Education Is Ceremony: Thinking *With* Stories of Indigenous Youth and Families

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Abstract

This research with three Indigenous youth and their families is an intergenerational narrative inquiry around experiences of belonging and identity making. Pulling forward teachings from Indigenous Elder Francis Whiskeyjack, a metaphor of "education as ceremony" is juxtaposed with the ceremonies of "schooling" (Greene, 2001). Thinking with stories lived and told by the youth and their families, I retell stories as a teacher, mother, and now, teacher educator. Experiencing personal and practical shifts to my teaching and learning, I reconsider the ceremonies of "schooling." This study offers possibilities for how educators might co-compose more relational and educative (Dewey, 1938) experiences in schools.

Do you want to know why we do a morning song and prayer?

Do you know why we drum?

Why we hug one another before school?

Education is Ceremony.

We acknowledge education and the creator.

This rock, this eagle, this feather, this tobacco

all these things are natural.

We are all connected. These are all our relations.

We are all living and human.

(Teachings of Elder Francis Whiskeyjack, March 11, 2011)

Elder Francis Whiskeyjack's teachings[1] stayed with me long after we visited his high school classroom. Three youth, Mary, Sage, and Bryann, who participated in a three-year-long narrative inquiry, asked me to take them to see Elder Francis in order to attend his Cultural Arts class and to continue work on their rattles and beadwork. Because they did not know the Cree language of their kookums and moosums,[2] they also wanted to attend a Cree language class.

I recall our arrival at the school: morning song had just begun with singing and drumming led by Elder Francis and some students. Students and teachers were gathered. After morning song, people hugged before heading to class. The girls and I stood in the doorway—watching, fixed in place. This way of

starting a school day was unfamiliar. As a teacher and researcher, I did not know what to do. Should we join in? I sensed we had entered in the midst of a ceremony. Was joining in allowed?

Following the morning song, we followed Elder Francis to his classroom. As we walked, he greeted every student with a smile, a hand shake, or a hug. The classroom, a warm place filled with colors of the earth, and walls filled with dream catchers, welcomed us. We sat on the floor and met students as they trickled in, one by one. Elder Francis invited us to the center of the room and began sharing teachings around the eagle feather. "Do you want to hold the feather?" he asked Sandra. Perhaps sensing our earlier hesitation, he explained more about connectedness and the importance of acknowledging education and all relations. He asked, "Do you know why we do a morning song and prayer?" He explained why smudging[3] is a ceremony and invited Bryann, Sage, Sandra, and I to join him in smudging. In those moments, I learned that everyone is welcome to join the morning song and prayer. Now as I look back, I understand how Elder Francis was working to create an educative, relational space where students and teachers came together, in ceremony, and *as* ceremony.[4] I wonder about the ceremonies of education and how they are lived out. What rituals and protocols shape the ceremonies?

In this narrative inquiry, Elder Francis gently guided me through puzzles as I wondered how I might come alongside Indigenous[5] youth and families in more relational ways. Holding his words close, I learned the importance of honouring and caring for the stories youth, and families shared with me. He helped me see how educators might attend in more relational and educative (Dewey, 1938) ways to youth and families' experiences. Before I met Elder Francis, I was already drawn to engaging in research puzzles to learn more about how I might think *with* stories. Morris (2002) notes the distinction between thinking *about* stories and thinking *with* stories:

> The concept of thinking with stories is meant to oppose and modify (not replace) the institutionalized Western practice of thinking about stories. Thinking about stories conceives of narrative as an object. Thinking with stories is a process in which we as thinkers do not so much work on narrative as . . . of allowing narrative to work on us. (p. 200)

My puzzle for my doctoral research was around whether the stories youth and families live and tell are shaped by their experiences of belonging and identity making in and out of schools. As I came alongside the three girls, I began to think *with* their stories and mine, and began a process of retelling stories of my experiences as a teacher, mother, and person. Elder Francis' teachings kept drawing me to recollect the stories I lived and told as a child, a teacher, and now a mother. As I considered education as ceremony, I also began to consider my experiences of what might be seen as the ceremonies of schooling. As I did so, I knew Elder Francis was drawing me to the ceremonies of "education," rather than "schooling."

Greene (2001) distinguished between education and schooling, and noted that in education,

> We are interested in openings, in unexplored possibilities, not in the predictable or the quantifiable, not in what is thought of as a social control. For us, education signifies an initiation into new ways of seeing, hearing, feeling, moving. It signifies the nurture of a special reflectiveness and expressiveness, a reaching out for meaning, a learning to learn (p. 7).

When I hold the ideas of schooling as ceremony and education as ceremony, I see differences. The ceremonies of education are filled with rituals that inspire—awe, wonder, curiosity, inquiry. The ceremonies of "schooling" are also filled with rituals, as Greene (2001) notes, around "the quantifiable" or "social controls." I wonder if she was referring to norms such as standardized testing, attendance, attendance boards, and so forth. Juxtaposing "education" with "schooling," we see schooling leans towards how we gain greater social control and pursue the measurable. Dewey (1938) also writes of the difference between schooling and education, noting that not all experiences in school are educative. "Every experience is a moving force. Its value can be judged only on the ground of what it moves towards and into" (p. 38). In contrast, mis-educative experiences are experiences that had the

> effect of arresting or distorting the growth of further experience. An experience may be as such to engender callousness; it may produce lack of sensitivity and of responsiveness. Then the possibilities of having richer experiences in the future are restricted. (p. 25)

Experiences were "educative" when they created "conditions for further growth" and "opportunities for continuing growth in new directions" (p. 36).

Pulling forward these distinctions in light of Elder Francis's teachings, I wonder about the ceremonies in "education" and in "schooling" (Greene, 2001). I wonder about the ceremonies in schooling that may be "educative" or "mis-educative" (Dewey, 1938). As teachers, what ceremonies do we embody, engage in, and enact in schools? Are these ceremonies educative or mis-educative? As I thought about Elder Francis's teachings and about how he lived his practices in schooling, I wondered again about his words, "education is ceremony." How can we, as educators, open possibilities to engage students in more educative and responsive ways? How can we create spaces in schools where ceremonies might be educative?

Methodology

Clandinin and Connelly (1998) also shaped my understanding of education when they wrote,

> We see living an educated life as an ongoing process. People's lives are composed over time: biographies or life stories are lived and told, retold and relived. For us, education is interwoven with living and with the possibility of retelling our life stories. As we think more about our own lives and the lives of teachers and educators with whom we engage, we see possibilities for growth and change. As we learn to tell, to listen and to respond to teachers' and children's stories, we imagine significant educational consequences for children and teachers in schools and for faculty members in universities through more mutual relations between schools and universities. (pp. 246–247)

Positioned as a doctoral student researcher within an interdisciplinary research team[6] (Caine et al., 2010), I was part of a larger study where we came alongside 30 youth in an after-school arts club for the 2010–2012 school years. Elders Francis Whiskeyjack and Isabelle Kootenay worked with us, sometimes joining in the club for sharing circles,[7] and medicine wheel teachings. I invited three adolescent Indigenous girls who joined the club to be participants in my doctoral study, part of the larger research study. Eventually

they brought me to their families (two mothers, a grandmother, and kinship caregiver) who also agreed to participate.

"Narrative inquiry is not a method, but a methodology, even more so, it is a way of composing a life, of living" (Huber, Caine, Huber, & Steeves, 2013, p. 37). Attending to dimensions of temporality, sociality, and place (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), my research was an intergenerational narrative inquiry around participants' experiences of belonging and identity making.

In the Field, Composing Field and Research Texts

I first came to know the participants within the club alongside other researchers. I later came alongside the three girls in other places and in ongoing conversations. As I lived in the field, I attended to the temporal unfolding of my life and theirs, in places through time. At first, conversations were guided by art club interactions and activities. Later, in one-on-one conversations, we listened to each other's lived and told stories and together inquired into them. Clandinin (2013) writes of how I think about the conversations. "The places and relationships we become part of when we begin with living alongside participants call forth the stories we, and they, tell" (p. 45). We often spoke of artwork created in the club, artifacts brought from home, personal artifacts such as photographs, photographs taken to show experiences, and annals we created. Sixty-five conversations were recorded and transcribed over three years. I went where the youth participants took me: their homes where I met their families; other places special to them; places they wanted to go. "In living alongside participants, we enter places that are important to participants" (p. 45). In both the living and telling of stories, the youth brought me to people important to them; particular family members, a close friend.

The study design also included their families as participants. The relational field with the two mothers, a grandmother, and an aunt, did not begin in the relational space of the club. Knowing I lived alongside their niece, daughters, and granddaughter, the participating adults began by telling their stories in one-on-one conversations, in family conversations at agreed meeting places, and later in participants' homes. Three narrative accounts, one for each youth, were co-composed alongside youth and families and are part of the research texts for the study.

Retelling Stories of Experiences Alongside Youth and Families

Since I began this narrative inquiry, I have experienced many changes in my life. For example, I worked as a teacher and teacher educator, married, and resigned from my tenure as a teacher and teacher leader with a public school board. I gave birth to two daughters and moved three times, once to another country. Currently, I work at a postsecondary institution as a teacher educator with preservice and practicing teachers. As I lived alongside the youth participants, my experiences of belonging and identity making were continually shifting and being composed over time. In the living, telling, and retelling[8] of my experiences of belonging alongside the youth and their families, and of our co-composed understandings, I am reminded that

> storytelling is always quietly subversive… you think it faces only one way, but it also faces you. You think it cuts only in one direction, but it also cuts you. You think it applies to others only, when it applies mainly to you . . . it startles your complacency . . . stories are very patient things. . . . They drift about quietly in your soul. (Okri, 1997, p. 35)

Okri captured a sense of my experiences alongside the youth and their mothers that has, in a way, "startled [my] complacency" and "taken-for-grantedness" (Greene, 1995) in how I attended to theirs and my experiences of belonging and identity making.

The experiences of both researcher and participants are under study in a narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry is not a study of the *other*. Thinking *with* the stories that I lived in the narrative inquiry changed me as these stories called me to live differently (Basso, 1996). Engaging in this narrative inquiry shifted my earlier understanding of belonging as I learned from, and with, the youth, their families, and Indigenous Elders. Thinking with their stories, I awakened to how I began to shift my stories of experience as a teacher in ways that might allow me to think *with* stories of the youth and their families.

Personal and Practical Shifts: Thinking *With* Stories of the Youth

As a teacher. This narrative inquiry allowed me to retell my stories of who I am as a teacher.

When I walk into a classroom,

The first thing I look at is the

teacher's face to see how her

If they [teachers] are mad, I freeze up

and I don't say anything

at all.

(Transcript, Sandra, May 6, 2011)

Sandra, one youth participant, was speaking about another teacher in this conversation, but as I reread her words and turned my gaze inward, I recognized that this teacher could have been me. A teacher for over 15 years, I embodied certain rhythms (Clandinin, 1989) and routines of school, ways of living as a teacher that I took for granted. For example, teachers often speak of having a "teacher look," looks that expressed their disapproval. I often used my "teacher look." Now as I think more about Sandra's words, I wonder what story I tell of belonging through my "teacher look." I wonder now about the spirit of belonging the children and I co-composed as I taught. Did I pay attention to the spirit of belonging that lived within each student's storied experiences through playfulness, loving perception, and "world"-travelling (Lugones, 1987)?

I consider myself to be a teacher who strives to create an inclusive classroom for all children. Now, as I retell stories of belonging, I am not sure the practices I was living in and living out were paying attention

to children's lives in ways that allowed me to attend closely to their stories to live by, who they were and were becoming. I may not have attended to the children's spirit of belonging in my classroom. As a teacher, I thought I was cognizant of how my body, looks, actions, and embodied rhythms created places where children and their families could belong. And yet, coming alongside the youth and their families has caused me to think again, to begin the retelling of who I was and was becoming as a teacher. Thinking with their stories, I wonder if I created school spaces, where, education, rather than schooling, was ceremony.

As I retell my stories as a teacher, I think back to the stories Sandra and her mother lived in and lived out, of not belonging in school places. During my time in the field, I remember standing outside of a classroom with one participant, waiting for a teacher to unlock the door, a door locked against students who came late. I think about Sandra who became anxious near the end of the school year when her mother received a warning letter about her attendance. Sandra's mother, Mary, was temporarily taken away from her family and placed in foster care when she was a child. Sandra shared her worries of being taken away to a group home like her mother. She worried about getting charged with truancy and the consequences for her mother and grandpa. When she received the letter from the attendance board, her friends also shared stories of how she could be taken away by authorities.

Returning to memories of our visit to Elder Francis' classroom, I remember how he responded to a child's very late arrival to school. When I asked him if all the children were there, he said, "no... but they are always welcome when they get here." These words resonate with me as I think back to the stories Sandra told of being afraid, after receiving letters from the attendance board.

Ceremonies in "Schooling"—Retelling as a Teacher

As I retell my stories as a teacher, I see now that I took the processes of mandatory attendance with its accompanying practices for granted. Gazing inward, I recall the many times I gave out attendance slips because it was part of the mandated curriculum in schools. Even as I welcomed students with a smile and explained attendance slips as part of the school mandate to ensure they were safely at school, I abided by the school rules and gave them a slip to bring to the office. Giving a late slip was carrying out the school policy. Inside I was always happy that the children came and told them so, but I lived out the mandated story. Looking back, this was the ceremony of each day of schooling; the ceremony that started the school day for students.

I do not believe this schooling practice was the kind of ceremony Elder Francis was referring to in his teachings. However, giving late slips was the ceremony that greeted my students at the door. My intention as I retell this story is not to tell a story that attendance is not important or that I should not follow attendance policies. However, in my retelling I know I need to attend to students' lives and think about how these stories of school may shape their experiences of belonging and identity making.

In thinking with the stories of the three youth participants and their families, I was provoked to wonder more about attendance and attendance boards. What does it mean to invoke institutional

bodies such as attendance boards into children and families' life making? As I researched the power of attendance boards, I was struck at the potential consequences[9] outlined by Alberta Education (Government of Alberta, 2016),[10] which noted that the Attendance Board has the same power as the Court of Queen's Bench[11] in Alberta.

As I retell my stories as a teacher, I remember when Sandra and her mother shared stories of not feeling a sense of belonging in school places. I think about the stories they lived in which their names were written on the whiteboard for being late or when they were sent letters from the Attendance Board. I see how lingering reverberations and legacies of colonization shaped stories of school around mandatory attendance; these stories stretching backward and forward as they continued to shape the girls and their families' experiences of belonging and who they were in the place of school. These experiences shaped fears of being taken away by Children's Services or fears of not living up to stories of school; these stories of school silenced the youth and their families.

I return to Sandra's mother, Mary, who spoke of "floating around school" and to her words, "I remember in grade four feeling depressed but didn't want to tell anyone. I didn't want Children's Services to take us away" (Transcript, June 23, 2011). Sandra and Mary's childhood stories around their fears of being apprehended by child welfare services provoked me to research further.

It is understood that the fear of being apprehended or placed in child welfare services, in particular for children with Indigenous ancestry, have deep-rooted connections to legacies and reverberations of colonialism (Blackstock, Clarke, Cullen, D'Hondt, & Formsma, 2004; Johnston, 1983; Sinclair, 2007; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). According to the TRC (2015), "although in 1920, the Indian Act was amended to allow the government to compel any First Nations child to attend residential school" (p. 62), the practice of removing Aboriginal children from their families continued. From the 1960s onward, the residential school experience was followed by what has been called the "Sixties Scoop," or the wide-scale apprehension of Aboriginal children by child welfare agencies across Canada (Hanson, 2009). Child welfare authorities removed thousands of Aboriginal children from their families and communities and placed them in non-Aboriginal homes (Blackstock et al., 2004; Johnston, 1983; Sinclair, 2007; Timpson, 1995; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). The overrepresentation of Aboriginal youth continues today as it is estimated that 30–40% of all children in care in Canada are Aboriginal (Blackstock et al., 2004).

With these histories of colonization, I think about the present-day reverberations shaping Mary's fears that vibrate onward and shape her daughter's fears of being apprehended. As Sandra shared in retelling of an incident following an accident where she was suspended from school, she wondered, "Am I going to get taken away to a group home? I don't want to get charged because my mom and grandpa will have to pay for me to get out of jail" (Transcript, November 4, 2012).

I wonder about what might be called ceremonies in schooling, ceremonies that focus on attendance boards, deficits, increased accountability, standardized testing. What would ceremonies look like if they were the kind where students' lives and attending to their spirit of belonging were central? With these

kinds of ceremonies at the forefront, who would I be as a teacher in relation with students I teach? Stories of belonging shaped by school attendance opened spaces for me to recollect the times I was fixated on carrying out the curriculum-as-planned (Aoki, 1993, 2005), the curriculum outlined in programs of study. In following the planned curriculum was I overlooking the experiences of children and their families and not attending to their curriculum of lives?[12] (Chung, 2008; Chung & Clandinin, 2010; Huber, Murphy, & Clandinin, 2011).

I retell my stories as a teacher with a deeper understanding of how the youth and their families tried to sustain their spirit of belonging, spirits that kept them returning to class, and school, even as they bumped up against stories of school. In the retelling of her stories, Sandra taught me more about a "world" (Lugones, 1987) where she felt her spirit of belonging was honoured.

When I walked into the club,

The adults were all happy,

I was happy.

(Transcript, May 6, 2011)

Sandra loved the art club as it was a world which invoked, for her, a sense of ease[13] and belonging. This makes me wonder about her notions of happiness and how happiness and belonging might be intertwined for her. For her, the club was ceremony and I sensed a living out, of education as ceremony.

As a teacher, I wonder how I can create more inquiry spaces within the curriculum-as-planned for youth to express their rhythms and embodied ways of knowing and being. I begin to sense how it might be possible for the rhythms of school to become a new ceremony where students feel a sense of belonging.

In *A Child's Work: The Importance of Fantasy Play*, Paley (2004) writes of her self-facing:

> My stories were not in rhythm with the children's themes. I rarely paused to listen to the narratives blooming everywhere in the garden of children in which I spent my days. I saw myself as the bestower of place and belonging, of custom and curriculum, too often ignoring the delicate web being constructed by the children in their constant exchange of ideas the moment I stopped talking and they resumed playing. (p. 19)

Paley (2004) writes that examining children's [and youths'] play is to study their "curriculum in its natural form, much as they study one another through the medium of their play" (p. 3). Lugones (1987) reminds me of the importance of having a playful attitude where I have an "openness to surprise, openness to being a fool, openness to construction or reconstruction of the 'worlds' that I, and my students, inhabit playfully" (p. 17). It is this attitude of playfulness "that carries us through the activity [and that] a playful attitude turns the activity into play" (p. 180).

I understand the challenges of working within the curriculum-as-planned to attend to youth and their families' living curriculum, particularly with increased high-stakes testing and a heavy mandated curriculum to enact. However, if ceremonies are to be educative (Dewey 1938), rather than

mis-educative, I must stay awake to how I might lovingly "world"-travel (Lugones, 1987) to the different "worlds" the youth and their families live in and live out. It is important to open spaces where students can both share and experience a spirit of belonging in the classrooms where I teach.

Moving Forward—Gentle Teachings

Do you want to know why we do a morning song and prayer?

Do you know why we drum?

Why we hug one another before school?

Education is Ceremony.

We acknowledge education and the creator.

This rock, this eagle, this feather, this tobacco

all these things are natural.

We are all connected. These are all our relations.

We are all living and human.

(Teachings of Elder Francis Whiskeyjack, March 11, 2011)

I return to Elder Francis' teachings once more as I think about how this research with the three youth and families that I lived alongside, is teaching me how I might retell and relive my experiences so that they become "educative" (Dewey, 1938) for me. They are teaching me about what it means to live an "educated life" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998) and perhaps how I can better create educative spaces for those I teach.

Keeping the youth and their families' lives at the forefront, I wonder how policies can think *with* the storied experiences of youth and families. I wonder how we can create educative, belonging spaces for youth as they experience multiple transitions in their lives. I wonder how we can better attend to their experiences and work with them as they compose lives where sometimes they have to leave schools. Within my different roles in the field of education, other educators, including preservice teachers, have asked me if they should create or mandate an Indigenous youth "program" in their schools. They wonder if there is a guide to creating a belonging project with children and youth. While I see their openness in wanting to become more attentive to Indigenous youth and their families' lives, the intention of this narrative inquiry is not to offer a prescriptive or "how to" guide on addressing the needs of Indigenous youth and families. What I want to make visible is that it is important that teachers think *with* and work *with* Indigenous youth and their families' experiences to open inquiry spaces where they can share their stories of their experiences of familial curriculum[14] making; spaces which lend an openness

to "world"-travel to each other's worlds, for playfulness (Lugones, 1987) and play (Caine & Steeves, 2009; Paley, 2007, 2010, 2015).

As a teacher, researcher, and human being, it is important for me to resist focusing on "deficits" or "fractures" and seeing Indigenous youths and their families as fixed beings. To be able to see education as ceremony and perhaps to see some of the ceremonies of schooling as educative, it is important to be willing to learn from youth and their families, and to think *with* them as we look towards possibilities for the future. In the words of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015), "it will take many heads, hands, and hearts working together" (p. 8).

Returning to My Shifting Stories to Live By—As a Mother and a Human Being

As I think about the stories of belonging I learned from the youth and their families, I am in the midst of learning to compose new stories to live by as a mother and teacher educator. My mind slides back to the stories of belonging connected to their families, to places(s), stories of belonging where they felt "like home." Thinking *with* the stories Sandra and her mother told, I understand there are more layers of complexities to the cultural and linguistic narratives that are shaping my children's life making, and that are shaping mine. My eldest daughter tells me,

> I do not want to go to school, mommy. I have nobody to play with at recess. I just walk around pretending I am doing something...centre time is hard because I do not know if it is okay to join in.

How is it that my outgoing little girl who used to love preschool, is so sad in kindergarten? As I come alongside my daughter who has just begun formal schooling in a new city and home, I worry every day. Will this be a day where she feels a sense of belonging at school? I wonder what safe spaces will be co-composed where her spirit of belonging is nurtured. Will she and her little sister experience education as ceremony? I wonder, as the three youths' lives continue to unfold, and as they navigate through high school, new places, with new relationships, how they will sustain their stories of belonging, who they are, and who they want to become.

Sliding back to Sandra's stories centred around attendance boards and being afraid, when policy drives the curriculum, I wonder, what will drive Sandra to "keep going." Will her spirit of belonging sustain her? I think about the spirit of belonging that I carry as a daughter and a mother that will shape who my daughters are—and are becoming. These wonders keep me wakeful to the stories to live by that I am continuing to compose alongside my children. Sandra and Mary have taught me to pay attention to my stories. Just as the daughter, teacher, and researcher in me also has to continually strive to co-compose safe inquiry spaces, I have to remember that I have to open spaces for my daughters to share their dreams, to shape and compose their own stories of belonging. I know that I have to travel to their worlds with a loving perception and compose "playfully" with them (Lugones, 1987).

Thinking with stories, I am learning how to care for stories of belonging that the three youth and their families shared with me as they call me to stay awake (Greene, 1977, 1993, 1995) as a teacher, mother,

and a human being. I am reminded that loving "world"-travelling requires spaces for play and playfulness, for it is "from these co-constructed story places, possibilities for continuing to compose new stories to live by are created" (Caine & Steeves, 2009, p. 2). I am learning that is through "world"-travelling to children's, youths', and their families' worlds that I might learn to gaze with "loving perception" where "[I] can understand what it is to be [other] and what it is like to be [myself] in their eyes" (Lugones, 1987, p. 17).

With the gentle guidance of my friend, Elder Francis and all my relations, I am learning how important it is to gaze outward and inward to see the I, as well as the we, as we collectively make sense of belonging, and who we are, and who we are not-yet (Greene, 1993, 1995, 2001).

The three youth and their families helped me understand more of the power of stories (King, 2003; Okri, 1997) as do Young et al. (2015), who reminded me that the sharing of our intergenerational stories is a gift because "it is through stories that we can connect with our ancestors" (p. 59). These intergenerational reverberations transcend time and place. These stories have the potential to be educative (Dewey, 1938) if we care for them (Basso, 1996) and for each other in loving and respectful ways, in and out of school places.

Learning to think *with* stories, provokes me as a human being to reach beyond myself, and to see more than "other." We are all relations (Wilson, 2008) and as Elder Francis teaches me, "education is ceremony" (Personal communication, Francis Whiskeyjack, March 11, 2011; August 24, 2017; November 20, 2017). In my role now as a teacher educator, I continue to have new conversations with Elder Francis Whiskeyjack as well as other elders who guide me. I hold on to these teachings as I think about how I want to live as a teacher educator alongside my students in their midst of becoming future educators. I wonder, how together, we (students and teachers) can imagine new possibilities of what education as ceremony looks and feels like.

Notes

1. In many conversations, over more than six years, Elder Francis encouraged me to use his teachings to think about who I am as a teacher. He also encouraged me to write about how his teachings were helping me in my life composing.

2. "Kookum" and "moosum" respectively refer to grandma and grandpa in the Plains Cree language.

3. According to KiiskeeNtum (1998), smudging is a ceremony widely used by Indigenous peoples which involves "the burning of various medicine plants to make a smudge or cleansing smoke...Elders teach us that all ceremonies must be entered into or begun with good intent. So many of us use the smudge as a symbolic or ritual cleansing of mind, body, spirit and emotion… smudging may also be used to cleanse, purify and bless the part of our Mother, the Earth, which we utilize in seeking after the spiritual...It is customary to cleanse, (brush or wash the smoke) over our eyes, ears, mouth, hands, heart and body. Some people choose to brush it over their backs, to 'lighten their troubles'." (para. 1-5).

4. The definition of the word "ceremony" points toward other words such "an act or series of acts performed according to a traditional or prescribed form" and "as the ritual observances and procedures performed at grand and formal occasions."

5. How we acknowledge the first peoples in North America is complex. There is no singular term that accurately reflects the diversity among the individuals and communities they are used to represent. This doctoral research was framed using the term Aboriginal youth and their families to describe participants and their heritage. Now I use the term Indigenous peoples, currently considered a more inclusive term.

6. My doctoral study (Chung, 2016) was part of a larger narrative inquiry into the educational experiences of urban Aboriginal youth and their families at home, in communities, and in schools; this collaborative study was undertaken by Elders, community organizations, representatives from a school district, and Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars. The larger study was funded by Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) and the Alberta Centre for Child, Family, and Community Research (ACCFCR). I also received an individual SSHRC Doctoral Fellowship.

7. Sharing or talking circles are widely used in Indigenous communities as a way to "encourage dialogue, respect, and the co-creation of learning" so that everyone is heard (First Nations Pedagogy, 2018, para.1). In a clockwise direction, whoever is the holder of the sacred object (i.e., talking stick, rock, feather, etc.) speaks while others in the circle, listen. In this relational approach, "everyone gets a turn to speak and all voices are heard in a respectful and attentive way" (para.1).

8. Clandinin and Connelly (1998) note that while "telling stories is a hard task, retelling stories is even more difficult. Retelling requires a vivid imagination as people try to rethink their stories in the context of the stories of others with who they interact" (p. 252). Retelling also requires "attention to tension" (Clandinin, Murphy, Huber, & Murray Orr, 2010, p. 88).

9. At the time of this research, according to Alberta Education (Government of Alberta, 2016), the Attendance Board may direct "students to attend school or to take an education program or course; parent/guardian to send their child to school; and /or parent/guardian to pay up to $100/day fine to a maximum of $1000. It may give any other direction to the students, parents/guardian or school considered appropriate… not obeying the ruling may result in contempt of court charges being brought against the student or others." (para. 1-6)

10. The source of the materials is Alberta Education (Government of Alberta, 2016). The use of these materials by Simmee Chung is done without any affiliation with or endorsement by the Government of Alberta; reliance upon this use of these materials is at the risk of the end user.

11. Court of Queen's Bench of Alberta (2018) notes, "The Court of Queen's Bench is the Superior Trial Court for the Province, hearing trials in civil and criminal matters and appeals from decisions of the Provincial Court."

12. Pointing to the centrality of lives in the negotiation of curriculum, Clandinin and Connelly (1992) wrote of how curriculum "might be viewed as an account of teachers' and children's lives together in schools and classrooms." They envisioned curriculum as being a "course of life" (p. 392). Seeing teachers' and children's identities, their stories to live by, as central to curriculum making, Clandinin et al. (2006) build on this notion of curriculum as being more than mandated subject matter: a course of life, or perhaps a "curriculum of lives" (p. 135). In my master's study, I built on Clandinin et al.'s (2006) and Schwab's (1969, 1973)

understanding of curriculum to view a "curriculum of lives" as a "curriculum co-composed in the meeting of children's, family members' and teachers' lives in a school milieu and through interactions with mandated subject matter" (Chung, 2008, p. 11).

13. Lugones (1987) wrote of "being at ease" in a "world" in one or all of the followings ways: 1) knowing all the norms that are to be followed and having confidence with them; 2) being normatively happy and agreeing with the norms; 3) being humanly bonded with those you love and those who love you; 4) having a shared history with others in a world (p. 12).

14. Whereas school curriculum making is focused on experiences in the context of subject matter nestled in the school milieu, "familial curriculum making is situated and composed in experiences outside of school, within family, and in community places" (Lessard, Caine, & Clandinin, 2015, p. 198). Familial curriculum making "as an account of parents'/families' and children's lives together in homes and communities where the parents and families are an integral part of the curriculum process in which families, children/learners, subject matter, and home and community milieu are in dynamic interaction" (Huber, Murphy, & Clandinin, 2011, p. 8).

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