

HISTORIES OF FORGETTING, GEOGRAPHIES OF REMEMBERING:  
EXPLORING PROCESSES OF WITNESSING AND PERFORMING IN  
SENIOR SECONDARY HUMANITIES CLASSROOM(S)

by

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## *Abstract:*

This thesis explores the roles oral histories and drama can play in questioning and transforming dominant curricular narratives in senior secondary Humanities (Social Studies, First Nations Studies, History, Geography) education. The project centered on two classes (Social Studies 11, First Nations Studies 12) in a secondary school in Langley, British Columbia. In collaboration with the regular classroom teacher, the author designed two eight week study units, one for each course, that incorporated oral testimonies from Canadian marginalized communities into a pedagogical framework of critical analysis and reflective drama processes. The testimonies detailed such experiences as legislated segregation in the City of Vancouver, residential schooling and the Japanese internment. The author used the Theatre of the Oppressed techniques of Augusto Boal (image theatre, cops in the head, forum theatre) to facilitate the students in their responses to the testimonies. Students also participated in class discussions and completed written reflections at the end of each lesson and unit.

This project created a curricular opening in which students could critically and creatively engage in personal and collective interrogations of “race”, racism, colonialism, nation building and memory in both a historical and contemporary national context. For many of the students the material covered in the testimonies was new and disturbing, and the drama processes proved invaluable in allowing them to express their questions, reactions and understandings openly and without judgment. Many students developed new insights on themselves as members of a “multicultural” nation, and found strategies to help them question dominant curricular and national narratives. The responses from both the students and the cooperating teacher show overwhelmingly that this teaching approach was both useful to them in their development and should be expanded to other schools, subject areas and grade levels. However, serious systemic and structural obstacles, such as outcomes-based school and curricular expectations, unequal social relations in both schools and society, and teachers’ lack of confidence in working with controversial issues need to be examined and overcome to bring this work to full fruition.

This thesis uses various narrative styles – academic, autobiography, poetry and travelogue – to witness the project’s themes and findings.

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*Because this is about the conversations and spaces we share,  
and the words we remember:*

*Because Deirdre Kelly never blinked, never flinched, never shied away*

*Because Anne Bourque has spent a decade teaching me to risk and love it all*

*Because Leslie Roman taught me that the critical and the creative speak the same words*

*Because Lynn Fels gave me the magic of dancing, singing and performing those words*

*Because Jean Barman showed me that practice makes praxis makes a practitioner*

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*Because Hartej Gill said my words were words of beauty and wisdom and courage*

*Because Stephanie Springgay said my words could be painted, if only she had a brush*

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*Because this would not have happened without all of them together, whether they knew  
each other or not, building the web that has been my learning*

*My writings testify to the patience and guidance of two people who taught me to move  
into, with and beyond the worlds of the academy:*

*my father Anthony England, who taught me then  
and my mentor Leslie Roman, who teaches me now*

## My Manifesto

*Love the earth and sun and animals,  
despise riches, give alms to everyone that asks.  
Stand up for the stupid and crazy,  
Devote your income and labour to others . . .  
And your very flesh shall be a great poem*

*Walt Whitman, Leaves of Grass*

As an educator, but also as a white, middle class female I carry within and on my body power and privileges both spoken and silent, and I must remain vigilant of how these express themselves when I am working with what Delpit (2001, p. 582) so aptly calls “other people’s children.” To do this successfully, I must understand myself as not simply a transmitter of information, but as a “transformative cultural worker engaged in the production of ideologies and social practices” (Giroux, 2001, p. 126). To become this kind of practitioner, I must commit myself to deep and ongoing praxis, or “reflective participation” (Freire, 2000, p. 63), into the ways in which the grammars of education and social justice have and continue to shape me and my work as a global/local/colonial citizen, teacher, researcher and artist.

*I agree with Giroux (2001, p. 128) when he says that:*

a critical pedagogy for democracy is about the intellectual, emotional, and ethical investments we make as part of our attempt to negotiate, accommodate and transform the world in which we find ourselves. The purpose and vision that drives such a pedagogy must be based on a politics and view of authority, that links teaching and learning to forms of self – and social empowerment that argue for forms of community life that extend the principles of liberty, equality, justice, and freedom to the widest possible set of institutional and lived relations.

*More specifically, perhaps, I see social justice education as:*

both a process and a goal . . . that involves social actors who have a sense of their own agency as well as a sense of social responsibility toward and with others and the society as a whole. (Bell, 1997, p.1)

*In practice, then, I and like-minded practitioners:*

must keep the perspective that people are experts on their own lives . . . that they can be the only authentic chroniclers of their own experience. We must believe that people are rational beings. . . that we may not understand their rationales, but that in no way reduces our responsibility to attempt to apprehend them. And finally, we must learn to be vulnerable enough to allow our world to turn upside down in order to allow the realities of others to edge themselves into our consciousness. (Delpit, 2001, p.594)

*So I must understand that:*

if the effort to respect and honor the social reality and experiences of groups in this society is to be reflected in a pedagogical process, then as teachers – on all levels, from elementary to university settings – we must acknowledge that our styles of teaching may need to change. (hooks, 1994, p. 35)

*And my vision of change involves:*

the phenomenon of storytelling . . . a tradition that creates continuities and holds people mysteriously together who might otherwise fall apart. Storytelling, in fact, can become a beginning for political action when it focuses on the process of thinking about experience and the conditions for action. (Greene, 2000, p.302)

*Which I plan to explore through:*

theatre – the art of looking at ourselves . . . for the theatrical language is the most essential human language. Everything that actors do on stage, we do throughout our lives, always and everywhere. Theatre is a form of knowledge; it should and can also be a means of transforming society. Theatre can help us build our future, instead of just waiting for it. (Boal, 2002, p. 15-16)

*And document within a framework of:*

three separate, distinct levels of witnessing: the level of being a witness to oneself within the experience; the level of being a witness to the testimonies of others; and the level of being a witness to the process of witnessing itself. (Laub, 1992 (p. 75)



"THE PURPOSE OF ART IS TO LAY BARE THE  
QUESTIONS THAT HAVE BEEN HIDDEN BY THE  
ANSWERS"

JAMES BALDWIN

## *My Invitation to You, the Witness and Spect-actor*

*Think of a time when the word border had no meaning for you. When did you last live beyond the barriers of geography, or the boundaries of knowledge? Have you ever been able to go wherever you wanted, speak to whomever you chose, ask for whatever you needed? Where was this world, for you? How old were you? Who shared it with you?*

This is my invitation to you to begin thinking metaphorically about the nature and reality of borders, both those that others construct around us, and those we impose on ourselves. In geopolitical terms, metaphorical borders become material borders laid down by victors to claim what they feel they won through physical, cultural or economic violence. Walls are built, soldiers hired to guard them, traditions developed to commemorate their founding. In educational terms, borders both metaphorical and material can also be defined through victory and even violence: what we learn and how we teach become controlled by the dominant scholars, the dominant polices and the dominant curricula. These borders too are tightly guarded by official, elected and appointed gatekeepers who lock out just as much as they allow in. Both geopolitical and educational borders serve to contain the flow of voices, peoples, ideologies and pedagogies in much the same way they operate to restrict the flow of commercial goods and commodities. Violating these restrictions can prove dangerous. People get shot at border crossings. Opportunities for of students and educators get destroyed by gatekeepers.

*Now think of a time when you were told you couldn't have or do something. Couldn't cross the street, couldn't speak a language you loved, couldn't read a poem you had written to your class. Not because you weren't capable of such an act, but because someone told you it was inappropriate, unsafe, not allowed. Could we call this your first experience of coming up against a border? What did you do? How did you feel?*

But it is not so much the official reasons for the development and existence of geopolitical and educational borders that I want to explore; it is more our lived experiences of *being bordered* within these discourses and realities that interest me. How is it to know oneself as privileged or subalterned by history and its imposed borders? What happens to those falsely segregated or united by a nation and its imagined borders? When we look across a border, what do we really see – of the other and of ourselves? How many of us ever actually cross - I mean really transgress, in mind and body and soul – a border? What is the difference between a traveler voluntarily crossing a border, safe in the knowledge that this is a trip of exploration that one can leave at anytime, and an economic or political refugee fleeing one set of borders for another, knowing that choice is a luxury long ago abandoned in favour of survival? How can an awareness of these border struggles and privileges, and those murky waters in between them, inform our practice as educators and researchers?

*I did not understand borders until I was eight years old and my father tried to take me to his home country. I was listed on his passport as a dependent, but security officers still chose to take me aside and question me, asking me why I was travelling, if this man was indeed my father, where I thought he was taking me. The officers kept me so long we missed our flight. This was how I learned that some borders cannot be challenged.*

This thesis uses the metaphors of borders, maps and travel to uncover some questions that have been hidden by the answers of official state and educational policies and discourses. Answers of statehood, citizenship, identity and belonging. Answers of displacement, dispossession, invasion and exclusion. Answers, yes, of geography and geopolitics. But answers too of other things, of disciplines and boundaries and definitions and pedagogies.

Answers that, when navigated mindfully, force us to ask questions of who we are and what we do. So let us begin. Here, with what we know.

To travel, we are often taught to use a map. The first maps human beings followed were the stars, or maybe detailed, precise etchings on sand or carvings on rock. These maps told stories, expressed rather than defined knowledges, allowed boundaries. Then came stronger lines, demarcations on pieces of parchment, rules and boundaries enforced by the victors. What we know of borders today comes from maps drawn in times of conquest, by artists and mapmakers under hire to those drunk on the desire to control pieces of land and the peoples they found there.

*Those* were the maps we studied at school. Today in education the word map means many things. “Map the story,” we tell students when they learn to read. “Map the literature,” we tell some of these same students when they reach university. “Map your argument”, we might tell ourselves as we prepare a paper or a presentation. The process of mapping concepts, ideas and experiences can thus become one of un-making as well as making. As we map what we want to say or teach, we uncover hidden geographies and landscapes, un-name territories and re-draw the borders of knowledge and language. We become geographers and cartographers so we can re-map the world and our relation to it.

This entire document is really just a process in un-mapping.

*When I was in elementary school, our teachers loved to give us maps to colour. Sometimes these maps made sense, as in a map of Canada and its 12 provinces and territories. Other times they were vague, confusing, like when we were given a blank world map and told to colour in the oriental empire. We were always told to pay close*

*attention to the borders, for anyone spilling over one of the lines would lose marks. I liked to see what happened when I mixed the colours. But then I failed the assignment.*

A key part of this project will be to re-contextualize the blurred, shifting outlines of Canada's national and social "imagined community" (Anderson, 1983). We will "decolonize" (hooks, 1994, p.34) these imaginaries until we find, or at least point ourselves in the direction of, what Bhaba (1990) calls the "third space" of critical exploration and dialogue, in which "it is legitimate to ask how things might be otherwise" (Rizvi, 1994, p.66). Only then will we be able to understand and implement "the possibilities for constructing a radically different Canada" (Bannerji, 2000) and truly say we are "teaching to transgress" (hooks, 1994).

But maps can only do so much. Sometimes we get lost. The compass malfunctions, the maps get torn in two, our visas expire and we are forced to turn inwards, to our intuition, our inner compass. My inner compass draws me to the arts, for they represent to me "a liberating space where one is moved to action, to voice, to affirm one's presence." (Fels, 1998, p.34). Here I will allow myself to be guided by Augusto Boal and his concept of the "spect/actor", and Maxine Greene and Kathleen Berry, who claim respectively that "art offers life; it offers hope; it offers the prospect of discovery" (1994, p.133) and that "any aspect of modern life is subject to interrogation or scrutiny through the dramatic arts, for they shape and re-shape the world" (2000, p.32).

I will write down - in narrative, in prose, in poetry and creative non-fiction, in styles yet to be invented or named - everything that happens along the way so that, unlike Hansel and

Gretel who got lost in the woods, we will always have a record, a documentation of our travels. We *will* find our way home.

*In grade eight Social Studies, we studied the formation of the United States as a nation. We learned the details of the land purchases in Louisiana, Alaska, New Mexico and could name all the players, the prices, the new borders this gave America. What we didn't learn, because no teacher or book ever mentioned it, was that citizenship can prove fickle. The residents of these territories were French, Russian or Mexican when they went to bed; the next day they woke up to find that their language, rights, jobs and land ownership held no further currency. The borders had simply been made to disappear. I did not learn until much later that this practice was not uncommon around the world.*

As educators, we live in nations, we work in school districts, we study in departments.

These borders - so neat and clear cut on paper – define us, name us, locate us. If there is a mutual agreement on the nature of the border's limits, that neatness can be maintained.

But when the borders have been drawn arbitrarily, by a group of powerbrokers in a boardroom, some bod(ies) will get hurt. Border crossings become guarded, indisputable territories, life threatening sites of contestation. If one is not careful, a border can become a war zone. But borders also must eventually meet, cross and intersect: it is inevitable that our pedagogical disciplines do the same. What happens then?

*“This is bullshit!” he shouts. “You are not teaching us anything, with all these theatre exercises. You should be standing up there, lecturing and giving notes.” He, is a medical doctor, an authority trained in the exactness of numbers and science, the proven rationality of the body. There, is an adult education class at a university in Vancouver. He is the only man in the class and I am the instructor. I wait, letting the silence fill the room. “Would anyone like to respond to this?” I ask. Twenty women – nurses, teachers, activists, **educators** all – eye each other cautiously. Then one, the youngest, looks directly at me and says “Um, you're doing the right thing with this work.” The others nod and someone else adds her voice. “I think this is interesting and want to try more. Please keep going.” So I do. But he refuses to participate for the rest of the class.*

With every border, with every demarcation in the sand and earth, there comes a migration of bodies that shift between and across lands, publicly or in secret, legally or illegally. These areas become known as the borderlands, places authorities say must be scrutinized and patrolled. Yet it is here that many people find a place to belong that is neither here nor there, that belongs to no one but themselves. They invent: stories, voices, languages, identities. They refuse to be silenced by the patrols. In graduate school I have walked carefully between my department of record and the campus borderlands in which I and my work feel more at home. This tension is one of the necessary dynamics of this paper, as it seeks both to rupture and merge traditional boundaries – and to create new borderlands – between the arts and critical thinking, between research and inquiry, between academic and creative writing, between theory and practice.

*Where have you stood, my friends?  
Across a river, a trickle of water in a parched desert,  
watching me, watching us . . . doing, what?  
I have stood at borders that are mere ditches or gullies  
that one could cross in a single step –  
I have never counted a soldier at one of these.  
But now I watch as you or someone you love,  
your sister, your father, your child,  
runs into no man's land;  
and are shot, or raped, or handcuffed . . . or simply sent back,  
while somehow I, with my new passport and neat skin,  
am allowed to cross without harm.*

*But here, if you take my hand, and I take yours,  
the crossing might be easier – and look, my friends,  
they have not seen us yet, will not catch us, not today.  
If only for tonight, amigas, we are safe.  
And tomorrow we will walk together,  
past the soldiers and through the barbed wire.*

*Tomorrow, my friends, is coming now.*

The borders I want you to imagine are both those of ancient cartographers and contemporary imperialists, and those that exist in our minds: mine, yours, theirs, ours . . . for at some stage in our lives we have all inherited the mappings of external teachings. What we know of ourselves, our stories, our disciplines and pedagogies we have learned, at least to begin with, through the eyes of somebody else, someone who believed they were doing the right thing by telling us what we should know – and what we should not. We must now continually work to un-make those teachings and mappings.

I ask only that you allow the spaces to be empty when necessary and filled when you are ready, that you give yourselves permission to walk down roads you do not know. To lead us out then, I call on Maxine Greene (1995, p.104):

There have to be disciplines, yes, and a growing acquaintance with the structures of knowledge, but at the same time, there have to be the kinds of grounded interpretations possible only to those willing to abandon already constituted reason, willing to feel and to imagine, to open the windows and go in search. The search – sometimes rigorous, sometimes gay – ought to be accompanied by the sound of a blue guitar.

Yes, this project may seem at first to be all over the map, to straddle too many borders, to stretch across too many disciplines. Yes, the journey will at times be messy, hot, and uncomfortable. You will *all*, at some point, feel dirty and wish you could go home. But trust me, when we get there (wherever *there* is) you will be glad you stuck it out.

*Come with me now into the borderlands.*

*There, you will find guitars of whatever colours you need.*

*They are ready to be played, and are just waiting for you to find them.*



Part I:

Witnessing(s)

Chapter I  
Witnessing Historical and Pedagogical Space:  
A personal and conceptual journey

*Mapping a moment of witnessing(s)*

*The teachers called us savages. I remember that, called us "Dirty savage, you'll learn," stuff like that. I felt bad, I felt real dirty. I thought the nuns were so pure and clean.*

*Dorothy Joseph*

To question "how spaces come to be, and to trace what they produce as well as what produces them, is to unsettle familiar everyday notions" (Razack, 2002, p.7). It requires risk, and time. So I ask: how do we find the space in our practice to build an educational culture of witnessing the spaces that have been constructed around and within us?

*In the summer of 2001, I am driving across Canada with four English friends. We're tired of packing and un-packing our camping equipment every second day, tired of squeezing our bodies into a cramped car and driving for hours at a time, tired too, I think, of each other's company. My friends are sick of the rugged landscapes and pioneer museums and no longer bring out their cameras for viewpoints and historical sites. I am beginning to wonder why I even came back to Canada, a place that holds so many conflicting memories and emotions for me, when I was so happy overseas.*

*We arrive in Kamloops and check into a roadside motel. The clerk behind the desk tells us a new museum has just opened on the other side of town. "Supposed to be pretty interesting, all about the school they used to run there, for the Indians, you know." He gives us a free map of the city and draws the directions on it with a red felt pen. We get back in the car and drive over the Thompson River, winding around a series of industrial parks and retail outlets until we get to an enormous red brick building. "Welcome to the Secwepemc Cultural Education Society", a sign at the front gate reads. "All visitors please check in at the museum entrance." And so the witnessing begins.*

*It was bad, I remember I couldn't keep anything down. The butter was rancid, everything was horrible. We got this white fish soup, and to this day I cannot eat fish. I remember corn flakes for Easter and I think there was an egg or two or a jellybean for a treat. I don't remember any Christmas Dinner.*

*Mary Anderson*

If “an examination of spatial arrangements is critical to an interrogation of the making of Canada as a white nation” (Oikawa, 2002, p.77), how should we witness the teachings behind the nation’s public spaces, and the buildings, monuments or cities that develop on them? Do we witness ourselves as resisting or perpetuating these teachings?

*We spend hours in the museum, poring over photographs, objects and documents. We read letters from missionary and government organizations that declare the need to civilize and assimilate native children. I touch pieces of a student's uniform, run my fingers along its scratchy woollen surface; this must have hurt to wear against bare skin. My friends watch a video interview with an adult survivor who describes his childhood in the school as one of abuse, fear, hunger and neglect, and speaks of an adult life full of anger and violence. We move through the museum in absolute silence, barely aware that we are its only visitors.*

The Kamloops Indian Residential School – now home to a band-run museum and education center – is not an innocent arrangement of bricks on land, but a deliberate construction with both material and symbolic meaning. It is what Goldberg (1993, p.188) calls a “periphractic space, the primary mode by which the space of racial marginality has been articulated and reproduced.” Constructed to both remove First Nations children from their homes, families and languages and to contain them at a safe distance from the clean streets and well-kept homes of the predominantly white settler community across the river, this building embodies both the experiences and legacies of colonialism. It becomes

a site of what Felman (1992) calls “trauma and testimony”, to which the public must “bear witness.”

*The photograph takes up an entire wall of the museum. Four children, none of whom can be older than seven or eight, stand in the back of an open cattle cart. The cart seems to be pulling away; the children stare at the lens with confused, frightened expressions. The caption under the photo reads “children being collected for the first day of school, circa 1930.” Who took that photograph, and why? How much did the children know about what was happening to them? I find no other written information - no names for these children, their families or communities - just four terrified faces slipping into the past.*

This photo, and its overwhelming size in relation to me and the rest of this site of colonial legacy, holds me for several minutes. Through this photo, and my very act of responding to its presence, I begin to understand something transformative for my teaching. In that moment, the photo becomes a metaphor for how we are often required to teach Canadian history in our public schools. “Narratives of struggle” (hooks, 1998, p. 53) too often become, like the children in the photo, faded historic snapshots fixed against an ongoing backdrop of dominant “white settler mythologies” that promote the “disavowal of conquest, genocide, slavery and the exploitation of the labour of peoples of colour” (Razack, 2002, p.2).

*I remember a truck came to pick us up. It wasn't just us, there were other children from the Reserve. It was a flatbed truck with rails around it, like the kind you carry cattle in. I was six years old. We rode all bunched up on wooden benches. I remember it rained and we got wet. There were no rest stops. I recall whispering “that's my brother over there.” It was strange not being able to talk to him. I had my hair cut off the first day of school, and my sister and I were separated and assigned different rooms. Naturally, they started us going to church right away.*

*Mary Anderson*

I touch the sepia-toned face of one of the children, lay my hand against her cheek as if checking my own child for signs of fever. And then so many questions: How do we stop the children on the cart from disappearing into a misremembered past? How can our practice bear witness to their experiences in a meaningful way? And how should we witness *space* as a social construct – both historical and contemporary - within the highly contested physical, epistemological and pedagogical space that is Canadian education?

*The painful part was when my grandmother came to see me. She must have hitchhiked or caught the bus or something. I looked out the window and I saw her, I didn't see her coming in, but I saw her going away and I ran out the door and I managed to get as far as the outside door and then I saw her walking down the road. Two nuns grabbed me and told me not to do that, I must have been punished again.*

*Anonymous*

*My friends are waiting for me on a bench outside the museum. I join them, and we sit looking out at the city and the hills behind it. Our white bodies and European accents implicate us in the evil of this place, yet we can find no vocabulary with which to speak of our selves in this space. "It's kind of like Auschwitz," one of us says. "You know, a place where something horrible happened and you go there because you feel an obligation to try to get a sense of what happened, but you never really do in the end. "Yeah," I say, "except this isn't some distant thing we can explain away to make us feel better. This is us, our ancestors who did this. And this is the country I grew up in." I want to ask them more questions - Are we just tourists here, taking this visit in like any other stop? What will we tell others about this place when we get home, and what even gives us the right to speak of what we saw if we will not also speak of what we felt, or what we are going to do with those feelings? – but their shocked, uncomfortable faces keep me quiet.*

Mapping the spaces we move through: schools and curricula

*It was an area where immigrants resided because of the direction that somebody placed on them – you didn't want all these people in the West End, right? . . . We never did get away from the East End – we didn't have cars, so we didn't have access to other areas of the city. You just bounced off walls down in the East End.*

*Ray Culos*

I wish to map the pedagogical spaces of this re/research study by interrogating the physical and official discursive spaces within which it is structurally located. In doing this, I echo Berry's assertion that "educators and curriculum, as potential agents of change, through interrogations and disruption of unchallenged cultural constructions, can begin the process of dismantling curricula and themselves." (2000, p.33) Let's begin by imagining the key elements of secondary education culture – the physical sites of schools and classrooms, the curricula, students and teachers - in terms of what Henri Lefebvre (1991, p.7) calls "perceived space, conceived space and lived space." Education has first a perceived social role brought into the public imagination through repeated traditions.

The physical plant of a school and the textual materials of its curricula direct the activities of the bodies moving through the building. Students and teachers sit at desks, walk through hallways, enter and exit through proscribed points. They teach and work from similarly confined structures of books, papers or computers. In this structured machine, the teachers transmit curricula while the students receive it. This could, in a nutshell, be how secondary education is *perceived* by the general public.

*The West End didn't like the East End. They didn't like us. But when they wanted to eat and drink, they always came to the East End. We'd give them everything we had. But you never go asked back to their house. Never.*

*Violet Teti Benedetti*

Lefebvre argues that spaces become publicly perceived due to their planned (conceived) representation, or how the physical space is designed and executed. Do you ever pass a school, particularly those brick boxes from the middle of the last century, and think how

closely they resemble prisons? I do. I mean, what else can the huge, insurmountable walls and the narrow slit-like windows, the long corridors and square classrooms possibly be intended to represent? Many school buildings seem less designed as spaces for living than for containment, conveying a message that the bodies of education (teachers, curricula and students) are to be controlled and monitored.

This brings me to Lefebvre's final concept, that of space as "directly lived through its associated images and symbols" (1991, p. 39). Educational space, through its perceptions and conceptions, then becomes a lived process of containment and control, something the public takes for granted but has little real connection to because most sites and spaces of teaching and learning are boxed and hidden away behind brick walls and closed doors.

*I was friendly with the boy who was shot, Yosh Uno . . . his mother was in the store one day, they lived in the back, and four young white kids came in with a gun and they held her up. Yosh ran out from the back to protect his mother and they shot him dead. So, then these kids were charged with murder. Then the headlines, "four white kids for one Jap – is it fair?" and people saying, "Japs are killing Americans, so what difference does it make if 4 Canadian boys shoot 1 Jap?"*  
*(Ivy Kaji McAdams)*

Like the physical space of a school, a curriculum is also a perceived, conceived and lived space. It is perceived as intended to teach something. It is conceived by various players, from Ministry of Education officials to community members to contracted educators.

Finally, it becomes lived by the teachers and students who must follow its guidelines. The official curricula for Social Studies 11 and First Nations Studies 12 present an enticing metaphor within which to explore how experiences of space play out in an educational

reality. These two subject areas form the focal points for this study because they represent some of the key perceived, conceived and lived spaces that have dominated much of my development as a secondary school teacher.

As a rookie Social Studies teacher in the primarily aboriginal community of Lytton, I worked and lived in constant tension between the proscribed provincial humanities curricula and the lived experiences of my students and their parents, many of whom had been forced to attend the area's notorious St. George's residential school. In an effort to move beyond the "textbook Indian" (Francis, 1997, p. 108) narratives of the standard Social Studies curricula and resources, I struggled to find ways of making learning meaningful and empowering for my students and still meet the school district's expectations. Some of my efforts paid off while others failed miserably, and in the throes of my working days I never fully had the time nor the energy to grapple with the inherent privilege and power of my position as a white, middle class teacher coming into an impoverished community haunted by the ghosts of other white, middle class "do-gooders" intent on "saving" souls and minds through western education.

While I may have thought I was disrupting this flood by shifting how I moved within the community's curricular spaces, by collaborating with community leaders, using local resources and alternative teaching methodologies, I did not realize until years later that my sheer presence in the town and school *reproduced* rather than challenged hegemonic assumptions of whose knowledge held the most validity, at least in national economic and social capital terms. My white body as the consistent authority in the front of the



classroom, rather than that of an elder or healer, told the same story as the white bodies in the front of the classrooms of St. George's: my urban, university-trained "knowledge", the one that got me a teaching certificate and thus the job in their town, counted more than anything they had to offer. It was my desire to grapple with these issues of knowledge, invisibility and silencing, and the relationship of teachers to the power structures inherent in both continuing and disentangling the process, that fuelled in large part my interest in pursuing graduate studies. What questions would I be able to ask of myself and my work within the reflective spaces of academia? And, after navigating the twisting halls of theory and inquiry, what answers would I find?

*Before the Second World War we could not practice as lawyers, and many other professions we could not get into. Many department stores would not hire Chinese. Government agencies would not hire Chinese. Because after all, even though we were born here, we didn't have full rights as Canadian citizens.*

*Harry Con*

The preceding narrative of my naïve wanderings through one problematic educational space illustrates the kinds of tensions behind the negotiating and claiming of *space* – historical, pedagogical and personal – that I want to explore in this thesis. I want this thesis to read as a journey through the many spaces that serve to educate us, so I feel I should begin with a brief interrogation of what is often used to claim space in our practice: the syllabus, or curriculum, or learning outcome so often conceived and transmitted by "experts". I want first to focus my inquiry on how two specific curricular documents, conceived by such experts as the best way to educate students on the cusp of graduating

and entering the larger society, create a learning space full of claims and exclusions for those who must live inside or outside of it.

The Social Studies 11 Integrated Resource Package (B.C. Ministry of Education, 1996)

opens with the following claim:

**SOCIAL STUDIES 11 CONTRIBUTES TO THE IMPORTANT GOAL OF PREPARING STUDENTS FOR THEIR FUTURE LIVES AS CANADIAN CITIZENS AND MEMBERS OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY. THE CURRICULUM IS DESIGNED TO ENGAGE STUDENTS IN CRITICAL, REFLECTIVE INQUIRY INTO THE CHALLENGES FACING CANADIANS AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY.**

These are certainly worthy *perceived* ideals, but the manner in which those goals have been *conceived* quickly becomes suspect. In the first section, titled *Skills and Processes*, the teacher is told to do the following: "HAVE STUDENTS WORK IN GROUPS TO BRAINSTORM A LIST OF THE EFFECTS OF IMMIGRATION ON SOCIETY" and then to "HAVE SMALL GROUPS OF STUDENTS CREATE CHARTS ILLUSTRATING THE POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF EUROPEAN CONTACT AND INTERACTION WITH ABORIGINAL PEOPLES", and to assess both projects on criteria that includes whether or not students "PRESENT ACCURATE INFORMATION" (pp. 14-15). In the curriculum's lived space then, I wonder what these directives might feel like to immigrant student forced to see his or her coming to Canada as an "EFFECT" on an otherwise happy landscape, or to an Aboriginal student forced to construct "POSITIVE" interpretations of colonialism. How are they going to want to contribute to the exercise that follows these assignments, in which the class is expected to discuss "WHAT IT MEANS TO BE CANADIAN" and each student must "COMPLETE THE SENTENCE, A CANADIAN IS \_\_\_\_"? And whose answers should the teacher decide are "ACCURATE"?

*I remember some food place where I went in and applied, and the form asked for nationality, so I put down "Canadian". He says, "That isn't enough." I says, "Well, I'm born here." And I could see what he was getting at, he could see I was Jewish, I had a Jewish name.*

*Gloria Steinberg Harris*

The First Nations Studies 12 Integrated Resource Package (1995) does offer a more critical approach (at least it asks students to **"ASSESS THE IMPACT OF EUROPEAN CONTACT"** rather than its positive effects, and the document actually uses the term colonialism, a word conspicuously absent from the Social Studies 11 text), but the program still seems to position aboriginal culture and experience as an exotic Other, one to be viewed from the confines of an anthropological gaze. Teachers are told, for example, to focus on the **"RICHNESS AND DIVERSITY OF FIRST NATIONS' LANGUAGES AND CULTURES"** in order to **"DEVELOP AN APPRECIATION AND RESPECT FOR THE SIMILARITIES AMONG AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE DIVERSE CULTURES OF THE WORLD"** (p. 3). In the lived space of the curriculum defined classroom, I can't help but ask if to teach the course in this way actually perpetuates what Lawrence (2002, p. 26) describes as "history . . . written from outside Indigenous perspectives" that means Indigenous peoples are not permitted to see "colonization as colonization."

Becoming Accountable:  
Mapping the context for this project

*Just before leaving the Secwepemc Museum, I find a book for sale: Behind Closed Doors: Stories from the Kamloops Indian Residential School, \$18.95. I buy it, planning only to read it for personal interest. Later in the summer I take a course on Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed methodology that starts me thinking about possibilities for embodied learning in classrooms. That same fall, I take a graduate course with Jean Barman on the history of education. . . and BOOM! . . . I am on a curve of learning and exploration that grows into a thesis research project. Funny how things come in threes.*

Both the Social Studies 11 and First Nations Studies 12 curricular spaces create an educational and discursive space dominated by “historical narratives” (Stanley, 1998, p. 42) that create what Willinsky (1998, p. 16) calls a “global backdrop of a world imagined as empire and race”. In his exploration of what he terms “the ethics of accountability”, Willinsky states that the “need to examine education’s continuing contributions to what were and continue to be colonizing divisions of the world” can only begin to be met when educators understand that they “owe those they teach some *account* - if always partial – of what we have taught them about the world” by “examining what this form of schooling has underwritten and who it has denied” (1998, p. 16).

*We put nametags on all the children, in case we got separated, on cloth we wrote it down, and we put a little sum of money on the bigger ones, and the baby I knew I would carry wherever I went. And we all had name tags, in case we got separated, you know, died or something, well then they'd know who we were.*

*Nobue Minato*

It was this project’s intention to become accountable in this way and “critically engage” (Stanley, 1998, p. 43) with the perceived, conceived and lived spaces forged by Canada’s dominant white settler educational discourse. I chose to do this by introducing specific texts of storytelling from two historically silenced and marginalized communities – East Vancouver and Kamloops’s aboriginal population - into a Social Studies 11 and First Nations 12 classroom. Further, this project used Drama as the mode of response to these texts in an attempt to transform one small piece of classroom and curricular space into “lived space, shared space and public space” in which new pedagogies and ways of knowing come into being and begin “reaching toward each other in safe and unsafe

spaces, seeking equity, seeking decency, seeking for a common world” (Greene, 2000, p. 294, p. 303).

Questions of Language:  
Mapping the spaces between telling and responding

Just what exactly is storytelling, anyway? The Oxford English Dictionary defines a *story* as "AN ACCOUNT OF IMAGINARY OR REAL PEOPLE AND EVENTS TOLD FOR ENTERTAINMENT" and *telling* as "HAVING AN IMPORTANT OR REVEALING EFFECT." Interestingly, the word telling is listed in this dictionary only as an adjective and not as a verb or noun. Is *telling*, then, not an action, not an experience in itself? Something about the very word story feels wrong to me in this context, like a story has a neat, clear beginning, middle and end, when true telling and responding is messy, unfinished and seldom resolved. Why should a story only be told for entertainment, and not to provoke or empower? Who decides when the story is over . . . and should we even wish such a thing?

If we reclaim the active agency involved in the act of sharing stories and call it “truth telling” (Ward, 2000, p. 64), does the process then facilitate an experience that “addresses the question of how we understand what has happened from the point of view of the present” and open up “a moment between past and future when we can think what we are doing” (Hill, 1979, p. 290)? How do we learn – and teach – *listening* in such a way that would get us to that place?

*My brother was the only Oriental in the class and he was competing and he was a good swimmer. He came back from the swim meet and my mother asked him how the class made out and he said, "We didn't swim." She said, "Why not?" He said, "Because in Crystal Pool they've got a rule, 'No Orientals allowed in here.'" They had singled out my brother and said, "He can't swim because we don't have Orientals in here." So the rest of the boys said "Well, if he's not swimming, neither are we," and the class all stepped back.*

*Ivy Kaji McAdams*

Felman & Laub (1992) answer this question with their writings on "testimony and witnessing". A testimony, in their terms, is a narrative of trauma told by one person to another, but a narrative that does not "come into existence, in spite of the overwhelming and compelling nature of the reality of its occurrence" until it "is listened to and heard" (p. 57). In this sense, the telling of and listening to an event become a mutually dependent process or contract in which "the knowing of the event is given birth to" and by extension "the listener is a party to the creation of knowledge *de novo*" (p. 57):

Bearing witness to a trauma is, in fact, a process that includes the listener. Testimonies are not monologues; they cannot take place in solitude. The witnesses are talking to somebody: to somebody they have been waiting for for a long time. (p. 70)

From Behind Closed Doors to Opening Doors:  
Mapping spaces for textual tellings

*I lost my talk,  
The talk you took away,  
When I was a little girl  
At Shubenacadie school.*

*You snatched it away:  
I speak like you  
I think like you  
I create like you  
The scrambled ballad, about my word.*

*Two ways I talk*

*Both ways I say  
Your way is more powerful  
So gently I offer my hand and ask,  
Let me find my talk  
So I can teach you about me*

*- Rita Joe, I Lost My Talk, 1994*

You have been reading their testimonies throughout this chapter –  
but have you been *listening*?

The testimonies offered in *Behind Closed Doors: Stories from the Kamloops Indian Residential School* and in *Opening Doors: Vancouver's East End* come from “degenerate spaces, established in relation to white bourgeois spaces to produce differing entitlements to power” (Oikawa, 2002, p. 77). *Behind Closed Doors*, like Haig-Brown's *Resistance and Renewal* (1999), witnesses the lived colonial experience of the Kamloops Indian Residential School, a holding pen for children dispossessed of their white-appropriated rural territories, while *Opening Doors* witnesses the classed and racialized lived experiences behind the social construction of East Vancouver as an/Other urban space well removed from Vancouver's white middle class West Side. These texts, then, offer an opportunity to witness how and why certain communities have been “re-cast outside the imagined white collective space of the Canadian nation” (Oikawa, p. 77). The voices in these texts uncover the realities of “the dark side of the nation” (Bannerji 2000): it is essential that we and our students witness their testimonies if we truly wish to teach and learn in the lived and shared spaces of a "CURRICULUM DESIGNED TO ENGAGE STUDENTS IN CRITICAL, REFLECTIVE INQUIRY INTO THE CHALLENGES FACING CANADIANS AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY" (Social Studies 11 IRP, 1996, p.2).

Both texts fit into other conceived curricular spaces of First Nations Studies 12 and Social Studies 11. First Nations Studies 12 contains a specific unit titled *Tradition and Challenge in Education* that begins with the statement "FIRST NATIONS SOCIETIES WERE DRAMATICALLY ALTERED BY ASSIMILATIONIST EDUCATIONAL POLICIES" (p. 36) and encourages students and teachers to both "ASSESS THE IMPACT OF RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS ON FIRST NATIONS FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES" and to "EXPLAIN THE RESISTANCE OF FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE TO ASSIMILATIONIST EDUCATIONAL POLICIES AND PRACTICE" (p. 36) through such strategies as reading Haig-Brown's book or inviting a guest speaker to the class. Likewise, the Social Studies 11 curriculum's *Social Issues* unit encourages students and teachers to "LIST REASONS PEOPLE IMMIGRATE TO CANADA" and "IDENTIFY MAJOR CANADIAN SOCIAL POLICIES AND PROGRAMS AND THEIR IMPACT ON CANADIAN SOCIETY" by developing "TIMELINES SHOWING THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY EVENTS THAT HAVE BEEN MOST SIGNIFICANT IN SHAPING CANADIAN SOCIETY" (p. 14). What is to stop the testimonies of *Behind Closed Doors* from "guest speaking" to a First Nations Studies class? Why can't Social Studies 11 students use the testimonies from *Opening Doors* to develop a "spatialized timeline" of provincial and municipal discriminatory housing and employment policies that "makes visible how social relations have been produced through geographic constructions" (Oikawa, 2002, p. 76) and policy?

Despite the richness of their tellings, these texts remain in the margins, both physically and pedagogically, and are at risk of becoming testimonies to "events without a witness" (Laub, 1992, p. 80). *Opening Doors* was published by the British Columbia archives in 1979, but is now out of print and available only in libraries or the odd used bookstore. In a similar marginalization, *Behind Closed Doors* is a publication of Theytus Books, a small



independent printing press, and is not sold in any major Canadian bookstore. Nor does either text appear on any Ministry of Education list of approved resources. On the surface, the public's access to these tellings remains limited; consequently, our ability to witness and act on what we hear from these testimonies may also be compromised.

Yet when we de-center the space of communication and pedagogy from the domain of one dominant mainstream, these texts become, through their sheer existence, sites of active resistance. Theytus Books is the only publishing house in the province both operated by people of First Nations background and dedicated to publishing only works by and for First Nations communities; it sets an award-winning example of how publishing can be used for social and cultural empowerment. In a similar vein, the *Opening Doors* project was financed in the 1970's by Dave Barrett's social activist NDP government, and provides an excellent juxtaposition to the current Liberal government's ongoing cuts to public education. If we and our students analyze not only the testimonial *content* of these texts but their material *production* and location against a larger backdrop of systemic and cultural hegemony, we perform our own act of pedagogical resistance.

These texts break through decades of educators and researchers "speaking for others" (Alcoff, 1993) and begin to "translate the sensory" (Kristeva, 1994, p. 250) lived experiences of being both placed in and resisting marginalized spaces. Bringing them into our classrooms and allowing ourselves and our students to listen to them, to *witness* them, can help begin a dialogue of educational accountability within our learning communities.

Spect-Acting and Response-ability:  
Mapping the concepts and the literature

According to Felman & Laub the process of witnessing testimony is a contract between the teller and the listener, one in which the “listener is to be *unobtrusively*” – physically and mentally, to oneself, the teller and the testimony – “present throughout” (p. 71). This kind of presence they call “response – ability”, a state that “leaves no hiding place intact” for “as one comes to know the survivor, one really comes to know oneself, and that is no simple task” (p. 72).

Witnessing begins with a traumatic event allowed to happen through unequal and oppressive power relations. We either see this event unfold, or are told about it later. What makes the witnessing process different from mere listening or bystanding is how we respond to the trauma. A witness practicing response - ability is neither bystander nor tourist: they do not slow down as they drive past a traffic accident, they do not visit a famous site only to snap a photo and leave. A witness will stop at the accident, enter the site, do whatever is needed to somehow document the event beyond the eyewitness facts and figures. A witness will speak to others not only about the trauma, but about how they are experiencing it. A witness touches, tastes and smells the its insides, and finds ways to remember those embodied sensations. A witness will admit defeat: he or she will not be afraid to show fatigue, exhaustion or incomprehension. A witness, then, responds to the trauma on multiple levels so they will forever be *part of* it, not just *at* its telling.

Another key goal embedded within the process of bearing witness, and the impetus for so much of the autobiographical nature of research on testimony and witnessing, is that

bearing witness somehow brings about a fundamental personal transformation. If the witness has made him or herself part of the trauma, they have engaged with the issues and experiences of injustice behind it. The hope is that this engagement leads in turn to a renewed consciousness or awareness of the workings of injustice, and a commitment to act for social justice. We and our students witness testimonies of the Japanese internment, for example, in the hopes that we as social actors will fight against such events ever being allowed to repeat themselves in our lifetimes.

This process of witnessing trauma, and witnessing oneself in relation to it, needs to be understood in our practice as an ongoing cycle. What we start in one classroom with students in grade ten may have an initial impact in the moment, but may not really take hold in some students' lives and actions until years later. Likewise, what we witness in ourselves – both as witnesses to the trauma *and* as facilitators of our students' witnessing processes – needs to be constantly reflected upon and interrogated.

This psychoanalytic approach has been taken up by several education scholars (Simon, Eppert, Britzman, et.al.) who study the role witnessing plays in educational cultures. Britzman (1998, p. 68) for example, argues that witnessing allows educators insights into “what is not learned”, and that witnessing is “not about a student’s development or identity but about historicity and its relation to the student” (p. 72). I agree with this use of witnessing in education, but wonder why research has so far limited itself to discussions of higher education pedagogy. I also agree with the highly autobiographical nature of much research on witnessing, as it is impossible to separate oneself from the

process (as Roger I. Simon so often mentions in his work on the Holocaust, in which he witnesses himself as a Jewish man witnessing the testimony of survivors), but wonder why little work has been done on asking ourselves to witness the testimonies of survivors of domestic Canadian traumas such as residential schooling or the internment. Finally, I ask these scholars how we can move from witnessing through the mind, as most academic research does by the very nature of its reliance on written texts, to documenting our witnessing through the body.

#### Mapping performance as the site of witnessing

In a social justice approach to senior secondary Humanities/Social Studies education, a subject area whose emphasis on historical data lends itself well to the witnessing process, we must ask ourselves two principal questions if we want to bring a culture of witnessing into our practice. How can we encourage our students to *safely* become the event, to enter into it as fully as they can? How can we encourage them to see themselves not only as lifelong learners, but as lifelong witnesses? I argue that the conceived spaces of any traditional sites and structures of learning – with their desks and books and unmoving bodies – do not support a pedagogy of response-ability. To develop an educational process of witnessing we must welcome it as one of embodiment; the listener and teller must be able to interact, even if the “teller” is a literary text. I believe that response-ability comes when the listener is able to perform their embodied responses to any telling.

Performance is of course a form of art, and encouraging performance means taking students into the arts education arena. I am of the view that the arts, and Drama

particularly as my specialty, do not need to remain separate from other curricula, but can be infused into any subject, any space, by any teacher and with any group of students. I also believe that, when one is seeking to engage students in critical thought and reflection, the arts offer the unique opportunity to develop a student's "critical imagination" (Rizvi, 1994, p. 66). Rizvi goes on to suggest that:

we need to teach for those forms of artistic imagination that problematise cultural formation and acknowledge that a politics of difference involves a dialogue with others who speak from different traditions, locations and experiences. (Rizvi, 1994, p. 66)

How do we get where we want this to take us? Perhaps:

we can confront our inconsistent Canadian history of tolerance, and meet the challenges of our Canadian diversity, by teaching Drama with an acute awareness of how theatrical techniques in the theatre and in the classroom conspire with the social and cultural backgrounds, education, and expectations of audience and students to produce meaning. (Zatzman, 2003, p. 40),

by working with and within

a form that invites improvisation, ongoing dialogue and critical and creative response . . . the concept of "letting go" is frightening, but necessary, if we are to invite students to imagine anew a curriculum that realizes their own presence (Fels, 2001, p. 6).

Into this textual and pedagogical landscape of arts as witnessing I bring the theatre methods of Augusto Boal, who claims not only that "artists are witnesses of their times" but that this witnessing should be explored through the body, "the most important element of theatre" (2002, pp. 16-17). His methods of image theatre, in which participants respond to issues or experiences by making shapes with their bodies, and interior monologues, in which participants speak as the character or emotion created by the images they make, form the backbone to this project. Boal's theory of the "spect-actor", that "all human beings are actors (they act) and spectators (they observe)" (Boal, 2002, p.

15) and are constantly shifting between the two positions or subjectivities in real life so they should do the same in the theatre, links directly to the concepts of both accountability and response – ability.

In spect-acting “whatever is not expressly forbidden is allowed” (Boal, 2002, p. 40): we may respond physically, spiritually, or emotionally to what we hear and see. We respond to those speaking to us as well as the voices we discover inside us, becoming fully present in ways that sitting at a desk and thinking only through our heads does not permit. We become more fully able to commit to our responses, and in doing so we become accountable.

In becoming accountable, we transform - ourselves, our surroundings and our teachings.

## Chapter II

### Mapping the Project's Location and Methodology

*You pull out of your driveway in the West End and head down Georgia Street onto the viaduct, turning right when you see the sign for Main Street. You have to stop at the traffic light before you can get to 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue, which leads to the highway. It's raining, like it always is here; a lone squeegee kid jumps in front of you and begins wiping your car's windshield. She doesn't finish before the light changes, but has enough time to notice the loonie on your dashboard, the one you always keep handy for parking emergencies. She puts out her hand, expecting the coin, but you just stare straight ahead and keep driving. "Bitch," she yells after you, so you turn up the volume on your radio.*

*The traffic announcer tells you it's a good day to be heading east on highway number 1; the traffic is light and moving quickly. The road takes you through the suburbs of Burnaby and Coquitlam and over the Patullo Bridge. Pretty soon you start seeing the exit signs, first for Surrey and then the place you're looking for, Langley. Follow the exit to Walnut Grove and drive past the line of fast food franchises, motels and gas stations until you reach the first set of traffic lights. The houses look nice here, gated two-story townhouses with lush, expansive gardens. On the corner there is a church with a sign asking you to stay strong for your community. Turn left here and drive one block – there is the school. At just past 8:30 a.m., the school day has officially started.*

*You pass a quartet of senior girls hanging out in the parking lot, cigarettes and purses in their hands (you can tell they're seniors by the confident way they hold their shoulders back, how they refuse to rush even though they know they are late). They wait around outside the school entrance, finishing their smokes and laughing about homework assignments they haven't done, tests they forgot to study for. A boy walks out of the school, his blonde hair shaved almost to his skull, and swears as he passes the girls. "Fucking kicked out," he tells one of them, a tall girl with long dark hair who seems to know him. The boy walks across the parking lot and gets into a mud-splattered white truck, revs the engine for a minute then peels out across the tarmac and onto the street. Smoke spews from his screeching tires; the girls laugh and pump their fists in the air. "Way to go Dustin!" the tall girl with dark hair cries. She turns to enter the school, and notices you for the first time. She looks you over slowly, deciding whether or not to trust you. She tilts her head to one side, puts a hand on her hip, stubs out her cigarette and raises her icy blue eyes to meet yours.*

*"Welcome to hell," she mouths at you, and then disappears into the building.*

any map can show you the boundaries:

Surrey to the west,  
Abbotsford to the east,  
Fraser river to the north,  
and the world's longest "unguarded" border to the south:

a super sized belt of nature, bibles and foreigners  
wrapped tightly around its ever-growing waist

\*

*look at us*, the township's website says:

*a community of*

(settler)

*communities*

\*

Sto:lo means river, means 10,000 years:  
Hudson's Bay Company its *discovery*;

we learn this company town means *the birthplace of BC*

\*

Dates:

1858: the royal proclamation signed here,  
an (other) Empire territory  
(ten gentlemen ate that night from the manager's table);

1871: gold rush, border disputes, railway  
(dislocation, separation, dispossession);  
the territory joins the birthing nation

2003: capital fuels a bedroom community of  
88, (mainly white, mainly middle class) 000 global

(colonial)

citizens.



And their school, how should we map that?

almost 2, (mainly white, mainly middle class) 000 bodies  
with – *hey!* – a female principal, and a commitment to:

*express innate curiosity!*

*skillfully pursue knowledge!*

*value personal well being!*

So into this map I come!

\*

*Tell me where you're from*, I ask them, and  
with words on paper they draw the map of their town:

tell me it's a place "clean and good", so

"picture perfect";

but then the lines grow frayed, words become stronger,  
grounds shift beneath the surface,

and a new geography takes hold

until the map of their town becomes the map of their lives,  
dissecting an "underground world", a "suburban hell-hole"  
in which survival equals nothing less than "acceptance and approval"

\*

the words they write, to tell me *where they're from*:

*"explode*

*infect*

*escape"*

this is the map of *their* town, *their* school, *their* lives;

\*

*this* is the map of their space.

This project grew out of a telephone conversation I had with Anne Bourque, a Humanities teacher in the Langley school district. Anne has long been a mentor to me ever since she taught me during my Teacher Education program at Simon Fraser University, and as our careers have developed we have often shared conversations of both inspiration and frustration. This time she was frustrated, for she wanted to find new ways to challenge some of the assumptions and silences she felt were shutting down dialogues amongst her students, particularly in her senior humanities courses. She knew I had an interest in anti-oppression pedagogy and its intersections with theatre and mainstream teaching practice, so she offered up two of her classes – Social Studies 11 and First Nations Studies 12 – as laboratories for exploration. And explore we did!

Beginning with the assumption that “knowledge of history helps us trace the patterns that constitute oppression over time and enables us to see the long-standing grievances of different groups in our society” and that it “also offers hope as well as evidence that oppressive circumstances can change through the efforts of human actors” (Bell, 1997, p. 6), I designed and taught two eight-lesson units, one for Social Studies 11 and the other for First Nations Studies 12. The goal of each unit was to encourage students to begin to examine their own social identities as well as develop an understanding of oppression in British Columbia as a historical, genealogical and contemporary lived experience. The lessons used selected tellings from *Behind Closed Doors* and *Opening Doors* to provoke questions around spatialized British Columbian experiences of race, gender and class oppression, and incorporated the theatre response techniques of Augusto Boal to explore the following questions:

- How can the study of oral histories in secondary education become a pedagogical intervention to stimulate a new discourse on Canadian experiences of class, gender and race oppressions?
- How does Drama as a mode of educational inquiry facilitate this intervention and discourse?

Each unit was structured with the following “major elements of social justice education practice” (Bell, 1997, p. 42) in mind (cited below from Bell, 1997, p. 42):

- Balance the emotional and cognitive components of the learning process by paying attention to personal safety, classroom norms and guidelines for group behaviour.
- Acknowledge and support the personal (the individual student’s experience) while illuminating the systemic (the interactions among social groups) by calling attention to the here-and-now of the classroom setting and grounding the systemic or abstract in an accumulation of concrete, real-life examples.
- Attend to social relations within the classroom by helping students understand group process and improve interpersonal communications without blaming or judging each other.
- Utilize reflection and experience as tools for student-centered learning by using the student’s worldview and experience as the starting point for dialogue or problem-posing.
- Value awareness, personal growth, and change as outcomes of the learning process by balancing different learning styles with lessons organized around goals of social awareness, knowledge and social action.

In the hope that by the end of the unit students would share at least the beginnings of a language with which to contextualize their learning, I decided to frame each unit's tellings, drama exercises, discussions and feedback form questions within a larger conceptual umbrella of anti-oppression vocabulary, specifically the terms *power*, *oppression*, *lived experience* and *agency*. I chose to work with these terms not only because they appear the most frequently across the anti-oppression literature, but also because they represent a continuum or cycle of knowledge and experience. If the students could reach even a limited understanding of how power is produced and constructed in their society, then they could use that knowledge to develop an understanding, or "consciousness" (Freire, 1970) of how oppression affects members of that society. Digging deeper, students who could witness the realities of power and oppression could then go on to examine how these phenomena become a lived experience for themselves and others. They could then begin the process of finding and using their agency as social actors, to engage with what Tatum (1992, p. 107) calls "action – the natural antidote to both denial and despair".

Each term was explored, through discussion, tellings and drama exercises, for two 80-minute lessons. I began each lesson with a brief explanation of the concept to be explored, and a reading to help illustrate it. I then asked them to relate this concept to their own experience, by means of a free expression question. We then moved into warm-up activities from Boal's "arsenal of the theatre of the oppressed" (1992) that were structured to further examine the meanings behind the concept. The remainder of the lesson was spent hearing and responding to, or witnessing, testimonies that took us deeper

into the concept. Each lesson ended with time for debriefing and questions. A complete unit plan for each course can be found in the Appendices. It is also important to note here that Boal and practitioners of theatre of the oppressed methodologies follow a certain protocol to ensure the safety of participants within both the classroom and the larger school environment. A key element of this protocol, and one enacted throughout the Langley project, is to inform the school counselors of the unit and its sensitivity, and to remind them every day of the time and place in which the lessons are to take place. Through this protocol of informing, the counselors were aware of potential issues and ready to offer support to students in case aspects of the lesson became emotionally difficult or traumatic. For a full description of the safety protocols, see David Diamond's *A Joker's Guide to Theatre for Living* (2000, pp. 5 – 15).

After each lesson, and at the end of each unit, students were asked to complete written "feedback forms" or questionnaires in which they reflected open-endedly on both the content (the testimonies) and the process (the drama exercises) of the lesson and unit. The lessons were also videotaped. Further data was collected in two hour long semi-structured interviews with the co-operating teacher. Throughout the process, Anne and I maintained an ongoing dialogue by sharing reflective journal writings in person, over the phone and via email. Everything collected – the lessons, the feedback forms, the interviews, my notes and journals – became data worth investigating. The feedback forms for each unit, and the teacher interview questions, are included in the Appendices.

In analyzing the data, I wanted to first assess students' general experiences or understandings of race, class and gender oppression in Canada. Were they, for example, making assumptions based on such influences as mainstream media, family or community members, or did they have a first hand knowledge of the issues?

Secondly, I wanted to see if, after witnessing the oral histories from *Behind Closed Doors* and *Opening Doors*, any students went through a personal transformation in how they approached or spoke about experiences of oppression in Canada. Did their views or thinking on the issues - or how they are generally educated to see these issues - shift in any significant way, and how were they able to articulate that shift, either verbally or in writing? Did a critical engagement or commitment to social justice work take root amongst any of the students, and how much agency did the students feel they had as social actors in their own lives, compared from the unit's start to end?

Third, I wanted to analyze the unit's performative moments and the students' reflections on them to explore the role *drama* as the mode of learning and communication played in the students' political or critical consciousness raising. How did *embodying* their responses or questions surrounding these issues effect their ability to relate to and grapple with them? What new spaces and opportunities for learning and dialogue did the drama methodologies open up, and could these openings be sustained beyond the unit? What role could this approach play in future senior secondary humanities courses?

In my conversations with Anne, I wanted to get to the heart not only of her interpretations of how the unit went for her and her students, but also to try to articulate what must happen within secondary education structures and organizations to really foster this nature of pedagogical change. Was this unit a mere pipe dream or real possibility?

Finally, I also wanted to infuse this study with personal interrogations of my own colonial upbringing as a white child of economic privilege in that bastion of last gasp empire, Victoria, British Columbia, and the influence this background might have on my roles in the classroom. As the eldest child of a white settler, upper class Canadian mother who never quite lost her internalized racist and classist assumptions, and an English working class hero father who became an academic but never quite lost the angry young man chip on his shoulder, my early development as a thinker and citizen was riddled with contradictions and compromises that I am now continually deconstructing as an adult global citizen and educator. I wanted to contrast my own memories of family and school life with those of the Langley students to see if anything has changed or remained the same in a generation – and what needs to be done about this.

The writing up of all this varied personal, analytical, performative and reflective data proved quite a challenge. How could I bring you, the reader, into each experience as fully and engagingly as possible? As a writer who has published in both creative and academic forms or genres, I wanted to access and develop my skills in both areas. I chose to write certain sections of this thesis in different styles, ranging from narrative to critical analysis to poetry, memoir and travelogue. True to the creative process (see Goldberg, 1990), I

allowed each piece of the thesis puzzle to take on a voice and shape of its own and trusted the editing process to bring the text as close to the reader as possible. The key technique I use throughout the writing is that of the juxtaposed or intercutting narrative or snapshot, a technique widely used by such contemporary Canadian authors as Michael Ondaatje and Alice Munro. In the conclusion, I speak more on the tensions and contradictions I want these narratives to express, but do not want to spoil it for you now!

I am in no way saying that a unit of eight lessons and a 120 page Master's thesis can do justice to the depth and complexity of the historical and contemporary experiences of oppression in this country, or that every student or educator will share the same understandings of and responses to the study's findings. What I *am* saying is that within the packed spaces of a senior secondary curriculum and timetable, two units and a thesis created at least a space of exploration in which to tackle these ideas.

And isn't that better than not tackling them at all?

In this spirit of inquiry, response-ability and accountability, the Legacies – *finding ways to understand how the past influences the present* - and Literacies – *finding ways to communicate and express that understanding* - Drama Education Project was born.



Part Two:

Stop : Crisis

THERE IS A MOMENT IN WHICH PERSONAL OR CULTURAL HISTORY STANDS BEFORE TWO DIVERGING PATHWAYS. ONE LEADS TO THE REPETITION OF THE KNOWN, THE TRIED AND TRUE, THE OLD, THE ESTABLISHED. IT IS SAFE, SECURE, AND STALE. THE OTHER FINDS A RENEWED IMPORTANCE IN THE UNKNOWN, THE UNCHARTED, THE NEW, THE DARK AND DANGEROUS. THE MOMENT I SPEAK OF IS NOT CHOICE IN THE SENSE OF DELIBERATIVE REASON BUT AN ACTION THAT CHOICE ITSELF STANDS ON. THAT ACTION IS AWARENESS. AWARENESS CONFRONTS THE LINE BETWEEN ENGAGING IN OR BECOMING DISENGAGED BY WHAT FOLLOWS.

IT IS THE STOP.

THE STOP IS THE TIME OF AWARENESS.

APPLEBAUM, THE STOP

## *What do I remember of the evacuation?*

*By Joy Kogawa*

What do I remember of the evacuation?  
I remember my father telling Tim and me  
About the mountains and the trains  
And the excitement of going on a trip.  
What do I remember of the evacuation?  
I remember my mother wrapping  
A blanket around me and my  
Pretending to fall asleep so she would be happy  
Although I was so excited I couldn't sleep  
(I hear there were people herded  
into the Hastings Park like cattle.  
Families were made to move in two hours  
Abandoning everything, leaving pets  
And possessions at gun point.  
I hear families were broken up  
Men were forced to work. I heard  
It whispered late at night  
That there was suffering) and  
I missed my dolls.  
What do I remember of the evacuation?  
I remember Miss Foster and Miss Tucker  
Who still live in Vancouver  
And who did what they could  
And loved the children and who gave me  
A puzzle to play with on the train.  
And I remember the mountains and I was  
Six years old and I swear I saw a giant  
Gulliver of Gulliver's Travels scanning the horizon  
And when I told my mother she believed it too  
And I remember how careful my parents were  
Not to bruise us with bitterness  
And I remember the puzzle of Lorraine Life  
Who said "Don't insult me" when I  
Proudly wrote my name in Japanese  
And Tim flew the Union Jack  
When the war was over but Lorraine  
And her friends spat on us anyway  
And I prayed to the God who loves  
All the children in his sight  
That I might be white.

## Chapter III

### *“Too hard to bear”: A Crisis of Witnessing becomes The Stop*

*The Stop is ubiquitous . . . evident in each and every earthbound action we experience. . . there is a hinge around which events pivot.*

*(Applebaum, p. 17)*

Then all hell broke loose. Early on in both units, I started to sense resistance from the students, but not the defensive “this is not my problem” kind I had witnessed from fellow students in some of my graduate courses; this resistance was more an overwhelmed, disbelieving silence. When Anne and I tried to encourage discussion around issues raised from the tellings, the students remained completely silent. No questions, no comments, not even a shift in body language. They refused to raise their eyes from the floor, kept their arms folded across their chests, dug their heels into the linoleum floor and waited, simply waited until the bell would ring or I would hand out the feedback questionnaires. Anne and I knew there was something major going on for these students, but because no one would speak we could not quite put our fingers on it. I began to wonder if we had bitten off more than we could chew, if the sophisticated ideas of the academy were simply too much to put into the minds of secondary students, or if my approach to the unit design had been all wrong.

Had I lost my teaching touch, after two years in graduate school? Had we just unwittingly stumbled into the chasm between academic theory and classroom reality?

The answer was not so simple. The answer was all that, and more. The answer, when we found it, implicated the public spaces of our entire educational culture.

. . . *my response to Joy Kogawa* . . .

What do we remember of the evacuation? I do not know what happened, for I was never there, and it was years before someone told me the story.

Not your story, for no one in my town read your books,  
nor your mother's story, for my neighbourhood did not value the words of elders:  
they could not trust voices coming from the outside.

There was an old man who drove our streets, selling fish from the back of his truck.  
We used to follow him down the road, liked to hide in the bushes and watch him walk, his  
shoulders stooped as he carried small bundles to each door, bowing as housewives dressed  
in cocktail dresses told him to *keep the change* as they shut the door in his face.  
And we called him *Mr. Nip*, because my best friend Sammy's Dad had once said we  
shouldn't buy our food from a *nip like him*.

One day the fish truck stopped coming down our street and we moved on to other  
distractions; the swings at the park, the rocks on the beach at high tide.

And then ten years later, or thereabouts, my grandfather began to speak.  
He spoke of farmers on Saltspring Island who moved in for the kill during the winter of  
'41, or was it '42 . . . he can't remember anymore. . .  
but what he does remember is that his father brought home a brand new boat, and that his  
cousins moved onto the orchard that used to belong to . . . *them*.  
There were no tears in my grandfather's eyes when he spoke that morning;  
just a stutter and a drool from a man who once was young.

And that, my friend, is all I remember of the evacuation.

They, these students waiting for me to teach them something, what do they remember?  
I say the words *internment, evacuation, exile*  
and they look at me in confusion, bewildered by a language they cannot share,  
the silence breaking the room – and my heart - in two.

I have pushed them too far, exhausted them: defiance takes over.  
They fold their arms across their chests and stare at the floor, silent, waiting to escape  
until one voice in the back, half-choked in the frustrated sobs of adolescence,  
begs out in a furious whisper: *Why are you making us talk about this?*

And that, my friend, is when they began to remember the evacuation.

*An endless automatic movement of thought obscures the Stop . . . The Stop is acknowledgement of resistance. Made conscious, the Stop effortfully fills perception with body.*  
(Applebaum, p. 17)

Memory, or the lack of it, sent the Langley students into crisis. The third lesson for the Social Studies 11 class focused on understanding and coming to terms with oppression. I had chosen to illustrate this concept with a series of tellings from *Opening Doors* that testified to the experience of the Japanese internment or evacuation. I had assumed that the students would share at least a general knowledge of why and how the internment played out, but I had assumed incorrectly. As I began reading Nobue Minato's testimony of name tagging her children, several hands shot up. "What are you talking about?" one student asked. "I don't get it," another added. Pretty soon the entire room was a chorus, not of denial but of confusion. These students, sixteen year olds raised for the most part less than an hour from the Hastings Park detainment center of which Joy Kogawa writes, had never heard of the internment. It formed no part, *whatsoever*, of their conscious memory or language.

Something similar happened in the First Nations Studies 12 class at the same stage in the unit. I was reading from Dorothy Joseph's telling, in which she tells of being called a savage by the school nuns, when two male students walked out. They were both white and from strongly Christian families (indeed, their parents had almost refused to allow them to participate in the unit), and could not handle how the testimony was making them question their religion. "It's too hard to bear," one of them said, almost in tears. Other students in the class responded to the telling with a kind of dumfounded shock, for they

had grown up in the colonial shadows of the “birthplace of British Columbia”, where the depth of abuses and injustices attached to the residential school project had been erased.

My lessons had inadvertently become these students’ first exposure to the un-mapping of their country as a beacon of international and domestic goodwill. And Anne and I had walked straight into one of the biggest crises of our teaching careers.

*The stop hides in a most hidden place. This is a place that is both near and obvious . . . The Stop hides a secret dimension of experience. To stop is to uncover what is in hiding, which is to say, to experience ourselves in hiding. (Applebaum, p. 16, 24).*

Felman (1992, p. 47) writes of a “crisis of witnessing” in one of her university classes in which students watched videotaped testimonies from Holocaust survivors, as a moment when the “eloquence of life carried the class beyond a limit that I could foresee and had envisioned.” Her students, who had a general knowledge of the Holocaust, were so overwhelmed when put face to face with a personal telling that they:

broke out into crisis . . . they remained, after the screening, inarticulate and speechless. They looked subdued and kept their silence even as they left . . . what was unusual was that the experience did not *end* in silence, but instead, fermented into endless and relentless talking in the days and weeks to come; a talking which could not take place, however, within the confines of the classroom but which somehow had to *break the very framework of the class* (and thus emerge outside it) . . . I realized that something strange was going on when I started getting phone calls from the students at my home at all odd hours, in a manifest wish to talk about the session, although they did not quite know what to say. (p. 48)

In many ways, what happened in my classes amounted to precisely such a crisis of witnessing. The crisis began with testimonies that pushed the limits of the students’ understandings of themselves and their surroundings. Their lack of a language for debriefing their feelings then drove them into silence. Finally, the crisis became

something that had to be worked through outside the boundaries of the classroom, or even the school building. The students started going home and raising these questions with their families and friends – around the dinner table, in the car on the way to school, at the mall. Anne and I knew this was happening because we started getting phone calls from their parents – not complaining but seeking advice. “How should I talk to my daughter about this?” one parent asked me. I stayed quiet a while, thinking of a myriad of responses, none of which seemed right. “By telling her what you know, and admitting what you don’t,” I finally answered. She seemed surprised, as if admitting ignorance was a failing rather than an opening. “I’ll try,” she sighed, “but can’t promise she’ll get it.” Get *what*, exactly? I wanted to ask her. *Get* that she lives in a racist country founded on inequalities, *get* that it’s not her fault no one has taught her about this before, *get* that not knowing doesn’t make her stupid or bad. . .? But she had already hung up the phone.

A conversation was taking hold all around us, and we needed to find a way to have that conversation in the classroom. We did find a way to “break the framework”, but not through writing or speaking. We broke the framework by acting and responding through theatre – but more on that later.

*The Stop contains a specific that, acting on awareness and organism alike, opens one to the source of lighting.*  
(Applebaum, p. 126)

Of course, my units never got finished – at least not in the way I had so carefully theorized and planned and written down. The crisis led us beyond those eight simple lessons to a much deeper awareness. The crisis, in a sense, became the project.



**We Stopped. We Talked. We Re-Grouped. We Witnessed. And We Learned.**

When Anne, her students and I allowed ourselves to witness this initial moment of crisis as an invitation for dialogue, the class was able to “pass through its own answerlessness” (Felman, 1992, p. 50). The silences evaporated, and what these students wanted to talk about was not so much what had happened in the past, but *what was happening to them now as they tried to understand the past*. The rest of the project, then, became about working the students through deconstructions of three previously unchallenged epistemological spaces that had been constructed both around and within them. I call each of these a Stop, a moment that both disrupts and crystallizes knowledge and the possibilities for actions: they are The Stop of Memory, The Stop of Whiteness and The Stop of Imagined Canada. Over the next few chapters, I wish to address these Stops in detail – not just as research spaces but also as conceived, perceived, lived, public and shared spaces – in the hope that we can draw from them insights and ideas for our own pedagogies and practices.

## Chapter IV

### *Sites of Memory in culture(s) and education(s)*

Cultural memory represents the many shifting histories and shared memories that exist between a sanctioned narrative of history and personal memory (Sturken, 1991, p. 119)

#### *Memory as public space, education and commodity: Robben Island, South Africa, 2000*

*I am going to this former prison in search of the memory of Mandela and apartheid. We leave Capetown Harbour in a comfortable cruising boat with padded chairs, a bar and washrooms, a video room and sundeck, but the waves and wind pitch the boat so violently that many of us become seasick. About halfway into the trip, I go out onto the deck to get some air, hoping this will reduce my nausea. A striking woman, tall and blonde, leans over a railing and watches the disappearing urban coastline. She nods at me and begins to speak. "I grew up here, almost twenty years ago," she sighs, "then left to study in England and just never quite made it back." She grimaces and grips the railing as the boat hits a particularly big wave. "Of course, Robben Island was real back then, not some tourist museum. It was . . ." her voice trails off. She coughs and begins again. "a place that was just so horrible, so unspeakable."*

*They brought the prisoners here in the dead of night, usually. A dozen or so men and women, crammed into rickety, uncovered motorboats. They sat huddled against each other, without lifejackets, often without coats, handcuffed to the wooden benches to stop them from trying to swim away. When boats capsized only the driver survived.*

*The island seems so innocuous from a distance: a small rocky outcrop with a few concrete buildings scattered across it. It reminds me of an island near my house in Victoria that we used to row to for family picnics.*

*A tour guide meets us at the dock and ushers us into a mini-van. He is a former prisoner, part of the island's UNESCO-sponsored public education program. We pass the guards' residences – a neat, tidy row of brick houses with a school, swimming pool, and tennis courts, a community so complete in its banality that it would not be out of place in suburban America – and our guide tells us that some female prisoners got to work in these homes as maids. They would return to their cells each night, but still they were considered lucky because sometimes they would get "old clothes, or food from the guards' wives." At a limestone pit we stop and get out of the van. This is the infamous forced labour quarry, where male prisoners worked ten hours a day, seven days a week, digging and chipping at endless blocks of limestone. Our guide pauses, takes a deep breath. "The guards used to stand just over there, watching us. They had guns, and whips. If they thought we weren't working hard enough they would beat us, maybe with the end of their guns, maybe with the whip . . ." he shivers, "or maybe they would just throw rocks at*

us. But Mandela, he was so strong. He would just laugh when they did this." He points to a cave at the edge of the quarry. "We used to meet there, early in the morning before our work shift, or during our lunch breaks. And we would read to each other from books people had sent us, or tell stories from our childhoods."

They passed a law on this island that no one under the age of eighteen could visit prisoners. That meant sons, daughters, sisters, brothers were meant to be forgotten. It also meant prisoners should forget they ever loved or were loved: the rule was intended to remind prisoners they were no longer human.

A woman, she can't possibly be older than thirty, greets us on the prison steps. She smiles and nods at us. "What do you think is the one thing a person might miss most when they are in prison?" she challenges us. We – mainly tourists from the west who do not know what freedom means because we have never had to win it – shuffle our feet and eye each other nervously. "The sky," someone blurts out. "Birds," tries another. "Freedom," the blonde woman from the boat deck whispers. The guide looks each of us in the eye; we are not used to having our privilege confronted like this, to being poked in all the uncomfortable places. "No," she begins, "it is the feeling of holding a child." We fall silent, embarrassed and ashamed in the face of such simple cruelty. And then she begins her testimony: "When I was twenty-one I was brought here after being convicted of terrorism. I had just had a baby, she was about eight months old, and I did not see her for the next six years. When apartheid ended I was released, and now I work here to try to share my experiences with you so that something like this will never happen again." I wonder how many times a day she must tell this story to strangers who only came here to take pictures of themselves in front of Mandela's cell.

The walls of the prison are painted white, with bare light bulbs hanging from the ceiling. We file into a long corridor lined on each side with cell after cell, each one no more than five square feet. The cells have been kept as they were during the prison's operation: they house only narrow cots covered by thin grey blankets. On the wall outside each cell is the name of its occupant; above each cot hangs his or her photograph. Beside the photo are writings, written after the prisoner's release, in which he or she shares memories of prison life and survival. Some are poems, some letters, others essays. We move past each cell in silence, memorizing the names, reading their testimonies. Some of us take photos, or write notes in journals. An African-American family has brought a box of votive candles; they light one at each cell. Another couple, Spanish I think, bows and prays before each cell. The blonde woman from the boatdeck weeps quietly in a corner of the hallway. Our guide watches us as we witness her life – her past and her present, her trauma and her testimony. She does not weep with us, just folds her hands across her stomach and waits for us to finish.

By the time we reach Mandela's cell, it hardly matters that this is what most of us came here to see. We take photos to commemorate his space in the prison and the place he holds in our imaginations. The Spanish couple takes a photo of the American children, then one of the family altogether. We do all this humbly, even solemnly; our recordings have none of the celebratory air so often associated with sightseeing and holidays.

*The return boat ride is smoother; some of us gather at the bar where the Spanish couple shows photos from the safari they took last week. We dock and disperse into the summer Capetown evening of restaurants and movie theatres and luxury hotels. I want to say goodbye to the blonde woman, but by the time I get off the boat she has disappeared.*

### *Sites of Memory: personal, political and educational*

History: the study of past event; the past considered as a whole

Memory: a person or thing remembered; so as to commemorate

(O.E.D., 2001, pp. 424, 558)

*“Do you know what this exhibit is about?” the museum guide asks me before I enter a sideroom in Atlanta’s Martin Luther King Memorial Center. It is her job, somehow, to protect the visitor from witnessing too much, from going too far into the risky territories of memory. She hands me a piece of paper to sign. “By going in to this exhibit on lynching you release the museum from any responsibility for injury or trauma you may feel as a result of your viewing,” it reads. I sign and she opens the door for me. The room feels different right away – dark and claustrophobic, with none of the rousing audioclips of King speeches and spiritual music so present in the rest of the museum. The photographs are everywhere, on walls, in books, behind glass cases – men, women and children hanging from trees and bridges, their faces bloodied, their necks limp. They have their impact, but the one that truly stops me and makes the bile rise in my throat is not of a lynching at all, per se. It is of a little white girl, maybe three or four years old, sitting on her daddy’s shoulders and eating an ice cream. Watching the lynching unfold.*

Do we want the students we teach to *study* the past, or to *remember and respond* to it?

This is a hugely contested and ongoing debate in the scholarly arena, with the argument creating the equivalent of “running a knife between the tree of memory and the bark of history” (Nora, 1989, p. 13). The two sides may be summarized with a couple of quotes from two French men who have contributed much to the debate. Maurice Halbwachs, the key thinker behind the concept of collective memory, believed that “memory distorts the past, whereas the historian’s obligation is to correct memory’s inaccuracies” (Hutton, 2000, p. 538). Pierre Nora, on the other hand, whose interrogations of public spaces and

memory in France led to a whole wave of similar interrogations around the world, argued that “the emergence of history as a profession with a body of codified knowledge was a deliberate attempt to obliterate memory” (Hamilton, 1994, p. 11).

*I am in the Nikkei Internment Museum in New Denver, British Columbia. This is the one place left in the entire province where internment spaces – the houses, the gardens, the barbed wire - have been kept as they were during the war. A school group has arrived just before me, their faces bright with anticipation. They rush through the displays in minutes, then gather on the lawn to eat lunch. A woman from the group – a parent, a teacher perhaps? – and I linger in one of the tiny “family dwellings”. “So small,” she says, surprised. “With such thin walls, and just that tiny sink for an entire family. Oh well” she laughs, pointing to the snow-capped mountains that circle the town, “at least it was beautiful here!”*

In many ways, the teaching - both in the conceived space of schooling and curriculum and in the shared, public spaces of monuments, ceremonies and museums - of Canadian history as a “linear march of progress through time” (Oikawa, 2002, p. 76) has erased the “living imagination” (Hutton, 2000, p.537) of remembering those whose lives and homes were marched on and through in the name of another group’s “progress.” This rupture between history and memory led to the Langley students’ Stop of Memory – their unknowing of the internment and residential schooling - and how this rupture plays out in Canada and other global educational spaces is worth exploring here.

### *Histories of Forgetting: Japan, South Africa and Canada as landscapes of memory and education*

Let’s return to Lefebvre’s and Greene’s concepts of space as perceived, conceived, lived, public and shared. The tension between memory, history and education continually resides within all these spaces, and using Japan, South Africa and Canada as mini case studies can help illustrate the “power relationships in the politics of negotiating memory”

(Hamilton, 1994, p. 18). In Japan, for example, the federal government and Ministry of Education consistently refused to allow negative images of Japan's imperial past (such as the Nanking Massacre, the enslavement of Korean comfort women, or the conditions in prisoner of war camps in Japanese-controlled territories during the Second World War) to be included in the conceived spaces of national textbooks and curricula in order to maintain a post-Hiroshima and Nagasaki perceived space of Japan as victim of western aggression. Twenty years after the end of the war, a Tokyo education professor named Saburo Ienaga sued his government for censoring textbooks he had written, arguing that the ministry of education was impeding his right to freedom of expression.

*Prague's Jewish Quarter on a Sunday afternoon is packed with tourists. They smoke and laugh as they wave cameras in each other's faces and haggle over the price of postcards. I fight past the hordes and end up on a deserted sidestreet. There is a synagogue here, hidden away behind a row of bushes. I enter the synagogue cautiously, unsettled by the tourist carnival outside and unsure I even deserve to be a witness here. An old man greets me and takes my hand. "Welcome," he says in stilted English. "Come," he says, leading me to a corner of the dusty room. Every wall of the synagogue is covered in names, thousands of them, the dates of their birth, transport and death etched in identical black letters. He runs his fingers down one line of names, peering close to read each one, and stops when he finds the one he wanted. He gestures for me to read, so I do: Ave Cohen Spatzen, b. 1900, transported to Bergen-Belsen 1941, d. 1943. The man takes his finger off the wall and points to his chest. "My father," he whispers.*

It was not until 1982 that his court case began to be resolved when the word *aggression* replaced *military advance* in materials describing Japan's role in Asian conflicts. But in 1997, the Japanese Supreme Court rejected Ienaga's request to include references to comfort women in a textbook he was writing, thus upholding the rationale that censorship and "feel-good nationalism are preferable to fact" (Paris, 2000, p. 153). The conflict that "occurs when people insist that others should remember as they do" (Hamilton, 1994, p. 15) in the shared, public space of education, is reflected in the comments of Tokyo

professor of education Nobukatsu Fujioka, who declared that Ienaga's textbooks were "not written with Japanese people in mind, for they present a history hostile to Japan . . . and the impact on our children is such that they write in their essay classes that Japan is the worst, most immoral country in the world." (Paris, 2000, p. 152). The controversy over curriculum in post-war Japan reveals the messy borders of perceived and conceived spaces, in that not all members of a community imagine themselves as belonging to that space in the same way and thus will not be able to agree on how to portray that space politically and educationally. In this conflict, though, the real victims are the subjectivities of teachers and students who must find ways to negotiate those spaces.

Two other post-war nations faced similar struggles and negotiations in putting their violent acts onto paper and into schools. Germany did not begin confronting its Nazi past and the Holocaust in official curricular spaces until the 1960's, while France did not include references to the Vichy regime's collaboration with Germany, including the deportation of French Jews, in educational texts until the 1990's. Yet it is the post-apartheid South Africa that offers more recent and troublesome insights into the ways in which "people in their society know" – and teach – "the past" (Hamilton, 1994, p. 9).

*I was watching television yesterday morning, when an ad came on for a new cleaning product. A smiling blonde, white hostess who couldn't stop praising the product spoke directly to the camera. Then the ad cut to an image of a hand – just a nameless, disembodied tool of service – scrubbing a dirty cooking pot. The next scene showed the smiling blonde holding a shiny clean pot, so clean it sparkled as much as her teeth. Only after the ad had finished did I remember – the hand scrubbing the pot was black.*

*Later that afternoon I was walking through Capetown's downtown core and stopped at a newsstand to buy a paper. A young African woman approached me, her hands neatly folded behind her back. "Excuse me madam," she asked, smiling. "I was wondering if*

*you might need any help in your house, maybe a maid, or cook, or nanny?" I fumbled an apology, told her I was only a tourist and had no home here in which to employ her. This morning, when I checked out of my guesthouse, the clerk asked me where I was traveling next. "Back to Tanzania, where I live", I said. "Oh," he replied, "Black Africa. Never been one for that, myself!" he laughed, handing me back my credit card.*

With the official end to apartheid, how to teach the reality of the regime has become a hugely contested issue in which "schools in the new South Africa, and the students and teachers inside them, continue to struggle with the disparate messages about who they are and who they ought to be" (Soutien, 2001, p. 312). In this quote we can see similar tensions between perceived, conceived and lived spaces as in post-war Japan. Whether South African teachers and students perceive themselves as survivors or perpetrators of apartheid greatly impacts how they perceive their roles in the new nation's education, and likewise for how the nation conceives of and uses the role of schooling and education. These two lived post-apartheid spaces – learning bodies and governing bodies - may share a common vision of working towards a new nation, but how they may see going about it cannot help but differ.

When Mandela's African National Congress took over the country on a platform of peaceful reconciliation, they re-vamped all curricula (which under the regime had portrayed apartheid as a difficult but necessary exercise in segregation and containment, for the good of the nation) to draw attention to the sufferings of apartheid, but did so as "a compromise that didn't show anyone in too bad a light" (Nolen, 2003, p. 3). This angered many who still felt the depths of apartheid as a lived experience were not sufficiently reflected in the materials and curricula, and angered still others who felt the horrors of apartheid were being exaggerated. "Do we simply replace a white Afrikaaner



nationalist narrative with a black African nationalist narrative, replace great white men with great black men?” the scholar Noor Nieftagodien asked in a speech shortly after the new curriculum was introduced. “That would be easiest,” he continued, “but it’s problematic – you are not challenging the approach to history, it’s just an ideological shift” (Nolan, 2003, p. 3). Perhaps the effects of this debate are best summed up by the people most directly impacted by it – the students themselves:

We’re sick and tired of hearing about how our parents suffered. We want to be consumerist, individualist, young blacks – don’t burden us with your past. (Nolan, 2000, p. 3).

The comments of the students and Dr. Nieftagodien reflect memory, history and education in the new South African landscape as a “conversation without closure” (Hutton, 2000, p. 541) that opens wounds so deep and conflicting that educational structures and materials may “never be able to integrate into a conventional historical narrative” (Hutton, 2000, p. 541).

*The big colonial houses of the diamond and gold merchants, and monuments to the Boer pioneers are still the landmarks you see from the highway and read about in the guidebooks. The post-apartheid monuments are smaller, and you have to look for them. A small plaque outside the police station in Port Elizabeth where Steven Biko was murdered, a map on the floor of a church basement that outlines the streets and homes of a black community razed to make way for government offices. A woman who stands on the steps of a prison and asks you what you think you might miss if you were in her shoes. I think of Germany and its aggressive monuments to the victims of the Holocaust, and wonder if it is easier for the oppressor to commemorate its work in the form of guilty purging than it is for the oppressed to remember how, once liberated, to heal themselves.*

I now want to speak of Canada and its links between memory, history and education.

Why include the Canadian space in this discussion? I want to explore the ideas of

Canadian “race” historian Constance Backhouse (1999, p. 12), who asks:

why is there so much resistance to attributing “racism” to generations of the past, in Canada? Is it evidence of the lack of sophistication of historians generally about matters of race? Is it emblematic of the infancy of Canadian race history as a subdiscipline? Whatever the rationale, it is simply, in my opinion wrong. Individuals and groups from Canada’s past acted in identifiably “racist” ways, causing actual and substantial damage to those they perceived as racially subordinate. These acts reinforced a wider social structure that was permeated with racism.

I believe Canadian education is in deep denial, or a state of “unreflective ethnocentrism” (Roman, 1996, p. 4) about its location in a “white settler society established by Europeans on non-European soil” (Razack, 2002, p. 1). I do not need to revisit the discussion of curriculum opened in the previous section, but choose here to concentrate on a particular community or public education project that has, I think, larger implications for schooling.

*The Museum of Anthropology is packed today with tourists and school groups, all admiring the splendid collection of Pacific Northwest artifacts and totem poles. A young tourguide leads a group of schoolchildren around the great hall and pauses by a series of carved boxes. “These,” she begins, “were given away at potlatches, which were big feasts hosted by leaders of each village. When the potlatches were banned, these boxes were brought to the university.” “Why were the potlatches banned,” a couple of students ask. “You know, I’m not really sure,” she says, ushering the students around the corner.*

### *The Dominion Institute : Public funds, “public” memories?*

The Memory Project, funded by the nationalist thinktank the Dominion Institute, is a national project advertised in mainstream media and accessed regularly via the Internet by schools across the country. This heritage project is based on collecting and recording memories and artifacts from the First World War. The Institute (and let’s remember here that the term Dominion projects explicit colonial links to Canada’s days as a member of the British Empire) instigated a kind of moral panic by publicizing the fact that only a handful of living veterans of that war were still alive, and the country was in danger of

losing its memory of their sacrifices. A worthy project, certainly, but in whose memory, and whose name?

A visit to the project's website reveals a very white, Anglophone narrative of heroics: I searched but could find no mention of the contributions of men and women of colour, or Aboriginal and francophone servicemen, when historical record does show that peoples of these backgrounds fought and died in service of their 'country'.

The Memory Project's very use of the term *project* to define itself is disturbing. In this context the word gives a sense of beginning, middle and end, of much-deserved closure – much how Canadian education treats discourses of settlement as a fixed, final project rather than ongoing legacy. In essence, the Memory Project, like Canadian history education, has appropriated the language of a post-traumatic nation and space (survival, heritage, legacy are words that appear frequently throughout Project documents and curricula) without actually engaging with the risky business of negotiating how and why, and in whose name that space came to be, whom the creating of that space actually traumatized, and who is implicated in the continued development and success of that space today. I am suddenly aware here that throughout this thesis I have used the term project to describe the work I did with Anne's classes in Langley. I too am now implicated in the same process of confining the teaching of history to a contained, manageable product that I have just critiqued. Have I internalized the very language and structures I seek to change? How can I create new words to define my re/researching?

*The architects of South Africa's apartheid came to Canada to research ideas for segregation. It is said they found the Canadian system of reserves and native*

*disenfranchisement quite appealing. I remember this as I stand outside Pretoria's Voortrekker monument, with its sculptures of courageous Boers and menacing natives. I can't help but think "there too but for the grace of God . . ." and wonder why we seem so unable to use the word apartheid when speaking of laws and spaces in our own country.*

This mapping of memory and history in education, both locally and globally, illustrates that "though there is a struggle for memory in all countries, it will emerge at different times" (Hamilton, 1994, p. 23). What this mapping also shows is a common thread among how these struggles for memory have played out: what gets taught in each country's educational spaces reflects or is dictated by the nation's public and collective understanding of themselves and their history, which means "the social production of memory" is "a collective production in which everyone participates, though not equally" (Hamilton, 1994, p. 18). In order to reclaim education's power to disrupt or subvert the production of dominant historical narratives, we must then engage with the very real and public space of collective and social remembrance.

### *Memory as collective imaginings*

In examining the concept of collective memory, I draw from the theory's originator Maurice Halbwachs, who defines it as a "record of resemblances, similarities kept alive by continuous reworking and transmission" (Hamilton, 1994, p. 19), or "continually reshaped by the social contexts into which it is received" (Hutton, 2000, p. 537). How, why and in what ways or places certain events or people become commemorated while others do not reflects the structure and perspective of larger "group identities" (Hamilton, 1994, p. 19). How the larger or dominant group perceives itself – its stories, its tragedies, its heroes – then becomes internalized by all members of the community, dominant or not, creating in

many cases “a tension between local and nationalist traditions” (Hamilton, 1994, p. 23). Veterans of the World Wars – the nation’s grand struggle and triumph over evil - are remembered with large, elaborate statues in central public spaces, while the victims of the internment – the nation’s own dirty laundry - must lobby government officials for years to be granted small patches of land, like street corners or unused parks, on which to commemorate their losses. There is not a single public memorial in the province that speaks to the violence enacted on the country’s indigenous peoples. To challenge these “organized structures of forgetting” (Hamilton, 1994, p. 13) within which we live and work, education and educators need to continually shift the contexts and contours of our collective imaginings. We can begin by asking ourselves and our students the same questions Hamilton poses when she writes, “who then, is the “we” of the nation? How do I relate to a “national” memory?”

*Re-positioning the Binaries:  
Memory and history as art and transformation*

*In the spring of 1996, I am nearing the end of my rookie teaching year in the aboriginal community of Lytton (pop. 800), a year witnessed as a stranger in a mountain landscape of apartheid and memory. Today I walk into the staff room to be told that one of our students is dead. No one knows how he died yet, just that his body has been found beside the railway tracks on the reserve. He is the third student we have lost this year, and we call a crisis meeting to figure out how to handle this. Terry, the school counselor, brings sage into the staff room and smudges us all while we cry and hold each other. “How can this keep happening here?” a teacher cries. “What the hell is wrong with us?” Terry looks at her, tears running down his face. “St. George’s school, that’s what’s wrong with us,” he whispers. He should know; he went there. I didn’t.*

Invitations to begin “conceiving of history in a new way” (Hutton, 200, p. 545) have surfaced in recent post-colonial scholarship. Hamilton (1994, p. 12) supports the idea of teaching and studying an “essential interdependence between memory and history”, while

Oikawa (2002, p. 76) argues for a “spatializing” of the “historical narrative, so that we conceptualize history as not solely about time but also about space” and that this approach enables us to “see the long-term effects of national violence and the multiple ways in which violence is continually being perpetrated against subordinated communities”.

Felman calls these ideas “an inexorable historical transvaluation” (1992, p. 74) that establishes the “facts of the past through their narrativization and interpretation” (p. 93) rather than fixed definition. In this way, the merging of teaching memory and history as one interconnected phenomenon becomes teaching and learning to see, hear and touch “history, as an *art* of memory” (Hutton, 2000, p. 545).

How do we do this? We take Nora’s advice that “the less memory is experienced from the inside the more it exists only through its exterior scaffolding and outward signs” (Nora, 1989, p. 13), and bring our students into the experience of memory and history as a lived, shared and public space. We begin this by interrogating with our students how discourses of memory and history are intertwined in “popular culture” for this “rather than scholarly debate, has become the principal site for the politics of memory” (Hamilton, 1994, p. 25). We bring films and documentaries into our classrooms that offer new ways to participate in the national collective memory, like *Ararat*, *The War Between Us*, or *Khanesatake*. We find novels, poems and plays that speak from silenced communities (the works of Joy Kogawa, *Thompson Highway* and *Dionne Brand* come to mind) and study them as literary *and* cultural texts. We do this not only with our students, but also with their parents, our colleagues, administrators and school boards.

We take our students – physically, emotionally and intellectually - to as many sites of memory as we can, and we interrogate the how, why and where of these places' presences and absences. We ask them to visit the Memory Project's website and ask questions about inclusion and exclusion. We take our class – or assign them a trip as homework – to the memorial outside Vancouver's Main Street bus terminal that remembers the Montreal massacre, and while we celebrate the fact that violence against women has any public commemorative space at all, we also ask why in the heart of the downtown eastside there is a memorial to a dozen white, eastern Canadian elite women and not to the community's fifty missing women, most of whom were aboriginal, homeless, drug users and sex trade workers.

We find – or ask our students to find - documents and museums that witness the head tax and Doukabout legislations. Then we talk about global public spaces like Robben Island, and its transformation into an educational project in danger of becoming a tourist commodity, and brainstorm places in Canada that might hold similar educational values and risks. Then we ask why they are not as vivid in our imaginations as they should be. If we can, we take them to the Secwepemc museum in Kamloops or the internment museum in New Denver and make the very journey a site of teaching and listening.

We use words like apartheid, displacement and dispossession to refer to our own history, not just the histories of distant nations, until they form part of our students' lexicon. We see ourselves as enacting our own transformative historical transvaluations in the realm of

the everyday, by accepting that “contestation is at the very heart of the process” (Hamilton, 1994, p. 20) not only of negotiating memory, but of teaching. And whenever students say they have never “heard” of the trauma or event of which we are speaking, we stop and find ways for them to *hear*, no, to *witness*, what happened and why. In allowing ourselves to remember this way, we re/member our classroom and its curricula. We become artists and actors in the art of remembering.

*Memory as public space, education and commodity (reprise):  
Fort Langley, British Columbia, 2003*

*The actual site of Fort Langley, a Hudson’s Bay Corporation trading post, is now a reconstructed museum under the care of the federal government. On the day that I visit, several school buses fill the parking lot. Before I can enter the site, I must pay an admission fee and pass through the gift shop, which sells colourful coffee table books about early pioneers as well as dream catchers and maple leaf key chains. A small exhibit of Sto:lo artefacts – bowls, pieces of broken jewelry – lines the wall before the exit, and then I am here, in this reproduction of life from a previous era.*

*A white woman dressed as a fur trader greets me. “Would you like to watch the movie about Fort Langley first, or perhaps try your hand at panning for gold?” she asks, gesturing across the compound. I tell her I just want to explore, and she nods. She looks hot and bored under all her garb. I head over to the gold panning area, intrigued because a group of students is working there. They seem to be about twelve years old, grade seven maybe, and their uniforms (knee length plaid skirts for the girls, navy trousers for the boys, ties and jackets for everyone) give them away as private school students, members of Vancouver’s new elite. I am drawn particularly to a girl who is working her pan with concentrated diligence. The white sleeves of her blouse are rolled up to her elbows, her hair is pushed back over one shoulder. Her fingers work carefully through the wet sand, coming up empty each time. Finally she gives up, wipes her forehead with the back of her hand. “Shit,” she mutters, “I’m not getting anything. I give up.” Across the park a group of French immersion students, about the same age as the uniformed gold panners but dressed in the casual jeans and sweatshirts that denote public school, are getting a lesson in hard labour. The guide tells them they will be voyageurs for the day, and must begin by carrying heavy loads on their backs. Uphill.*

*And the teachers in these scenarios? They sit huddled in groups, leaning against the whitewashed buildings, leaving college students on summer jobs to do the teaching.*



*“How does it feel,” I ask a guide, “to work here?” “Oh it’s great,” he answers, adjusting his suspenders, for he is playing the camp manager today. “The people who come here get a real taste of our history.” “Does anyone ever ask tough questions,” I ask the he/she fur trader, “about land claims, or why the Scots workers had better conditions than the Hawaiians, or why workers’ wives couldn’t live on the compound?” She looks at me blankly, her painted moustache twitching. “What do you mean?”*

*Visitors to Fort Langley become consumers of a colonial memory. The site itself feels trapped between fantasy and misremembrance, shifting from day to day in one smooth sequence of public space and education, choreographed by the federal government.*

*And another thing: on the day I visited Fort Langley, all the actors were white.*

## Chapter V:

### *"Embarrassed by their whiteness": Navigating "race" with the "invisible" majority*

The whites are, of course, the Caucasian race, the reds are the American Indian, the blacks are the African or Negro, and the yellows are the Mongolian (Japanese and Chinese). But only pure whites will be classed as whites; the children begotten of marriages between whites and any one of the other races will be classed as red, black or yellow, as the case may be, irrespective of the degree of colour.

(1901 Dominion Census instructions, cited in Backhouse, 1999, p. 3)

*The town of Chemainus on Vancouver Island is known as the little town that could. This is a tourist phrase, a narrative of redemption, for the town of Chemainus has used art to pull itself from the brink of bankruptcy. A failed mill town in the early 1980's, the community decided to resurrect itself by painting a series of murals on the walls of its buildings, large scale paintings depicting the region's history and environment. The idea was to market Chemainus as a tourist destination, a project of public education as well as income generation; it has indeed proved a remarkable financial success, if a somewhat more problematic educational or cultural project.*

*I pull my car off the highway and through the lush hills of the Duncan valley, following the signs to Chemainus. I have never been to this town, but have heard much of its renewal project. Gift shops, bed and breakfasts in heritage homes, and a theatre advertising a summer run of an Agatha Christie play line the road into town. I park my car and spend an hour or so strolling the six square blocks of the town. The first murals I see are fairly humdrum scenes of forests and beaches, seascapes of whales and salmon. A heritage park, complete with artificial totem poles and a replica of a settler's log cabin, is situated on a bluff overlooking Kuper Island, home to one of the province's most notorious residential schools. There is no sign, no memorial to that space here.*

*I make my way from the park to the town's main avenue and site of its most viewed murals. The first mural shows the town's founders, two balding white men who ran the mill. On the next wall is a rosy-hued portrait of three phases of a woman's life, from birth to adulthood to old age. This at first seems innocent, and it is not until I read the portrait's caption that I understand.*

*This mural celebrates the life of the "first **white** woman born in Chemainus."*

*I turn the corner, nauseous. I am on a side road, little more than a back alley strewn with broken bottles and cigarette butts. And it is here, pushed to the side, forgotten, that I find the final murals of the town. The one on my left shows a Chinese store, circa 1908, filled with birds in cages and men in slippers and pointed hats. A child's memory, "it was a tough life but we were happy" is painted into one corner. The mural on my right shows*

members of a First Nations community on a beach, shaking hands with an explorer. The explorer is dressed in the fashions of the eighteenth century, ruffled sleeves and buckled shoes and a feathered cap. His ship sits prominently in the harbour, dwarfing the village's canoes. The male villagers are dressed in loincloths, while the women are topless. And everyone, *everyone*, in this mural is smiling.

*Contact*, the caption below the mural explains. And I remember bell hooks telling us that "no one is born a racist, everyone makes a choice" (hooks, 2003, p. 53).

### *Power Plays: Symbolizing and questioning white privilege*

*If the content is multicultural, then curriculum, instruction, and assessment choices become even more crucial to the process of knowledge acquisition and attitude changing. The teacher must serve as a role model demonstrating the application of multicultural perspectives in his or her classroom.* (Brown, 1998, p. 167)

*A Sunday drive in the country, a special trip to show off my Dad's new car. My mom packs sandwiches for a picnic and lets me sit up front. We leave Victoria and head up the Saanich peninsula, looking for a place to have lunch. We hit a reserve, though I don't yet know what that means, and my mother whispers to me to close and lock my window, "you never can tell in these places", she sighs. My father slows the car, lost, beside two kids playing on dirt bikes. Their clothes are stained and torn, their hair greasy; when they laugh at my Dad's questions I see gaps between their teeth. I hold my fingers to my nose and shout to the closed window, "pu, those guys stink. Let's get out of here!" My mother leans forward from the back seat, her knuckles white against the headrest. "She's right honey, we shouldn't be here, please do get going", she says. Her voice sounds edgy, afraid. My Dad just laughs and puts his foot on the gas pedal.*

*I am eight years old and have just made my first racist comment. And no one, **no one**, has called me on it.*

*At the time, I had no idea of the ugliness of my words; only now I am a teacher do I want to ask my parents why they stayed silent. But they no longer remember that day and only laugh when I try to speak of it. If we do not allow ourselves to speak, how do we learn?*

How do we navigate the murky, treacherous waters of race and racism in the classroom?

What is needed for us to effectively bring our students to understanding that "race is a mythical construct but racism is not" (Backhouse, 1999, p. 7), and that racism runs much deeper than namecalling or stereotyping? How do we develop an understanding that racism is "a system of advantage based on race" (Tatum, 1997, p. 7) that houses whiteness

at its very core? This Stop in the project, of understanding race, racism and particularly the unmarked yet constant privileges accorded whiteness in Canadian history and society, formed the “hinge around which events pivot” (Applebaum, 1995, p. 17).

The very fact that residential schooling and the internment could take place at all – and then be forgotten – revolves around the fact that this country was, and continues to be, settled and governed within a bastion of white privilege. What the project’s crisis of witnessing brought out was that these (mainly white, mainly middle class) students had deeply internalized the mythmaking teachings of Canada as a racism free, multicultural community and, as the project progressed, they were forced to grapple with their first experience of unlearning or unmapping the lived experiences behind white privilege.

*The police car pulls right up behind me, its headlights glaring into my rearview mirror. I pull over and wait while the policeman gets out of his car and walks to my window. “Evening maam,” he begins, “just want to let you know I think your insurance has expired, from the dates on your plates. Mind if I see your license and registration?” I fumble around in the glove compartment, find the papers and hand them over with shaking hands. Jesus, fuck, damn – it’s a fucking six hundred buck fine for driving uninsured, and the whole thing had just completely slipped my mind. The officer is white, male, clean cut and around my age. “I’m sorry,” I plead, “I’ve had so much on my mind lately, I must have forgotten to get the insurance renewed. I’ve never done anything like this before.” The officer tips his hat and smiles at me. “I can see you’ve made an honest mistake, I’ll let it go this time. Just make sure you fill out the paperwork as soon as you can – and stay safe, maam.” With that he is gone. I head back out on the road and turn on the radio to calm my nerves. It’s a political talk show from Victoria, some Liberal MLA speaking. “Well,” he laughs, “that MLA Jenny Kwan, the only thing good about her is that she’s pretty and she looks good, an Asian face you know, something for the minorities. That’s the only reason she’s been able to make it in politics, cause she sure doesn’t have much upstairs.” He laughs again, and I can almost feel his spit on my face.*

*The next day six Vancouver police officers plead guilty to assaulting two homeless men, admitting that they forced them into a police car and drove them to Stanley Park, where they beat them unconscious and left them unattended on a freezing February night.*

## *Finding a definition of whiteness*

What exactly is whiteness and its attendant privilege? Although I am frustrated by the dominance issues of whiteness hold in anti-racist discourse (much of the literature looks at how to raise awareness of skin privilege among white educators and students), I feel it is necessary to examine the Langley project and its crises of witnessing through this lens, particularly in relation to the Social Studies 11 class as it was made up exclusively of 22 white students. Whiteness, then, had become their educational, as well as social, cultural and economic location. And this project, in Anne's words, made them embarrassed by it.

Although Ruth Frankenberg has recently distanced herself from her earlier work on the making of whiteness, I still feel educators can learn from how she has framed whiteness and its privileges (Frankenberg, 2001, p. 76) because she offers some very clear, practical ideas that we can use to both interrogate our own experiences and share with others:

- Whiteness is a location of structural advantage in societies structure in racial dominance.
- Whiteness is a "standpoint", a location from which to see selves, others and national and global orders.
- Whiteness is a site of elaboration of a range of cultural practices and identities, often unmarked an unnamed, or named as national or "normative" rather than specifiably racial.
- Whiteness is often renamed or displaced within ethnic or class namings.

- Inclusion within the category “white” is often a matter of contestation, and in different times and places some kinds of whiteness are boundary markers of the category itself.

*In the 1700’s, a woman named Jacinta married into my very white, very aristocratic, very English family. Little is known about her, except that her husband was a Colonel in the Royal Marines, and when he brought his bride back to England she became known as the “toast of the regiment as the pretty little gypsy,” even though they made her change her name to Jacyntha to sound more English. I know all this because on my fourteenth birthday my grandmother gave me a collection of stories she had written about the family genealogy of my name. “Your first ancestor,” she wrote in the opening sentence, “was a foreign bride, small and dark.”*

- Whiteness as a site of privilege is not absolute but rather crosscut by a range of other axes of relative advantage or subordination; these do not erase or render invisible race privilege, but rather inflect or modify it.
- Whiteness is a product of history, and is a relational category. Like other racial locations, it has no inherent but only socially constructed meanings. As such, whiteness’s meanings are complexly layered and variable locally and translocally; also, whiteness’s meanings may appear simultaneously malleable and intractable.
- The relationality and socially constructed character of whiteness does not, it must be emphasized, mean that this and other racial locations are unreal in their material and discursive effects.

*Things I have heard said in graduate classes when discussing race and racism:*

- *“Why make such a big deal out of it, it’s not that important now anyways”*
- *“You know, I’ve been targeted too. When I moved here from England all the kids made fun of me for my accent.”*
- *“My father came here from Greece, he didn’t fit in either, couldn’t speak any English, so does he get lumped in with the privileged whites?”*

*Things I have said in the same classes:*

- *“God, weren’t those people just playing the race card, to complain like that?”*

- “Can we really call whites who acted in the past racist – I mean wasn’t it a different context back then?”
- “My family has been here four generations, surely that counts for something?”

Frankenberg concludes her definition with the following caveat:

I am struck by the extraordinary sense of ease with which white individuals can slide from awareness of whiteness to the lack thereof, and related to that slippage, from race-consciousness to unconsciousness and from anti-racism to racism, whether from year to year, situation to situation, or sentence to sentence. My own history, for example, is marked by a shift from unconsciousness both of my whiteness and of my own enmeshment in racism to an awakening of them . . . but my awakening is never complete. Although the initial transformation was one of major earthquake proportions, there is always room for another aftershock, always need for further awakening. (2001, p. 77)

*The speaker – a white, female Ph.D. candidate - at an academic critical race conference is delivering a paper on an anti-racist course she taught last semester to undergraduate students in the Faculty of Social Work. “Non-white students,” she begins, “were in a minority in the class.” Immediately, two women in the audience – African-Canadian, female professors – stand up. “Excuse me,” one of them calls out. The presenter stops, looks up from her paper and squints in their direction. “Do you mind,” the professor continues politely, “if for the rest of your talk you do not use the term “non-white” to refer to us?” The presenter seems perplexed, unsure of what to do or say. “We are people,” the professor answers. “So call us people - people of colour.”*

### *“It’s About Food”: Dominance as education*

The challenge in the Langley school was to engage the students in enough critical explorations and discussions that they could start moving towards an interrogation of whiteness as the norm by which all others are defined, divided and governed. This required facilitating a shift in their thinking on race and racism from what is currently practiced in their school (soft, or celebratory multiculturalism) to a deeper, more questioning critical multiculturalism. To set the scene, I wish to quote at length from a follow-up interview I shared with Anne, in which we discussed how issues of race, racism and multiculturalism had been taught in her school before the project began:

A: In our school I think we have, maybe 24 kids of Indo-Canadian background, our school is very homogenous, all the blonde hair, blue eyes.

J: And most of your teachers are of that background as well?

A: Yes, we have one Japanese teacher, one Indo-Canadian teacher on staff, but they're both women, our male teachers are exclusively white, exclusively white males, out of 100 teachers.

J: So the kids have very little contact with people from other backgrounds.

A: Yes, I'm always amazed when I take my students out of the district, when they see people in cultural dress, it's like they've never seen anything like that before. We did have one TA who was Indo-Canadian, and she was a hugely strong influence on the school in terms of multicultural education, but she lost her job last year with the budget cuts. She worked hard to get kids to understand cultural differences, really educated them.

J: So what is multicultural education like at your school?

A: It's about food. Multicultural week at our school boils down to food, a superficial act, a façade so we can say we've met the requirements. Sometimes the teachers will bring in costumes, maybe music or dance, but it's still performed, not explored.

J: We talk about critical multiculturalism as looking at real experiences of historical contexts, the pain and oppression, but this isn't happening.

A: No, we only talk about the good stuff, the costumes, the dancing, the stuff that doesn't challenge you. These kids have never been to the home of an Indo-Canadian family, or friends from different backgrounds. Multicultural education at my school feels like a thin coat of paint.

The administration too, in our case, at our school, we have this superficial multicultural week, but that's influenced to be that way by the admin, who wants to keep things safe, we're not going to offend anyone, bring too many questions, or parent complaints. We need to be talking about the Komagata Maru, but admin would discourage that because it's seen as offensive - *not to people of Indo-Canadian background, but to the white families* - and they don't want to deal with those kinds of parent complaints. Basically, in this high school, where we should be doing things that are developing a social consciousness, we keep everything too neat and simple. Like this sign that somebody put up outside my classroom the other day, saying the school was a racism free zone - like that is going to solve it all, just put up a sign but don't talk about it.

As explained by Bell (1997, p. 12), "members of dominant or privileged groups

internalized systems of oppression and through their collusion with the system operate as



agents in perpetuating it . . . Dominants learn to look at themselves, others, and society through a distorted lens in which the structural privileges they enjoy and the cultural practices of their group are represented as normal and universal". From the administration right through the teachers and to the students, Anne's school merely reproduced rather than challenged white dominance. So what happened when Harry Con and Gloria Steinberg Harris and Mary Anderson and Dorothy Joseph brought their testimonies right into the faces and bodies of forty-two of these students?

*"It is polite and appropriate to know your background"*  
(Katie, Socials 11)

How much does the make-up of our classroom influence how we can speak about experiences of racism? Reflecting the homogeneous white nature of Langley, both classes were made up of predominantly white European students, the Social Studies 11 class exclusively so. In this class, the discussions and reflections centered openly on coming to terms with one's own implications with white privilege and its role in creating and perpetuating systemic racism. In turn, their written reflections on the feedback forms were self-reflective and provocative. My role as the teacher was also simplified, as I could be read as from their side, as someone who shared their experiences and responses.

The First Nations Studies 12 class, on the other hand, had a slightly more diverse composition. The majority (20) was still white, but the class also had two students of aboriginal background (both males, one Sto:lo, one biracial white and native) and two of Iranian background (a male born in Canada and a female recent immigrant with limited English skills). In this class I needed to find ways to create spaces for the white students

to process their responses, and at the same time maintain a safe space for the students of colour to express their experiences. It was a tightrope walk we never quite mastered: the students were often silent and what little discussions arose were often strained, as if we were all too afraid of hurting each other. Written responses on the feedback form reflected this tension: questions were often unanswered, or answered only partially.

What happened? How should I account for – or be accountable for – the differences in classroom climates and student engagement? In the Social Studies 11 class, did I show more empathy in witnessing the testimonies, or more confidence in facilitating student responses? In the First Nations Studies 12 class, were the aboriginal males made to feel like token speakers for all First Nations? Was I read by that class's students of colour as ally or enemy? What could I or should I have done differently?

I have no answer to these questions, and here I am faced with a difficult choice. I want to use this chapter to interrogate whiteness and its dominance in education, and feel that the written comments from the Socials 11 students have a lot to teach us about how white students might be able to interpret and act on an awareness of skin privilege. At the same time, I am aware that by selecting data from only one of the classes I am ignoring questions and insights that could arise from a more comparative analysis. I am also aware that I am perpetuating already abundant stereotypes surrounding First Nations Studies 12 as what Anne called a “non-academic dumping ground” by not including their written comments here.

All this raises troubling questions about the choices researchers make in order to present a good case, or create a piece of good art, or write a publishable paper. Do we include participants' comments because they are articulate, neat and quotable and thus enhance our argument and our work? Journalists, artists and documentary filmmakers do this all the time and no one bats an eye. Editing is, in the end, a necessary part of good storytelling, and that is what I am trying to do here. I want you to experience the stories behind the project's crises of witnessing, and for this particular crisis the Social Studies 11 reflections – for whatever reason, be it time, safety, interest - *were* more candid and articulate, and *do* take the reader into the experience more clearly, than the comments from the First Nations Studies 12 students.

The questions I asked earlier about the dynamics of a white teacher doing anti-racist work in homogenous versus diverse classrooms are well worth pursuing in further research but lay beyond the scope of this thesis. I want to keep this chapter's focus on the students' processes for working through the project's crises, and for the purposes of *this chapter only* I will depend on the written reflections of the Social Studies 11 students to explore how they understood whiteness as a construct in their own lives. The depth of their responses to the crisis of witnessing whiteness (and even in this homogenous group skin appearances can be deceiving, for within this group of 18 students was diversity of class, gender, sexuality, ability, language and religion) shows both hope for change and just how much more work needs to be done.

I would like to analyze their written responses to the testimonies within a framework of social identity development, because in many ways the students in this class were working through not just a crisis of knowledge but a crisis of identity as who they had grown up believing they were, as individuals and citizens, was being called into question.

Briefly, Hardiman and Jackson (1992) conceptualize social identity for whites and peoples of colour as moving messily and even simultaneously through five distinct stages: naïve, acceptance, resistance, redefinition and internalization. The naïve stage, when individuals are “unaware of the complex codes of appropriate behaviour for members of their social group” (Bell, 1997, p. 23) is basically passed through in early childhood, when acceptance, or “some degree of internalization, whether conscious or unconscious, of the dominant culture’s logic system” (Bell, 1997, p. 24) begins to take hold. This acceptance can, when challenged, become resistance, or a state of “increased awareness of the existence of oppression and its impact” (Bell, 1997, p. 24). With sufficient support, a person can move into a process of redefinition to create “an identity that is independent of an oppressive system based on hierarchical superiority and inferiority” (Bell, 1997, p. 27). Finally, as an individual becomes more fully committed to redefining and reworking him or herself in relation to the dominant culture, internalization, or the goal to “incorporate the identity of redefinition into all aspects of everyday life” (Bell, 1997, p. 27). How far could, or did, or should, the students go?

*"I'm not racist": Acceptance and official multiculturalism*

Perhaps one of the reasons the crisis unfolded as it did was because the Social Studies 11 students were already in a state of acceptance, enhanced by the school and community culture, that this was simply the way things are. This kind of acceptance is echoed in a couple of early reflections from students, when they were asked to write on their impressions of the role racism plays in how inequalities work in the Lower Mainland:

***I DON'T REALLY THINK ABOUT RACISM VERY OFTEN BECAUSE I AM NOT RACIST. I DON'T SEE RACISM AROUND ME TOO OFTEN BECAUSE SCHOOL AND MY ENVIRONMENT ARE NOT VERY RACIST. (ALYSSA)***

Here we have a student walking and talking the party line of celebratory multiculturalism, the "I/we are not racist" discourse that says because we are polite in respecting difference, we are not implicated in a systemic construction of power and privilege based on skin. To her, the system works, so she sees no need to change it. Another student, Bridget, had a similar perspective on difference and inequality when she wrote ***"THE ECONOMIC DIVIDE STILL EXISTS, BUT I DOUBT THAT THE RACIAL ASPECT PLAYS SUCH A BIG ROLE."*** She was able to make a limited class analysis, but unable to link that to racial difference and therefore unwilling to believe that race is an issue in contemporary Vancouver.

Perhaps the most complacent example of acceptance comes from Natalie, who wrote of East Vancouver as ***"NOT A PLACE I'D WANT TO GROW UP IN AND LATER ON, WHEN I HAVE CHILDREN, I WOULDN'T WANT THEM TO GROW UP IN IT EITHER."*** She is so secure in her places and spaces – both her skin, class and geographic privileges – that she is unable to imagine her life any other way, nor can she see anything wrong with how she lives in relation to the opportunities of others.

An interesting comment from Megan shows the messy boundaries of understanding one's self and society. Just as she declares that **"WHITE PEOPLE HELD TOO MUCH POWER AND IT WENT TO THEIR HEADS, THEY MAY STILL HAVE TOO MUCH"**, a sign she is beginning to move into resistance, she falls back into acceptance when she writes in the next sentence that **"VISIBLE MINORITIES, THEIR JOURNEY DIDN'T HAPPEN IN VAIN. THEIR RACES ARE NOW ACCEPTED IN SOCIETIES OF "WHITE" BACKGROUNDS."** Her use of the words "races" and "accepted" shows she is still speaking from the position of accepting white dominance as the norm, even though she seems ready to try to work towards change. She finishes her paragraph with **"WE STILL HAVE A LONG WAY TO GO, BUT WE'RE IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION"**, which takes into account the need for change, but acceptance that official routes are still the best vehicle.

These reflections were written before we moved into the text. After the first testimonies, those of the discriminatory employment experiences of Harry Con and Gloria Steinberg Harris, the same students began to shift noticeably. **"I UNDERSTAND NOW THAT RACISM OCCURS CLOSER TO HOME THAN WE THINK,"** wrote Alyssa, while Bridget documented her reaction by saying **"I FELT SO DISGUSTED THAT PEOPLE COULD TREAT FELLOW HUMAN BEINGS LIKE THAT"** and Natalie felt she was beginning to think about East Vancouver **"IN DIFFERENT WAYS, I NOW DON'T LOOK DOWN TO THEM."** Are they in resistance yet? Not fully, I would say, as they are still in initial stages of processing – but are at least coming into an increased awareness.

*"The experiences were revolutionary:" acting into resistance*

The more complex the testimonies became, and the longer we involved ourselves with them, the more the students were able to articulate their resistance in writing. After Ivy McAdams's testimony, in which her brother Peter is refused entry to the pool, Elin wrote

**"JUST THE FACT THAT A POOL WOULD HAVE SUCH A SIGN DISGUSTS ME . . . PETER'S STRUGGLE IS EXACTLY LIKE MODERN DAY DISCRIMINATION, WHERE THE STRONGER**

**PARTY SINGLE OUT THE 'WEAKER' ONE."** They were also able to share deeper insights into

the workings and dominance of power. **"THE MORE POWERFUL PEOPLE DON'T HAVE A REASON TO BE AFRAID OF ANYTHING BECAUSE NO ONE WOULD STAND UP TO THEM",**

wrote Alyssa, while her classmate Ryan **"CAME TO THE CONCLUSION THAT WHITE SUPREMACISTS ARE AFRAID OF LOSING THEIR POWER OVER MINORITY GROUPS, AND IF THIS FEAR DID NOT EXIST THEN I BELIEVE RACISM WOULD NOT BE SUCH A PROMINENT ISSUE."**

When Jennifer writes that hearing the testimonies was **"REVOLUTIONARY, I HAD NEVER THOUGHT OF MINORITIES THAT WAY BEFORE"**, and Katie says that **"VANCOUVER IS NOT AS PICTURE PERFECT AS SOME WOULD BELIEVE"**, they are taking their first steps towards critical thinking, moving through answerless and confusion to concrete ideas and analyses. How these ideas become suggestions for action becomes clear in the following student comments:

**RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION HAVE HAPPENED TO MORE PEOPLE AND PEOPLE DON'T ALWAYS SEE THE TRUTH, THEY ONLY SEE WHAT THEY WANT TO SEE. (ANDREA)**

**I NEVER THOUGHT ABOUT WHAT OTHER PEOPLE WENT THROUGH, AND WHAT THEY ARE GOING THROUGH EVEN NOW. I FEEL LIKE I UNDERSTAND THAT THEY HAVE GONE THROUGH SO MUCH HISTORICALLY, THAT IT NEEDS TO STOP. (KIARA)**

***I'M STARTING TO REALIZE THAT SOME PEOPLE SEPARATE THE CITIZENS INTO DIFFERENT "CLASSES". WHY ARE WE STILL LIVING LIKE THIS? A HUGE AMOUNT OF PEOPLE DISCRIMINATE AGAINST THE PEOPLE IN EAST VANCOUVER, BUT HOW DO WE PROVE THEM WRONG?***  
**(LINDSAY)**

These three quotes, particularly the words of Kiara and Lindsay, show these young students seriously grappling with finding and defining their position in a racist society, a move that may lead them into redefinition and internalization. However, for all the hope and inspiration their transformations offer, other students' responses to the same testimony reveal a willingness to listen to the tellings, but an inability to move beyond the fixed link of the us and them mentality of whiteness and official multiculturalism:

***I REALIZED THAT VANCOUVER WASN'T SUCH A GOOD PLACE TO BE WHEN LOTS OF PEOPLE WERE STILL RACIST, BECAUSE THEY TREATED ALL THE NON-WHITE PEOPLE SO MEANLY.***  
**(WHITNEY)**

***I HAVE MORE COMPASSION FOR THOSE PEOPLE NOW. I DON'T EXACTLY KNOW WHY THIS HAPPENED IN VANCOUVER BUT NOT OTHER CITIES IN CANADA.***  
**(RON)**

***I HAVE A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF HOW THEY MUST HAVE FELT AND THE DEVASTATING INJUSTICES THAT WERE LAID UPON THEM.***  
**(BIANCA)**

*Were. Non-white. Those people. Not other cities. Have felt. Were laid.* These quotes show a less reflexive attitude than those of their classmates, one that still sees discrimination as a fixed, historical event that has happened to people other than themselves and is therefore not their concern. Ron's inability to relate Vancouver's history to the larger picture of systemic racism is also troubling. I see their comments as indicative of what Backhouse (1999, p. 9) the "misleading transparency of whiteness" that "contributes to an erasure of the privileges that attach to membership in the dominant



race.” This shows us not only, of course, that when we work to deconstruct issues of oppression we must remain mindful that individuals move into their realizations at different paces and in different ways, but also that really breaking through the boundaries of learned patterns and acceptances is a long, arduous process, and that “white antiracism is a stance requiring lifelong vigilance” (Frankenberg, 2001, p. 77).

*Out of time, out of place: Redefinitions and internalizations*

Not only were the Social Studies 11 students negotiating their understandings of themselves as part of a white identity, they were trying to see this new identity through their already-rocky lens of teenage hood. **“USING AN EXAMPLE CLOSE TO HOME (EAST VANCOUVER) REALLY MAKES IT EASY TO SEE RACISM AS A THING THAT DOES IN FACT EXIST IN OUR COMMUNITY, AND IT DOES! THAT’S WHAT I’VE LEARNED, IT DID AND IT DOES AND WE NEED TO CHANGE IT!”** writes Jennifer in her final reflection. **“BUT”** she continues, **“IT MAKES ME WONDER WHAT I CAN EVEN DO TO HELP. HOW CAN I FIGHT AGAINST RACISM WHEN I CAN’T EVEN WALK INTO A STORE WITHOUT BEING STEREOTYPED AS SOMEONE WHO’S GOING TO STEAL SOMETHING? I WANT TO HELP AND FIGHT BUT WHO’S GOING TO BELIEVE THAT I TRULY WANT TO?”**

This tension between the students’ willingness to begin redefining themselves against a backdrop of white privilege and their sense of themselves as not being taken seriously within the larger adult community was a constant thread running through many discussions and reflections. This tension certainly challenged assumptions I held about their social and cultural location, and needs more exploration.

In eight lessons, we were able to bring the students to varying degrees of awareness, and in some cases a desire for action, about how white power and privilege operate to oppress people of colour. What we were not able to do was facilitate in them a dissection of their own implication in skin privilege. We can hope that these eight lessons formed the “beginning of an inquiry rather than the end of it” (Frederickson, 1997, p. 79), and as these students move through other years of schooling, at least a few of them will continue to grapple with the questions we raised in the ways we encouraged them to. I do believe the testimonies began to move them through the “slippery fictions of racial designation” and into an understanding that “the concept of ‘race’ is undeniably a moving target through time and space” (Backhouse, 1999, p. 11).

Last week I emailed the following quote (hooks, 2003, p. 57) to some of the students:

If we fail to acknowledge the value and significance of individual anti-racist white people we not only diminish the work they have done and do to transform their thinking and behavior, but we prevent other white people from learning by their example. All people of color who suffer racial exploitation and oppression know that white supremacy will not end until racist white people change.

And Lindsay, so passionate in her commitment to prove racists wrong, wrote me back to say she had pasted hooks’ words in her locker.

*Watch this space.*

## Chapter VI

### *“We treated them like possessions”: Troubling the national imaginary from the shadows of Empire*

*Unlike the United States, where there is at least an admission of the fact that racism exists and has a history, in this country one is faced with a stupefying innocence.*

*Dionne Brand, Bread out of Stone, 1994, p. 178*

*I was born in the States, when my English father was a doctoral student at Yale. We moved to Canada when I was two, but I remained a landed immigrant until I was sixteen. For my citizenship ceremony I got to miss a day of school, and my whole family went downtown. My mother and grandmother wore dresses and carried leather purses, while the men (my father, grandfather and brother) wore suits. Most of the people at the ceremony were people of colour, except for the presiding judge and Mounties. The judge opened his remarks by saying he realized most of the new citizens came from places where they might have been afraid of courts and police, but here, in their new safe country, they had nothing to worry about. After the ceremony my grandfather took us to the fanciest restaurant in Victoria, where we ate steaks and drank champagne and raised our glasses in toasts to the nation and the Queen. I don't remember anything else.*

At my final immigration interview, I was facing an elderly, bald, white man, mustached and blue-eyed – who said he had been to India. I made some polite rejoinder and he asked me – “Do you speak Hindi?” I replied that I understood it very well and spoke it with mistakes. “Can you translate this sentence for me?” he asked, and proceeded to say in Hindi what in English amount to “Do you want to fuck with me?” His hand was on my passport, the pink slip of my “landing” document lay next to it. Steadying my voice I said “I don't know Hindi that well.” . . . On Bloor Street in Toronto, sitting on the steps of a church – I vomited. I was a landed immigrant.

Himani Bannerji, *The Dark Side of the Nation* (2000, p. 89)

How are we educated to see ourselves as part of the nation, and how do we want our students to think about this place we call home? I think here of a recent article in the *Globe and Mail* newspaper to promote the paper's annual Nation Builder of the Year

award, a prize voted on by readers, that opened with the headline “Canadians who help make country better” (Alphonso, 2003, p. 3). The article takes up half a page, with photographs of four key contenders: golfer Mike Weir, Kelowna fire chief Gerry Zimmermann, Supreme Court judge Roy McMurtry and medical researcher Paul Goss. Four photos of four successful, educated, middle class white men. The list continues: businessmen, politicians, athletes. Not a single artist, writer or activist. Then, buried deep in paragraph 12, I find the name Monia Mazigh, the wife of Maher Arar, whose persistence in keeping her husband’s confinement in a Syrian prison in the public eye did much to obtain his release. She is the only female or person of colour in the entire piece. How do these kinds of popular culture narratives influence those we teach to define who is and who is not “an insider/outsider to the Canadian nation” (Bannerji, 2000, p. 63)?

*My family have been settlers here since the late 1800’s. We have farmed, mined, logged and run orchards. We have had servants and made money. The women have given birth to alcoholics, whores and gamblers as well as accountants and teachers and scientists. I have a great-great grandfather who designed most of the first grand homes on the Gulf Islands and even owned a few of the smaller islands until he drank and gambled them away; a great-grandmother who was a founding teacher at Havergal College, a private girls’ school in Ontario; and an uncle who worked the north of Vancouver Island as a card player and fishing guide until he got involved with the mob and was murdered in Vegas. Me? – I got out while the going was good and spent my adulthood overseas.*

*My mother used to joke that she was the only Canadian born female who spoke English like the Queen. She grew up in the Yukon, raised by a mother who slapped her hand every time she failed to pronounce certain letters (like a, or o) correctly. In this family, correct meant British. My mother never did figure out how to get rid of her accent.*

Benedict Anderson’s definition of the nation as “an imagined political community – imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (1983, p. 6) can help illuminate not only my own and my mother’s educational experiences, but those of the students in the

Langley project as well. As I witness my memories of my citizenship ceremony and my colonial genealogy, and as I reflect on the fundamental “crisis of witnessing” (Felman, 1992) that occurred throughout the project, I realize that the link between how our understandings of nationhood and belonging are formed, and what happens when those understandings are challenged, must be read and acted upon as key pedagogical issues.

Anderson details his definition of the nation by saying it becomes imagined because although the “members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members . . . in the minds of each lives the image of their communities” (p. 6). He states that each nation remains limited because they have “finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations” (p. 7) and sovereign because “the concept was born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the . . . dynastic realm” (p. 7). They can be called communities “because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship” (p.7). What distinguishes these imagined places and spaces, according to Anderson, is not their “falsity/genuineness, but . . . the style in which they are imagined” (p.6). Bannerji (200, p. 157) adds to this critique with “we can say, therefore, that there is nothing natural about communities. In fact they are contested ground of socio-cultural definitions and political agencies.”

Hobsbawm (1983) adds to Anderson’s and Bannerji’s analyses with his study of what he terms “invented traditions . . . a set of practices . . . which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the

past” (p. 1). In a country such as Canada, whose institution as a nation is fairly recent, this past had to be “invented” almost as soon as it was being implemented as a tradition. Hobsbawm lists three major innovations as deciding factors in how invented traditions take root in the popular imagination. The first? Primary education, of course.

*In 1973 I started elementary school in an upper middle class suburb of Victoria called Oak Bay. Our school day had several strict rituals as part of its daily routine. First, we filed into our classrooms in order of our ages, the grade ones in the front, the grade sevens at the back. Then under the watchful eyes of Queen Elizabeth II, for every classroom had her portrait hanging from the front wall so that it would face us, so that we would have to answer to her every time we allowed our eyes to leave our books, we stood to say the Lord’s Prayer in unison. I don’t remember if there was anyone different – a Jew, a Buddhist, a Moslem or an atheist – who had permission to miss this ritual because no one ever spoke of such things, and besides, we all looked and talked alike. White. Clean. Well fed and clothed. Successful children of successful parents.*

*On certain days of the week, all the grades would march down the stairs of our hundred-year-old brick school to the auditorium, where we would gather for an assembly. Sometimes there would be entertainment, like a play or a musician, sometimes a talk from a famous person, an author or an astronaut. What I remember most about these assemblies is that a special student, chosen by the principal, always led the other students into the auditorium, and that special student was allowed to carry the flag. I never got chosen; it always seemed to be the boys, particularly the athletic or nerdy ones, like the boy who won a city track race or placed top five in a national science contest, who got to carry the flag. And so we would follow these dynamic young heroes into the auditorium, like the children who followed the piper into the cave, and before we were allowed to sit down we sang God Save the Queen. Not Oh Canada, not a poem or a drum song or a story or a dance. But God Save the Queen, once a week, for seven years. And no, this was not a private school. And no, it was not the 1940’s. And yes, we thought at the time that singing this anthem was a good thing. A fine, a very fine thing.*

This chapter’s title quote was written by a First Nations Studies 12 student named

Chelsea, but she was not alone. **“IT MADE ME FEEL SAD AND QUITE CONFUSED WHY WE AS A COUNTRY CAN’T LEND A HAND TO THOSE IN NEED. . . WE ARE ALL CANADIANS. WE ARE A FAMILY, AND WHEN A PART OF THAT FAMILY SUFFERS WE SHOULD BE THERE FOR THEM,”** writes Elin, a Social Studies 11 student, after a lesson in which we tackled

histories of racial segregation in Vancouver. **"I WOULD NEVER HAVE THOUGHT THAT A PLACE I CONSIDER SO ACCEPTING OF DIVERSITY WOULD HAVE SUCH A HISTORY OF RACISM,"** adds her classmate Bridget. After the same lesson Sarah admits, **"TO THINK ABOUT THIS MAKES ME SHUDDER. MY PRIDE OF CANADA HAS WAVERED"**, while Ryan writes **"THIS TYPE OF RACISM I OFTEN ASSOCIATE WITH SOUTHERN UNITED STATES, BUT NEVER IN OUR OWN HOMELAND. THE CONCEPT IS TRULY MIND-BOGGLING."** However, I think Megan most clearly sums up the crisis when she says **"THE STORIES MADE ME STARE IT RIGHT IN THE FACE. I HAD TO RECOGNIZE THAT CANADA ISN'T QUITE AS MULTICULTURALLY INCLINED AS WE'VE BEEN TOLD."**

Reflections of this kind show these students being forced to re-negotiate their relation to state-sponsored multiculturalism, or what Francis (1997) calls "national dreams" and Stanley and Roman (1997, p.215) identify as the "Canada the redeemer discourse". For most of their lives, the Langley students internalized the same teachings as me and my mother: Canada as a peaceful, multicultural democracy; Canada as a rugged landscape tamed by brave Mounties and pioneers; Canada as not – NOT – the United States.

### *Ms. England goes to Ottawa: A Travelogue*

*Germaine Greer wanted to see the city of Oakland, California. So she followed her road map through the tangled streets of San Francisco, the endless freeways and traffic jams, the districts both glamorous and dangerous, until she reached the end of one map and the beginning of another. And then, standing on the bridge between the two cities and seeing Oakland for the first time, she could only whisper bitterly:*

*"There is no there, there."*

*I do not want to go to Oakland, but I am going to Ottawa. "You must make sure you see the leaves," the woman in the seat beside me says as we lift off from Vancouver. "Just wonderful this time of year." I smile, murmuring assent, but do not tell her I have already seen the leaves in the Gatineaus in the fall and that I am visiting "the nation's capital", as the pilot so eloquently announced, for a different reason. True, the leaves would be beautiful, the golds and auburns a refreshing change from the deep greens of Vancouver's rainforest, but I will not have time for that this visit. This time, on this frequent flyer redeye weekend freebie, I want to find the story of my country.*

*If it is there. And if it will let me in.*

*The downtown core of Ottawa this Sunday morning is cold and windy, with icy breezes shooting off the Rideau Canal. I begin my walk at Nepean Point, where there is a bronze statue ode to the "founder" of the Ottawa settlement. He is dressed in fine European garments and stands looking across the river, his hand on his hip and his boot raised on a piece of rock. I walk further, past a statue of a Huron chief dressed in feathers and loincloth who, the plaque beneath his bare feet reads, was the "first Indian to co-operate with the settlers". His name is not given. Onto the Chateau Laurier now, a hotel named after a former Prime Minister and an ode to the fruits of industry. Limousines pull up to its entrance, and doormen in long coats fill their arms with stacks of luggage. Inside the opulent lobby – marble floors, gold ceilings – a tour guide recites the list of famous guests – presidents and royalty and celebrities – to a group of tourists.*

*I head to the Houses of Parliament, passing on the way more statues of founding European fathers. The tour guide leads us through various halls and chambers, marble stairways adorned with symbols (wheat for Saskatchewan, beavers for Quebec) and the flowers (dogwoods for British Columbia, wild roses for Alberta) of each province. Finally we are at the entrance to the House of Commons. Our guide opens the door with a knowing flourish and we are allowed to stand in the hall, this immense space in which so much has happened to define this nation. The desks are arranged in rows facing each other, all polished wood and deep green velvet surfaces. "Here," the guide begins "is where all the Members of Parliament sit when the House is in session." And what strikes me about this space is not the elaborate high ceilings or the golden throne at the centre, but how peculiarly small the desks are, and how suffocatingly close their rows feel.*

*And then it hits me: this room is structured just like the kind of classrooms we now discourage teachers from creating.*

*It is not until I leave the Houses of Parliament that I remember I had also wanted to find a newly unveiled memorial to Canada's early suffragettes. It takes me a while and I have to ask directions, because the memorial is behind the main buildings and is not visible from the front entrance. When I finally find the statues I see four women – women who were*



activists, who became senators, who took the damn government to court, for Christ's sake – sitting together in a square. Globes of bird dung cover part of the memorial plaque, and a lone crow picks at the grass beside the statues. Nellie McLung and Emily Murphy hold teacups to their lips and cross their legs delicately at the ankles, smiling at each other. And that is all they are doing in this unwanted, neglected space.

And I remember making a presentation in my grade seven class that I decided to call "women as leaders in Canada." I stood in an empty space at the front of six rows of desks and told my classmates I wanted to be the first female Prime Minister of Canada. Some of them cheered, others laughed. My teacher Mr. Cowan sat at his desk at the back of the room and took notes on a pad of yellow legal paper. When I finished, he raised his eyebrows and looked at me. "So tell me, Jacyntha," he began, "why would a woman possibly want to lead the country, and why on earth should we let her?"

The Sunday night red eye flight to Vancouver leaves an hour late. Passengers are grumpy and tired: the businessmen and civil servants have meetings scheduled for early the next morning, others have families to leave and return to.

And me? I have . . . nothing.

### *Renegotiating the imagined community*

Ottawa, the defining public space of the national imaginary, follows the same rigid narrative of colonialism as the country's curricular spaces: European male heroes who tamed the wilderness, co-operative noble savages, genteel women and invisible minorities. Struggles of race, of slavery, of class and marginalization are simply not – to echo the words of Germaine Greer - there.

It is multicultural week at the Langley school, and the Social Studies 11 class has been called to the library for a presentation by an immigration officer. Each student is handed a fake identity card, with a name, country, education and profession. They must follow the immigration points system to see if their 'person' would be allowed into the country. A girl who was given the identity of a Yemeni electrician asks the presenter why she failed to be admitted. "Well", the presenter begins, "Yemen is on the list of suspicious countries for their links with terrorists. Besides, there's already plenty of electricians here, and your person could not speak English. He had no chance, which is tough, but to get into our country that's the way it is." "But," the student raises her voice, "is that really fair?" The officer pauses, preparing an answer, but the bell rings.

As Bannerji (2000, p. 110) makes clear, “depending on one’s social location, the Canadian landscape . . . can seem near or far, disturbing, threatening or benign.” You matter, the public space of imagined Canada tells us, if you are male and white and wealthy. You have no place here, they tell us, if you are poor, or indigenous, or of colour. And so it goes in our communities, our museums, our national monuments. And so we are educated, and so the education becomes internalized and the imagined nation becomes the system, the structure, in which we live, work and teach.

And now we have to un-do it. We must find as many ways as possible to interrogate the very concept of nation, community and belonging - not just with our students but within ourselves - much in the way the texts and exercises from this project did. We must find ways of *accounting* for the nation building project, as both a historical and contemporary process, and ask if there even is such a thing as a nation builder. For whose nation? And then we ask ourselves if the Canadian landscape is as comfortable and near to our students and us as we might once have thought.

## Postscript:

### *Breakthrough pain, crisis and pedagogy*

I would venture to propose, today, that teaching in itself . . . takes place precisely only through a crisis: if teaching does not hit upon some sort of crisis, if it does not encounter either the vulnerability or the explosiveness of a (explicit or implicit) critical and unpredictable dimension, it has perhaps not *truly taught*. (Felman, 1994, p. 53)

*My mother lies on the hospice bed, wrapped up to her chin in blankets. Her skin is paper thin, her hair almost gone. I touch her hand and she opens her eyes and tries to smile.*

In the age of testimony teaching, I would venture to suggest, must in turn *testify*, make something *happen*, and not just transmit a passive knowledge. (Felman, 1994, p. 53)

*Her brown eyes are empty and hollowed – I don't think she recognizes me anymore. A nurse comes in, checks her i.v. and morphine drip, rearranges the sheets on the bed. My mother closes her eyes and winces, a soft moan escaping from her lips.*

I want my students to be able to receive information that is dissonant, and not just congruent, with everything that they have learned beforehand. Testimonial teaching fosters the capacity to witness something that may be surprising. (Felman, 1994, p. 53)

*"She's in pain", the nurse tells me, "but we can't risk increasing her morphine. This is what we call breakthrough pain, pain too strong for any medicines."*

Teaching must be viewed not merely as *transmitting*, but as *accessing*: as accessing the crisis or the critical dimension. . . The question for the teacher is, then, on the one hand, how to access, how *not to foreclose* the crisis, and, on the other hand, how to *contain it*, how much crisis can the class sustain. It is the teacher's task to recontextualize the crisis and to put it back into perspective, to relate the present to the past and to the future and to thus reintegrate the crisis in a *transformed* frame of meaning. (Felman, 1994, p. 54)

*She grips the sheets, twists her wasted body in agony. The nurse holds my mother by the shoulders and sings softly to her, wipes her forehead with a damp cloth. She glances at me. "Breakthrough pain usually doesn't last more than a minute or so, just keep holding her hand", she says. I bite my lip to keep from crying: I should be the one holding her, singing to her, cleaning her. I goddamnit, should be her comfort, not this stranger.*

In working through the crisis which broke the framework of the course, the dynamics of the class and the practice of my teaching exceeded, thus, the mere concept of the testimony as I had initially devised it and set out to teach it. What was first conceived as *theory* of testimony got unwittingly *enacted*, had become itself not theory, but an *event* of

life: of life as the perpetual necessity – and the perpetual predicament – of a learning that in fact can never end. (Felman, 1994, p. 55)

*The pain seems to have passed; my mother lies still. The nurse takes the top sheet from the bed – stained from my mother’s sweat and drool - and throws it into the empty corridor. She pulls a fresh sheet from a shelf and snaps it out across my mother’s sleeping body in one quick, efficient movement. I am jealous of her, of her ease with this woman in the bed whom I have spent most of my life hating, of her ability to soothe and love her when I can’t. I want to ask the nurse how it feels to know all her patients are going to die under her care, but my mother opens her eyes again. They light up when she sees me. “Hello darling”, she whispers, beaming. I am not sure if she means it, or if it is the morphine talking, but I stay in the room, holding her hand and singing, until dark.*

At a public lecture on campus, my colleague Yvonne Brown, an educator and activist in her own right, asked her audience to think about creating a pedagogy of pain, one that embraces the dark, prickly spaces of memory and suffering in order to push us into new realms of awareness and understanding. I think of the nurse’s words (*breakthrough pain is too strong for medicine; it only lasts a minute*) and wonder how we can extend moments of breakthrough pain into the classroom and beyond. I don’t want us to depend on morphine or the quick fix solutions - one day workshops, guest speakers or videos - so often favoured in teaching, to rid or mask what is really going on under our skins.

In many ways, the crisis that hit the project was a moment of breakthrough pain, one that could not be hidden away by easy, safe answers. The breakthrough pains of memory, of racism and of nation building forced us to embrace not just our selves, but each other, as we worked through the crisis and re-thought who we were and wanted to be. Yes, the pain cut deep and caused hurt, even bleeding and scarring. But, like the moment in the hospice when witnessing my mother’s breakthrough pain finally allowed me to love her the way she needed, the project’s breakthrough pain jolted me into action, and turned me

into a better teacher. As educators we need to *witness* our tolerance levels of breakthrough emotional and social pain, the areas that for us morphine cannot treat. In my case, these are my memories of my mother's death and my interrogations of my life of white privilege. In making peace with these pains within myself, I become better able to maintain safe spaces for inquiry and expression in my classrooms.

In using the phrase breakthrough pain, I need to distinguish here between the kinds of pain caused by collective experiences and memories of oppression, and the more individual pains of personal trauma, abuse or violence. I am not saying we should suddenly try to become therapists to our students in the sense of working through their personal traumas in the public space of the classroom. That is work we are not qualified to do, and would easily prove disastrous. What I *am* saying is that teaching to an engagement with and critique of collective pain and social crisis allows for students and teachers to experience breakthroughs in their collective and individual understandings of themselves in relation to history and society. Such a breakthrough is in itself a therapeutic moment, if we follow the dictionary definition of therapeutic as "having a good effect on the body or mind" (O.E.D., 2001, p. 943). I would dare to add that such breakthroughs are necessary in a social justice approach to teaching if we ever hope to facilitate deep and long lasting transformations amongst those we teach. And they only happen when we are willing to risk our emotions and venture into painful territories, at both personal and pedagogical levels.

*Thank you, thank you, thank you Shoshana, for making sense of this for me.*

*Part Three:*

*Transformation(s)*

## Chapter VII:

“You don’t fall asleep doing it”:

Performative space(s), Performative moment(s)

### Prologue:

This is drama and how it educates: for each of the students, their very acts of discovery and questioning are inherent parts of the theatre they produce when responding to a wide range of historical and personal narratives. . . students must have the opportunity to make meaning, to write themselves into their and others’ generational stories; to discover how performance might be constructed and to explore the possibility of *creating* memory. . . Drama educates by filling spaces in the struggle to trace history both remembered and not remembered, transmitted and not transmitted. (Zatzman, 2003, p. 36, 44)

\*

### Scene I

*A rainy Monday morning, almost half the class is absent. We move the desks and chairs to the side of the room, and I read them Dorothy Joseph’s testimony from Behind Closed Doors, in which the nuns call her a savage. Then I ask the students to create a shape or image with their bodies that shares their response to the testimony. Chelsea steps into the center of the space, straightens her back and points her finger to the ground. She freezes her entire body – her face, her neck, her shoulders, even the tip of her pointing finger – into one embodied expression of hate. When I move on to the next exercise, asking them to speak a monologue as that shape, Chelsea whispers “you dirty little savage, get over here, I’ll show you”. I let the exercise continue, to thirty seconds; Chelsea is beginning to spit, her face red, the bile spewing from her mouth, “who do you think you are, you little savage”; I am worried about Chelsea, she seems close to breaking, so I call out “10 seconds to go”; her voice pitches into one low, anguished sigh. Chelsea sinks to her knees, shaking, tears at the edges of her eyes. “Those words,” she tells the class, “were the sickest things I’ve ever said.” “But,” she writes later, “one of the most amazing things I’ve ever done, I had no idea I could act to be something I’m not.”*

\*

### Scene II

*I read the Socials Studies 11 class Ivy Macadams’s testimony from Opening Doors about the shooting and newspaper headline “four whites for one Jap – is it fair?”, and tell them we are going to make a group image response to the telling. We are beginning to talk about characters and struggles in the telling, when Elin raises her hand. “I don’t think we should respond to the telling as it is, just about the boys. I think we should make our image about the bigger picture of racism in the media today.”*

\*

### Scene III

*Working on this response image, almost half the class joins together on one side of the room, taking shapes to represent the media. They stand on chairs and desks, hold out cameras, and lean their heads together conspiratorially. While they take on these images, a smaller group, all girls, makes shapes of victim hood on the other side of the room: they lay on the floor, crouch together, hide their faces behind their hands, find ways of protecting each other with their bodies. In the center of this tableau stands another girl, defiantly refusing to look at either the media or the victims. She folds her arms across her chest and stares out the window. This image has unfolded – organically, performatively, critically – with no spoken direction from me or the class.*

\*

### Scene IV

*I ask students in the tableau to speak lines their image might say, lines that begin with “I’m afraid of” and “I want”. I do not give them much time to think about what they will say, for I want them to be able to speak directly in the moment. I move around the tableau, touching each student on the shoulder in turn, inviting and welcoming his or her words into the space. “I want them out of my country”, “I want to keep my power”, “I am afraid of not getting a good story” echo the voices of the frozen media. “I want to live”, “I am afraid of them”, “I want to be free”, cry the victims. When I get to the center, to the girl choosing to ignore both situations, she whispers, “I am afraid . . . of nothing.” Later, she tells the class she was showing what she thought was at the heart of both the testimony and the group response image. She was, she said “representing power, that can choose to see what it wants to see and ignore the rest – and that kind of power has no fear, because they never let anything get too close to them.”*

\*

### Epilogue

All these embodied, expressive, literate insights.

All this collective, co-operative action.

All this art.

From students who, when sitting at their desks, would not / could not say a word.

Breaking the Framework: Drama as process of answering

I want to concentrate in this chapter on how Drama as a process allowed the crisis of witnessing to “break the very framework of the class” (Felman, 1992, p. 48) and “pass



through its own answerlessness" (Felman, 1992, p. 50). I want to simply let the students tell you how this happened:

**I PERSONALLY FEEL THAT LEARNING IN THIS WAY IS BETTER THAN DOING QUESTIONS OR TAKING NOTES FROM A TEXTBOOK. IT BRINGS PEOPLE TO BE MORE OPENLY INVOLVED IN THE MATERIAL THAT IS BEING STUDIED. I THINK IT MADE ME UNDERSTAND THE TOPIC MORE BECAUSE YOU HAVE TO STOP AND TRY TO SEE THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE DRAMA AND THE TOPIC. . . I WISH MORE LESSONS WERE TAUGHT IN THIS MANNER.**  
(NATALIE, SS 11)

**THE DRAMA REALLY MADE ME THINK ABOUT THE CHARACTERS IN ALL THE STORIES. I FELT CLOSE TO THEM AND, AT SOME POINTS, UNDERSTOOD THEIR PAIN AS WELL.**  
(CHELSEA, FN 12)

**IN OTHER COURSES WE ARE TOLD WHAT TO THINK BUT HERE, WITH ACTING, IT'S ALL UP TO YOU. WHAT I LEARNED MOST FROM THE THEATRE GAMES WAS SEEING WHAT EVERYONE ELSE FELT ABOUT THE CHARACTERS THEY WERE PORTRAYING. IT MADE ME SEE HOW DIFFERENT EVEN YOUR CLOSEST FRIEND CAN SEE SOMETHING THAT YOU SEE A DIFFERENT WAY.**  
(JENNIFER, SS 11)

**LEARNING THIS WAY WAS A COMPLETELY NEW EXPERIENCE FOR ME. I AM NOT USUALLY A PERSON WHO ENJOYS IMPROVISATION OR UNPLANNED EVENTS OF ANY SORT, BUT THIS HELPED ME TO PUSH MY SELF AND PUT MYSELF IN THE SHOES OF ANOTHER HUMAN AND TO PLAY THE ROLE OF A RACIST. I DID THIS IN THE HOPE OF COMPREHENDING THE MENTALITY OF THOSE WHO ARE RACIST.**  
(BRYAN, FN 12)

**IT CHALLENGED ME TO STEP OUT OF MY NICE, COZY SHELL AND TAKE RISKS. I WANTED TO REALLY HELP, TO GET MY IDEAS OUT THERE. WE HAVEN'T REALLY BEEN IN A RACIAL ISSUE WHERE SOMEONE IS DISCRIMINATED AGAINST, SO THIS WAS A GOOD EYE OPENER.**  
(MEGAN, SS 11)

**IT FELT A LOT DIFFERENT TO LEARN THIS WAY, BUT I PREFERRED IT. THIS PROCESS GOT ME TO PUT MYSELF IN SOMEONE ELSE'S SHOES AND CONSIDER THEIR THOUGHTS, EMOTIONS AND PERSPECTIVES. IT CHALLENGED ME TO GO DEEPER THAN THE FACTS AND EXPLORE THE HUMAN IMPACT OF OUR HISTORY. I LIKED THE COLLECTIVE EXPERIENCE . . . IT GIVES STUDENTS A MUCH MORE PROFOUND INSIGHT THAN A TEXTBOOK WOULD. . . I WOULD MAKE EACH UNIT LONGER, IF POSSIBLE.**

(BRIDGET, SS 11)

**I WAS REALLY NERVOUS AND UNSURE OF HOW IT WAS GOING TO WORK BECAUSE IT IS NOT SOMETHING THAT I HAVE ENJOYED IN THE PAST. I DON'T LIKE PUTTING MYSELF OUT THERE IN FRONT OF MY PEERS. HOWEVER, ONCE WE STARTED AND I REALIZED THAT WE WERE ALL IN IT TOGETHER, I REALLY ENJOYED IT. IT REALLY CHALLENGED ME, BUT I FELT GOOD BECAUSE I KNEW THERE WAS NO WRONG ANSWER. I HAVE GROWN AS I LEARNED ABOUT BOTH THE PEOPLE OF EAST VANCOUVER AND MYSELF. I HAVE NEVER DONE ANYTHING LIKE IT BEFORE, AND IT WAS REALLY WORTHWHILE.**

**(KIARA, SS 11)**

The critical imagination and the third space:

The fascinating thing about these reflections is that, almost to a one, the students are intertwining their personal growth, their learning about the testimonies and their learning about the drama process into one seamless narrative that incorporates with fluidity Laub's (1992, p. 75) three levels of witnessing (witnessing oneself within the experience, witnessing the testimonies, and witnessing the process of witnessing itself).

This is exciting, for it shows that they are starting to work and think from a shared point of critical interrogation *and* imagination, that to them the two domains go hand in hand. I would venture to suggest here that it was the process of embodying and living their responses, of drawing "upon their emotions to unfold their cultural imagination" (Rizvi, 1994, p. 59) that allowed them to reach moments of critical insight. The process was circular, without a clear beginning and certainly with no end. It was the drama process, and where it led the students into their own personal inquiries of their internal and external boundaries and surroundings, that moved the discourses of race, nation, class and memory from crisis to transformation and action. It was the drama, that educated.

Is this the fabled "third space" of which Bhaba speaks? Did incorporating Boal's techniques "open up the possibilities for new structures of authority, and for new politics

of resistance to be created” (Rizvi, 1994, p. 63)? I would argue that the entire project found and conducted itself, celebrating witnessing at multiple levels, within that space – and beyond.

Finding the third space was just the beginning for these students. Moving into the third space – and here I quibble with the notion that spaces must be numbered sequentially, and that the ultimate destination is a mere third, *troisieme*, bronze, for surely there must be as many spaces as we have minds and memories? – and beyond to re-articulate the boundaries of what they thought was possible in their minds and bodies became a way for these students to “lay down possible new worlds” (Varela, 1987, p. 68), spaces and – most importantly – ways of knowing. The third, and fourth and five hundredth spaces inhabited by the project’s performative moments became, in and of themselves, literacies.

*Literacy as reading codes, literacy as trickster*

Eisner (1997, p. 135) defines literacy as “an ability to read, interpret and communicate codes in any medium.” How, then, were the students in the project becoming literate? They were not being asked to read any texts in the traditional, alphabetic way; however, they were being asked and encouraged to read themselves, the bodies of their classmates, and the tellings and teachings behind each testimony. They became culturally literate, able to read and communicate their understandings on “the interrelationships between power structures, the hidden and not-so hidden agendas of the oppressed and the oppressor” (Fels, 2001, p. 3). Through their growing comfort with Boal’s methodology, they developed a performative literacy, not only in that they were able to use the language

of Boal to express their learning and feeling, but also in that the performative act led them “from the single-dimensionality of dichotomies towards an understanding of the multiplicity of perspective and outcomes possible” (Fels, 2001, p. 5).

This kind of literacy, this ability to read and move through media, codes and meanings in a creative and critical way, is what Fernandez (2001, p.117) calls “trickster literacies . . . lush literacies that are in constant motion around us.” She goes on to comment “that these literacies often remain invisible is paradoxical. That our impoverished pedagogies cannot learn from these literacies is still more paradoxical.” I think of this project as a form of trickster literacy, as it shifted from body to mind to bodymind, from storytelling to performance and back.

In the First Nations Studies 12 class, the academically ‘weaker’ of the two groups (i.e., students whose success at traditional academics and literacy had been limited), something extraordinary began to take root about midway through the unit. Suddenly, at the end of each lesson, students who two weeks previous had had trouble finding their feedback forms were rushing back to their desks to begin scribbling down their ideas. They would write furiously and passionately, often after the bell rang, until they had said all they needed to say. The trickster was moving through them, realizing a voice that had long been silenced by traditional learning structures and assessments. Perhaps the greatest trickster was Bryan, who after a lesson in which we witnessed a testimony from *Behind Closed Doors* about two girls who tried to run away from the school, wrote that “hearing this story made me want to try to write a story about those girls, about them running

away.” Bryan traveled, in the space of a few minutes, from witnessing to responding to analyzing and then wanting to create his own response in another artistic medium. To further illuminate the impact Anne and I felt in the room during these lessons, and the shifts we knew were happening in the students’ ability to read the word and the world, I want to share with you another extract from my final interview with Anne:

**J:** I think the reason they worked so quickly when we got to the written parts was that the embodied work, the theatre, had touched something inside them, that they felt this huge need to try to write it down, to express it, to tell their story.

**A:** They felt they were doing something.

**J:** Yes, they were being asked to do something that they felt was somehow relevant to their lives.

**A:** And I know you were collecting data from the questions, but you know, all those questions you used in your data could also be used by me as a teacher to get feedback from the kids, to evaluate their learning - just from those forms, I would know what they learned, how they learned it, I would know everything.

**J:** It was a unit taught through performance, which leads us to the concept of performative literacy . . . and so I want to ask you how would you define the term literacy?

**A:** In a simplistic form, the ability to read and understand, to write and make yourself understood, to spectate and observe, to interpret - that to me is literacy.

**J:** And in performative literacy, we believe we can come to be able to read and understand the world, through engaging in Drama.

**A:** Totally, I believe that too.

**J:** and that was what was happening, especially with the First Nations Studies 12 students, who might not have strong alphabetic skills, but they were responding so strongly in the drama work, because it touched something inside them that more traditional ways of teaching couldn’t - this validated them, made them literate, perhaps for the first time in several years. And this literacy was moving from their body up into their heads, and then they were wanting to get alphabetically literate, they were wanting to write it down. That was incredible, just scribbling, they had no writer’s block, no frustration, because it had already been created for them to write down through the work, like you said, it’s a methodology.

**A:** what a valid assessment - because not only am I getting their gut reaction to the work, which is the most honest, but I’m also seeing how they’re interpreting it, how to take the ideas one step further, it’s an exciting way to plan, to ask yourself just how far can we go

with this? What links can we make? I mean some of those kids wrote more for you in your few days with them than they wrote for me all year.

J: And that writing was coming from a very natural place, they had it right there, and that was what blew me away, seeing the confidence level raise. So it's like we have to reverse how we think about teaching and learning - start with the body, get them feeling and thinking in that way and then let it come into a head, intellectual way of knowing.

A: Learning doesn't have to be all dates and names and places. Learning can be this, what we did. Learning can be that, feeling it from the inner self - like I learned something today, yes the kids learned something about residential schools or East Van, but they also learned that they reacted to that knowledge, and they didn't like what they heard.

*Trickster, that says it all.*

Writing the moment: frustrations of writing about performance

*No, nervous, proud, different*

*Please, confidant, proud, loyal*

*Different*

*Excited, loyal*

*Different*

*Nervous, please*

*Different*

*Loyal*

*Different*

*Nervous*

*Different*

*Please*

*Different*

*No*

*Different, Different, Different!*

*Proud*

How can I write about the performative? Do I tell you what happened, lay out the rules of the exercise, who moved where, who stood where, who spoke what? Would a diagram

help, a map, with arrows and circles and footnotes to tell you how it felt? The words you just read, what do they mean to you? If I tell you that these words were spoken by members of the Social Studies 11 class, and that they created one of the most transformative and magical moments of the unit, would you believe me?

Boal has an exercise called soundscape that I love, because it encourages a different kind of listening. After the group has formed its response image, I ask them to think individually of one word to express their feelings as that image. Then I move through the image, touching participants on the shoulder and inviting them to share their word. I move quickly between sounds, sometimes asking one person to repeat theirs, so that the words begin to blur together into an aural soundscape. Not only do participants need to be “unobtrusively present” (Felman, 1992, p. 71) to their own sound, they need to listen to what the others are saying, as well as be ready for my invitation. The soundscape then becomes its own exercise in witnessing a testimony of response.

After reading Ivy Kaji McAdams’s testimony about her brother at the swimming pool, I asked the class to form their response image or tableau as possible “cops in the head” (Boal, 1992) or voices that form in the mind of the protagonist Peter, who was being portrayed by Alyssa. The students moved chairs and tables, as was becoming their habit, and gathered around Alyssa in different poses, some supportive, some hostile. When the soundscape exercise began, those words came out.

I found myself lingering on Bridget's "*different*" and wanting to hear it in contrast to the other voices. Bridget spoke her word aggressively, angrily, harshly, for she wanted Peter/Alyssa to feel, to know, he did not belong. As I kept welcoming her word into the soundscape, her voice raised in volume and ferocity until it was at a fever pitch, drowning out everything else. Why did I stay with that word? It just struck me in the moment as what could be explored; the hatred and fear involved in naming difference.

But how do I *tell* you, now, what power that moment held for all of us in the room? How do I get you to see the image, to hear the edgy scratch, the near hysteria in Bridget's voice, the quiet assurance in Alyssa's as she kept whispering "*please*", the utter pin-drop silence between the words, as the group focused so intently on their spect-acting? How can I bring you into that room, that moment, that space – or should I even try?

Maybe sharing a piece of conversation will help:

**A:** The scene in socials 11 - the kids were blown away. I liked the fact that they were blown away and at the end they could really sense the power of the work they'd done.

**J:** It was so intense, that last exercise, especially when they'd been so lethargic at the beginning of class.

**A:** when the whole thing came together, they told the story of how they felt about it - Bridget saying "different".

**J:** I found the soundscape amazing too, all those words.

**A:** and how do you put something like that down on paper - it would look like nothing

**J:** yes, and you have to see it in the context of what has happened before, what the shapes were that the kids were making. . how they just came out of themselves and went so deeply into the work.



A: it was almost like a branching out into this avant garde drama thing - I mean, come on, making shapes and soundscapes in the middle of a socials classroom - but it all made sense. I was sitting there watching the work and it made complete sense to me, what they were telling me with those sounds.

*Now, read the soundscape again, and tell me what you hear:*

*No, nervous, proud, different*

*Please, confidant, proud, loyal*

*Different*

*Excited, loyal*

*Different*

*Nervous, please*

*Different*

*Loyal*

*Different*

*Nervous*

*Different*

*Please*

*Different*

*No*

*Different, Different, Different!*

*Proud*

The performative space is like no other research space. It breathes, it swallows, it moves between, through and around the spaces we thought were already there. It reveals the hidden, silent spaces we never knew we wanted or would be able to find. The performative space is constantly opening and closing itself around us. It folds and stretches the canvas of who we are and what we can do. It belongs to one, it belongs to all – simultaneously – and excludes only those who do not think they want it. Yet.

The performative moment, like the Stop, is when the performative space becomes its own living, breathing entity, and all boundaries of classroom and knowledge disappear. The performative moment tells its own transformation story, reveals its own aesthetic (a beauty, a moment of being most alive, a choice) just when we most need it. In the heat of a performative moment we forget who we are, where we were, and know only this: the word, the sound, the image, the breath. We cross the threshold of our own preconceived ability, take a leap of faith, jump into the deep water without a lifejacket, take off our shoes and walk through the fire. And we surface on the other side, in our own realm of memory and make believe, still breathing, still swimming, still walking. Unscathed and unscarred, waving but never drowning. The performative moment is as simple as a sixteen year old girl whispering “you dirty savage”; it is as powerful as a teenaged boy writing a story; it is as endless and universal as another girl shouting “different” into her classmate’s head. The performative moment *is* us: it belongs to us, speaks to and with us, walks through and around us. We are its recipients but never its captors, and we must learn to hold, celebrate, nurture, share it . . . and ultimately release it.

Maybe I should not have tried writing about it after all. Or maybe this tension between being and documenting is in itself an aesthetic, performative experience. Can I make “the teaching of the aesthetic experience” my “pedagogic creed” (Greene, 1994, p. 133)?

## Chapter VIII

### Implications

*Teachers might even be able to think in terms of yet another metaphor – that of the landscaper, someone who endeavors to change the lay of the land . . . but this is unlikely to work well if teachers merely follow the dictates of an architectural landscaper who never gets down into the dirt. It also won't work well if teachers focus only on their own garden plot and fail to see its relation to the larger overall design of the site. At the macro level, our educational systems need to be spaces that are both functional and beautiful.*  
(Reynolds, 1996, p. 76)

"This isn't just some words in a textbook, it's real":

Student reflections . . .

. . . On story / truth telling:

***I THINK LEARNING FROM THIS RESOURCE WAS MUCH MORE EFFECTIVE. INSTEAD OF BEING TOLD BY A TEXTBOOK WHAT HAPPENED, WE LEARNED ABOUT THE HISTORY THROUGH THE WORDS OF THE PEOPLE WHO LIVED IT. IT MADE A MUCH MORE PERSONAL AND INSIGHTFUL PROCESS.***

**(BRIDGET, SS 11)**

***IN MY OPINION YOU CANNOT EVEN COMPARE THE EFFECT THAT LISTENING TO THESE REAL LIFE MEMORIES HAD ON MY UNDERSTANDING OF THE URBAN EXPERIENCE COMPARED TO LEARNING FROM TEXTBOOKS OR EVEN VIDEOS. IN REALITY YOU NEVER REALLY REMEMBER ANYTHING FROM OUTDATED BORING TEXTBOOKS, BUT HEARING THOSE EXPERIENCES REALLY MADE ME THINK AND TAKE TO HEART WHAT WAS BEING SAID.***

**(BIANCA, SS 11)**

***THE STORIES WERE REAL MEMORIES, NOT JUST A RESEARCH PAGE FOR A TEXTBOOK. THE EFFECT IT HAS HAD ON MY UNDERSTANDING OF THE URBAN EXPERIENCE IS HOW EVERYDAY OF THEIR LIVES PEOPLE REMIND THEM OF "WHAT THEY ARE".***

**(ELIN, SS 11)**

. . . On spect-acting:

***AT FIRST IT WAS PRETTY SCARY AND NERVE RACKING BECAUSE YOU DID NOT KNOW WHAT TO EXPECT, BUT IT DEFINITELY MADE YOU REALLY REFLECT ON WHAT YOU WERE***

**LEARNING, AND INSPIRED YOU TO PUSH YOURSELF TO TAKE ON EACH ROLE AS IF IT WERE REALLY HAPPENING TO YOU.**

**(BIANCA, SS 11)**

**IT WAS EASIER TO LEARN FROM DRAMA THAN TEXT BECAUSE IT WAS MORE FUN, AND WHEN PEOPLE ARE ENJOYING THEMSELVES AND HAVING FUN THEY LEARN BETTER.**

**(RYAN, FN 12)**

**AT FIRST IT WAS HARD BUT IT BECAME EASIER AS THE CLASS BECAME MORE COMFORTABLE WITH THE IDEA. IT MADE ME FEEL LIKE I WAS THE PERSON. I LEARNED TO TAKE CHANCES AND DO SOMETHING I'M NOT SO INTO DOING.**

**(CORY, FN 12)**

**LEARNING THROUGH DRAMA DARED THOSE PARTICIPATING TO ACTUALLY GET IN THE MINDS OF THE CHARACTERS AND UNDERSTAND ON A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT LEVEL. THE GAMES INSPIRED ME TO REACH THAT LEVEL OF UNDERSTANDING IN MY OTHER CLASSES AND ASSIGNMENTS.**

**(SAMM, SS 11)**

... On Transforming

... other schools and other students:

**I THINK THIS WOULD BE EXCELLENT TO BE TAUGHT IN SCHOOLS. IT WOULD TEACH EMPATHY, SYMPATHY, ACTING AND PUBLIC SPEAKING SKILLS AS WELL AS CONCEPTS OF RACISM AND HISTORY.**

**(MURRAY, SS 11)**

**IT SHOULD BE TAUGHT IN OTHER SCHOOLS BECAUSE IF NOT THEY WILL PROBABLY NEVER HAVE THE CHANCE TO REALLY OPEN THEIR EYES TO MANY THINGS. IT WAS A REALLY POWERFUL EXPERIENCE THAT ALL SHOULD HAVE THE CHANCE TO EXPERIENCE.**

**(BIANCA, SS 11)**

**THIS UNIT SHOULD BE TAUGHT IN OTHER SCHOOLS BECAUSE I THINK IT HELPS STUDENTS LEARN MORE AND FASTER.**

**(TODD, FN 12)**

**IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO TEACH THIS ELSEWHERE BECAUSE IT HELPS OPEN YOUR MIND TO THINKING ABOUT ISSUES MOST PEOPLE NORMALLY DON'T SPEND A LOT OF TIME THINKING ABOUT.**

**(BRYAN, SS 11)**

... and themselves:

**ALL THE STEREOTYPES OR TERRIBLE THINGS I HEARD ABOUT THE DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE DON'T AFFECT ME AS MUCH. I AM NOT AS NAÏVE AS I WAS, AND I'VE REALIZED THAT THE WAY I HAVE ACTED IN THE PAST IS ONLY CONTRIBUTING TO THEIR SUFFERING. MY**

**BELIEFS HAVE BEEN ALTERED BECAUSE I KNOW NOW WHAT THESE PEOPLE HAVE TO SUFFER WITH EVERYDAY, AND IF MANY OTHERS COULD MAKE THE CHANGE I DID DURING THIS UNIT, THAT WOULD BE GREAT. (ELIN, SS 11)**

Transforming our teaching: a hard-nosed reality check

What if teachers . . .

- came to expect diversity rather than conformity in their classrooms?
- actually worked with one another to solve problems?
- felt free enough to admit that they had problems?
- were encouraged to be reformers, even rebels, and given the necessary supports for their efforts?
- were encouraged to see and deal with the partiality of their own knowledge, the limits of their ability to control behavior and their subjective responses to their students?
- had a say in the social policies they were asked to implement?
- were treated like professionals rather than children?
- were able to choose when and with whom they wished to collaborate?

(Reynolds, 1996, pp. 75-76)

So, with a unit that created this much impact on one small part of the educational landscape, what are the realistic chances of this kind of work being implemented on a larger scale? How effective is an individual teacher's transformation if it stops at awareness or consciousness-raising but not does transcend into committed and sustainable action? What are the very real structural barriers that must be overcome to bring risky but transformative pedagogies out into the open – and how will they be received by an educational system and culture that “hold a depoliticized, liberal view of education . . . that does not perceive curriculum content, classroom processes and school organization as the outcome of past and current struggles over what is to be taught, to whom, why and how” (Hursh, 1995, pp. 105-106)? How “do we negotiate a safe place for our art within a system that feels monstrous and immutable? Do we use our art to help question and change the monstrous system? Is there a middle ground” (Murray, 2000, p. 103)? And what good would the middle ground be if it did *not* succeed in changing the system?

"How teachers talk about teaching . . . reflects the discourse of the larger society."

Murray, Anne, Hursh and Jacyntha in conversation

*H: If teachers are to become reflective, to raise questions of what is to be taught, to whom, how and for what purpose, they must treat their classroom practices as problems and analyse how their classrooms are supported or contradicted by the discourses and organizational structures of schooling. Education is political in the sense that the organization of the school and the curriculum content practices are outcomes of contested political goals. . . Teachers' discourses need to be analysed continually to see which of the competing concepts of society and schooling they reflect and perpetuate (Hursh, 1995, p. 108-109).*

**J: So when you have conversations with other teachers, do you talk much about this stuff - social justice or anti-racism work?**

**A: No, we talk about budget, and photocopying. People just don't have the time or the energy. This stuff - social justice - is not viewed as a priority.**

**We've talked about how by about year 15 of a teacher's career, they have seen how everything new or innovative gets shut down, and they don't want to bother anymore. They're just coasting waiting for their retirement, and I would say that's true of most teachers. They back off from social justice work because it's just too exhausting, overwhelming, much work. Training would be a huge issue. What you did in this project, well, a lot of teachers just would not be comfortable with that. First of all, anything that is controversial, like racism, that rubs others the wrong way, that emphasizes whiteness, teachers will just stay away from. That's wrong, but these kinds of lessons can cause teachers so much grief, with parent and admin complaints, that the teacher might just say "why do it if it's going to cause me so much trouble, I may as well just bypass it and not worry about." And I think because of the way the school system is set up, that's the problem.**

*M: How do we recognize and work within the complex and often contradictory messages teachers receive that make them doubt their own artistry and its place in their teaching? (Murray, 2000, 103)*

**A: For me to do this? I would need a major workshop, like a course. I mean, I have some drama experience but nothing that can give me that kind of ease that you showed in the classes. So I would want to be put in the situation where I could learn how to work like that before I could actually go with it into a classroom of my own.**

*M: Is the genuine and lasting presence of Drama in any school anything less than an act of reform? (Murray, 2000, p. 103)*

A: So many teachers don't have the background in real, nitty gritty facilitation that would give them the confidence and skills to take on this kind of work. I'm not talking about an afternoon pro-d workshop, but a full interactive course, one that talks not only about facilitation, but also the topics, the issues you're covering, so you can do it right.

Like how do you walk in there and be as confident as you were. I mean you were taking a huge risk because you didn't know these kids, had no idea what kind of a response you'd get. For me, I would be taking a risk on something else. I would know the kids, know the potential responses, but at the same time my real risk would be the actual doing, the actual moving of the desks and getting them to start making shapes with their bodies.

J: I think that that's the challenge - finding that way of being within yourself and feel confident using that, then finding ways to encourage teachers to develop that sense of themselves as facilitators. It's a teaching skill.

A: Yes, and I think it is something that can be taught. I could learn it, if I'm in the right environment, observing you was already a beginning. Everything I was watching, like how you set the chairs up, how you had them move, where, where you stood, how you went into the crowd. I watched you, which was great - but there has to come a time when I do, myself.

I would like to reverse the role, I would like you to watch me. This is what I'm going to do, and I want constructive criticism and collaboration from a colleague, which is another thing that is lacking in the system. We just don't have time to go around doing this kind of stuff in our workday.

J: This needs like a year.

A: I would say a three-month, minimum, drama program, just to get the essentials of drama. Like, a Drama for the classroom teacher, to really understand image theatre, the philosophy and approaches. Now that I've got those approaches, I need to work on how to present an issue of social justice through this approach to drama in your classroom, we need that kind of process to get really comfortable with the work and its potential.

*M: Is it realistic to expect deep and thorough support of the arts from all administrative realms? (Murray, 2000, p. 103)*

A: and sometimes the support - the resources and the courses, just aren't there.

J: So if we want to improve our practice, where do we look, who do we turn to?

A: In Langley's favour, Langley has one of the most developed professional development programs for teachers at nominal costs, so it is a good district that

way. So we need to figure out how to use people that we have to help us change - we don't have to pay the big bucks to fly someone in from Toronto or the States, we can find the support we need in our own communities. We have you, who live down the street.

### *Full Circle: The student teaches the teacher*

There was a time when I ran to her, desperate, seeking help and assurance - and only her words could soothe me

*L'enseignement, cest l'enseignement: Teaching is teaching – you can do it*

Late at night, sleepless, restless, terrified of failure -  
I would call her up and whisper my fears across the urban telephone wires  
and into her 25 years of experience

And even then - even when she had watched us teach all day, had driven her car across the city to meet with me, had offered ideas, suggestions, books and guides, had sent me emails, had spoken with my supervisor, had eaten lunch in her car so she would not be late for our meeting, had laughed when I tried to tell the class a joke, had said “who cares about the product, look what you were doing in the process” when I screwed it all up yet again –

and then she had driven home  
across two suburbs in rush-hour traffic, to leftovers, phone messages,  
emails, questions and confusion, hours of prep before she could put her feet up –

then I call, just as she was slipping into sleep, slipping into bed beside her husband,  
slipping into a warm bubble bath, slipping into something more comfortable  
than being a university instructor to wannabe teachers, wannabe world changers  
who would not/could not write unit plans the way the faculty wanted them to –

then I, the most difficult, unfocussed student of all, the activist, the actress, the traveler,  
the one who kept wanting to write stories instead of essays, who always seemed within  
a hair's breadth of dropping out, dropping down, dropping away, dropping like flies,

never waving, always drowning,  
the one she always needed to save, to reel back in from the churning middle waters -

I would phone her late at night, and say

*“Je ne peux pas le faire, je ne sais pas quoi faire”*: I can't do it, I don't know what to do



because I was tired, because books made me nervous, because that day the principal had yelled at me for taking kids into the hallway during class hours and causing a ruckus (I had wanted them to tour the school in French – they were learning the vocab anyway)

and she would stop what she was doing – stop eating, stop making love, stop living her life – and listen to me cry

and before we said goodnight she would always say

*L'enseignement c'est l'enseignement . . . et toi, tu es une professeur*

So now, a decade later, I sit in her newly-remodelled kitchen (they did it themselves, she and her husband, cheaper that way, but took them forever), and she pours me a drink, and presses garlic for the salad, and throws meat on the grill

And I feel at home, and safe – though I have lived a teaching career on the edge, in places and sites of violence, of conflict, of change and hope - back in her embrace.

The tables have turned, this year I have been her teacher – have walked into her world and torn it upside down, told her students to stand on chairs and lay on the floor, have spoken of race, and legacy, and disturbing new memories – and she, she tells me now in her kitchen, on this warm early summer evening, has learned from me.

Learned that change, and hope, and saving the world is not a crazy, washed out dream – learned that all those calls were not in vain, for they brought us to be here, tonight, again.

*L'enseignement c'est l'enseignement: teaching is teaching, and we will do it.*

## *Chapter IX*

### *A kind of conclusion, I guess*

When I finished this project in June, I spent weeks searching for ways to write about it. Every morning I would make a big pot of tea and sit down at my computer – and cry. Something about the black and white type, the finality of trying to put all that magic into academic, rational and objective language, trying to fill the voids of the blank pages with quotes and insights that would make sense . . . just shut me down. What happened in this project felt, at that time, too rough, too raw, too sacred to turn into a research product.

So I took my time, read some more, went to Europe, wrote and published some creative stories, broke up with my boyfriend, grieved and figured out how to move on – and came back to the thesis in the fall. I was still getting nowhere in Vancouver, so I packed up my laptop, notes and books and headed to the Cariboo, where a friend gave me the keys to her cabin in the backwoods. The Cariboo has been my spiritual home since I began my teaching career there a decade ago, and it is where I return to whenever I need healing, or comforting, or wisdom, or renewal. I go there because the air is fresh, the nights are clear and cold, and I can sleep under a blanket of stars and wake up to horses grazing by my window. I go there to remind myself of a world bigger than me; I go there to love and be in love; I go there to teach and be taught, to write and be written. I go there, to be alive.

It was almost dark when I arrived at the cabin, after winding my way through several kilometers of mountain backroads. A herd of cattle had kept me company for part of the

way, and I was pretty sure I had seen a bear running up into the hills at one point. The changing leaves of spruce and alder trees spread carpets of gold, bronze, red and burgundy across the valley, and the stars were just starting to come out. I drove down the pot-holed drive to the cabin, got out and stretched. The air was sharp, noticeably cooler; I took several slow, deep breaths to clear all the cobwebs and confusion from my brain. Then I unpacked my laptop, opened up the cabin, got a fire going, made a pot of tea, and sat down to write. And there, under the stars, surrounded by scents of cinnamon and cedar, I wrote the first words of this thesis, the poem that responds to Joy Kogawa.

I have tried, in this writing, to weave together two narratives: the analytic narrative of the research, grounded in theories and literatures and data, and the more creative, autobiographical narrative of my own personal journeys through the data and theories and literatures. My hope is that the creative narratives need no extra analysis or explanation: I want them to complement, enhance and illuminate the threads of analysis: my hope is that they form their own inquiry, draw you in and give you the freedom to interpret them as you need. They bear witness to my histories of forgetting and re/membering and invite you to witness your stories of social justice teaching, pedagogy, and the arts. In this way, you and I will reach what Taylor and Saarinen call “interstanding”, since “understanding has become impossible because nothing stands under, interstanding has become unavoidable because everything stands in between” (Taylor & Saarinen, 1994, p. 2).

In many ways, this project was one big foray into interstanding. We witnessed the spaces in which we live, teach, and learn – the spaces we must find news ways of sharing. We

uncovered serious gaps in a curriculum driven by white settler mythologies, and tried to untangle the knots of memory, history, race, place, and nation. We challenged ourselves and our students to work beyond our comfort zones, to take risks, to blur the boundaries of our imaginations. We cried, we swore, we got confused. It hurt, deeply, to recognize ourselves and our bodies as implicated in the dual legacies of colonialism and racism.

We became literate in a new methodology. The students used words like image theatre, interior monologue, cops in the head and soundscape as they would use words like book, pen, test and essay. They began the unit as learners, then discovered they could be actors - socially and artistically – until they ended the unit as spect-actors in their own right, on a stage full of the tumbling geographies of remembrance. They left the unit with a raised critical awareness not only of their understandings of oppression, history and social change, but of their ability to know and express themselves on these issues.

There are obstacles, of course, to seeing this work come to fruition. We wished we had had more time to fully explore our questions and uncertainties in greater depth. I needed, perhaps, more preparation, more context, before going in to teach the unit, so that I would have been more aware of their needs and gaps before we began . . . but then, if I had known all I know now, would the crisis had happened, would the learning be as rich?

The senior secondary curriculum is so full, packed, overflowing – with outcomes, with exams, with university entrances, with the diverse concerns of parents and administrators, with budget cuts and fear. With so *much* fear - of offending, of wasting time, of not being

efficient and sufficient – that finding time to implement new approaches is almost impossible. Teachers, too, may want to take the risk and time to try new methodologies, but feel unskilled or unsupported. Ongoing opportunities for professional training and support, both in anti-oppression and arts education – through public institutions like universities, school boards or grassroots community groups - are vital if “teachers are to think like artists and gain comfort in taking risks” (Murray, 2000, p. 102). And as Murray continues to make clear:

true change seems to need more than money; it requires focused, negotiated, community belief towards re-envisioning urban schools. It requires support from the larger administrative body for that systemic reform. If we believe drama is truly a transformative art, we need to be strategic in how and why we share it.

We need also to be strategic about how we implement new resources like oral histories. Seek them out and use them, trusting that your students will value their truth telling as the Langley students did. Trust too that the bodies that manage us – our administrators and parents – will respect our work if we present it in an honest, up-front and open manner, if we give clear justifications and explanations of our rationale ahead of time. Remember, Langley is a conservative, Christian space, and – surprisingly - not one parent complained about the work, so why should your learning community be any different?

This project ends in hope. Community organizations like Vancouver Status of Women and Headlines Theatre have begun actively offering intensive training workshops for educators on anti-oppression and Boal pedagogies respectively. I have been able to share my work and insights in a series of hands-on workshops both for UBC teacher education students and Vancouver School Board professionals, and the response every time has been

overwhelmingly positive, with teachers pro-actively choosing to try this work on their own. I have been hired by a national multiliteracies research project co-ordinated at UBC's Language and Literacy Education department to develop two projects with Vancouver schools that will explore drama as a literacy in its own right. For the next few months, I will work with four teachers who want to use the work of Boal to stimulate critical creativity and communication in their classrooms. We will talk, map, plan our mutual visions, and find the spaces for interstanding our selves and our practice. I will offer ideas, they will take the work and make it their own . . . and if they get stuck, or need encouragement, or someone to laugh and cry with, I will come into their classrooms and work through whatever crises or answerlessness made them Stop. Later, we will share our findings with other practitioners, through writing, through acting, through speaking – through being. We have started. We are on our way. Here. Today.

#### *What Next?: Suggestions for further research*

The teaching of humanities touches on phenomena fundamental to the human (and humane) experience, and by its very nature deals with issues both sensitive and controversial. In this subject area, anything can be a potential landmine, a trap door leading into the next crisis of witnessing. Yes, we are walking straight into landmines anytime we open our mouths to name oppression and its perpetrators, or whenever we stand up against racism, homophobia, sexism, ablism and other forms of discrimination. But we cannot simply keep walking on eggshells hoping we don't get into too much trouble. We as educators must be willing to delve into murky, contested territories, knowing that the work might be difficult and knowing too that it might generate more

questions than answers. Some unfinished questions I have from this project, and ones requiring further thought and research, include the following:

- How do we define the role of the teacher in social justice pedagogies, and how does that role influence classroom dynamics?
- How can experienced teachers work with beginning teachers and students in teacher education programs to create and implement innovative approaches to social justice teaching?
- The Langley project tried to create an analysis that integrated class, race and gender oppressions, a discourse for which the students were not ready. Is a social justice pedagogy that attempts to look at oppression as a relational or intersectional experience feasible in the senior secondary curriculum?
- What other experiences of oppression or injustice within Canada's borders might senior secondary students be unaware of? Do oral histories from these groups exist as public documents? How can they be used in ways similar to these units?
- How could this research and these two units benefit students in communities with opposite demographics to Langley's (e.g. highly diverse, low income schools)?
- How can this work be shared, in a meaningful way, with other practitioners, and be supported and sustained beyond token academic research projects?
- What would an extended version of this unit – sixteen lessons over a semester, for example – look and play out like in senior secondary curricula?
- How can the teaching of drama as a process for understanding and reading the world become a core, integrated curricular practice at the senior secondary level?

*A final note: Witnessing, public cultures and Jomar Lenot*

Anne: This kind of work can be done, I mean you were only in my classroom a few weeks, but the impact was huge. Kids went home and talked about the work, which to me is a perfect indicator that they learned something. They wondered about it, it made them curious. And now, I would bet that if those kids were in a group where anyone was saying anything about First Nations, or residential schooling, or East Van or Hastings, those kids would give whoever was talking an earful. An earful. While the kids who haven't had that opportunity may never really get it – what happened in residential schooling, what created the downtown east side.

We're trying to promote learning, aren't we, so now what that unit is going to do I'll bet is make them curious, take them further, get them to try to start learning on their own, going to a museum, reading a novel set during the time – like, just after we finished the unit with you, the kids in First Nations Studies 12 were begging me to bring in a speaker who had survived a residential school – they were craving more work on the issue, and after hearing stories wanted to be in the presence of a survivor. Suddenly, they were interested.

And you know what else it brought up for them probably, is that everyone has a story and that it's okay to share them, not to keep things bottled up inside as so many kids do – to tell their own stories of how they feel discriminated against, to see themselves as part of a larger system of discrimination and exploitation – the shortest period of their life, but the most intense. It puts their lives into perspective – like they may have problems, but they have a certain level of safety compared to others, like kids who were put into residential schools. So now when they see something in the news or media, they'll be more critical, more literate.

To develop an educational culture of witnessing, we must shift our perceptions of space from within (our classrooms, our desks, our textbooks, our curricula, our school building, our community politics) to without (our bodies, our stage, our re/searching, re/membering and re/presenting, our museums, monuments, parks and media). We must begin to think of and act on education as a public and shared space that travels beyond the conceived walls of our own schools and curricula, and we must make that move with it whenever we can. We must witness our selves not just as educators, activists and artists; we must witness our selves as witnesses to our own processes of teaching, learning and interstanding. In this new space, our work and our visions will cease “to be a thing, and



become more than a process. They will become a verb, an action, a social practice, a private meaning, and a public hope . . . not just the sight of our labor but the product of our labor, changing as we are changed by it” (Pinar et.al., 1995, p. 848).

On the day I write this conclusion, a student named Jomar Lanot has just been killed by a group of teenagers outside an East Vancouver secondary school. It is being described as a racial incident, in which a group of male Indo-Canadian teenagers began shouting racial insults at a group of Filipino boys on the school’s basketball court. A verbal battle broke out, then the Indo-Canadian boys gave chase. Jomar was caught and hit on the head with what police have described as a blunt object. He was seventeen and had been in this country for just over a year.

I watch two CBC reporters, both white men, cover the story. I listen to their subtle intonations on the word “immigrant”, “east Vancouver”, “Filipino”, “Indo-Canadian” “race” and “violence”, so the themes become strung together in one long melody of Othering and objectifying. I watch the white female principal of the school express her regrets and say that although she did not know Jomar, she had been told he was a good and helpful student; then I see the white male school district superintendent defend the district’s efforts to quell racist behaviour amongst their youth, and the white male police chief deny this is a racial incident. I do not see, or hear, the faces or voices of other students, teachers, parents or activists – not because I am not watching, ready to witness, but because they are not there. The authority in this story remains the authority of the system: white, middle class and (mostly) male.

I read two pieces on the death in the Toronto Globe and Mail, both written by white men: “students mourn bright light” says one headline, while “Vancouver and the violence of Babel” cries a column on the op-ed pages. The story and its discourses are quickly becoming positioned as us and them. The incident is a matter between two “ethnic” groups, not whites and people of colour, so the problem lays not with/in us and our system, but with them, over there, the immigrant population in distant East Van. This discourse is not so very different from the racist and colonial discourses so present in *Opening Doors* – race, class and geographic constructions as an exercise in exclusion.

Buried in Mark Hume’s opinion piece about the death is a telling quote from Ken Annandale, a retired principal of Van Tech, another east Vancouver secondary school:

We don’t have the ESL teachers we used to have, we don’t have the councilors we used to have, and we don’t have the police liaison officers we used to have. The bottom line is we’ve got schools full of talented kids and committed teachers, but we are underresourced in terms of dealing with social responsibility (Hume, 2003, p. 15).

Hume then goes on to say:

there will be a lot of talk about the need for anti-violence, anti-racism programs in Vancouver schools. There will be demands for quick fix responses, when what is needed is a broad, long-term commitment to helping new immigrants and and teaching kids of all racial backgrounds more about social responsibility. But where will the money come from? The provincial government, which is spending \$600 million to upgrade a highway, can’t adequately fund ESL, counseling and other non-core programs. . . the tragic death reminds us that teaching social justice to kids is a task that’s never done.

Students are not “kids”, Mr. Hume, they are people. And they are not the only ones who need to be “taught” about social responsibility and social justice:

UNDERFUNDING, OVERCROWDING, EXHAUSTION,

CONFUSION,

DENIAL. SILENCE. INVISIBILITY.

FEAR.

We must trespass on and move through these educational spaces, navigate them, contest them, interrogate them – constantly – if we are going to hold the spaces around us accountable for what they teach us, and how we teach in them. And by we, I mean US, our “kids”, our neighbors, bosses, authorities, governments, monuments, arts and media.

ARE YOU READY?

NOW?

*The struggles continue.*

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***Legacies and Literacies Drama Education Project: Social Studies 11,  
First Nations Studies 12***

***Lesson One: Locating Our Selves, Understanding and Naming Key Concepts of Unit***

***Objectives:***

- To encourage students to begin to express and examine their own social identities
- To allow facilitator to gain an understanding of social make-up of classroom
- To familiarize students with concepts of power, oppression, lived experience and agency through drama games, group debrief and individual reflection

***Materials:***

- One small ball that is easy to toss in a group
- Nametags
- “I am From” poem, from Linda Christensen’s Reading, Writing, and Rising Up resource book
- Research Feedback Forms

***Process: 70 minutes***

***I. Introductions, 10 minutes***

- Introduce myself, give out nametags, set ground rules for safety (respect, trust, confidentiality)
- Game: ball toss in circle; toss ball around group, each person must say the name of another member of the group before they toss it to them.
- Introduce concept of research feedback forms and pseudonym, hand out feedback forms

***II. Locating Our Selves, 20 minutes***

- Introduce concept of personal location (race, class, gender etc.) by reading “I am From poem”
- Ask students to write their own “I am from” poem, paragraph or drawing, as free expression #1 on feedback form. The piece must include the following: one line about where they were born; one line about where they live now; one line about something important in their family; one line about something important to them. These pieces will not have to be read aloud, but if a student wants to share a piece welcome them.

***III. Introducing Key Concepts of Unit, 20 minutes:***

***Power, Oppression, Lived Experience and Agency Through Drama***

*\* Write above terms on board, but do not explain them until after the games: give students time to complete free expression #2 on feedback form\**

***Game #1: Power Struggle***

In pairs, find a way to push against each other (shoulder to shoulder, back to back) and still keep balanced. Experiment with different body parts (arm to arm, leg to leg, etc.)

### ***Game# 2: Mirror Hypnosis***

Change partners. Choose a leader and follower. The leader can “hypnotize” the follower with one hand. The follower must focus only on the hand, and must follow it no matter where it leads (up high, on the floor, in circles). Allow both partners to experience leading and following.

### ***Game #3: West Side Story***

Form two equal lines facing each other, at one end of the room. The first person on the right of each line is named leader. The leader from the first row makes a challenge, one that is physical and non-verbal (no language), to the opposite row. The members of the first group must copy the challenge together, as loud and large as possible, moving forward and pushing the opposite line across to the other end of the room. Then the other line’s leader issues a challenge to the line that just lead, with the group members copying the action and forcing the first line back to the end of the room where the game began. If time, continue with new leaders.

### ***IV. Group Debrief: 10 minutes***

Bring students’ attention to the terms on board, try to come to a group definition of each term.

Possible questions/ideas could include:

- How can we connect the words to the drama games? What was inside the drama games for you?
- What is power? In the games, who had it? How did they use it? What did it mean to you to have it or not have it?
- What is oppression? In the games, who lived with it? How did it feel?
- How did you experience agency in the games, either through your own actions or those of others?

### ***V. Individual Reflection (feedback forms): 10 minutes***

Ask students to complete feedback forms. Collect and set the scene for following lesson (understanding historical connections to contemporary oppression, locating concepts of oppression within a local context)

*Legacies and Literacies, First Nations Studies 12*  
*Lesson Two: Understanding Historical contexts of oppression*

**Objectives:**

- To familiarize students with concept of oppression as a historical and genealogical lived experience, through the process of listening and responding to an oral history of a residential school survivor
- To encourage students to make links between historical oppression and contemporary realities
- To encourage students to reflect on the connection between oppression and lived experience
- To introduce students to concepts of embodied memory and feeling through image theatre

**Materials:**

- Mary Anderson's recollection of her first day of school, in Behind Closed Doors: Stories from the Kamloops Indian Residential School
- Research feedback forms #2
- A large, open work area in which students can move freely

**Process: 70 Minutes**

**I. Warm up Blind Games (10 minutes):**

- a) Ask students to spread around the room until they find a space that is comfortable for them. Tell them to find a spot on the side of the room across from them and memorize it, then ask them to close their eyes and move towards that spot. Arms must be either across the chest or at the sides. Students must try not to open their eyes until they think they have reached their spot.
- b) In pairs, assign one partner to lead and the other to be blind. Decide on a sound (no language) that they will use as their guiding signal. The leader moves two steps away from his or her partner and begins to move around the room. The blind partner closes his or her eyes. Using only the agreed upon sound, the leader must safely guide the blind partner around the room.
- c) Debrief by asking students what the experience of leading and being blind made them think of, and how they could relate it to concepts of power, oppression, lived experience or agency.

**II. Introducing Image Theatre (5 minutes)**

- a) What do you see?: one person (teacher, to start), stands in middle of room and makes any frozen image with his or her body. Hold it for thirty seconds while students call out whatever they see in the image. Emphasize that in image theatre any impression or interpretation is valid, as long as it respects the person who is making it. Then ask another student to go into the centre and make a shape, and ask him or her to hold it for thirty seconds while other call out responses.

Continue for a few minutes, allowing several students to work at making and showing images.

- b) Complete the Image: Ask a student to make a shape in the centre of the class. Ask another person to join the shape, extending it with their body in any way they can. Call out “first person go” and ask another person to come join the shape that is left. Then call out “first person go” again, and ask for another person to join the new shape. Continue until all students have participated.

### ***III. Free Expression #1(on research feedback form): Memories of School (10 minutes)***

- a) Set the tone for the investigation into Mary Anderson’s story by asking students to remember their earliest memory of school, negative or positive, and to express this memory as a poem, story or illustration. No student should be forced to share, but if a student wants to share he or she is welcome.
- b) Extend the exercise by asking students to make images to show this memory – asking students to create the images simultaneously creates a gallery effect and also reduces fear for students nervous about sharing. Explain that later in the class, we will use images to respond to telling.

### ***IV. The telling (5 minutes)***

Ask students to find a comfortable place to sit to listen to telling. Introduce the telling as one woman’s recollection of her first day at school. Read the telling twice: the first time, ask students to think about how Mary’s experience is different or similar to their own school memory; the second time, ask students to see themselves as a character, or an emotion, or a word, or an image in the story. Pause between each reading.

### ***V. Individual Image Response Theatre (15 minutes)***

- a) Ask students to choose what was for them the most powerful, insightful, or educational moment from the telling. This can be represented as a character, or a word, an image or emotion. Ask each student to make an image, using any level or body position, that shows this moment. Explain that this image needs to be something they can hold without moving, but make it clear that students can take a break to stretch whenever necessary. Explain that the image they start with will become a character.
- b) Ask students to hold their image, and to think of a sound (no language) that expresses what it feels like to be in this shape. The sound can be any volume or emotion. Ask students to give the sound simultaneously, when the teacher claps his or her hands. Count to three out loud, then clap your hands. Then move slowly through the group, touching students lightly on the shoulder (this is the signal for them to give their sound).
- c) Ask students to think of a sentence, beginning with the words “I am afraid of . . .” that expresses what the character behind this shape might be feeling. Follow same process as above.
- d) Ask students to think of a sentence, beginning with “I want . . .”. Repeat as above.
- e) Ask students to visualize this character’s deepest wish, and to picture an image that shows it. Tell them they have three steps (claps) to get from their current

image to the image that shows the character's deepest wish. Students may only make one movement or step per clap. Go through the three claps; see which students get closest to reaching their wish image.

***VI. Group Image Response Theatre (10 minutes)***

- a) Ask one student to show his or her original response image in centre of room. Ask the rest of the class to complete this image, either with their own original images or with a new image that responds to the ones presented. Keep going until all students are part of the image, so that the class has formed a tableau response to Mary's telling.
- b) Ask students to create a sound (non language) that expresses their image. Ask for the sounds to be given simultaneously at first, then create move into the tableau and touch students on shoulders to ask them to give their sound. Vary speed and pattern, sometimes going back to the same image, or asking one image to repeat its sound, sometimes moving slowly or quickly between sounds, so that you create a "soundscape" of responses tied to the image.
- c) Staying in the tableau, ask students to begin a dialogue in the roles their images have created for them. Ask one student to begin with any sentence, then encourage others to respond, filling in the spaces until a conversation takes hold.

***VII. Group Debrief and Individual Reflection (15 minutes)***

Lead the class in a brief discussion of the class. Possible questions may include:

- How does hearing Mary's story today make you feel?
- What does it make you think about school, or childhood?
- Does it challenge previous conceptions you may have had of residential schooling?
- What links can you draw between residential schooling and contemporary First Nations issues?
- Why should we study stories from the past?

Ask students to complete and hand in research feedback forms, and set the scene for following lesson (understanding lived experience and developing skills of empathy)

***Legacies and Literacies Drama Education Project***  
***Lesson Three: First Nations Studies 12, Engaging With Empathy***

***Objectives:***

- To encourage students to develop and recognize skills of empathy in understanding the residential school experience
- To encourage students to further explore and identify concept of lived experience
- To introduce students to theatrical technique of interior monologue

***Materials:***

- Behind Closed Doors: Stories from the Kamloops Indian Residential School (p.85, p.161, p.137, p. 127, p. 74, p. 85, p. 80)

***Process: 70 minutes***

***Free expression #1: Introduce concept of empathy (10 minutes)***

Read aloud, or write on board, dictionary definition of empathy. Brainstorm with class what makes one feel empathy. Ask them to complete free expression exercise, writing about a moment in their life when they felt empathy for another person's situation.

***Warm up: Fear and Protection (10 minutes)***

Students secretly choose one other person in the class to be their protector. Students move around the room, and each student must stay close to their protector at all times, no matter what their protector does. Reverse the game, using fear. Students secretly choose someone in the class to be afraid of, and as they move around the room they must stay as far as possible from this person. Use this exercise to discuss issues of power, safety, agency.

***I. Group tableaux and interior monologues in small groups (20 minutes)***

Ask students to form pairs or small groups. Read short selections from Behind Closed Doors to set scene for lesson. Ask each pair or group to form a tableau showing their response to each piece. Each time you read a piece, the group has a different leader who has the power to sculpt the group according to his or her own response. Move into interior monologues by asking students to hold their shape and speak, stream of consciousness style, as that shape or image for thirty seconds. Encourage students to say whatever comes into their head, and to not stop to think about what they want to say. Debrief by asking students to share their experiences during the exercise. Did anyone come close to feeling empathy for his or her character?

***II. Group tableaux and interior monologues as whole class (20 minutes)***

Read stories from p. 80 and p. 85, asking students to create whole class tableaux in response to the memories. Try a soundscape activity before moving into interior monologues. Ask students to share key words or lines from their monologues. How does this exercise get us closer to the experience of empathy?

***III. Debrief, fill out feedback forms (10 minutes)***



***Legacies and Literacies Drama Education Project, First Nations Studies 12  
Final Lesson: Understanding multiple perspectives***

***Objectives:***

- To encourage students to find complexities within individual experiences of residential schooling
- To introduce “cops in the head” theatrical technique

***Materials***

Behind Closed Doors: Stories from the Kamloops Indian Residential School, p. 85  
(Dorothy Joseph)

*Process: 70 minutes*

*Free expression #1, (10 minutes): Think of a time when you had to make a difficult choice*  
...

***Warm up: Imitate the oppressor/oppressed (10 minutes)***

Choose a character from any of the tellings that you think was an oppressor (i.e., someone who was using power to control the life of another). Begin to imagine how they might walk, talk, sit. Take on their character for one minute, moving around the room. Repeat, in choosing to play an oppressed character. Debrief by asking questions about the privilege to move in and out of peoples’ experience.

***I. Dorothy Joseph’s telling. (40 minutes)***

Read entire telling once. Ask students to identify key points in telling when different characters had to make a choice regarding their actions or words. Create group tableaux, interior monologues and soundscapes to depict each scene. Ask students to play the conscience, or cops, that might be in the heads of the major characters making choices. Improvise scenes with students, in which these cops interact with major characters. Do they encourage the action, or lead the characters to make different actions? Debrief by discussing the complexities of each character’s choice – how do we allow cops to operate in our heads?

***Complete feedback forms, closing debrief (10 minutes)***

***Legacies and Literacies Drama Education Project, Social Studies 11***  
***Lesson Two: Understanding Historical contexts of oppression***

***Objectives:***

- To familiarize students with concept of oppression as a historical and genealogical lived experience
- To encourage students to make links between historical oppression and contemporary realities
- To encourage students to reflect on the connection between oppression and lived experience
- To introduce students to concepts of embodied memory and feeling through image theatre

***Materials:***

- Ray Culos's (p.166), George Nita's (p.20), Gloria Steinberg Harris's (p.130) and Elda Battistoni Venturato's (p.47) oral histories from Opening Doors: Vancouver's East End
- Research feedback forms #2
- A large, open work area in which students can move freely

***Process: 70 Minutes***

- Write quote from Ray Culos on board: "It was an area where immigrants resided because of the direction that somebody placed on them – you didn't want all those people in the West End, right?" Read George Nita's description of the "dog days of discrimination."
- Use these quote as an opportunity to discuss issues of race and class in the development of early Vancouver. Who were the "West Enders"? )? How might they have perceived immigrants? Why? What power might they have had to control who lived near them? How might they have used this power (economically, legally, socially)? How can we connect some of these questions and answers to the key concepts of the unit, or the drama games from the previous class?

***II. Free Expression #1: Memories of East Vancouver (10 minutes)***

Set the tone for the investigation into the oral histories by asking students to remember their earliest memory of either being in or hearing about East Vancouver, negative or positive, and to express this memory as a poem, story or illustration. No student should be forced to share, but if a student wants to share he or she is welcome.

***III. Warm up Blind Games (10 minutes):***

- d) Ask students to spread around the room until they find a space that is comfortable for them. Tell them to find a spot on the side of the room across from them and memorize it, then ask them to close their eyes and move towards that spot. Arms must be either across the chest or at the sides. Students must try not to open their eyes until they think they have reached their spot.

- e) In pairs, assign one partner to lead and the other to be blind. Decide on a sound (no language) that they will use as their guiding signal. The leader moves two steps away from his or her partner and begins to move around the room. The blind partner closes his or her eyes. Using only the agreed upon sound, the leader must safely guide the blind partner around the room.
- f) Debrief by asking students what the experience of leading and being blind made them think of, and how they could relate it to concepts of power, oppression, lived experience or agency.

***IV. Introducing Image Theatre (5 minutes)***

- c) What do you see?: one person (teacher, to start), stands in middle of room and makes any frozen image with his or her body. Hold it for thirty seconds while students call out whatever they see in the image. Emphasize that in image theatre any impression or interpretation is valid, as long as it respects the person who is making it. Then ask another student to go into the centre and make a shape, and ask him or her to hold it for thirty seconds while other call out responses. Continue for a few minutes, allowing several students to work at making and showing images.
- d) Complete the Image: Ask a student to make a shape in the centre of the class. Ask another person to join the shape, extending it with their body in any way they can. Call out “first person go” and ask another person to come join the shape that is left. Then call out “first person go” again, and ask for another person to join the new shape. Continue until all students have participated.

***V. Ida’s telling (5 minutes)***

Ask students to find a comfortable place to sit to listen to telling. Introduce the telling as one woman’s recollections of living with poverty in East Vancouver. Read the telling twice: the first time, ask students to think about how the speaker’s experience is different or similar to their personal memory of East Vancouver; the second time, ask students to see themselves as a character, or an emotion, or a word, or an image in the story. Pause between each reading.

***VI. Individual Image Response Theatre (15 minutes)***

- f) Ask students to choose what was for them the most powerful, insightful, or educational moment from the telling. This can be represented as a character, or a word, an image or emotion. Ask each student to make an image, using any level or body position, that shows this moment. Explain that this image needs to be something they can hold without moving, but make it clear that students can take a break to stretch whenever necessary. Explain that the image they start with will become a character.
- g) Ask students to hold their image, and to think of a sound (no language) that expresses what it feels like to be in this shape. The sound can be any volume or emotion. Ask students to give the sound simultaneously, when the teacher claps his or her hands. Count to three out loud, then clap your hands. Then move slowly through the group, touching students lightly on the shoulder (this is the signal for them to give their sound).

- h) Ask students to think of a sentence, beginning with the words “I am afraid of . . .” that expresses what the character behind this shape might be feeling. Follow same process as above.
- i) Ask students to think of a sentence, beginning with “I want . . .”. Repeat as above.
- j) Ask students to visualize this character’s deepest wish, and to picture an image that shows it. Tell them they have three steps (claps) to get from their current image to the image that shows the character’s deepest wish. Students may only make one movement or step per clap. Go through the three claps; see which students get closest to reaching their wish image.

***Gloria’s telling (5 minutes): repeat the process as for the first telling***

***VI. Group Image Response Theatre (10 minutes)***

- d) Ask one student to show his or her original response image in centre of room. Ask the rest of the class to complete this image, either with their own original images or with a new image that responds to the ones presented. Keep going until all students are part of the image, so that the class has formed a tableau response to Gloria’s telling.
- e) Ask students to create a sound (non language) that expresses their image. Ask for the sounds to be given simultaneously at first, then create move into the tableau and touch students on shoulders to ask them to give their sound. Vary speed and pattern, sometimes going back to the same image, or asking one image to repeat its sound, sometimes moving slowly or quickly between sounds, so that you create a “soundscape” of responses tied to the image.
- f) Staying in the tableau, ask students to begin a dialogue in the roles their images have created for them. Ask one student to begin with any sentence, then encourage others to respond, filling in the spaces until a conversation takes hold.

***VII. Group Debrief and Individual Reflection (15 minutes)***

Lead the class in a brief discussion of the class. Possible questions may include:

- How does hearing these stories today make you feel?
- What does it make you think about how East Vancouver became the place it is today?
- Does it challenge previous conceptions you may have had of the area?
- What links can you draw between the historical development of East Vancouver and today?
- Why should we study stories from the past?
- What role did the drama games and exercises have in getting you to think about all this?

Ask students to complete and hand in research feedback forms, and set the scene for following lesson (understanding lived experience and developing skills of empathy)

***Legacies and Literacies Drama Education Project  
Lesson Three: Social Studies 11, Engaging With Empathy***

***Objectives:***

- To encourage students to develop and recognize skills of empathy in understanding class and race difference and discrimination in Vancouver
- To encourage students to further explore and identify concept of lived experience
- To introduce students to theatrical technique of interior monologue

***Materials:***

- Opening Doors: Vancouver's East End

***Process: 70 minutes***

***Free expression #1: Introduce concept of empathy (10 minutes)***

Read aloud, or write on board, dictionary definition of empathy. Brainstorm with class what makes one feel empathy. Ask them to complete free expression exercise, writing about a moment in their life when they felt empathy for another person's situation.

\*Write two quotes from Opening Doors (p. 159, Harry Con & p. 132, Gloria Steinberg Harris) on board, and read aloud from p.37, Violet Benedetti and p.99, Tadao Wakabayashi; these can serve as starting points for the lesson's investigations of class and race in Vancouver.\*

***Warm up: Fear and Protection (10 minutes)***

Students secretly choose one other person in the class to be their protector. Students move around the room, and each student must stay close to their protector at all times, no matter what their protector does. Reverse the game, using fear. Students secretly choose someone in the class to be afraid of, and as they move around the room they must stay as far as possible from this person. Use this exercise to discuss issues of power, safety, agency.

***I. Group tableaux and interior monologues individually and in small groups (20 minutes)***

Read short selections from Opening Doors (p.164, Ray Culos, p. 36, Violet Benedetti, p.89, Nobue Shiga Minato, p. 131, Gloria Steinberg Harris) to set scene for lesson. For the first one or two, ask students to work individually, making shapes to show their response to the telling. Ask each pair or group to form a tableau showing their response to each piece. Move into interior monologues by asking students to hold their shape and speak, stream of consciousness style, as that shape or image for thirty seconds. Encourage students to say whatever comes into their head, and to not stop to think about what they want to say. For the last two pieces, move the class into pairs or small groups and read the tellings. Each time you read a piece, the group has a different leader who has the power to sculpt the group according to his or her own response. Try a soundscape activity before moving into interior monologues. Debrief by asking students to share their experiences during the exercise. Did anyone come close to feeling empathy for his or her character?

***II. Group tableaux and interior monologues as whole class (20 minutes)***

Read story from p. 119 (Ivy Kaji McAdams) and p. 23 (George Nita – time permitting), asking students to create whole class tableaux and monologues in response to the memories. Ask students to share key words or lines from their monologues. How does this exercise get us closer to the experience of empathy?

***III. Debrief, fill out feedback forms (10 minutes)***

*Legacies and Literacies Drama Education Project, Social Studies 11*  
***Final Lesson: Understanding multiple perspectives***

***Objectives:***

- To encourage students to find complexities within individual experiences of residential schooling
- To introduce “cops in the head” theatrical technique

***Materials***

Opening Doors: Vancouver’s East End, p. 119 (Ivy Kaji McAdams)

*Process: 70 minutes*

***Free expression #1, (10 minutes): Think of a time when you had to make a difficult choice . . .***

***Warm up: Imitate the oppressor/oppressed (10 minutes)***

Choose a character from any of the tellings that you think was an oppressor (i.e., someone who was using power to control the life of another). Begin to imagine how they might walk, talk, sit. Take on their character for one minute, moving around the room. Repeat, in choosing to play an oppressed character. Debrief by asking questions about the privilege to move in and out of peoples’ experience.

***II. Ivy McAdams’s telling. (40 minutes)***

Read entire telling once. Ask students to identify key points in telling when different characters had to make a choice regarding their actions or words. Create group tableaux, interior monologues and soundscapes to depict each scene. Ask students to play the conscience, or cops, that might be in the heads of the major characters making choices. Improvise scenes with students, in which these cops interact with major characters. Do they encourage the action, or lead the characters to make different actions? Debrief by discussing the complexities of each character’s choice – how do we allow cops to operate in our heads?

***Complete feedback forms, closing debrief (10 minutes)***

**Legacies and Literacies Drama Education Project: Research Feedback Form #1:  
Social Studies and First Nations Studies  
Tell me who you are!**

NAME (choose a pen name, and use it each time): \_\_\_\_\_

**Free Expression #1: I am from . . .**

*Write a poem, or paragraph, or make an illustration, to show us something about yourself.*

*Your piece MUST include:*

- *one line, sentence or image that shows where you were born*
- *one line, sentence or image that shows where you live now*
- *one line, sentence or image that tells us something important about your family*
- *one line, sentence or image that show something that you value, that is important to you*

**Free Expression #2: Power, Oppression, Lived Experience and Agency**

*Write or draw something, anything that you think of when you read these words on the board. What do these words make you see? How do they make you feel? Which one can you relate to the most? How?*

**Reflection:** *Choose one moment from the drama games when you felt a direct connection to one of the concepts discussed in today's class (power, oppression, lived experience and agency) and write one or two paragraphs about it. Which game was it (struggle, hypnosis or west side story)? What were you doing (leading or following)? How did you feel . . . and how can you connect these feelings to a concept?*



***Legacies and Literacies Drama Education Project: Research Feedback Form #2,  
First Nations Studies***

***Name:*** (Remember to use the same pen name) \_\_\_\_\_

***Free Expression #1: My First Memory of School***

Write a poem, a song, or a story, or create an illustration, that shows or describes the earliest memory you have of going to school. It can be either a good memory or a difficult one . . . it is up to you. Try to give as much detail as you can – what you saw, heard, felt, who was with you, who you wished was with you . . .

Think about what you knew about residential schools before this lesson. Do you see the residential school experience differently after participating in the lesson? How?

Choose one moment from one of the Drama activities in today's lesson that was significant for you, perhaps because it challenged or inspired you in some way, or made you feel a powerful emotion. Describe that moment and how it made you feel. What do you think you might be able to take from that moment and use in other parts of your life (in school, with friends or family . . .)?

***Legacies and Literacies Drama Education Project Research Feedback Form #3:  
First Nations Studies***

***Name (don't forget your pen name!)*** \_\_\_\_\_

***Free Expression #1:*** Empathy means the ability to share and understand the feelings of another person. Think about a moment in your life when you felt empathy, and write about or illustrate that moment. Who was the person? What happened? How did you feel? Did you ever get a chance to tell them your feelings?

***Free Expression #2:*** If you could speak to a residential school survivor today, what would you want to say to them? If you could speak to someone who worked in a residential school, what would you want to say?

Choose the line from any one of your interior monologues that was the most important to you, and write it here. What were you thinking of when you said that line? What image were you making? Why does it stand out for you? How did making that image and saying that line make you feel?

***Legacies and Literacies Drama Education Project Research Feedback Form #4:  
First Nations Studies***

***Name (or pen name)*** \_\_\_\_\_

***Free Expression #1: Making difficult choices***

Think of a time when you had to make a difficult choice, one that made you feel some conflict inside yourself. Write about or illustrate that choice. What “voices” did you hear in your conscience – what did they want you to do? If those “voices” could be specific people or characters, who would they be? How did you resolve the conflict?

Which of the characters in today’s telling do you think faced the most difficult choice, and the most complicated internal “voices”? How can you connect this character’s struggle to modern discussions of residential schooling?

Think about today’s “cops in the head” exercise. Which “cop” did you find the most realistic and convincing? Why? Write a line or image they made that had an impact on you. What insights does this give you into the kinds of choices people make?

***Legacies and Literacies Drama Education Project, First Nations Studies 12:  
Final Reflections***

***Name or Pen Name:*** \_\_\_\_\_

***A. Thinking Back . . . .***

This project asked you to take some big personal risks, both in terms of topics and the process used to explore those topics. This form has two pages. The first page asks you to reflect on the content of the unit and the second page asks you to reflect on the process of learning this material through Drama.

Think back to the four key concepts of the unit (power, oppression, lived experience and agency). Do you understand any of these concepts better after completing the unit? Which ones? How? Which concepts would you like to explore in more detail? Which concepts still feel unclear to you?

One of the goals of this project was to get you thinking about residential schools in ways you might not have done in previous classes. Has this happened for you? How? Write about the most important insight you feel you have gained into understanding issues surrounding residential schools.

This unit was taught entirely through one resource, a collection of oral histories, or peoples' recollections of going to the Kamloops Indian Residential School. What effect has listening to these real life memories had on your understanding of the residential school experience? How does learning from this resource compare to learning from other resources, such as videos or textbooks?

***Legacies and Literacies Drama Education Project, First Nations Studies 12 :  
Final Reflections***

***Name or Pen Name:*** \_\_\_\_\_

***B. Looking Forward . . .***

One of the goals of this unit was to try to learn about concepts of power, oppression, lived experience and agency through Drama games and exercises. Describe, in as much detail as possible, what it was like to learn this way. Did it make you see or feel things differently? How? How did it challenge or inspire you?

Which drama exercise do you feel had the strongest impact on you (e.g.: interior monologue, cops in the head, image theatre)? Write about the image you made or the line you spoke in this exercise. How did this exercise affect you and your understanding of the unit's concepts or issues? Go into detail!

Do you think this unit should be taught in other schools? Why? What changes would you make?

Do you have any other questions, comments or reflections? Feel free to write them here!

***Legacies and Literacies Drama Education Project: Research Feedback Form #2,  
Social Studies 11***

***Name:*** (Remember to use the same pen name) \_\_\_\_\_

***Free Expression #1: My First Memory of East Vancouver***

Write a poem, a song, or a story, or create an illustration, that shows or describes the earliest memory you have of either being in or hearing about East Vancouver. It can be either a good memory or a difficult one, it is up to you. Try to give as much detail as you can – what you saw, heard, felt, who was with you, who you wished was with you . . .

Think about what you knew about East Vancouver before this lesson. Do you see the area differently after participating in the lesson? How?

Choose one moment from one of the Drama activities in today's lesson that was significant for you, perhaps because it challenged or inspired you in some way, or made you feel a powerful emotion. Describe that moment and how it made you feel. What do you think you might be able to take from that moment and use in other parts of your life (in school, with friends or family . . .)?

***Legacies and Literacies Drama Education Project Research Feedback Form #3:  
Social Studies 11***

***Name (don't forget your pen name!)*** \_\_\_\_\_

***Free Expression #1:*** Empathy means the ability to share and understand the feelings of another person. Think about a moment in your life when you felt empathy, and write about or illustrate that moment. Who was the person? What happened? How did you feel? Did you ever get a chance to tell them your feelings?

***Free Expression #2:*** Imagine you had a chance to meet any character, major or minor, from today's lesson. Whom would you want to meet? Why? What would you want to say to him or her?

Choose the line from any one of your interior monologues that was the most important to you, and write it here. What were you thinking of when you said that line? What image were you making? Why does it stand out for you? How did making that image and saying that line make you feel?

***Legacies and Literacies Drama Education Project Research Feedback Form #4:  
Social Studies 11***

***Name (or pen name)*** \_\_\_\_\_

***Free Expression #1: Making difficult choices***

Think of a time when you had to make a difficult choice, one that made you feel some conflict inside yourself. Write about or illustrate that choice. What “voices” did you hear in your conscience – what did they want you to do? If those “voices” could be specific people or characters, who would they be? How did you resolve the conflict?

Which of the characters in today’s telling do you think faced the most difficult choice, and the most complicated internal “voices”? How can you connect this character’s struggle to modern discussions of oppression or discrimination in Vancouver and Canada?

If you played a “cop” in today’s exercise, describe the experience. What did you want your character to do? Did you get what you wanted? How did it feel to play someone with intentions other than your own?

If you played a character in today’s exercise, describe the experience. How easy was it to listen to or block out the cops’ voices? Did any comments surprise you? What made you do what you did, in the end?



***Legacies and Literacies Drama Education Project, Social Studies 11:  
Final Reflections***

***Name or Pen Name:*** \_\_\_\_\_

***A. Thinking Back . . . .***

This project asked you to take some big personal risks, both in terms of topics and the process used to explore those topics. This form has two pages. The first page asks you to reflect on the content of the unit and the second page asks you to reflect on the process of learning this material through Drama.

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One of the goals of this project was to get you thinking about Vancouver in ways you might not have done in previous classes. Has this happened for you? How? Write about the most important insight you feel you have gained into understanding issues surrounding Vancouver and discrimination in this city.

This unit was taught entirely through one resource, a collection of oral histories, or peoples' recollections of growing up in East Vancouver. What effect has listening to these real life memories had on your understanding of the urban experience? How does learning from this resource compare to learning from other resources, such as videos or textbooks?

***Legacies and Literacies Drama Education Project, Social Studies 11 :  
Final Reflections***

***Name or Pen Name:*** \_\_\_\_\_

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Do you think this unit should be taught in other schools? Why? What changes would you make?

Do you have any other questions, comments or reflections? Feel free to write them here!