of plants and their contribution to the survival of the tribe. (p. 47)

Chief John Snow (1977/ 2005) also relates how these kinds of values were traditionally expressed by Nakoda hunters who would only hunt out of necessity, use all parts of the animal that they killed, share the meat with everyone in their community, and return a small portion to the Earth as a humble offering of gratitude. Cajete (1999, 2000b) calls this the "hunter of good heart". He proposes that the erosion of these kinds of values in modern society have led to our present ecological crises.

Anishnaabe scholar and activist Winona LaDuke (2002) simply states that, "you take only what you need, and you leave the rest" (p. 80). She describes the Haida tradition of harvesting lengths of timber from living trees without chopping them down as an example. The Haida still use this strategy of carefully removing pieces from the trunks of ancient trees, leaving enough of the tree intact so that it will continue growing. This kind of long-term thinking is characteristic of Indigenous ecological wisdom and is often represented by the Seven Generations maxim (Coates, Gray, and Hetherington, 2006): How will our actions today impact our descendants seven generations from now?

In concert with Deep Ecology and Bioregionalism, Indigenous perspectives have profoundly influenced my own ecological identity, helping me to articulate my own developing ecosophy that is a métissage of both European and Aboriginal roots. In the following chapter, I articulate this perspective further through discussion of a Métis

worldview from a historical and contemporary perspective. However, before proceeding, this chapter concludes with a discussion of contemporary and historical ecological identities in Canada.

Canadian Ecological Identity

Is there such thing as a "Canadian Ecological Identity"? Our national symbols and icons—the beaver, the canoe, the voyageur, the lumberjack, the maple leaf, the Group of Seven, the Great Lakes, the Rocky Mountains, the North—suggest that, as a nation, we identify strongly with the natural world (Francis, 2005). Foreign tourists flock to Canada annually to experience our abundance of natural splendour. Why is it then, that we were recently awarded the "Colossal Fossil Award" at the Copenhagen Climate Conference for being the least environmentally progressive nation in the world (Cryderman, 2009)? Might there be a contradictory element to our national consciousness?

Adrift in our National Consciousness: Meditations on the Canoe

In his reflections on Canadian identity, satirist Will Ferguson (2007) suggests that:

> Canada is a land pinned between the memories of habitant and voyageur. We have grown crops and built cities, bypassed rapids, unrolled asphalt and smothered our fears under comforters and quilts. We are habitants, and the spirit of the voyageur now lingers only in the home movies of our nation … Like a song from the far woods. (p. 94)

Might Ferguson, though somewhat glib, be correct? Has mainstream Canadian society happily adapted to modernity along with the rest of the Western world, while desperately grasping for increasingly distant images of Nature as touchstones for an increasingly urban

existence? Might we be much more disconnected from the natural world as a society than we would like to admit?

I must confess to romantic visions of my own of adventurous voyageur ancestors setting out each spring from the comfort of their *habitant* farms on the southern shores of the St. Lawrence to spend the spring, summer, and fall plying the waters of the Great Lakes and the rivers of the Northwest. Perhaps these dreams manifested themselves in my own passion for recreational canoe travel? Is that all that I am doing when I set out on a three-day, one-week, or even one-month canoe trip? Recreating? Re-creating? Or is there a deeper meaning to these intermittent adventures?

Like Peter Cole (2002, p. 450), I believe that "my canoe is a place of cultural understanding"; when paddling, I often reflect on the Indigenous roots of the canoe. I think back to my Mi'kmaq ancestors, skilled canoe builders who deftly created sea and river-worthy boats from birch bark, cedar, and spruce roots; this gives me a profound sense of connection to the Land and my own cultural history. There are also moments when I experience the "flow" that Czikszentmihalyi (1990) describes—a feeling of oneness with the Land when you feel yourself "lost in the moment" and "time slows down", similar to the experiences cultivated through the aforementioned concept of *Friluftsliv* (Drengson, 2008; Gelter, 2000). And sometimes I simply enjoy paddling as a physical and/ or social activity that I can do with my friends, family, and students.

Misao Dean (2006) discusses the canoe as a celebrated icon of Canadian culture. She critically relates the story of one of the centerpieces of the Centennial celebrations of 1967. As part of the Centennial, the Canadian government organized the longest canoe race ever held. Teams of paddlers from every province and territory retraced the historic route of the voyageurs from Rocky Mountain House, Alberta to Montréal, Québec (Dean; Guilloux,

2007). However, Dean suggests that the centennial canoe race was a misrepresentation of Canadian history. She notes that while most voyageurs during the fur trade were French Canadian, Aboriginal, or later Métis, the large majority of centennial paddlers were English-speaking Euro Canadians. Dean also relates that the Aboriginal participants in the Centennial race were often poorly treated. She suggests that the Centennial canoe race was an instance of dominant Anglo-Canadian society appropriating a cultural icon that is not really their own. Why would they do this? What is it about the canoe and other symbols of our nation's connection to Nature that so strongly captures the imagination of the average Canadian? Are we clinging to the past, whether real or imagined, or seeking solace from the present?

The Promise of Escape

Roy MacGregor (2002) suggests that a large characteristic of Canadian identity is based upon the notion of "escape". He proposes that throughout history, Canada has been seen as a place of escape for refugees or immigrants fleeing poverty or violence in their homelands as well as a haven for romantic wanderers or idealists seeking isolation. MacGregor also presents the notion that escape is preserved in cottage-country throughout Canada and the annual pilgrimages that so many Canadians make to their favourite fishing, hunting, canoeing, or skiing destinations to "get away from it all". The escape mentality uncritically presented by MacGregor (2002) portrays Nature as an isolated refuge from the "real world", similar to the interpretation of the Western concept of "wilderness" as a place of solace or retreat (Merchant, 2004).

I believe that this kind of attitude represents an ecological identity that, while reverent, views Nature as a recreational *resource*, useful for a short period of time to

recharge before returning to the rigours of city life. While the escape mentality may not be immediately harmful on the surface, I believe that it is symptomatic of a disconnected Nature-as-resource mentality that is ironically used often by urban preservationists to critique the actions and attitudes of rural conservationists or resource extractors (Berry, 2009; Thomashow, 1996). While the immediate effects of resource extraction are much more obvious, is there really that much difference in the original mentality? In both cases, the more-than-human world is ultimately viewed as a commodity available for human use and manipulation, as long as it suits us. Having lived in both large metropolitan centres as well as isolated rural and semi-rural areas, it is my experience that rural farmers, hunters, loggers, miners, and fishermen are often much more keenly aware of and deeply connected to the Land around them than the urban environmentalists who so often criticize and dismiss them with scorn. As American farmer and ecosopher Wendell Berry (2009, p. 78) astutely observes:

> They have trouble seeing that the bad farming and forestry practices that they oppose … are done on their behalf, and with their consent implied in the economic proxies they have given as consumers.

When considering ecological identity in Canada, the picture is often unclear. For example, contrary to popular perception across Canada of the province of Alberta as the home of unabated oil and resource extraction, a survey into the environmental attitudes of Albertans last year reported that a majority of people in the province actually hold positive feelings towards the “environment”, but most feel disempowered or at a loss to act or speak out (Thompson, 2009). Statistics Canada (2008) also reported that “the environment” was the top concern for Canadians in 2007. My hope is that these studies are examples of a slow shift in our society that is increasingly positively disposed towards environmental issues.

However, despite our cherished national image as a naturally beautiful and environmentally pristine nation, Canada's current government was recently awarded the "Colossal Fossil" award at the Copenhagen Climate Change conference for being the least environmentally progressive nation in the world (Cryderman, 2009). What happened to all of those Canadians who ranked "the environment" as their top concern in 2007 (Statistics Canada, 2008)? Have their priorities shifted due to the recent worldwide economic downturn (Steverman, 2008)? Or perhaps, our federal government simply does not represent the interests and values of a majority of Canadians. The recent federal election where the Conservative party was elected to a majority government with only forty percent of the popular vote (Elections Canada, 2011) would suggest that this is indeed the case.

What do all of these statistics really mean? Perhaps a political and/or economic crisis is exactly what is needed for the growth of ecological métissage—an opportunity to reassess and re-imagine our society. Perhaps, like post-modern voyageurs, we have ventured deep into the wilderness of industrialization and modernity, only to realize that we don't have the tools, skills, and wisdom to survive. Might society at large turn to the wisdom of Indigenous peoples to reassess how to live well in our local places? How would this be accomplished in theory and/ or practice? These kinds of questions will be addressed in the following chapters.

CHAPTER THREE:

ARTICULATING A MÉTIS WORLDVIEW: EXPLORING THE THIRD SPACE

"England had kings, queens, and jacks. But we had the jokers. We were the jokers. Outside the deck, across the ocean, dancing our little jigs of happiness."
-Jessica Grant, Come Thou Tortoise (2009, p. 141)

When considering the contemporary blending and/ or integration of Western and Indigenous knowledge and philosophies in Canada, one solution that comes to mind is simply adopting the worldview and practices of the Métis people. However, in this chapter I argue that identifying and adopting *the* "Métis worldview" as a model for contemporary métissage (ecological in this case) would be inappropriate because a singularly identifiable Métis worldview does not exist. While certain similarities in language patterns, spiritual beliefs, and other cultural markers can be identified, the diversity between and within Métis communities and people in Canada is greater than their commonalities.

Nevertheless, what can be most commonly identified is a "Third Space" *mentality* (Richardson, 2004): amenability to incorporating two or more cultures, languages, and spiritual traditions on an individual, community, and regional level. Rather than seeking to reduce and essentialize the vast diversity of the Métis world to an exclusive set of cultural and epistemological characteristics, I demonstrate that what is required is an understanding of the *spirit* of métissage—a Third Space mentality. I believe that it is this spirit or mentality that is required for successful ecological métissage. I also present examples of the Third Space mentality in non-Métis communities in Canada as touchstones for the development of ecological métissage in our contemporary society.

Métis Culture in Canada: Controversial Origins and Confusing Terms

Gibbs (2000) questions whether a singular Métis culture and worldview can actually be defined or if, in fact, a multitude of values and practices exist. The diversity of Métis cultures and epistemologies both in the past and present is so broad that, any attempt to distill a singular definition of *the* "Métis worldview" is impossible. While some Métis draw fairly equally on the Aboriginal and European traditions of their ancestors, others identify more firmly with one or the other (Edge and McCallum, 2006). Thus, the dynamic nature of Métis cultures and worldviews in Canada also resists definitive comparisons with their Western or Aboriginal counterparts.

The following comprises a presentation of evidence demonstrating the historical and contemporary diversity of Métis people in Canada. Rather than seeking to provide a definitive description of the specific cultural, linguistic, and spiritual characteristics of the Métis people, my intention is to elucidate the essence of a Métis *mentality* and how it might contribute to ecological métissage in Canada.

Who are the Métis?

"Who are the Métis?" is a seemingly simple question that most likely elicits a host of mental images for the average Canadian: Louis Riel, Gabriel Dumont, the Red River Rebellion, voyageurs, Half-European / Half- Aboriginal, buffalo hunters, the sash, the Red River jig, the list goes on. Many of us have strong preconceptions of the Métis people in Canada that are primarily based on Western Métis culture. However, a review of Métis literature, along with my own experiences with Métis people across Canada, has revealed to me that the story is much more complex. For example, Métis academic Étienne Rivard (2008) suggests:

> As early as the French regime … episodes of *métissage* created *Métis geographies*, that is, new cultural spaces between Indian and European societies, spaces conducive to Métis ethnogenesis … these episodes of *métissage* and Métis geographies were distinct from one another because of the different peoples involved and the different contexts in which they took place … The diversity and recurrence of Euro-Indian *métissage* in early Canada make it a valuable topic of investigation. (p. 46)

Foster (1978/ 2007a) also suggests that:

> Much confusion surrounds the use of the term "Métis". While scholars and laymen alike agree that the term refers to persons of mixed Indian and Euro-Canadian ancestry, it is difficult to obtain a more precise definition… In essence, such questions are problems in historical understanding. (p. 21)

Like the Trickster figure in Aboriginal mythology (Graveline, 1998), Métis people are hard to pin down; we are shape shifters. Some Métis have blended into Aboriginal communities while others now "pass" as Euro-Canadians (Fujiwara, 2001-2003; Richardson, 2004). Others have maintained or revived their Métis identity and culture, living and viewing the world through a lens that blends both Aboriginal and European perspectives (Richardson). As is discussed later in this chapter, these kinds of identity dynamics can create tension and confusion within Métis families and communities as well as with non-Métis people attempting to understand or define us.

Métis history and identity are highly complex and controversial subjects. Entire theses and dissertations have explored these topics at length (e.g. Gibbs, 2000; Richardson, 2004). It is not my intention here to replicate such inquiries. Rather, my goal is to explore the complexity of Métis histories and identities in order to articulate the prohibitive difficulty of defining *the* "Métis Worldview".

Origins

A review of literature reveals a broad variety of views on the origins of Métis people in Canada. While some argue that the Métis people did not crystallize as a cultural

group until the conflicts and resistance centered on Red River and Batoche in the mid to late 1800's (e.g. Hanson and Kurtz, 2007), others suggest that Métis communities influenced by both Aboriginal and European cultures, emerged across Canada and the northern United States soon after the onset of European colonization (Gibbs, 2000; Hanrahan, 2000; Karahasan, 2008).

In her doctoral dissertation, Karahasan (2008) presents an exhaustive exploration of métissage in Canadian history. She provides extensive evidence of the emergence of mixed communities in Acadia in the sixteenth century and works through present-day Québec, the northern States, Ontario, Louisiana, and *finally* the northwestern states, provinces and territories. Métis people in all of these areas established unique linguistic and cultural communities representative of both their European and Aboriginal heritage. For example, Métis and non-Métis people in the Maritimes commonly used an argot of French, Basque, and Mi'kmaq. Contemporary cities such as Louisbourg, Detroit, Green Bay, and Sault St. Marie, Ontario were also well-known Métis communities during the fur trade. Some of these communities have preserved their Métis consciousness (e.g. Sault St. Marie, Ontario), while others were eventually absorbed into the increasingly dominant French or British colonizing societies. Their inhabitants were likewise absorbed, or, as in the case of my maternal grandfather's family in the Maritimes or my paternal grandmother in the southern Great Lakes, scattered across the western United States and Canada.

While an abundance of literature describes Métis communities in Western Canada, those of the East are less extensively documented (Karahasan, 2008). This is not to say that they did not or do not exist. For example, Hanrahan (2000) presents an inquiry into the health issues of contemporary Labrador Métis communities. Bartels and Bartels (2005) also provide an account of the "Jackatars", people of mixed French and Mi'kmaq descent in

Newfoundland. Gibbs (2000) and Karahasan (2008) also relate compelling historical and genetic evidence indicating that many Acadian and Québécois families are actually Métis in origin.

However, due to inconsistent and incomplete record keeping, the prevalence of unsanctioned "country marriages" (especially in the Northwest) (Foster, 1994/ 2007b), and the reticence of record keepers to acknowledge Aboriginal people who married into Euro-Canadian families, accurate estimates of the number of Métis families both historically and presently in Canada remains difficult (Karahasan, 2008). My own family records in New Brunswick simply indicate that one of my forefathers married, "a savage" (C.A. Force, personal communication, April 15th, 2010). Adoptions, unregistered births, and the forced imposition of European surnames on Aboriginal peoples further confuse historical records (Karahasan, 2008). For these reasons, many Métis families today rely on a mix of often-incomplete official records along with oral histories to retain or rediscover their genealogies. Unfortunately, as Richardson (2004) suggests, this complexity often results in significant losses of Métis history and genealogy.

As European explorers and fur traders ventured further into the interior of North America, they naturally established relations with the Aboriginal women whom they encountered (Foster, 1994/ 2007; Karahasan, 2008; Nute, 1987). These relationships took on many forms—some were casual or mutually passionate affairs, others were strategically arranged marriages, and some, unfortunately, were cases of rape (Foster; Gruzinski, 2004; Karahasan; Podruchny, 2006).

Angleviel (2008) and Gruzinksi (2004) also suggest that not all instances of cross-cultural affairs result in cultural métissage. Indeed, the offspring of early mixed unions in Canada were born into a variety of circumstances; some Métis children were simply

absorbed into the Aboriginal societies of their mothers or, less frequently, the European communities of their fathers. However, others, increasingly throughout history, were raised under the influence of both sides of their heritage. As European settlement, often linked to the fur trade, expanded across North America, an increasing number of European men settled permanently or semi-permanently with Aboriginal women to raise their Métis children together. Sometimes these families settled into distinctly Aboriginal or European communities. However, distinctly Métis communities also emerged as groups of Métis families created new settlements of their own (Foster 1994/ 2007; Karahasan, 2008).

Contemporary Métis Identity

Métis identity has become a politically charged and highly controversial subject (Foster, 1978/ 2007). This is largely due to the fact that Section 35 of Canada's 1982 Constitution Act recognizes the Métis, along with the Inuit and First Nations ("Status Indians"), as Aboriginal people, but it doesn't define who exactly is or isn't Métis. This has left interpretation open to the various regional and federal groups that represent the interests of the Métis people. The Federal government's Aboriginal Portal website (2011) is an excellent illustration of this situation; people interested in applying for a Métis status card are directed to a page containing over a dozen different regional and national organizations. Each of these groups has their own definition of just who is Métis with varying levels of inclusivity. For example, one of several federally recognized organizations, the Métis National Council (2002), recently defined a Métis person as:

> A person who self-identifies as Métis, is of historic Métis Nation Ancestry, is distinct from other Aboriginal Peoples and is accepted by the Métis Nation.
>
> "Historic Métis Nation" means the Aboriginal people then known as Métis or Half-Breeds who resided in the Historic Métis Nation Homeland;

> "Historic Métis Nation Homeland" means the area of land in west central North America used and occupied as the traditional territory of the Métis or Half-Breeds as they were then known;
>
> The Métis Nation's Homeland is based on the traditional territory upon which the Métis people have historically lived and relied upon within west central North America. This territory roughly includes the 3 Prairie provinces (Manitoba, Alberta and Saskatchewan), parts of Ontario, British Columbia and the Northwest Territories, as well as, parts of the northern United States (i.e. North Dakota, Montana). (http://www.metisnation.ca/who/index.html)

This definition is controversial as it excludes a significant number of contemporary Métis in Canada (Richardson, 2004). For example, the previously discussed Métis people of the Maritime provinces (Bartels and Bartels, 2005; Hanrahan, 2000) and Québec (Karahasan, 2008). I agree with Karahasan who describes the present state of internally divisive Métis politics as "technocratic genocide" (p. 232). For example, people without quantifiable proof of "historic Métis Nation" ancestry such as scrip records (Vizina, 2008) may be excluded from the contemporary Métis Nation despite generations of familial Métis consciousness or treatment as such by the broader society. These internal divisions can result in serious identity issues for contemporary Métis people.

Even the unifying term "Métis" can be questioned—only recently has this term come to universally signify someone of mixed Aboriginal and European ancestry in Canada (Foster, 1978/ 2007; Karahasan, 2008). While it has been in use since the beginning of French settlement in Canada and is used, in fact, throughout the French colonies (Karahasan, 2008; Lefèvre, 1989), many other terms were and still are used to describe and identify those people who are now commonly known as "Métis" in Canada

"Métis" is French for "mixed", originating from the Latin "miscere" or "mixtus" (Karahasan, 2008; Nguyen, 2005). Historical sources indicate that the term "Métis" was

first used to describe people of mixed Aboriginal and European ancestry as early as the sixteenth century in present-day Canada (Rivard, 2008).

However, while people of mixed European and Aboriginal origins in Canada have been identified as “Métis” throughout history, other French terms such as “bois-brûlé” (“burnt-wood”, a reference to skin colour) and “Canadien” were also commonly used (Karahasan, 2008). In the English-speaking world of the Hudson’s Bay Company, derogatory terms such as “half-breed” or “half-caste” were employed as well as the less-pejorative “Rupert’s Lander” or “country born” (Foster 1978/ 2007). Terms for Métis people can also be found in Cree, Ojibwe, and Michif (a Western Métis language). In Ojibwe the term *Wissakodewinmi* means “half-burnt woodmen” (Gibbs, 2000). Another Ojibwe term commonly used is *Wesahkotewenowak*, which roughly means “fresh plant shoots that grow after a fire” (Edge and McCallum, 2006). While in Cree, *Otipemisiwak*, meaning “free men” or “people who own themselves”, is common (Edge and McCallum, 2006; Karahasan, 2008; Vizina, 2008), referring to the independent lifestyles of early Métis traders. In the Cree-Michif dialect, *Apihtaw’kosisan* is commonly used and means “half-son” (Edge and McCallum). Hanrahan (2000) also reports that the terms “settler”, “breeds”, and “esquimaux” were used in the past in reference to the Métis people of Labrador. In Newfoundland the derogative term “Jackatar” described those of mixed European and Aboriginal ancestry (Bartels and Bartels, 2005). However, most recently, for simplicity and political unification, the term “Métis” has been adopted across Canada (Foster, 1978/2007; Karahasan, 2008). This regional and linguistic diversity is important to recognize because it demonstrates that people of mixed Aboriginal and European ancestry have been recognized as distinct peoples across Canada throughout history, casting further doubt on the existence of a singular Métis culture.

Based on the complexity of Métis history and identity, Richardson (2004) provides a broad definition of contemporary Métis in Canada as those people of mixed Aboriginal and European (and possibly other) origins who self-identify as “Métis” and who incorporate aspects of Aboriginal and European cultures and worldviews into their identity and lifestyle.

Fujiwara (2001-2003) suggests that many people of mixed Aboriginal and European origins identify exclusively as either “Aboriginal” or “White”. Despite being of mixed origins, Métis people may choose to identify, for various personal, political, or physical reasons with only one side of their ancestry. Kienetz (1983) proposes that, for many people, identifying as White, Aboriginal, or Métis is simply a matter of philosophy. Gibbs (2000) also states:

> There is still little recognition by the dominant society that Métis identity is not static but dynamic, and that there is always a philosophical element in the question of any identity. (p. 66)

This kind of identity diversity is common even within a single family (Richardson, 2004). The reflections of Métis scholars like Howard Adams (1999) and Cathy Richardson (2004) who describe identity conflicts within their own families resonate with my own experiences; some of my family members, myself included, self-identify as “Métis”, while others call themselves “White” and are reticent to discuss our Aboriginal origins, despite being visibly Aboriginal to other people.

Bonniol and Benoist (1994) and Richardson (2004) also suggest that how a person of mixed heritage self-identifies or is identified by society is often related to their physical appearance, a highly variable factor in mixed families. However, this variability can also create turmoil for people who are identified by society as fitting into one cultural group when they actually identify with another, or perhaps several others. This kind of identity

conflict often leads to what Cajete (2001) calls the “split head” phenomena—a feeling of being split between two or more worlds without fitting into anywhere.

Foster (1978/ 2007) relates that, historically, government categorization of who was Métis was highly subjective. He suggests that being identified as Métis was sometimes based on lifestyle rather than ethnicity. For example, several Iroquois fur traders were granted Métis scrip in the prairies based on their semi-nomadic Métis-like lifestyles. Karahasan (2008) also provides evidence that some people who were considered “Métis” were actually Europeans who had adopted Aboriginal ways. Gibbs (2000) and Foster both argue that it sometimes simply came down to who was or wasn’t physically there to be counted when government agents came to visit.

People of mixed Euro-Canadian and Aboriginal ancestry were and are present across Canada. Karahasan (2008) suggests that several Métis cultures formed “synchronically” at different places in Canada in many different forms. She states:

> The several Metis groups reflect a diversity of Metis experiences, and show that Metis developed, in fact, a proper identity that differed from both Europeans and Indians, while at the same time showing characteristics that could be just as typical of Europeans (settlement and agriculture) as of Indians (nomadism and chase). (p. 202)

As Karahasan relates, Métis people formed a broad new variety of cultures based on the geographical and cultural characteristics of each region drawing on the diverse cultures of both European and Indigenous ancestors. This resulted in a plethora of Métis cultures across Canada. For example, a family of French-Dené Métis in the present day Northwest Territories might bear minimal cultural or linguistic similarity to a Scottish-Inuit Métis family in Labrador. However, in my opinion, both of these families have the right to self-identify as “Métis”. Gibbs (2000) provides evidence from a 1981 national census indicating

that self-identifying Métis were present in every province. She emphasizes the regional differences between Métis communities and suggests that this lack of a collective identity and ideology results in self-doubting and identity issues for many contemporary Métis. Gibbs also states:

> A section of the public's perception is that the Métis seem unable to forge a sense of solidarity and identity but that is not strictly true… The tremendous differences that far outweigh the commonalities existing between the various Métis communities do not appear to lessen family ties but rather appear to strengthen that sense of solidarity and identity… Strangely, First Nations people are not expected to conform to one rigid image of "Nativeness" but that is not held as true for the Métis. The Métis, of course, have a commonality of Aboriginal ancestry but they do not have a clearly defined image of that source of identity, and therefore lack a compliance ideology on which to build a collective identity. The question of collective Métis identity needs to be clarified so that the Métis are perceived by the public not only as a political entity but also as a unique Aboriginal society. (pp. 59-60)

Gibbs' comments are reminiscent of similar critiques of "pan-Indianism"—applying overly broad generalizations to First Nations people—that has been consistently challenged on the grounds that, while First Nations cultures across North America are related and *some* commonalities are evident in worldviews, customs, and practices, there is also an enormous amount of diversity that resists over-generalizing (Rosser, 2006; Waldram, 2000). Gibbs' reflections also remind me of Richardson's (2004) nod to Ernest Hemingway when she comments that, for contemporary Métis people who don't have regular contact with other Métis, opportunities for interaction with others that we can deeply relate to are a "moveable feast". Considering these kinds of statements led me to question whether métissage is unique to Canada or are there similar cultures in other areas of the world?

Global Voices: International Perspectives on Métissage

While famous Métis scholars like Maria Campbell (1983) and Howard Adams (1999) have drawn attention to the contemporary experiences of Métis people in Canada, voices from around the world also add to contemporary Métis discussion. A review of literature reveals that there are actually Métis people across the globe; wherever the French colonized, the term "Métis" was (and often still is) used to describe people of mixed European and Indigenous ancestry (Nguyen, 2005). I was surprised and delighted to discover the similarity of experiences and issues discussed by Métis people worldwide.

I found a special resonance with several scholars from French Polynesia. Their descriptions of the importance of the canoe, or *wa'ka,* in Indigenous Polynesian cultures (Keown, 2008; Ramsay, 2008; Wilson, 2008) reminded me of its similar historical and contemporary place in Canadian culture. In a manner similar to canoes here in North America, Ramsay (2008), Keown (2008), and Mateata-Allain (2008) all relate how the wa'ka served as both a literal and physical vehicle of métissage in Polynesia by carrying people across the ocean to meet, share stories, and mix culturally and biologically. Mateata-Allain (2008) comments further that modern colonial political and linguistic boundaries have restricted traditional intercultural exchange in Polynesia—a phenomenon also common to North America.

Several Métis voices also emerge from Asia. Stoler (1992) describes métissage in South East Asia from a personal perspective as both an advantage and disadvantage. Stoler suggests that while being Métis sometimes helps you to fit into certain situations, it may also exclude you from others. Choo (2007) and Nguyen (2005) also discuss métissage in South East Asia. Both Nguyen and Choo discuss the role of Métis or "Eurasian" people as intercultural mediators—people who are able to navigate both Asian and European society.

Echoing the previously discussed debate around Métis identity in Canada, Choo also raises the issue of who "qualifies" as Métis in South East Asia: Only historically mixed families or contemporary ones as well? Choo also relates that some young Eurasians in Southeast Asia try to hide their European roots, preferring to blend into mainstream society.

In Africa "Métis" is also used to describe people of mixed African and European ancestry. For example, in the Congo, Belgian men often engaged in sexual relations with Congolese women; their children were called "Métis" (Rahier, 2003). Rahier, a Congolese Métis himself, reports that there was initially societal and institutional confusion regarding how Métis should be treated: were they Black or White? However, as the Métis population grew, "this ambiguity came to characterize the lives of the growing population of métis" (Rahier, 2003, p. 86).

The term "Métis" is also used in French-speaking areas of the Caribbean like Haiti and Guadalupe to describe people of mixed European and African ancestry (Niort, 2007). Niort relates that, as in many other colonial nations, European men and African women, who were usually slaves, often entered into sexual, but rarely marital, relationships. Similar to Africa, Caribbean societies like Haiti were initially uncertain how to categorize the Métis offspring of these relationships however, as their numbers grew, they came to represent an elite upper class of servants, acting as intermediaries between the ruling Europeans and enslaved Africans.

I find it interesting to see the links and commonalities among Métis communities around the world. I found it heartening to see the broad use of the term "Métis" which, as was previously discussed, has become highly politicized here in Canada (Karahasan, 2008). There are many intriguing parallels between Metis communities around the world with issues such as old vs. new families, denial of heritage, and links to ecological identity.

An exploration of Métis history and contemporary issues in Canada and internationally may leave us with more questions than definitive answers. However, an ambiguous result may be, in itself, an answer. Keeping this in mind, rather than providing definitive definitions and comparisons, the following section attempts to clarify the essence of a Métis or Third Space mentality as it relates to the present inquiry.

Exploring the Third Space: Understanding *a* Métis Worldview

In her doctoral dissertation, Métis scholar Catherine Richardson (2004, p. 16) adapts Bhabha's (1998) "Third Space" concept—an intercultural existential territory resulting from cultural blending—to describe a Métis mentality. Richardson compares the Métis Third Space to the "First Space" of the dominant Euro-Canadian society and the "Second Space" of colonially subjugated Aboriginal peoples. Richardson's use of these terms is an invitation for us to further explore the "Third Space" in a Métis context.

During a recent conference presentation, an audience member astutely suggested to me that the First Space here on Turtle Island (North America) was, in fact, Aboriginal, followed by the Second Space introduced by the colonizing Europeans, which resulted in the Third Space of the Métis. This revised interpretation of Richardson's (2004) Third Space is presented in the figure below.

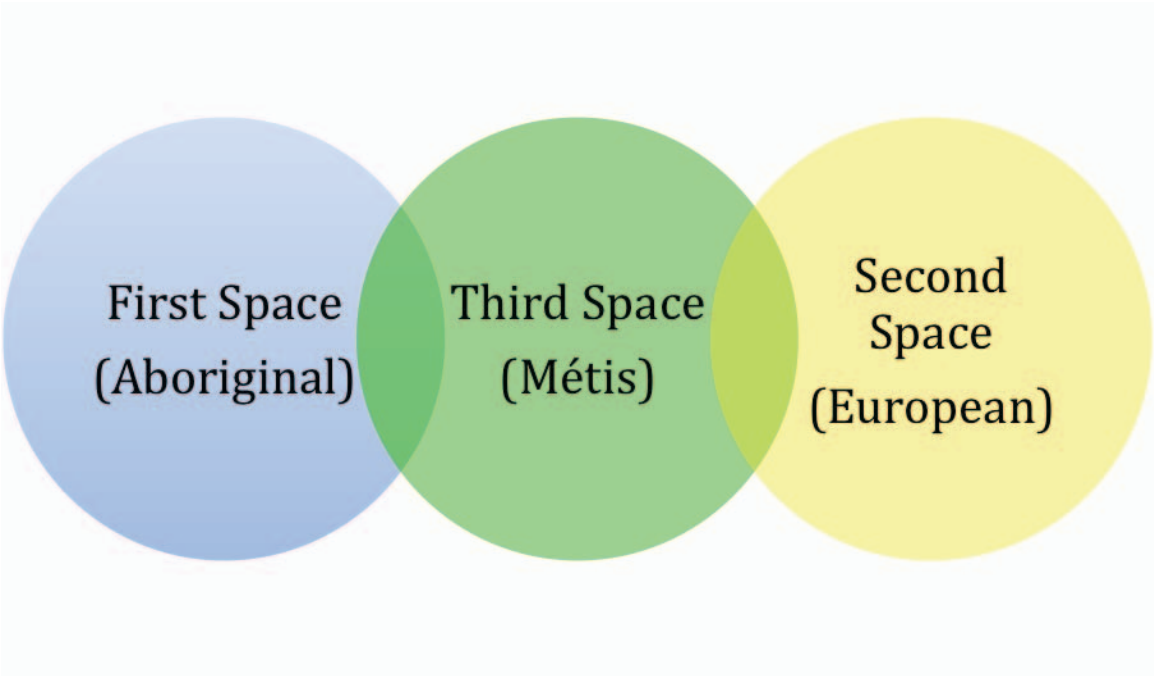

Figure 2. The Third Space

The Third Space is a place where Western, Aboriginal, and possibly other beliefs, philosophies, values, and knowledge intersect, co-habit, and intermingle (Richardson, 2004). Zembylas and Avraamidou (2008) propose that the Third Space represents, “points of departure” (p. 990) to challenge existing norms—a “landscape of becoming” (p. 990) that stimulates “transformative practice” (p. 990).

This discussion focuses on the Third Space between Western and Aboriginal cultures but it need not. For example, Chambers (2002) discusses the métissage within her own Euro-Canadian family. She reminds us that, not too long ago, even being of mixed English and Scottish heritage was notable in Canada, as both groups were still very conscious of their distinct origins.

The following illustrative examples of the Third Space are drawn from examples of Métis lives and philosophies. What might we learn from the lifestyles and communities of

Métis people in the past and present? How might specific examples of Métis life and culture in Canada inform our understanding of the Third Space? Are there examples of non-Métis people embracing a Third Space mentality? Further discussion of the Third Space and other related concepts will be continued in the following chapter.

Interpreting Métis Lifestyles

Karahasan (2008) suggests that métissage is a concept that needs to be interpreted rather than defined. The following section presents information related to the historical lifestyles and practices of Métis people across Canada. I will elucidate the Third Space mentality through interpretation of various examples of Métis cultures and communities. The areas addressed in the following section include Métis spirituality, marriage, education, and geography. What might these practices and traditions tell us about a Métis worldview or Third Space mentality? The majority of available literature addresses the Métis cultures of central and Western Canada, however this does not mean that Métis people and cultures did not or do not exist in other regions.

Spirituality

Historically, Métis communities were spiritually diverse (Foster, 1994/ 2007; Fujiwara, 2001-2003; Vizina, 2008). Some followed Anglican or Catholic practices (Foster), while others also incorporated Aboriginal traditions like the Sweatlodge (Edge and McCallum, 2006). Fujiwara (2001-2003) and Duval (2001-2003) report that many communities followed a kind of “folk Catholicism”, blending both Catholic and Aboriginal spiritual practices. Métis scholar Yvonne Vizina (2008) adds that:

> The spirit of the Métis and the spiritual practices of the Métis are as complex as the ancestral roots of their Indian and European culture and languages… [Métis] were comfortable blending them together. (p. 175)

Karahasan (2008) reports that when the first Catholic Mission was established in the Red River settlement in 1818, the missionaries found the Métis practicing a broad and blended variety of syncretic folk religion ranging from purely Indigenous traditions to those of the Catholic Church. Unfortunately, due to the predominantly oral tradition of Métis cultures, written records of how this blend was embodied in practice are limited, indicating an area in need of further research (Préfontaine and Dorion, 1999).

Duval (2001-2003) shares that many Métis were reluctant to contribute funds to build the first Catholic Church in Red River, happy to continue with their less formal religious practices. However, some Red River Métis like Peter Erasmus (1999), a Protestant, devoted much of their lives to missionary work with Aboriginal peoples.

Even once the Catholic Church was established in the Red River Valley, they were still frustrated by the Catholic Métis' openness to intermarriage with their non-Christian Aboriginal and Protestant neighbours (Duval, 2001-2003), further demonstrating the Métis mentality which led to increasing European and Aboriginal métissage. Duval also suggests that the Roman Catholic Church tried to curtail the Métis' semi-nomadic traditions by discouraging hunting and fishing and encouraging them to focus full-time on settled agricultural pursuits. Apparently they were largely unsuccessful in this project, but did succeed in temporarily banning hunting and fishing on Sundays. However, Duval reports that the missionaries eventually conceded and began accompanying their Métis parishioners on hunting expeditions.

In a recent conference report, Métis scholars Lois Edge and Tom McCallum (2006) provide insight into the contemporary spiritual views of Métis Elders in the Prairies. They

report that, while a strong sense of spirituality and faith exists in the Métis community, there is no one view common to all Western Métis. For example, while some Elders attend and facilitate Indigenous ceremonies such as the Sweatlodge, pipe ceremonies, and the offering of tobacco, others live a predominantly Christian existence. However, many embrace both, drawing on Christian and Aboriginal spiritual traditions to create their own unique métissage. Reflecting an awareness and acceptance of this complexity, Métis Elder Tom McCallum (Edge and McCallum, 2006) suggests that we should all reflect on our own spirituality and decide for ourselves which aspects of our Aboriginal or European roots to incorporate.

Marriage

What might early Métis marriage customs tell us about their worldviews? Several historical sources provide accounts of marriage *à la façon du pays* (Foster, 1978/ 2007; Karahasan, 2008; Podruchny, 2006). These "morganatic" or unsanctioned "country marriages" were often a blend of European and Aboriginal practices, unsanctioned by the Church and variously incorporating rituals and traditions of both cultures. For example, European and Euro-Canadian men who wished to marry an Aboriginal woman often followed local customs of paying a bride-price (e.g. a horse) and living with the bride's family until the birth of their first child (Foster, 1994/ 2007). This practice allowed the groom to learn local knowledge and skills under the watchful eyes of the bride's family.

Métis marriage ceremonies were often quite simple and regularly employed a blend of Western and Aboriginal traditions. Historian Carolyn Podruchny (2006) relates:

> The wedding custom was a blend of Aboriginal and French Canadian practices… Some marriages included rituals such as the smoking of a calumet [pipe] and a

> public lecture by Aboriginal elders on the duty of a wife and mother. The new Aboriginal bride was then cleaned by other women at the [fur] post and then clothed in "Canadian fashion", which consisted of a shirt, short gown, petticoat, and leggings. (p. 271)

As with many other aspects of Métis life, early marriage customs reflect flexibility on both sides to incorporating Aboriginal and Western practices. This flexibility was retained and variously interpreted as Métis communities grew throughout Canada.

Healthy Land, Healthy People

> *Territoriality played a vital role in forming Metis identity. The attachment to indigenous soil was one of the characteristics of Metis community formation.* (Karahasan, 2008, p. 211)

What might accounts of early Métis relationships to and interaction with the Land tell us about their worldviews? Similar to other Aboriginal cultures (Cajete, 1994; Simpson, 2002) as well as certain Western schools of philosophy such as Deep Ecology (Naess and Rothenberg, 1990), a deep connection to the land is a prominent feature of Métis cultures in Canada (Edge and McCallum 2006; Gibbs, 2000; Hanrahan, 2000).

Gibbs relates a Western Métis view that the Land is naturally perfect and thus people should adapt themselves to it, not the reverse. Hanrahan seems to concur when she reports the Labrador Métis perspective that, rather than people taking care of the Earth (as in a Western stewardship model), the Earth takes care of the people. This means that it is the people's responsibility to act with humility and care towards the Earth and all creatures.

Echoing the perspectives of Aboriginal scholars such as Gregory Cajete (1994), Hanrahan (2000) shares the views of Labrador Métis Elders who believe that human health is intimately linked to the Land. They suggest the Land and the Sea are the basis for a deep interconnection within and between individuals and their human and non-human

community. This view leads them to maintain practices such as eating wild foods harvested from the Land as well as following traditional Inuit and Mi'kmaq seasonal rituals such as preventive "spring cleaning": fasting and cleansing oneself using traditional plant medicines at the end of winter. Many Labrador Métis Elders continue to use traditional plant knowledge in conjunction with Western medicines (Hanrahan).

These kinds of perspectives can also be found in the Western world; Euro-American philosopher and farmer Wendell Berry (2009) describes the traditions of Euro-North American farmers who not only grew crops and raised livestock, but also went hunting and fishing on a regular basis. These farmers were keenly aware of the complex relationships between their own cultivated land and the surrounding "wilds".

Edge and McCallum (2006) report similar perspectives from Western Métis Elders. At a recent Elders' gathering various beliefs were shared on the importance of the Land in Métis cultures. Similar to the Labrador Métis, Western Métis Elders shared that a connection to the Land is a key factor in Métis health, knowledge, wisdom, and stories. Many Elders also stated that, as in many North American Aboriginal cultures, the concept of "All My Relations", recognizing the deep interconnectedness of all things, is foundational to a Métis worldview (Edge and McCallum). Edge and McCallum also reported dual approaches to Métis health and healing that incorporate both Western and Aboriginal traditions. They emphasize the diversity in the Métis community, with Elders falling on a spectrum from Aboriginal to Western views and practices.

Settlement and Housing

Given the fundamental importance of the Land in Métis cultures, how were Métis worldviews represented in early settlement and housing practices? Gibbs (2000) reports that many prairie Métis families and groups were semi-nomadic—maintaining small farms, but also travelling across the prairies to hunt and trade on a regular basis. Karahasan (2008) suggests that with increased missionary and European settlement, the semi-nomadic lifestyles of many Métis resulted in hierarchies forming in communities such as Red River. She proposes that the degree of a family's settlement reflected their status in the community; fully-settled Europeans and Euro-Canadians were at the top with the more settled Anglophone (often Scottish) Métis next followed by the buffalo-hunting Francophone Métis and finally the surrounding Aboriginal groups who were seasonally nomadic.

Troupe (2009) reports that many Western Métis settlements such as Batoche in Saskatchewan had a "big family village feel" (p. 60). Troupe and Podruchny (2006) both note that many Métis communities across the West followed French Canadian settlement patterns using a river-lot system where each family was allotted a narrow strip of land that provided universal access to a river or lake. This system contrasts with the American-style land settlement pattern of dividing land into wider sections that was autocratically introduced by the Canadian government when it took over management of Rupert's Land in 1869 (Vizina, 2008). This unilateral action reduced regular water access to those landholders bordering the water source, a less egalitarian approach (Troupe, 2009).

Métis homes often reflected both Aboriginal and Western roots. Burley and Horsfall (1989) state that Western Métis homes often appeared European from the outside, but were

very open inside, reflecting Aboriginal values of extended family and community. Karahasan (2008) relates a derogatory description by one European observer of Malecite Métis homes in St. Malo, Québec as European style homes inhabited by people living in "Indian style". Similar to other cultural aspects, early Métis settlement and building patterns reflected a Third Space mentality that incorporated both Aboriginal and European traditions and practices.

Education

Many Métis families educated their children in a blended European and Aboriginal style in various forms depending on the time period, community, or individual family. For example, Métis boys from wealthier elite families in the Red River region, like Louis Riel, were often sent east in their teens to Montreal (Duval, 2001-2003) or even Europe (Brown, 1983) for more formal educational training. Most records indicate this was less common for Métis girls who tended to stay at home to learn from their mothers and boys from poorer families who were more likely to remain in the Northwest developing their hunting, fishing, and agricultural skills (Brown). Brown also notes that many Métis children, girls and boys alike, were also exposed to a combination of Western-style schooling the Northwest along with traditional Indigenous knowledge that they learned experientially on the Land with their families.

Edge and McCallum (2006) also report that both Indigenous and Western modes of education were and still are valued by many Métis communities. They indicate that along with Western style approaches, experiential, land-based educational techniques were and still are employed with Métis youth. Edge and McCallum suggest that aspects such as self-

esteem, self-reliance, responsibility, and traditional wilderness skills are best taught on the Land and they stress the importance of taking youth outside on a regular basis. They emphasize that land skills are very important.

Hanrahan (2000) notes similar values in the Labrador Métis communities that she researched. Echoing Edge and McCallum (2006), other Indigenous environmental education scholars such as Leanne Simpson (2002) and the findings of my own master's research (Lowan, 2008; 2009), Hanrahan suggests that Labrador Métis Elders believe that values such as self-reliance, independence, and adaptability are best taught through experiences on the Land.

Edge and McCallum (2006) stress the importance of helping Métis youth develop their sense of personal and cultural identity and belonging. McCallum suggests that they need to learn to be "bi-cultural in a multicultural world" (p. 113), taking the best of all the cultures to which they are exposed and blending them together, rather than keeping them separate. McCallum's comments strongly remind me of the concept of Two-Eyed Seeing promoted by Mi'kmaq Elder Albert Marshall (Lefort and Marshall, 2009), a concept that will be explored in the following chapter.

Language

The Michif language arose in various forms in many Western Métis communities from the intentional blending of French with Aboriginal languages (Bakker & Papen, 1997; Crawford, 1985; Rosen, 2003). Crawford suggests that the consciously constructed balance of French nouns and Aboriginal verbs in the structure of Michif is reflective of the values

of the Métis societies' that equally valued their European and Aboriginal roots. Saskatchewan Métis scholar Yvonne Vizina (2008) also states:

> Until recent times, most Métis spoke multiple languages and many were literate in French or English. The Michif language was a unique outcome … of Métis mixed ancestry and creativity. Just as the grammar and lexicon of Michif is unique, the stories of the Métis also combine elements, perspectives and traditions of their ancestral lineages. (p. 175)

I agree with Métis Elder Tom McCallum who relates Métis diversity to the linguistic diversity *within* Michif (Edge and McCallum, 2006). In reference to the revitalization of Michif, he states:

> There is this whole idea [of Michif] that they are promoting right now. It comes from Manitoba and it is mixed with Ojibwe. It has a "zheh" sound. We don't have that sound back home. We have a different dialect of what you call Michif or Cree. And there is probably not as much French, as those French Michif… I've heard that they are trying to standardize it, to make it one. And, that is kind of offensive to the people who don't speak that language… it offends me anyway… I like to speak my language, the language of my people, from where I come from. (p. 101-102).

The previous section has outlined various aspects of Métis lives and traditions that reflect a blended "Third Space" worldview. In areas such as religion, marriage, education, and language, Métis people incorporated aspects of their European and Aboriginal roots in various ways. One might be tempted to consider simply adopting customary Métis cultural practices and traditions as an easy way to achieve contemporary métissage. However, as stated at the beginning of this paper, I disagree. As discussed in previous sections, Métis people and cultures across Canada are very diverse and, as such, resist broad generalizations and comparisons. While it is true that many more Canadians than is collectively acknowledged are actually Métis (Karahasan, 2008), it would still be inappropriate for the non-Métis Canadian majority to simply appropriate Métis cultures and practices in a neocolonial (Zembylas and Avraamidou, 2008) manner. What then, would be

a more appropriate approach? Are there any examples of non-Métis people in Canadian history adopting a Third Space mentality?

Exploring the Third Space in Non-Métis Communities

The following section presents three examples of the Third Space in predominantly non-Métis communities—the early French voyageurs, Chinook Wawa, and contemporary Aboriginal education. What might we learn from these examples in our search for strategies to embody ecological métissage?

Voyageur Worldviews

The voyageurs are often associated with the emergence of Métis communities in northwestern Canada. Their well documented narrative tells us that primarily French Canadian voyageurs under the banners of Montreal-based ventures such as the Northwest Company ventured progressively further from their *habitant* homesteads along the St. Lawrence River, eventually spending winters in the Northwest as *hivernants en dérouine* where they increasingly intermingled and settled with Aboriginal women to produce significant numbers of Métis offspring, many of whom formed identifiable and unique communities of their own (Foster, 1994/ 2007, Karahasan, 2008). We are told that voyageurs and Aboriginal women formed mutually beneficial relationships for various reasons: material necessity, physical survival, strategic trading alliances, and simply for love (Foster, 1994/ 2007).

What is not as clearly documented is the inner world of the voyageurs (Podruchny, 2006). Due to their almost universal illiteracy and the rigidly hierarchical structure of the fur trade where primarily English and Lowland Scottish gentlemen occupied the bourgeois

positions of managerial power over the predominantly French (and later Iroquois, Métis etc…) voyageurs and Highland Scottish "boatmen" (Raffan, 2008), scant evidence remains to tell us stories from their own perspectives. What remains are the accounts of the bourgeois or visitors to Canada who recorded their observations of the habits and customs of the voyageurs.

In her recent work, Podruchny (2006) delves deeper into the voyageur psyche than previous historians. Rather than simply repeating the standard narrative, traditions, and habits of the voyageurs, Podruchny provides an unparalleled *interpretation* of the worldview of the voyageurs. An exploration of her work is relevant to the present task because I believe that insight into the beliefs of the voyageurs provides us with a well-articulated example of a Third Space mentality from a predominantly non-Métis perspective.

Podruchny (2006) suggests that a closer examination of voyageur rituals and habits reveals deep intentionality. Ritual acts such as performing baptisms at every height of land were not simply maintained in order to procure an extra swig of rum from the bourgeois; they served to indoctrinate new voyageurs into the world of their more experienced compatriots, teaching them the rules and values of their trade. Karahasan (2008) suggests that the French colonial project in North America resulted in the unexpected outcome of French people like the voyageurs adopting Indigenous habits and beliefs as much as the reverse, contrary to the hopes of the French government.

Podruchny (2006) argues that as the voyageurs ventured increasingly further from St. Anne's Church at Lachine, their final stop before leaving Montreal for the Northwest, their world became increasingly indigenized. Local customs and languages were adopted away from the watchful eye of the Catholic Church. Podruchny and others (e.g. Nute,

1987) note that voyageur rituals often involved a mix of Christian and Aboriginal spiritual practices. For example, a Catholic prayer for safekeeping before a dangerous lake crossing might have been accompanied by the offering of tobacco and a small coin (Podruchny). The voyageur baptism was also a mixed affair that was performed by sprinkling water over a neophyte's head using a sprig of cedar, a sacred plant in many Aboriginal societies. Podruchny also highlights that several of the important sights of voyageur rituals such as Oiseau Rock on the Ottawa River are also sacred Aboriginal spiritual places. As she suggests:

> On a symbolic level, mimicking the location of an Aboriginal spiritual site may have been another attempt at indigenizing themselves or perhaps even garnering spiritual power and protection from Aboriginal forces to bolster the protection of their Catholic saints. (p. 63)

Podruchny also proposes that the voyageurs' habitual smoking of tobacco in their pipes might have been considered as a spiritual act by some, following the beliefs of Aboriginal peoples. She also suggests that some voyageurs adopted Aboriginal spiritual practices to appease their Aboriginal hosts in tense situations as well out of desperation during times of danger or starvation. Podruchny relates that many voyageurs also learned Aboriginal stories (often involving the Trickster) and rituals and incorporated them into their own beliefs and values. For example, some voyageurs offered tobacco and other small items of value to the water at the beginning of every day to pray for safe passage.

Voyageur dress also reflected a blend of Western and Aboriginal styles—often mixing cotton shirts and wool ceintures flechées (sashes) with leather moccasins and beaded tobacco pouches (Karahasan, 2008; Nute, 1987). Not only was their clothing functional, it was also representative of their absorption of both cultures.

Voyageurs who learned Aboriginal languages most likely gained a deeper understanding of Aboriginal cultures (Podruchny, 2006). Indigenous authors such as Leanne Simpson (2002) and Gregory Cajete (1994) remind us that Indigenous languages are highly representative of the values of their host cultures. As such, a voyageur that learned an Indigenous language would have had greater insight into the culture of its speakers. Evidence of such linguistic interactions are evident in the parallel naming in Aboriginal languages and French of key points along fur trade routes and the eventual development of the Métis language, Michif, (see Crawford, 1985; MacDougall, 2006; Rosen, 2003) that I described earlier.

These insights into voyageurs' rituals and beliefs demonstrate the general amenability of the voyageurs to Aboriginal values and ways of life. Many voyageurs took on aspects of Aboriginal cultures and worldviews while maintaining some of their own predominantly French Catholic practices. Podruchny (2006) also proposes that the voyageurs' maintenance of this unique blend was also a way for them to distinguish themselves from the primarily Anglo-Protestant bourgeois.

One could argue that some of the voyageurs adopted Aboriginal spiritual and cultural practices merely to survive in a somewhat hostile physical and cultural environment. This is most likely true, however we know that, while some eventually returned home to their farms along the St. Lawrence, many voyageurs chose to remain in the Northwest, adopting highly Indigenous lifestyles and raising Métis children with their Aboriginal wives (Foster, 1977/2007; Brown, 1983). The early voyageurs provide us with a well-documented example of a non-Métis people (at least initially) who developed a Third Space mentality in order to survive and thrive under challenging physical, emotional, and spiritual circumstances.

Chinook Wawa

Another example of the Third Space in a non-Métis context is Chinook Wawa, a contact language incorporating various Aboriginal languages, French, English, Hawaiian, Chinese, and Japanese that was commonly spoken socially, in business and government, and written throughout the Pacific Northwest until the 1930s (Backhouse, 2008; Klassen, 2006; Silverstein, 1997). Chinook Wawa is a strong example of a collective Third Space mentality in a non-Métis setting. While the Michif language was generated by people of similar cultural origins, Chinook Wawa was developed and adopted by a culturally disparate community (Backhouse, 2008). Some scholars (e.g. Crawford, 1985) emphasize the uniqueness of the Michif language because it is quite rare amongst colonial contact languages as a truly mixed language representing both Indigenous and European languages in vocabulary and grammar. However, Backhouse (2008) observes that Chinook Wawa is also remarkable because it was created and used by a culturally diverse community with the intention of forging a common language available to all.

A contact language like Chinook represents the Third Space mentality in a different way than a mixed language like Michif that is primarily spoken by people of common cultural origins. I do not mean to suggest that no cultural prejudice or hierarchy existed in the Pacific Northwest while Chinook was in use, but I do find it remarkable that a geographically and culturally disparate community would collectively engage in the project of communal sense-making represented by Chinook Wawa. Rather than forcing non-English or non-French speakers into speaking a completely foreign colonial tongue, the early colonists, other settlers, and the Indigenous peoples of British Columbia and other Pacific regions created and employed a language that used words from several languages—Indigenous, European, and Asian alike. If we consider theorists such as Cajete (1994) and

Simpson (2002) who emphasize the strong link between languages and worldviews, then we must conclude that the formation of a language like Chinook Wawa is significant. It arguably represents a locally generated worldview based on consideration and respect for each contributing culture's values and traditions. Roth (2008) suggests that it is exactly this kind of common jargon mentality that is required to collectively move into the Third Space.

As the colonial project progressed, permanent European settlement increased and more European women were encouraged to emigrate to Canada; the vital role of Aboriginal peoples and intermarriage with Europeans decreased substantially in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Saul, 2008). However, the Third Space continues to be represented in various ways in Métis and non-Métis communities in Canada. For example, a recent study by Statistics Canada reports that "mixed-unions" between a person who is a visible minority and another who is not, increased by 33% between 2001 and 2006 in Canada (Milan, Maheux & Chui, 2010). Statistics Canada also predicts that by 2031, a third of Canadians will be "visible minorities" (Malenfant, Lebel and Martel, 2010).

Are we in the midst of a renewed expansion of the "Third Space" where Indigenous and other cultural traditions will once again play a strong role in the framework of our society or will Western norms continue to dominate? Pieterse (1996) suggests that seriously considering cultural hybridity involves the decolonization of the mind. Little Bear (2000b) also comments:

> Colonization created a fragmentary worldview among Aboriginal peoples. By force, terror, and educational policy, it attempted to destroy the Aboriginal worldview—it failed. Instead, colonization left a heritage of jagged worldviews among Indigenous peoples … Yet all colonial people, both the colonizer and the colonized, have shared or collective views of the world embedded in their languages, stories, or narratives. It is shared among a family or group. However, this shared worldview is always contested, and this paradox is part of what it means to be colonized. (p. 84-85)

Rather than being dominated by a mono-cultural colonial mentality, a Métis worldview or Third Space mentality is open to the perspectives and traditions of several cultures simultaneously. Examples of métissage from our collective past provide inspiring models of intercultural collaboration that transcends these “jagged worldviews”. How might we draw on these examples to nurture the Third Space in our contemporary society in areas such as science and environmental education? The following chapter explores current theories and examples of practice that attempt to integrate or blend Western and Indigenous knowledge and philosophies.

CHAPTER FOUR:

IN SEARCH OF COMMON GROUND: TO BLEND OR NOT TO BLEND?

A dozen junior high students and two middle-aged teachers gather together in a circle, leaning forward, straining to hear the soft words of an Anishnaabe Elder. A fire crackles in the centre of the circle, occasionally throwing light onto her weather worn face. "This here is pemmican" she says, producing a small pinch of grizzled meat, fat, and cranberries from a leather pouch. "One handful of this will keep you going for half a day's hard work." The students raise their eyebrows in anticipation as she passes the pemmican pouch to her left to be circulated clockwise around the circle.

While the students sample the pemmican, one of the teachers brings the Elder a cup of steaming tea. "All right class," the other says, "It's time for bed. Don't forget to bring your journals tomorrow morning to the main hall. We have a biology professor from the university coming to explain why berries were such an important part of the traditional Anishnaabe and voyageur diet."

As the students gather their belongings and slowly filter away to the cabins, the Elder chuckles to herself, "Eee, that's right; if you didn't eat enough berries, your teeth would fall out! Hehehehe..."

An increasing number of scholars, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, are asking questions such as, "Is it possible to blend Western and Indigenous North American ecological philosophies and knowledge? Or is it better to keep them separate, but search for commonalities?" Some, like Cajete (2001) and the late Nakoda Chief John Snow (1977/ 2005), suggest that the collective survival of our society will require the *combined* wisdom of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultures.

Renowned Tewa scholar Gregory Cajete (2001) relates the story of a female relative who has a "split head"; she is of mixed Euro-American and Tewa ancestry and often feels split between the two cultures. Cajete suggests that many contemporary Aboriginal *and* non-Aboriginal people also have a split head—torn between various cultural and sub-cultural influences and values. He proposes that the ultimate task at hand is to find ways to heal the split head of our collective society, blending the best of Western (and others) and Indigenous cultures to create a unified whole.

Nancy Turner (2005), a well-known Euro-Canadian ethnobotanist who has built strong relationships with Indigenous communities on the West Coast also states:

> Despite the tremendous scientific and technological advances we have made since the Industrial Revolution, humans have not successfully protected our environments or cared for the Earth's other species. Much of today's environmental damage is a direct result of poorly considered use of technology and the impacts of this technological mindset. Our scientific sophistication has not been matched by our caring for the Earth—our environmental ethic … I believe that there are many ideas and approaches we can look to [in the Indigenous world] to help us in our search for better, less harmful ways to live, while maintaining healthy, fulfilling and satisfying lives. (pp. 1-2)

Partnerships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and organizations to combat environmental challenges are also growing (Simpson, 2010); however relatively few comprehensive accounts of these initiatives are available (Davis, 2010). As this area of inquiry and practice grows, key issues of concern and debate are rising in the literature. These topics include questions such as how Indigenous and non-Indigenous people can engage respectfully engage with each other (Mack, Augare, Different Cloud-Jones, Quiver Gaddie, Honey, Kawagley, Little Plume-Weatherwax, Lone Fight, Meier, Pete, Rattling Leaf, Returns From Scout, Sachatello-Sawyer, Shibata, Valdez, and Wippert, in press; Root, 2009) and whether blending or integration can actually be achieved in a Western framework without "watering-down" Indigenous knowledge (Hermes, 2000)? There is also considerable debate surrounding questions such as: Are Indigenous knowledge and philosophies of Nature a form of science or should they be considered a separate body of knowledge (Little Bear, 2000a)? Also, what are the similarities and differences between Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and Western Science (Barnhardt and Kawagley, 2005)? These kinds of questions relate to broader discussions of contemporary trends such as globalization and multiculturalism (Pieterse, 1996; 2001; Welsch, 1999).

The following section provides an overview of the key characteristics of and contemporary issues surrounding the blending and/ or integration of Indigenous and Western knowledge and philosophies of Nature. Perspectives and theories from Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars in North America and around the world are explored and supported with illustrative examples of contemporary practice.

Transcultural Perspectives on Intercultural Engagement

Bricolage, métissage, creolization, the Third Space, integration, hybridity, diaspora, transcultural, intercultural, multicultural, and bicultural (among others) are all terms that one encounters when examining contemporary literature on culturally-related science and environmental education. Amidst this seemingly endless labyrinth of terms, it is easy to lose your way; a wide range of scholars provide an equally wide range of perspectives on societal trends of cultural interaction on regional, national, and international levels along with their beliefs of how these trends relate to current educational practices. In the following section I discuss a selection of perspectives that are relevant to my examination of approaches to combining Indigenous and Western approaches to environmental education.

Multi, Inter, or Transcultural?

Welsch (1999) proposes that, in our increasingly interconnected world, many peoples' experiences are "transcultural" blends of several cultures simultaneously. Similar to Saul (2008) and Roth (2008), Welsch (1999), a German scholar, challenges what he describes as the archaic classical European belief in a one-nation, one-culture worldview. He suggests that past and present theories of multi and interculturalism are inadequate

portrayals of the current complexity of regions, nations, and international relationships because they are based on the monocultural assumption of *difference* rather than recognizing the historical and contemporary ambiguity and blurring of cultural boundaries in most areas of the world.

Welsch (1999) proposes that a monocultural understanding of the world relies on three inherently flawed premises: social homogenization, ethnic consolidation, and intercultural delimitation. He states:

> Firstly, every culture is supposed to mould the whole life of the people concerned and of its individuals, making every act and every object an unmistakable instance of precisely *this* culture ... *Secondly*, culture is always to be the "culture of the folk", representing … "the flower" of a folk's existence … Thirdly, a decided *delimitation* towards the outside ensues: Every culture is, as the culture of one folk, to be distinguished and to remain separated from other folks' cultures. The concept is separatory. (pp. 1-2)

Welsch suggests that these premises are inadequate because:

> First … modern societies are multicultural [internally culturally plural] in themselves, encompassing a multitude of varying ways of life and lifestyles … Secondly … ethnic consolidation [in the past] is dubious … such folk-bound definitions are highly imaginary and fictional; they must laboriously be brought to prevail against historical evidence of intermingling. Finally, the concept demands outer delimitation … The traditional [European] concept of culture is a concept of inner homogenization and outer separation at the same time … It tends … to be a sort of cultural racism. (p. 2)

While Welsch's perspective is unmistakably European, he does touch on several concepts that bear great relevance to the present inquiry. Welsch emphasizes the internal plurality within all cultures of the past and present due to individual differences as well as interaction with other cultures. For example, in our increasingly connected world, we can almost instantly access food, clothing, literature, music, and languages from across the globe. Welsch also emphasizes the alienating effect of monoculturalism that defines itself,

largely, by what it is not, requiring foreign "others" to consolidate one's own sense of culture.

Welsch (1999) also critiques the concepts of interculturalism and multiculturalism. He suggests that interculturality is inherently flawed because it relies on a monocultural view of the world in order to find a common middle ground. Welsch states:

> The concept of interculturality reacts to the fact that a conception of cultures as [independent] spheres necessarily leads to intercultural conflicts … the deficiency in this conception originates in that it drags along with it unchanged the premise of the traditional conception of culture. (p. 3)

Welsch (1999) also presents similar concerns about multiculturalism. He notes that the only distinction is multiculturalism's focus on intra-national rather than international diversity. Welsch proposes that:

> Compared to traditional calls for cultural homogeneity the concept is progressive, but its all too traditional understanding of cultures threatens to engender regressive tendencies which by appealing to a particularistic cultural identity lead to ghettoization or cultural fundamentalism. (p. 3)

Welsch (1999) suggests that transculturality is a much more appropriate tool to describe and understand cultures today. He argues that transculturality is a result of the "inner differentiation and complexity of modern cultures" which recognizes that "cultures today are extremely connected and entangled with each other" (p. 4). He also notes that, in many places, "cultures' external networking" (p. 4) has surpassed traditional internal beliefs and relationships. Welsch also notes that transcultural similarities have been enhanced through the spread of global movements such as environmentalism and feminism which have surpassed local or even national cultural concerns and created powerful sub-cultures whose members may have a more common outlook and lifestyle with their

counterparts in similar sub-cultures of other nations than with other members of their home nation.

Welsch (1999) also suggests that cultures today are characterized by hybridization due to the relative ease and availability of "foreign" products and concepts. He states:

> Henceforward there is no longer anything absolutely foreign. Everything is within reach. Authenticity has become folklore, it is owness simulated for others—to whom the indigene himself belongs. To be sure there is still a regional-cultural rhetoric, but it is largely simulatory and aesthetic. (p. 5)

While I do agree with Welsch that the world has become increasingly complex and interrelated, his comments above concern me to a certain extent. Perhaps I am simply clinging to monocultural romanticism, but I find myself resisting his assertion that regional-cultural characteristics are merely superficial decorations on top of a transcultural global cake. However, perhaps Welsch is merely observing what he perceives as a trend around the world for people to look increasingly outside of their respective region or nation to connect with products, concepts, and people around the world that appeal more to them than their own traditions. As someone who spent a large part of my twenties traveling and living around the world, I can understand this compulsion, but I find it troubling.

Reflecting on the previously discussed concept of bioregionalism which emphasizes living in response to your local sociocultural and ecological surroundings (Dodge, 1981; Thomashow, 1996), I can't help but question the implications of a transcultural perspective for the ecology and/or cultures of specific regions? In a world where you can instantly download and read your favourite Romanian author on a laptop from the comfort of a cabin in northern Ontario, can you still value and support the local farmer's market? I believe that this *is* possible because I live this way in Thunder Bay. Many others in our community do too, maintaining virtual connections to other areas of Canada and the rest of the world

while also valuing and participating in the local community. However, in a relatively remote area like Northwestern Ontario, such a lifestyle requires an acute consciousness to avoid becoming over-connected to the virtual world and disconnected from the local landscape.

I also question whether the relative ease of contemporary global travel and communication allow us to too easily wander about, place-less and disconnected from any meaningful engagement with a specific cultural and geographical region for any significant amount of time? Or perhaps, like the voyageurs who once travelled the breadth of Canada's boreal forest in a single season, some people now have an expanded sense of place that transcends the traditional interpretation of home as being limited to a narrowly defined geographical area (Cuthbertson, Heine, and Whitson, 1997)?

Haberer (2011) also describes this phenomenon in her research into the experiences of outdoor educators in Canada. I have observed and experienced this myself as an outdoor educator. One characteristic of the outdoor education sub-culture is geographic and economic nomadism; contemporary outdoor educators not only travel great distances on canoe, ski, or hiking trips, but also, due the inherent seasonality of the work, across North America or even further abroad to take up new employment. For example, as an outdoor educator today, you might find yourself working as a canoe guide in Ontario for the summer and then as a backcountry ski guide in Alberta for the winter. Others might stick to one activity, necessitating raft guides to move south to the United States during winter, for example, in order to chase an "endless summer". Due to this seasonal nomadism, many contemporary outdoor educators feel at home in a variety of geographic settings.

I also find Welsch's (1999) perspective to be inherently European; he is not writing from the perspective of someone who has been colonized and seen their culture erode under

the forces of colonialism. From a historical perspective, I would argue that some cultures of the past were indeed quite different from one another. For example, pre-contact, the cultures of Europe were much more similar to each other than they were to, for example, North American Indigenous cultures. There is no question, however, that after contact, European and Indigenous cultures have influenced one another to varying degrees across North America (Saul, 2008). Perhaps a term such as "intercultural" can still be employed to describe the interaction of cultures that, at least in the past, *were* distinctly different from one another, while "transcultural" is more useful in a contemporary context.

Cajete (2000a) and Snow (1977/ 2005) also remind us that, while there are many similarities amongst Indigenous people in North America, there is also considerable diversity. Similar to the unique, but related cultures of Europe, Indigenous North American cultures share many commonalities in worldview, cultural norms, and other characteristics, but also differ greatly in other ways. While generalities can be drawn about North American Indigenous cultures, indicating the precise tribal and regional origins of the material presented whenever possible helps to avoid "pan-Indian" over-generalizations. Saul (2008) suggests that embracing and working within this diversity is one the strong traditions that Canada has inherited from our Aboriginal predecessors.

Welsch (1999) addresses these kinds of concerns when he clarifies that transculturality is not intended to homogenize or globalize out of existence all cultures of the past. Instead he proposes that it provides the opportunity for "new diversity". He states that:

> A new type of diversity takes shape: the diversity of different cultures and life-forms, each arising from transcultural permeations … The transcultural webs are, in short, woven with different threads, and in different manner … Transcultural networks … have some things in common while differing in others, showing overlaps and distinctions at the same time … No longer complying with

> geographical or national stipulations, but following pure cultural interchange processes. (p. 9-10)

While I appreciate Welsh's optimism here for the potential of new cultural phenomena to occur, liberated from the shackles of historical monoculturalism, I disagree with his assertion that we must no longer comply with geographical stipulations. From an ecological and bioregional perspective, I find this troubling. As contemporary human beings, we still require physical sustenance from somewhere and, I believe, a sense of being at home some*where*. Despite being able to travel around the world by airplane in a single day and communicate instantly with people in distant lands, we are not merely particles floating in space, only interacting with each other, regardless of our ecological and geographical surroundings.

Nevertheless, there is an alluring promise of hybrid harmony in a transcultural approach. If we were to interpret transculturalism on a regional level, I think that it holds great promise—as bioregional scholars (e.g. Dodge, 1981, McGinnis, 1999) suggest, would it not be ideal to see people in different regions embracing a collective culture developed in response to their unique cultural and geographical landscapes? The ecological benefits of such an approach are undeniable; for example, if more of us were to support local agriculture and harvesting, less fossil fuels would be burned transporting food to our area. Arguably less tangible, but equally important, benefits would also arise in phenomena such as increased community participation, transcultural cooperation and the development of a collective sense of place.

The region where I currently reside, under the watchful eye of Nanabijou, the Sleeping Giant, on the western shores of Kichigami, also known as Lake Superior, is an example of area that already has a strong regional culture based on an eclectic mix of

original cultures (Scandinavian, Italian, Scottish, French, Ukranian, Anishnaabe, and Métis) brought together by a rugged and isolated landscape. Here in Thunder Bay we have several farmers' markets that are well attended and many people still value things like local food, picking berries, hunting, and fishing. The various founding cultures have intermarried and actively share their traditions and practices with each other, resulting in a unique regional métissage. This is not to say that racism and prejudice do not exist; our local news often carries stories on incidents of racism, especially towards Aboriginal people. For example, an elementary school aide was recently suspended after she cut the hair of an Aboriginal boy, without his family's permission, who had been growing it for ceremonial reasons (CBC, 2009). However, despite ongoing incidents of cultural ignorance and prejudice, I do believe that this region provides an interesting example of regional transculturalism. There is most certainly a unique "feel" to the sociocultural landscape here that eco-logically extends south across the arbitrary US-Canada border to northern Minnesota. As someone with eclectic ethnic roots who has travelled widely and settled far from my original home, I can relate to Welsch's (1999) supposition that:

> Transcultural identities comprehend a cosmopolitan side, but also a side of local affiliation … Transcultural people combine both. Of course, the local side can today still be determined by ethnic belonging or the community in which one grew up. But it doesn't have to be. People can make their own choice with respect to their affiliations. Their actual homeland can be far away from their original homeland. (p. 11)

Welsch (1999, p. 7) also reminds us that:

> Conceptions of culture are not just descriptive concepts, but operative concepts. Our understanding of culture is an active factor in our cultural life. If one tells us (as the old concept of culture did) that culture is to be a homogeneity event, then we practice the required coercions and exclusions. We seek to satisfy the task we are set - and will be successful in so doing. Whereas, if one tells us or subsequent generations that culture ought to incorporate the foreign and do justice to transcultural components, then we will set about this task, and then corresponding

> feats of integration will belong to the real structure of our culture. The `reality' of culture is, in this sense, always a consequence too of our conceptions of culture.

Welsch's comments above are especially important for us to consider from an educational standpoint; as educators we have the privilege and power to influence our students through consciously or unconsciously relating our own our own worldviews. As Welsch asserts:

> One must therefore be aware of the responsibility which one takes on in propagandizing concepts of this type … Propagandizing the old concept of culture and its subsequent forms has today become irresponsible; better chances are found on the side of the concept of transculturality. (p. 7)

Welsch's (1999) concept of transculturalism strongly relates strongly to métissage, the focus of the following section.

From Bricolage to Métissage

Similar to Welsch (1999), German-Canadian scholar and educator Wolf-Michael Roth (2008) also challenges the classical European notion of pure monocultures. His work explores the related concepts of *bricolage* and métissage examines the experiences and identities of contemporary science educators and students. Roth comments:

> Cultural bricolage, taking from here and there to make do, producing not only new, heterogeneous, creolized forms of knowledgeability and practice but also producing hybrid identities in a process of continuous métissage. This métissage occurs in all parts of a society that—such as Canada—values multiculturalism and leads to new cultural phenomena. (p. 894)

Similar to Welsch's (1999) assertion that most cultures around the world are already *transcultural*, Roth proposes that due to the ever-increasing *diaspora* of many cultural groups, many people already live in a "métis" way, drawing from their home cultures and traditions, as well as those of their new homes. He notes:

> Ongoing globalization leads to an increasing scattering of cultural groups into other cultural groups where they the latter continue to be affiliated with one another thereby forming diasporic identities. Diasporic identities emerge from a process of

> cultural bricolage that leads to cultural métissage and therefore hybridity and heterogeneity. (p. 891)

Roth (2008) also makes the interesting suggestion that students raised in their "own" culture may still experience diaspora when they are placed in new educational settings such as science or mathematics classrooms that require them to view the world through foreign lenses. He states:

> *Diaspora* is a concept, therefore, that allows us to theorize not only the experiences deriving from transnational migration and how these mediate science learning but also the experiences of native students in a culture foreign to the one they experience at home. (p. 902)

Roth provides the example of a devoutly religious student confronted by a scientific worldview who feels confused and torn between the conflicting teachings of his family and church and those of his government-sponsored science teacher. Roth also explores the experiences of junior-high French immersion science students. He notes that these students are in a double-diasporic situation—confronted not only with the new "language" of science, but also having to communicate among themselves and with their teacher in their second, or even third, language. Roth's observations helped me to understand some of my own experiences as a French immersion student; I can clearly recall challenging, but ultimately enriching, moments when I was required to learn new concepts in math or science classes. Conversely, I remember feeling out of place when attending English-language math and science classes later in high school and university because all of my foundational vocabulary was French. However, while these situations were challenging at the time, I believe that they were ultimately enriching because I am now capable of understanding complex concepts in either language. These experiences early in life also gave me the confidence to study other languages, such as Japanese and Ojibwe, in subsequent years.

Roth (2008) comments that we can all experience these kinds of diasporic moments whenever we are placed in uncomfortable or unfamiliar situations and advocates for the learning and increased awareness that result from such experiences. He suggests that it is exactly this kind of diasporic thinking that is required to solve today's complex issues and challenges. He notes:

> Real-world problems (those outside a test tube) are so far ranging and complex that they require the métissage of resources from ranges of domains heretofore isolated within disciplines … we need individuals who can live a diasporic life and identity, employing the resources at hand to find solutions to problems that exceed the grasp of any single regional ontology. (p. 914)

Pieterse (2001) also proposes that métissage problematizes cultural boundaries—forcing people to re-examine their conceptions of culture and cultural identity. Similar to Welsch (1999), he comments that this kind of expanded understanding of cultural identity can also lead to a broader ecological identity. Pieterse (1996) also suggests that hybridity disrupts and confuses racist notions by blurring cultural and racial boundaries. Similar to Zembylas and Avraamidou (2008), Pieterse and Welsch (1999) relate that, despite negative connotations of racial hybridity in Western history, in more recent times hybridity has increasingly been viewed as positive. Pieterse describes hybridity as a form of post-modern subversion that can embody "a resurrection of subjugated knowledges" (p. 1393). However, he cautions against superficial hybridity, or "multiculturalism lite", and uses the metaphor of the mixing of words versus grammar in linguistic métissage: word hybridity would be a simple mixing of words to spice up a language, whereas grammatical hybridity would involve a deeply-seated blending of the actual *structure* of a language.

Pieterse proposes that hybridity involves recognizing the "in-betweens" and "interstices" (p. 238) and pushes us beyond false dualistic conceptions of culture and race.

According to Pieterse, this requires "collective liminality, collective awareness" (p. 239) similar to the Trickster knowledge celebrated in many Indigenous cultures.

Roth (2008, p. 913) recognizes the "symbolic violence" experienced by minority and Indigenous students in classrooms around the world. He comments that science education is especially guilty in this regard:

> The violence does not come from the fact that they are different—difference exists inside White middle-class culture—but from the fact that enactments of their (inherently hybridized) cultural forms are repressed, punished, thereby leading to the (tacit, acknowledged) experience of oppression. More so, within White middle-class culture, legitimized, legitimating, and legitimate scientific discourses in particular— as scientists and science educators define them in their curriculum and Standards documents—are constituted and considered as superior to any hybrid discourse. Although science educators often give lip service to acknowledging the (cultural) pre- school and out-of-school experiences of students, they do so on the presupposition that it is a lesser form of knowing than the one to be inculcated. (p. 913)

Roth's comments on the tensions between Western Science and Indigenous epistemologies lead us to the following section that examines current issues and practices in Indigenous science and environmental education.

Traditional Ecological Knowledge: Indigenous Science?

As has been discussed previously, a growing number of scholars have recently advocated for the development of the "Third Space" between Western and Indigenous ecological approaches (e.g. Barnhardt and Kawagley, 2005; Brandt, 2008; Roth, 2008; Zembylas and Avraamidou, 2008). Brandt (2008) comments:

> I am convinced that these locations exist within campus classrooms, in faculty offices, or in the corners of campus. *Locations of possibility* are those discursive spaces in which students and their instructors value connected knowing, acknowledge each other's history, culture, and knowledge. (p. 718)

These kinds of statements are inspiring, but what does enacting them in practice entail? Also, is Indigenous knowledge "science"? What are the similarities and differences between Western and Indigenous ecological knowledge and philosophies? Also, what issues do we need to be aware of before attempting to blend or integrate Western and Indigenous knowledge? The following section explores these kinds of questions.

Anishnaabe scholar and activist Winona LaDuke (2002) emphasizes the ancient roots of Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and argues for its inclusion in contemporary ecological discourse:

> Traditional ecological knowledge is the culturally and spiritually based way in which indigenous people relate to their ecosystems. This knowledge is founded on spiritual-cultural instructions from "time immemorial" and on generations of careful observation within an ecosystem of continuous residence. I believe that this knowledge represents the clearest empirically based system for resource management and ecosystem protection in North America … Frankly, these native societies have existed as the only example of sustainable living in North America for more than 300 years. (p. 78)

However, other Indigenous scholars express concern about how TEK might be included in mainstream dialogue and action. Describing the somewhat tense relationship between Western Science and Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), Anishnaabe scholar Leanne Simpson (2004) also states:

> Over the past fifteen years Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) has received much attention in the United Nations–sanctioned forums concerned with biodiversity and sustainable development, and this has sparked the curiosity of scientists working in these areas. Those aspects of TEK that are most similar to data generated by the scientific method are seen as a potential resource, holding answers to the environmental problems afflicting modern colonizing societies, while the spiritual foundations of IK and the Indigenous values and worldviews that support it are of less interest often because they exist in opposition to the worldview and values of the dominating societies. (pp. 373-374)

Simpson notes that this interest in TEK was initially met with enthusiasm in some Indigenous circles:

> Initially, many Indigenous people viewed this new interest with optimism and hope, seeing an opportunity to indigenize environmental thinking and policy to the betterment of both Indigenous and non- Indigenous Peoples and to advance the agenda of decolonization and liberation. (p. 374)

However, Simpson suggests that many efforts to integrate TEK and Western Science have failed due to the perpetuation of colonial attitudes by well-meaning Western scientists. She suggests that:

> This has not gone unnoticed by Indigenous Peoples, and interactions around TEK and resource management, conservation, sustainable development, and biodiversity have become important sites of resistance and mobilization for Indigenous Knowledge holders and political leaders advocating for Indigenous control over Indigenous territories and Indigenous Knowledge and promoting a decolonized and just approach to the coexistence of Indigenous and non-Indigenous nations.

Simpson also relates her frustration with, what she describes as a continued lack of acknowledgement by Western scientists of the validity of TEK. She relates that much of her own research has been discredited as non-scientific and barred from publication in Western science journals. Simpson notes that mainstream interest in TEK stops when sociocultural questions are raised relating to, for example, *why* it is currently endangered (colonialism). She suggests that Western scientists are reluctant to acknowledge the sociological, spiritual and cultural aspects of TEK. Simpson (2004) argues that:

> Removing Indigenous Knowledge from a political sphere only reinforces the denial of the holocaust of the Americas and trains a generation of scientists to see contemporary Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous Knowledge as separate from our colonial past, as an untapped contemporary resource for their own exploitation and use. This serves as a reminder that it is not enough to recover certain aspects of Indigenous Knowledge systems that are palatable to the players in the colonial project. We must be strategic about how we recover and where we focus our efforts in order to ensure that the foundations of the system are protected and the inherently Indigenous processes for the continuation of Indigenous Knowledge are maintained. (p. 376)

Other Indigenous scholars also argue for the recognition of TEK as a valid form of science. Eminent Blackfoot scholar, Leroy Little Bear (2000a, p. xi) states:

> If science is a search for reality and if science is a search for knowledge at the leading edges of the humanly knowable, then there are "sciences" other than the Western science of measurement. One of those other sciences is Native American science … In order to appreciate and "come to know" in the Native American science way, one has to understand the culture/ worldview/ paradigm of Native American people. (p. x)

Euro-Canadian scholar Gloria Snively (2009) supports Little Bear's view. She suggests that various forms of "science" exist in all cultures, reminds us that the original Latin root for science (*scientia*) simply means "knowledge" (p. 33), and states that "Indigenous science is an interpretation of how the world works" (p. 34).

Attempting to allay the concerns of those who question the validity of "Indigenous Science", Kincheloe and Steinberg (2008) state:

> In this context, the Western analyst confronts the need to reassess the criteria for judging knowledge claims in light of the problems inherent in calling upon a transcultural, universal faculty of reason. Questioning and even rejecting absolute and transcendent Western reason does not mean that we are mired forever in a hell of relativism. (p. 137)

They describe the promise of what they term "transformative science":

> Once individuals come to believe that Western science is not the only legitimate knowledge producer, then maybe a conversation can be opened about how different forms of research and knowledge production take issues of locality, cultural values, and social justice seriously … The goal of such a learning process is to produce a transformative science, an approach to knowledge production that synthesizes ways of knowing expressed by the metonymies of hand, brain, and heart … A transformative scientist understands that any science is a social construction, produced in a particular culture in a specific historical era. (p. 153)

I believe that the most important aspect of this conversation is the recognition of TEK as a valid way of knowing and understanding the world without forcing it conform to

the norms and values of Western science. Snively (2009) and Little Bear (2000) argue that TEK is its own form of "science"; as Snively suggests, it is useful to distinguish *Indigenous* Science from *Western* Science as they most certainly descend from different cultural and methodological origins, but, the root meaning of "science" is simply knowledge of how the world works. While Western Science has come to denote a prescribed empirical process to approaching problems (e.g. Hypothesis, testing, results, conclusions, further testing …), Indigenous Science has its roots in a wider understanding of the world that includes disciplined observation of Nature, for example, but that is also enhanced through deeper spiritual and philosophical elements that extend to ontologies of daily life (Barnhardt and Kawagley, 2005; Simpson, 2004).

Barnhardt and Kawagley (2005) provide the illuminating Venn diagram below to compare and contrast Western and Indigenous approaches in search of common ground. From their diagram we can see that there are indeed many similarities between Western science and Indigenous knowledge of Nature. Concepts such as a unified Universe, personal qualities such as perseverance, curiosity, and honesty, empirical observation of nature, and a desire to understand the behaviour and patterns of plants, animals and other beings and elements.

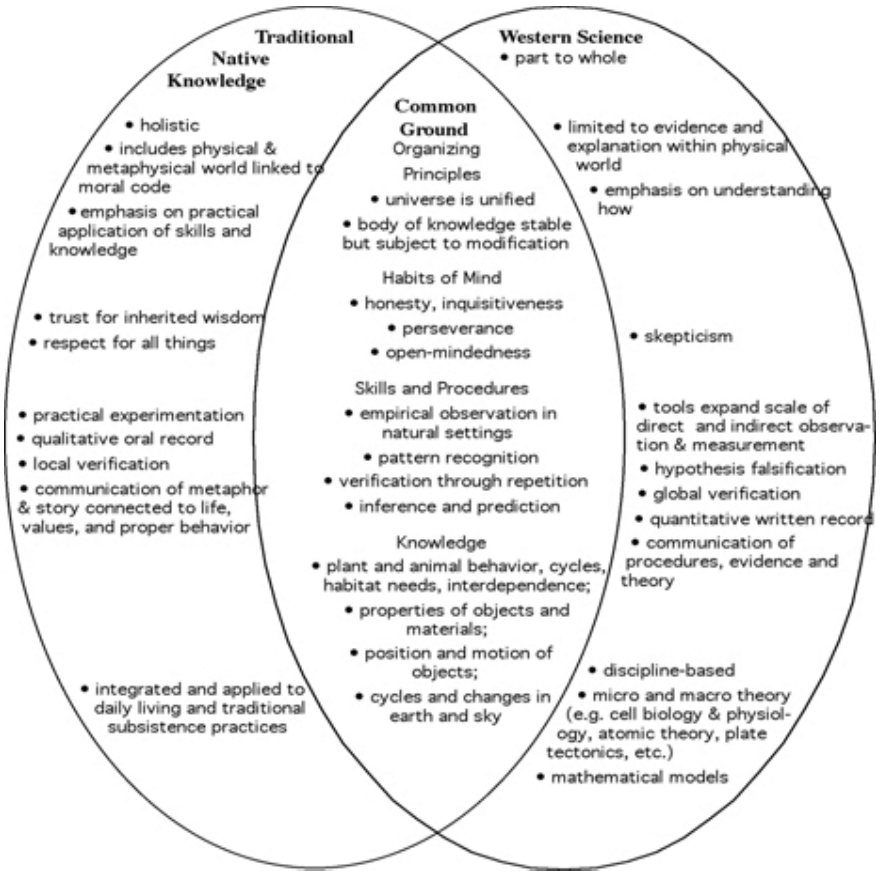

Figure 3. Finding common ground between Western science and Indigenous knowledge (Barnhardt and Kawagley, 2005).

Differences include Indigenous trust in inherited wisdom contrasted with Western skepticism, Indigenous holism compared to Western compartmentalism, the Indigenous belief in the link between the metaphysical and physical worlds as opposed to the Western science focus on the physical world only, and the Indigenous tradition of seeking understanding in order to apply it to daily living versus the Western science value of seeking understanding for its own sake (Barnhardt and Kawagley, 2005).

The following section addresses perspectives on and issues related to engaging with Indigenous knowledge.

Engaging With Indigenous Knowledge

Conflicts over the collection and use of Indigenous knowledge have caused considerable debate over the past century. Academic fields such as anthropology and pharmacology have come into conflict with Indigenous peoples over intellectual property rights and the misrepresentation of cultures (Cajete, 1999, 2000a; Lassiter, 2000; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). As a result, Indigenous people are often hesitant to share any knowledge with outsiders for fear of its misuse for profit or misrepresentation. As Cajete (1999) relates:

> It is important to move beyond the idealization and patronization of Indigenous knowledge, which often leads to marginalization of the most profound Indigenous ways of knowing … Indigenous people have been touted as the spiritual leaders of the environmental movement. Such a designation is more symbolic than tangible … Still, many environmental educators … [are] paralleling the traditional practices of Indigenous societies. This is appropriate since Indigenous people around the world have much to share and much to give. The same peoples also continue to be among the most exploited and oppressed, and are usually the people who suffer the greatest loss of self and culture when dealing with various economic … and educational schemes. (p. 19)

So, how can non-Indigenous people respectfully learn from and with Indigenous people? Root (2009) suggests that an important point to understand is that there are four different forms of Indigenous knowledge: traditional and sacred, revealed (through ceremony, dreams, and visions), empirical, and contemporary. Of these four the kinds that *might* be shared publicly include empirical and contemporary. The other forms of knowledge are often restricted to family or community members who have earned the right to that knowledge. This is an important characteristic for non-Indigenous people to understand.

Another key issue introduced by Mack *et al.* (in press) is the fundamental importance of authentically integrating Western and Indigenous knowledge in educational programs. They suggest that:

> By integrating multiple ways of knowing into science classrooms, students will learn the value of traditional ways of knowing and Native language, learn to utilize a conceptual ecological perspective, and acknowledge that learning and understanding is part of a complex system that includes student experience, culture, and context, as well as mainstream materials that are taught in the classroom. (p. 4-5)

While these kinds of statements seem initially promising, leading Indigenous scholars such as Marie Battiste (1998; 2005), Leanne Simpson (2002; 2004) and Mary Hermes (2000) contest the integration of Indigenous knowledge *into* previously established Western-style educational programs or curricula. Battiste (1998; 2005), Simpson (2004) and Hermes (2000) all suggest that, in order to avoid the subjugation or "watering down" of Indigenous knowledge, Indigenous educational programs must be developed from an Indigenous perspective *first* before considering how they might meet be tailored to meet Western standards, rather than the opposite.

Kincheloe and Steinberg (2008) acknowledge that engaging with these kinds of issues is a challenging task for educators:

> In this critical multilogical context, the purpose of indigenous education and the production of indigenous knowledge does not involve "saving" indigenous people but helping construct conditions that allow for indigenous self-sufficiency while learning from the vast storehouse of indigenous knowledges that provide compelling insights into all domains of human endeavour … Teachers and scholars informed by this critical multilogicality understand these concepts. Such educators and researchers work to extend their students' cognitive abilities, as they create situations where students come to view the world and disciplinary knowledge from as many frames of reference as possible. (p. 135-139)

These issues will also be discussed further in the methodology section of this study in the following Chapter. As Cajete (2000a) concludes, in order to conduct respectful

research and education, “an equal playing field is essential for exchange of information between practitioners of Indigenous and Western science” (p. 8). The following section explores initiatives in Canada and beyond our borders that are responding to the concepts discussed above, engaging with both Western and Indigenous knowledge and philosophies in science and environmental education.

Examples of Contemporary Programs

Adams, Luitel, Alfonso, and Taylor (2008) argue that:

> There comes a time in the development of theoretical perspectives … when one is entitled to ask for a demonstration of their practical viability in assisting resolution of problems, dilemmas and challenges confronting teachers and students. (p. 1002)

The same authors also suggest that, “one of the most important roles of educational theory is to help radically reconceptualize” (p. 1002) the taken for granted assumptions of modern science and environmental education.

Given the previous discussion of the search for a deeper understanding of concepts such as métissage, transculturalism, and the Third Space mentality, what are their practical applications in contemporary science and environmental education? This is an emerging concept that has been explored and employed recently by a growing number of scholars and educators. Alternately naming their programs “Integrative Science” (Hatcher and Bartlett, 2009a), “Cross-Cultural Science” (Snively, 2009), “Two-Eyed Seeing” (Hatcher, Bartlett, Marshall and Marshall, 2009), or “Bridging the Gap” (Kazina and Swayze, 2009), the collective aim of these practitioners is to embody the Third Space in educational practice. Third Space approaches are often interdisciplinary, providing opportunities to integrate science, social studies, humanities, art, health and physical education into one unit

or lesson. My own experiences as an outdoor, environmental, and science educator in both formal and informal learning environments resonate with this approach.

Roth (2008) also notes that Indigenous students attending Western-style schools experience educational diaspora on a daily basis. He proposes that these students are inherently transcultural as they are forced from a young age to navigate unfamiliar cultural terrain. Some contemporary educational programs are designed to meet the needs of these students specifically, providing them with culturally sensitive and enriching experiences (Takano, 2005). In the following I begin with a discussion of programs designed specifically for Indigenous students and end with exploration of those designed for students from all backgrounds. International examples are also provided.

Indigenous Environmental Education Programs

Leanne Simpson's (2002) description of her experiences as an Indigenous environmental educator in Canada is one of the most comprehensive descriptions of Indigenous environmental education available. Based on her extensive experience with various programs, Simpson relates several key features that she believes should be part of any Indigenous environmental education program: supporting decolonization, grounding programs in Indigenous philosophies of education, allowing space for the discussion and comparison of Indigenous and Western epistemologies, emphasizing Indigenous ways of teaching and learning, creating opportunities to connect with the land, employing Indigenous instructors as role models, involving Elders as experts, and using Indigenous languages when possible. Simpson's recommendations provided the framework for my master's study (Lowan, 2007a, 2008, 2009) that explored Outward Bound Canada's Giwaykiwin program for Aboriginal youth through a lens of decolonization.

Another study that I first encountered in my master's work was Takano's (2005) description of a community-developed land-based cultural education program based in Igloolik, Nunavut. Takano, a researcher of Japanese descent, participated in Paariaqtuqtut, a 400 km journey through the community's ancestral territory in May 2002. Paariaqtuqtut means "meeting on the trail" in Inuktitut and was developed by a group of community members and Elders. Paariaqtuqtut aims to connect young people with cultural skills and teachings in a land-based context.

Takano (2005) found that the community members in Igloolik were concerned that many youth were losing connections with their land and culture. Those interviewed observed that this leads to youth feeling lost between two worlds, disconnected from their community and culture, yet unprepared to live in the Western world. Takano also recorded the experiences of several participants who felt that Paariaqutuqtut had helped them to reconnect with their Land and culture.

Barnhardt and Kawagley (2005) also describe the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative (AKRSI), a program developed in 1995 in consultation with Indigenous Alaskan Elders. The intent of the program was to enhance Indigenous students' experiences in the formal school system by integrating local Indigenous values and knowledge into school curricula across Alaska. Barnhardt and Kawagley report significantly improved educational experiences and academic success for participating students. While the AKRSI was originally designed for Indigenous students, it has since been employed to students from all cultural backgrounds across Alaska. As Barnhardt and Kawagley note:

> By documenting the integrity of locally situated cultural knowledge and skills and critiquing the learning processes by which such knowledge is transmitted, acquired, and utilized, Alaska Native and other Indigenous people engage in a form of self-determination that will not only benefit themselves, but will also open opportunities

> to better understand learning in all its manifestations, thereby informing educational practices for the benefit of all. (p. 20)

The AKRSI now serves as a catalytic model for other programs across North America. The following section explores other such programs that reach out to not only Indigenous students, but those from other cultural backgrounds as well.

Intercultural Environmental Education Programs

The Integrative Science program at Cape Breton University employs the Mi'kmaq concept of *Toqwa'tu'kl kjijitaqnn* or, "Two-Eyed Seeing" to combine Western Science with traditional Mi'kmaq knowledge and philosophies of Nature (Hatcher et al., 2009). The Integrative Science program's aim is "concentrating on common ground and respecting differences" to teach "both systems side by side" (p. 3). Bringing together Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Elders, educators, and students, the Integrative Science program provides an interesting example of an integrated approach at the post-secondary level.

The leaders of the Integrative Science program (Hatcher et al. 2009) suggest that at certain times (e.g. measuring fish populations) Western science and mathematical approaches are best used while at other times (e.g. teaching students trout behaviour, feeding habits, and how to catch them) an experiential Mi'kmaq approach is most suitable. Hatcher et al. suggest that "In weaving back and forth between knowledges, Two-Eyed Seeing avoids a clash or "domination and assimilation" of knowledges" (p .5). They also propose that the Integrative Science or Two-Eyed seeing approach provides "fertile ground" (p. 4) for interdisciplinary educational projects.

Hatcher and Bartlett (2009a) describe a series of lessons that they often employ on local birds. Using a Two-Eyed Seeing approach, they introduce students to the various

birds of their area through a combination of experiential and classroom-based activities drawing from various fields of Western science along with local Mi'kmaq legends and knowledge. Their lessons include everything from observations of birds at bird feeders, discussions of the physics of flight, local Mi'kmaq beliefs and knowledge about different birds, and exercises on storytelling and the oral tradition. They suggest that their "classroom mirrors the world outside" (p. 7) and also that, "Integrative Science is underlain by … an intimate, respectful relationship between the scientist, the natural world and different worldviews" (p. 9).

Hatcher and Bartlett (2009b) also provide a clear example of a Two-Eyed Seeing lesson that teaches students about local medicinal plants using a combination of Mi'kmaq ethnobotanical knowledge of the healing properties of tamarack and red spruce and chemical testing for the presence of Vitamin C. The lesson culminates with the students preparing a drinkable tea.

Métis educators Kazina and Swayze (2009; Swayze, 2009) also describe their program, "Bridging the Gap", that serves inner-city youth in Winnipeg. Bridging the Gap aims to impart a sense of ecological stewardship to its elementary-aged students through a combination of Western science, experiential, and Aboriginal approaches. Kazina and Swayze (2009) describe their two main lesson approaches: The first involves an introductory talk by an Elder; students and teachers alike are introduced to important cultural protocols such as how to properly approach an Elder: providing a small offering tobacco beforehand as a traditional request for the sharing of knowledge. Kazina and Swayze suggest that involving Elders is a comfortable way for non-Aboriginal educators to respectfully introduce Aboriginal concepts to their students. Following the introductory Elder's talk, students are taken on an interpretive hike where they get hands-on experience

and learn traditional protocols for activities such as picking medicinal plants and berries. The lesson culminates with the students recording their observations in a journal.

Another lesson begins again with an introductory discussion with an Elder on the Aboriginal concept of “All My Relations”, the interconnectedness of all things (Durst, 2004; Pepper and White, 1996; Simpson, 2004). Students then work in groups to create “habitat wheels” (see Figure 4 below) that illustrate the various needs of animals and how they fit into their respective ecosystems. The Medicine Wheel, a common symbol used by many Aboriginal peoples to represent universal interconnection (Cajete, 1994, 1999; Snow, 1977/ 2005), is used as the base framework for the habitat wheel. This cyclical, interconnected model contrasts with the common hierarchical Western concept of the food chain or pyramid that I remember from my early school days.

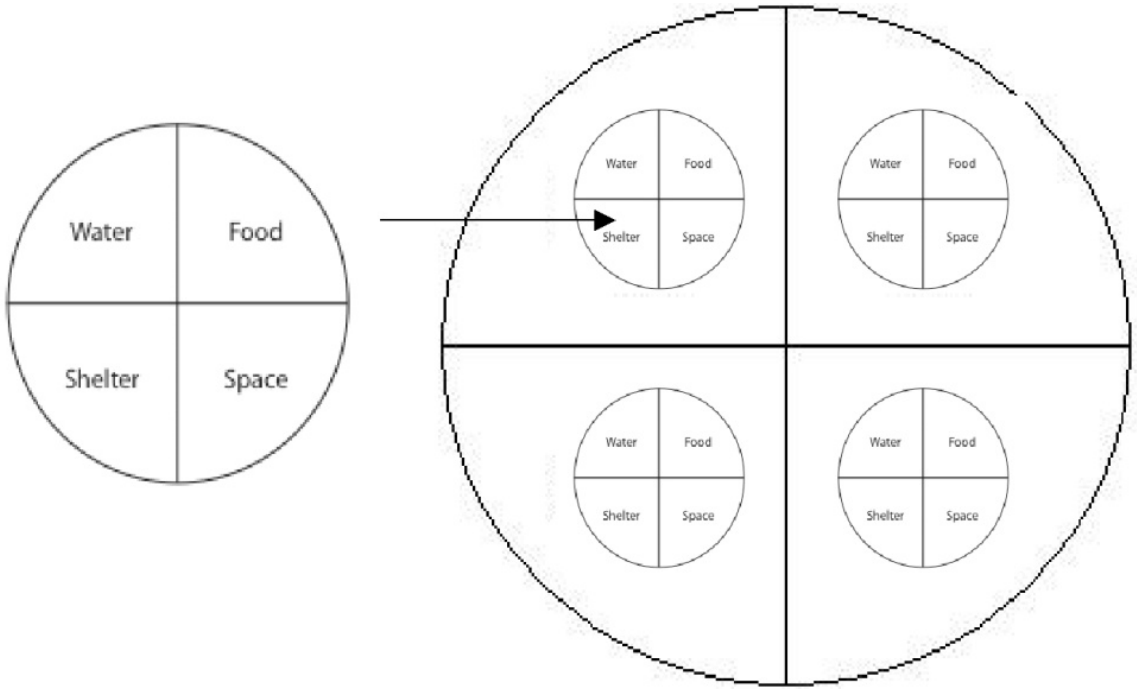

Figure 4. Building a habitat wheel based on the Medicine Wheel (Swayze, 2011).

Gloria Snively (2009), a professor at the University of Victoria, also describes her own "cross-cultural science" approach. She states:

> Cross-cultural science education is a topic that either polarizes or numbs people depending on their understanding of the concept and their agenda for science education. Those who think there is only one right answer and one definition of science may think that cross-cultural science education is fundamentally flawed and a waste of time. Those who tend to believe that we can approach questions from different angles and starting points and still come up with workable solutions usually think that cross-cultural science is imperative. (p. 33)

Snively works with students from university to grade school level. Her approach to creating a Third Space for students includes challenging them to solve a problem (e.g. constructing a fishing net) using only their creativity and local resources. Once they have completed their task, she reveals the local indigenous technology that was historically developed in response to the same problem and uses this as an entry point for discussion around the meaning of "science". Snively closes by saying:

> Cross-cultural science education is not merely throwing in an Aboriginal story, putting together a diorama of Aboriginal fishing methods, or even acknowledging the contributions Aboriginal peoples have made to medicine. Most importantly, cross-cultural science education is not anti-Western science. Its purpose is not to silence voices, but to give voice to cultures not usually heard and to recognize and celebrate all ideas and contributions. (p. 38)

There are also inspiring examples of international Indigenous outdoor and environmental education programs. For example, For example, David Lertzman (2002) of the University of Calgary and Thom Henley (1989) describe the Rediscovery program, a global family of outdoor and environmental education programs based on local Indigenous traditions. Henley (1989), one the program's original founders, states, "Rediscovery brings together people from many different racial backgrounds … when people from different races have the opportunity to talk to one another, to work and play together, then inevitably they begin to learn about each other's lives and cultures" (p. 35). Rediscovery programs

have been founded across North America and around the world (e.g. Wales, Thailand, Bolivia, Guyana, Siberia, Hong Kong) in various forms. Some are very small and focus on one particular Aboriginal community while others such as Ghost River Rediscovery (Lertzman, 2002) in Canada are large, year-round programs.

In Aoteaoroa/ New Zealand, Hawaiian Nalani Wilson (2008) from the University of Otago leads traditional Polynesian waka ama (canoe) voyages with Maori and non-Maori New Zealanders. Wilson reports that the inter-indigenous context of these voyages facilitates rich intercultural ecological, metaphysical, and epistemological discussions and experiences for students and leaders alike.

Yuko Oguri (2010) of Kagoshima University in southern Japan also reports on a "living village" developed in Minamata, a small city famous for its remarkable recovery from widespread mercury poisoning in the 1950's, designed to revive, preserve, and share traditional farming, fishing, and forest skills, knowledge, and beliefs. Oguri reports that the citizens of Minamata have been surprised by the interest shown by people from larger urban areas who now regularly visit their "living village" to learn traditional skills and philosophies that have been lost in other areas of Japan.

One key experience that I have had was at an Aboriginal high school in northwestern Ontario. I had the opportunity to spend six weeks working with students from grade nine to twelve in an integrated traditional Land skills program. The philosophy of the school was to simultaneously impart traditional Ojibwe and Oji-Cree language, knowledge, and philosophies to the students while enhancing their Western science, math, social studies, and language skills. The hope of the teachers was that students would feel an enhanced sense of pride in their own culture as well as feel prepared to venture to the South for post-secondary schooling.

Our classes were often spent entirely outdoors in the surrounding boreal forest under the expert guidance of two local Elders. Students learned traditional land skills such as how to build shelters using local materials, make fire from various sources, set animal traps and fishing nets, and many other valuable lessons. Throughout the process students were encouraged to film and photograph their projects for final written and web-based reports (for examples, go to: http://www.nnec.on.ca/pffnhs/traditional-activities).

Appendix A is an example of a lesson I implemented with these students. First, the students selected a plant from the surrounding area and documented it by harvesting (after offering tobacco), drawing, or photography. Their next challenge was to learn the names for the plant in their Indigenous language (Ojibwe or Oji-Cree), Latin, and English. Students then researched the possible uses of the plant. As the lesson plan indicates, legitimate research sources included formal Western-style books and resources as well as local knowledge holders or Elders. This approach emphasizes the equal value of both ways of knowing and gathering information. It fully legitimizes Aboriginal knowledge alongside Western sources. This lesson also provided a great opportunity to discuss current issues such as the misuse and appropriation of Indigenous plant knowledge for profit by non-Indigenous corporations (Simpson, 2004).

The programs described in this section embody a Third Space approach to science and/ or environmental education. A Third Space approach challenges traditional Western academic boundaries, pushing the limits of “science” while embracing a transcultural or Métis mentality. Snively (2009) suggests that this means more than simply including the odd Aboriginal fact or example, it requires a collective movement into a Third Space where all cultural forms of “science” or knowledge are considered equally and implemented as is appropriate in the local context. Roth (2008) highlights the need for further research into

the facilitation of Third Space thinking in contemporary science and environmental education. Zembylas and Avraamidou (2008) also recommend deeper inquiry into making science and environmental education more socially conscious and locally responsive.

As previously mentioned, while there is a growing body of literature on intercultural environmental education in Canada, no comprehensive studies to date have focused on the experiences and competencies of intercultural environmental educators and the deeper societal implications of their work. Who are these “border crossers” (Hones, 1999; Nguyen, 2005; Pieterse, 2001)? What led them to their chosen vocation? What makes them effective? And how might they be reshaping Canadian ecological identity? Why is this important? As will be discussed in the following chapters, these are the kinds of questions that I addressed in this study with contemporary educators.

CHAPTER FIVE:

TOWARDS A METHODOLOGICAL MÉTISSAGE:

CONFESSIONS OF A MÉTISSEUR

During the first year of my doctoral studies I had the opportunity to participate in a unique family gathering; My mom invited me to join her and five other family members for an afternoon of sharing stories and exploring the meaning of refining and preserving our family history. Four generations of our family were represented—a great aunt, a cousin from my mom's generation, an aunt, my sister and her eight month old son, my mom and myself.

My Mom had recently revived a family history project with renewed vigour; over the past ten to fifteen years, various family members have taken turns digging into the past, trying to expand and clarify our family tree which, until recently, remained barren beyond two or three generations. My mom was specifically interested in learning more about her paternal grandmother, a Métis woman that she never really knew, in order to enhance a book of creative fiction based on our family history that she is currently writing. I was happy to participate in the event as I have always had a keen interest in the history of both sides of my family. I also anticipated that the experience would provide me with a greater sense of family history and a foundation to clarify the direction of my doctoral research.

During our two-hour discussion I was privileged to listen to the stories shared by older relatives, occasionally interjecting with comments of my own or asking clarifying questions, but mainly just listening. We began the discussion using a tape recorder, but were soon asked to turn it off due to the highly sensitive and personal nature of many of the stories shared pertaining to people still living and present that day. I think that it was very important that we respected this request. As Kovach (2010) notes, all family and tribal stories and knowledge must be treated with deep respect; sometimes this means not sharing them publicly.

My mom has persevered in her genealogical quest over the past few years, encouraged by this family gathering and supported by various aunties, cousins, and my own work and research. Through the virtual power of the internet, she has travelled coast to coast from her home on Vancouver Island back to Alberta, her province of birth, on to Saskatchewan, the birthplace of my grandfather, and eventually all the way back to the Miramichi region of northern New Brunswick, where my grandfather's family originated before migrating to the prairies. My mom was able to access census records dating back to the eighteenth century and, with the assistance of local genealogists, trace our ancestors as they emerged and blended from the southern shores of the St. Lawrence River and the Gaspé peninsula in Québec, Scotland, England, and Mi'kmaq communities such as the Pabineau Reserve in New Brunswick.

I share this anecdote because, upon reflection, I've realized that my family has been modeling their own form of Métis research—a mix of oral consultation with Elders and other relatives as well as drawing on written documents and archives.

In the previous chapter, I discussed the related concepts of bricolage and métissage as they relate to cultural issues and concepts in science and environmental education.

Bricolage and métissage also deeply informed my methodological approach to this study—a combination of Western and Indigenous approaches to conducting interpretive narrative research grounded in place and ecological consciousness. Throughout the research process, I reflected upon these concepts, sought fresh literature, and attempted to clarify how they informed my methodology. This ongoing process of searching for and reflecting upon literature and the perspectives of research participants allowed me to better understand, clarify, and articulate methodological decisions that I had made intuitively in the earlier stages of the study. The following chapter outlines the *mélange* of methodologies that emerged to guide this study.

Bricolage as Research

Kathleen Berry (2006, p. 87) suggests that, "bricolage is fast becoming a key way of rethinking what counts as research and how to conduct research." She introduces the concept of bricolage as research by sharing an anecdote about an Acadian neighbour who is constantly at work using, "scraps of leftover wood … to create the most unique and charming birdhouses ... no two ever look the same" (p. 87). Berry notes that, like her neighbour's carpentry projects, engaging with bricolage as a research approach involves working "with 'bits and pieces' of theoretical, methodological and interpretive paradigms. It works with the scattered parts, overlaps and conflicts between paradigms" (p. 102). Shirley Steinberg (2006) also comments that:

> Bricolage involves taking research strategies from a variety of scholarly disciplines and traditions as they are needed in the unfolding context of the research situation. Such an action is pragmatic and strategic, demanding self-consciousness and awareness of context from the researcher. The bricoleur, the researcher who employs bricolage, must be able to orchestrate a plethora of diverse tasks. (p. 119)

I have come to realize that I too, acted as a bricoleur at certain stages of this study; a diversity of cultural and academic sources such as Western and Indigenous theorists, historians, scientists, educators, and interpretive qualitative researchers from around the world deeply influenced my approach. As Berry suggests, I engaged in an ongoing "struggle to avoid a monological, single path or method" (p. 89). Steinberg (2006) also notes that:

> Bricolage does not draw upon diverse theoretical/ methodological traditions simply for the sake of diversity. Rather, it uses the different approaches to inform and critique each other … Such an interpretive process subverts the tendency of knowledge producers to slip into the position that their interpretation is the "right one". (p. 120)

As Steinberg suggests, the methodological diversity inherent in this study was not selected at random due to a lack of organization or focus; it was a carefully considered, dynamic, and intuitive attempt to express and engage with a diversity of voices in order to foster rich and respectful conversations between myself, the literature, and the research participants. Steinberg (2006) also comments on the inherently activist nature of interpretive research approaches like bricolage:

> The purpose of research as bricolage involves providing new knowledge, insights, ideas, practices, structures that move towards social justice, inclusiveness, diversity, plurality and so forth. (p. 90)

Berry (2006, p. 88) comments that as a methodological bricoleur you, "don't know in advance what shape the … (text/ knowledge/ research) will take." However, she also suggests that, "bricoleurs, both novice and seasoned, gradually see the emergence of new knowledge, insights and connections." (p. 111). I experienced the process described by Berry in this study; as I delved further into the literature and engaged in conversations with ten research participants, I gained progressively deeper insights into the theory and practice of intercultural environmental education. This process is documented in the following two

chapters (six and seven) where ten interview-based mini biographies are presented and analysed respectively.

While the concept of bricolage denotes the spontaneous, but calculated, cobbling together of various elements, resulting in a dynamic, but unified whole (Berry, 2006; Roth, 2008; Steinberg, 2006), Roth suggests that, in cultural terms, bricolage often leads to métissage, a term implying a mix or blend so complete that the parts can no longer be extracted from the whole. Extending the example of Berry's (2006) birdhouse bricoleur who collects, cuts, and patches together various bits of wood and other objects to create a unified finished product, while the birdhouse is most certainly complete in and of itself, one might still be able to dismantle it piece by piece, separating each original element from the final whole. Now imagine this same bricoleur creating a special colour of paint to decorate his new birdhouse; in so doing he might mix a red and a blue, for example, to create a rich purple. This new purple is a *métissage*, not a bricolage, because the parts are no longer discernible or divisible from the whole—it would be impossible to isolate and extract the original red or blue from the final purple product. This final expression is influenced by, but no longer reducible to, its progenitors; it is possible because of the strong similarity of the original sources. For example, two colours of paint mix together much more easily than two pieces of wood that might be nailed or glued to each other, but can still be separated, albeit with great effort. A skilled artisan or researcher must be able to examine their materials (or concepts) and decide if a given project, or aspect of a project, lends itself better to bricolage or métissage? The following section examines the extremely limited, but emerging field of métissage as a research methodology.

Métissage as Research

Western Canadian scholars Chambers, Hasebe-Ludt, and Donald (2002) state that

> Métissage … is a … way of merging and blurring genres, texts and identities; an active literary stance, political strategy and pedagogical praxis [a] metaphor for fluidity, and a creative strategy for the braiding of gender, race, language and place into autobiographical texts … Literary métissage not only describes experience; it is a strategy for interpreting and critiquing the experiences reported. At the same time these autobiographical texts open apertures for understanding and questioning the multiple conditions and contexts which give rise to those experiences; and the particular languages, memories, stories and places in which these experiences are located and created. (p. 1-2)

Métis scholar Dwayne Donald (2009; 2010) built on these earlier notions of métissage as methodology in his doctoral study. Donald (2009, p. 1) describes his methodology as "Indigenous Métissage … a place-based approach to curriculum [and research] informed by an ecological and relational understanding of the world." Similar to Berry (2006) and Steinberg's (2006) comments on bricolage, Donald (2010) suggests that Indigenous métissage requires embracing an ambiguous, contextual, transdisciplinary approach that is "against prescribed method":

> These goals imply a transdisciplinary focus. To be 'transdisciplinary' in research focus means to be responsive to the various contextual research challenges that arise by being open to diverse research approaches and possibilities (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994, p. 2). Doing Indigenous Metissage requires dedication to the reciprocating interpretive process and attentiveness to insights that arise from it. In this sense, then, Indigenous Metissage is a research sensibility that is against prescribed method. What is required instead is careful attention to the details of the research context with the hope that a story will arise that will need to be told. (p. 143)

Donald's (2009; 2010) praxis involves comparing and contrasting colonial and Indigenous narratives of historical sites and objects through a critical lens of Indigenous métissage. He employs three metaphors to outline his approach: the fur trade fort, pentimento, and the braid or the sash.

Donald (2009) first argues that, in the contemporary Canadian consciousness, Euro-Canadians are found inside the fur trade fort while Indigenous peoples remain perpetually outside. However, in a spirit similar to my own arguments in Chapter 2, Donald suggests that the historical reality of the fort is that the boundaries were, and continue to be, permeable and ambiguous; Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians have intimately interacted for centuries and, like Saul (2008), he proposes that:

> This reductive Canadian national narrative weighs heavily on the consciousness of Aboriginal peoples and Canadians, and continues to influence the ways in which we speak to each other about history, identity, citizenship, and the future. (p. 3)

Donald (2010) also employs the historic and artistic metaphor of pentimento to describe Indigenous métissage:

> Pentimento implies a desire to peel back the layers that have obscured an artifact or a memory as a way to intimately examine those layers. The idea of pentimento operates on the acknowledgement that each layer mixes with the others and renders irreversible influences on our perceptions of it. Doing Indigenous Metissage, then, involves peeling back these layers to reveal what has been concealed and interpreting the significance of what has been uncovered. (p. 141)

Donald's comments are reminiscent of Norman Denzin's (1989) reflections on interpretive biographical research as another example of pentimento:

> Lives and their experiences are represented in stories. They are like pictures that have been painted over, and, when the paint is scraped off an old picture, something new becomes visible. What is new is what was previously covered up. A life and the stories about it have the qualities of *pentimento.* Something new is always coming into sight, displacing what was previously certain and seen … images and traces of what has been, what could have been, and what now is. (p. 81)

Karahasan (2008, p. 179) describes the creator of a métissage as a "*métisseur*" or "*métisseuse*". Donald (2009) also describes a researcher who employs métissage as the weaver of a braid or a Métis sash, deftly interpreting the shifting nuances of a society that is still heavily influenced by the legacy of colonialism:

> As a research practice, métissage is focused on relationality and the curricular and pedagogical desire to treat texts—as live and braided rather than isolated and

> independent … What is needed is a theory of métissage focused on colonial experience that demonstrates that Aboriginal peoples and Canadians have deeply historical relationships that continue to manifest themselves in ambiguous ways to the present day. (p. 9)

My understanding of métissage as a methodological approach in this study was similar to Donald's in that I challenged the impermeability of "the fort" in the Canadian consciousness. I also engaged multiple sources of literature, both Western and Indigenous, as well as a diversity of perspectives from Indigenous and non-Indigenous research participants. My approach differed from Donald in that it was not a predominantly historical project focused on sites or artifacts; as will be extrapolated throughout this chapter, this was an interpretive narrative study that explored participants' lives and experiences. I worked with the research participants to peel back and explore the various layers of their memories to reveal the stories beneath.

Donald (2010) also notes that every métissage-inspired research initiative is highly contextual. He suggests that explicitly positioning and examining the context of every study is very important:

> The act of weaving a textual braid through Indigenous Metissage provides a means for researchers to express the convergence of wide and diverse influences in an ethically relational manner … The weaver as researcher would produce a textual braid or bricolage … While the spirit and intent of Indigenous Metissage is rooted in ethical relationality exemplified through braidedness, it is also true that the 'look' of the braid will reflect the particular research context under scrutiny. The weaver of the braid must remain mindful that each research context must be explored and evaluated based on the particular character of the situation … The bricolage, then, is a braided and emergent construction created by the researcher. (p. 142)

Donald's use of the term "bricolage" interchangeably with the concept of métissage is interesting. Referring back to my analysis of Berry's (2006) birdhouse bricoleur, I would suggest that we need to exercise greater precision in our use of these two related, but slightly different concepts. As I explained with reference to the birdhouse project, my

understanding of the concept of métissage is that it differs from bricolage in its inextricably mixed nature. Contrasting this with Donald's metaphor of the braid or sash, we see that, while the different strands of each have been woven together into a unified whole, the original strands are still intermittently visible and could be pulled apart. I would again refer to the example of blended paint as a stronger example of métissage where the original progenitors can no longer be discerned from the final product. Another explicitly Métis example would be the infinity symbol that is prominently placed in the centre of the Métis flag (see Figure 4 below). As Dorion and Préfontaine (1999, p. 17) note, "the horizontal eight is an infinity sign, which has two meanings; the joining of two cultures and the existence of a people forever."

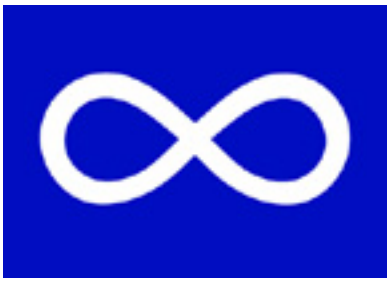

Figure 5. Métis infinity flag (Eastern Woodland Métis Nation, 2010).

As a Métis person this distinction is of utmost importance to me. For example, I do not see myself as a cobbled together Frankenstein-esque creation; such a view would have me with a Norwegian arm, a Swiss leg, a Mi'kmaq head, a Lenape elbow and so on. This is most certainly not the case; the same is true for my intellectual and spiritual anatomy. I am a *mixed* whole reflective of, but not reducible to, the influence of my various ancestral cultures. I believe that this kind of blended perspective is what constitutes métissage; when the parts can still be extracted from the whole, we remain in a state of bricolage. This is not to say that bricolage is not a powerful representation of and/ or approach to research and the

relationship of knowledge systems in certain cases, just that, métissage is a truer representation of my own personal epistemology and intention with the methodology of this study. I explore this concept further in the following section through examination of the similarities and differences of Indigenous and Western interpretive research approaches.

Indigenous Interpretive Inquiry: A Natural Métissage

In order to further understand and articulate my initial approach to this study, it was imperative that I explore the perspectives of a variety of Western and Indigenous scholars. Through this process I realized that, when comparing Indigenous research methodologies to traditional science-inspired Western research models (both quantitative and qualitative), similarities exist, but there is also significant *divergence* (Barnhardt and Kawagley, 2005). However if we examine more recent perspectives from the field of *interpretive* qualitative research, we find significantly more *convergence* than divergence, providing fertile ground for true métissage. In the following section I delineate this dynamic relationship as it relates to my attempt to understand and embody métissage in this study.

Referring back to my examination of Kawagley and Barnhardt's (2005) discussion and representation of Indigenous and Western Science as presented and analysed in the previous chapter, I summarized this relationship by stating that, "similarities include concepts such as a unified Universe, personal qualities such as perseverance, curiosity, and honesty, empirical observation of nature, and a desire to understand the behaviour and patterns of plants, animals and other beings and elements. Differences include Indigenous trust in inherited wisdom contrasted with Western skepticism, Indigenous holism compared to Western compartmentalism, the Indigenous belief in the link between the metaphysical

and physical worlds as opposed to the Western science focus on the physical world only, and the Indigenous tradition of seeking understanding in order to apply it to daily living versus the Western science value of seeking understanding for its own sake." From this analysis it is clear that, while there are many similarities between the two, significant distinctions remain. Attempts to bring these two together conceptually or in practice might be best described as bricolage rather than métissage.

However, if we shift the focus of our comparison from Western and Indigenous *science* to interpretive and Indigenous *qualitative inquiry*, the distinctions diminish and a host of striking similarities emerges. The work of Margaret Kovach (2010), a Cree and Saulteaux scholar, was catalytic in my understanding of this complex relationship in the later stages of my doctoral studies. Kovach explains how Indigenous research methodologies are intimately, albeit somewhat cautiously, linked to interpretive qualitative approaches:

> Qualitative research offers space for Indigenous ways of researching, yet any understanding of Indigenous methodologies alongside Western-constructed research process (qualitative or otherwise) triggers recollection of the miserable history of Western research and Indigenous communities … In response, Indigenous scholars have been unified in their call for methodological approaches to research that respect Indigenous cultural knowings … Indigenous methodologies can be situated within the qualitative landscape because they encompass characteristics congruent with other relational qualitative approaches … This matters because it provides common ground for Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers to understand each other. Finally, and most significantly, tribal epistemologies are the centre of Indigenous methodologies, and it is this epistemological framework that makes them distinct from Western qualitative approaches. (p. 24-25)

In the following I respond to Kovach's three main premises as they relate to my efforts to create a methodological métissage in this study: the legacy of distrust between Indigenous peoples and researchers, the significant resonance between Indigenous methodologies and

interpretive qualitative approaches, and the importance of respecting and embodying tribal epistemologies in contemporary Indigenous research.

The Precarious Position of Indigenous Researchers

The historic misuse and abuse of research conducted with and on Indigenous peoples is well documented (Kovach, 2010; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). A history of positivist anthropological and ethnographic approaches have left Indigenous peoples worldwide wary of researchers. As Kovach (2010) explains:

> From an Indigenous perspective, the reproduction of colonial relationships persists inside institutional centres … While we may currently be in a more inclusive moment of qualitative research, Indigenous communities are still being 'researched', albeit with more political finesse. Indigenous scholars … remind us that regardless of whether research emerges from a positivist, constructivist, or transformative paradigm, it is still 'researching' Indigenous people, and it is still deeply political. (p. 28-29)

However, a growing number of researchers, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, are attempting to address these concerns by embodying Indigenous values in their research practices. As Euro-American scholars Denzin and Lincoln (2008) state in the preface to a handbook on critical and Indigenous methodologies:

> It is time to dismantle, deconstruct, and decolonize Western epistemologies from within, to learn that research does not have to be a dirty word, to learn that research is always already moral and political. It is time to chart a new decade, the Decade of Critical, Indigenous Inquiry. (p. ix)

Kovach (2010) supports the inclusion of non-Indigenous scholars like Denzin and Lincoln in this movement. As she notes:

> The strongest potential for fresh discourse rests with the ability of invested non-Indigenous academics to listen attentively to not only what diminishes Indigenous research scholarship, but also to what helps. (p. 157)

Indigenous researchers such as Kovach (2010) and eminent Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) from Aotearoa (New Zealand) are increasingly guiding the development of research approaches *by, with, and for* Indigenous peoples. Smith has developed a methodology called Kaupapa Maori, a form of Maori-centered research that is an excellent example of an empowering approach to Indigenous research. Kaupapa Maori is research that is conducted by Maori people, for Maori people, to explore topics of concern to Maori people. Central to conducting respectful Indigenous research are key concepts such as reciprocity, researcher positioning, and embodying cultural traditions in research methods. These and other concepts will be explored in detail in the following sections.

Due to the historically uneasy relationship between Indigenous peoples and researchers, both Kovach (2010) and Smith (1999) discuss the precarious insider/ outsider role of Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous researchers in the academy. Indigenous scholars are insiders in the increasingly diverse, but still largely Western academy as academics, but outsiders as Indigenous peoples attempting to conduct research and teach based on Indigenous epistemologies. As Kovach notes:

> From my perspective, Indigenous methodologies and qualitative research … form an insider/ outsider relationship … Although most qualitative researchers intuitively understand the dynamics of this relationship, it is here that we encounter the messiness of the work. The tension of the insider/ outsider dynamic will persist until Indigenous research frameworks have methodological space within academic research dialogue, policy, and practice. (p. 31)

As a Métis academic striving to articulate and embody a methodology representative of my own worldview, I attempted to unravel and clarify the “messiness” of this relationship in the course of this study, struggling to expand Richardson’s (2004) Third Space in the academy as an existential and methodological meeting place between Western and

Indigenous approaches. The following section explores the coherence of interpretive research and Indigenous methodologies as they converge in the Third Space.

Into the Third Space: Articulating An Interpretive Indigenous Approach

Inspired by Kovach's (2010) discussion of the resonant, but delicate relationship between Indigenous and interpretive research methodologies, I revisited the literature in both areas with a view to assessing and articulating this relationship as it relates to my doctoral endeavours. After much exploration and reflection, I was excited to experience the convergence of the two into a conceptual model of métissage as a form of interpretive research. In the following I articulate this model as it was embodied, albeit in an initially awkward and largely intuitive manner, in this study.

Through my examination and enactment of various interpretive and Indigenous research approaches in this study, I found that one way to examine the relationship between them is through a critical lens constructed through questions such as: Was this research done in "a good way?" (Kovach, 2010, p. 141) and/ or has this research done "good work in the world?"(Willinsky, 2006, p. 440).

My observations of the strong similarities between the criteria for interpretive and Indigenous research methodologies are presented below in tabular format as well as through the infinity symbol of the Métis people. As the following table and figure illustrate, I believe that this is an example of two concepts that are so closely aligned that it is possible to bring them together into a métissage where the parts are ultimately indivisible and largely indistinguishable from the whole. As will be explored in detail in the following, questions informing both approaches include:

Key Questions	Indigenous	Interpretive
Was the research reciprocal? *Were there benefits for both the researcher(s) and the participants?*	√	√
Was it explicitly positioned? *Who is conducting/ participating in this research?*	√	√
Was their participant review? *Did the participants approve of how they are represented in the final text?*	√	√
Was a narrative approach employed? *Have both the researcher(s) and the participants shared stories and reflections?*	√	√
Was the research reflexive? *Is there evidence of learning by the researcher(s)?*	√	√
Has community accountability been satisfied? *Have/ will the findings been shared publicly in an accessible format?*	√	√
Was it place-based/ contextualized? *Is there evidence of ecological consciousness?*	√	√
Have critical issues been problematized?	√	√
Were tribal customs followed and respected?	√	X

Table 1. Comparing and contrasting Indigenous and interpretive approaches.

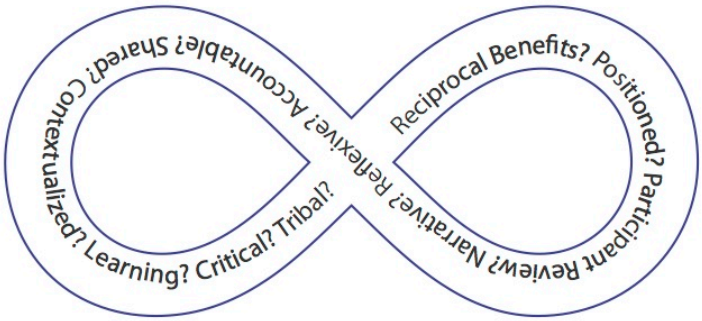

Figure 6. Indigenous and interpretive research: An infinite relationship.

As Table 1 above illustrates, the only significant distinction between Indigenous and interpretive approaches is the importance of following and respecting tribal customs in Indigenous research (Kovach, 2010). This is especially relevant to researchers who are conducting research within a specific Indigenous community, geographic and/ or cultural, and/ or attempting to embody their own cultural traditions in their methodology. For example, Kovach (2010), a scholar of Cree and Saulteaux descent, incorporated a significant amount of Cree language and concepts in her doctoral research despite the fact that her participants came from a variety of Indigenous backgrounds.

In this study, the researcher (myself) is Métis and the participants came from a wide variety of backgrounds: Indigenous, Métis, Euro-Canadian, and Asian-Canadian. As has been delineated in great detail and will be expanded upon further, I attempted to embody my own Métis perspective in my theoretical and practical approach to this study. On a theoretical level this involved drawing from a wide variety of Indigenous and Western sources. On a practical level, I attempted to embody my own perspective while still respecting the culture of every participant. As Kovach notes:

> It is pertinent to note that Indigenous knowledges can never be standardized, for they are in relation to place and person. How they integrate into Indigenous research frameworks is largely researcher dependent. (p. 56)

In this study such an approach involved, for example, offering tobacco along with institutional consent forms to all participants, a common practice amongst most Indigenous North Americans for requesting the sharing of knowledge (Kovach, 2010; Lickers, 2006) with which all participants were familiar. Kovach explains that, in her doctoral study the exchange of tobacco signified that:

> What was spoken was the truth as each person knew it. There was a further recognition the person's story would become a part of the social and historical fabric of the people, a historical truth, through their honour. It requires belief in

> another's integrity, that there is a mutual understanding that speaking untruths will upset the relational balance. (p. 103)

The "relational balance" mentioned by Kovach is a central concept in both Indigenous and interpretive approaches. Key criteria that fall under the relational umbrella include identifying the intended audience and purpose of the research (Who is it for? Who benefits?), reflexivity, reciprocity, positioning, evidence of learning, and community accountability. The common characteristic unifying all of these concepts in both traditions is the foundational importance of a narrative approach. These concepts will be explored in detail in the following sections.

A Narrative Foundation

> Our theory of knowledge is found in the sacred stories that are the living knowledge of the people. The stories explain the nature of reality, the science, and the economic and social organization of *Siksikaitsitapi*. They are the accumulated knowledge of centuries. Each generation … is responsible for retelling the stories to the next generation. The knowledge contained in them is living. (Bastien, 2003, p. 45)

As Bastien relates above, the oral tradition is foundational to Indigenous cultures. Kovach (2010) also comments that:

> Stories remind us of who we are and of our belonging. Stories hold within them knowledges while simultaneously signifying relationships. In oral tradition, stories can never be decontextualized from the teller. They are active agents within a relational world, pivotal in gaining insight into a phenomenon. Oral stories are born of connection within the world, and are thus recounted relationally. They tie us with our past and provide a basis for continuity with future generations. (p. 95)

Due to the centrality of the oral tradition and stories in Indigenous cultures, Kovach suggests that an interpretive narrative approach is the most appropriate methodology for Indigenous research. She also makes note of the similarity between Indigenous oral traditions and the Western fields of oral history and narrative research:

> Those well-versed in qualitative research methods will confirm that story is not unique to Indigenous knowledge systems. Story is practised within methodologies valuing contextualized knowledge, such as … narrative inquiry. Terminology like … oral history is familiar to these forms of qualitative inquiry … oral history concerns a particular aspect of an individual's experience that pertains to the research topic at hand … It is recognized that story as both form and method crosses cultural divides. (p. 96)

Western scholars such as Creswell (2007) concur and note that narrative inquiry involves recording life stories and experiences. Creswell suggests that narrative inquiry can take many forms such as biographical, autobiographical, topical, interpretive, or historical.

Dunaway (1996) traces the development of oral history research in North America to the early twentieth century. Nevins (1996/ 1966) suggests that researchers began recording oral histories in response to a decline in written correspondence and journal writing. With the advent of the telephone and increasing accessibility of rapid transport, people were less inclined to keep personal journals or correspond by letters. Nevins explains that this created a void for historians who had previously relied on written documents as primary sources for historical information:

> In hardly less degree than space exploration, oral history was born of modern invention and technology … the hurry and complexity of modern politics … financial and business affairs … sliced away the time [needed] for methodical reflective writing. … (p. 30)

While oral historians initially focused on recording the life histories and experiences of famous figures, Dunaway comments that over time oral history also became a tool for both amateur and professional historians to record the stories of people whose voices would otherwise be forgotten or ignored. For example, amateur historians began using oral history as a way to revive and preserve family histories. Oppressed minorities and other disempowered segments of society (e.g. Indigenous peoples, slaves, labourers, and farmers) also became the focus of many oral history projects by the mid-twentieth century. For

example, Métis filmmaker Christine Welsh (1991) and others (e.g. Iseke, 2009) have made exemplary efforts to collect and preserve the oral histories of their own and other Métis families. Métis scholars Dorion and Préfontaine (1999) also note that due to the enormity of such projects, collaboration with non-Métis oral historians in this regard is also a welcome development:

> The Métis perspective on history is orally based and is central to Métis identity. Many non-Aboriginal historians are now using oral tradition and written sources in order to reconstruct Métis history. From a Métis point of view, this is a welcome development because too often in the past historians … neglected to use Aboriginal oral history, and relied almost exclusively on written sources. (p. 12)

A shift in focus from exclusively recording famous figures' biographies and the history of "big events" to an interest in the lives of everyday people also led to the use of narrative inquiry as a tool for social activism in the 1960s and 70s (Dunaway, 1996). As Dunaway explains:

> A second generation, coming of age in the mid-1960s … built upon this earlier work by expanding the purposes of collectors and collections. This group viewed oral history as more than a way to capture the accounts of important people for scholars; rather, it employed oral history techniques to describe and empower the nonliterate and the historically disenfranchised. (p. 8)

For example, Gresson (2006) cites the development of narrative and ethnographic research that studied, for example, the experiences of African American women *by* African American women in the inner cities of the United States, as revolutionary. Gresson notes that:

> This orientation broke with the traditional insistence that researchers achieved 'objectivity' and 'validity' through being removed from their own influence or impact on the research act and context. The boundaries between self and other, researcher and researched, were seen to be significantly less rigid or pure than [previously] imagined or desired. (p. 191)

As the field of narrative inquiry developed, it became an indispensable tool adopted by researchers from a diversity of fields such as education, anthropology, women's studies,

sociology (Dunaway, 1996). It continues to be a powerful approach for challenging the dominant voices of the social, economic and political elites in contemporary society. Related areas such as the study, preservation, and revival of oral traditions, the focus of the following section, have also benefited from the development of the field of narrative research.

The Oral Tradition

The oral tradition has existed in many societies for thousands of years as a way to preserve history, family lineages and cultural stories and values (Finnegan, 1970/ 1996). Both Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars highlight the importance of the oral tradition as a precursor of and influence on narrative research techniques. For example, Chief John Snow (1977/ 2005) suggests that in the Nakoda tradition oral history is still taken very seriously; contracts and agreements negotiated verbally are accepted as lawful and binding. Kovach (2010) and Miller (2011) also note that oral traditions are increasingly respected in the Canadian judiciary as evidence in land-claim cases. Miller comments that, “In the 1980s and 1990s courts and tribunals in Canada and other jurisdictions began to seriously consider the relevance of Aboriginal oral narratives … to legal proceedings.” Kovach also relates the well-known example of, “the 1997 Delgamuukw decision, [where] the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that oral testimony has the same weight as written evidence in land entitlement cases” (p. 95).

Another example pertinent to my own family comes from the Miramichi region of New Brunswick. Through the course of this study, I learned that the Aboriginal hunting and fishing rights of Gerald Lavigne Jr., a distant maternal cousin, were recently upheld, even upon appeal by the Crown, by judges who accepted local Mi’kmaq Elders’ testimony as

valid evidence of his ancestral membership in their community (*R v. Lavigne Jr.*, 2005). Lavigne had initially been charged for hunting moose without a license, but the charges were dropped and his Aboriginal rights upheld when it was established that he was acknowledged to be an Aboriginal person by Elders from the local Aboriginal community. This was further supported by genealogical research.

Vansina (1961/ 1996) suggests that the oral tradition is dynamic and must be considered in the context from which it arises. He states that the oral tradition is an interactive record of perceptions that links lives to context. One of its strengths is that it is highly adaptable; for example, a story meant to pass on cultural values might be updated to suit the current lives of its audience without changing the original meaning or lesson of the story. In this manner the audience might better relate to the story as it comes alive in their contemporary world. Hareven (1978/ 1996) also proposes that oral traditions preserve knowledge that would have otherwise disappeared many generations earlier. Kovach (2010) observes that:

> Within Indigenous epistemologies, there are two general forms of stories. There are stories that hold mythical elements, such as creation and teaching stories, and there are personal narratives of place, happenings, and experiences … Both forms teach of consequences, good and bad, of living life in a certain way … Stories are vessels for passing along teachings, medicines, and practices that can assist members of the collective. (p. 95)

Similar to Kovach, famed Cree playwright, novelist, and performer Tomson Highway (2003) from northern Manitoba shares the perspective that, in the tradition of his community, there are *three* forms of narrative:

> In the language of my people … there are three distinct terms for the concept of narrative. The first term is *achimoowin*, which means “to tell a story” or “to tell the truth.” The second is *kithaskiwin*, which means “to tell a lie,” meaning “to weave a web of fiction,” as it were. And the third, which lies at a point exactly halfway between these first two is *achithoogeewin*, which means “to mythologize.” (p. 21)

In reference to Highway's comments, I would suggest that this study was primarily a work of *achimoowin* as the participants and I exchanged tobacco and agreed to tell "the truth as each person knew it" (Kovach, 2010, p. 103). Bastien (2003, p. 4) also reminds us of the responsibility that accompanies the sharing of a story when she suggests that, "transfer of knowledge is the exchange of medicinal power and responsibility." I am deeply aware of the responsibility imbued to me by the participants through the sharing of their stories. I embodied a narrative approach throughout this study by sharing my own stories and reflections in response to the material presented in every chapter along with presenting the participants' perspectives in a narrative format as will be described in greater detail later in this chapter.

The following sections outline strategies common to both Indigenous and interpretive research for engaging and interpreting respectfully with research participants and their stories such as reflexivity and reciprocity, positioning, community accountability, contextualizing, and problematizing.

Reflexivity

Many scholars highlight reflexivity as a key component in qualitative research. A reflexive researcher examines his or her role in the research process, reflecting on their experiences throughout the research journey, the influence of their cultural and social positioning, and their interpersonal interactions with research participants. Explicit reflexivity is also a tool for demonstrating the learning experienced by the researcher, a key criteria for high quality interpretive research (Tobin, 2006).

Reflexivity recognizes that a qualitative researcher is also a participant in the research process. As Kovach (2010) explains:

> In co-creating knowledge, story is not only a means for hearing another's narrative, it also invites reflexivity into research. Through reflexive story there is opportunity to express the researcher's inward knowing. Sharing one's own story is an aspect of co-constructing knowledge from an Indigenous perspective. (p. 100)

Michalovsky (1997) describes resistance that he experienced from other scholars when he chose to incorporate reflexive personal reflections into his research practice. He comments that his detractors described his work as self-serving, narcissistic and indulgent. However, Michalovsky emphasizes the interactive nature of interpretive qualitative research and advocates for researchers including their own reflections along with those of their participants. Steinberg (2006) and Tobin (2006) also suggest that reflexivity is a vital element of interpretive research because it demonstrates the learning experienced by the researcher. With regard to documenting your learning, Tobin notes:

> One important way to do this is to undertake auto/ ethnography and dedicate a significant part of the writing of a study to documentation of changing ontologies and making sense of such changes in relation to what is learned from a study. (p. 26)

I demonstrated my learning in this study throughout as I have narrated and responded to the literature and my changing perceptions and understandings of key concepts. For example, the preliminary sections of this chapter were dramatically revised in the final stages of the study as my understanding of the distinction between bricolage and métissage, Western, and Indigenous knowledge was not clear until I had absorbed and interpreted the meaning of the interviews presented in the following chapter. I also demonstrated my dynamic understanding of key concepts throughout this series of ten interviews as is demonstrated through the meta-dialogue of my own perceptions throughout.

Berry (2006) also notes that reflexivity is very important in interpretive research because it allows and encourages both the researcher and the participants to position themselves theoretically, culturally, geographically, another key aspect of both interpretive

(Berry, 2006) and Indigenous research (Kovach, 2010). This is the focus of the following section.

Positioning

Absolon and Willet (2005) suggest that explicitly positioning yourself is especially important in research projects involving Aboriginal peoples as positioning is an integral foundation of many Indigenous cultures. From an interpretive research perspective, positioning means introducing yourself to your research participants and later your audience (Bolak, 1997). For example, in this study I explicitly informed my participants that I am a Western Canadian of Métis, Norwegian and Swiss descent. This helped them to understand my perspective and background and allowed them to position themselves accordingly. I also did this in my master's research (Lowan, 2007a, 2008, 2009) and found it very effective. Several participants, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, commented that they felt more at ease discussing culturally related topics knowing my background because they had a better sense of their audience (me). For example, two Aboriginal participants related that they were more comfortable speaking openly about controversial cultural issues once they knew that I was Métis.

These kinds of considerations relate to the precarious position of Indigenous researchers and the insider/ outsider dynamic (Kovach, 2010; Smith, 1999) discussed earlier in this chapter. For example, Smith notes that belonging to the community that you are studying can also be a disadvantage for a researcher, depending on the personal, political, and contextual characteristics of a given situation.

Conscious of such nuances, Ginsburg (1997) also describes the importance of situating not only the interviewer but also the interviewee; relating details about the context

of the interview, like the physical setting, also adds richness to the final product. I also did this in the present study for each participant (see following for chapter) through including a significant amount of biographical information and dialogue as well as keeping each participant's narrative intact rather than breaking and mixing them into themes. This is an appropriate approach in Indigenous research where treating participants stories with respect is of the utmost importance (Bastien, 2003; Kovach, 2010). Kovach also describes how keeping participants' stories intact increases the presence of their voices in the research:

> Indigenous research frameworks shift the power of the researcher in controlling the research process and outcome. Methodologically, this means gathering knowledge that allows for voice and representational involvement in interpreting findings. A powerful method for achieving this desire is the use of story, life history, oral history, unstructured interviews, and other processes that allow participants to share their experiences on their terms. (p. 82)

As Kovach (2010) indicates above, reflexive researchers understand research to be a collaborative, interactive and constructive act. Researchers and participants work together, consciously and unconsciously, to create and interpret the interview experience. This relates to another key aspect of both interpretive and Indigenous methodologies—participant approval of your representation of them. As will be explained in greater detail in a subsequent section, I enacted this principle in the present study by seeking participants' approval of the mini biographies that I created for each of them based on our informal interviews.

Problematizing: Positioning Yourself Theoretically

Grele (1994) and Steinberg (2006) remind us that an interview is a conversational narrative not only between the interviewer and the participant, but also with the literature of their field that is embedded in current and historical contexts. Grele encourages researchers

to look for the underlying “hidden conversations” (p. 3) present in interviews: What story is being told between the lines of what is actually being said? Grele (1994) also recognizes that reflexive research can lead to conflict and tension with participants. This is the natural product of people who might hold conflicting worldviews or experiences interacting. Interviews often touch on controversial or sensitive topics and this can lead to conflict if differing perspectives exist between the interviewer and interviewee. Recognizing, resolving and reporting on this tension can deepen the research process and lead to richer results.

I embraced Grele’s suggestions and, as is presented in the following chapter, responded to participants with my own thoughts on key issues as well as those of other scholars and participants in a cautious manner. This typically resulted in a deepening of our discussion; one participant (Liatrus) even commented that our conversation was going to “keep her up all night” thinking about issues surrounding her identity and practice as a Métis environmental educator.

Berry (2006) explains that problematizing key issues historical and sociocultural issues relevant to a respective study is a key preparatory step for interpretive research:

> Problematizing adds to the rigor of doing bricolage. Each historical, intellectual, social, and political period has specific needs for problematizing the research text and its constituents. Thus, problematizing the worlds/texts/issues/ events etc. to be researched requires an additional recognition of the connectivity with the world of the text with the world outside the text… problematizing is the ground from which the research text grows in purpose and directs the bricoleur to what tools to use and when. (p. 105)

I problematized key historical and sociocultural concepts and topics throughout this study; each chapter of the literature review (two to four) discusses challenging and controversial concepts. For example in Chapter Two I challenged Western conceptions of ecological identity and philosophy and juxtaposed them with Indigenous approaches. I wove this

discussion together with my own perspective as a Métis Canadian. In Chapter Three I challenged popular historical and contemporary notions of Métis people and cultures and in Chapter Four I examined various perspectives on and the relationship between Western and Indigenous Science. These discussions continue in the final chapters where I present the participants' perspectives on these and other related issues (Chapter Six) and provide my own final analysis and discussion (Chapter Seven).

Contextualizing: Positioning Yourself Geographically and Ecologically

> "Affirming the multiplicity of different … visions in different places means taking care of each other *and* our environment." (Bastien, 2003, p. 42, my emphasis added)

As Bastien notes above, Indigenous researchers recognize that we should extend the same care and attention to the greater than human world and our place in it as we do to our relationships with each other. Positioning yourself geographically and ecologically is a key aspect of both interpretive and Indigenous research. Donald (2010) describes his approach as deeply place-based and influenced by the relationship between Western and Indigenous geographical concepts:

> I emphasize land and place as key aspects of Indigenous Métissage and decolonization of curriculum and pedagogy. The most significant reason for this is a fascination with the connectivity between place and identity, and how my ancestors chose to map their territory as a way to express who they think they are. Indigenous place-stories and mapping conventions are expressions of sovereignty that are deeply influenced by wisdom traditions and provide specific examples of how to recognize the land as relative and citizen. I am interested in bringing these insights to bear as curricular and pedagogical considerations because they belie the assumed universality of conventional Eurowestern approaches. I think there is much to be learned about citizenship and the land from holding these two mapping traditions in tension. p. 19

I have satisfied this important condition of interpretive research by situating the research participants, the literature, and myself socio-culturally, geographically, and historically

throughout this study. For example, in Chapter Two I described my own ecological identity that draws from the concepts of Deep Ecology, Bioregionalism, and Indigenous traditions. All of the research participants were also situated geographically and ecologically in their biographies through introductory comments and the sharing of their personal philosophies and experiences.

I also paid considerable attention to how I embodied ecological consciousness in my research approach and enactment. As I planned and conducted my research, I attempted to consider both the shallow and deep ecological aspects of doing environmental research. While much research is conducted *into* ecological issues, no studies that I have reviewed explicitly discussed how ecological consciousness was incorporated into their methodology and methods. This study was conducted conscious of its potential ecological benefits *and* impacts.

However, some organizations such as EECOM (The Canadian Association of Environmental Education and Communication) are beginning to plan their conferences and meetings in ways that limit their ecological impact (e.g. EECOM, 2009). EECOM's Green Conference Guide provides suggestions such as using technologies such as online registration and communication to reduce paper use; encouraging organizers to use local products and services as much as possible; minimizing travel to and from conference venues by selecting sites with sufficient accommodation within walking distance or accessible to public transit; facilitating carpooling; soliciting sponsorship from environmentally responsible organizations and rejecting it from those who are not; encouraging organizers to walk, bicycle; or use transit to attend meetings; educating delegates about local environmental issues; providing on-line opportunities for those who

cannot attend the conference in-person; working with venue managers to minimize energy and paper use during conferences; and providing recycling and food composting services.

While I try to follow and enact all of the guidelines discussed above in my daily life at work and at home, I paid especially close attention to some of them in the course of this study. In order to limit the use of fossil fuels in this research, I sought creative ways to connect with participants; I travelled by bicycle, car, and air to connect with educators on the West Coast, across the prairies, and in the depths of Ontario's boreal forest.

In order to minimize excess travel, I conducted two interviews using video conferencing software and scheduled several interviews to coincide with personal and professional travel plans. I also purchased carbon credits to offset the impact of airplane flights (For an example see Appendix B).

Throughout this study, I also made every effort to use recycled paper, re-use previously printed single-sided pages, or print documents double-sided. Dissertation edits were conducted using on-line communication and editing software as much as possible to avoid printing copies of each draft. I also provided participants with the option of receiving communication electronically or by regular mail (see Appendix C). Fortunately, they all elected to communicate electronically.

Along with the aforementioned shallow ecological practices, albeit motivated by deeper ecological sensitivities, I also attempted to embody and practice a deeper ecological consciousness in my research approach. For example, during the final writing stages of this dissertation I made sure to take breaks every day for short walks and light work outside in our lush vegetable garden. I also made sure to exercise at the end of every day, most often running around a lake and in a forested area near our house. Weekends were typically spent outside working around the house and/ or going for short hikes and swimming adventures.

We also periodically made the three-hour trip to our family camp (cottage) on a lake near Thunder Bay where we can swim, fish, canoe, and cleanse our bodies and minds in the wood-fired sauna. This regimen of daily and weekly time spent physically connecting with the Land served to reinforce and refresh the bond that I feel to the rest of Nature and my conviction to continue this work.

Embodying ecological consciousness in environmental education research is an area that I believe deserves significantly more consideration in future environmental education research.

Reciprocity

Both interpretive and Indigenous researchers emphasize reciprocity as an essential component of ethical practice. The concept of reciprocity is informed by questions such as "For whom is this research?" and "Who is benefiting from this research?" (Lemesianou & Grinberg, 2006, p. 230). Futrell and Willard (1994) also state that reciprocity extends to considering why people agree to act as participants in a study: What are their motivations? Their fears? How might an interview benefit them? Will it be therapeutic? Cathartic?

Creswell (2002) describes reciprocity as a mutually beneficial relationship between a researcher and the people with whom they are working. Reciprocity also means recognizing that, while you may be conducting research with a select group of individuals, they are members of a greater community, and that it is important to honour that community (Kovach, 2010; Willinsky, 2006).

For example, if you were working with participants from a specific geographical or cultural community, it would be important to ensure that the findings of your research were shared publicly in a variety of accessible formats to ensure its accuracy, gain approval for

its use, and celebrate the knowledge shared for the benefit of the greater community (Kovach, 2010). Possible approaches include publishing findings in accessible language and conducting public presentations after approval has been granted (Kovach).

Kovach (2010) also notes that in more ethnically or geographically diverse contexts where participants come from a variety of cultural and/ or geographic backgrounds, it is still important that they are apprised of and benefit from the findings of your research. For example, her doctoral study was with Indigenous academics across on Canada, so she shared her results with other Indigenous graduate students and academics at her home university as well as across Canada through publications and presentations.

Interpretive researchers Willinsky (2006) also emphasizes the importance of sharing the findings of your study publicly and ensuring that your participants benefit in some way. Willinsky argues that academic research, especially in the field of education, should be shared more freely through a variety of media, for the benefit of all citizens. He criticizes the restrictive nature of academic journals with costly subscriptions and limited circulation and advocates for the sharing of research findings in more accessible formats for the general public in a similar manner to contemporary medical research. Willinsky suggests that sharing your work as widely as possible ensures, “the widest possible public scrutiny” (p. 440). He also emphasizes that educational research should not only be conducted as an academic exercise, but that it should also do good work in the world. He notes that, “the warrant for conducting research is that such work will contribute to knowledge, which is regarded as a matter of public good” (p. 440).

I ensured reciprocity in this study in a variety of ways. As was previously discussed in this chapter, I began by sharing the emerging findings and my analysis of them with the research participants as soon as they were available. I also shared my initial experiences

and the emerging findings of this study through several publications (Lowan, 2011a; in press a; in press b) and public presentations at professional meetings and academic gatherings (Lowan, 2010a; 2010b; 2010c; 2011b).

I also intend to continue sharing the findings of this study through academic, professional, and community publications and presentations. This is an appropriate approach because, as is described in detail below, my participants come from a variety of cultural backgrounds across Canada, but their unifying characteristic is their praxis as environmental educators and scholars. I know that many of them have benefited from this study because they have told me, both during our interviews and afterwards, that they appreciated the opportunity to discuss and reflect upon their praxis. My hope is that the process and findings of this study will translate into improved implementation of culturally-related environmental education across Canada and internationally for the benefit of both educators and students, Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike.

Methods

As I plotted the direction of my doctoral research, I took into consideration all of the previously discussed guidelines for interpretive and Indigenous research. I took into account the roots and development of oral and narrative research as an academic practice as well as their relationship with the oral tradition. As has been previously discussed, my doctoral methodology incorporated characteristics common to both interpretive narrative and Indigenous research approaches such as reflexivity, reciprocity, accountability, problematization, and contextualization as guiding principles for ethical research. The following section describes the methods that I followed in this study guided by my methodological approach.

Participant Recruitment and Informed Consent

Glesne (2006) suggests that qualitative researchers must reflect carefully when determining sample size. She proposes that, while large samples allow for breadth, smaller samples allow for greater depth of exploration. Kovach (2010) also notes that, “in choosing participants, it is suggested within qualitative studies that research participants be chosen for what they can bring to the study as opposed to random sampling” (p. 51).

Considering these suggestions, I recruited ten contemporary intercultural environmental educators from various cultural and professional backgrounds with the hope of connecting with a large enough group of participants to provide a breadth of perspectives from across Canada that was still small enough to manage and interpret in a deeply meaningful way.

Over a six-month period from early July 2010 to early January 2011, I had the immense privilege to interview ten intercultural environmental educators in-person and and online from a diversity of cultural and geographical backgrounds across Canada. Mirroring the cultural make-up of early Canada, a mix of First Nations, Métis, and non-Aboriginal participants were recruited. Participants’ experience as educators ranged from five to forty years. Their cultural backgrounds were equally diverse; the participants included two Métis women from the prairies, one Sto:lo woman from the West Coast, an Acadian-Mi’kmaq woman originally from the Maritimes who now lives on the West Coast, a Japanese-Canadian man from Ontario, four European Canadian women from various areas of Canada, and a European Canadian man from central Canada who has worked extensively with Inuit youth in the Arctic.

Participants were recruited through my personal and professional contacts as well as through snowball referrals from other participants. They were initially approached via a

brief introductory electronic mail or telephone call. If they expressed interest in participation, an official letter of invitation was presented along with appropriate consent forms by land-mail or in-person. Once consent was established, interviews were conducted.

Along with following standard institutional ethics protocols, I also honoured Aboriginal cultural protocols for sharing information. As Lickers (2006) and Durst (2004) describe, this can be challenging for the contemporary researcher. Keeping this in mind, along with standard institutional consent forms I offered participants, regardless of their cultural background, a small gift of tobacco, a practice for requesting the sharing of important personal information in most North American Aboriginal cultures (Lickers, 2006). Participants who were interviewed online were sent small hand-leather medicine pouches that I made as an alternative to sending tobacco by mail across provincial borders, which is illegal. Following ethics' guidelines, participants chose their own pseudonyms and had the right to withdraw at any time.

Data Collection

Data collection techniques included keeping a field journal and digitally audio recording all interviews. I developed fourteen questions to guide interviews with research participants (Appendix B) based on the overarching themes of this study introduced in my original research questions and literature review such as cultural and ecological identity, pedagogical philosophy and practice, and the relationship between Western and Indigenous knowledge and philosophies of Nature. Interviews ranged from forty-five to seventy minutes in length.

Presentation and Interpretation of Findings

After transcribing each interview, I analyzed the transcripts and crafted mini biographies based on the interpretive biographical approach developed by Denzin (1989). Rather than reorganizing the interviews using a themed coding system, interpretive biography involves keeping each interview separate, providing enough biographical information to create a "portrait" (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005) of the participant, and highlighting "epiphanic moments" where their understanding of key topics and/ or issues related to the research were rapidly expanded (Denzin). Kovach (2010) also contends that this method of presenting condensed forms of participants' narratives with limited theming and coding is appropriate in Indigenous research because it preserves the integrity of their stories.

I employed Denzin's (1989) methodology of interpretive biography in part to guide the interpretation and presentation of the participants' narratives. Denzin describes interpretive biography as "creating literary, narrative accounts and representations of lived experiences. Telling and inscribing stories" (p. 11). He notes that interpretive biography focuses on "epiphanic moments" (p.13) and suggests that:

> Epiphanies are interactional moments and experiences which leave marks on people's lives … In them, personal character is manifested … They alter the fundamental meaning structures in a person's life … The meanings of these experiences are always given retrospectively, as they are relived and reexperienced in the stories persons tell about what has happened to them. (p. 70-71)

My understanding of Denzin's use of the concept of "epiphany" is that it is not meant to be interpreted as religious experiences as the original sense of the word might imply, rather more something akin to an "aha" moment: significant experiences and/ or turning points in people's lives where they have come to see or understand something or someone (themselves or another) in a new way.

Kovach (2010) and Denzin both note that biographies may cover broad life histories or more specific topics. For example, this study was not simply an open biographical exploration of the participants' lives; I focused on the development of their cultural and ecological identities and their experiences with and beliefs about topics such as the relationship between Indigenous ecological knowledge and Western Science and Canadian cultural and ecological identity. In order to create a "portrait" (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005) and contextualize the perspective of each participant, I provided background information and significant amounts of dialogue on the interview setting and flow. However, I did not construct totally comprehensive chronological accounts of the participants' entire lives; the focus of each mini biography was the subject matter as identified in my original research questions (Chapter One) and interview guide (Appendix D), with special attention paid to "epiphanic moments" (Denzin).

Clandin and Connelly (2000) also remind us of the embeddedness (socially, culturally, historically) and continuity of experiences in our lives—while significant life experiences and "epiphanic moments" (Denzin, 1989) can provide us with enhanced insight into peoples' lives, it is also important to remember that life is a continuous series of interrelated events situated in various contexts; the impact of sustained, but perhaps less exciting, experiences and the contexts within which they occur is also important to consider.

As will be discussed further in the next chapter, I uncovered several instances where participants' understanding of themselves and/or something or someone else drastically shifted. I was also curious about epiphanic moments they observed or learned of in others (co-workers, students, family members) and what part might they have played, if any, in facilitating others' moments of epiphany? Following Grele (1994), I also paid attention to

the multiple dialogues present in interviews, searching for epiphanic moments between the research participants and myself as well as considering what previous scholars have said on the topics examined.

Along with searching for epiphanic moments, I followed Creswell's (2007) recommendations and "re-transcribed" each interview for flow and clarity; this involved editing and reorganizing the participants' responses based on the questions as outlined in the interview guide (Appendix D) that were based on the original themes and research questions guiding this study as described above. I avoided completely "re-storying"—paraphrasing participants responses to create a fluid story without quotations (Creswell)—in order to preserve their original voices, an important consideration in Indigenous research (Kovach, 2010).

As mentioned earlier, I also provided each participant with the opportunity to review their biographies to clarify details, confirm anonymity, and expand discussion of key topics (Kovach, 2010). Some participants simply acknowledged that they were fine with their bio as presented while others engaged in extensive co-editing to clarify their thoughts and/ or extend discussion of certain concepts.

Following Denzin's (1989) and Kovach's (2010) recommendations, each participant's biography is presented on its own in chronological order (Chapter Six). As the research journey progressed, I engaged in an ongoing reflexive process, considering each interview in relation to my original research questions and the responses of previous participants. This resulted in an increasingly rich meta-dialogue as the research journey progressed.

In order to frame the final discussion of the findings (Chapter Seven), I referred back to my original research questions to examine the following series of ten short biographies. In the rest of this dissertation, intriguing ideas and responses shared by the participants are woven into an emerging dialogue that emerged between them, the literature, and myself as our research journey progressed. I also highlight "epiphanic moments" (Denzin, 1989) that I experienced myself or witnessed in the participants during this study. These epiphanic moments provide enhanced understanding of the topics and issues we examined.

CHAPTER SIX: THE RESEARCH JOURNEY

The following are short interpretive biographies presented in chronological order that I created based on interviews with the ten participants involved in this study during the summer, fall, and early winter of 2010-2011.

Skywalker

Skywalker is a middle-aged woman from southern Alberta of British and Norwegian descent who runs an outdoor and environmental education consulting company in the eastern foothills of the Canadian Rockies. She has close to thirty years of experience facilitating experiential education with a wide range of students and has cultivated relationships and partnerships with Aboriginal individuals and communities throughout her career.

Skywalker and I met on a lovely July afternoon; I bicycled to our meeting and we conducted our interview over fresh berries next to a slow-moving river. Our discussion was regularly interrupted by the singing of birds *(indicated in this transcript in italics).*

We began the interview discussing Skywalker's childhood and family history. When asked to describe herself culturally, Skywalker replied:

> I think that I've always felt a deep connection to the Celtic side of being [British] you know, since as far as I had an independent mind that, you know, thought beyond basic needs, I think that Celtic sort of … mystery … has always been a strong interest. Whereas the Norwegian, I think … finding out I'm Norwegian and then being curious was kind of more … internal … more academic … … In terms of the Norwegian part… I mean, it explains some things in my physical features, you know, [being] very blonde, blue-eyed … and also maybe in my way of adapting to being outdoors … I love the cold and I love the heat … the sauna and the snow … I really don't have a preferred temperature… and maybe that … is part of that genetic make-up … Whereas Celtic and English was definitely right in there from the get go. That was something I always saw about myself, related to about myself …

When asked to comment further on her cultural influences, Skywalker related:

> My grandparents came from England, so that notion of being English was very much ... I didn't feel it in anyway of separating me or anything like that, but just knowing that was part of who I was definitely was a container within which my identity resided … and … it was later as an older adult where I had even some maybe anger and shame being English because of their arrogance conquering the world and… And how they treated the Scottish… and [Aboriginal peoples] and … it's like, "Oh God I'm English!"

I then asked Skywalker, "So, in terms of your identity as a Canadian… do you feel strongly that you are Canadian or did these other cultural links play more strongly in your identity?" She responded by linking her cultural and ecological identities:

> No, absolutely I see myself as a Canadian ... I've always felt … the [pride] of being Canadian and for me that [pride] has always been about the landscape, the wilderness, the wildlife, you know, the fact that all of that still exists in Canada, is part of what makes me a proud Canadian ... And if that goes I'll be a disappointed Canadian!

Skywalker then elaborated further on her ecological identity, expressing a perspective similar to Deep Ecologists like Arne Naess (Naess & Rothenberg, 1990):

> I…. perceive myself [as] part of nature… I definitely see myself as … the manifesting of nature into human form … I'm just the human version of nature… we are in fact, one … Ultimately I think I would always describe myself as a human connected to the Earth ... I've always been culturally and spiritually earth-based.

When asked to describe herself as an educator, Skywalker highlighted the experiential and dynamic characteristics of her approach to teaching. She commented:

> I would say I'm a very experiential educator; I used to do a lot of prep in order to have some foundation and then be flexible from the foundation. Now, more often I actually just show up and the prep often happens in my mind driving to the location … But the interesting part of that for me is … when I come to a group and sense the group energy, that has a big influence on how I'm going to present and what I'm going to present and what have you because I pick up the group dynamics, the group maturity, the group you know, whatever that is … and I guess I've been doing it for so long, I can just now integrate that into my design and … delivery process.

Skywalker then provided a more detailed description of the programs that she currently delivers:

> So with kids … I'[ve] been [going through my own] experiential process of looking at what's out there [in] experiential education and Earth education and … outdoor classroom science-based education and that sort of thing and … Looking at that in short programming and long programming and … in my mind, trying to assess, "how do you create more 'aha' moments? What really gets the kids to connect with the environment?" I'm … in the process of deepening and learning how to provide programming for kids that does take them into a relationship with Nature and not just Nature as a book or Nature as a piece of paper … or Nature as a sound you hear or the colour of [the] sky, but something that's interactive, something that's a part of them, something that could be part of their future. *(birds chirping)*

She continued by highlighting her belief in student-centred experiential learning:

> I also try to bring in a lot of observation and opportunities for the kids to gain awareness through sharing and looking … What are they learning [and] what are they seeing? And acknowledging them for it, because I think one of the things kids lack is the sense that they matter, a sense of acknowledgement for who they are and that their ideas are valid and fun and worthwhile, so in a short time frame I often have, how do you provide that for them? And that's something I really work on too … *(birds chirping)*

Skywalker also works extensively with adults. Her adult courses often draw on local Indigenous knowledge, traditions and history. Here is how she described her approach to some of those programs:

> [My adult programs are] very interpretive… Previously, my programs were … trying to take people on a cultural journey. And I had partnered with [an archaeological society]. I had a program called "Hiking Sacred Places" where we would go to places of pictographs, places of wildlife valleys, hunting valleys in the past, hunting grounds, that kind of thing …

She elaborated:

> One of the places we would go to … I really believed that to go there [was] a sacred journey… We needed to go there in the spirit of how that valley or that creek bed was … perceived in it's past to recreate the sacredness of it. So we would smudge before we went into the valley, I would do a meditation where everybody picked up a rock, because the rocks are the record keepers of the Earth, and so the rock would help take us in a journey back in time in our mind[s] … And that's where the archaeologist would then … do the storytelling of the [geological and archaeological] process[es of the area] … It was a very exciting [and] enlightening journey … that links to an oral history of various tribes in North America … It's really quite a profound location historically speaking.

Skywalker concluded:

> This year my focus seems to be more on [cultivating]… a personal connection with the landscape and … for me that's taken me in the direction of edible and medicinal plants which has always been a side passion, but finding that for people … to recognize that this knowledge and this healing and food and medicine exists here in our landscape that really has generated a more pertinent … connection with the Earth. And so I'm finding that seems to be the strength of how to make that initial connection to the landscape with people.

When I asked Skywalker what initially drew her to incorporate Indigenous knowledge into her programs and her own ecological identity, she explained that it had been a gradual process over many years. Similar to other non-Aboriginal participants (e.g. Orange Blossom), she described feeling an inexplicable attraction at a young age to Aboriginal traditions:

> It's been a gradual process throughout my life. My family was very lucky to have a cabin in Windermere, BC from the time I was six. And I can remember for sure, 12, maybe younger, when we would drive there, I would look out the window and I always saw myself as this Aboriginal person running in the bush beside the car and if there was a river then I was on the river in a voyageur canoe. You know ... I don't know if I'd even heard of a voyageur canoe in a book or anything … but I knew I'd been in a voyageur canoe ... It was like … this internal knowledge. I knew … that that was part of who I was on some level… and so … as I got older … it was almost, this would sound corny, but it's almost like the past life part of me was still present and hadn't finished something in this life … there was this kind of draw [to] knowledge [of] these traditional ways ... Like I have a pile of wooden skis in my porch … I have wooden snowshoes you know… this affinity with the past perhaps ... the simplicity of a past life… that's always been an internal motivator and an internal part of me …

Skywalker went on to describe her first extended experiences with Indigenous people and knowledge:

> [In] my twenties I was … very lucky to hook up with a group of people, it started with one person and we became a group of people who called ourselves the "Earth Medicine Co-op". And we … were very lucky that was actually the first time I had interactions at all with Indigenous people. It was the Stoney Nakoda Sioux people … and at that time Chief [name] was the chief… and … there was a gal and a guy who were [ceremonial] facilitators ... and [they] had a connection with [Chief's name] who gave us permission to actually build a Medicine Wheel out at Nakoda. And so… that was in the 80s and so that was when … I had an opportunity to actually find this other arena for expressing this connection to nature and discovered

> Medicine Wheels and ceremony and ... it's really about on a deeper level … So that became… I mean that was the major part of my life in the 80s was that experience learning that connection … and having the opportunity to express something that I'd always felt through that venue ...

I found Skywalker's description of her first experiences with Indigenous peoples and knowledge intriguing, so I asked her what she felt were the key aspects to making that a positive experience for everyone involved? She responded by emphasizing the welcoming atmosphere that was created by their hosts:

> Often at the events, there would be people there that would be maybe … setting up the Sweatlodge or, you know, teaching us about things. And so I had interactions at that level, but … it was always a willingness to be there and ... I don't know what their thoughts were about us, but if they were anything other than positive, it was never shown that way. So there was definitely a support and … [mutual] acknowledgement and ... Yeah they were always helpful and participatory and co-creative. So that was my first experience.

Skywalker then shared how these positive experiences early on in her career have influenced her teaching practice and philosophy:

> When I … created the "Hiking Sacred Places" series, I knew that I wanted to have an Elder know what I was doing and … you know … get their blessing. It was very interesting … I managed to get into a class with the city that I thought was one thing but turned out to be something else. My mom and I were the only ones there … It was supposed to be on the history of Native people in city parks … So this woman, [in the end] actually did a course on how to approach an Elder to get their blessing (laughing) on research or that sort of thing … She … like me, she showed up … and gave us what we needed. So after that I did go out to Eden Valley, which is west of my place and … met a fellow … who's now passed away unfortunately, but you know, [I] told him about my ideas and my interests … So… for me going to … this man out at Eden Valley was really important.
>
> I also approached a fellow that I worked with years ago with Elder Hostel out at Morley … and … asked him too if he had an Elder because I knew there were different bands. And I did one hike down in the Highwood area and Grotto Canyon and I know the pictographs are written by the Kootenai… not a Siouan people, but it's still in their territory and so [he] and I ended up striking up a relationship.

Building on this initial friendship, Skywalker had the opportunity to facilitate an intensive cross-cultural immersion course:

> One of my most proud … programs as a cross-cultural experiential educator is when [Stoney Nakoda friend] and I created a 3-day program for this group from England that was doing a ten-day spiritual outdoor journey in Canada … The people came out to Nakoda lodge, but we stayed in tipis and [he] and his son created sort of a kitchen arbour. You know the structure and the bows of the poplar trees making the roof and a big fire and … we had this beautiful outhouse that he'd made… hahahaha… for us and brought tables down from this kind of camping area at Nakoda Lodge and ... he brought his Elders along. And with his Elder… we all made our own Sweatlodge, got our own rocks, [and] had a Sweatlodge ceremony. You know his wife came and made moose meat stew and we had ... gooseberries and made dream catchers and then the last night we actually went to the Pow-wow …

She continued:

> It was also Canada Day … hahahahaa… [it] was like Canada Day transposed over Thanksgiving because there was this table of Europeans, this table of Aboriginals… [and] this one table of Aboriginals and Europeans sitting together. And they [the Europeans] were all from England, they weren't Canadian Europeans, they were European Europeans. And you know it's Canada Day and we're eating this amazing meal together after a Sweatlodge ceremony … and someone starting singing "Oh Canada" and I just about wept… it was just like. "God, this is so cool" ... It felt [like the] bringing together of the Nations … It felt like there was healing on a very subtle level and perhaps unconscious for many folks and so that was a program that I was very, very proud of…

Several other participants in this study also mentioned these kinds of direct intercultural experiences as formative experiences.

Reflecting on the kinds of powerful experiences described above, I asked Skywalker to describe what she thought were the keys to facilitating effective intercultural educational environments. She highlighted deep mutual respect and the importance of teachers "stepping back" and being open to learning from their students:

> I would say one of the key things is of course, respect … it comes back to what I said about we all … need to be heard… we all need to feel acknowledged and we all need to feel we have something worth contributing because … the truth that we are connected means we have impact ... whether we're conscious of it or not and if we're angry and hurting that we don't feel heard, we hit trees and kill squirrels because … that's the impact we'll be having … One of the things that I've … learned from other people [is] … "This is how we do a Sweatlodge, but we honour all traditions, but we do it this way." You know, "This is how we do a pipe

> ceremony but we honour all traditions …" You know, so that's been a big teaching for me….

Skywalker added:

> Here's another journey I'm on personally is that ... You know there's this paradigm where you know everything [as a teacher] … and I think it's hard for a teacher to sometimes shut-up hahahahahaaha! … So that's another thing in this last year I feel like that's been part of my opportunity and challenge is to shut up more and, you now, let the kids learn something and teach me something whether I know it or not …

Like Hawaiian Nalani Wilson (2008), who describes mutual learning that occurred on an inter-Indigenous canoe expedition that she led in New Zealand with Maori students, Skywalker believes in "stepping back" and being open to learning from her students. She provides an example of this below:

> I did a [program] with Aboriginal kids from northern Alberta and when I did the smudge circle I had this feeling right after I started it that I was going in the wrong direction and afterwards one of the kids came up to me and said, "Yeah, you should have gone clockwise... the other direction". And … I totally respected him for that and we totally had this connection after that you know, as opposed to being defensive because he put down the teacher or something right? So you know that kind of … being open that there's no right or wrong … that we can't do it without each other… so how do we live that? How do we live in community that way in our day-to-day?

Intrigued by this last anecdote, I asked Skywalker if she had any other stories of intercultural gaffes? She responded by sharing a wonderful tale about a humorous epiphanic moment with a Blackfoot Elder:

> I was out at … Blackfoot Crossing… beautiful place … and … we had an opportunity to be talking to an Elder downstairs and ... he was talking about the Sundance and inviting us to one. And we were chatting and … in the tradition I had recently studied in ... when you did a Sweatlodge or you did certain ceremonies you did not wear clothes because the idea was, you know, it was … more of a pure experience, your clothes kind of got in the way… And I was kind of in that paradigm as I was talking and … listening to him and… I think he said, "You have to wear a skirt". And I said, "Well… do you wear a top?" And he craaaacked up laughing and said to me "If you come without a top, their eyes will pop open!" Hahahahahahhahaahaha! We just kind of had this moment where I realized, "Oh, I'm in the wrong paradigm for this moment!" Hahahahhaa! But we just have a great

> laugh about that and you know, it was like a deeper bonding experience in spite of the fact that I was embarrassed. Hahahaha!

Through this anecdote, Skywalker demonstrates that having a sense of humour about yourself is also a key aspect to being a successful intercultural learner and educator.

After learning about Skywalker's background and experiences, I wanted to discuss some broader issues with her relating to Canadian cultural and ecological identity. For example, I asked her what she thought of John Ralston Saul's (2008) concept of Canada being a "métis nation"? She responded:

> I think it's brilliant actually … I mean, ultimately I think it's kind of our way through… Because … it creates that opportunity for us to see that we are all the same in terms of our needs wants, human nature, makeup, and that we all have capabilities and failings… You know, when I have the schools come now [often] … there's ten White kids and the other twenty kids are of all races and nations … It says to me that we need to get beyond our ethnic differences if we are going to be even more of a part of this nation with the future generation and our immigration policies and what have you. So I think that being a métis nation recognizes all cultures and traditions, but still has a system or a code of, you know, law and behaviour that is civil and respectful … I think that's the real balance and I think that really is you know, who Canada is … and that's part of the Canada that I stand on guard for.

Skywalker then proceeded to share an interesting story about her experiences working with children who are recent immigrants to Canada. Again, she emphasized her belief in being open to learning with and from her students:

> I was doing a program at the zoo on … interaction in ecosystems and we're looking at all these native ecosystems and I realized as I looked around … it wasn't a classroom of Albertans who grew up on or near farms or had a Grandma on a farm. They didn't know about gophers or badgers. Nobody had even heard of a badger… These kids knew more about tigers and ... Eurasian animals … because that's where most of [their families] were from … So that was an interesting paradigm [shift] for me ... Because I was teaching them about the exotic Canadian animals and they were teaching me about the exotic ... other continental animals. So in that regard I really saw, you know, when you talk about nature and the landscape and what makes up who we are … I am indigenous to this land ... and so I have that and there I saw the contrast of their [the students] indigenous nature …

Skywalker elaborated:

> Education is the only way to gain those understandings … And to see the value in what they know and that it's not bad or wrong that they don't know… So then … how do I teach so that it's easy for them to build the bridge? I need to think out of the box… I need to be flexible enough to realize they bring these other worldviews and to somehow find a way to make that bridge so that they're still feeling like they know something, which they do, and they're [still] understanding the essential concept of what they need to know and they're not wrong because they don't know about cougars…

Continuing our discussion of Canadian identity, I asked Skywalker if she had any thoughts on Canadian *ecological* identity? She replied:

> Well, I'm probably ethnocentric in this answer because I haven't spent a lot of time in the East and so… in terms of having a … ecological identity mine's pretty rooted in the West you know sort of BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and maybe a toe in Manitoba. So … ecologically I think there still is the sense of … the Great Wild, the mountains, the rivers, the forestry, you know. I would say, the rivers of the East, the mountains of the West and the forest industry and our resource industry base. Which means mountains and rocks and minerals and trees that on that level. Yes, I think there is a[n] … ecological definition of who we are… that's pretty common across the country.

Following up on her response above, I asked Skywalker if she thought that the average Canadian sees themselves as part of Nature? Or is Nature only seen as a resource? Similar to several other participants in this study, she replied by identifying several different conflicting Canadian ecological identities:

> Perhaps … both… but I'd say probably the most common identification would be Nature as a resource. Like, if you think about … the lumberjack, you know, those kind of paradigms, the cowboy, the cultural paradigms we have aren't really quite so deep as the connection to the land. It really is about what they *do* ... which means the resource … is what you do to make your living. So, I think again, we're very *economically* focused in our identities. And I think culturally we have been since the industrial revolution.

She continued:

> So ... at that deeper level of landscape connection, it's starting, I would say, and probably there is a large percentage that perceives it that way and probably there is a large percentage of people who wouldn't want to see Canada's natural resources wiped out for the sake of economics. I would say most Canadians would not want that … to cut down the mountains to make you know, limestone or cement or

> whatever. [They] probably don't want to drain the lakes … We don't want to lose that … and I think that's the oxymoron we kind of walk in as Canadians because you know, we don't want to lose that and we do have a personal connection with it, but it's not strong enough yet, that it rises above our economic sense of self, and our economic sense of what we deserve in life … Beyond or maybe deeper than our love of the landscape, those two really hold in kind of a paradoxical stalemate.

Skywalker concluded:

> Because it's our resource and our quality of life economically, but it's also you know ... Do we use 'till we lose it? Because we love it of it's own essence, the Great Lakes, the mountains. And … even recreation I think we look at, you know, as an activity as a shopping mall kind of experience, you know we still don't really see recreation as a relationship ... to Nature ... It's an activity we do… I mean there are ... I would say there are … groups that do the deeper connection, but in the retail world, Nature is still an experience and an activity, not a relationship. Yeah. So, I think we're still walking that edge, still craving that balance.

Finally, I asked Skywalker if she, like some contemporary scholars and educators (e.g. Cajete, 1999; Snow 1977/ 2005) thought it was possible and beneficial to blend Aboriginal knowledge and philosophies of Nature with other (e.g. Western) traditions? She commented optimistically, but with some astute concerns as well, emphasizing the importance of a *deep* ecological approach:

> Yeah, I think it's absolutely possible to blend them ... I think … where it's going to be tricky is, "Does the blend make it another commodity experience?" Or you know, "How authentic, how deep are we willing to go down the rabbit hole, so to speak, in our relationship to where we live?" You know, humanity has a big disconnect and … we have learned to be afraid of anything that takes away from our … right to that lifestyle … [However,] … I think [there are] those who are willing to make the blend and willing to find a way to build a bridge ... For example, there seems to be an upwelling of things like permaculture and … you know xeroscaping. And … to me a lot of those kinds of things are probably part of the manifesting of the blend in a physical expression … right … So philosophically … it's more than having … the parts of the washing machine have the same code on them so they can … be recycled. That's part of it, but on the day to day … this yard [gestures to our surrounding] can be an amazing permaculture garden of native plants that are edible and it isn't … So, more and more I see that kind of … physical expression I guess of the minds meeting and the cultures meeting. So, I think on that personal level and on that … you know, the green movement, green economy … that is part of the blending of the two things. And that is a very viable direction that we can go.

Similar to Chief John Snow (1975/ 2003), Skywalker then closed our interview with a call for respectful sharing of Aboriginal philosophies and knowledge of Nature for the benefit of all of Canadian society while also recognizing the complexity of such an endeavour:

> You know I really feel that that Native knowledge, that Native paradigm is … part of what can reconnect us and save parts of our planet *(birds chirping)*, so ... on that level I feel like a Native knowledge is necessary for all humanity, not just Native humanity. And … over the years I've met … Native people who feel that way *(birds chirping)* and some of them have been persecuted by their own people for sharing knowledge with Whites … And, you know, the feedback I often get is "No, the Whites have made enough money off of our knowledge," or "No, that's sacred knowledge and somebody will go abuse it." And I agree, I understand that …

Reflecting an understanding of the concerns surrounding the sharing of Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) raised by scholars such as Simpson (2004) that were discussed in Chapter Four, Skywalker concluded with comments on the potential tension that can arise within Aboriginal communities when members are willing to share traditional teachings:

> [However,] there's a fellow, Red Cloud's Vision, and he used to do a ceremony out in BC you know and he believed all people needed to know it. Sun Bear was another man who, his teachings were available in books about Medicine Wheels and all kinds of things and he felt all people needed to know it. But they weren't always supported by their own people for sharing that knowledge … I understand the reasons why and I totally empathize with them, and at the same time ... you know, we need help!

I really enjoyed interviewing Skywalker. Her energy and enthusiasm is infectious and I deeply appreciate her sharing of wisdom and experiences. I was especially intrigued by her discussions of epiphanic moments that she has had in intercultural settings such as when she asked if it was appropriate to attend a Sweatlodge in the nude. Skywalker's ability to have a sense of humour in such situations speaks volumes about her capacity to build intercultural relationships. This was also evident in descriptions of her teaching

philosophy where she described the importance of "stepping back" as an educator and, as Wilson (2008) discusses, having the humility to learn *from* and *with* your students rather than always presenting yourself as the all-knowing expert. Skywalker also emphasized the importance of building genuine face-to-face intercultural relationships based on deep mutual respect. Her thoughts on bioregionalism and its relationship to the diversity of ecological identities in Canada were also enlightening. In subsequent communication, Skywalker commented, "Thanks again, I really enjoyed being part of your project!"

Natasha Little

Natasha Little is an Acadian woman in her early thirties of French and Mi'kmaq ancestry. She has been involved in the field of intercultural environmental education for over a decade. Natasha first became involved with intercultural environmental education on Canada's East Coast in a university-level integrative science program. She studied and worked there for almost a decade before graduate studies took her to British Columbia. Natasha stayed on the West Coast after completing her master's degree and now works as an education program manager with a large non-profit environmental education organization. We met on a hot July afternoon at her home and conducted our interview in her backyard. Our only distractions were birds and the delicious aroma of salmon roasting on the barbecue.

When I first asked Natasha about her cultural background, she responded:

> I grew up on Cape Breton Island and … I'm Acadian ... Acadian as far back as we can trace. So in Cape Breton … it's pretty easy to dig up your family tree because it's well recorded, so … it's really supported … and … even the university … and all of the churches have a good track of peoples' family history. So, we've traced both my mom's and dad's families back to ... My mom's family probably to the mid-1700s and my Dad's to the early 1800's and … all of the names are Acadian. But we know that they're not all Acadian because all of the Mi'kmaq adopted

> Acadian names … So, we know there's Mi'kmaq blood, but we just don't know where ...

I was intrigued by Natasha's mention of her Mi'kmaq ancestry and asked her if this was common for Acadian families as is indicated by some scholars (e.g. Karahasan, 2008)? She replied somewhat hesitantly:

> Maybe … I have met quite a few people who… in the past probably five years have said that and said, "Oh well if you're Acadian, you're Métis." But growing up, it wasn't … [it] certainly wasn't taboo, [but] there was no mention of it ... Like it wasn't, "Are you Métis or not?" It was just not mentioned… It would have been from, you know, several generations back … My Dad … has mentioned Métis background, but we didn't really pick up on it … we didn't go anywhere with it … In fact, I thought growing up when I heard "Métis" … I always assumed it meant "Quebec" French … I really thought that Acadians were … a different … breed completely … We learned that Acadians and Mi'kmaq [were] kind of allies against the English, and we knew that they … intermarried and ... had families ... But I didn't think about them being called "Métis" ever … It wasn't called that in the textbooks, or social studies… lessons. [However,] I shouldn't speak for all [of] the [East] coast

Later in the interview, echoing my own experiences and those of many other scholars of mixed cultural backgrounds (e.g. Owens, 2001; Pieterse, 2001), Natasha discussed the struggle to define her own cultural identity and how it relates to her work:

> I've struggled … a little bit in terms of my own identity … Having worked with First Nations' cultures… in … personal learning as well as teaching ... And also [being] really interested in my own Métis heritage. I wonder if it … in a sense … qualifies [me] as… a First Nations' person, then I'm separate from the … Western oppressors you know? But obviously I'm a blend … I wonder if I want to welcome First Nations or Métis heritage as a way of feeling included? Or giving me … legitimacy? And I don't want that to be the case… I don't want that to be the reason that I explore it because … being Acadian or being completely non-Aboriginal is legitimate as well and doesn't entitle me any less to learning about Aboriginal culture… In some ways I would prefer to identify as Acadian… *and* … at the same time teach about Aboriginal culture because then other people who are non-Aboriginal will recognize that it's accessible to them …

Natasha continued by describing the highly blended nature of Acadian culture, language, and even cuisine:

> I really don't see it as a pure … culture… The language is not pure … It's … a mix of old France French with some Scottish terms, some Mi'kmaq terms mixed in … And then the music especially in Cape Breton is almost all Scottish. You know, Acadian fiddle music is Scottish-based in Cape Breton especially. And … food, a lot of it is local food ... all learned by … Acadians [from the Mi'kmaq]. And then it was farmed as well which would have been some food[s] … brought over from France. But just in terms of kind of every day events, [Acadian culture is] very mixed.

Next I asked Natasha how she would describe the relationship between her cultural and ecological identities based on her early life experiences. She replied:

> I [don't] think I … draw lines between my ecological … and my cultural upbringing … I very much see the time that I spent outdoors [as a child] equivalent to time that I spent indoors … I guess an ecology doesn't have to be indoors or outdoors. I see… a party with my family as an ecological lesson and I see … spending time outdoors or learning about the environment as a cultural lesson as well. So I really don't … separate them. I think [that] because I grew up spending so much time outdoors … we [were] never "learning about ecosystems", but when I look back now, I recognize it as learning about ecosystems just in … the differences between playing on the beach and playing in the forest and playing up in trees and playing in crazy winds and, learning about these patterns and … because it was often with my family or with my brothers or cousins, it's kind of always tied together with the cultural aspect …

Natasha then shared the following memories that represent the intimate connection between cultural and ecological identity in her family in a way similar to Indigenous scholars such as Gregory Cajete (1994) and others (e.g. Abram, 1996; Simpson, 2002) who articulate the strong ancestral link and symbiosis of ecology and geography with the development of Indigenous cultures:

> My grandfather ... was the lighthouse keeper on [a nearby] island and so we were always aware of the … relationship with Nature in terms of … the danger of being out on the sea. And … my dad's family is … a fishing family all of his ancestors ... are all fishermen. And ... so my grandfather would sit either outside or *(seagulls calling)* in his rocking chair and just watch the water from his binoculars and have his cb radio tuned in just listening to what was happening on the water and so even sitting indoors you're listening to the relationships, kind of the stories, that are happening out on the water, and being aware of that. And then that being a culture too, very much a water, you know a fishing culture … People loving being on the water *(seagulls)* and also dying on the water, and losing family members on the water all of the time and still needing to fish because that's your livelihood.

She continued:

> Yeah … so I mean … I can still feel that of being on the island and … the lighthouse has been … replaced when he retired 25 years ago probably, maybe longer… But I can feel the … ocean air when I think of being there, I can smell the cranberries, I can hear the fog horn, and … it's pretty clear … all of that mixed together very clearly, family … and the feeling of ecology.

Prompted by her stories linking her family's culture with the ecology of Cape Breton, I asked Natasha how she saw herself in relation to Nature? She commented:

> I've always felt a part of it … I remember the first time I … started thinking about ecological identity … I mean [I] studied "ecology" in university and … then started taking some… environmental philosophy [courses] … and, reading about different relationships that people have with Nature. And I remember being woken up by that thinking, "Oh!" You know I'd never thought about feeling *separate from* or feeling *part of*, it's just … I always sort of felt like I was *part of (bbq noise)* ...

Natasha continued by identifying storytelling as a key to her early ecological identity development:

> Cape Breton very much has a story telling culture … and … Acadians love to tell stories and there, I think the stories that I was raised with very much made me feel part of ... Nature or… within Nature … and it was only until I started reading about it that I realized, "Oh, I could think of this in a different way."

She continued:

> The coastal life and stories especially that I was told are very much like … "If the wind is up … you cannot go outside, because you will be swept out to sea." There are very clear dangers of Nature, and so obviously I'm part of Nature if I can be thrown into the ocean and swept away! Or [it was the] same with you know, we weren't allowed to go jump on the ice because it would pull out and then you'd be taken out to the ocean … Same with fishing too … just … hearing stories of people dying on the water. So, I think those sorts of stories made it very real of being a part of Nature. I wasn't scared of Nature, I was just like, "You need to pay attention because you're not left out of this."

I saw a strong link between Natasha's description of storytelling in Acadian culture and its central role in many Indigenous cultures (Turner, 2005). Perhaps this is due to the longstanding connection of the Acadian people with the Maritime landscape—Hasn't

Acadian culture, language and diet also been shaped by several hundred years of symbiosis with the rugged East Coast?

Our conversation then shifted to Natasha's practice as an intercultural environmental educator. I asked her if she could identify any "epiphanic" (Denzin, 1989) experiences that influenced her early in her life to pursue this unique vocation. She replied somewhat enigmatically:

> No ... I'm really bad at identifying one … It's because … I like big pictures ... and I also like to acknowledge where things come from and so … I [would] really [like to] acknowledge … you know, that one song that my grandfather would sing at … parties … [that] influenced me to become an educator ... or those cranberries on the island and just being able to smell them and wanting my ... kids to smell them … Or… you know, going to university and realizing that there are other [worldviews]… [but I can't].

She continued by describing the gradual development of her awareness:

> It was probably in university that I started thinking that there are other worldviews and so that ... *(sirens)* made me... think about … different worldviews and… epistemology and … different ways of … thinking and then … realizing that there are also different ways of learning and teaching so … I know that my passion for environment and for culture came from everyday things growing up, but ... working with [professor's name] integrative science program … that really encourages thinking about worldviews and … different knowledges … really shifted … the way that I thought about science. First of all … I loved science, loved it, just loved learning about little details and big picture and … loved the stories that came through science …

Natasha continued:

> And then when I realized that I could learn … something from any number of different ways … And learn different things about one tiny little detail from different stories told from different perspectives, that really sparked an interest in learning ... personally … And then I sort of always imagined that I would go on to study or to ... work in science but I didn't have a passion for … I didn't have a drive for scientific inquiry ... I just had the drive for more stories and that … made me think about … education … and learning and teaching. And learning and teaching very much come hand in hand for me ... I only … I think I'm only in education because I love to learn and so it's always this… feedback ... loop.

Similar to other participants (e.g. Skywalker) and Hawaiian environmental educator Nalani Wilson (2008), Natasha emphasizes in the passage above her passion for learning as well as teaching. This seems to be a common characteristic of intercultural environmental educators.

Next I asked Natasha if she could identify any key people who strongly influenced her as she developed her passion for intercultural environmental education? She replied:

> Yeah … through the integrative science program, I worked with some great … scientists and some brilliant Elders … I think it was a great big challenge for me because I didn't want to step on toes and so … I was shy to … ask questions… and just watched a lot ... and over time certain Elders grew really just, kind of used to me being there and would say, "Why don't you try this moose meat?" Or, "Why don't you come to this feast?" Or, "Why don't you come to this celebration?" And … [two particular Elders] … became good friends and… [one of them] especially so … They just kind of opened themselves up. I think I was around enough, so that they just got used to me and we just liked each other's company. So it became more comfortable. Instead of us having a formal work relationship … That's when the real learning started ... I learned that I could ask about other cultures and other ways of doing things and … they also … just say it like it is ... So I learned to trust them over time and ... I learned to trust that they trusted me and so… I learned that if I didn't know, I could ask a question ... and I also trusted that if I was asking an insulting question, they would say, "You can't ask me that." Or they would just roll their eyes, or … change the subject. So, I just came to trust in that process …

Similar to other participants (e.g. Skywalker, Orange Blossom) and some Aboriginal scholars (e.g. Graveline, 1998), Natasha emphasizes above the foundational importance of relationship building for effective intercultural learning with Aboriginal peoples.

At another point in the interview, Natasha also commented on the importance of self-confidence and building trust in intercultural educational environments:

> For me it's all about trust … trusting in myself … and trusting in others… Whether it's students who I work with or Elders … or teachers who I'm working with … I trust in myself, my own abilities in bringing forth whatever we're learning or teaching and I trust that whoever I'm working with will give me feedback that ... will feed into the process … When I really work with myself to… look at my abilities, I have the best results ...

She then explained how authenticity and self-confidence in her academic and professional work relates to her personal life as well:

> My masters' thesis was … mostly on deep ecology … Looking for practices … for teachers to help them feel more connected with Nature … And in order to ... feel confident [to] bring this forward … in order to bring these messages to teachers, I really had to be practicing them myself. So … during my research I … would regularly take breaks … I would stop being on my computer to go for a walk … to personally reconnect or ... do things that I felt were really important … Really knowing where my food came from or growing some food and then … I didn't tell the teachers this, you know I didn't say, "I've been doing this … preparing for this workshop …" But the feedback that I got was very much, "I believe in this work because you seem to be living it." … And I … really, felt like, "Oh … this is working." And I felt good because I'd been doing these practices that connect me and I also felt confident bringing it forward.

Reflecting on her years of experience as an intercultural environmental educator, I asked Natasha how she felt about the concept of blending Indigenous knowledge and philosophy with Western science or other ways of knowing and seeing the world? She replied amidst a distracting, but welcome, symphony of birdcalls:

> Well, for [many] years I was working with [a university-based] integrative science program … So I was kind of looking out there to see what was happening in Indigenous education ... and then also keeping an eye on what was happening … in the science world and trying to bring them together *(birds).* So [for example] there would be a new *(birds)* article out on dreams … and in the class we *(birds)* would be working on consciousness, so we would talk about … *(birds)* what's happening physiologically in the brain when you're dreaming and then also have a conversation or do an activity on visions *(birds)* or dreams *(birds)* culturally … So we would always blend, well not always ... Sometimes we would do strictly science and sometimes we would do strictly … I guess there's no strict cultural, but we'd focus on [a] traditional [Indigenous] activity ... And sometimes they blended really well and sometimes … you didn't need to blend them ... Sometimes it would water them down if you blended … and we didn't want to water down science or … be an assimilation … We wanted it to be an "integration" or coming together and … recognizing that there are differences that shouldn't be blended.

The position that Natasha seems to takes in the above passage is that blending is sometimes advisable, but not always, depending on the subject matter and context. She also echoes the concern of scholars such as Goulet (2001) and Hermes (2000) who warn that blending can

result in a “watering down” effect, especially of Indigenous knowledge in a Western dominated system. As discussed previously in the literature review, whether or not Indigenous knowledge can and should be blended with Western or forms of knowledge, is a strongly contested concept (e.g. Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2005; Cajete, 2001; Little Bear, 2000b). As will become increasingly evident in subsequent participant biographies, the plurality of opinions in the literature was manifested in this study as well.

Natasha concluded her comments on blending by highlighting spirituality as a key distinction between Western science and Indigenous knowledge:

> Well, I think that spirituality is at the base of … Indigenous … culture. There’s a deep … spiritual connection. And … as it stands, Western science cannot fit spirituality into its realm. It doesn’t … [acknowledge] the need for … spirituality. It … dismisses or … takes away from it ... And same with the … strictly objective reductionist components of … Western science ... Sometimes you don’t need to see the big picture, you just want to look at the details ...

Next I asked Natasha if she had ever observed an “epiphanic moment” in a student or colleague? She replied with this story of creative experiential teaching and learning:

> Several years ago when I was teaching [in an integrative science program], and … we were talking about … the position of the sun well, all our solar system and … I think I may have stumbled and realized… “You know, I really have a hard time grasping how everything is working together.” And then I asked and no one could really answer and this is something you learn really young, but none of us really got it ... And I like when I’m part of not getting it too … So then, I … I remember sort of figuring it out and I drew a diagram on the board, but I could tell there were [still] some blank stares. And then we made some models and that helped… Looking at where the sun is and … specifically where Earth is and our moon … but having the other planets involved as well and looking at rotation … and … revolving around the sun and ... imagining all of the planets doing the same with their respective moons and rings. And still it was really challenging even though we had these great models.
>
> And so [then] we did this activity where … I stood in the middle of the room and I was the sun…. hahaha … I mean that’s a bit pompous of me hahahaha! Everyone revolves around me! No, I stood and then … we just pushed all the desks out and all the students were different planets … and then we had a moon just for Earth ... It started with a conversation about the seasons and so why…? You know, why it’s colder in winter than it is in summer… and why the days are longer in summer than

> winter… so that's just what … sparked the conversation … but for a lot of the students, when we were moving … they would rotate, they would move on their axis … and we would watch one person do it at a time and then they knew how long it took to rotate on its axis and how long it took to revolve around me… But they physically had to do it… and then with Earth we took extra time to think about ... and we kind of tilted her… a little bit. So she could imagine … her head… and then it was when she was turning and she could see the sun that she realized, "Oh, it's day time!" because she was facing the sun and then when she's not, it's nighttime ... And then the position of the moon as well could she could see that the moon could see the sun … And then she realized, "Oh, if you were standing right here on my shoulder, then … you would see the sun's reflection. You would see the moon seeing the sun." And it just kind of clicked when we were moving physically moving our body to kind of dance this … Earth *(car horn) (seagulls)* moon sun relationship… that tilt is what creates the seasons, not us being closer or farther from … it just you know how long we get to "see" the sun… And … it clicked for me too and I love that when it's a collective click ... it worked! It went into probably a [whole] week of lessons…

This story is a great example of innovative experiential education. Natasha again emphasizes her own role as teacher-learner, not being afraid to admit when she doesn't know something herself and seeking answers with her students.

Later in the interview Natasha shared another, more poignant story about an epiphanic "aha" moment that she facilitated for her nephew with the help of a trusted Mi'kmaq Elder and friend:

> So my nephew … he was probably four at the time, three maybe … who would be Acadian Mi'kmaq, if we want to say that, and then probably some Scottish … grew up in downtown Toronto … [He] visited some museum of anthropology … and learned and he was learning about … Aboriginal culture … I didn't know this and [when] I went [to visit] ... I brought him a little birchbark canoe that [a Mi'kmaq Elder] had given to me to give to [him] and … so I gave it to him ... and I said, "This is a gift from my friend [Elder's name]." And I said,' Have you heard of Mi'kmaq people?" And he said, "No…" And I said, "Oh well, Mi'k maq people are people who live in Canada, you know how we have French heritage and a long time ago our ancestors came from France? Well Mi'kmaq people lived here for a really long time before any people from Europe came over…" And he said, "Kind of like Aboriginal people?" And I said, "Okay, we're talking the same language here… So Mi'kmaq people are Aboriginal" And he said, "Oh, okay, yeah… I thought this looked like an Aboriginal canoe…" Only three at the time! And then, I said, "Well, my friend is a Mi'kmaq Elder and he gave it to me to give to you." And I said, "Could we maybe call him to say thanks?" And he said, "Yeah!". And we called and [Elder] talked to him for a minute and then switched to Mi'kmaq … he just

> switched … and [my nephew] just kind of listened and picked up some of the words and he just kind of nodded … and … they just had like a nice little conversation and then he said, "I love you!" and then he hung up. Three-year olds will do that …

Natasha continued:

> Maybe two days later we went for a walk and [my nephew] … was quiet and then he said, "I think I wanna be Mi'kmaq when I grow up!" And then he looked at me to see if I was going to laugh … I didn't … I just looked at him and he said, "Can I be that?" and I said, "I don't know, let's call [Mi'kmaq Elder friend]" and so he asked him and [Elder] said, "Oh [nephew]! Being Mi'kmaq has nothing to do with what's in your blood, it's what's in your heart!" And [nephew] was like "Ah! Great! Thank you!" And hung-up ... It was a great lesson for both of us… It doesn't matter what percentage of your blood [is Aboriginal]… could be zero percent of your blood, but if you identify, if you choose to identify in a certain way then … who will stop you from doing that? If you're righteous about it then that's different, but if you choose to take on a worldview it's not the same as staking claim over something ... it's choosing to look at something from a certain point of view….

The final lesson shared in this heart-warming anecdote reminds me of Richardson's (2004) "Third Space" concept—opening your mind to the uncertain space in-between different worldviews, regardless of your cultural affiliations. Mi'kmaq Elder Albert Marshall (Lefort & Marshall, 2009) might also call this "Two-Eyed Seeing".

Our discussion then turned to bigger picture issues related to Canadian cultural and ecological identity. I asked Natasha if she could describe a "Canadian ecological identity?" She responded:

> Canada as a whole has an ecological identity just in terms of … the way that people identify… with … [the] outdoors ... So, there's a canoeing culture in Canada. Even if people don't canoe, they still recognize the canoe as a Canadian symbol … The North, you know, thinking of inukshuks and thinking of the northern landscape is very much a part of a cultural landscape in Canada. Even if people haven't spent time in the North or open prairies landscapes, you know, this is part of my [own] identity as a Canadian and I've never been to the prairies. So … it's images that have been fed to me … that I've taken on. And I know that I'm not alone in that. So I think that there's that kind of … landscape within the identity … But, at the same time, there are so many cultures within [Canada]. I mean… it's very much a blend of cultures … and … I don't know how others would feel in terms of you know … first generation descendants of immigrants to Canada ... I mean, having been raised in Canada and my parents and grandparents and great grandparents and great-great grandparents… being born in Canada, I think probably gives me a different

> perspective and kind of a different claim over "Canada" … and also being raised in a more rural area … I definitely identify … I definitely think that there's a Canadian claim to Nature… which would feed into our collective ecological identity.

Several of the aspects of Canadian ecological identity that Natasha identified above are reminiscent of Daniel Francis' (2005) discussion of the "symbols" of Canada including the canoe and the North. I also found it interesting how Natasha described Canadian ecological identity in terms of a "claim to Nature". As I discussed in Chapter Two, this leads me to question, "Does the average Canadian feel ownership over rather than part of Nature?" I asked Natasha whether she thought this "claim to Nature", as she described it, is positive or negative? She replied optimistically:

> I would say it's a positive, I would say it's not always very deep, but … I can't see it hurting anything ... I … can't see it … having any kind of negative impact … and I can see it having a huge positive impact if people choose to act for it you know, take action to save part of the boreal forest because they know that it plays such a huge role … Taking action to preserve or work for it *(sea gulls).* So in that sense I can see it having a really positive impact ...

When I asked Natasha what she thought of John Ralston Saul's (2008) belief that Canada is a "métis" nation, she responded with an interesting regional comparison:

> Well, I think that … I see a very small movement in Canada … It's very different on the West coast than the East coast. I see a lot more … recognition of Aboriginal culture, [but] at the same time … I don't know if it's a deep respect … or if it's simply an acknowledgement because it's politically correct ... At the same time, when my friend [an Elder] came to visit, he said he really appreciated the acknowledgement of First Nations culture. So … I respect that and I have to agree with him … I think that even if it's shallow, it's more important to recognize than to not recognize… I think that it's a beginning ... Across Canada I see less in other places of a coming together or of an acknowledgement that people are already together ... People *are* living together, cultures *are* coexisting … And I see that that a lot of people aren't acknowledging that … and … I think that it would be enormously helpful [if they did] … and I get really excited thinking about that…

Building from Natasha's optimistic perspective presented above, I asked her what key things non-Aboriginal Canadians might learn from Aboriginal Canadians? She commented with an emphasis on the strength of long-term visioning in Aboriginal cultures:

> I think learning how to see [the] big picture is really important ... And learning how to think beyond … ourselves… Like [beyond] myself or my family and/ or my community and also my generation … seeing beyond generations … Aboriginal cultures have a huge lesson to offer in learning to see beyond … learning to recognize [the] past, you know, see where things are coming from and … acknowledge with respect … and gratitude ... See where we are and then see where we're going … and I think that kind of long term vision in either direction is a huge gift that people could gain from First Nations.

Finally, I asked Natasha what she thought Aboriginal peoples might learn from Western (or other) traditions in a contemporary context? She replied with an intriguing observation in defense of the benefits of reductionism in certain fields such as medicine:

> It's funny… over the past few years … I've been working in these two-way … programs that claim … to be working in a co-learning [environment] … And I think that reductionism *(airplane)* … [is] often painted with a bad stroke ... in a negative sense ... But learning to look at details is really important too… Western medicine *(seagulls)* is what it is because we learned to look at small, small details … But I think it's lost without the big picture … I think it's pointless to look at details without the big picture ...

This interview with Natasha was a real pleasure. I was intrigued by her descriptions of Acadian culture and history and the gradual and inextricably linked development of her own cultural and ecological identities. I also appreciated her emphasis on building reciprocal trust as an intercultural educator. I was also especially pleased to hear the story about her nephew and their friend the Elder, who extended an invitation to anyone who is interested to venture into the "Third Space".

Orange Blossom

Orange Blossom is a middle-aged woman of Swiss, Dutch and German descent originally from the American Pacific Northwest. She relocated to Canada's West Coast Early in her teaching career where she has been an intercultural science and environmental educator for over forty years. We met at a café in a suburban community on the West

Coast. It was a fresh, early summer day, so we decided to sit outside, despite steady background noise from vehicle traffic nearby.

Orange Blossom began by describing her childhood in a small farming community in the Pacific Northwest:

> I grew up … in a very small community … I was the only kid in my class all the way through … I was a real country bumpkin … [I] … grew up on a farm and … I had two horses … We were about 60 miles from the [ocean], which of course is very beautiful ... We visited the ocean every summer. I went to a small country school [and we] … had incredible freedom… I really loved school ... My elementary school experience I think is just the opposite of most everybody else's … It was just this little country school and… I mean I could go on for hours about that little school, but we [had] immense freedom, and [had a] huge amount of fun …

Orange Blossom then related how these positive experiences with school at a young age encouraged her to become a teacher herself:

> I knew when I was in grade four, five, and six that I wanted to be a teacher and I never ever changed my mind … I frequently think back to that elementary school and I know that it shaped me hugely. And also growing up on the farm … We had 60 acres [and] a creek that went through the … woods. And so I grew up with … butterflies and crawdads and snakes and hahahah! I was a real tomboy. I had my horse and we would go on trail rides often many miles from home. I was a real kind a country kid ... And that's always been a part of my life and it's one of the things that I really feel extremely bad about when I look at kids growing up in the city … in high rise buildings … They just don't have that experience that I had. I mean, I really was able to … spend a huge amount of time … in Nature and I did a lot of it by myself ... Which for a young girl would be pretty rare these days.

Before I could ask her myself about what might have led her to develop an affinity for Nature, Orange Blossom anticipated my question and commented:

> I really look back on [my childhood experiences] and … I know from having read … lots of environmental education articles [on], "Why do people become environmentalists?" [that] usually there is a teacher or a role model. I had neither of those in terms of ... a family member or a teacher who was particularly environmentally oriented.

However, she continued by describing the general enthusiasm of her elementary school teacher who simply encouraged her curiosity and love of Nature:

> The teacher I had [in] elementary school was great, but I don't think he was particularly environmentally oriented. He was just really free! Hahaha! It was so free that we used to have water fights in the class, you know, stuff like that hahahaha! But, what he … did give us was a love of Nature … I do remember going out in the woods and doing things like collecting mushrooms and rocks and moss and lichens and I'd bring them to school and … he would always stop and make a big fuss of it. So he did teach us that way, but … I don't remember him teaching us about environmental education. I actually have this strong feeling in me that it was sort of Nature itself … that taught me … just being out there. Experiences with snakes and birds, cedar trees, gigantic gary oak trees, and wildflowers … on my own … as a kid ... I think kids are really naturally … attracted to birds and animals and plants … And … I really have always just been so happy that I had all those experiences.

Next I asked Orange Blossom what led her to become an intercultural Indigenous science and environmental educator? Her response was somewhat similar to Skywalker in that she discussed being inexplicably drawn to Aboriginal culture at a young age:

> That's an interesting question … I have no idea why because growing up we never knew any Native people. There just weren't any where I grew up … But for some reason when I was [young], I read every single book on [Aboriginal people] that I could find in any library … I have had Native people tell me when I tell them that, "Well that's because you were a Native in another life." Hahaha!

She continued by describing her first intercultural teaching experience in an Aboriginal community in the 1970s:

> My first real true experience … was in 1974. I had been teaching [elementary school for] a few years ... and [a local] university … kept … wanting me to be a faculty associate … I was fairly well-known in the area of science, environmental and marine education because I would always take my kids on field trips to the seashore, lake, or forest … That's what we did when I was in school—we were outside! … I didn't want to go up [to the university] for a long time … I thought those university kids were too big! But I finally agreed to go … and I was up there for four years teaching science [and] environmental education … And … the third year, the person who was running [the] off-campus First Nations teacher education program … asked me to teach [an] environmental education course … And so I did and … that was my absolute first experience in a Native community … and it was a real kind of two-way teaching experience … I absolutely loved it, you know, and I never felt unsafe there … There was a fair amount of animosity between the [local] people and non-Natives, because of [several ongoing land and environmental issues] ... A non- Native logging company somehow got permission to log trees on the reserve and dumped the leftover logs in the lake which contributed significantly

> to a decrease in salmon returning and surviving in the lake. So the government closed the lake to fishing and sent fisheries officers and the RCMP to keep the local Native people from fishing. They even cut the Elders' nets, so there were a lot of bad feelings … There actually were … barricades on the highway when I was teaching! And there were students in my class … who were … putting up the barricades … I had great sympathy with my students and I supported them every way that I could … That course really opened my eyes to … environmental problems … on the reserve … I just learned a lot from them, you know …

Reflecting on how she initially built relationships with this Aboriginal community, Orange Blossom commented on the importance of being relaxed and having a sense of humour:

> There was a real coming together partly because I had grown up on a farm. You know, I knew how to sit around a fire and just, as my dad WOULD SAY said, "Shoot the breeze" Hahaaha! … That sort of … sense of humour that … I was used to … And … I actually went riding with them, they were totally shocked that I could sit on a horse and ride as well as I could. Hahahaha! …

Orange Blossom then shared an interesting anecdote that could be described as an "epiphanic moment" from her second year of teaching in this Aboriginal community:

> I taught a course on curriculum development and we put together a teaching unit *(cars)* … on local indigenous topics … I gave them the assignment to pick an environmentally related issue in [the community] and … research it ... You could interview people … photograph, and write up a proposal … as if you were going to present this to the band council …

She continued:

> Anyhow, this one student, who was really quite a good student, she decided that poverty was a big problem ... and… her project was going to be bringing chickens, the raising of chickens back to [the community] … so … that sounded like a great idea. And then she just disappeared! She just disappeared for several days. Nobody knew where she went. I didn't know if she'd dropped out of the class … She was missing a lot of class because we met for several hours each day! She comes back four or five days later [and] she's finished with her project. And I said, "Oh that's really great, what did you do?" And what she did was she got into her car, she drove all the way down to [the big city] … filled her car up with something like 1000 baby chicks hahahhaaha! I forget the number, but it was big and … So she had stacks of these cartons of baby chicks … in her car. Drives all the way back to [the community] ... And [then] drove around … delivering baby chicks to Elders and teaching them how to raise the chickens.

Orange Blossom concluded by recognizing the clash of worldviews that she experienced with this student:

> So she came and she was all finished with her project and so I said, "Well that's really great, but now *(car)* I want you to write this up as a report." She could not figure out why… I was asking her to write anything up because she was finished hahaha! … I kept trying to tell her, "Well that's part of the assignment" *(cars)* and she kept trying to say, "Well why should I write this, because I've already done it!" And that was such a wonderful example of … the different viewpoints that we got into … She was right, she'd finished the project but I'm trying to get her to do something now that she saw of absolutely no worth whatsoever… to fit into the system hahahaha! The whole summer was just filled up with stuff like that ...

Orange Blossom next described how this initial experience propelled her into more work with Aboriginal peoples and opened her mind to a new way of viewing the world:

> That was the first experience I'd had working in a Native community and … I learned a lot about Native ways of thinking ... about the environment … It was like living on another planet for me … But … I just felt from day one that they accepted me. There was not a single negative word that anybody uttered even in the whole community … To really experience the … unbelievably difficult situation that they were living in and then to see how they'd had this rich culture and they were really … destroyed by non-Native people . . . By the missionaries and the school system as they experienced it. And then on top of it they had a great sense of humour and there was all this positive stuff, this rich culture that they still had.

Reflecting on the importance of reciprocal relationship building (e.g. Graveline, 1998), Orange Blossom shared this story from her doctoral research that was conducted in a coastal Aboriginal community:

> [For] my doctorate degree, which I took several years later … I decided I wanted to look at kids' orientations towards the ocean ... All the fieldwork was done in [a coastal Aboriginal community] … I knew that I wanted to do my study about the ocean in a Native community because I knew I wanted to combine Native and non-Native views of the ocean … So … over that … four or five months that I collected the initial data … I worked a lot in the school and I ended up getting to know the cultural teachers … At first they were a little bit cold to me, but I gave all these beach walks and talks for free and ... that really was what won them over because I knew a lot about marine life and really about the sex lives of seashore animals you know, and these Elders and … culture teachers they just thought that was the best part … They thought this was just great! We did a lot of laughing. Hahahaha! And then I continued to build [and deliver] workshops … up and down the coast ... for at least 35-40 years ... in all the … Native communities … So that 's how I got to

> know them… I knew something that they wanted to get information about ... so it was a two-way exchange …

When I asked Orange Blossom to share some of the other keys to success that she's learned through over forty years of experience as an intercultural environmental education, she responded with this story of a field school that she led in Haida Gwaii (previously known as the Queen Charlotte Islands) that, like other participants also mentioned (e.g. Skywalker and Natasha Little), emphasizes the importance of direct experience:

> [A historian] and I took these [ten non-Native] … graduate … [and] undergraduate … students and … AND about ten Haida [graduate] students ... around the Queen Charlotte Islands. We hiked around, and went to different locations and … we spent … maybe two weeks out on these boats … camping and going around to different places … We hired Elders to meet us at different places ... And so you know, the Elders were our teachers … So … you're off in the middle of the woods, like nothing here, but then we would have a seminar and … have the students read historical articles about what happened [there] ... historical events. For example encounters with European gun boats etc… So very direct experience. And students loved it. And of course we're out there and we're camping at night. So you can sing songs and eat Indigenous food and … that was really fun …

Reflective of discussion in the literature about whether Indigenous knowledge is "science" (e.g. Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2005; Snively, 2009), Orange Blossom offered an interesting discussion of attitudes towards Indigenous knowledge and science based on her own experiences trying to publish her work and present at conferences:

> Initially … [a colleague and I] had to try to convince the science education professors that Indigenous knowledge was science … We had submitted this article to [a] science journal and the … science educators conference. And several years in a row it was rejected. And we would get these little notes [like] … "Submit this to a history journal" ... because we were trying to argue that Indigenous knowledge was science … And what we did realize after a while is that one of the major problems was that the science educators, the *educators*, had no knowledge of TEK [traditional ecological knowledge] … [However,] there's [a growing number of] scientists and biologists and people who do acknowledge Indigenous knowledge …

Frustrated by these kinds of experiences, Orange Blossom explained how she tried to expand her own university-level science education students' conceptions of "science":

> I always had [a] fairly strong component [in my classes] from an Aboriginal perspective … I'd do this about two-thirds of the way through the science course. So you know, students were shocked! I always like to get people to define what the word "science" means to them … On the first day of class I'd get them to write their definition of science down on a piece of paper, put it in an envelope and put their name on it, and … I get them to do that before we ... talk about anything… And then I give them those envelopes back at the end of the course … And it's amazing how many of them, you know, on the first day of science class give you a Western science definition, you know biology, chemistry, physics, or the five step scientific method strictly from a Western viewpoint … And the stronger the person has a science background, the stronger that Western science definition is there. It's amazing how their definitions changed, sometimes significantly, at the end of the course.

Orange Blossom reported that by the end of these courses, students' concepts of "science" had often expanded to include Indigenous ways of knowing.

Reflecting on her career and identity, Orange Blossom concluded our interview with comments that remind me of Richardson's (2004) discussion of the "Third Space" between Western and Indigenous worldviews:

> You know, I see things differently because I don't have that science degree. My doctorate degree is not in the sciences, even though I did take a number of biology and oceanography courses. Really that's one thing that has allowed me to kind of squeak in the middle and kind of crossover. But that's where … sometimes the Western science guys say, "Whoa, what do you know? Where's your physics degree?" You know, I don't even have a biology degree! My degrees are all in education … I was very much into values of worldviews, ethics, philosophy, art, and a wide range of interests ... and that's why the Indigenous viewpoint appeals to me because [of] values ... [and] ethics, you know, spirituality… So I do see things differently ...

It was wonderful to sit and talk with Orange Blossom. I really appreciated the opportunity to learn from her experiences gained over four decades as an educator. Similar to most of the participants in this study, she described spending extended time in Nature as a child as highly influential on her ecological identity as an adult and eventual vocation as an environmental educator. Orange Blossom also emphasized reciprocity and direct experience as key components of successful intercultural education. I was especially

interested in her description of her approach to opening the minds of teaching post-secondary science educators to what Richardson (2004) would call the "Third Space"—viewing both Western and Indigenous knowledge of Nature as valid forms of science.

Liatrus

Liatrus is a woman from a mixed cultural background in her early thirties with over a decade of experience as a student and practitioner of environmental education. She is currently the director of an urban environmental education program in a large prairie city that teaches both Western Science and Indigenous perspectives.

Liatrus and I met on a muggy summer evening inside a busy café. We had a wonderful conversation that flowed very naturally amidst the buzz of other patrons and café staff. As is evident in the following, Liatrus raised several interesting points of discussion; I found myself drawn into conversation with her rather than simply recording what she had to say.

To begin the interview, I asked Liatrus to describe her cultural background. She provided this thoughtfully curious and intriguing response, questioning the term "culture":

> I always find that such an odd question to be asked because … that term "culture" can have many different contexts. To some it means ethnicity … or race. And to some it means something completely different … It's actually more challenging for me because my cultural and ethnic history are so complicated…. My birth father is Pakistani and … there's such a distinct … Pakistani culture [but] I don't know anything about it … I was adopted by my current father and lived with my biological mother… So [I] grew up in a different kind of cultural … context than what my actually ethnicity is … But, ethnically … after my mother I am … Icelandic, British, Cree, and Sioux … and then on my father's side I'm … Pakistani ... but was raised very much in sort of a Polish, German sort of household ... And I guess, how I think of myself culturally now would maybe be very different than when I was a child. Because I think a lot of that has sort of just developed recently, I've become intrigued by learning more about my Aboriginal ancestry. And it's always been an evolving concept for me … So … my cultural identity is kind of an evolving thing …

I was intrigued by Liatrus' thoughtful response and asked her to further describe her "evolving" cultural identity. She continued:

> It was only about ten years *(music)* ago that we actually realized that we did have Aboriginal [ancestry] … And I think for me, just because my own cultural identity was so complicated and I didn't have any connection to my Pakistani heritage, I've sort of been drawn to this cultural identity of being Aboriginal and just … immersed myself in it. Because it's now something that I can have a sense of. I do have a connection with the Icelandic heritage that is also part of me, but … I've really … started to develop that strong sense of identity as being Aboriginal and being Métis and so… it's kind of that, "Aha, now I have something to grasp to that's a specific thing that I would enjoy learning about."

When I asked Liatrus if she could describe her cultural heritage in a single term, she responded that she couldn't:

> I usually go into the whole long story, because I don't have the one-word term. I usually just explain it all. It's only … when I'm asked to … distinguish … myself between Aboriginal, Métis, and then Inuit right, sort of from a Canadian perspective… It's … clarifying that [I'm Métis] … *(voices)* but I usually go into the whole long story …

She continued:

> I think it's also depending on the circumstances *(noise)*, especially if it's someone I'm meeting for the first time. A lot of people just want clarification of [my] dark complexion … right? So they kind of look at me and they're like, "Are you Spanish, are you … what is it?" And it's almost just … clarifying exactly this is why I look this way, this is what all of the different backgrounds are … And I think that's probably becoming so much more common for people [of mixed ancestry] … And a lot of people will just say, "Oh I'm Canadian." … It just becomes very, very complicated…

Next I asked her to further discuss how her cultural identity is related to who she is today personally and professionally? She replied:

> My current research and professional interests are so closely intertwined with my … personal identity … And it's definitely influenced a lot of the choices that I've made in life, just being open to this idea of intercultural … ideas and that kind of thing … and being sensitive to … others' opinions *(voices)* and so on…

When I asked Liatrus if she could think of any epiphanic moments or experiences related to her cultural identity, she initially responded with some memories of having her sense of family being questioned during childhood:

> I can think of a couple. One was just as a child, I mean … because I'm visually dark-skinned with Pakistani features, but was raised in a very White [appearing] family, so ... being out in public and having people just look at me and say, "Is she yours?" and sort of question my sense of belonging within my family unit … So the effects of that sort of consistent awareness, being aware of that sort of … fine distinction between my ethnicity and [my] cultural family identity.

Liatrus then shared a more recent experience related to honouring Aboriginal knowledge in her master's work:

> Another one … in my professional life was doing my master's research and coming to a point where I needed to ask for help and some assistance. And … my first gut reaction was to turn to some of the academic literature … [or] my university professors, sort of that academic point of view. [But] then [I] had to catch myself and say, "You know what? I should be going back and talking to some of my Elders that I've been working with and kind of getting back to that kind of point of view and perspective on it and just sort of being able to appreciate two very strong … [but] different … types of knowledge and information." So that was a really strong epiphany for me to be able to sort of bring my work back into sort of a personal realization…

Our conversation then shifted to the topic of ecological identity and how Liatrus came to be an environmental educator. She reflected:

> I think that there's early roots to my intrigue in Nature. My father, my mother too, they were sort of old hippies … Just being raised in that dynamic where a typical summer was spending either every weekend out at the cabin or fishing, or doing outdoor sort of things. My adopted father that I was raised with has rural roots and has always been very much … passionate about… Nature. And I was brought up in that environmental context and got to relate from an early age and left high school and wanted to start university and do something to do with the environment … I ended up taking a double major in environmental studies and cultural-physical geography. So [I] got a bit of a flavour of that cultural piece through my major.

In terms of how she perceives herself in relation to Nature, Liatrus related the deep ecological feeling of intimate connection (e.g. Naess & Rothenberg, 1990):

> I see myself as being a part of it … It's kind of like we are one in the same in a lot of ways ... It's always something that is hard to try and remind yourself of, especially living in the city. You start to have this sense of domination of Nature where you're very … urban and removed from … the natural setting, But I've started to look at appreciating any sort of human construction as a part of nature, just in a very sort of humanized state, right… It all came from something and it all originated from something… That being said … I can't even describe the sort of emotional sensation to me to just be outdoors and be around sort of the typical Nature setting … by a river, in a forest … It's almost a healing; It de-stresses; It's just sort of that sense of being … back home … It's like a different sense of home …

When I asked Liatrus if she could identify an "epiphanic moment" related to her ecological identity, she replied that she couldn't:

> I think it's very general, nothing specific I can think of a specific point of time, I have sort of vague memories of even just being a child and having that sense of just being out exploring … a natural setting and just having that feeling … It's not something that I can define [or] intellectualize. It's just a feeling, an emotion…

I asked her how those experiences that she mentioned from her childhood might be related to who she is today? She commented:

> I think a lot of it … is the association … with my family as well as that time outdoors … in a context of my parents on holidays and always relaxed … So I always have … vivid sensational memories of positivity associated with being in Nature …

Reflecting later on what led her to become an educator, Liatrus commented:

> Part way through my undergrad I decided to go to Japan and teach … I think it would have been [that] Japanese experience that [was] the first kind of [intercultural experience that I had]… You know what I mean? Immersing yourself in the culture, being part of the education system within another culture … And I absolutely fell in love with the idea of teaching. So I ended up coming back to finish my first undergrad and then did a teaching degree and kind of just … gradually over time developed an interest in environmental education … My master's [in education] is studying my effectiveness as a teacher and practitioner bringing Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous teaching techniques into my environmental education practice.

When I asked Liatrus how she would describe herself as a learner and educator, she replied with an emphasis on informal experiential learning and being reflective:

> I generally prefer learning in non-formal settings. I really feel strongly that a lot of what we learn in life is nothing related to what's done in a formal classroom setting … So just … being able to bring … learning into everything we do … outside of formal schooling and training. I'm really excited about being a part of that and [that's] how *(voices)* I've learnt most of the things in my life … And… as an educator … I'm very reflective, so I'm very … aware of being able to … think back about things that I've done and use that … to be a better educator.

When I asked Liatrus to describe her experience with environmental education in an Aboriginal context, she responded:

> [My] interest in Aboriginal education and culture [grew out of] the [intercultural EE program that I direct] … It was a program that I developed and it originally had … [no] cultural element to it … That was just sort of an idea that evolved based on my experiences ... It was … drawn out of the environmental and nature-related topics that we are dealing with in the program as well as the demographic of the students [who are largely Aboriginal] …

Liatrus continued to describe the development of the program, specifically learning how to engage with Aboriginal Elders:

> It was a big … learning experience for me … I will never forget the first time I had to … find an Elder and didn't know the first thing about what I was supposed to be doing … You know, where do you look for an Elder? For me it was just kind of deer in the headlights and then being … incredibly nervous about my first time to meet an Elder and having no idea what to expect …

Liatrus then described how her first meeting with an Elder was a kind of ephiphanic experience:

> [I met this] woman for the first time who, this sounds really terrible ... She was just sort of like an old Aboriginal woman and she lived in a nursing home. She … was very much just sort of into day-to-day life activities … I just felt so strange coming and thinking I was going to be going through some huge ceremonial, very sort of naïve movie-based kind of thing with her. [But] it was just very day-in, day-out life … Then we questioned those kind of preconceived ideas I guess, stereotypes that I'd had.

When I asked Liatrus what she learned from this experience, she responded with reflections that speak to Richardson's (2004) concept of the "Third Space" between Western and Indigenous perspectives:

> I think maybe just starting to be more … comfortable with the fact that … you can easily sort of walk between any of those kinds of things, like when I think about that woman and the kind of knowledge she had, and her ability to just look like an every day person, but it was only really talking to her and realizing that … there's Elders and people with that sacred knowledge all around us and it's only sort of based on the stereotypes of what we're expecting [that we sometimes miss them] … And then having someone about a year later tell me, sit down with me and say, "You know what, we're all Elders in training." You know what I mean … being … okay with being a part of my own experiences and developing my own information base … And really thinking of myself as being a part of that sort of cultural identity as well … Really resonating with the fact that I do have some Aboriginal heritage as well.

Next I asked Liatrus to reflect upon what she feels are key concepts and practices for facilitating effective intercultural environmental education? Similar to other participants (e.g. Skywalker, Natasha Little), her comments emphasized open-mindedness and flexibility. She commented:

> Being very open-minded, being willing to recognize and acknowledge that you don't know everything … and [that] you are constantly learning and evolving in your understanding … But then also being able to trust your instincts … I mean we're all in a different place in terms of our own sort of personal and professional knowledge and understanding …

When I asked Liatrus if she could identify any ephipanic "aha" experiences in her career as an intercultural environmental educator, she replied with some recent observations and stories of students' work:

> Something more recent … associated with my master's work [is that]… one of the things I'm really trying to bring home with the students who are participating in my program is the idea of … respect for culture and culture as being sort of more intertwined with respect for Nature … And start[ing] to really accept that fact [of] ourselves as being a *part* of nature. So, I've had students respond to me in a couple of situations in journal responses … to a question about how they can be good ... stewards of Nature ... And responses in a couple cases where we can be respectful for one another … I mean for a grade four child to *(phone ringing)* acknowledge that being respectful and a good steward of Nature involves being respectful for other humans … I think that was sort of an aha moment for me like, "Okay they get it!" You know, it's kind of that, what we're bringing home it's not always about like planting … trees or we're going to go pick up garbage. It's like, "Okay, being kind to my friend and someone else" [is part of it], right?

Building on her comments on the relationship between culture and Nature, I asked Liatrus if she thought it was possible to blend Western and Aboriginal approaches and knowledge in environmental education? She responded somewhat cautiously:

> I don't think you can use the term "blend". I think you can use them both together … [but] you're definitely not blending … I've always had very strong opinions of that … I mean my work specifically… involves Indigenous … and science education… and then sort of bringing in the environmental education piece into that. But I kind of came to a place where I decided … I didn't want to use the idea of Indigenous science education. I wanted to spell it out … using [both] Indigenous knowledge and pedagogies and science … or ecological education, but [with] each remaining distinct. And you can bring them together and use both in your teaching, but I wouldn't necessarily have said that you're blending them.

Reflective of the diversity of perspectives in the literature (e.g. Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2005; Cajete, 2001; Hermes, 2000; Simpson, 2002; Snively, 2009), Liatrus' comments differ from those of other participants (e.g. Orange Blossom and Cedar Basket) who advocate for more overt integration and recognition of Indigenous knowledge as a "science". For Liatrus, there is an important distinction between blending Indigenous knowledge and Western science (which she is against) and presenting them side-by-side (which she supports). When I asked her to describe how this perspective is embodied in her current practice, she responded with comments that would be supported by Battiste (1998) and Hermes (2000), who advocate for developing Indigenous educational programs from Indigenous perspectives *before* considering how they might relate to mainstream requirements, rather than vice-versa:

> Basically what I've been very cognizant about doing is not trying to pick out Aboriginal content to fit within an existing program. It's kind of taking a step back and … revising the overall goals for the program and my learning objectives for the participants *(blender)* to make them give equal weight to both the Indigenous knowledge and … the science content … And then sort of finding topics and concepts from … science that is … aligned with the concepts and topics in … aboriginal culture. And using only those … when appropriate and not just sort of putting in token examples of things … And then also making sure that when I'm assessing learners, that I'm also placing equal emphasis on both. So it's not just

> bringing in an Elder as part of a program and then still only evaluating learners based on science content. It's putting both in … It's just important to me to keep them both side by side and bring them both into the program as opposed to just sort of saying, well there's this concept and we'll just sort of bring that into the science… The other thing [about] … keeping the two concepts distinct is that … everyone that would hear that concept [would] have a different level of understanding to begin with. And … to just sort of have them … blended. It can mean many different things without having a full explanation and conversation with somebody and ensuring that they understand the way it's meant to be used …

She continued by emphasizing the importance of the planning stage:

> I can almost think of a piece where you could do blended instruction if it wasn't pre-planned. Do you know what I mean? I think it's in the planning stage, when you set out exactly what you're going to do that you can be very distinct and not blend it, but just in sort of the day-in-day out informal, like if [I] was just walking down the street, and talking to somebody and I'm you know, teaching them something it's going be a blended, because it's going to be … all the different sort of ethnic things that I know and cultural things that I know and just my own history.

In response to her comments, I reflected:

> So maybe we need to be aware, especially with the history of Western colonization and dominance, to really keep the boundaries when we're planning things to be sure that the Aboriginal aspects are maintained … Because you're right, even people like us that are very aware of these things, we've still been raised for the most part in a Western education system.

She replied:

> Just being very cognizant of the fact that I was raised within a certain context that had certain historical roots. And I developed my way of thinking because of certain … circumstances. And always being willing to stop and remember that … And … call that into question.

Intrigued by her response to the blending debate, I asked Liatrus how her beliefs relate to her own identity as a person of mixed ancestry? She replied:

> That's different! … I think then we're starting to talk about … an individual identity versus a concept, right? So, I don't like the idea of having a blended concept, but I can see … a personal … identity, being sort of intermingled… Because … even I would *(blender)* speak to that.

She continued:

> So as an individual … that sense of blending and intermingling… I still like as a concept. It's maybe just that [it needs to] avoid being used improperly, right? I like it to remain distinct as a concept. But in an individual, I think it's too hard to avoid blending … it's almost just like a natural … [process].

Our conversation then shifted to intercultural relations. I asked Liatrus for some general keys to building intercultural learning relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Aboriginal people? She replied with an emphasis on mutual respect:

> I've always been very adamant about the importance of respect ... So… I think there's a lot to be said for just being able to learn and respect differences and different ways of knowing and different values systems ... I think it's … not always so mutual, but I mean I've always personally always felt strongly that just because of our historical context and because of the history of colonization, there's almost a … need to be respectful to the geographic origins of this country and what that history was… being respectful of that history by having that willingness to learn … It is both ways, but I think respect can truly only be both ways …

With respect to Aboriginal peoples specifically, she commented:

> There's no way to erase history… and I think there's … still … European dominance of this country… [For Aboriginal people] there's almost a need to be able to learn in both ways and … achieve success … within that … knowledge system ... And I think it's only empowering, right? But it's also … realizing that you can't erase history and realizing that … the people that might have the historical … connection [to the original colonizers] … the European or White people alive today … It's not a characteristic of maybe there mindset … We've been talking about our sense of culture [being] *(laughing)* so diverse that they can't just be pinpointed based on ethnicity so … There's a lot of non-Aboriginal people that have a much better understanding of Aboriginal traditions than Aboriginal people. So it's not always something that's connected to our … ethnicity and race.

Our conversation then turned to the topic of John Ralston Saul's (2008) concept of Canada being a "métis nation". When, I asked Liatrus what she thought of Saul's theory, she replied:

> I can understand it, I can appreciate it, but I think it's maybe … just sort of feeding into the idea of that melting pot idea where we all sort of, we are intermingling, but to say that we're … a métis nation, I think that each of us has our own sort of uniqueness in that, so I think … it's maybe a little bit over simplified. But the concept in and of itself I think is great, because it gets people to actually think you know? And really think about the history of Canada and all of the interesting dynamics that make this country what it is … It's almost, being respectful of our

> individuality, but still having sort of some sense of collectivity. We're not ready to be unified as one sense of identity, all together, but on an individual level you can start to yourself.

Based on this response, I asked her if she thought the average Canadian has a sense of the historical métissage described by Saul (2008)?

> I think that it's emerging and … I personally noticed it over the years … more commonly becoming something people are aware of … But I don't think it's universal. I don't think it's widespread. I think there's still unfortunately people who would probably be very adverse to the idea and… *(noise)* and maybe just ignoran[t]… for whatever reasons …

Building off of her thoughts on Canadian cultural identity, I asked Liatrus if she could identify a Canadian ecological identity? She replied that she didn't think so:

> Again, I would say that it would be so diverse [that] to try to describe it as a universal I think is a mistake ... It's also evolving… I mean we think about environmental education and … changing dynamics and all the people like you and I that sort of got to know our own cultural identity as we get older ... So … it is so mixed that I mean even that notion of sort of a mixed cultural- ecological identity may be part of the definition of what [it] is…

I really enjoyed this interview with Liatrus. Her thoughts on the shifting parameters of cultural identity and how to effectively integrate Western and Indigenous perspectives were especially intriguing. In subsequent communication, Liatrus indicated that she had enjoyed the interview process. She also mentioned that she was prompted to relate her thoughts and experiences with her family by sharing this short biography with them.

Olivia L'Hirondelle

Olivia L'Hirondelle is a Métis woman in her late twenties. She is currently the program coordinator of an urban environmental education program for Aboriginal youth that incorporates both Western Science and Indigenous perspectives.

Olivia and I met early on a late August morning at her office in a large prairie city. The conversation began at a slow and sleepy pace, but became increasingly animated as our morning coffees took hold. Olivia had taken the unique initiative to write down some initial thoughts prior to our interview. This created an interesting interview setting where she was able to draw from and expand upon her notes in response to my queries. Olivia also provided me with a copy of her notes to aid in the transcription process.

When I asked Olivia to describe herself culturally, she replied:

> I am Métis Cree ... My mother's side is Cree … from north-central Alberta … and my father's side is Ukrainian … My father's grandparents on both sides were Ukrainian … farmers. It's a weird mix but, it's funny, I can always point out someone who is a Native /Ukrainian mix. Hehehehe…

Based on this response, I asked Olivia how her family history might have affected who she is today? She emphasized her mother's strong influence:

> My beliefs have largely been influenced by my mother. The beliefs and stories shared through her ancestors to me and her experience being a Métis woman. I was really young when my mom was coming to terms with being proud of her identity and accepting herself as Native. So, this influenced me in terms of looking at my own beliefs, the books I read, and my own being in this life ... The best example I can think of is asking my mom when I was young where our ancestors came from and she responded that, "We were always here".

When asked to identify an epiphanic moment related to her family's cultural history, she reflected on the socioeconomic disparities between her Aboriginal and European ancestors that reminded me of my own family:

> It's one history in two parts … Histories that are pinned up against each other … One of the colonized and the other the colonizer … My dad's father [Ukranian] lived through the Great Depression. He turned 90 this year. His stories from the 30's and the struggles with poverty are very similar to those of my mother's [Cree] growing up in the 70's. It's strange … you know, 1930's and what he's going through is really similar to the stuff my mom was going through in the 70s. Like, in the 70's my grandpa had a half-million dollar home in Vancouver and had all of these things … My mom was 16 when she got running water … No one should not have running water and I mean people now… First Nations' communities, one in six don't have access to clean water… You now, I have friends that are my age that

> grew up taking water from the stream still and boiling water…. That poverty is still there….

Later in the interview, she also commented:

> Non-Aboriginals need to know the struggles of the Indigenous people all across Turtle Island: logging in Grassy Narrows and the mercury, the hydro dams of northern Manitoba and Ontario, the New Mexico, Nevada and Utah nuclear waste, the GMO contamination and patenting of the seeds, our food. There's just so much poverty and access to basic needs that not all Canadians are aware of and recognizing… a third world country out there … It has … made me realize how lucky I am to have the luxuries I have. It could have been very different …

When I asked Olivia to describe how she saw herself in relation to Nature, she replied from what could be described as both a Deep Ecological (Rothenberg and Naess, 1990) or an Indigenous perspective (Cajete, 1994)—seeing herself as part of Nature, related to all of Creation:

> I think of myself as a relative of all things, animate and inanimate. These all carry a spirit, which is always around me and always will be … It's like I never questioned Mother Earth or God or Creator or whatever one wants to call it. I always just knew, even when trying to make sense of the chaos, which you can't, and having a short-lived atheist period, I still knew. So my sense of the world from a spiritual perspective is intrinsically linked with the ecological.

At another point in the interview, Olivia expounded further:

> Western knowing of the world heavily emphasizes the world as an abstract. The relationship to the "environment" or "Nature" is a construct, it is intellectualized, separated, the environment or nature is seen as something that is "out there". My reality and experience teaches me otherwise, my knowing of the Earth is that it is a whole in which all living is included. Creator and Mother Earth must be respected knowing this is as such. It is a type of insanity to see Nature or the environment as "out there".

Olivia's thoughtful response led me to question how she might have developed such an ecological identity? She initially reflected back on some key childhood memories of spending extended periods playing and exploring the natural world:

> Well, I spent most of my time outside as a child. My mom encouraged this—either running around my city neighborhood, at the park, building snow forts, riding bikes or discovering yet undeveloped prairie patches. They still existed when I was a kid

> … And then, summers where spent in [a nearby provincial park] trucking around in the bush. My friend and I would take off for hours telling his parents he was at my place and I would tell my grandma I was at his … We would play in the forest, poking in the old garbage dumps, finding enormous ant hills, making new trails and forts. Between 8 and 12 this was just part of our summer rituals, you know? So for me, having this nurtured my love of the outdoors. I was very lucky to have had these summers … As a teenager and adult, gardening has kind of taken me to this current path … either as a community gardener or through employment with inner city kids doing gardening.

Olivia's comments above transitioned nicely into me asking her to share more about her current educational practice, she emphasized the inter-Indigenous complexity of working in a large urban centre:

> I work in an urban setting … with many different nations. I work mainly with inner city school age children. I don't want cultural boundaries to become blurred but it seems like they often do in the city. When Elders introduce themselves, I often have children say, "I am Native too," but they don't know if their Cree, Ojibwa, Dakota, Métis … I find this kind of hard.

Next I asked Olivia to describe her educational philosophy. Her comments emphasize flexibility, openness, learning from and with your students, sense of place, and a belief in interconnectivity:

> When I am educating I put myself into a place where I just go with the flow, it works best to be open to the unexpected. I look to be extra conscious that I am in this space of sharing. We are always sharing/teaching but it's just that people, especially in the adult world, are not always open to what others are saying. As an educator I [also] want to convey a very tangible sense of how we are all related. For example, this insect needs this plant … a symbiotic relationship … and how that relationship plays into a human role and so forth … And I love teaching relationships when doing environmental education. Equally important is I also want students to have a sense a place, because I think that this is where environmentalism starts. I teach and am taught by children. One of my friends never ceases to remind me that children are one of our greatest teachers. This is something his Elder shared with him and this is something that he shares with all adults. We need to remember this.

Similar to Indigenous scholars Simpson (2002) and Battiste (1998), Olivia also described her belief in locally focused education and the importance of including Elders in educational programs:

> I am a proponent of local education. Well, really local anything. I think focusing on the local is, and is going to be one of the ways in which we can help save our dying planet ... I really like this idea, it works on so many levels and can fit into any subject area. Sometimes I struggle with bringing education that link both science and culture due to being so urban and working with so many nations. It's like, how relevant is trapping in the city? It's not like I can take the kids out trapping … Sometimes I feel trapped in the concrete! The best way for me [to introduce Aboriginal culture] has been inviting Elders into my programs and into the classrooms to work directly with students. I want to see more Elder involvement in the regular school system, I can see that students truly benefit from this experience and gravitate to this way of learning.

When I asked Olivia if she could share any ephiphanic moments from her teaching, she responded:

> I've had Elders … and … kids start crying ... Because … it's so…. different, right? … The way that we're sharing, the way that we're talking, how we're, I think, much more open than maybe a regular classroom setting is … Just talking about things that maybe they don't get to talk about…and then here's this opportunity. So I've seen some kids … start crying…. And ... Elders [too] … so it can be pretty powerful. No one wants to go home…

To summarize, I asked Olivia what she thought makes for effective intercultural environmental education? She replied with an emphasis on language, local-focus, and an ethic of sharing, caring, and respect:

> Have children learn their own language. Language can define how one perceives and intellectualizes the world. [Also being] locally focused. [And] sharing, caring and respect … It's about knowing where you came from and being proud of that. If you go back far enough, all cultures are rooted in the land. Maybe Europeans have forgotten their stories as they became possessed with conquest. I want the children I work with and all children to fight with love for Mother Earth. I want them to have the skills and know-how to do so ... Someone who knows their own history, is compassionate, respectful and passionate about the home we share.

Our conversation then turned to the topic of métissage. I asked Olivia if she felt that it is possible to blend Western and Indigenous knowledge and philosophies of Nature. Her comments reflect a certain discomfort with the concept of intentional blending similar to those expressed by Indigenous scholars such as Hermes (2000):

> In bringing Western and Aboriginal philosophies and knowledge of Nature together,

> I don't think that blending is the correct way to focus. I think that they can learn, share and teach from each other and there are ways in which they are coming together, but to blend is to blur and for me this is something that we need to be aware of.

I was intrigued by her answer and asked her how her thoughts on blending manifest in her educational practices? She replied with emphasis on recognizing and honouring the original source of knowledge:

> I guess that it's kind of blending, but it's still recognized for what it is. And where it comes from … Becoming blurred is when you cannot see the origins … To honour it you need to honour where it comes from too.

Based on this response, I asked Olivia how her perspectives on blending in practice related to her identity as a Métis person descended from both European and Aboriginal ancestors? Does she keep the two separate in herself? Or is there métissage in her identity and way of viewing the world? She replied:

> I mean they're both me. Maybe some here, some there, … It's all a part of me … [However,] I think I'm more Métis usually … Métis in the sense of Aboriginal, those teachings coming from you know, my mother's Cree side…

This initial discussion of métissage led nicely into a conversation around Saul's (2008) concept of Canada being a "métis nation". Olivia commented that she didn't agree with Saul's thesis and that she saw Canada as a predominantly colonial nation:

> I mean there's blending, but Canada is part of the colonial construction. There is nations within the nations. [But], it's still just … European… It's colonial.

I subsequently asked Olivia for her thoughts on Canadian ecological identity? Similar to several other participants (e.g. Skywalker), she highlighted the predominantly recreational and resource-based relationship that many Canadians have with Nature:

> I … believe that, in general, Canadians hold a deep affection for this country and its beautiful land … But I find it is a kind of twisted relationship—the wilderness is a hobby, cottages, and camping on the weekend. I guess this is symptomatic of urbanization and capitalism … And I think … that there's this idea that there's so much! So much out there, wide-open space still and I don't think it's like that…

> Maybe [it's a] settler mentality or our small population, but I think it's still "so much, we have so much!"

I appreciated Olivia taking the time to share her experiences and ideas with me. I found her discussion of her own Métis identity and how it relates to her educational practice especially intriguing. Olivia seemed to emphasize that, just because some of us have blended cultural and philosophical backgrounds, a fully blended approach isn't necessarily the best way to deliver an educational program. Similar to Liatrus, Olivia advocates for presenting Indigenous knowledge and Western Science side-by-side, being careful not to "blur" the boundaries between them and honouring the original sources of the knowledge. This philosophy might be imagined as two (or more) puzzle pieces fitting together, finding matching points, but still maintaining their own distinct shapes. Olivia and Liatrus' perspectives lead me to wonder, "Does this kind of approach still eventually result in a blended "Third Space" (Richardson, 2004) understanding of the world?"

Thor

Thor is a man in his early thirties of mixed European descent originally from southern Ontario. He has been involved in outdoor and environmental education with a wide variety of programs across Canada and internationally for over ten years. Over the past few years, Thor has worked extensively with Inuit youth both in formal classroom settings as well as on extended wilderness canoe trips.

We held our interview after dark on a fall evening next to a crackling outdoor fire. The smell of fresh rain and wet leaves filled the night air. Thor provided many thoughtful, unique, and challenging responses that fuelled our discussion and introduced new perspectives to this study.

Early in our conversation, Thor identified himself culturally as “Canadian”. He shared the following reflections on his family’s cultural history reminiscent of Roy McGregor’s (2003) descriptions of early Canadian settlers escaping difficult lives in Europe in the hope of a better life:

> Well, my entire life I’ve basically just thought of myself as being Canadian ... One side of my family has been in Canada for three generations and they are from the Ukraine … They left the Ukraine before the first world war and sought a better life and … they’ve been in Canada ever since… The other side of the family has been in Canada since sometime in the 1700’s.

When I asked Thor how his family history might have influenced who he is today, he discussed a vivid consciousness of his mother’s family rise from poverty:

> On my mother’s side, which is … Ukrainian... I don’t know if it’s so much heritage or ... nationality as it is life circumstances … Leaving one country and coming to another and making a go of it … [That] definitely influenced my mother [growing up] without very much and how she raised us … I think it was our class more so than our heritage that influenced a lot of … those values and things as we were brought up … I don’t know if it would have mattered so much as [being from] one European country or another… but probably different if it would have been something vastly different [from another continent]… where the value structure may be different … So [in terms of] my immediate upbringing … I see how that influenced my mother and she … has been very influential in my life …

Our conversation then turned to ecological identity. Thor shared a consciously deep ecological perspective (e.g. Rothenberg and Naess, 1990):

> I see myself as a part of Nature … on all levels … Genetically, [within] my body, the organisms that are living within me and digesting my food, the air I breathe in and how that’s created by other organisms … It’s all very cyclical it seems … I feel I’m like a microcosm of the universe … and then the things within me are maybe a microcosm of me and then it’s all just different levels and … It’s all just the same energy whether it’s me or you or that tree or … these burning logs, it’s all made up of the same kind of stuff and it all gets transferred around … Whether it’s water or air… or the food we eat … That’s my personal philosophy …

When I asked Thor if he could identify what might have influenced the development of his ecological identity, he described the synergistic interaction of intellectual, emotional, and spiritual influences:

> I think that it would be a culmination of my life experiences … [For example] hearing other people talk, having experiences in the out-of-doors … and … watching a movie and then reading a book … They all formed my knowledge of the way the world works. [On] a very strictly say, scientific level, we know that everything is made up of atoms and energy and it's all just energy moving around. And then from … other levels like emotional levels or spiritual levels, we have connections with ourselves and our thoughts and what's going on in our life process, but also others around us, with animals and places and landscapes. And so I think it has been the variety of experiences and influences throughout my life that have contributed to my personal ecological identity -

Thor continued by describing his initial involvement with environmental education:

> Growing up I was always outside, playing, exploring, and … in my late teens [I] started to become interested in learning about environmental issues and what was happening with the planet and … the negative effect that humans are having on themselves and on the planet, and seeing a long term solution to that being through education. And … basically providing experiences and teaching the youth so that when they're older, … they've had the knowledge and experiences … to be able to make positive decisions that can be good for themselves and for the planet and for life in general … And then, of course, there's values from my family and my upbringing that … provided a foundation … So … how I see myself as an educator is trying to … work with people where I can both enjoy the work but also feel like I'm contributing to the type of world that I would like to see now and in the future for myself and for generations to come …

When I asked Thor to describe what led to him to his work with Aboriginal youth, he described a combination of early friendships, happenstance, curiosity, and an inner drive to better understand the history and contemporary situation for Aboriginal people in Canada:

> Well, growing up I had the opportunity to be friends with … people of Aboriginal … descent … [However] it's been in the last couple years where I … have had the opportunity to work … with Aboriginal populations. Primarily … with Inuit … which has been great ... For a long time I've been interested in Canadian history, and Aboriginal history and culture in particular. My experiences working with Aboriginal populations [came] up [initially] … by chance … for the one situation [a canoe expedition] and then the other situation to go North and to teach. That was something I sought out and had been researching for a number of years….

Thor expanded further on his experiences of teaching in Nunavut and his draw to the northern landscape:

> One [thing] that we haven't really talked about is my draw to the landscape and to live … in remote, northern communities … Teaching being the medium to be able to go and … contribute … My experiences came more from the landscape and wanting to be there and ... a sincere interest in the culture and wanting to contribute … To be an educator … help[ing] prepar[e] a generation of … people who ... can make good decisions and make the most of their time on the planet.

Next I asked Thor if he could identify any "aha" or "epiphanic moments" (Denzin, 1989) in his career as intercultural outdoor and environmental educator or if it had been a more gradual process of development? He described coming to terms with a realization during time spent teaching in Nunavut of the long-term commitment required to facilitate positive change:

> One thing that comes to mind is … it was a gradual "aha" … There wasn't necessarily one straw that was pulled that revealed it all. But eventually I just came to terms that … there were a number of things that could be strengthened in the school where I was teaching… In a sense it was motivating for me … I saw [that] good change [was] possible … but it[required] like a five to ten year kind of commitment for me ... personally to have the level of change that I [envisioned]… It wasn't [because] it would take so long that I'm not there [now] … but it wasn't the right place or right time for me to carry on with that … I believe positive things are very possible… It's hard to get experienced committed teachers to … stay and … facilitate meaningful, culturally relevant and appropriate programming rather than … go in for a short period of time and … not be reciprocal at all ...

I found Thor's comments very interesting. They reminded me of scholars such as Graveline (1998) who discuss the fundamental importance of building strong, long-term relationships in Aboriginal education. I respect that he identified that, in order to facilitate the kinds of positive changes that he believed were possible in his school and community, a longer-term commitment was required, despite not feeling prepared to offer that commitment himself at the time. Thor concluded by identifying "mini aha moments" that he experienced while teaching in Nunavut:

> Little mini aha moments would be … days where lessons went well … and the students were into what we were doing and we had fun and were laughing and through that some learning was happening … And then… I would retrace my steps

> regarding how that learning environment was created… So there were a number of positive moments like that and over all it was a very positive experience for me …

I subsequently asked Thor what he thought characterized effective intercultural environmental educators? He replied with a wide variety of insights including strong "people skills", mutual respect, an open mind, creativity, and empathy for people and the natural world:

> I think someone who is very motivated to do the best they can … in their teaching situation ... [and] someone who has … people skills … I don't think it necessarily has to be a formally trained teacher … I think we're all educators in one way or another. For instance, we're always leading by example [through] our actions and lifestyles ... And… I would say, respect … respect for ourselves, respect for other people, for other cultures ... And an open mind … and … ways that they can relate to people that they're working with whether it's through story or dialogue or formal lessons … I think also to have a caring concern for all people and also … the places where we are and the Earth … and everything that encompasses the planet … That in my mind is what would make a good person and … and a good educator … For those who are in the position of a formal teacher we are in extreme positions of privilege and influence and we should be very careful how we approach our teaching and working with people because … the influence that [you] can have is very powerful. I believe that educators need to be critical and aware for their influences and their practice

Similar to Wilson's (2008) description of the Hawaiian principle of a'o/ ako (teaching/ learning), Thor concluded his comments on effective intercultural education with reflections from his time in Nunavut on the importance of personal and intercultural reciprocity. Similar to Tong (a participant who will be introduced later in this chapter), he also mentioned the importance of having the support of Elders as well as instructors from different cultural backgrounds acting as intercultural role models for their students:

> When I'm … working with any sort of population … whether they're kids deemed "youth at risk" or kids who are coming from an affluent background … Inuit youth in the North, they're often kids with the same stuff going on and I try not to get caught up in … those backgrounds… However, when I was teaching in Nunavut, I did think more about it because I was trying to understand Inuit values and how I could be teaching and guiding these youth into the future and being very cautious not to, necessarily try to steer them based on my Western values and ways of doing things … But rather I worked to blend Inuit culture and values into my

> program plans and what we did through the classes. Also, I worked to teach and educate towards respect and leadership and honesty and … other such character traits and values that I think … span across cultures … So I felt the work that I have done with Aboriginal youth in my time living in the North … was very grounded in a genuine desire to give but also to learn and wanting to not be an expert teacher but to be a facilitator of learning and knowledge both for myself and anyone I encounter in these places… And … there's a lot to learn and numerous challenges to do that well and to coordinate an intercultural program … [Only having] one person from one cultural background doesn't work … In my experience [You need] to have people from both … cultures … with … a common goal in mind … [Also] … having guidance from the community and Elders is … essential,

When I subsequently asked Thor if he had ever observed an "epiphanic" or "aha" moment in a student or colleague, he mentioned intercultural learning that he observed during an international student exchange and also shared anecdotes from time spent on the Land with Elders and other cultural initiatives during his time teaching in Nunavut.

> The biggest "aha" moment for me was realizing the importance and significance of intercultural experiences for youth in the north, as well as for colleagues while working internationally. The most significant change I saw in a number of students who I worked closely with occurred over a period of 8 days when we did a cultural exchange with students from another country. It gave the students a chance to have an intercultural experience, and allowed [them] to interact with youth beyond our isolated community.

Thor continued:

> Also, there were days where we went out on the land, ice fishing or seal hunting with local elders, and other days when we would do cultural programming in the school, sometimes with local community members and Elders, and sometimes without, such as Inuit games, cooking traditional food, and having elders come in and tell stories, among other things. It was often through activities such as these where I would see students' eyes light up, and motivation and engagement levels higher than usual … Programming that was experiential, active and fun was where I had big successes with students while teaching in Nunavut.

Our conversation then turned to John Ralston Saul's (2008) concept of Canada being a "métis nation". I asked Thor what he thought of Saul's ideas? He responded with

comments describing the strong influence of Aboriginal peoples on the formation of Canada:

> I think that in many ways we could consider Canada a métis nation. That Canada emerged and developed with the myriad interactions and influences from the Inuit, Métis and First Nations peoples is cause enough for me to consider further the concept of a métis nation.

He continued in detail:

> If we think of Aboriginal cultures being very connected to the Land and there not being a distinction between humans and nature ... then the landscape itself of North America is part of Aboriginal cultures and the landscape of North America has definitely had a huge influence on where things are and how things have unfolded for me personally as well as the generations of immigrants who have come to this continent over the past several hundred years… The rivers and the waterways being traditional and modern travel routes … have influenced the location of most if not all the major cities in Canada Further, the waterways, the forests, the mountains and everything that comprises the landscape is inherently connected to the Aboriginal cultures that have lived in these parts for… some say time immemorial … thousands of years at least … The fur trade, harvesting timber, farming… and especially hunting and gathering techniques, are very much a blend of ancient (Aboriginal) approaches as well as those who have arrived more recently. … Aboriginal people… helped … the early settlers that came here … even if it wasn't outright, just watching how the Aboriginal people lived and how they harvested…. That would have had a profound effect on who survived here and who procreated and who are the generations that ended up having an influence on Canada … The different land treaties that are going on from coast to coast to coast are still actively shaping the country, such as Nunavut being formed ten years ago this year and how that's having a profound effect on the North … So … a blending of different cultures and different people and different thoughts and different worldviews? I would say absolutely.

I subsequently asked Thor to comment on how Canada's ecological identity might be linked to our history? He commented that he thought geography as much as human history has influenced our ecological identities. He also emphasized the gradual dominance of Europeans since colonialism:

> I think it's our geography as much as our history… I think the landscape … has influenced the history [and] the people and where they've been and how they interacted and what there was to eat there and … *(rumbling, crackling fire)* … our national ecological identity… People came from Europe and elsewhere and pushed back the forests and, although … the Aboriginal people that were here

> … did play a strong role, I think in the longer run … I think it's been more of [the Europeans playing] … the dominant role. And so … that has re-shaped the ecological identity that may have been here say pre-contact 500 years ago to what it is now …

Similar to several other participants (e.g. Skywalker) Thor also identified diverse ecological identities within and between geographic regions in Canada:

> Within ... any family, community, or province, I don't think there's a common ecological identity ... However, in the community where I was living ... in Nunavut last year… There amongst the locals, I think more so than any one place I've been, there was more of a common ecological identity ... which is very different from the ecological identity of … the general mass of people in southern Ontario where I grew up …

Our conversation concluded with Thor's thoughts on blending Western and Indigenous knowledge. He commented:

> I'm sure it is [possible to blend them] … and … that's essentially what I was trying to do teaching in the North last year … To blend the two, to share my experiences and background with the local culture, but still very much be teaching and guided by the goals and visions of people from within that culture and that community. It was a really interesting … and challenging process to undertake … The job description called for [someone] to help develop and implement a cultural education program that was drawing on the South and their education system, but also the values and … the experiences … of the community … and the Inuit culture.

Thor concluded with an emphasis on the importance of individuals building strong relationships and learning directly from each other, seeking Richardson's (2004) "Third Space" where people find commonalities regardless of their cultural background:

> In a broad sense I think we can learn something from everyone and every culture. In my experience it's … important to learn from culture, but also important to learn from individual people and their actions. For example, there's people within say … Western culture … in southern Canada … who respect family and have respect for each other and live a good life and … are admirable and can be looked up to from anyone on the planet, in certain regards. But right down the street, you're going to find [people] who don't treat each other well and don't treat the environment well and … I don't think we should model our lives after them. And [it's the] same … in my experience in the North … Within … the community [where] I was living, there

> were people who you'd want to learn from and maybe base some decisions on and then quite the opposite. So I think there's that full spectrum within communities and within our country …

It was a pleasure to hear Thor's perspectives on intercultural environmental education. He shared many rich experiences and insights including a reminder of the economic, epistemological, and ontological heterogeneity of individuals within any culture; the power and importance of direct experiences with other cultures, the Land, and respected Elders in intercultural environmental education; and the interlinked and foundational influences of geography and human activity on the development of Canada both pre and post European contact. I appreciate Thor taking the time for our initial interview and his commitment to subsequent consultation.

Kate

Kate is a woman in her early thirties of mixed European descent. She has been involved with outdoor and environmental education as a participant, leader, and teacher-educator for over fifteen years. The current focus of her teaching and research is reflexively examining the experiences of White outdoor and environmental educators who are engaging with Indigenous peoples and knowledge through a lens of decolonization.

Kate and I held our interview over Skype, an online video conferencing program, after several failed attempts to meet in person. We have known each other for several years so, despite being physically separated, our conversation flowed smoothly. We both commented afterwards that it was easy to forget that we were not speaking in person.

When I asked Kate how she would describe herself culturally, she replied with a complex and thoughtful answer:

> Well … how I would answer that now has evolved somewhat and … I mean there's a number of aspects to that. There's the way that I … would introduce myself now formally if I'm giving a talk which acknowledges my heritage of being German, Irish, and Welsh … and recognizing that I'm just now starting to learn how those cultures have influenced who I am. But there's the before part to that where I've never felt strongly connected to those traditions of those cultures … And … before that like all through high school … would have had a perspective of, "Well, I'm Canadian." Not really a full understanding of what that means. But I guess it's … shifted… I definitely think about being a White person and … how that influences the way people interact with me and the way people interact in the world …

She continued by discussing her own sense of "culture" which includes sub-cultures such as a network of fellow of outdoor educators and her own family:

> I'm somebody that really ... is influenced by my love of the outdoors and the time my family spends outdoors and when I think about traditions of my life… cultural traditions … I think of … outdoor education culture … and how those are probably some of the … traditions that I cherish a lot in terms of … rhythms of the year like meeting up with people at a certain time …

When I subsequently asked Kate how her family history might have influenced who she is today, she reflected on her lifelong interest in family lore more so than the tangible influence of cultural traditions:

> I've … always been quite interested in my family history … In about grade two or three somebody in my dad's family completed a family tree and I can remember sitting down with my dad and looking at it and looking at … I think it was five greats or something like that … when this grandfather came from Germany into the States and … I was very interested that the last name had [been] changed and why that was … So I think some of those things have given me a bit of a sense of a longer family history ... And maybe just curiosity too about how people lived differently … Hearing stories from grandparents about growing up on a farm and what that was like … Just being aware that … it wasn't always the way it was … But in terms of … coming from … Germany or coming from England … I don't think that I paid a lot of attention to … the… influence of those European traditions. I think on a more recent scale traditions, family traditions, immediate family traditions, what we do at Christmas, in the summers, that's always … been pretty important to me….

Our conversation then shifted to ecological identity. Similar to many other participants (e.g. Liatrus, Olivia L'Hirondelle, Natasha Little, Orange Blossom) and scholars (e.g. Corcoran, 1999; Thomashow, 1996), Kate expressed a Deep Ecological (Naess and Rothenberg,

1990) perspective and commented on the formative influence of early experiences spent outdoors with her family:

> I [feel] connected [to] and definitely part of [Nature] … When I start thinking about my relationship with Nature, I immediately start thinking about my childhood on the … river and … I remember my dad saying … that he and my Mom used to think that I … had an "unnatural affinity for Nature" … I think what he meant was … something you don't see amongst all kids … But … spending that time … in a place that was local to me and really getting to know that place as a kid I think was pretty influential in my relationship with Nature … Things I loved to do in the summers as a kid were blueberry picking, exploring around islands, sharing meals around a campfire, swimming in the river, beachcombing for snail shells and other things, drinking fresh water from a local spring, sailing ...

Similar to Orange Blossom and Skywalker, Kate also reflected on the cultural aspects of those early experiences and an early sense of the long history of Aboriginal peoples in the area:

> I didn't realize this for a long time … but I … am aware that at a really young age, I had a sense that people had been living and travelling on that River for a really long time and … I don't have a clue where I got that notion... Part of me likes to think … that was something that came from the river … I think I knew that it was a travel and a trade route for a really long time and there was a… particular place ... on that river where you could … climb up to the top of a big cliff … And there was always a story that I heard that was the so called "Native Legend" … I have no idea if the story … was accurate at all, but … since then I've come to find that wall is covered in dozens of pictographs … So there's that place that I was getting exposed to that had a story and had this history and I don't know when I started to learn that story or realize it , but … there was a Nature and a culture piece to spending time there…

When asked how she would describe herself as an educator, Kate responded with some engaging questions of her own around the term "intercultural":

> In terms of [being] an "intercultural educator", I mean that's an interesting one because I certainly use the term "intercultural" when I'm talking about being interested in understanding relationships. I don't know if I've ever specifically … used that word to describe myself as an educator, but … that's not to say it doesn't fit … I think one of the questions I have is ... "If I'm talking about an intercultural educator … is that conveying a notion that I think my own culture is somehow … "inter" [blended]… or does it mean that I'm interested in educating in a way that engages people of multiple cultures?" … I don't know if it's describing me as a person in my culture or if it's about how I … educate…

When I asked Kate about experiences or influences that might have led to her current work in intercultural outdoor and environmental education, she shared a collection of both positive and negative moments. She began by discussing influential experiences from her undergraduate and graduate studies:

> When I was in undergrad … I remember there was a woman in our class who chose to write one of her papers about Native cultural appropriation. And at the time I hadn't thought about that really at all ... and I remember being kind of intrigued and … kind of curious … And … and I remember … in that [same] class … doing … an activity … where [we had] to stand in a place in the woods where we thought nobody had ever stood before. So we all engaged in this and then … of course the talk after that was, "Well, really the idea that it's an un-peopled landscape is kind of a false idea" … The [grad] class I took with [an Aboriginal professor] was [also] a huge turning point … On the one hand … it provided a lot … of information … about processes of colonization … It was also an exposure to … Aboriginal pedagogies … She sang at the beginning of classes and smudg[ed] and we did the class as circle work. All of which took getting used to and… I think she created a really … safe [intercultural] environment … So … I think that the significance of taking that class was … me sort of grappling [with questions like] "Is there a place for me to get engaged in this work?" … And sort of getting to a point of feeling like, "Yes, there are ways that I can contribute and there's still a lot that I have to learn but that it's worthwhile to continue with it."

Kate also described how uncomfortable moments in her work have also motivated her:

> Moments of discomfort … sent me in particular directions too ... experiences where I had a visceral sort of discomfort but didn't necessarily know why … [For example] one of the parents [at a camp I worked at in my late teens came] to do a campfire … and he was … a white guy from downtown Toronto … who had paid some money to go and do these sweats somewhere I don't really know what his background was, but he came and did some ceremonial type stuff and smudging with us at the campfire and I just remember feeling really uncomfortable … it just didn't [feel] … like the right context …

Kate expanded further on the learning potential of uncomfortable moments. She shared the following epiphanic moment from her master's study related to her relationship with a Métis friend:

> So … the big dilemma in my master's was … trying to figure out … what would be the most … respectful … decolonizing perspective … choice of participants? … On the one hand, I really … wanted to interview a mixed group of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants [so] that I was including everyone's voices. [However] … I was feeling like there was also the potential of burdening Aboriginal participants with helping me as this White female sort out … my issues … and also having the sense that before I could engage in the bigger conversation I really wanted to understand my own experience and the experiences of people like me. So that was my dilemma. And … at some point [a close Métis friend and I] had talked about [him] being a participant … and one day [he] … offer[ed] overtly to [participate]. [However,] I had made the decision at that point that I would only be interviewing White folks and I had to tell [him] that. And that initial sort of realization that, "Oh, wait a minute ... what does this mean in terms of who [he] is and who I think [he] is?"

Kate concluded:

> And then the follow-up to that was the next day [he was] presenting … at [a] symposium … And [he] introduced [himself in] Ojibwe ... Anyways … I think I actually cried at the moment because … it just struck me that I think those two pieces together which are seemingly insignificant just made me recognize that … that I had not fully honoured who [he was] and what it meant for [him] to be Métis … I had this nagging … subconscious thought that "Oh well … [he]'s just like us." You know, "Why does [he] really bring bannock when [he] comes to a potluck?" … And it was sort of me just recognizing that deeply-seated Eurocentrism in my perspective … It was scary to see that even though … [he] and I are good friends, [and have] had lots of conversations around these themes … I still had missed it and that that in the future … I knew that there would be other moments … So … that was a big one.

Kate also mentioned the encouraging influence of one her mentors, a non-Aboriginal woman currently engaged in similar work:

> [My non-Aboriginal graduate supervisor] was pretty significant too … In meeting [her] I found … this other White woman who was finding ways of engaging and who could see the same who was looking at the same connection that I wanted to look at of environmental degradation and colonization of people … So I felt very supported by her and … exposed to lots of ideas …

When I asked Kate to share more specific examples of her experiences leading intercultural environmental education initiatives, she reflected on challenges and successes from various teaching experiences:

> Things that happened at [one program] gave the opportunity for … discomfort, but at times just really … open dialogue and conversations … We didn't have a lot of Aboriginal students … coming to our program … [But we really thought about] … how to teach the Aboriginal content of that course and knowing that we ... lacked the knowledge and knowing that it needed particular attention but just being really unsure of how to do that. [However, that confusion was also] balanced [by] meeting people who were incredibly generous and who welcomed groups of students for example to [a nearby Algonquin] community … A family there … had a group of five or six students sleep at their house and … they were just really generous and … welcoming. A hugely influential student was [name] … What was neat about [her] was that she did have a lot of knowledge and was quite confident about her [Aboriginal] identity and was quite willing to share and ask questions in a generous kind of a way. So ... between conversations with her, [and] also her mom … we just felt like … we had somebody that we could call on and ask and that it would be okay if we … asked questions that were seemingly silly or something like that and it would be fine …

Kate also shared two epiphanic moments from her time with the same interdisciplinary program. Similar to Thor's observations on facilitated reflection, she commented that she didn't actually realize that they had been "epiphanic moments" until later on when she had the time and awareness to reflect upon them further:

> Two … interesting moments … I don't think they became sort of "epiphanic" … until later on when I had more knowledge and awareness to be able to re-reflect on them ... One was [regarding] … an Aboriginal student … that had really struggled in school although he was doing fairly well academically at our school and ... he had had a lot of exposure to his heritage and to his culture and valued it a lot and often shared that with us in class … and … although we had a no smoking and cigarette policy, there was, we found ways for him to be able to bring tobacco with him and he would often offer tobacco at different points on our canoe trips and our hiking trips and that sort of thing. However, he was also a student who had a really hard time following the rules … and … in the end … this student was asked not to return in the second semester and… it was a terrible decision to have to make and it was an emotional decision … I remember having conversations with his dad on the phone and his dad saying, "We really want to work around this … when he comes back here to the reserve … the opportunities aren't going to be here educationally and it's going to really influence and change his life not being able to finish what he's started." and just what a difference our school had made for him … I think in retrospect, I don't know how or if I would have done anything differently, but I just feel like maybe it required more consideration than what we gave it at the time … Anyways…. I guess just that I don't know when I was having conversations with the father, I don't really know if I really understood what he was getting at of how significant … or how disproportionate this kind of punishment was to really remove

> him from the program … So …I wish we'd given more thought to how to work with that student …

She continued:

> And then another "aha moment" was … we were in the process of trying to develop a second semester … We were talking with a lot of parents whose children may have come to join us for a second semester and we were brainstorming what courses we might offer ... and [an Aboriginal student] was [there] and I was talking with [her mother] and we tossed around the idea of offering the Native English course that was in the Ontario curriculum at that time. And I can remember her looking at us and saying, "You need to offer that course." And "Do you understand the significance of this decision?" And at the time I said "Oh yes …" And I understood [that it was] an important decision, but I don't think I understood the significance that she was thinking of, you know, being able to expose students to Aboriginal authors …

When I asked Kate if she had ever observed an epiphanic moment in a student, friend, or colleague, she shared an interesting story about attending a rally with her friends and observing a transformation in one person's comfort with and interest in Aboriginal people and issues:

> Well one … that comes to mind is … when [an Aboriginal land-dispute] rally was going on … [Some friends] happened to be in town visiting and … I had told them that I wanted to go to this rally … And so they [came with me] … [They] are generally quite … open-minded … and [one person] had himself worked with … restorative justice and [Aboriginal people]. So he was certainly open to Aboriginal culture, but probably hadn't really been exposed to very many intercultural experiences having lived his whole life pretty much in a small town. So anyways, we got to the rally quite early and we were probably amongst the first few dozen people there. And … we all got out of the car and … there were no other non-Aboriginal folks there yet and we were walking up the hill and one friend said to us, "You go ahead and I'm gonna go this way and meet up with later"… And afterwards he told us that he was really uncomfortable because he's this really big tall white guy and he felt really uncomfortable … He didn't know if he should be there. Anyways, later on more and more people gathered and my dad came back and there was all kinds of people from everywhere and he was really interested in what was going on and he was very engaged and was talking to people. I think he became much more comfortable and, in fact, continued to follow the trial for weeks afterwards … But it was interesting … to witness him feeling really vulnerable and then… to see him sort of be okay with it and to see him then continue to engage …

Next I asked Kate what advice she would share with aspiring intercultural environmental educators? She described transparency, self-critique, and facilitating open dialogue as key aspects of effective intercultural education:

> I think … transparency … and a willingness to be self-critical and to exemplify that for students is important … Also … I think there needs to be a place for students to express themselves no matter what point they're at in their particular journey and I think the difficulty there is, especially if you're working in an intercultural group of students, how do you do that without injuring other students? But at the same time, if only a certain type of dialogue is tolerated, then you're not really getting at the underlying issues.

She also highlighted compassion as an important characteristic of successful intercultural educators:

> [I recently read an] article … about meeting resistance with compassion and that, particularly in Bachelor of Education programs, we're … hoping to create educators who can [be] compassionate with students … [But] as teacher-educators, we don't always show the same level of compassion ... We sometimes have this expectation that they need to get it right away and … there's a … [need] for compassion … there.

Kate also raised the interesting question of how to know when it's most effective for people to learn in homogenous or heterogeneous cultural settings? As well as the potential for cross-cultural instructor teams acting as role models like Thor also mentioned:

> Another balance that I'm trying to figure out is, "How do you know when groups of people need to work in sort of their homogenous culture groups and when people need to come together?" Both are probably important … and on that note, I think it could go a long way to work collaboratively with … co-instructor type teams where you can model relationships …

Kate also identified humility and learning from your own cultural gaffes or mistakes as a key characteristic of effective intercultural environmental educators. She commented, "I think those experiences of being really uncomfortable and being able to openly talk about your mistakes, I don't think you can have enough of those."

Our conversation then turned to focus on blending Western and Indigenous knowledge and philosophies of Nature. Kate commented that she didn't believe in blending to the point of losing original cultures, but did support it as a way to find commonalities similar to what Richardson (2004) might call the "Third Space":

> I don't think I could say … that everything should be blended because then … the only option is to create something new … As opposed to … looking at what kinds of traditions to conserve that ... have worked for a really long time ... But maybe where blending is useful is … as a bridge for people to find points of resonance and find places where they can get on the same page and form some relationships and have some conversations. But I don't think that should be to the exclusion of people's own … specific cultures necessarily ... But that's also hard because if there's things about my own culture that I don't like or that I disagree with, then there needs to be some change as well … I mean I don't think it's realistic to … completely abolish one way of thinking or another … [However] … figuring out what to do with these different ways of knowing is … important…

Kate also highlighted the difference between intercultural and transcultural endeavours:

> I also think you have to ask what you mean by "blending" … I'm thinking about the [difference] between inter-disciplinarity and trans-disciplinarity… "Inter" being … working in the spaces between and looking for connections between two disciplines. And "trans" being bringing two together to create something new … So … are you talking about meshing two cultures into one new culture or are we talking about looking for ways for two cultures to co-exist in certain spaces or certain people?

I responded that I thought both intercultural and transcultural endeavours were important, but also highly contextual. I also reflected on the responses of other participants such as Liatrus and Olivia L'Hirondelle who were against blending in the "transcultural" sense, but seemed to be more open to the idea of inter-disciplinarity as Kate described—seeking the commonalities between two distinct cultures. This discussion reminded Kate and I of Barnhardt and Kawagley's (2005) Venn diagram (see Figure 3 in Chapter Two) demonstrating the overlap between Western Science and Indigenous knowledge and philosophies of Nature.

When I asked Kate what Aboriginal peoples might learn from non-Aboriginal peoples and vice-versa, she commented:

> I think that … one thing I have to learn is … how to work towards resisting ongoing colonization and Eurocentrism … learning how to recognize the … patterns in my own thinking and in the thinking of people from my culture … And then the constructive side too of … just trying to begin to glimpse another way of viewing or understanding the world and that's not to say that I think we're out to necessarily completely take on an Indigenous worldview or … to learn all the knowledge that there is to learn ... But just … learning to recognize that there … are some other ways of relating to … other people and to Nature and to our history … And I think there are things to learn about living well in particular places … from people whose … language and whose stories are ... really tied to those particular places … You know I … still feel really connected to [where I grew up], but I can't … begin to understand what somebody whose ancestors have been there for thousands of years might know or feel about that place … I think there's likely some kind of connection that I haven't experienced …

Our discussion then shifted to John Ralston Saul's (2008) concept of Canada being a "métis nation". Kate made the following thoughtful remarks on the importance of recognizing the ongoing influence and importance of Aboriginal peoples in Canada:

> It does speak to me and I … I think it's about honouring and recognizing … contributions to our contemporary society and to our history that have been … overlooked and diminished and downplayed … I'm really interested in how we then take his ideas and work with that amongst student groups who haven't even thought of the concept of identity or concept of culture [before] … [It reminds me of] Susan Dion's … perfect stranger concept … People tend to put themselves in this unapologetic stance of ignorance where they pretend like they've had nothing to do with Aboriginal peoples or communities, so they don't think they have to engage … "If I don't engage, I won't make any mistakes, I won't offend anybody ... Everything will be just fine …" But that fails to recognize that ... all people in Canada are living in relation to ... Aboriginal peoples … Saul is pointing out that … there is this relationship … and we just haven't paid attention to it and here's … the evidence … for why we should…

When I subsequently asked Kate for her thoughts on Canadian ecological identity, similar to several other participants (e.g. Cedar Basket and Thor), she replied that she didn't believe that there is one identifiable Canadian ecological identity:

> It might be a stretch to say that we have one national Canadian ecological identity… I think there are … those people that envision their … ecological connections or

> contributions to be quite urban and … sometimes also intertwined with … social issues … I think there are other groups … who don't necessarily pay attention to social issues and who are more ... "Back to Nature" … I think there's people whose ecological identity … is really fueled by a physicality—they're seeking adventure and sport … And I think there are you know, people who are quite spiritually connected to Nature and … people who are ancestrally connected to particular localized places … Then I also think there's people who don't think about it all ... who are so far removed that it makes them nervous to see a spider or … [who] spend their whole life living in their air conditioned house to their car to their office …

When I asked Kate if she could identify historical links to some of the identities that she mentioned, she commented:

> One that seems obvious to me is … the canoe trip enthusiast or the outdoor educator. Typically White middle class … urban Euro Western person who takes their two or three weeks vacation and goes on an escape-type canoe trip in some far off place. And … I think about the … people who would have come here from Europe seeking to escape whatever they were … the escape idea I think was Roy McGregor … who talked about that ... People who left this place and went … seeking some idealistic place … and not necessarily paying attention to the other people who are already there. So you know I think that's really interesting … I think there's a connection with that mentality… That some land of Eden exists and that people are going to go out and find out and that it's going to be completely separate from the other parts of their life … [Also] when I see contemporary communities of Aboriginal people who are connecting to … the land and to Nature in ways that are ... really rooted in a longstanding tradition, then that would be another example of history contributing [to ecological identity] …

Kate's discussion of McGregor's (2003) theories of escapism as a pillar of Canadian identity also reminded me of Carolyn Merchant's (2004) discussion of declensionist theory—Western society's attempts to rediscover or recreate the Garden of Eden, which I explored in detail in Chapter Two.

I am grateful to Kate for sharing so many deep and rich insights and experiences. I was especially intrigued by her discussion of the distinction between intercultural and trans-cultural approaches to blending Indigenous knowledge and philosophy with other epistemologies. I also appreciated her thoughts and stories about the learning potential of uncomfortable experiences and cross-cultural mistakes

Tong

"Comfortable with the uncomfortable"

Tong is a western Canadian woman in her mid-twenties of mixed European ancestry. Her involvement with intercultural outdoor and environmental education began over ten years ago as a youth participant with an intercultural outdoor and environmental organization that welcomes students from all cultural backgrounds. This initial experience motivated Tong to return several times and gradually led to her to taking on a leadership role with the same organization. She continued her immersion in outdoor and environmental education as an undergraduate student. Tong currently works as a school librarian in a northern community.

Similar to Kate, Tong and I conducted our interview using video chat technology. We've also known each other for several years, so our conversation flowed quite naturally despite the physical separation.

When I asked Tong how she would describe herself culturally, Tong replied:

> I think of myself firstly as Canadian, with mixed European ancestry … On my dad's side I'm Norwegian and Irish ... and on my mom's I'm German and Ukrainian … The closest connection to Europe is to my dad, we still have family in Norway …

Describing how her family's history might have influenced who she is today, Tong emphasized the more immediate influence of her parents. Without prompting, her comments led nicely into a discussion of her ecological identity:

> We didn't have a specific religion in my family or anything like that … The only thing my dad would ever talk about in terms of spirituality was just respecting Nature and… that really did have an influence on me growing up…
> [My parents] were always taking us camping [and] … we moved out of town onto an acreage when me and my sister were just young girls … So I … spent a lot more time out of the city growing up … Playtime in a natural world feels a whole lot different than play in the city … So I was able to, you know, go hunting when I was thirteen … My grandma passed down a gun to me on my birthday!

When I asked Tong how she sees herself in relation to Nature, she responded very honestly about a shifting sense of connection depending on her surroundings and state of mind:

> I feel connections and disconnections when it comes to Nature … There are times when … I'll be … on my own all the time in certain landscapes and I'll see myself reflected everywhere ... Like in the grass or… in the river. And then there's other times where … in the regular working day-to-day and living in town, I feel more disconnected from it than I'd like to be … And I feel that I'm the most natural and the most myself when I'm on the Land as opposed to when I'm in the city … I feel like nature shows us the most truth in the world.

I subsequently asked Tong to reflect further on the formative influences that have shaped her current ecological identity. She replied:

> I think it's been a combination of a lot of experiences both in my early childhood and adolescence and then adulthood that have all brought about my relationship to Nature. Part of it was my family. Half of it would have been my family and the way I was able to grow up and the other half would have been my connection to … an organization that does intercultural ecological education. And that was a huge, huge influence on my life and … my cosmology … Just seeing the powerful things that can happen when a group of people come together and form community based on begin isolated together on the Land …

Tong also identified some key moments from her time with that intercultural environmental organization:

> I think all of my solos ... and fasts… were really influential ... And … doing that … knowing that other people are out there on the Land doing the same thing … Having experiences where people are pushed beyond boundaries and the power that that has when you're challenged past your edges of comfort. And witnessing [others'] experiences … That definitely drove me to want to interact with people in that way as much as possible in my life….

Tong's involvement as a participant with this organization gradually led to her taking on a leadership role. She described the strong influence of the older leaders and Elders who mentored her:

> It … was a progression of being involved … there summer after summer. And a lot of it was the influence of the leaders that were down there … Watching the magic of … all [the older leaders and Elders] … I have no other word for it aside from

> "magic" ... Yes, it's extremely skillful facilitation and experiential education, but when you're … there experiencing it … All I can think of is magic … The enormous skill that they have to weave together a group of people. Coming from so many different corners of the world and different experiences and backgrounds and … watching people come together in such a strong community with such a huge opportunity for change and learning and personal development and ... watching that happen through … leadership and their facilitation and … watching them push people. That really ... influenced me to want to be able to do what they do … I remember when [my friends and I] start[ed] leading our own programs … always being worried that we weren't going to be as magical … Haha! We all knew that we had to find our own gifts to bring and that we were all going to have our unique charisma, but there was always that sense that we just couldn't quite weave the same way that our teachers could.

Based on her experiences, I asked Tong what she thought makes for effective intercultural environmental education? She responded initially with thoughts similar to Thor and Kate—emphasizing the importance of having cross-cultural leadership teams who can act as role models:

> I think it's important to have a well-balanced team … You can't have a cultural program and only have facilitators that come from the same background … It's possible, but … I've seen the most harmony come from having people of mixed backgrounds come together to be able to facilitate … and … present examples that way… If you're of mixed backgrounds as a leadership team, it provides so much opportunity for experiences in-group facilitation towards your students especially if they're of mixed backgrounds as well. And then if issues come up, you're able to address that from … your [respective] backgrounds as facilitators and … discuss your differences… I think it's important … that differences are acknowledged and that their importance is recognized … That's important in intercultural education …

She continued with comments on the importance of intercultural educators being open, self-aware, and "comfortable with the uncomfortable":

> To be genuine is really important … There's always going to be… tensions … And when you bring a group of youth together, those tensions can reach a point of … boiling. You have to be able to … not brush that under the table. I think those are the really huge experiences where really important discussions can happen that might not otherwise happen. And so it's facilitators who have to … be comfortable with the uncomfortable ... And be able to talk about attitudes and stereotypes and … openly with your students. [So]… being relationship oriented … is important … Knowledge of your own background and your own cultural identity is [also] important …You can't really talk about culture or identity without having struggled with your own identity a bit … I think it's a comfort with being able to relate with

> people of different backgrounds … Especially if you might even have … differing opinions, you have to be … open about that … and be able to still relate … You can't overstep your bounds … you have to be very respectful … [and] come to know your own place or be careful to learn it as you go along.

When I subsequently asked Tong if she'd had any other big intercultural experiences, she responded with reflections on a year spent in Thailand:

> I did an exchange … when I graduated high school before I started university … I ended up… being … a volunteer teacher at [a] high school and … took some courses at [a] college … And then … ended up doing a bunch of different volunteer projects … We were involved up at the elephant conservatory and helped sponsor a camp for underprivileged youth and people from [an] orphanage for a cultural camp at the conservatory.

I asked Tong if she saw any links between her training in Canada in intercultural education and her time in Thailand? She replied:

> I think my time [with the intercultural environmental education program in Canada] has given me a lot of tools and strategies to navigate my way through different cultural landscapes and … just to get through challenges and difficult situations … It was a tough year I spent in Thailand and I definitely drew on a lot of things that I learned at the [Canadian program] [to] get me through.

Further reflecting on her experiences with intercultural outdoor and environmental education, Tong shared the following epiphanic moment that occurred while leading an intercultural group of youth on a hiking trip:

> [I was leading] … a teenage [hiking] camp ... [with two co-instructors: a Métis woman and a Euro-Canadian man] … It was a strong group with lots of … energy .. tension [and] challenges … I remember one day we hiked up to [some] falls. And … it's a powerful landscape … You … have to go up a canyon … The waterfall was dry and we were able to hike right up into [a] small basin area and sit on the rocks …

Tong continued:

> We were kind of just snacking and having conversation and … cultural issues starting coming up amongst the kids. There were people there that were from reserve communities. There were people of Native background that lived in the city. And there were Caucasian kids there too. And somehow, sitting in this little base of the waterfall, a fight kind of started about who was Native and who wasn't and ... what that meant and … what it was like and it was a huge … opportunity for

> intercultural education … There we were with people from these different backgrounds fighting with people about identity. There were like, people from the reserve saying, "You're not Native, you live in the city. You're like half-Native." And then there was that kid returning it back saying, "Yeah, but you don't know what it's like to be Native and have to fit with all these White people at my school." And then there was the Caucasian girl … saying her bit too … It was a huge opportunity to address that at face value with these youth that were sitting there.

Tong concluded her story with a description of how they resolved the situation:

> So … I remember that being a big … [learning] moment about the power of intercultural ecological education. And we were able to … prevent it from becoming an experience that damaged the group … We stopped everything for a bit and started a circle right away and … said, "Okay … we have to talk about this now, this is important … and… then we have to be respectful to each other … we can absolutely talk about your opinion and your identity and what your experience has been based on your background, but be open to listening to each other and to what their experiences have been." And so we did that and I can't remember how many rounds we had, but it was a profoundly powerful experience for everyone involved … I've never seen … teenagers from such different backgrounds being able to address those issues with each other in that kind of a way … We were able to continue on with the rest of the program … and see that the students were even tighter as a group because of that and because of being able to have acknowledged that with each other.

Our conversation concluded with a discussion of some broader issues, such as John Ralston Saul's (2008) concept of Canada being a "métis nation". Tong shared mixed feelings about Saul's ideas:

> I remember reading about some of the things he wrote ... and kind of agreeing in some ways, but disagreeing in others … I definitely could not say that we are all one united cultural identity … I don't feel that way at all. It would almost be nice, to feel a united cultural identity … That's one of the things that I thought about a lot when I went to Thailand. Because if you're from Thailand, you're Thai … We ha[d] so many discussions about [being] Canadian and having to describe our cultural identity and having to talk about the mixture of nations and identities within one country. And it was really hard for them to understand the idea of Native and non-Native … [They'd ask], "Why aren't you just Canadian, how are there different nations within one country?" So that was really interesting, but even within Canada, I feel … sure you can say "Canadian" and that can be the overall umbrella, but … even within our Indigenous groups there's so many different identities and cultures ... I definitely see what … Saul is saying about … there is a huge Métis community and so many of us have connections to that somehow, but I don't see it as being all of Canada.

Shifting focus to Canadian ecological identity, Tong remarked that she believes that there is an endless variety of ecological identities within Canada based on influences such as family, culture, and geography:

> It's the same as the feeling that we don't have one unified cultural identity. There's people from so many different backgrounds … within Canada. You could not talk to ten people from across the country and come up with the exact same ecological identity from all of them ... They come from such diverse cultural backgrounds and each one of those has their own ecological relationship with this landscape … It's all based on your family and your origin and where you grew up …

When I asked Tong if she thought it was possible to blend Western and Aboriginal ecological knowledge and philosophies, she replied enthusiastically that she thought that it was possible. She also discussed the similar Earth-based origins of all cultures and the importance of non-Aboriginal people learning as much as possible about the Earth-based roots of their own cultural traditions:

> I think that it's possible, and I also think that it's important … I feel that Native … people that were born here with their ancestry dating from here… have a unique … relationship to this landscape … and … I feel like I belong to this land, but my ancestry feels far away … You hear a lot about First Nations' philosophy ... really guiding and leading in terms of relation to the natural world, but I also feel like that's not necessarily lost upon my own ancestry … I know that if I go back far enough, my people have drums, my people have ceremonies and … everyone in the entire world stems from an intricate relationship to the Land. That's our home, our number one home, despite everything else that we've built on top of it. And we all stem from that. Every single religion stems from [sacred] experiences … that are had in landscapes. And we all have that to share with each other and I feel that … for people like myself it's really important for me to reach back and find my own philosophies in Nature and to be able to share that from my own background with Native people and for us to be able to bring that together.

Tong also noted that non-Aboriginal people shouldn't simply adopt Aboriginal culture, but might be inspired to rediscover their own cultural traditions, working in partnership with Aboriginal people to find "a workable design" for society, or what Richardson (2004) might call a "Third Space":

> It seems so much that Western philosophy influenced industrialism and influenced our fall from harmony with Nature and a really important role of Indigenous populations is to help us bring back that balance … I do feel like Western societies are further removed from the original connection, but they're not lost, they just need to be rediscovered … Non-native people can't take on Native culture, but we can be influenced by it in order to rediscover our own connection and our own ways … that we then need to work together to find a workable design to move forward with …

Tong concluded emphatically that knowing your culture is important for everybody, regardless of background, because it helps you to better understand yourself and, as a result, others:

> Having experiences … in places where culture is seen as very, very important, to personal development … led me to be a big believer that culture, no matter what it is, is very important, for everyone. And it's also important for people to share those backgrounds and experiences because you can never know yourself unless you know difference. Knowing difference opens so many possibilities for reflection for yourself and your own knowledge of yourself and your own identity. And … your beliefs and views are able to be challenged in ways that they never would if you didn't have experiences of differences …

I really enjoyed this interview with Tong. She shared many wonderful stories and insights from her early life and experiences with intercultural environmental education. I was especially intrigued by her honest discussion of her shifting sense of connection to Nature depending on the physical and existential context. I also appreciated her comments on intercultural educators "being comfortable with the uncomfortable" and the importance of getting to know your own culture as a key piece to learning about others. Tong also provided the valuable observation that the most effective intercultural education teams are typically intercultural themselves. I am grateful to Tong for the time and thoughts that we shared.

Arthur

Arthur is a man in his early thirties of Japanese and Danish descent who grew up in a large urban area in central Canada. Arthur's interest in outdoor and environmental education began in his late teens when he enrolled in an undergraduate outdoor recreation program and has culminated with him running a successful dogsled and bed and breakfast business in Northwestern Ontario for the past four years. Arthur draws on a soft-spoken yet highly engaging teaching style to facilitate experiential learning that incorporates local Aboriginal knowledge, perspectives, and partnerships.

We held our interview in a cozy living room on a chilly afternoon late in the fall. To begin, I asked Arthur to share some thoughts on his cultural background. He initially commented on the impact of his father's experiences with internment during World War II, echoing the sentiments of other Japanese Canadians (e.g. Aoki, 1983):

> I'm certainly a product of my parents' cultures … though that's probably … a deeper layer than what's on the surface now … My father was born in Vancouver to Japanese parents … Actually his mother was also born in Canada … My dad was interned in the war… which for a lot of Japanese Canadians meant… really Westernizing themselves because they … felt that they needed to prove themselves as good [Canadians afterwards] … And so, even though my dad's parents spoke Japanese, they insisted that English be spoken at home …[However,] I think I've got the soft mannerisms … from the Japanese side of my family … a lot more so than … my mom's side of the family ...

Arthur then discussed his mother's struggles and subsequent resiliency in Denmark during the Second World War:

> My mother … grew up in Denmark … during the war. So [she learned to be] very thrifty and creative … People … had to make due with the resources they had … My mom is incredible … in that regard.

Arthur also described his childhood in a multicultural neighbourhood within a large urban centre in central Canada. He also reflected on the difference between his childhood and his undergraduate experience in a smaller northern city:

> I grew up very much a city person in a [large] multicultural city … Growing up … a lot of other families were … immigrant[s] … [who] didn't speak English at home. And so … we [had] very multicultural classroom[s] even in the early eighties … So I didn't grow up with any one … dominant culture in our school … [In my] university … there was a dominant … culture. More of an upper middle class ... White culture … So it was the first time I actually felt a little bit different...

Reflecting further on the concept of "culture", Arthur also commented on the regional culture (human and otherwise) of Northwestern Ontario that has been a strong influence on him in more recent years:

> I find that … my culture's very much … shaped by Northwestern Ontario's landscape … It means I gravitate towards water … and I embrace the snow hehehe! … I like things slower and … the people I lean towards as role models are people from an older generation who have done things a little bit more traditionally … I'm the type of person who likes to be out on my ash snowshoes instead of my high-tech ones and … the dogs I use for dog sledding are older style lines … So culturally I would say, I've got a lot of influences … But … the way I found myself is more through how I interacted with the landscape … I suppose that's the best way to sort of describe my culture …

Arthur's comments on the power of the Northwestern Ontario landscape led nicely into a discussion of his ecological identity. He commented:

> When I first started going to school in an outdoor based field … I was a bit older say than … people maybe who were exposed when they were younger … I didn't have all … outdoor experiences that a lot of my classmates did … There was a lot of talk about camping and "leave no trace" … [But] there came a point where I decided for myself that "leave no trace" was ludicrous because it meant that I had to be separated from [Nature] and I wasn't allowed to be a part of it … I just wanted to pay attention to what was going on … One activity that helped me do that and made me feel comfortable because you could do it without a lot of knowledge was animal tracking … And what happened to me in that exploration was… this realization that nothing go on around me was random … You [can't] go animal tracking without also engaging in all the environments that that animal is engaging in … The stick that I got in my eye was the same stick that that deer got in the eye, you know? … I realized, "As I'm moving through here, I'm affecting the world too, I'm leaving my footprints." And … so that has led to me … feeling that no matter what we do … we're just a part of [Nature] as well … I see a connection everywhere in Nature and I don't think that … a manufactured piece of plastic is any less natural than a tree growing in the boreal forest … I always thought that it was unhealthy to create that separation. And so it's affected the way I've made decisions in life. [For example] … my wife and I … [believe in] local food … [because] we see that as all being a part of our own environment and we affect it as much as it affect us...

Reflecting further on his ecological identity, Arthur described the following epiphanic moment while animal tracking:

> I was tracking a fisher … and … they're kind of fun. It's almost like they're being playful… And so, I'm looking around … and I'm interpreting. I'm talking to myself in my head about what I'm seeing … And then…there was a moment later in the day… where I realized [that] … I was reading the tracks in their own language … That was … the first time I'd ever transcended those human limitations that … had to interpret and speak a language in my head … to talk about the experience … to understand the experience. And suddenly I was understanding it in it's own language. And I was like, "Whoa, that was powerful!" … That was certainly an epiphany for me and that led me to … write … my undergrad thesis about animal tracking and how it can foster an ecological spirituality.

Arthur's comments above remind me of my own experiences studying French and Japanese. At a certain point with both languages, I eventually arrived at a level of fluency where I stopped translating from or into English in my head while reading or during conversations. Arthur's description of being totally absorbed in the moment while tracking is also reminiscent of Czikszentmihalyi (1990)'s concept of "flow"—complete immersion and focus during outdoor activities where one's perceived separation with the surrounding environment dissolves and profound feelings of connection to the natural world are often experienced.

When I subsequently asked Arthur to comment further on any epiphanic "aha" moments in his early career as an outdoor and environmental educator, he described the realization that his soft-spoken, experiential approach to teaching could be very effective:

> [When I first started] engaging with nature and the outdoors more … it seemed everyone had such a strong identity of what they were: … skiers or hikers, or paddlers. [But] I thought, "I've come here to learn this stuff, I don't feel I have that identity yet." … And so that's where I started going toward the animal tracking which led to me doing all kinds of other things like snowshoeing and hiking and photography … as well … And then ... I wanted to teach … you have to … have some confidence in your own worth, that you're worth listening too, right? [So] despite being soft spoken … and being more reflective and … not really being that … expert kind of person … I found that people would actually lean in and they'd

> get engaged and… be really interested … And I always thought, "Oh that's interesting, I have something to share … because I'm paying attention to what's going on around me." And so that's when it came into being able to teach others ... I realized [that] all I have to do is share some of my experiences and then guide them to have their own. And therefore you don't have to be an expert if you can ask people to have their own experience. And talk about it with them.

Arthur commented further on his experiential approach to teaching:

> I guess I don't [really] think of myself as … an "environmental" or "outdoor" educator … so much … as [a] struggling businessman hehehehehe … [However,] as an educator … it depends on the scenario … I rely on the strength of the activities that I set out for people … to create their own personal meaning … And I think the reason I do that is because that's how I learned … I had to have my own experiences … So, I'll teach … dog sledding… and … people are like, "Okay, I've signed up for dog sledding." But really when they get there, what I've created for them as an experience is not necessarily dog sledding, but … the ability to be part of that dog team … Most people come to me thinking they're going to get an activity, just an act of fun. [But] they leave thinking, "I learned about myself"… when I craft it well. You simply cannot come to my place and interact with my dogs without learning a bit about yourself and how fit into the group.

Arthur provided further details about his approach to facilitating self-reflection with clients:

> I … often ask people … to tell me about themselves … and [then] I give them some dogs … Some of the dogs will be much like themselves, but … I will also give them dogs who are very much not like themselves, [so] there'll be some dog that … you're going to have adjust yourself to in order to make that relationship stronger. And so … I'll often ask them, "What was it like being able to reconcile those differences?" People are often able to [realize], "Oh this dog doesn't immediately like me because we're not so much alike, so I have to adjust myself." And I'll often ask people, "How often are you willing to adjust yourself for other members of your human team?" People … get such a strong idea of their own identity that they forget that maybe sometimes … people might need me to be something other than what [they are] … It's funny because people … will always adjust [and] have compassion for … others as long as those others are different enough from yourself … So, they'll adjust to meet the needs [of] a dog. Or they'll adjust to … someone from a very foreign culture or someone with a disability. But very often people will not adjust … for someone who is say a little bit more like themselves or a part of the same culture. And so … I try to engage people in some social learning [focusing on] how they relate to … other people, other beings, other animals, and to the environment around them … They're not expecting to learn those things about themselves sometimes.

I was intrigued by Arthur's use of his dogs to stimulate self-reflection with clients about their human relationships. I also found his suggestion that people typically adjust for

those who are very different than themselves, but not those who are similar, very interesting. How might this relate to the field of intercultural education that seems based upon the assumption that people have more difficulty adjusting to those who are different?

When I asked Arthur if he thought it was possible to blend Western and Aboriginal knowledge and philosophies in practice, he responded with a curious anecdote about teaching animal tracking through music:

> One thing that I did once in a lesson for animal tracking … was … I discovered … this [Indigenous Australian] instrument the didgeridoo, in which the traditional rhythms are based on animal movements and I thought, "That's really cool because I'm into tracking." So I started thinking, "I'm going to interpret … this story [of] track[s] in the snow us[ing a] didgeridoo." It's hard with … tracking because I want to read it as it is rather than interpret as, you know, "This animal did this …" like you would in a science lab … And so I thought of … English words for it … [and] at the same time I … creat[ed] a story about the tracks and us[ed] that instrument to be the go-between … I couldn't say for sure, but I think that the… class thought that that was kind of fun and … they liked looking at it in a different way other than just, "Okay, this was a fox and it went here and it did this … " The rhythm of that music … got them to … feel more what that animal was doing and so… I didn't think of it at the time as necessarily "cross-cultural education", but I guess there was an aspect to it there.

Reflecting on how he incorporates Aboriginal perspectives and knowledge into his current practice, Arthur described incorporating historical interpretation and Aboriginal artwork in his business practice. He also commented on the power of role modeling culturally sensitive behaviour rather than simply describing it:

> From a cross-cultural perspective … interpretation or education plays into my programming a lot … Our history … in … Northwestern Ontario is very much influenced by … the fur trade … We [have]… Scottish … French … Finnish … Anishnaabe and … Métis [influences and] we talk about how this land shaped those cultures … And you should see the appreciation … people have … [when] they [realize], "Oh, that's a part of who I am. That's a part of why this country is what it is ... today …" And other things we [also] … bring in local foods and … art … One relationship that we have built … is with … [a local Aboriginal] art gallery [that] represents … Anishnaabe artists and … we like to expose our clients to them [and] they've been good … by spending some money over there … It's very specific to this region … that woodland style of painting … We [also] have those paintings in our house and we interpret them as they were interpreted to us… We do try to …

> role model cultural behaviour rather than I guess talk about it … You know I'll say, "Well, I'll share with you this story that [the owner of the gallery] shared with me about this… " Much like you shared the tobacco with me [at the beginning of our interview]. You were role-modeling a behaviour, not [just] describing it.

Reflecting on intercultural experiences that have influenced how he runs his business, Arthur shared the following epiphanic moments from a storytelling festival in northern Canada:

> [One summer] I volunteered at [an] international storytelling festival … [At one point] I was backstage with an Elder … and she started speaking to me … I realized that she was actually sharing something with me, that her telling me a story wasn't about her speaking, it was about her giving something to me … Now I was a part of that culture and I held that story. It was given to me … [And] later … when another one of the storytellers came to the campground I was staying at, it hit home again … This [other] woman … from Haida Gwaii … [told me that long ago] when … European activity was [increasing, a neighbouring Aboriginal group was] worried a bit about their own culture, about their own lessons. So they went over to the Haida Gwaii, … and they gave them some stories and songs for safekeeping. And one of those songs was performed for us. . and … that changed my experience … That story held wisdom, that story held important parts of the culture. And then to know that it was shared with me … made me a part of it, it invited me in. And … it changed my thinking about culture in general.

I then asked Arthur to share any epiphanic "aha" moments that he might have observed in former students, clients, or colleagues. Similar to Thor, he described witnessing peoples' faces "light up". Also similar to Thor, he described learning about clients' "aha" moments after the fact through written reflections. He commented:

> Not always … big life changing things, but moments where someone's face just you know, it's like … "Oh!" and they just bask in the moment for a sec and go, "Oh wow, that's what that means to me." Those moments kind of have happened … with people not realizing they're going to learn about themselves through the dogs. [Realizing things like,] "I'm not always willing to change myself for that other person … that I work with." Using the dog to bring that home in terms of social learning. That has happened on several occasions … [Also] real changes … in people … that I've noticed after the fact in [our] guest books … Maybe I wasn't able to observe them [in the moment], but in things that they have written th[ey] showed that there was real meaning to their experience … It's nice when we're able to help craft that … I rely on the power of the experience itself to … create that meaning for people. But at the same time, you try to to let people have space to

> have that experience for themselves. You don't force things on them. And it happens when it happens.

Our discussion then turned to Canadian ecological identity. Arthur commented on the early influence of the fur trade on Canadian ecological identity. Similar to many other participants (e.g. Thor), he also highlighted the often forgotten connection between Canadian geography and human history.

> The fur trade is when ideas moved and when people really started interacting with … different cultures ... and sharing things … When you think about Canada's … geography ... the shape of the land … [and] the Great Lakes … right in the middle of the continent … it makes so much sense, it's not random, we are shaped by our environment … So many Canadians … celebrate the canoe as [a] wonder of Canada … But is interesting because the ones who are doing the canoeing [often don't have] any clue [why the canoe is important] or why … the centres of business [are] where they are … And so … that started out of necessity … and became a recreational activity … [However] I think that our identity ecologically … has … been disconnected [from that history].

Similar to many other participants (e.g. Tong, Kate, Thor), Arthur also observed that there are a multitude of regional and socio-economic ecological identities in Canada:

> I don't think there is one ecological identity … I think that [it] is probably different in different [sub-]cultures … So [in] business culture, our ecological identity is one of natural resources … Internationally as well, our ecological identity is [linked to the] business world [and resource extraction] I think that probably shapes our… ecological identity a little bit more than anything else … But I think that culturally … the importance of the symbol of the beaver to Canada … and other things … like maple syrup [and] … the maple leaf [is] funny because … that's not my experience of Canada ... There [is so much regional and] ecological diversity … Canada's not all maple trees …

Reflecting on Saul's (2008) concept of Canada as a métis nation, Arthur again noted Canada's regional and historical diversity, while celebrating the "cross-cultural" sharing that, for the most part, continues to occur:

> I can't categorize Canada at all culturally, as a whole … It is so diverse … But … what resonates [for me] is … this idea of … movement and sharing of ideas. If you take the word "métis" [to] mean "cross-cultural" … not necessarily Métis as [in] Louis Riel … I think that Canada is very much a métis nation … I talk about [my] Japanese Canadian family that … really Westernized. [However,] I don't think …

> that that is the norm anymore … I think about … my friend … who has a Jamaican restaurant … He's from Jamaica … [and] that's really a part of who he is … But he's still very much … a … Canadian person ... It's almost what defines Canada ... And so … if you think of it as a blending and a sharing [of] idea[s], then I like the idea [of] thinking of Canada as a "métis nation" … Because if not, if it wasn't, I would have never been [given] that story [at the storytelling festival].

It was such a pleasure to interview Arthur. His deep respect for other beings, human and otherwise, resonated throughout our discussion and his unique perspectives on outdoor and environmental education, Canadian history, and culture added a fresh dimension to this study. I was especially intrigued by Arthur's reflections on his soft-spoken approach to experiential education; the use of music and art to incorporate Aboriginal perspectives; and his approach to using dogs to teach people more about themselves and how they interact with other human beings. Might Arthur be right? Do we, in fact, accommodate more easily to those who are very different than ourselves? If so, how different must one be in order to gain our accommodations? And, by accommodating, are we simply patronizing or are we deeply considering and acknowledging another culture's norms, values, and/ or perspectives as equal to our own? Also, is this just a phenomenon related to inter-species (human-animal) interactions?

My initial response to these kinds of questions is that, as Thor emphasized in his interview, there is a considerable diversity of perspectives and beliefs within any cultural group. I would expect to find that some people are much more open and adaptable to different cultures than others. For example, the intercultural educators involved in this study all, for various reasons and in different ways, live in the "Third Space" (Richardson, 2004), exhibiting ecological métissage in their personal and professional philosophies and practices. It is my experience that people like the participants in this study represent a minority rather than a majority. However, I may be mistaken. This connection between

human and non-human animal interactions and intercultural accommodation could be a fascinating topic for future study.

Cedar Basket

Cedar Basket is a Sto:lo woman from Canada's West Coast. She has been an educator in a wide variety of settings for over twenty years and currently teaches various courses in Aboriginal and technological education at a university in central Canada. We met in a quiet office on a snowy mid-winter's day.

When I asked Cedar Basket to describe her cultural background, she described a strong cultural connection to the River adjacent to her community:

> Well our community is Sto:lo … The River and the people have the same name … And … my family … lived right beside the River, so culturally I identified with that river right away hehehe … It gave us lots of food. Especially the salmon and the ooligans and even sturgeon … So … culturally, I see myself as a strong River woman!

Reflecting on how her family's history and cultural background have influenced who she is today, Cedar Basket described the powerful influence of spending a lot of time with her grandmother and other Elders on the Land as a child:

> I think that's such a vital question because … when you're living in a rural area and living with … extended intergenerational family, which is what we had, there's a lot when you're young, [that] you don't realize … It's just natural to you ... And it didn't occur to me that … we weren't, probably in the eyes of a lot of people, very wealthy. However, we had what I thought was lots of food because we … had lots of fish and … wild game and lots of preserves ... It wasn't really until … I got … to high school, because I was at a little school in those early years, that I really took a look around and went, "Wow, I guess I've had a very different life and my family is different in many ways"… [And during those early] years I was with my grandparents and my great uncles and my grandma especially, my mom's mother … Her family comes from the edge of where the Nisga'a territory is in the north of British Columbia… I spent a lot of time with my grandmother just watching her … I think one of my favourite memories is taking all of these gunny sacks … and going out into the bush. She would get … roots from certain trees and bark from certain trees and we would have … sandwiches and a jar of water or something …

> And my uncles eventually … would show up and haul all these gunny sacks of stuff that my father would drive to the railway station. And … they [had] some agreement of where to drop them off [to send to] Vancouver by train, where they were making medicinals. Isn't that something?

Cedar Basket concluded with a summary of the lessons that she learned from her incredibly resilient grandparents and other Elders about treating all other people and creatures with caring, respect, and generosity:

> My grandmother was like a legend … I don't think there was anything that she couldn't do … She was [so] resilient … She was born … just before the turn of the last century and … in addition to … all of the … environmental things that happened such as floods [there were] illnesses like the great flu …
> Our grandparents and great grandparents ... lived through those decades [when] laws were not very supportive of any kind for Aboriginals and if you wanted any kind of freedom, you lived off reserve and you just didn't make a … whole lot of noise about anything … I learned early on that you respect what you take out of that river and you're generous. I learned that just by seeing how generous my family… were to others—Family and friends [or] just strangers who needed something. I [also] learned about … how many food sources we got from the land. … I felt very lucky to be growing up in such a rich way with that family and … I notice as I get older, that there's ways and manners that you can't explain except that those came from watching Elders and as I move my way decades into being an Elder I see where I get that. There were hard times [too] and that's why, when there's a strong person, especially an Elder who, you know … pours that positive approach to life, that resiliency … you get through some of the tougher places when you're younger and you're not sure what's what and how to go about this or that and you're troubled by something and ... I know for me, I sure hung onto those traits that I saw in my grandmother and my dad, my mom, my great uncles...

Our discussion then turned to ecological identity. When I asked Cedar Basket how she saw herself in relation to Nature, she described a deep sense of connection with the natural world, especially near her childhood home where she grew up intuitively aware of the seasons:

> Most simply, I see that there's … no separation … That … core understanding came from knowing the smell of the seasons, the way the River changed with the seasons, knowing … when the cottonwood trees in the spring bust open, all that fluff comes out of those seeds … and … sometimes it looks like it's snowing. But at the same time, [the] richness of that cottonwood scent and the cedar scent … that infuses … my appreciation of the seasons and when, certain dragonflies and different birds started showing up along the River, it was always a signal that the ooligan run was

> coming or the first spring salmon were coming. So those things were, you know, still really early [in my life]. Touching the earth, being a part of it … just trundling along from the time I could walk hehehehehe… on this Land and being so close to the River.

Similar to other Indigenous scholars such as Simpson (2002), Cedar Basket also mentioned the foundational importance of Indigenous languages and their relationship to ecological diversity:

> The Elder that I work with … is the only living speaker remaining that [speaks] fluently and [knows] the written part of … Halkomelem, the River language … So, there are other speakers who have various knowledge and capacity to speak in the longhouse, to speak in public places. Or … like me who are re-learning and can welcome and begin to get comfortable again with the appreciation of our language … The language defines so much of our natural world. We must really do everything to renew … the plants that are so diverse and important to that land … It all works together … A language and plants and animals, once they're gone, it's likes a library goes, a universe goes.

When I asked Cedar Basket how she would describe herself as an educator, she emphasized the importance of hard work and lifelong learning, and discussed her role as a teacher-educator committed to fostering confidence and a sense of place in her students:

> [I am] a work in progress! Hahahahaha! Well, not too far from that. I think [that] if you're going to stay vibrant and energetic in education, you have to be a lifelong learner … Our … ancestors were hard working people … All those Elders worked, worked, worked … and we need to get back to that kind of ethic. And so, as an educator, I see how important it is … to guide my students, these new teachers [who] are Métis [and] Aboriginal first to have confidence— you need confidence to be in education and sometimes that's all that's missing. And so to really create an environment where they … have confidence about the worldviews they bring, about those stories from the Land they have, and many of them have languages that are still intact … So… I [am committed to] helping build a … curriculum … for all of our students and all of our teachers to see that Nature and a place-based education is very valuable. And I would like to see that open up a whole new … conversation about how we address policies. Both environmental and education[al].

I was intrigued by Cedar Basket's response above, so I asked her to describe some of the influences that led to her current vocation as a teacher-educator. In response she

discussed her early struggles and the unconditional support that she has always received from her family and Elders:

> I wouldn't say I was a natural teacher or even that I had a lifelong goal [to be one.] But … I'd listen very well, and … [when I was young] I could say back some of the stories that I learned in my family and so others began to say, "Oh, you're a storyteller." I didn't ... have a clue about how to make that transition from living by the River in a rural area to [attending university in a big city] and I nearly didn't make it … I called my [parents] half-way through [my] first semester … And, they didn't argue … My dad came [to take me home] and nobody said anything … I went fishing with my grandmother everyday for five days and then the conversation came up. She said, "You don't have to go back." But by then I kind of knew I needed to try … I just had a sense about it. As much as the sense that you can have when you're eighteen hahaha! And I got through it, I wouldn't say I got through greatly, but I did. And I kept going. And [later on] I met a wonderful Cree-Métis [couple who were] really pivotal in encouraging me to go further with my education … I've had Elders along every step of the way when things needed to be moved into the current and the canoe [needed to] mov[e] in a different direction, I have had the gift of Elders. So that's made all the difference to me.

Next I asked Cedar Basket if she had ever had an epiphanic moment related to her cultural or ecological identity? In response, she shared a deeply personal story about making peace with the struggles of her grandparents:

> My grandfather [had a very hard life] … but he was a tremendous man … He worked so hard [but] he lost his leg, so he couldn't work anymore. And I think … he fell into a depression [after that]… And … my grandmother took a path … to keep that family together as best she could. And maybe it wasn't the best way, but it was as much a loving way as she could. And … so my "aha moment" was to go [down to the River] … where [my grandfather used to go.] This really stormy day, I just went down there … and I left tobacco and I had this conversation with my grandfather … And it was like I called upon … Ancestors and the power of the River and ... my grandfather himself … that a healing needed to take place. And whether that healing was visible or not didn't matter … I … was bridging something that my own mother couldn't express or my uncle who I'm very close to couldn't express, but … I'm part of carrying to the next generation[s] … a way of reaching family who you think are in trouble in any way. And also to bring some of those stories of the family forward and talk about them in ways that are loving and about healing. So that was a stepping into an adulthood for myself and realizing I'm connected. I'm connected back seven generations as well as holding it forward to seven ... And [thinking about] the health of the children that I'll … never meet [in future generations and] a profound love of family and strength in family. That's what I can give in this generation.

I also asked Cedar Bark if she had ever observed an epiphanic moment in someone else? She responded with two stories from a recent course for Aboriginal student teachers that are powerful examples of teaching and learning in Richardson's (2004) "Third Space":

> We were all working together to find … ways to make the language work in the curriculum … How stories really are at the centre of all of our Indigenous learning … And what came out of that was… really creative visual … film [and] digital stories. We put together a book that had everyone's thoughts on what was the core importance of learning and … it was [so] strong … I grew, they grew … from that and I know that that set in motion a whole other way of just bringing confidence to those teachers. [In the end] they [felt that,] "Yes, we're in this Western, still very powerful Western looking curriculum and yet, no there's a place at the table for what we're bringing forward here." … And that was just fabulous!

She continued to describe a second "aha moment" from the same course:

> One of the students … was having trouble [with] a writing piece. Finally I thought, "You know [your] language so well, would it be easier for you to write part of this in pieces in [your] language?" [And they replied,] "Oh yeah, it would be." So I said, "Well do it." And they said to me, "But … you won't understand this language." And I said, "You're right, you'll read it to me and explain it to me, I'll learn something … You're strength is there, you can express it in a powerful way and it comes natural to you that way, I want you to do that and at the same time I'll guide you into strengthening another way of saying what you've said here. And those two can come together." That was an "aha" moment [for both of us]. It made a huge difference!

Considering her comments above, I asked Cedar Basket what she thought were key aspects to successful intercultural environmental education? She replied:

> We've got to get all Canadian citizens in [the same] canoe … going in the right direction. And part of that is understanding the Métis history, the Aboriginal history, the Inuit history ... Generations of Canadians have only pieces … of our history … The very first thing I [do] in this nine-week [Aboriginal Education course that I teach] is to say that, "There has … always been … another narrative, an original narrative … here in this land, across Canada. Before … contact, before the Hudson Bay, there was a narrative that was deep and rich and it's still here today. It hasn't gone away." And so we begin by talking … about the richness of those stories. And I believe that … when new teachers are welcomed in … where they don't feel like it's their fault what happened in the past with Canadian history, that they have a very powerful place to play now … And also inviting … those new teachers into ways where they see that the language and the land and the knowledge and the plants all come together. And then … I guess I nurture them into making digital stories because I think when they see a visual … and they start to put their

> own voice to some of the stories … and then say how they would use that in a thoughtful manner … light bulbs go on! And for the most part I find that they're leaving that very … brief course at least with a … lot of resources and maybe somewhere down the line they'll still be thinking about some of the conversation that went on in that course.

Since she had just mentioned Canadian history, I asked Cedar Basket for her perspective on John Ralston Saul's (2008) concept of Canada being a "métis nation"? She commented enthusiastically:

> I think he's right on … It [is] an invitation to … pause for a moment [and] reflect on … when this Métis idea came alive in our country and … how it grew, and how it got nurtured and how it got damaged sometimes and how it's still very present today … I think … that is really worth exploring … in many different disciplines … Absolutely…

I also asked Cedar Basket if she thought that it was possible to blend Western and Indigenous knowledge? She replied optimistically:

> Yes, I might be in the front of that parade! Hehehehe … For instance, the Cohen commission just began I think … in [late] 2010 … on the West Coast and it's all about bringing all of the folks [together who are] involved … with salmon. And even though [we had] a miraculous run where the salmon children came back in thousands [last year] … the salmon are still in peril … The Cohen commission is about bringing Aboriginal [and] Métis folks and the fishery folks and the fish farm folks and the David Suzuki folks and general people … together to … be a voice for salmon … So … this commission … could be a model for how other conversations need to come together. When we're putting … curriculum together, I really want to see [a] meshing of science and of art and of literature and of math … It's … not even interdisciplinary, it's trans-disciplinary … It's going beyond just how, there they are, all linking, but what comes out of that? That's the "trans" part, I think, and so there's the new conversations and the new curriculum and the new understandings … If we can start to build those models and practice them, then we're going to have other places in our society where people are going to say, "We have to bring … many voices together." And even though it's harder, maybe to get consensus or even understanding … that's going to [bring results] that we haven't [seen] before … If we're really serious about education and revitalization in the second decade of the 21st century … we need to start exploring … different ways of how we put knowledge and curriculum together. And yes, Aboriginal worldview[s] and science … are [are] all … part of that.

In conclusion, I asked Cedar Basket for her thoughts on Canadian ecological identity. She responded:

> Well … lots of cousins in [my] family … are in the forestry industry at home … So, [based on] thirty years of conversations with loggers in my family … what I am hearing is that there is concern about how the practices of the past cannot continue into the future. And so, I sense a shift, how[ever] subtle ... just within my family cosmic sphere … There is concern that things are connected. [If] you clear cut a whole range of forest … the soil tumbles down into the salmon beds and they can't spawn anymore … It's like a domino [effect and] people are seeing this. The things that they used to see … in childhood aren't there anymore or they hardly exist … Things have to be done differently. And so … I want to believe that Canada is moving … more … into a concern for … environment … Everything comes around in cycles, [so] I may be just old enough to hopefully see the next big positive push for a nation-wide change in our environment policy to the better. Where we're looking at growing … instead of monopolizing ... That's just one River Woman's hope …

My conversation with Cedar Basket was such a rich way to conclude this series of ten interviews. I was deeply honoured that she took the time to share her reflective, caring, respectful, and inspiring experiences with and perspectives on Aboriginal and environmental issues with me. I couldn't have imagined a more appropriate way to conclude the physical and metaphorical research journey that began six months earlier and took me halfway across Canada, meeting with people from all of the Four Directions.

I was especially intrigued by Cedar Basket's astute discussion of the relationship between "trans" and "inter-disciplinary". Her perspective is similar, but somewhat different than other participants such as Kate who advocates for a cautious transdisciplinary "meshing" of *some* elements of Aboriginal and Western knowledge and philosophies while keeping others separate but still recognizing their interdisciplinary similarities. Other participants such as Liatrus and Olivia L'Hirondelle support an even stronger position against transdisciplinarity, maintaining that cautious interdisciplinarity is the only way to avoid the loss or blurring of Indigenous knowledge. However, similar to other participants like Orange Blossom and Skywalker, Cedar Basket seems to support a movement towards

transdisciplinarity in all areas *growing from* a recognition of interdisciplinary similarities between curricular subjects and knowledge systems.

Cedar Basket's childhood stories and ongoing connection to her community and the River are a rich example of the importance of place in Indigenous cultures (e.g. Cajete, 1994; Simpson, 2002). Cedar Basket's descriptions of her own struggles and the guidance and support of her Elders also serve as a strong reminder of the power of intergenerational cooperation and the Seven-Generations maxim. I was especially inspired by Cedar Basket's optimistic views on the potential for transcultural cooperation on environmental issues and her stories of navigating the "Third Space" with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal student teachers. As she said, "We've got to get all Canadians in the same canoe!"

In the following chapter I respond to my original research questions through interpretation of the ten perspectives presented in this chapter.

CHAPTER SEVEN:

LOOKING BACK AND MOVING FORWARD:

ANALYSIS AND REFLECTIONS

I am very grateful to have had the incredible opportunity to engage in conversation with some of Canada's most experienced and inspiring intercultural environmental educators over a six-month period in late 2010 and early 2011. As mentioned in earlier chapters, this journey was a constant process of reflection—a spiraling dialogue between the participants, the literature, and myself. As I came to the end, I found that some of my original questions had been answered, however new questions had inevitably risen in their place. Another conundrum that I faced was that every participant had a unique perspective on the topics and questions guiding this study. How then, to make sense of it all?

I realized that I needed to revisit the literature, discuss my thoughts with trusted peers and mentors, and reflect on my original research questions to begin making sense of all of these ideas and questions that had arisen during the interviews. My original research questions were:

1. Can Western and Indigenous knowledge of the natural world be blended theoretically and in practice? If so, how?
2. What characterizes the ecological identities of contemporary intercultural environmental educators?
3. Do they embody ecological métissage? If so, how?
4. How might the concept of ecological métissage reshape environmental education in Canada?

I also revisited the methodologies that guided me in the initial stages of this research (see Chapter Five), such as Kovach's (2010) thoughts on Indigenous methodologies and the various interpretive narrative researchers who informed my

approach. As I discussed in detail in Chapter Five, my intention in this study was to seek out and explore “epiphanic moments” (Denzin, 1989) that help us to gain deeper insights into the experiences, and perspectives of participants. In the following I highlight epiphanic ideas and discussions that emerged during this research journey.

With these guiding points in mind, I revisited the collection of ten biographies presented in the previous chapter, searching for insights, discussions, and meta-discussions that respond to and expand upon my original research questions. Following standard qualitative research approaches (e.g. Creswell, 2005), I reviewed the biographies and coded the participants’ responses for themes based on my original research questions. These themes included: participants’ cultural and ecological identities, Canadian cultural and ecological identity, participants’ teaching philosophies and practices, perspectives on the relationship between Western and Indigenous knowledge and philosophy of Nature, and the future of intercultural environmental education. As Kovach (2010) explains, this approach is allowable for contemporary Indigenous researchers who have also honoured participants’ stories by keeping them intact in previous sections of the study. In keeping with the contextual nature of the oral tradition, it is appropriate for a researcher to provide *their own* interpretation of this research experience and the stories shared by the participants. However, it is centrally important to note that these are only *my* interpretations based on my life experience and perspectives; it is appropriate and anticipated that other readers (listeners) might have different interpretations (Kovach, 2010).

In the following I begin by addressing the second and third of my research questions that pertain to understanding the ecological identities of contemporary intercultural environmental educators: “What characterizes the ecological identities of contemporary intercultural environmental educators?” and the related questions, “Do they

embody ecological métissage? If so, how?" This felt like the most natural starting point to me because it was typically the first topic of discussion in our interviews. I then explore the overarching question of "Can Western and Indigenous knowledge of the natural world be blended theoretically and in practice? If so, how?" This leads into discussion of the final question, "How might the concept of ecological métissage reshape environmental education in Canada?" I conclude by articulating the significance of this study in relation to existing literature and highlight future research opportunities.

Exploring the Ecological Identities of Contemporary Intercultural Environmental Educators

As with any group of people identified as having a certain commonality such as, in this case, a profession, the contemporary intercultural environmental educators interviewed for this study represented a wide range of backgrounds, experiences, opinions, ideas, and identities. However, they also exhibited similarities such as the common perspective of seeing themselves as *part of* rather than *separate from* Nature, as well as significant life experiences (SLE) such as regular and extended time spent outdoors as children or young adults, influential teachers or family members, and academic study.

For example, Skywalker, a Euro-Canadian woman, stated, "I ... perceive myself [as] part of Nature…" and described regularly spending time in Nature with her family as a child as highly influential on the development of her adult ecological identity. Liatrus, a woman of mixed cultural heritage (Pakistani, Aboriginal, and European), also commented, "I see myself as being a part of [Nature]" and described time spent camping with her parents as a child along with academic study later in life as highly influential on the development of her current ecological identity. A review of Chapter Six revealed similar

stories amongst all of the participants. Some, like Orange Blossom, acknowledged a familiarity with SLE research when she commented:

> I … look back on [my childhood experiences] and … I know from having read … lots of environmental education articles [that] usually there is a teacher or a role model. I had neither of those.

Instead of discussing an influential adult in her early years, Orange Blossom reflected on her free-range childhood, where she was free to explore the forests and coastlines of the Pacific Northwest, as the primary influence on her early love for Nature. I will not dwell on findings such as these that have been explored in detail in past significant life experience research (e.g. Corcoran, 1999; Thomashow, 1996; Payne, 1999). However, vastly different perspectives and experiences emerged when I considered how or if the educators in this study embodied ecological métissage.

At the outset of this study I defined ecological métissage as the blending of two or more ecological worldviews at a personal and/ or cultural level as represented in personal identity, philosophies, and practices. This definition provides the framework for the following discussion that explores the identities, philosophies, and practices of the intercultural environmental educators in this study. As will be explored in this section, I argue that while some of the participants did embody ecological métissage in a variety of ways (identity, philosophy, practice), others expressed characteristics more congruent with bricolage—embodying an integrated rather than a blended perspective. The relationship between participants' cultural and ecological identities was also a highly variable area of discovery; while some expressed strong cultural affiliations that influence their ecological identities, others did not.

Ecological Identity

All of the educators that participated in this study identified themselves as "part of Nature". However, as each discussion progressed, it became clear that the influences on and expressions of their identities were quite diverse. Intriguing dialogue emerged on topics such as the influence of physical and geographical contexts on ecological identity as well as the relationship between cultural and ecological identity.

Context

As discussed in Chapter Two, Dillon, *et al*. (1999) emphasize the dynamism of identity; they observe that a person's identity can shift from one *social* context to the next. An interesting and related tension raised by both Tong, a Euro-Canadian woman, and Liatrus, a woman of mixed Pakistani and Métis descent, is how shifting physical or geographical (e.g. urban or non-urban) contexts can influence their *ecological* identities; both Tong and Liatrus expressed feeling less connected to Nature in urban environments. For example, Liatrus commented:

> Living in the city … You start to have this sense of domination of Nature where you're very … urban and removed from … the natural setting. But I've started to look at appreciating any sort of human construction as a part of Nature, just in a very sort of humanized state, right… It all came from something and it all originated from something… That being said … I can't even describe the sort of emotional sensation to me to just be outdoors and be around sort of the typical Nature setting … by a river, in a forest … It's almost a healing; It de-stresses; It's just sort of that sense of being … back home …

I appreciate Liatrus' and Tong's honesty in sharing their struggles to maintain a sense of connection while in urban environments. I can definitely relate to their feelings, however I agree with Liatrus that since humans are part of Nature, so to are our constructions. This concept is reminiscent of earlier discussions of the concepts of Nature and wilderness

presented in Chapter Two. For example, Gary Snyder (2003) also argues that all human creations are, in fact, part of Nature, but agrees that time spent in areas less impacted by humans is sublime. Aboriginal scholars such as Cajete (1994), also remind us that all Land (including contemporary urban areas) is a sacred part of Nature. What other connections might there be between culture and ecological identity?

Culture and Ecological Identity

Some participants in this study (e.g. Skywalker, Natasha Little, Oliva L'Hirondelle and Cedar Basket) identified a strong connection between their cultural and ecological identities, while others such as Kate, Liatrus, and Arthur emphasized the strong influence of geographical regions and subcultures such as professional peer groups (e.g. outdoor educators). Tong also shared that her experiences with Aboriginal cultures have led her to rediscover the Earth-based traditions of her own European cultures. Skywalker seemed to concur when she commented on the influence of her Celtic and Scandinavian roots:

> I think that I've always felt a deep connection to the Celtic side of being [British] … that Celtic sort of … mystery … has always been a strong interest ... Whereas … in terms of the Norwegian part… I love the cold and I love the heat … the sauna and the snow …

However, similar to Thor and Kate, Skywalker also identified with being "Canadian"; she also emphasized her love for and connection to the Canadian landscape when she noted:

> I see myself as a Canadian ... I've always felt … the [pride] of being Canadian and for me that [pride] has always been about the landscape, the wilderness, the wildlife, you know, the fact that all of that still exists in Canada, is part of what makes me a proud Canadian ... And if that goes I'll be a disappointed Canadian!

Similar to several other participants (e.g. Skywalker, Thor, Arthur) Natasha Little highlighted the regional variations of Canadian cultural and ecological identity, a concept

that will be explored further in a later section. Based on her experiences growing up in an Acadian family on Cape Breton Island, she identified the inextricable relationship between the Acadian landscape and culture:

> I [don't] … draw lines between my ecological … and my cultural upbringing … I see… a party with my family as an ecological lesson and I see … spending time outdoors or learning about the environment as a cultural lesson as well. So I really don't … separate them. I think [that] because I grew up spending so much time outdoors … we [were] never "learning about ecosystems" … because it was often with my family … it's kind of always tied together with the cultural aspect …

From a West Coast Sto:lo perspective, Cedar Basket also identified the powerful link between her family, community, and their home river when she commented:

> Well, our community is Sto:lo … The River and the people have the same name … And … my family … lived right beside the River so, culturally I identified with that River … I felt very lucky to [have] grow[n] up in such a rich way …

Many of the non-Aboriginal participants in this study seemed very cautious about appropriating an Aboriginal or Métis identity while others shared stories of being welcomed by Elders into Aboriginal cultures. For instance, Kate, a Euro-Canadian, shared her own perspective that involves deepening her understanding of the effects of colonization and Indigenous knowledge and philosophies, and then applying them to her own life without completely appropriating them into her *identity* when she commented:

> One thing I have to learn is … how to work towards resisting ongoing colonization and Eurocentrism … learning how to recognize the … patterns in my own thinking and in the thinking of people from my culture … And then the constructive side too of … just trying to begin to glimpse another way of viewing or understanding the world and that's not to say that I think we're out to necessarily completely take on an Indigenous worldview or … to learn all the knowledge that there is to learn ... But just … learning to recognize that there … are some other ways of relating to … other people and to Nature and to our history …

However, Arthur, a Canadian man of mixed Japanese and Danish ancestry, described feeling welcomed into Aboriginal culture by an Elder who shared a special story with him at a storytelling festival when he reflected:

> I realized that she was actually sharing something with me, that her telling me a story wasn't about her speaking, it was about her giving something to me … Now I was a part of that culture and I held that story … and … that … made me a part of it, it invited me in. And … it changed my thinking about culture in general.

Natasha Little, an Acadian of French and Mi'kmaq ancestry also related the story of a Mi'kmaq Elder telling her nephew that being Mi'kmaq was a way of seeing the world, not just an ethnic identity:

> [Elder] said, "Oh [nephew]! Being Mi'kmaq has nothing to do with what's in your blood, it's what's in your heart!" ... It was a great lesson for both of us… It doesn't matter what percentage of your blood [is Aboriginal]… could be zero percent of your blood, but if you identify, if you choose to identify in a certain way then … who will stop you from doing that? If you're righteous about it then that's different, but if you choose to take on a worldview it's not the same as staking claim over something ... it's choosing to look at something from a certain point of view….

One Métis participant, Olivia L'Hirondelle, eloquently expressed her own ecologically "Métis" identity:

> I mean they're both [European and Aboriginal] *me* … It's all a part of me … I think of myself as a relative of all things, animate and inanimate … My knowing of the Earth is that it is a whole in which all living is included. Creator and Mother Earth must be respected … It is a type of insanity to see Nature or the environment as "out there".

Kate, Liatrus, and Arthur all problematized the concept of "culture". Along with discussing the legacy of their ethnic identities, they also identified the influence of subcultures and regional cultures on their ecological identities. For example, Liatrus noted that "culture" can be interpreted differently by different individuals. She also emphasized the complexity of defining her own identity as a person of mixed ancestry:

> "Culture" can have many different contexts. To some it means ethnicity … or race. And to some it means something completely different … It's actually more challenging for me because my cultural and ethnic history are so complicated ... My cultural identity is kind of an evolving thing …

Kate also questioned the meaning of "culture" and described feeling very connected to the outdoor educator sub-culture:

> I think of … outdoor education culture … and how those are probably some of the … traditions that I cherish a lot in terms of … rhythms of the year like meeting up with people at a certain time …

Arthur commented on his strong and interconnected sense of connection to the regional culture and geography of Northwestern Ontario, his adopted home:

> I find that … my culture's very much … shaped by Northwestern Ontario's landscape … It means I gravitate towards water … I embrace the snow … I like things slower and … the people I lean towards as role models are people … who have done things a little bit more traditionally … I'm the type of person who likes to be out on my ash snowshoes instead of my high-tech ones and … the dogs I use for dog sledding are older style lines … So culturally I would say, I've got a lot of influences … But … the way I found myself is more through how I interacted with the landscape … I suppose that's the best way to … describe my culture …

Exploring the relationship between the cultural and ecological identities of the intercultural environmental educators in this study revealed a variety of influences and expressions, and opinions. While some, like Cedar Basket and Olivia L'Hirondelle, identified strongly with their cultural heritage and expressed how it is intimately linked to their ecological identity, others, like Kate and Arthur, also highlighted the influence of other factors such as sub-cultures of like-minded people and geographical regions.

The question of whether or not it is appropriate or even possible, for someone to adopt a cultural identity different than their own raised a plurality of opinions. While some, like Kate described her belief in *learning with* but not adopting Indigenous cultures, others like Natasha and Arthur described experiences with Aboriginal Elders that led them to believe that one can be "welcomed" into another culture if they handle themselves with deep respect and humility, challenging the boundary between philosophy and personal identity. I am inclined to optimistically align myself with the perspectives of Natasha and Arthur; while I am extremely cognizant and respectful of the hesitation of many Indigenous peoples to open up to sharing culture and knowledge with non-Indigenous people (e.g.

Simpson, 2004), I am hopeful that, through a continued increase in authentic and mutually-respectful engagement, more people like Arthur will be "welcomed into" Aboriginal communities, further expanding opportunities for intercultural and eventually transcultural (Welsch, 1999) experiences and creations grounded in a regional sense of collective connection.

Philosophies

The ten educators involved in this study expressed a variety of eco-pedagogical philosophies; some expressed more of a "Third Space" perspective (Richardson, 2004) than others; however, they all acknowledged both Aboriginal and Western influences on their pedagogical values and practices. As was mentioned in the previous section, while many of the non-Aboriginal participants were cautious about adopting Aboriginal or Métis *identities*, they seemed more comfortable engaging with and adopting Indigenous philosophies to varying degrees. For example, similar to Natasha Little's comments about her nephew and their Mi'kmaq Elder, Liatrus commented:

> There's a lot of non-Aboriginal people that have a much better understanding of Aboriginal traditions than Aboriginal people. So it's not always something that's connected to our … ethnicity and race.

Skywalker, a Euro-Canadian woman, demonstrated such an understanding when she mentioned the importance of seeking the guidance of an Elder before visiting a sacred valley with students when she stated, "I knew that I wanted to have an Elder know what I was doing and … get their blessing … So … I did go out [and] met a fellow … [I] told him about my ideas and my interests … For me going to … this man … was really important."

Orange Blossom also discussed her experiences with incorporating both Western and Aboriginal influences into her personal and teaching philosophies. She mentioned that, along with having a background in the sciences, her pedagogical praxis is informed by and open to the arts, philosophy, and spirituality, allowing her to act as an intercultural and interdisciplinary "border crosser" (Hones, 1990):

> You know, I see things differently because I don't have that science degree … even though I did take a number of biology and oceanography courses. Really that's one thing that has allowed me to kind of squeak in the middle and kind of crossover … I was very much into values of worldviews, ethics, philosophy, art, and a wide range of interests ... And that's why the Indigenous viewpoint appeals to me because [of] values ... [and] ethics [and] spirituality… So I do see things differently ...

Cedar Basket also described two epiphanic moments from her work with Aboriginal student teachers when she shared the ultimate realization they came to as a group that it *was* possible for them to bring Indigenous perspectives into their teaching in a predominantly Western system:

> [In the end] they [felt that,] "Yes, we're in this Western, still very powerful Western looking curriculum and yet, no, there's a place at the table for what we're bringing forward here." … And that was just fabulous! And so, as an educator, I see how important it is … to really create an environment where they … have confidence about the worldviews they bring, about those stories from the Land …

Cedar Basket also described her approach to working with non-Aboriginal student teachers that involves encouraging them to consider Aboriginal knowledge and history alongside Western narratives and worldviews in a manner similar to Dwayne Donald's (2009; 2010) conception of Indigenous Métissage (see Chapter 5):

> The very first thing I [do] … is to say that, "There has … always been … another narrative, an original narrative … here in this land, across Canada. Before … contact, before the Hudson Bay [Company], there was a narrative that was deep and rich and it's still here today. It hasn't gone away … And I believe that … when new teachers are welcomed in … where they don't feel like it's their fault what happened in the past with Canadian history, that they have a very powerful place to play now … And for the most part I find that they're leaving … with a … lot of

> resources and maybe somewhere down the line they'll still be thinking about some of the conversation that went on in that course.

Cedar Basket's description of how philosophy can inform practice leads well into the following section that examines the practices of the educators who participated in this study. How are their cultural and ecological identities expressed in practice? Do they embody ecological métissage?

Practices

How are intercultural environmental educators' cultural and ecological identities and philosophies related to their educational practices? The educators that participated in this study discussed these relationships both explicitly and implicitly. For example, Liatrus clearly described the relationship between her own mixed cultural background and her current practice as an intercultural environmental educator when she stated:

> My current research and professional interests are so closely intertwined with my … personal identity … And it's definitely influenced a lot of the choices that I've made in life, just being open to this idea of intercultural … ideas and that kind of thing … and being sensitive to … others' opinions and so on…

Liatrus also shared an epiphanic moment from her master's work where she realized that she needed the guidance of an Aboriginal Elder to support her Western-style academic research. Natasha Little's description of her teaching approach in an integrated science program also reflected a combination of Western and Aboriginal approaches:

> Well, for [many] years I was working with [a university-based] integrative science program … So I was kind of looking out there to see what was happening in Indigenous education ... and then also keeping an eye on what was happening … in the science world and trying to bring them together. So [for example] there would be a new article out on dreams … and in the class we would be working on consciousness, so we would talk about … what's happening physiologically in the brain when you're dreaming and then also have a conversation or do an activity on visions or dreams culturally …

Orange Blossom also reflected on her approach of opening science education students' minds to recognize Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) as an equal of Western Science when she stated:

> On the first day of class I'd get them to write their definition of science down on a piece of paper, put it in an envelope and put their name on it, and … And then I give them those envelopes back at the end of the course … It's amazing how their definitions changed, sometimes significantly, at the end of the course.

Thor also related his approach to working with Inuit youth, trying to integrate what he saw as the best of both Western and Inuit values and practices:

> When I was teaching in Nunavut … I worked to blend Inuit culture and values into my program plans and what we did through the classes. Also, I worked to teach and educate towards respect and leadership and honesty and … other such character traits and values that I think … span across cultures …

Thor's comments above also allude to a belief in transcultural values that "span across cultures". He lists character traits such as respect, leadership, and honesty as desirable in any cultural context. Thor's comments remind me of Barnhardt and Kawagley's (2005) Venn diagram that was presented in Chapter Four, comparing and contrasting Western Science and Traditional Ecological Knowledge. Similar to Thor, Barnhardt and Kawagley suggest that, even though there are differences between Western and Indigenous approaches, there are also many similarities. They propose that understanding these distinctions is the key to drawing on the strengths of both. The following section explores the perspectives of other study participants in response to the overarching question: Is it possible to blend Western and Indigenous knowledge of Nature? If so, how?

To Blend or Not to Blend: From Bricolage to Métissage?

The overarching question framing this study was: Can Western and Indigenous knowledge of the natural world be blended theoretically and in practice? If so, how? As the study progressed, a variety of perspectives emerged on the concept of blending Western and Indigenous knowledge and philosophies.

Echoes from the literature examined in Chapters Two to Five resonated throughout our discussions; while some participants were strong proponents of *transcultural* métissage—seeking new blended, hybrid creations that draw on the strengths of both to create something new, others recommended a more cautious *intercultural* approach reminiscent of my interpretation of bricolage in Chapter Five; they suggested that, while there are many points of convergence, Western and Indigenous knowledge can and should never be completely blended. They suggested that the similarities between Aboriginal and Western knowledge and philosophies can be highlighted and explored (see Barnhardt and Kawagley's (2005) Venn diagram in Chapter Four), while still recognizing and honouring their distinctions. The different opinions presented by the participants interacted with the perspectives of various scholars and my own thoughts and opinions to create a dynamic dialogue.

Reflecting the concerns of Anishnaabe scholars Hermes (2000) and Simpson (2004) who caution against the "watering down" of Indigenous knowledge, Olivia and Liatrus expressed reservations about the absolute blending of Western and Indigenous knowledge in a predominantly Western context. Olivia expressed her support for an integrated, but not blended, approach when she noted:

> In bringing Western and Aboriginal philosophies and knowledge of Nature together, I don't think that blending is the correct way to focus. I think that they can learn, share and teach from each other and there are ways in which they are coming

> together, but to blend is to blur and for me this is something that we need to be aware of … To honour it, you need to honour where it comes from.

Liatrus also challenged the use of terms such as "blend" that imply mixing from the beginning rather than seeking commonalities:

> I don't think you can use the term "blend". I think you can use them both together … [but] you're definitely not blending … I've always had very strong opinions of that … I mean my work specifically… involves Indigenous … and [Western] science education… and then sort of bringing in the environmental education piece into that. But I kind of came to a place where I decided … I wanted to spell it out … using [both] Indigenous knowledge and pedagogies and science … or ecological education, but [with] each remaining distinct.

Expressing a similar hesitancy to Olivia and Liatrus, Kate questioned the implications of the terms "intercultural" and "transcultural" when she stated:

> I also think you have to ask what you mean by "blending" … I'm thinking about the [difference] between inter-disciplinarity and trans-disciplinarity… "Inter" being … working in the spaces between and looking for connections between two disciplines. And "trans" being bringing two together to create something new … So … are you talking about meshing two cultures into one new culture or are we talking about looking for ways for two cultures to co-exist in certain spaces or certain people?

Similar to Indigenous scholars and educators such as Battiste (1998, 2005) who caution against simply integrating Indigenous knowledge *into* Western-style curriculi, Liatrus also emphasized the importance of equal representation of Western and Aboriginal content that begins in the planning stages of program development. However, similar to Roth's (2008) discussion of the spontaneous and creative nature of bricolage that eventually results in métissage, Liatrus also commented:

> I can almost think of a piece where you could do blended instruction if it wasn't pre-planned … but just in sort of the day-in-day out informal, like if [I] was just walking down the street, and talking to somebody and I'm … teaching them something it's going be a blended, because it's going to be … all the different sort of ethnic … and cultural things that I know…

Natasha also discussed the spontaneity that she experienced while teaching in an integrative science program in the Maritimes. She raised the interesting point that blending can be very effective, but at other times, keeping Western and Indigenous approaches separate is better. Being sensitive to these nuances is a key characteristic of effective intercultural environmental practice. Natasha commented:

> Sometimes we would do strictly science and sometimes we would do [a] traditional [Indigenous] activity ... And sometimes they blended really well and sometimes … you didn't need to blend them ... Sometimes it would water them down if you blended … and we didn't want to water down science or … be an assimilation … We wanted it to be an "integration" or coming together and … recognizing that there are differences that shouldn't be blended.

Kate expressed similar concerns to Olivia and Liatrus for the watering down of cultures that might occur through unabated blending, but her comments also express similar sentiments to Natasha's perspective on the nuances of when blending may or may not be appropriate:

> I don't think I could say … that everything should be blended because then … the only option is to create something new … As opposed to … looking at what kinds of traditions to conserve that ... have worked for a really long time ... But maybe where blending is useful is … as a bridge for people to find points of resonance and find places where they can get on the same page and form some relationships and have some conversations. … I mean I don't think it's realistic to … completely abolish one way of thinking or another … [However] … figuring out what to do with these different ways of knowing is … important…

In a manner reminiscent of Barnhardt and Kawagley's (2005) previously discussed comparison of Western and Indigenous knowledge and philosophies of Nature (see Chapters Four and Five), Natasha discussed the unique strengths that she perceived in each tradition—the holism of Indigenous approaches and the attention to minute details facilitated by Western Science approaches:

> Well, I think that spirituality is at the base of … Indigenous … culture. There's a deep … spiritual connection. And … as it stands, Western science cannot fit spirituality into its realm. It doesn't … [acknowledge] the need for … spirituality. It

> … dismisses or … takes away from it ... And same with the … strictly objective reductionist components of … Western science ... Sometimes you don't need to see the big picture, you just want to look at the details ... It's funny… over the past few years … I've been working in these two-way … programs that claim … to be working in a co-learning [environment] … And I think that reductionism … [is] often painted with a bad stroke ... in a negative sense ... But learning to look at details is really important too… Western medicine is what it is because we learned to look at small, small details … But I think it's lost without the big picture … I think it's pointless to look at details without the big picture ...

Sto:lo scholar and educator Cedar Basket expressed her optimism for the future of blending and transculturalism when she stated:

> I really want to see [a] meshing of science and of art and of literature and of math … It's … not even interdisciplinary, it's *trans* disciplinary … It's going beyond just how, there they are, all linking, but what comes out of that? … If we're really serious about education and revitalization in the second decade of the 21st century … we need to start exploring … different ways of how we put knowledge and curriculum together. And yes, Aboriginal worldview[s] and science … are [are] all … part of that …

Cognizant of the concerns of participants such as Liatrus and Olivia L'Hirondelle and scholars such as Hermes (2000) and Simpson (2004) surrounding the "watering down" and misappropriation of Indigenous knowledge. I would suggest that in the case of environmental education initiatives that bring together Western and Indigenous knowledge and philosophies, the best approaches begin as an intercultural, integrated, *bricolage* of two or more epistemological and ontological approaches, being careful to recognize and discuss the original sources of the knowledge that you are presenting. As Sto:lo scholar and educator Cedar Basket enthusiastically advocated in her interview, this process will hopefully result in an expansion of the Third Space (Richardson, 2004) and the proliferation of locally-grounded transcultural instances of métissage, as Roth (2008) also suggests.

The Métis infinity symbol that I employed to illustrate the relationship between Indigenous and interpretive research methodologies in Chapter Five might prove useful

here to represent ecological métissage. If we continue to expand environmental education to include approaches such as deep ecology (Naess and Rothenberg, 1990) and bioregionalism (Dodge, 1981) as well as Western science, as so many of the participants in this study are already doing, the distinctions between Western and Indigenous approaches diminish and more similarities emerge, positioning us well to move from bricolage to métissage. For example, drawing from the traditions of deep ecology and bioregionalism would allow us to include tenets such as respect and recognition of cultural and ecological diversity, the inherent value of all beings, spiritual forces, long-term multi-generational thinking, the embedded and relational position of human beings in the circle/ web of life, locally-focused and responsive living, practical application of principles, local traditions, and acknowledging Indigenous territories and sacred landmarks. If the aforementioned values were used to modify and expand the "Western" side of Kawagley and Barnhardt's (2005) Venn diagram (Figure 3) depicting the relationship between Western Science and Traditional Ecological Knowledge as presented in Chapter Four, we would find that significantly more similarities now existed than differences. This relationship could then move from one of an intercultural, integrated, bricolage, to one of a regionally inspired, blended, transcultural, métissage. The image below represents this relationship as well as my own ecosophy, ecological métissage:

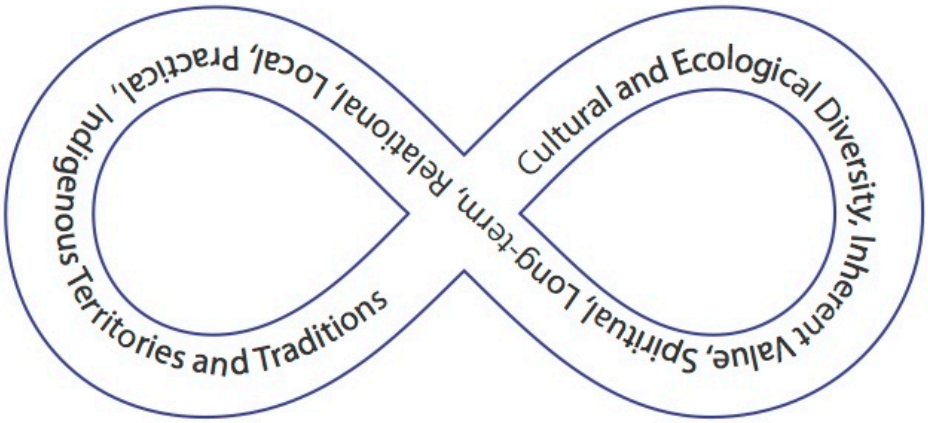

Figure 7. Ecological Métissage.

However, considering persisting concerns regarding the misinterpretation and misappropriation of Indigenous knowledge (Hermes, 2000; Simpson, 2004), I think that it is important that we continue to exercise caution to articulate, understand, and honour the distinctions and similarities between Western and Indigenous Science (Barnhardt and Kawagley, 2005), for example, before moving towards absolute regionally-grounded transculturalism. My position is based on voices in the literature as well as my recent experience teaching an introductory Aboriginal education course for undergraduate students at Lakehead University; the students that I work with typically do not arrive with a comprehensive understanding of historical or contemporary issues facing Aboriginal peoples in Canada today, nor do they demonstrate a comprehensive understanding Aboriginal cultures. This experience leads me to believe that we must still work towards deeper intercultural understanding before respectful transculturalism (blending, métissage) can be achieved.

I am not certain what the future holds, but my hope is that in future decades we will find ourselves in a different sociocultural situation in Canada where concerns regarding misappropriation have softened and transcultural bioregionalism will have taken hold. Such

a shift will also require a broader conception of environmental education to include and embrace Indigenous as well as Western perspectives other than science such as deep ecology (Naess and Rothenberg, 1990) and bioregionalism (Thomashow, 1996). Based on my own experiences as a scholar and educator and those related by the participants in this study, I believe that this is possible and, in fact, increasingly becoming a reality. I am inspired by the continued growth of intercultural science and environmental education programs; as documented in this study, new programs and initiatives are constantly emerging across North America. Perhaps it is not too late for us to cautiously, but enthusiastically, revive the Third Space (Richardson, 2004), the Métis spirit that was commonplace in the early days of our nation, but lost in recent generations (Saul, 2008). The following section explores this concept in greater detail.

Implications for Environmental Education in Canada and Beyond

My final research question was: How might the concept of ecological métissage reshape environmental education in Canada? My initial response to this question is that it is already beginning. For example, along with the growth of intercultural environmental education programs such as those described in the literature review and findings of this study, a number of conferences and journal issues over the past few years have focused on the concepts examined in this study. In Chapter Four I mentioned a keynote address that I gave at an outdoor and environmental educators' conference based on the theme of "learning to live well together on this Land" (Lowan, 2010a). Other examples include Indigenous knowledge niches at the past three EECOM (Canadian Association of Environmental Education and Communication) conferences, one of which was an international UNESCO-sponsored gathering), and special issues of journals such as

Pathways: The Ontario Journal of Outdoor Education (Fall 2008) and *Green Teacher* (Fall 2009) addressing concepts such as culturally-based outdoor and environmental education and Two-Eyed Seeing. A recent issue of the *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education* also focused on the concept of "place" and welcomed several articles from Indigenous scholars, including one of my own (Lowan, 2009). These kinds of developments provide me with great hope for the future.

So, based on this growth and the experiences and perspectives shared by the participants in this study who are leaders in our field, how might we be re-shaping environmental education in Canada? Also, what effect might our efforts have on Canadian society in general? In the following I address these questions through discussion of key findings from this study. Topics discussed include moving from abstract notions of Aboriginal peoples to authentic engagement and partnerships, re-imagining student-teacher relationships, and Canadian cultural and ecological identity.

From Abstract Notions to Authentic Engagement

In Chapter Two I critiqued early North American "archetype" (Thomashow, 1996) environmental philosophers, like Henry David Thoreau and John Muir, who simultaneously romanticized and denigrated Indigenous peoples and cultures. I was troubled by their perspectives and wondered how they might still be reflected in contemporary cultural and environmental thought. I was therefore inspired by one trend that emerged in interviews with several of the Euro-Canadian participants (e.g. Kate, Orange Blossom, Skywalker)—a growth from curiosity and abstract notions of Aboriginal peoples and cultures at young ages to authentic engagement later in life due to personal motivation and opportunities presented through school, work, and other involvements.

For example, Skywalker shared early memories of time spent at a family cottage:

> I can remember for sure, 12, maybe younger, when we would drive there, I would look out the window and I always saw myself as this Aboriginal person running in the bush beside the car and if there was a river then I was on the river in a voyageur canoe. You know ... I don't know if I'd even heard of a voyageur canoe in a book or anything … but I knew I'd been in a voyageur canoe ... It was like … this internal knowledge. I knew … that that was part of who I was on some level… and so … as I got older … it was almost, this would sound corny, but it's almost like the past life part of me was still present and hadn't finished something in this life.

As was presented in the previous chapter, through her work and involvement with other organizations later in life, Skywalker had and created several opportunities later in life to engage for extended periods of time with Aboriginal peoples. Through building reciprocal relationships and being open to learning and making mistakes, her understanding of Aboriginal cultures has deepened significantly since childhood, resulting in an authentic, deeply respectful, and embodied understanding today.

Orange Blossom shared a similar perspective. Discussion of her childhood revealed an innate curiosity about Aboriginal peoples and cultures. She reflected:

> I have no idea why, because growing up we never knew any Native people. There just weren't any where I grew up … But for some reason when I was [young], I read every single book on [Aboriginal people] that I could find in any library … I have had Native people tell me when I tell them that, "Well that's because you were a Native in another life." Hahaha!

Similar to Skywalker, Orange Blossom had the opportunity later in life, in the earlier stages of her teaching career, to work in an Aboriginal community. This experience "opened her eyes" to the realities of contemporary Aboriginal issues and cultures and motivated her to continue working in Aboriginal contexts. As she said herself:

> That course really opened my eyes to … environmental problems … on the reserve … That was the first experience I'd had working in a Native community and … I learned a lot about Native ways of thinking ... about the environment … It was like living on another planet for me … But … I just felt from day one that they accepted me. There was not a single negative word that anybody uttered even in the whole community …

Reflecting on how these kinds of experiences have influenced her pedagogical practice, Orange Blossom related the creation of a cultural and ecological field school that brought together Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in Haida Gwaii where local Elders and Euro-Canadian academics all contributed to a “Third Space” (Richardson, 2004) educational experience. These kinds of experiences not only deepen the awareness of non-Aboriginal students, but also challenge the diasporic experiences of Aboriginal students (Roth, 2008). By facilitating direct interaction and relationship building between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in a reciprocal intercultural learning environment, they learn from and about each other in very authentic ways. Aboriginal “voice” (Graveline, 1998) is also introduced into mainstream discourse; challenging the preconceptions and assumptions of non-Aboriginal students and encouraging all students to consider the similarities and differences between Aboriginal and Western epistemological and ontological traditions, another important implication of these kinds of initiatives.

As Arne Naess (Naess and Rothenberg, 1990) suggests, challenging the reductionist assumptions of Western Science and encouraging students to consider other ways of understanding and living in the world, might also help them to deepen their ecological views, promoting a heightened sense of connection to their home regions. As Tong also noted, these kinds of experiences can motivate non-Aboriginal students to rediscover their own cultural traditions and to consider how they might incorporate those into their personal and professional lives in the future.

A'o/Ako: Re-Imagining Teacher-Student Relationships

Another meta-dialogue that caught my attention while reviewing the biographies presented in Chapter Six was participants' descriptions of their pedagogical approaches and philosophies. Many of the participants related teaching philosophies and practices that included concepts such as humility, building reciprocal relationships, having a sense of humour, and being open to learning *from and with* your students. I wouldn't venture so far as to say that these characteristics are *unique* to intercultural environmental educators, however, I would suggest that these kinds of beliefs and practices are important *foundations of* effective intercultural environmental education.

Tong eloquently described the transformational power of being "comfortable with the uncomfortable" in intercultural situations; she related the challenge and importance of being brave in the face of intercultural conflicts. She described facilitating heated and emotional discussions that touched on challenging topics, but eventually deepened relationships between instructors and students as well as amongst the students themselves.

When asked to share some of her epiphanic teaching moments, Skywalker also expressed this concept. At one point she commented on her own teaching philosophy:

> Another journey I'm on personally is that ... You know there's this paradigm where you know everything [as a teacher] … So that's another thing, in this last year I feel like that's been part of my opportunity and challenge is to shut up more and, you know, let the kids … teach me something whether I know it or not …

Skywalker also described several instances where having a sense of humour about herself has allowed her to overcome cultural gaffes and deepen relationships with Aboriginal people. One story that she shared involved a discussion with an Elder about the proper attire for a Sweatlodge. Another story that she related involved accepting corrective advice

from an Aboriginal student on the protocol for conducting a smudge, an excellent illustration of being humble and open to learning from your students:

Another foundational concept in many Aboriginal cultures (Graveline, 1998) that was recognized by many participants is the importance of reciprocal relationship building. Orange Blossom expressed this concept eloquently, along with demonstrating her sense of humour, when she described the "sex lives of seashore animals" walks that she would lead in the remote coastal community where she conducted her doctoral research, giving back to the community that was providing her with knowledge of their own.

Nalani Wilson (2008, p. 19), a Hawaiian scholar and educator based in Aotearoa/ New Zealand, describes this two-way exchange of teaching and learning as "A'o/ Ako". I have shared this concept with my own teacher education students by including Wilson's article in my class reading list and have been amazed by their enthusiastic responses; students consistently express their admiration for it in-class as well as in response papers and other assignments. Many comment that they have not been exposed to similar approaches in other classes.

Arthur expanded the discussion of teacher-learner relationships to the greater than human world when he described his playful, yet earnest, approach to challenging peoples' understanding of themselves through interactions with his team of sled dogs when he stated:

> I … often ask people … to tell me about themselves … and [then] I give them some dogs … Some of the dogs will be much like themselves, but … I will also give them dogs who are … not like themselves, [so] there'll be some dog that … you're going to have adjust yourself to in order to make that relationship stronger. And so … I'll often ask them, "What was it like being able to reconcile those differences?" And … I try to engage people in some social learning [focusing on] how they relate to … other people, other beings, other animals, and to the environment around them … They're not expecting to learn those things about themselves sometimes.

Educators who view themselves and their students through a lens of A'o/ Ako (Wilson, 2008) with humility and humor demonstrate genuine respect for other people, creatures, and cultures. My hope is that, as intercultural environmental continues to grow and further infiltrates the fields of environmental education and education in general, an increasing number of educators will also embrace the spirit of A'o/ Ako.

Canadian Ecological Identity: A Métis Nation?

Another topic of discussion that elicited a host of intriguing responses from the educators in this study was John Ralston Saul's (2008) concept of Canada being a "métis" nation that has forgotten and/ or ignored the contributions of Aboriginal peoples and the attendant concept of Canadian ecological identity. I believe that these concepts are strongly related to intercultural environmental education in Canada, so I explore them in the following as they relate to the growth of our field.

When asked if they agreed with Saul (2008) that Canada is a "métis" nation, the participants provided a variety of responses; some expressed strong agreement while others had sharp criticisms and constructive critique of his perspective.

For example, Skywalker expressed strong support for Saul's (2008) concept when she stated:

> I think it's brilliant actually … I mean, ultimately I think it's kind of our way through… Because … it creates that opportunity for us to see that we are all the same in terms of our needs wants, human nature, makeup, and that we all have capabilities and failings… We need to get beyond our ethnic differences …

Thor was also enthusiastic:

> I think that in many ways we could consider Canada a métis nation. That Canada emerged and developed with the myriad interactions and influences from the Inuit,

> Métis and First Nations peoples is cause enough for me to consider further the concept of a métis nation.

Arthur also added some interesting observations such as:

> I can't categorize Canada at all culturally, as a whole … It is so diverse … But … what resonates [for me] is … this idea of … movement and sharing of ideas. If you take the word "métis" [to] mean "cross-cultural" … not necessarily Métis as [in] Louis Riel … I think that Canada is very much a métis nation …

However other participants expressed some hesitancy, such as Liatrus who was hesitant to embrace the concept of Canada being a "métis" nation due to concerns about what she called the "melting pot" effect that results in the loss of unique cultures, however she also expressed some support for Saul's (2008) concept because it encourages people to think critically about Canadian culture and history:

> I can understand it, I can appreciate it, but I think it's maybe … just sort of feeding into the idea of th[e] melting pot … But to say that we're … a métis nation, I think that each of us has our own sort of uniqueness in that, so I think … it's maybe a little bit over simplified. But the concept in and of itself I think is great, because it gets people to actually think you know? And really think about the history of Canada and all of the interesting dynamics that make this country what it is …

Kate also shared the following comments on how Saul's (2008) concept reminds her of the importance of recognizing the historical and contemporary relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Canada. She also questioned how these concepts can be introduced into pedagogical practice:

> It does speak to me and I … I think it's about honouring and recognizing … contributions to our contemporary society and to our history that have been … overlooked and diminished and downplayed … I'm really interested in how we then take his ideas and work with that amongst student groups who haven't even thought of the concept of identity or concept of culture [before] … People tend to put themselves in this unapologetic stance of ignorance where they pretend like they've had nothing to do with Aboriginal peoples or communities, so they don't think they have to engage … But that fails to recognize that ... all people in Canada are living in relation to ... Aboriginal peoples … Saul is pointing out that … there is this relationship … and we just haven't paid attention to it and here's … the evidence … for why we should…

Cedar Basket's comments reflected her enthusiasm for Saul's perspective. She also emphasized the historical timeline of the rise of métissage during the fur trade, the decline of respect for Aboriginal peoples in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with increased European settlement, and the contemporary promise of renewed transcultural collaboration:

> I think he's right on … It [is] an invitation to … pause for a moment [and] reflect on … when this Métis idea came alive in our country and … how it grew, and how it got nurtured and how it got damaged sometimes and how it's still very present today … I think … that is really worth exploring … in many different disciplines … Absolutely…We've got to get all Canadian citizens in [the same] canoe … going in the right direction!

Cedar Basket and Kate outlined the historical aspects of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relationships in Canada; like Saul (2008), they remind us that, in the early days of European exploration and settlement, Europeans relied heavily upon Aboriginal peoples as guides, trading partners, and often as family members. This is not to dismiss the often patronizing or condescending attitudes that accompanied the colonial mentality, but to acknowledge that there were many instances of intercultural cooperation and métissage as I explored in Chapter Three. As Saul (2008) notes, these relationships changed drastically with the influx of greater numbers of European settlers, especially women, resulting in increased discrimination and ignorance towards Aboriginal peoples. Attitudes of prejudice and cultural superiority continued well into the twentieth century, and, unfortunately, into the present day. However, I am inspired by the growth of areas like intercultural environmental education as signs that these relationships are changing once again. As so many of the educators in this study expressed, it is still possible to forge and renew relationships built on intercultural and, eventually, transcultural cooperation.

Exploring Canadian Ecological Identity: A Varied Terrain

Another topic that produced several interesting conversations was Canadian ecological identity. It immediately became apparent to me that no single Canadian ecological identity can be identified. All of the participants had opinions on the origins and expressions of the various ecological identities that they identified within and across Canada. Influences identified ranged from geography and history to socioeconomics and culture. The expression of these identities was also described in different ways—through exploration of political, recreational, occupational and economic perspectives and practices.

Arthur identified variations in ecological identity arising from different subcultures and regions in Canada:

> I don't think there is one ecological identity … I think that [it] is probably different in different [sub-]cultures … So [in] business culture, our ecological identity is one of natural resources … Internationally as well, our ecological identity is [linked to the] business world [and resource extraction] I think that probably shapes our… ecological identity a little bit more than anything else … But I think that culturally … the importance of the symbol of the beaver to Canada … and other things … like maple syrup [and] … the maple leaf [is] funny because … that's not my experience of Canada ... There [is so much regional and] ecological diversity … Canada's not all maple trees …

Thor also commented on individual and regional variations of ecological identity in Canada:

> Within ... any family, community, or province, I don't think there's a common ecological identity ... However, in the community where I was living ... in Nunavut last year… There amongst the locals, I think more so than any one place I've been, there was more of a common ecological identity ... which is very different from the ecological identity of … the general mass of people in southern Ontario where I grew up …

As Arthur and Thor discuss above, geography has been a very powerful influence in the past and present on Canadians' ecological identities. This concept lends support to the previously discussed concept of bioregionalism (Thomashow, 1996) and Deep Ecology's

emphasis on locally developed values and practices (Naess and Rothenberg, 1990) as discussed in Chapters Two and Four. Similar to Aboriginal scholars such as Cajete (1994), Thor also commented on the historical connection between both Aboriginal and more recent settler cultures and the geography of North America:

> The rivers and the waterways being traditional and modern travel routes … have influenced the location of most if not all the major cities in Canada … Further, the waterways, the forests, the mountains and everything that comprises the landscape is inherently connected to the Aboriginal cultures that have lived in these parts for… some say time immemorial … thousands of years at least …

Arthur also discussed the (often forgotten) legacy of the fur trade and the influence of Aboriginal peoples on the building of Canada as we know it today. Similar to Misao Dean (2006). He also commented on the ignorance of many Canadians regarding the origins of the canoe:

> The fur trade is when ideas moved and when people really started interacting with … different cultures ... and sharing things … When you think about Canada's … geography ... the shape of the land … [and] the Great Lakes … right in the middle of the continent … it makes so much sense, it's not random, we are shaped by our environment … So many Canadians … celebrate the canoe as [a] wonder of Canada … But is interesting because the ones who are doing the canoeing [often don't have] any clue [why the canoe is important] or why … the centres of business [are] where they are … And so … that started out of necessity … and became a recreational activity … [However] I think that our identity ecologically … has … been disconnected [from that history].

As Thor and Arthur emphasized, Canada's geography has drastically influenced the formation, movement, and settlement of people since time immemorial. Like Saul (2008), they both also highlighted that the foundational role of Aboriginal peoples in the formation of our contemporary nation has been largely forgotten and/ or ignored. This is another area where intercultural environmental educators can raise awareness, providing their students with a deeper and msore authentic understanding of the past to inspire the future.

Similar to Arthur and Thor, Liatrus emphasized the diversity of ecological identities in Canada. She also described what she perceived as a gradual shift towards greater ecological empathy due to factors such as the growth of environmental education and increased understanding of the relationship between our cultural and ecological identities:

> I would say that it would be so diverse [that] to try to describe it as a universal … is a mistake ... It's also evolving… I mean we think about environmental education and … changing dynamics and all the people like you and I ... So … it is so mixed that … even that notion of … a mixed cultural [and] ecological identity may be part of the definition of what [it] is…

Kate also described the various subcultures that she believes have a strong influence on individuals' ecological identities:

> It might be a stretch to say that we have one national Canadian ecological identity… I think there are … those people that envision their … ecological connections or contributions to be quite urban and … sometimes also intertwined with … social issues … I think there are other groups … who don't necessarily pay attention to social issues and who are more ... "Back to Nature" … I think there's people whose ecological identity … is really fueled by a physicality—they're seeking adventure and sport … And I think there are, you know, people who are quite spiritually connected to Nature and … people who are ancestrally connected to particular localized places … Then I also think there's people who don't think about it all ... who are so far removed that it makes them nervous to see a spider or … [who] spend their whole life living in their air conditioned house … car [and] office.

Natasha's comments were reminiscent of Daniel Francis (2005) who discusses the cultural importance of symbols such as the canoe and the North to Canadian identity. She also noted our internal cultural diversity and questioned if the experiences of more recent immigrants would be different than her own:

> Canada as a whole has an ecological identity just in terms of … the way that people identify… with … [the] outdoors ... [For example] there's a canoeing culture in Canada. Even if people don't canoe, they still recognize the canoe as a Canadian symbol … The North, you know, thinking of Inukshuks and … the northern landscape is very much a part of a cultural landscape in Canada …Or open prairie landscapes, you know, this is part of my [own] identity as a Canadian and I've never been to the prairies. So … I think that there's that kind of … landscape within the identity … But, at the same time, there are so many cultures within [Canada]. I mean… it's very much a blend of cultures … and … I don't know how others

> would feel … you know … first generation descendants of immigrants to Canada ... I mean, having been raised in Canada and my parents and grandparents and great grandparents and great-great grandparents… being born in Canada, I think probably gives me a different perspective and kind of a different claim over "Canada" … and also being raised in a more rural area … I definitely think that there's a Canadian claim to Nature… which would feed into our collective ecological identity.

Cedar Basket optimistically described a shift towards greater ecological awareness that she has witnessed in family members who work in the forest industry:

> [Based on] thirty years of conversations with loggers in my family … what I am hearing is that there is concern about how the practices of the past cannot continue into the future. And so, I sense a shift, how[ever] subtle ... just within my family … sphere … There is concern that things are connected. [If] you clear cut a whole range of forest … the soil tumbles down into the salmon beds and they can't spawn anymore … It's like a domino [effect and] people are seeing this. The things that they used to see … in childhood aren't there anymore or they hardly exist … Things have to be done differently. And so … I want to believe that Canada is moving … more … into a concern for … environment … Everything comes around in cycles, [so] I may be just old enough to hopefully see the next big positive push for a nation-wide change in our environment policy to the better. Where we're looking at growing … instead of monopolizing ... That's just one River Woman's hope …

Cedar Basket's optimism is inspiring. Like her, I hope that we are moving towards a deeper collective ecological awareness that transcends the political, cultural, and socioeconomic divisions described by the other participants above.

Significance

As I came to the end of this study, I found myself pondering its significance; how does it relate to and/ or depart from the key literature and concepts reviewed in previous chapters? How is it unique? For that matter, is it unique? And what have I found or experienced that contributes fresh perspectives or understanding to the field of intercultural environmental education?

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, one significant contribution of this study is that it adds greater cultural diversity to the body of significant life experience (SLE) research.

As delineated by Dillon *et al* (1999), previous significant life experience research has been primarily conducted from a Eurocentric perspective examining Eurocentric approaches to environmental education. I believe that this study has added other perspectives to this dialogue through the voices of participants who are of St:olo, Métis, Pakistani, and Japanese ancestry. A diversity of perspectives were also presented by the Euro-Canadian participants who all expressed a deep understanding of and respect for Indigenous cultures and articulated their own unique identities, philosophies, and practices.

I believe that this study has also challenged the persistently perceived dichotomy between Western and Indigenous knowledge and philosophies of Nature. Similar to Tong and Skywalker, a limited few intercultural environmental education scholars such as Kawagley and Barnhardt (1999) have acknowledged the existence of Western traditions other than science, although none have expanded upon their relationship (potential or embodied) to Indigenous traditions in detail. By acknowledging and exploring the development, influence, and potential of Western-derived perspectives such as deep ecology (Naess and Rothenberg, 1990) and bioregionalism (Dodge, 1981; Thomashow, 1996), this study has contributed to a softening of the borders between Western and Indigenous approaches to environmental education. As was presented in Chapter Six, many of the educators profiled in this study not only draw on Western science and Indigenous traditions, but are also informed, for example, by deep ecological perspectives. The articulation and development of my own ecosophy, ecological métissage, also contributed to this discussion.

As was emphasized in Chapter Two, many Western environmental philosophers over the past two centuries have followed “archetypes” (Thomashow, 1996) such as Henry Thoreau and John Muir in advocating for the consideration of Indigenous perspectives.

However, few have demonstrated an authentic and engaged understanding of what this actually entails. I believe that this study has contributed to the field by sharing the stories of environmental educators, Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike, who are engaged in authentic, locally grounded, and engaged relationships and endeavors.

This study also critically examined and expanded upon John Ralston Saul's (2008) concept that Canada is a "metis nation". One gap in Saul's discussion was in the area of environmental perspectives; while he did present a short section that advocated for the potential contribution of Indigenous knowledge to contemporary environmental discourse in Canada, he did not expand upon it in any great detail, nor did he examine it through his lens of Canada as a "metis nation". I believe that this study has provided further exploration of this area through a lens of métissage. As described previously in this chapter and others, many of the participants agreed with Saul as to the métis foundations of early Canada, but many also challenged his notion that it remains so, emphasizing the progressively oppressive nature of European colonialism in Canada and the attendant cultural and ecological consequences.

Finally, and perhaps, most significantly, I believe that this study has helped to further explore and articulate the relationship between Western and Indigenous epistemologies and the use of bricolage and métissage as metaphoric models for research and pedagogical praxis. For example, as described above and in Chapters Four and Five, I believe that the current relationship between Western and Indigenous Science is one with the potential for an integrated bricolage, where many similarities exist alongside significant differences. In Chapter Five I described my experiences as a methodological métisseur seeking to articulate and enact a métissage of Indigenous and interpretive research methodologies. Realizing that this was possible and that I had achieved it, albeit largely

intuitively in the beginning, was the most exciting moment of this study for me. And finally, through an extensive review of literature, conversation with the ten participants in this study and reflection on my own experiences and identity, I submitted in this chapter that I believe that ecological métissage is possible on a regional level if we also acknowledge and explore Western traditions other than science such as deep ecology and bioregionalism in environmental education.

Limitations and Future Research Opportunities

This study was limited to the Canadian context. However, I did draw on a limited selection of international literature to expand and deepen my understanding of concepts such as métissage, and Indigenous and Métis experiences and identities around the world. These explorations led me to understand that there are certain commonalities of experience and perspectives emerging from those nations influenced by the ongoing legacy of colonialism. I also believe that this study will be of interest to anyone interested in engaging with inter and/ or transcultural themes in science, outdoor, and /or environmental education. Thus, I encourage those who read this from beyond our borders to interpret the themes and concepts presented through their own sociocultural and ecological lenses.

Another limitation of this study was that, while some supportive French literature was accessed, all of the interviews were conducted in English with primarily Anglophone participants. I believe that this is also a limitation in general in our field that deserves greater attention. For example, during recent participation in several national and international environmental education conferences I observed that, while excellent research and pedagogy is happening in many areas of the world, cultural and linguistic barriers sometimes dissuade us from sharing and/ or collaborating. This limitation points to another

area of possible future research—exploring and strengthening collaboration efforts between the French, English, Indigenous, and other language-speaking environmental education communities in Canada and internationally.

A further limitation that was also recognized at the beginning and throughout this study is that it does not encompass the vast diversity of cultural voices now present in contemporary Canada, especially those of recent immigrants from, for example, Latin American, Asian, and African nations. Exploring the experiences of recent immigrants' experiences with and perspectives on Indigenous knowledge is another fascinating area of potential future research.

Final Thoughts

Through this study and other work over the past several years, I have had the immense pleasure of meeting and working with intercultural environmental educators from across Canada and around the world, physical and epistemological border crossers working towards increased intercultural and ecological consciousness. Roth (2008) states that the world needs more people like this who are able to, "live and create diasporic identities" (p. 915).

As embodied by the programs and educators profiled in this study, the Third Space (Richardson, 2004) is once again taking hold across Canada. Educators committed to such an approach are developing and facilitating programs that foster locally-grounded authentic engagement and collaboration between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and epistemologies, conscious of their simultaneous role as teachers and learners, with a sense of humor and humility. I am inspired by the growth of our field; my hope is that, in the decades to come we will experience a continued increase in intercultural and inter-

Indigenous sharing and collaboration, with the common goal of learning how to live well on this Land.

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APPENDIX A

Ethnobotany Exercise

Plant Name

Ojibwe/ Oji-Cree: English: Latin:

Sample (photo, drawing or clipping)

Uses (Possible sources: textbooks, approved websites, Elders, teachers)

APPENDIX B

Interview Guide

How you would describe yourself culturally?

How has your own family history influenced who you are today?

How do you see yourself in relation to Nature?

Can you identify formative influences in your life that led you to be the person you are today personally and professionally?

What is your current or former occupation?

Please share some stories about your experiences with intercultural environmental education…

Can you think of any instances where you have experienced an "epiphanic moment"—coming to understand yourself, another person, or an issue in a profoundly deeper way?

Can you think of any instances where you have observed an "epiphanic moment" in a student, colleague, friend or family member?

What makes for effective intercultural environmental education?

What characterizes an effective intercultural environmental educator?

What do you think of the concept of Canada as a métis nation?

How do you think that Canada's history has influenced our present ecological identity?

Can non-Aboriginal Canadians learn from traditional Aboriginal ways of knowing, living, seeing the world? What about vice-versa?

Is it possible to blend Western and Aboriginal philosophies of Nature?