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On the cover: This picture was created by Sarah Khandoker, a five-year-old kindergarten student in Ms Sceviour's afternoon kindergarten class at Timberlea Public School, in Fort McMurray. It is a crayon and watercolour resist project that the class completed for its oceans theme class. When the pictures were drawn, the students painted over the top with blue watercolour paint. The paint sticks to the paper but the crayon does not. Sarah included a dolphin, jellyfish, shark, seaweed, treasure chest, and even some sea snails! Timberlea Public School has a diverse population of about 700 students from about 30 different countries.

Reflections on Storytelling

Anna Kirova

Anna Kirova is a professor in the Department of Elementary Education, University of Alberta. She teaches courses in early childhood education in both the bachelor of education and the master of elementary education programs. Her research interests include peer relationships and social inclusion of young children, particularly immigrant and refugee children; issues related to global migration and education; and collaborative arts-based research with children.

It is always exciting for me to see each new issue of the *Early Childhood Education* journal because it is, to some extent, a reflection of what early childhood educators are interested in examining more closely, either in their own classrooms or as researchers learning with and from their participants. It is exciting for me also because I always learn from these articles and have no doubt that you, too, will find them very informative, valuable and relevant to your lives as educators. An excellent opportunity of this kind of exciting learning for me was offered by John Friesen's article, "They Had What the World Has Lost: Traditional Native American Child-Raising Practices." This article not only provides an excellent definition and overview of oral history and storytelling but also gives concrete examples of the type of legends used by First Nations people to educate the young. The article makes strong meaningful connections between the Indigenous ways of teaching and contemporary inquiry-based learning models. I found the section "Protocol for Aboriginal Inquiry Learning" inspiring. The author's call for "going back," or learning from the past, is passionate and pedagogically sound. Although the development of an appreciation for the interconnectedness of natural forces is foundational to our existence, we must regain our commitment to it by following the path made by those who have come before us. The importance of recognizing the role of elders in our communities is certainly a meaningful starting point for many of us.

Interestingly, in her article, "Images of Older Adults in Canadian Picture Books," Linda Reichenauer also touches on the role of older adults in children's lives. While there are no surprises in the review offered by the author about the aging of the Canadian population, very young children's ageist attitudes are not only surprising but also troublesome. It is these negative children's attitudes about older adults that prompted the author to examine how children's books can be used for educating children about aging. I found the discussion about the importance of children's literature portraying older characters and the ideas for literature selection and classroom activities particularly meaningful and thoughtful. I am confident that the suggested websites and resources and the annotated list of Canadian picture books featuring older characters will be very useful to many early childhood educators.

In "A Foray into the iPad World," Jennifer Tonn tells us in a very compelling way how her kindergarten class, which consisted of 15 Cree students between the ages of four and six, the majority of whom lived on First Nations reserves, used iPads to tell and retell stories from their favourite children's books. Her classroom action research study was part of a schoolwide study on technology use. She makes an excellent point that it isn't the iPad that we want in our classrooms; it is the learning and growth in our students. In her particular case, she built on her students' creativity and encouraged the children to create something to share with her, with each other and, perhaps, with the school and the outside community. She observed that sharing knowledge with each other was a strong motivator for the children to use the iPads. Her observations also reassured her that when her students were "playing" with the iPads, real learning was going on. She found the use of the iPads to be beneficial for her students' beginning writing experiences. However, the greatest benefit of using iPad technology she found was her students' language development.

Jennifer Tonn's observations that her students did not seem to have any difficulties learning to use the

iPads and that those who had fewer skills at the beginning learned from their peers are supported by Suzanna So-Har Wong's article, "Hop on Pop, Click on Poptropica: Preschoolers' Multiliteracy Practices at Home," in which she presented one example from a study to illustrate a preschooler's multiliteracy practices at home. As the author points out, this example suggests that young children can be sophisticated users of current technologies such as iPads and laptops. In this article Wong draws on data analyses from a larger, ecological inquiry informed by complexity thinking. The use of Green's (1988) conceptual framework of a three-dimensional (3-D) model is intriguing and informative. Wong was a participant observer in the child's home, where she documented the ways in which preschool children engage in multiliteracy practices at home, including the use of iPads, laptops and other devices as part of their everyday play objects. Not unlike Jennifer Tonn, who observed children's use of iPads in a classroom to contribute to their language development, Wong concluded that some children are developing early literacy skills and knowledge while exploring such objects at home. Her statement that "Literacy learning involves being able to learn from multiple interconnected aspects of literacy through multiple textual landscapes" is an important message to the adults in children's lives—both parents and teachers.

While the connection between home and school could be detected in a form of transferring technology skills as they relate to literacy from one context to the other, it could also be established in a more traditional format, as described in the article "The *All About Me* Book as a Culturally Responsive Pedagogy." The authors, Rosamund Stooke and Nazila Eisazadeh, present a bookmaking activity that supports young culturally and linguistically diverse children's literacy learning and builds connections between home and school. The authors describe the activity as multimodal and illustrate how it draws on children's home languages, cultures and interests. Their attempt to integrate research and theory with practice in the field of early childhood literacy in order to make theory accessible to educators who work with young children is commendable. The authors offer

classroom examples to illustrate the main claim of the article that *All About Me* activities provide opportunities to practice multimodal meaning making including gestures, talk, vocalization, gaze and actions to tell their personal stories to their peers, family and teachers. In addition, the authors found that *All About Me* activities support children's positive identities and a sense of belonging to a new community, because they enable them to bring their cultural identities into their books.

Related to the need to address the diverse student populations in our classrooms is the excellent book review by Xiaobing Lin. Roma Chumak-Hoorbatsch's book *Linguistically Appropriate Practice* (2012) acknowledges that "immigrant children are far more than learners of the classroom language. They are emergent bilinguals" (p 23). The book makes a very compelling case against the deficiency, or "less-than," perspective that some educators hold. It recognizes the riches of children's sociocultural capital already invested in their first languages. While many of us are already fully aware of the importance of understanding the language strengths, abilities, skills, needs and potential of young immigrant children, and the inequity and hardships they face when joining a monolingual classroom, most of us are still struggling with the everyday "how to" of incorporating so many different languages and cultural perspectives into our teaching practices. As Xiaobing Lin reassures us in her review, the book systematically describes how to implement linguistically appropriate practice (LAP) in early childhood classroom practice, how to prepare the classroom for LAP, how to apply it in the classroom and practical activities in the classroom using LAP. I echo Lin's recommendation to read this very practical book if you have children from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds in your classrooms.

And, as usual at the end of an editorial, I would like to thank the authors for their invaluable contributions to this issue, and the editorial review committee for working with the authors to expand and deepen their ideas. As a collective effort of early childhood educators and researchers, *Early Childhood Education* is an important vehicle for change in the field. 🙏

They Had What the World Has Lost: Traditional Native American Child-Raising Practices

John W Friesen

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Abstract

As a self-reliant culture before European contact, the Indigenous peoples of this continent were completely reliant on their own creative social structures in maintaining valued cultural beliefs and practices. Self-reliance was backed by the ardent self-discipline needed to stand against uncertain climatic conditions and topography, and later attempts to annihilate their way of life. The oral tradition defined for the First Peoples the meaning of life, individual and group responsibilities, and related duties. Much of the substance of the oral tradition comprised legends or stories whose telling was the preserve of elders or recognized storytellers who were very efficient in maintaining their culture. This paper elucidates that phenomenon and concludes with implications for today's pedagogical practices.

They [the First Nations] had what the world has lost. They have it now. What the world has lost the world must have again, lest it die.

—John Collier¹

It is quite clear what Commissioner Collier had in mind nearly a century ago when he reprimanded North Americans for ignoring First Nations' value systems when the First Nations' cultural warehouses contained so much knowledge that could have benefitted dominant society. This would include the

First Nations' respect for nature and living in harmony with it, their sense of universal connectedness, their respect for one another, and their awe of the Creator. Evidence seems to be emerging that we are finally discovering that there is much to learn from Indigenous cultures, partly because their traditions have great relevance for today's world. This is certainly true of their child-raising practices.

As a self-reliant culture before European contact, the Indigenous peoples of this continent were completely reliant on their own creative social structures to maintain valued beliefs and practices. Self-reliance was backed by a severe self-discipline, needed to stand alone against uncertain climatic conditions and topography. As Helin (2006, 82) has observed, in precontact days there were no government handouts, transfer payments, welfare cheques or employment insurance. Viewed positively, this void spurred additional effort on the part of each nation's creative juices. Insofar as communication was concerned, the First Nations relied entirely on individual and group perceptions and memory to preserve valued information. There were no taped interviews, VCRs, videotapes, iPods, or DVDs; raising children was an individual-centred activity featuring the full cooperation of parents, grandparents and elders, with the last two groups playing a dominant role. Little of the process, if anything, was based on written forms of communication; the oral tradition prevailed.

Defining the Oral Tradition

The oral tradition guided the First Peoples in their quest for the meaning of life and the assignment of individual and group responsibilities (Battiste and

¹John Collier was Indian Commissioner for the United States from 1933 to 1945; this quote is from *Killing the White Man's Indian*, by Fergus M Bordewich (1966, 71).

Henderson 2000, 9), and this package of conscious moral duty was carried exclusively in their hearts. With the Old Testament psalmist they could say in response to the Creator, "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you" (Psalm 119:11 NIV). Another way of putting it is in the words of Mary Lou Lahtail: "I have no written speech. Everything that I have said I have been carrying in my heart because I have seen it. I have experienced it" (Castellano 2000, 148).

Social scientists of various allegiances have long been acquainted with the Indigenous orientation to utilizing the oral tradition to transmit traditional cultural knowledge to younger generations. Before European contact, the First Peoples of North America passed along valued knowledge and beliefs verbally, without dependence on written literature (Johnson and Cremona 1995, 161; Friesen and Friesen 2002, 64–68). In some instances pictographs or petroglyphs, many of which remain in secluded sites to this day, were employed to supplement the oral tradition. One of the benefits of the oral tradition was its flexibility; that is, if need be, truth could be adjusted to time and place. Passing along knowledge by the oral tradition required intimate personal interactions, and in some cases, depending on the nature of the conversation, one on one. Much of the substance of the oral tradition comprised legends or stories whose telling was the preserve of elders or recognized storytellers.

The Phenomenon of Storytelling

Traditionally, the practice of relating legends comprised the major vehicle of transmitting cultural beliefs and values in Native American societies. Interestingly, the value of the art of storytelling is currently being rediscovered. As Berkowitz (2011, 36) observes, "Educators can support young children's cognitive, language, social, and emotional development by using ... storytelling techniques." Shedd and Duke (2009, 26) concur and emphasize the importance of reading stories to young children as a means of strengthening their cognitive skills. These authors have also developed a list of types of questions to be asked after a story has been read, in much the same manner that an Aboriginal elder might ask questions after relating a legend.

McKeough et al (2008) propose that contemporary literacy programs should include oral storytelling by teachers and students because oral storytelling is a precursor to reading and writing across cultures. The authors argue that oral storytelling is the best way for listeners to achieve

six basic skills—print motivation, phonological awareness, vocabulary, narrative skills, print awareness and letter knowledge. The repetition of oral narratives encourages the formation of new language structures and allows students to understand the value of story and of literacy in general. Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, narrative development can begin before the age of one (McKeough and Graham 2008, 1).

Traditionally, Native legends were told in two formats—formal and informal. Formal occasions for storytelling were particularly set up for the specific purpose of passing along specific historical truths, instilling cultural values, relating tribal origin stories or preparing youngsters for participation in sacred events and activities. Informal occasions for storytelling included passing time in a lodge during a cold winter evening or for such things as reprimanding someone for violating a cultural folkway.

There is a consensus in literature about the various types of Indigenous legends employed by elders of various backgrounds (Bird 2005, 35). While working on a two-year legend project with a team of young people of the Stoney (Nakoda Sioux) First Nation near Calgary, three of us (Clarice Kootenay, Duane Mark and I) identified four types of legends: entertaining, instructional, moral and spiritual. Interestingly, the number four is considered sacred among Plains First Nations. Some general information about the types of legends is needed to understand the stories conveyed in the following section.

First, legends told purely for entertainment usually involve a mythical character called the trickster and may be told by any member of the community. The trickster is a deity of sorts and known by many different names; for example, the Blackfoot call him Napi, the Crees call him Wisakedjak, the Ojibway call him Nanabush, and the Nakoda Sioux call him Îktômni. Other First Nations have different names for him, like Coyote, Tarantula or Raven (Grant 1993, 25). The Mi'kmaq First Nation has a slightly different version of the trickster character known as Glooscap, who never really played tricks or fooled anyone, but was viewed essentially as a deity who always stood ready to help his people.

Stories about the trickster are principally fictional and can be invented and amended during the actual process of storytelling. Usually the storyline remains recognizable, but subplots and humorous embellishments may be invented by the storyteller at will. A good example is the Nakoda Sioux story about the trickster and the mice.

One day Îktômni the trickster was walking along in the forest when he heard the familiar sounds of a pow-wow. Someone was playing drums,

singing songs and obviously enjoying a real celebration. The trickster wanted to join the party, but he could not figure out where the music was coming from.

Îktômni stopped to listen. After a short while it became clear to him that the music was coming from inside a buffalo skull lying on the ground not far from his feet. He could hardly believe his ears, but he stooped down to peek inside the skull. To his amazement he saw dozens of mice having a pow-wow. Some of them were drumming and others were singing and dancing.

Intrigued by the sight, the trickster asked the mice if he could observe the celebration, and after some negotiation he stuck his head inside the skull to further enjoy the festivities. As the pow-wow progressed to the wee hours of the morning, the trickster fell asleep. When he woke up he discovered the mice had shorn the hair from his head, then disappeared. On top of that, he found that his head was now stuck in the buffalo skull.

Although he was not amused by the situation, the trickster could do little about it. After struggling for a while, he finally gave up, staggered to his feet and tried to walk. With the buffalo skull still stuck on his head, he obviously could not see where he was going, and soon fell over an embankment and hit his head on a rock. Fortunately for the trickster, the skull shattered.

Now Îktômni could see again, so he cleaned himself up and continued on to his next adventure. (Friesen 2000, 11)

A second kind of legend is designed for cultural instruction and related as a kind of informal pedagogy. These stories often incorporate animal characters because animals are seen as colleagues in this earthly wandering. The continued interaction between humans and animals is essential because human relationships with nonhuman beings help people define what is human.

Instructional legends are intended to teach about tribal origins, impart cultural content or relay information about natural phenomena. These stories explain things. For example, a child may enquire about the origin of the seasons or the creation of the world, and a tale revolving around animal life may be told. Another child may ask, "Where did our people come from? Why does Frog live on a lily pad?" Or, "Why are Raven's feathers black?" and a story will ensue. Stories told in response to these questions could include adventures of the trickster.

The following Assiniboine legend explains why Crow, whose feathers used to be white in colour, one day became black.

There was once a Native American warrior who lived with his wife and son. They were very happy together until the man's wife suddenly disappeared and did not come back. The warrior was very worried because his wife had not told him where she was going. Soon he and his son grew very lonesome.

A white crow living nearby was a close friend of the family, and the warrior told his friend what had happened. Then the warrior asked his friend Crow if he knew where his wife had gone. Crow told the warrior that his wife had gone to the sky with a star. Immediately the warrior decided to go and look for his wife. He asked Crow to look after things while he was gone. He asked Crow to keep the fire going because his son would need it to cook food and keep warm.

Crow promised to honour his friend's request.

The warrior was gone a long time. When he eventually returned with his wife, he found Crow faithfully fanning the embers of his fire with his wings to keep it burning. After standing in the smoke of the fire for so long, the white plumage of Crow's feathers had turned black.

To this day every crow displays its black feathers as a badge of honour and faithfulness. (Friesen 2000, 23)

A third legend type is the moral legend. Native American storytellers have at their disposal dozens of moral legends that are told to teach ideal or correct forms of behaviour. Not unlike the parables that Jesus taught in the New Testament, these stories are employed to suggest to the listener that a change in attitude or action would be desirable. Since traditional Native Americans rarely corporally punish their children, they sometimes find it useful to point out or emphasize the inappropriateness of certain behaviour by telling stories with a moral. For example, the story might be about an animal that engages in inappropriate behaviour—the child is expected to realize that a possible modification of his or her own behaviour is the object of the telling. The onus is always on each listener to apply the lesson of the legend to him- or herself if deemed appropriate.

A story about wasted talent often told among Plains First Nations is a good example of a moral legend.

A Native American hunter once decided to play a trick on a prairie chicken. He climbed up into an eagle's nest and retrieved an egg from it. Then

when no one was looking he slipped the eagle's egg into the prairie chicken's nest, which already had several eggs in it. The hunter reasoned that the mother prairie chicken would not notice the extra egg in her nest and would sit on it to hatch it. That is exactly what happened.

In due course a baby eagle was born from the eagle egg and joined the baby prairie chickens in the nest. As the chicks grew and developed, the mother prairie chicken noticed that one of her chicks was larger than the others, but she did not realize that this was a baby eagle.

As the baby eagle grew up, observers noticed that he acted just like a prairie chicken. He ate prairie chicken food, walked like a prairie chicken and flew like a prairie chicken. Since prairie chickens do not fly very high, he always flew close to the ground.

One day the young eagle saw an eagle flying high in the sky, soaring over the top of a mountain. "Who is that bird?" he asked his prairie chicken friends.

"That is the king of the birds," said his friends. "Don't worry about it, though. You will never be able to fly like that so don't even try. You are a prairie chicken."

The young eagle never tried to fly high. He always remained close to the ground, never realizing what strength he had, never reaching his full potential. (Friesen 2000, 47)

Sacred legends are a fourth type of legend; they were traditionally related only by recognized elders or other tribally approved individuals, since their telling was considered a form of worship. Tribal origin stories used to be included in this category, but today it is possible to find some of them in published form. Before European contact, spiritually significant stories were never related to just anyone who asked, and when they were told, a price had to be negotiated and paid. This is still the practice among many First Nations. Some of them consider sacred legends to be personal property and thus their transmission from generation to generation is carefully safeguarded.

It should be mentioned that among Native Americans of the Great Plains there are four kinds of spiritual elder. There are spiritual elders who are responsible for caring for and conducting sacred ceremonies. A second group who hold a similar office are medicinal elders, men and women trained in the art of herbal healing, usually through apprenticeship. Third are wisdom elders—men and women who are sought out by individuals or groups for wise counsel. Fourth are instructional elders or

storytellers. It is the last group, along with grandparents, who have primary responsibility for educating a nation's young.

Traditional First Nations Child-Raising Practices

One of the most touted contemporary learning models is inquiry learning, an approach in which motivation and initiative to pursue "truth" is essentially the responsibility of the student. Jerome Bruner's book *The Process of Education* (1960) is sometimes credited with providing the basis for the development of "methods of inquiry" towards effective teaching, although there is ample evidence that the assumptions he posited have deeper historical roots. Bruner's work is essentially a synthesis of then-known ideas about intelligence and motivation, and a recommendation that schools adhere to an inquiry-based curriculum. Bruner suggested that the various academic disciplines function according to unique principles, and successful students would find it necessary to learn the appropriate principles for each discipline. The result would be a spiral-like curriculum for each discipline, beginning with elementary forms of knowledge for earlier grades, with ever-increasing levels of complexity as students progressed through school (Parkay et al 2009, 278). Using the example of mathematics, Bruner explained his approach in this way:

The three fundamentals involved in working with [mathematical] equations are commutation, distribution, and association. Once a student grasps the ideas embodied in these three fundamentals, he is in a position wherein "new" equations to be solved are not new at all, but variants on a familiar theme. *Whether the student knows the formal names of these operations is less important for transfer than whether he is able to use them.* (Bruner 1960, 7-8; italics added).

Research shows that the traditional Aboriginal way of raising children was a corporate affair with elders and grandparents very much involved in day-to-day procedures. As will be shown, the approach used by these pedagogues very much resembled what is known today as inquiry learning, but with a twist—Indigenous pedagogy is *always* founded on a spiritual base. More detailed information about Aboriginal inquiry learning is available from both the oral tradition and written sources.

One of the earliest non-Aboriginal written sources about the child-raising practices of Canada's First Nations is the work left behind by New Zealand

anthropologist Diamond Jenness (1977). First published in 1932, Jenness's work comprises the results of a cross-country tour of Canada's First Nations on behalf of the National Museum of Canada. Although Jenness's ethnocentrism sometimes shows through in his descriptions of Indigenous life, he did manage to provide a fairly accurate picture of traditional Indigenous child-raising practices. This is borne out in later publications by Aboriginal writers. Jenness basically described these practices as being handed down from generation to generation amid harsh economic conditions, accompanied by "...ignorance of certain elementary rules in child-welfare so general that infant mortality was terrific" (Jenness 1977, 151).

Bias aside, Jenness *did* provide valuable information pertaining to the education of the young, noting that Indigenous children had more freedom than their non-Native peers and that they were exempt from the innumerable petty checks and restrictions that too often cramped the development of Euro-Canadian children. Native children were not physically disciplined, but their freedom did not give them licence to do whatever they wanted. Every adult took an active part in child training, including supervision of someone else's children, and elders always stood by to arbitrate disputes and apportion praise or blame. Because villages were small, it was easy for children to detect whether or not their behaviours generally met with community approval or disapproval. Jenness noted that First Nations' educational practices did not have regular hours and included two sets of "curricula," namely physical labour, which consisted of learning skills necessary to tribal survival, and spiritual knowledge, which pertained to ethics, morality and tribal ceremonial life. The last was presided over by elders who related stories and legends appropriate to the occasion (Jenness 1977, 152). The ubiquitous, mythical trickster character, who was capable of both doing good and playing tricks, often figured in First Nations' storytelling.

Aboriginal writers are generally in agreement with Jenness's appraisal, but go further in offering helpful details about educating the young. Following the lead of Ojibway elder Basil Johnston (1976), Grant (1996, 31) emphasizes that traditional Aboriginal education was based on respect, humility, caring, healing, generosity, cooperation, patience, humour and a willingness to help others. MacIvor (1995, 75f) identifies a series of bases for First Nations education and argues that spirituality—namely, the interconnectedness of all living things—traditionally formed the foundation of student learning. Students were consistently reminded that their first responsibility was to their culture and to its

members and that responsibility was to be transacted with respect.

Stairs (1993, 86) points out that traditional Aboriginal learning focused on values and identity developed through a learner's relationship to other persons and to the environment, namely Mother Earth. This approach involved a high level of abstract verbal meditation in a setting somewhat removed from daily activities, with the skill base for a specialized occupation as the principal goal. Young children were not expected to progress at the same speed nor in the same direction, but they were expected to attend to adult initiatives around them according to their individual motivations and abilities. They could always feel free to consult grandparents and elders about individual concerns. On reaching adulthood and having discovered their talents and calling, the benefit of practising their occupation was to honour the family for the benefit of the community (Deloria 1999, 141).

A primary Aboriginal approach to initiating the young was the emulation of adult practices. For example, young Inuit boys would be encouraged to literally stab their meat at meals as a way of demonstrating the harpooning of prey. Young girls were encouraged to imitate domestic chores. Tribal rites of passage indicated formal recognition of having attained a valued skill. Most important, desired child behaviour was not to be influenced by direct or coercive means (Miller 1996, 17). The key to effective learning was self-discovery. As the teen years approached, children tagged along with their parents and learned various skills on their own. If they attempted a particular activity and mismanaged it, they would not be corrected unless the result was potentially dangerous. Even then, any word of caution might be offered quietly, without a hint of condemnation.

Today, inquiry-based learning is defined as a student-centred strategy during which students inquire into an issue or seek answers to posed content questions within a fairly well-established procedure (Kourilsky and Quaranta 1987, 68). In inquiry learning (or discovery learning) students are given opportunities to inquire into topics of interest so they can discover insights for themselves, much like an Aboriginal child would be educated by a grandparent or elder. Effective teachers (facilitators or guides) will challenge students to go beyond the immediacy of a teaching/learning situation to inquire further on their own (Parkay et al 2009, 254). They may even be challenged to discuss *why* they arrived at a particular conclusion. Crisp (2009, 10) suggests that inquiry learning may be viewed as the process of asking and answering questions with the intent of creating meaningful dialogue. This may

be demonstrated by the following scenario, which features an exchange between a cultural neonate and an elder.

True to traditional Indigenous philosophical form, the elder encourages the process of individual inquiry. Since the youth is actively involved in the search, the elder offers these encouraging words: “Don’t worry. Take it easy. Do your best. It will all work out. Respect life. Respect your elders. It’s up to you. You have all the answers within you” (Couture 1991, 205). Sensing the youth’s uneasiness at being left on his or her own, and using the metaphor of a moose, the elder offers to help the searcher periodically evaluate the result of the search.

These are his words: “On a given day, if you ask me where you might go to find a moose, I will say, “If you go that way, you won’t find a moose. But, if you go that way, you will.” So now, you younger ones, think about all that. Come back once in a while and show us what you’ve got. And, we’ll tell you if what you think you have found is a moose.” (Couture 1991, 205)

The traditional Indigenous interpretation of inquiry, like that of more contemporary times, concludes its investigation with evaluation. The Aboriginal approach uses insightful input from respected elders, who proceed with acknowledged experiences and wisdom, and community approval. Today’s educators bypass input from elders and stress the importance of evaluating individual experiences in consultation with peers, hoping that through the process, “truth” will eventually emerge.

Protocol for Aboriginal Inquiry Learning

Literature pertaining to Native American storytelling is ample, since this universal tribal activity was viewed as the primary means to pass along cultural knowledge and encourage the development of individual insights (Macfarlan 1968, xiii; Price 1979, 41).

In the absence of written forms of communication, the practice of storytelling also “... trained and taxed the memory at the somatic level and in the soul” (Wheeler 2005, 191). Children learned hundreds of legends about hundreds of things—natural phenomena, animal life, tribal beliefs and customs, and spiritual truths. Storytelling ensured that education for the young need not be haphazard or incomplete. Elders would often gather children together during the day and tell them stories. These stories were useful for

instruction and discipline, and helped children learn about cultural practices and how to be respectful (Grant 1996, 37).

As the late elder Gail Valaskakis (2000, 76) stated: Stories are narratives—written or visual—and academic writing has long recognized that the narratives we express are windows on who we are, what we experience and how we understand and enact ourselves and other. ... Stories are not just entertainment. Stories are power. They reflect the deepest, the most intimate perceptions, relationships and attitudes of people. Stories show how a people, a culture, thinks.

Before European contact, storytelling was a very important activity among North American First Nations. Some Indigenous communities even designated storytellers who were judged by their eloquence and powers of invention. They were given the best seats in the lodge, and the choicest foods wherever they went (Clark 1971, x). It often happened that different storytellers might relate the same tale, and although they could embellish certain aspects of the story, the fundamental essence of the story would remain intact.

Fundamentally, legends were not told merely for enjoyment or instruction; the lessons inherent in their content were believed. Legends were viewed as emblems of active spirituality, because they gave concrete form to established beliefs and traditions that linked generations of people together (Erdoes and Ortiz 1984, xv). This is why it was so important that respected, knowledgeable persons who possessed the wisdom essential to raising probing questions appropriate to the occasion were in charge of the process.

Legends, like other aspects of cultural life, were perceived to be living phenomena, and each listener was expected to take something personal away from the experience of listening to the recounting of a story (M Blackfish, quoted in Norman 1990, xiii). On occasion a listener might not take anything away from such an experience, but days later, having cogitated on the experience, the person could realize what lesson might be learned or what was implied about his or her attitude or behaviour in the telling of the story. In this context, inquiry learning was also an adult activity.

Grant (1993, 1) posits that legends comprise an attempt to explain the unexplainable. Jungian psychology suggests that there are two kinds of knowledge—knowledge of the conscious, external world of everyday life, and knowledge of the subconscious workings of the human mind. Because the encouragement of personal ruminations is the target of inquiry learning, relating legends appeals to the latter kind of knowledge.

The general protocol for relating legends traditionally included telling them only in the winter and then only during the evening (Clark 1988, 15; Mayo 1990, 11). Storytelling was never undertaken when activities necessary to community livelihood demanded attention. Stories were not to be told during the spring, when plants were growing; “they might listen and forget to grow” (Montiel 2010, 37). During the summer months when certain animals were out of hibernation, they might overhear a story being told and find its reference to their habits unflattering. Relating legends other than during late autumn or in the winter months was therefore forbidden—the saying “all my relations” implies maintaining positive relations with all living phenomena. In traditional Indigenous cultures, everything in the universe was viewed as interconnected. The people believed that the happenings in every river, waterfall, echo and thunderclap, and even the changing positions of stars in the sky, resulted from actions by indwelling spirits whose activities could have implications for human behaviour (Edmonds and Clark 1989, xv), because after all, humans and all other living things are connected.

Though storytelling served various purposes among both adults and children, adults made the most of them for entertainment. Some Iroquois storytellers carried with them a bag of props and, when requested to relate a legend, would reach into the bag, pull out an item and make up a tale about it. On more formal occasions, during evenings, community members would gather in a circle around a fire and request that one of the elder keepers of old stories relate a valued tale. The responsibility of listeners was to enjoy the legend and at the same time keep in mind that its meaning could have a personal application—even if they had heard the story many times before. The storyline might not have changed very much between hearings, but the experience of the listener might have, and this could affect the listener’s interpretation of the story. As an added feature, some storytellers would design unique ways to check if their listeners were awake by uttering a particular word and expecting the audience to utter a certain response (Mourning Dove 1990, x).

The upshot of relating legends to children was that gifted storytellers were counted on to pass along revered truths to contemporary and future generations.

Why We Need to Go Back

There are four points to consider in applying the above protocol to contemporary early childhood socialization.

In the first place, we would be wise to consider assigning to “those who know” (Meili 1991) the responsibility of transmitting valued cultural knowledge, or at least incorporating their specialties. The benefits could be significant, based on what we know about the value of intergenerational interaction (Huber 2011, 18–20). Present practices are to assign this responsibility to babysitters, playschools, elementary school teachers, media or other such avenues, thereby bypassing an important cultural sector. As Weinman observes, things may be changing.

... There’s an increased awareness that the longer the star has been out there, the more comfortable we are with them. Older people are in ... The young kids are learning things procedurally from the older characters, but the older character is enriched by his experience with the young people. (Weinman 2011, 81)

Second, early childhood specialists know it is important that young children experience a degree of stability and awareness of the wider community in their lives, especially the kind that older adults can offer. Huber describes it this way:

Intergenerational meetings benefit all participants. ... Intergenerational meetings help reduce children’s misconceptions about older adults and help them learn how to accept people with disabilities. (Huber 2011, 18)

It is true that older people are sometimes accused of being grounded in the past, but the opportunity for young children to interact meaningfully with them can provide an important historical perspective.

Third, it is important to acknowledge the benefits of lifelong learning, but more important, this commitment can almost certainly be strengthened by having it demonstrated first-hand. As First Nations are well aware, many elders have at their disposal a vast storehouse of cultural knowledge that can readily be appropriated through storytelling featuring one-on-one interaction. In the words of Mary Muktoyuk, “The elders, in those days, we held in great respect. Whatever they told us, we would listen very carefully, trying not to make mistakes when we listened, because we respected them so highly, because they knew so much more than we did” (Mary Muktoyuk, Yupiaq First Nation, quoted in Friesen 1998, 9).

Paul (2011, 15) emphasizes the importance of making connections when conversing with young children, and, as we are all aware, the principle of human interconnectedness with natural phenomena is a vital plank in First Nations’ metaphysics, and no one is more qualified to explicate the meaning of that concept than spiritual elders. Developing an

appreciation for the interconnectedness of natural forces is a mainstay of Indigenous philosophy, and with elders at the helm of the process, the enhancement of young children's sense of wonder and appreciation should virtually be assured (Jacobs and Crowley 2010, 37).

Fourth and finally, it is important to create community in today's world, a world too often segmented into specific age groupings—daycares, elementary schools, teen clubs, middle schools, high schools, college or university cliques designated by majors, and a wide variety of adult segregations culminating in retirement resorts, nursing homes and even palliative centres. Bringing elders and grandparents back into the pedagogical milieu focused on young children might be a beginning step in the socialization of future generations.

As quoted at the outset of this paper, "They [the First Nations] had what the world has lost. They have it now. What the world has lost the world must have again, lest it die."

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Images of Older Adults in Canadian Picture Books

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Abstract

The article begins with a brief demographic overview of the aging of the Canadian population. It then notes issues related to measuring children's attitudes about older adults and proposes reasons for educating children about aging. Next, it discusses the importance of children's literature portraying older characters, offers ideas for literature selection and classroom activities, and suggests some websites with resources that early childhood educators may find useful. Finally, it provides an annotated list of Canadian picture books that feature older characters.

According to Turcotte and Schellenberg (2007), low fertility rates, greater life expectancy, and baby-boom generation effects have all contributed to the aging of the Canadian population. The percentage of the population who are seniors will increase rapidly over the next few decades as baby-boomers born between 1946 and 1965 start turning 65. Statistics Canada, in its 2005 population projections, projects an increase in the number of seniors from 4.2 to 9.8 million between 2005 and 2036 and an increase in their share of the population from 13.2 per cent to 24.5 per cent. It states that population aging will continue between 2036 and 2056, although more slowly, with a projected increase to 11.5 million seniors and an increase in their share of the total population to 27.2 per cent.

Measuring Children's Attitudes and Educating Children About Aging

Kwong See and Heller (2005) describe children's "ageist attitudes" as "their feelings about older people and their beliefs and expectations (stereotypes) about what older people are like. These attitudes are manifested in differential treatment or behavior directed at older people compared to younger people" (p 210).

Citing Kite and Johnson's (1986) meta-analysis of studies of children's attitudes about younger and older adults, Palmore (2005) concludes that "there is no simple answer to the question of whether children's attitudes toward the aged are negative, neutral, or positive. The answers depend on what dimension is measured and how it is measured" (p 67).

Kwong See and Heller (2005) discuss methodological problems of "direct assessments," which "measure ageism by first prompting children to think about older people, for example by using verbal instructions or pictures as cues, and then asking for conscious (direct) judgments on attitude measures" (p 210). They instead advocate "indirect assessments," which "allow one to infer children's beliefs and feelings ... by observing [their] behavior toward older persons, usually in the context of performing tasks that in no way appear to be measures of ageism" (p 210).

Based on studies by Isaacs and Bearison (1986) and Kwong See and Rasmussen (2002), which used indirect measures, Kwong See and Heller (2005) state that negative attitudes about older adults were found in children as young as four or five years old.

Crawford (2000) advocates educating children about aging for the following reasons. She first notes the 1999 US Census Bureau's projected increase in the American population aged 65 and older that is associated with greater life expectancy

and aging of baby-boomers. Citing Kupetz (1994), she then points out that aging is a natural process in human life. Young children regularly interact with older people. Their parents and they themselves will eventually become old. Last, Crawford raises the “issue of teaching for justice and equity” (p 163). Referring to Comfort’s (1976) definition of *ageism*, she stresses the importance of confronting age-related biases and stereotypes that will ultimately affect everyone.

The Importance, Selection and Classroom Use of Children’s Books That Include Older Characters

Matthew and Lowe (2010) recommend using books that portray older persons realistically to help children address stereotypes presented in the media, explore the meaning of aging, make connections between the characters and older people in their own lives, and understand the value of intergenerational relationships and of being loved by older persons.

Noting its importance in children’s cognitive and affective development, Crawford (2000) also recommends using children’s literature to explore issues of older persons and aging. She suggests that teachers select texts that show older characters in unbiased and varied ways, raise questions about ageist stereotypes and portray positive intergenerational relationships.

According to McGuire (2003), ageism in children’s literature reflects ageism “deeply ingrained in U.S. culture” (p 146). In her opinion, early children’s literature often focuses on negative aspects of aging with limited, uninspiring and unrealistic portrayals of older people.

Regarding text selection, McGuire (2003) stresses the importance of examining an older character’s role and poses the following questions:

Is the older person portrayed as healthy, independent, and active in his or her community?
Is the older person a role model for growing up and growing older?

Are intergenerational relationships portrayed in the story? Are stereotypic adjectives and portrayals used? Are the illustrations ... age-stereotypic? Are illness, death, and dying associated with the older characters in the story? Does the older person have a role other than grandparent? (p 146)

McGuire (2003) suggests that teachers include books that have older characters in reading activities

and discussions, engage students in writing and sharing activities about older people and aging, and invite older people for classroom reading and interaction. She also advocates including positive, intergenerational literature in school, library, bookstore and home book collections.

McGuire (2009) recommends the books listed in her online article to help children see aging as a normal process; recognize intergenerational similarities, mutual enjoyment and learning; and see older people as worthwhile members of society. She suggests using such books to help children think about what Dychtwald and Flower (1990) term their “elder within,” or “the older person they can become” (McGuire 2009, 2), to show older people in lifelong pursuits such as engaging in the arts, physical activities and travel. She suggests that older persons could read books to children. She advocates contacting schools and libraries to make the listed books available, purchasing them for children, and contacting authors and publishers about the need for positive literature. She also invites comments and recommendations for other books.

The Reading Rockets website, a project of the Greater Washington Educational Telecommunications Association (2013), includes annotated lists of books with positive images of older adults for three- to six-year-olds and for six- to nine-year-olds.

The US National Academy for Teaching and Learning About Aging (NATLA) is one organization that McGuire (2003) recognizes for promoting education about aging. Its website (www.cps.unt.edu/natla, accessed July 29, 2013) provides resources to help K–12 teachers incorporate aging and lifespan topics into the curriculum. These resources include sample classroom activities, a literature evaluation form and a list of recommended children’s books.

Annotated List of Canadian Picture Books Featuring Older Characters

McGuire (2003) states that older characters in early children’s literature are usually grandparents and that there are in such literature few nonfamily main characters. The following annotated Canadian picture books, however, are not intergenerational stories about grandparents. The older characters have various roles including friend, neighbour and community worker and there is even a homeless person. Although some stories do portray infirmity, loneliness or loss, they also celebrate friendship, humour and perseverance. Some depict realistic

situations, while others take place within the realms of fantasy and folklore.

- **Abby's Birds**, by Ellen Schwartz, illustrated by Sima Elizabeth Shefrin. Vancouver, BC: Tradewind Books, 2007.
Abby creates a special surprise to celebrate the homecoming of her neighbour, Mrs Naka, from the hospital.
- **Amos's Sweater**, by Janet Lunn, illustrated by Kim LaFave. Toronto, Ont: Groundwood Books, 1988.
Aunt Hattie and Uncle Henry match wits with Amos, a disgruntled sheep who is determined to retrieve his wool.
- **Aunt Olga's Christmas Postcards**, by Kevin Major, illustrated by Bruce Roberts. Toronto, Ont: Groundwood Books, 2005.
Anna enjoys a special visit with 95-year-old Great-Great Aunt Olga, sharing stories and poems inspired by her aunt's collection of vintage Christmas postcards.
- **The Bone Talker**, by Shelley A Leedahl, illustrated by Bill Slavin. Red Deer, Alta: Red Deer Press, 1999.
After a young child helps to rekindle her spirit, "Grandmother Bones" works magic.
- **The Cat and the Wizard**, by Dennis Lee, illustrated by Gillian Johnson. Toronto, Ont: Key Porter Books, 2001.
A lonely wizard and an exceptional black cat celebrate their new friendship with an incredible party in Casa Loma.
- **Catmagic**, by Loris Lesynski. Willowdale, Ont: Annick, 1998.
To prevent being banished from their retirement home, Izzy the cat convinces the witches to cast one last spell.
- **Chin Chiang and the Dragon's Dance**, by Ian Wallace. Toronto, Ont: Groundwood, 1984.
An understanding custodian helps Chin Chiang overcome his apprehension about performing in the Year of the Dragon celebration.
- **Chung Lee Loves Lobsters**, by Hugh MacDonald, illustrated by Glen and Perri Craig. Charlottetown, PEI: Acorn, 2011.
Two brothers discover why retired cook Mr Lee regularly buys a lobster from their mother's restaurant.
- **Claire's Gift**, by Maxine Trottier, illustrated by Rajka Kupesic. Markham, Ont: North Winds / Scholastic Canada, 1999.
Claire shows her gratitude to Tante Marie for taking her in and teaching her rug hooking.
- **Clancy with the Puck**, by Chris Mizzoni. Vancouver, BC: Raincoast Books, 2007.
Although his celebrity days are long over, Clancy still retains his self-confidence and love of hockey.
- **Courage to Fly**, by Troon Harrison, illustrated by Zhong-Yang Huang. Calgary, Alta: Red Deer Press, 2002.
An elderly Chinese neighbour gives Meg some friendly advice that helps her adjust to her new home in Canada.
- **Cross Katie Kross**, by Donna Morrissey, illustrated by Bridgette Morrissey. Toronto, Ont: Penguin, 2012.
Grumpy Katie sets out to find the perfect home like the one in her dream and learns it is closer than she thinks.
- **The Dream Collector**, by Troon Harrison, illustrated by Alan and Lea Daniel. Toronto, Ont: Kids Can, 1999.
The Dream Collector's reward for Zachary's help is something that Zachary has been dreaming about.
- **Duck Cakes for Sale**, by Janet Lunn, illustrated by Kim LaFave. Toronto, Ont: Douglas & McIntyre, 1989.
An older woman moves to the country for a restful life, but experiences quite the opposite.
- **Duncan's Way**, by Ian Wallace. Toronto, Ont: Groundwood, 2000.
His fisherman father is out of work, and Duncan worries about moving, until his retired friend Mr Marshall gives him an idea.
- **Each One Special**, by Frieda Wishinsky, illustrated by H Werner Zimmermann. Victoria, BC: Orca, 1998.
After 35 years as a cake decorator, Harry is despondent when he loses his job, but his young friend Ben has creative ideas to cheer him up.
- **Emily's Eighteen Aunts**, by Curtis Parkinson, illustrated by Andrea Wayne von Königsöw. Toronto, Ont: Stoddart Kids, 2002.
Finding an "aunt" to share special activities becomes more complicated than Emily expected.
- **Farmer Joe Baby-Sits**, by Nancy Wilcox Richards, illustrated by Werner Zimmermann. Markham, Ont: Scholastic Canada, 1997.
First-time babysitter Farmer Joe and Jennifer search the farm for Jennifer's missing naptime blanket, and the effort wears them both out.
- **Franklin and the Babysitter**, by Sharon Jennings, illustrated by Mark Koren. Toronto, Ont: Kids Can, 2001.
Franklin the Turtle worries that he won't have any fun with his elderly babysitter, Mrs Muskrat.
- **Ghost Cat**, by Mark Abley, illustrated by Karen Reczuch. Toronto, Ont: Groundwood/Douglas & McIntyre, 2001.
Retired teacher Miss Wilkinson is heartbroken when her beloved cat Tommy Douglas dies, until she senses his comforting presence.

- **Grandpa Joe**, by Ruowen Wang, illustrated by Hechen Yu. Toronto, Ont: Kevin & Robin Books, 2008.
Friendship with a talkative neighbour has a remarkable outcome for a young boy who does not speak.
- **A Hen for Izzy Pippik**, by Aubrey Davis, illustrated by Marie Lafrance. Toronto, Ont: Kids Can, 2012.
Shaina's unwavering protection of Izzy Pippik's prize hen brings good fortune to her impoverished town.
- **I Know an Old Laddie**, by Jean Little, illustrated by Rose Cowles. Toronto, Ont: Viking, 1999.
In this version of the well-known rhyme, an elderly man starts by swallowing a flea and ends by swallowing a squid.
- **It's Raining, It's Pouring**, by Andrea Spalding, illustrated by Leslie Elizabeth Watts. Victoria, BC: Orca, 2001.
So she can go outside to play, Little Girl cures the head cold of Old Man, the weather giant.
- **Jeremiah and Mrs. Ming**, by Sharon Jennings, illustrated by Mireille Levert. Toronto, Ont: Annick, 1990.
Jeremiah's caregiver, Mrs Ming, uses her "magical" abilities to help him fall asleep at bedtime.
- **Jeremiah Learns to Read**, by Jo Ellen Bogart, illustrated by Laura Fernandez and Rick Jacobson. Richmond Hill, Ont: North Winds, 1997.
Jeremiah's determination to become a reader is a rewarding experience for everyone involved.
- **Jonathan Cleaned Up—Then He Heard a Sound, or Blackberry Subway Jam**, by Robert Munsch, illustrated by Michael Martchenko. Toronto, Ont: Annick, 1981.
In exchange for some blackberry jam, the elderly man who runs the city's computer agrees to help Jonathan get a subway station out of his apartment.
- **The Lighthouse Dog**, by Betty Waterton, illustrated by Dean Griffiths. Victoria, BC: Orca, 1997.
The lighthouse captain expects his wife to bring home a little puppy, not huge Molly, who creates havoc until she assists with a brave rescue.
- **Lily and the Paper Man**, by Rebecca Upjohn, illustrated by Renné Benoit. Toronto, Ont: Second Story, 2007.
At first Lily is afraid of the dishevelled-looking paper man on her way home from school, but when it starts getting cold, she thinks of a plan to help him stay warm.
- **Madame B Takes Up Flying**, by Bénédicte Froissart, illustrated by Mylène Pratt, and translated by Jane Macaulay. Montreal, Que: Smith, Bonappétit & Son, 2006.
Madame B and her cat, Rascal, take passengers on a thrilling airplane adventure.
- **Mavis and Merna**, by Ian Wallace. Toronto, Ont: Groundwood Books, 2005.
After thirty years, Merna Gully reopens her general store with help from Mavis, who has been her friend since Mavis was a child.
- **Me and Mr. Mah**, by Andrea Spalding, illustrated by Janet Wilson. Victoria, BC: Orca, 1999.
When his parents separate, Ian and his mother move to a faraway city. He and an elderly neighbour become friends and share memories of their old homes.
- **Miss Wondergem's Dreadfully Dreadful Pie**, by Valerie Sherrard, illustrated by Wendy J Whittingham. St John's, Nfld: Tuckamore Books, 2011.
After new bakery owner Miss Wondergem reveals her pie ingredients, the McGrew children better appreciate their mother's cooking.
- **Mr. Belinsky's Bagels**, by Ellen Schwartz, illustrated by Stefan Czernecki. Vancouver, BC: Tradewind Books, 1997.
After trying to compete with a fancy new bakery, Mr Belinsky decides it's more important to just keep making delicious bagels.
- **Mr. McGratt and the Ornerly Cat**, by Marilyn Helmer, illustrated by Martine Gorbault. Toronto, ON: Kids Can, 1999.
Mr McGratt is determined to get a stray cat to leave, but the cat is equally determined to stay.
- **Mr. Zinger's Hat**, by Cary Fagan, illustrated by Dušan Petričić. Toronto, Ont: Tundra Books, 2012.
Encouraged by storyteller Mr. Zinger and his "magical" hat, Leo discovers the pleasures of creating stories.
- **Mrs. Goodhearth and the Gargoyle**, by Lena Coakley, illustrated by Wendy Bailey. Victoria, BC: Orca, 2005.
Only one little gargoyle on Great House's roof can come to life, and he is lonely until kindly Mrs Goodhearth moves in.
- **No Dogs Allowed**, by Margriet Ruurs, illustrated by Marc Houde. Toronto, Ont: Chestnut, 2006.
Based on a true story. Mrs Jamieson must give away her dog, Sam, when she moves to a retirement home. Amazingly, Sam finds her months later and earns a special place there.

- **No Frogs for Dinner**, by Frieda Wishinsky, illustrated by Linda Hendry. Markham, Ont: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 2012.
Aunt Rose has organized Melvin's visit, but unfortunately not with the fun activities that *he* wants to do.
- **Noguchi the Samurai**, by Burt Konzak, illustrated by Johnny Wales. Toronto, Ont: Lester, 1994.
Noguchi the bully brags that he is the greatest samurai in Japan, but aged samurai Michihara teaches him a lesson in humility.
- **Old MacDonald Had Her Farm**, by JonArno Lawson, illustrated by Tina Holdcroft. Richmond Hill, Ont: Annick, 2012.
Vowels inspire Old MacDonald's inventive and resourceful approach to farming.
- **Old Thomas and the Little Fairy**, by Dominique Demers, illustrated by Stéphane Poulin, translated by Sheila Fischman. St Lambert, Que: Dominique & Friends, 2000.
Bitter and alone, Old Thomas the fisherman finds renewed happiness after he finds a tiny, fairy-like girl. To save her life, he willingly sacrifices his own.
- **Oliver Crump is Not a Grump**, by Lisa Smith. Toronto, Ont: McArthur, 2006.
After a long winter indoors, Oliver ventures out on the first nice spring day to catch up on life.
- **The Pirates of Captain McKee**, by Julie Lawson, illustrated by Werner Zimmermann. Toronto, Ont: Scholastic Canada, 2008.
A pirate adventure awaits a brother and sister who don't heed the captain's warning to stay away from his canoe.
- **A Present for Mrs. Kazinsky**, by Marilyn Reynolds, illustrated by Lynn Smith-Ary. Victoria, BC: Orca, 2001.
Although he wants to keep it for himself, Frank gives his best friend, Mrs Kazinsky, a special gift for her 80th birthday.
- **Red Parka Mary**, by Peter Eyvindson, illustrated by Rhian Brynjolson. Winnipeg, Man: Pemmican, 1996.
The young narrator is afraid of his neighbour Mary until he gets to know her. In return for his Christmas present of a new red parka, she gives him her own special gift.
- **Roses for Gita**, by Rachna Gilmore, illustrated by Alice Priestley. Toronto, Ont: Second Story, 1996.
Gita discovers a gentler side to the personality of her gruff neighbour, Mr Flinch, and their friendship starts to bloom like the roses they both admire.
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Yankel enjoys spreading gossip about the other villagers until his rabbi teaches him a lesson about its consequences.
- **Simply Ridiculous**, retold by Virginia Davis, and illustrated by Russ Willms. Toronto, Ont: Kids Can, 1995.
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- **Smarty Pants**, by Colleen Sydor, illustrated by Suzane Langlois. Montréal, Que: Lobster, 1999.
Like her great-aunt, Norah has a singular personality, which proves helpful when she experiences a difficult situation at school.
- **Ten Old Men and a Mouse**, by Cary Fagan, illustrated by Gary Clement. Toronto, Ont: Tundra Books, 2007.
The arrival of a little mouse livens up the days of the synagogue's ten elderly members.
- **Who Wants Rocks?** by Michael Arvaarluk Kusugak, illustrated by Vldyana Langer Kryorka. Willowdale, Ont: Annick, 1999.
Old Joe the prospector discovers that there are greater riches in life than the gold he has been seeking.

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A Foray into the iPad World

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Do not confine your children to your own learning, for they were born in another time.
—Chinese proverb

Our students are living in such a different world than we were when we attended school. I can remember that Grade 5 was the first time I had a computer in my class. I recall my teacher being unhappy when my dad asked me at parent night what we did with the computer and I responded that I didn't know. I really don't remember using that computer. I recall the teacher showing us something about the hardware inside, but what we students actually *did* with the computer I don't recall. It is truly a different world for students today.

This past year I had the privilege of being a part of an Alberta Education learning initiative that provided a technology grant to my school, a rural elementary school in northeastern Alberta. This grant provided my school with funds for iPads as part of a provincewide study on technology use in K–4 classrooms. The tech leader in our division had approached us in September and suggested that we apply for the grant and also recommended that we propose to get iPads in our classrooms. We decided to focus our grant proposal on having two class sets of iPads for the three Grade 3 classes to share, as well as three iPads in each K–2 class to use as part of a learning centre. We hope to continue to increase the number of iPads in those centres as we get further into this project, but this was our original proposal. As we were drafting this proposal, I was looking for an independent action research project to do as part of my master's program at the University of Alberta. Being a part of this Alberta Education learning initiative seemed to fit well with

a study of the use of iPads in my kindergarten classroom. The original research question I posed was, How can I use iPad technology to improve the literacy abilities of my kindergarten students, with a particular focus on writing and oral language abilities?

Methodology

Bearne, Graham and Marsh (2007) write about the importance of considering your sample when completing an action research project. I focused my study on my students and my classroom. During the eight months of the study my kindergarten class consisted of 15–16 students between the ages of four and six. These students were all Cree students, with the majority living on nearby First Nations reserves. Six of the students were in the foster care system—some in group homes and others with extended family members. A few of the children had special needs, some academic and some behavioural. During the study, two students left my class and one new student arrived. My action research study officially began in November of 2011 and ended in June of 2012. Our school did not obtain the class set of iPads until January of 2012, but in the two months prior I had begun to introduce my students to a variety of iPad apps and their uses by using my own personal iPad. In order to aid my reflections, I collected samples of the children's work and made careful observations of their interactions with the iPads and each other as they used the iPads during centre times. During this time I also kept a personal journal of my observations and discussed the work with colleagues at school and with my university supervisor.

Observations

In looking at the data I began to think about what important themes were emerging from the collection of items I was gathering. I discussed with colleagues what they were observing in their classrooms. Furthermore, I read scholarly articles about technology use and early childhood pedagogy. I discovered three important themes as I looked at all the evidence from my first year with the iPads.

Technology

The first theme relates to the technology itself. Why should we use such technology in the classroom? Some may argue that introducing this technology will force children to be dependent upon technology and will stop them from thinking for themselves. Most of my students do not have access to much technology at home. Technology is so prevalent in mainstream society today and its importance will continue to grow in the future—I think that it is important to expose students to a variety of technologies in school. In today's world, checking the weather, finding what movies are playing or looking up a phone number are typical uses of technology by a majority of people. We don't know what the future holds in the way of technology for our students, but by teaching them to use the technology that exists in their lives today we better prepare them for the future. Richardson (2012) stated

Let's face it: For my children and for millions like them, life will be an open phone test. They are among the first generation who will carry access to the sum of human knowledge and literally billions of potential teachers in their pockets. They will use that access on a daily basis to connect, create and, most important, to learn in ways that most of us can scarcely imagine. Given that reality, shouldn't we be teaching our students how to use mobile devices well?

Richardson goes on to state that we must now require more from our students. We must start asking questions that require synthesis and creativity, not just rote memorization. Ching et al (2006) stated, "They (young children) have been raised with these artifacts, so do they even conceive of a separate class of objects known as 'technology' and thus notice its unusual entry into alternative spaces? Perhaps this notion of 'technology' is a distinction that belongs to a previous generation, those of us still struggling with the 'before' and 'after' of the computer revolution" (p 367). I believe that this is true. The children in my kindergarten class don't know that it is unusual to have iPads in the classroom. They are brand new to school and to the ways of schooling, so this is natural to them. My future classes are going to be even more unaware of the uniqueness of this inclusion of technology; they will be using it from day one or two in the classroom.

There are those who think that the iPad is only for fun and games and has no business in school. It is important that teachers make sure that our goal with iPads is about the teaching, not the technology. Sure, the children enjoy having and playing with

iPads—iPads are motivating and engaging; however, I came to realize that it was more important to look at what I wanted to accomplish to determine if the iPad was truly the best tool for the job. Fletcher (1996) made this analogy:

When you go to the hardware store to buy a drill, you don't actually want a drill, you want a hole, they don't sell holes at the hardware store, but they do sell drills, which are the technology used to make holes. We must not lose sight that technology for the most part is a tool and it should be used in applications which address educational concerns. (Fletcher 1996, as cited in Okojie, Olinzock, and Okojie-Boulder 2006, 68)

It isn't the iPad that we want in our classrooms; it is our students' learning and growth. Too often, we forget this with technology in school. We allow all these iPads, laptops and interactive whiteboards to override our good teaching. It often isn't until much later, or after a great deal of reflection, that we realize the proper place of that technology and the best ways to use it to help our students learn. Perhaps this is common with new technologies. Kalantzis, Cope and Cloonan (2010) stated that in the rush to adopt new technology "we have seen new media brought into the classroom, as if the medium itself was the message" (p 62). They went on to caution that these new novelties "do not always involve *pedagogical* innovation" (p 63). This is what is most important: we must remember that we should always think about pedagogy. What knowledge do we want students to have? Will the technology aid in that learning? We must not continue to do the same old thing with these new technologies. I saw disheartening examples of this when I began to look at ways to incorporate the iPad into my classroom. Many teachers wrote on blogs or posted YouTube videos of their use of iPads. Often this technology was being used in their classrooms to complete worksheets or to reinforce basic skills. Sure, it's great to save a few trees, but really I wanted this to be more than that for my students. I wanted them to create something, to show me their deeper knowledge.

My school also had a more complex focus in mind. We had a goal. Our grant proposal stated that we planned to make use of the iPads in K-2 to improve reading, writing and oral language development. I began to brainstorm ways to use the iPads for this purpose in my kindergarten classroom. I really wanted the children to create something to share with me, with each other and, perhaps, with our school and the outside community. Looking back, this idea of creation and collaboration was another major theme that emerged in my first year of iPad use.

Creation and Collaboration

I started to explore ways to create with the iPad as soon as confirmation came that we would be getting the technology grant. I immediately bought a personal iPad in anticipation of the project and I began to bring it to class to have the students get used to the device. Because this was my personal iPad, I was a little less free with this device and I allowed the children to use it only with me, in a centre, at this time.

My class received their three iPads right after Christmas holidays. Beginning the new year with these iPads really let us start fresh and be innovative with the devices. One of the first apps I taught the children how to use was the app Puppet Pals (Polished Play 2011). This app allows students to use cartoon images of stock characters to create a little play from a story. It records their voices and the movements of their characters, saves the video and plays it back. One of the best features is that it allows children to take photos of themselves or others to include in the story. Using the Smart Board I showed the children how to take their photos and add them to the Puppet Pals video. I then began teaching them to use the app during our writing time. I started with the stronger students, because I knew they would pick it up quickly and then would be able to help the others. Although I eventually worked with all the students, many did not need much instruction from me because they had already been shown by some of the other students and had picked it up quickly. Sharing knowledge with each other was a strong motivator throughout this first year with the iPads. I often heard cries of: "Where did you find that?" or "How did you do that?" as children went to sit with classmates to see a new app or find the answer to a question. I was encouraged by their collaboration.

Our first whole-class project was a retelling one of their favourite stories, *Pete the Cat*, by Eric Litwin (2010). The students chose a variety of ways to retell the story—puppets, drawings and acting it out. After I completed this project with them I reflected on a few things. First, I think that I controlled the project too much. I held the iPad while videoing (because it was my own, I was afraid they would drop it), so my voice was heard the loudest. Although I know the students knew the words, they were often not loud enough to be heard in the final versions. However, even though there are parts of this experience I would change, I still think it gave us a good starting point: it gave the students an idea of what they could do with the iPad, especially the video function, and it allowed me to see some of the limitations of the microphone, so I taught the students to use strong voices or use a microphone attachment.

My students were extremely motivated to create on the iPad after seeing some of their work with the whole class. After they created the *Pete the Cat* videos, I purchased a VGA adaptor to connect the iPad with our Smart Board. The children loved watching themselves on the Smart Board, and although some of them might have seemed embarrassed as the whole class was watching, the same students were often seen immediately afterwards making more videos.

The connection cord also allowed the children to see how different apps worked and gave us the opportunity to use some of the apps together. I showed them how to use certain skill-and-drill-type apps and how to work different parts of the iPad, such as how to focus the camera and change viewing options from front to back. The children enjoyed learning how to work the apps, and though I was glad they found them engaging, I still did not want this to be a focus of our use of the iPads. As I reflect back on the year, I am happy that though the apps served a function, my students still were more interested in producing their own creations with the iPads.

Not many of my students had access to this technology outside of school life, but the few who did were leaders in our class. If students had questions, they knew they could go to one another to find an answer rather than always looking to me. Upon reflection, I could see Vygotsky's zone of proximal development in effect, which allows for "collaboration with more capable peers" (1978, 86). I could even see it within myself. Kederasha-McClay and Mackey (2009) wrote, "The zone of proximal development is multi-directional, with teachers helping students and students helping teachers, and everyone performing at a higher level than they could manage unassisted" (p 112). We often don't consider students more capable than ourselves, especially five-year-olds! But I soon learned who the more skilled students were with the iPads and I made use of them when I needed to. For example, one day one of my students locked the screen on an iPad. Although I knew how to fix it, I seemed unable to focus on it; my students were waiting for me to show them a video we had created and I was flustered by not being able to fix the screen. Finally, I used another of our iPads to show the video and handed the locked one over to one of my students and asked her to fix it. I knew she was capable. She was very good at replacing the pictures on the home screen and could do all sorts of things I hadn't yet explored. Better yet, she was teaching all these things to the other students as they worked together on the iPads.

Right from the beginning of our use of iPads, most of my students wanted to create. They often

made videos of themselves singing, or retelling stories or rhymes. They learned how to use an app called Puppet Pals (Polished Play 2011), which allowed them to make little movies with characters, and every week they created more and more of them. This desire to create and share their creations grew as we continued to explore different ways to use the iPads and began to show the results to the whole class. Students loved having their videos shown to others on our Smart Board or on their iPad. I was very pleased with the direction the students had taken with their videos and creations. I found examples of students singing classroom songs on the videos, groups of children getting together to retell their favourite stories and one student retelling “Humpty Dumpty” in a mix of English and Cree. My students were doing just what our proposal had set out to accomplish. They were enhancing their creativity through beginning storytelling experiences—or at least retelling, practising reading, and reciting rhymes and songs. I could also see how this was improving their oral language skills.

I must caution, though, that these things did not come immediately to my students. I had to ensure that I was encouraging, supporting and sharing their creations.

The creations my students made on the class iPads were very revealing. Weekly I would download and watch the new videos, pictures and other creations they had made that week. I started doing this as a reflection for myself as part of my action research study, but it became so invaluable to me as a teacher that I am certain I will continue to make this a priority in my future years with the iPads. I could see my students’ interactions and collaborations with others; I could see who repeatedly made the same types of videos and also who did not often create videos or take pictures. These videos also allowed me to see growth in the language abilities of students, one of the main focuses of my action research study.

Play

The final theme I would like to reflect on in this article came as a result of the limited number of iPads in the classroom. One of the difficulties I found this first year was that the number of iPads in the classroom didn’t allow for more class projects that everyone could work on at the same time. I began to worry that we weren’t doing enough with the technology. I began to worry that too much free time or play was not making the best use of the technology. I was often concerned that I was not doing enough, not doing the right things, and allowing too much freedom during play centre time. This concept is still hard for me to accept, but I

needed to realize that, especially in kindergarten, some play is just fine. When I look at what my students were doing when they “played” with the iPads I see many examples of real learning. This is true of all play. Brown and Vaughan (2010) have studied play in a variety of situations and found that “animals that play a lot quickly learn how to navigate their world and adapt to it. In short, they are smarter” (p 33). In kindergarten, play is often pushed out by more formal learning. Thankfully, I teach in a full-day kindergarten so I don’t always feel the same time pressures other teachers might. My students still have time for play. I can see the benefits of it—play gives them a chance to learn to interact with others, learn to share and take turns, and to learn concepts through their play.

As I reflect on this first teaching experience with the iPads, I think that the way the iPads were presented encouraged the children to want to create something with them. We had no game apps. Most of our apps had some educational purpose, if only for skill and drill. At first students played with those skill-and-drill apps, but I believe they began to find them too easy so they started exploring more difficult apps. Most of the children wanted to explore music making with the Garage Band app or making a video or taking pictures. Albers and Harste (2007) stated, “Classroom spaces that encourage multimodality allow students across ages to learn as well as play with a range of media. With play comes invention. Students are inventing new uses for common materials like photos, video, and visual texts” (p 15). I felt so much better after reading this. Much of the children’s “play” with the iPads was actually invention. They were inventing ways of videoing each other and themselves, and practising uses for the iPads that I had not considered.

One great example of their play and creation occurred the day a student came to me with a concern. We had purchased the interactive book app Sesame Workshop Apps (2011) for the story *The Monster at the End of This Book* (Stone 1971). The children loved the app, which not only tells the story but also allows children to interact with the character and make decisions about how the story will proceed. The students often listened to this app while paging through our paper copy of the book. After doing this, two of my girls had wanted to find the app for another well-loved story. One of them brought me an iPad and asked where the *Down by the Bay* (Raffi 1999) app was. After double-checking to make sure one hadn’t actually been created in the app store, I explained that not all books have apps. Nonchalantly I suggested that she and her friend make one. I walked away without

giving this any more thought because a number of students needed my attention elsewhere. A few minutes later, the noise level in the room started to rise. As many teachers can understand, I started to worry that the noise meant the students were off task and out of control. I tried to calm myself—this was play centre time, after all—and began to attend to the noises I heard. One of the goals our school had for the iPads was to improve the oral language skills of our K–2 students. I needed to reflect: was the noise I heard part of that learning with the iPads? I also tried to remember that an “emphasis on quietness ... does not take into account the valuable role that talk plays in the social process of learning” (Larson 1999, 228). I paused and looked around the room. There were the usual play centres and their inherent noise, three children splashing in the water table, two boys building towers out of blocks on the carpet. But something was different. The noise I heard came from the tables. There they were, those two girls, one holding the book and singing “Down by the Bay” and the other videoing the action. They were creating their own book app! Not only that, their idea had spurred another two girls to do the same with another favourite book and from their corner of the room I could hear the sound of *Caps for Sale* (Slobodkina 1987).

This was a normal day of play centre time in my kindergarten classroom, but the difference was that the amount of literacy-based activities had increased. The result of one child’s wish for a *Down by the Bay* app resulted in four students working—or, as I’m sure they saw it, playing—on two iPads to recreate favourite stories for other students to view and enjoy.

Conclusions

As I look back on my first year with iPads and look forward to discussing ideas with fellow teachers, I try to decide what was most valuable to me. I could talk about my students’ favourite apps or the ones I found most valuable as a teacher, but I think I would have to say that the process of action research and the discoveries I made about the students were what I enjoyed most. Students were excited to create something to share with others, and these creations, often made during “play” time, told me so much about them and their literacy experiences. My original research questions were answered; in addition, I found that the use of the iPads was beneficial for the beginning writing experiences. Moreover, I found that students’ language development was the greatest benefit of using iPad technology. Is this because of the easy-to-use video function? Is it because of easy playback

for children, allowing them to revise their work and share with others? These are questions I will continue to ponder in my future years of using iPads in the kindergarten classroom. By examining what my students created and reflecting on ways of encouraging their growth, I feel I made a good start during this first year of iPad use. However, I know that as time goes on I will continue to reflect on and tweak the learning experiences I can offer to my students with this tool.

If we teach today as we taught yesterday, we rob our children of tomorrow.

—John Dewey

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Hop on Pop,¹ Click on Poptropica:² **Preschoolers' Multiliteracy Practices at Home**

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Abstract

This article draws on data analyses from an ecological inquiry informed by complexity thinking. It uses Green's (1988) conceptual framework of a three-dimensional (3-D) model. As a participant observer, I documented, described, and analyzed the ways preschool children engage in multiliteracy practices at home. In this article, I present one example from the study to illustrate a preschooler's multiliteracy practices at home. This example suggests that young children can be sophisticated users of current technologies (eg, iPads and laptops); can use a variety of technology tools as part of their everyday play objects; and can develop early literacy skills and knowledge while exploring such objects.

Introduction

This article presents interpretations from an ecological inquiry that describes, documents and analyzes preschoolers' engagement with multiliteracy practices at home. The study examined how such literacy practices might influence the children's home lives. A deeper understanding of

young children's home literacy experiences can inform educators, policymakers and other stakeholders who make decisions and plan curricula for young children's literacy learning. The article illustrates some new ways that young children are using current technology tools (eg, laptop computers and mobile touch screen devices) as play objects at home. It highlights the example of one preschooler's home literacy experience with *Poptropica*, an online video game. This was one of many examples observed in this study that illustrated the complexity and interconnectedness of preschoolers' literacy learning.

This study took place in two urban and two rural centres in western Canada and southwestern Australia. The example presented here addresses the question, In what literacy practices are preschool children engaging in their home environment?

Theoretical Framework

Complexity theory provides the theoretical frame for this study; it recognizes literacy learning as a nonlinear, interconnected and recursive process. Complexity theory also recognizes systems such as social systems, including families, as adaptive complex learning systems (Davis and Sumara 2008; Doll 2012; Waldrop 1992). Davis (2004) notes that, unlike analytical science, which focuses on a simple cause-and-effect model and has expectations of linear predictability and certainty, complexity theory is more interested in nonlinear, uncertain, interconnected, emergent, self-organizing, adaptive

¹Dr Seuss. 1963. *Hop on Pop* is a children's picture book. It was published as part of the Random House Beginner Books series.

²*Poptropica* is an online, role-playing game designed for children ages 5 to 15. Players can go to different islands, compete in multiplayer games and communicate with each other (www.poptropica.com).

complex systems. Organisms that dynamically connect to and influence their environments and are influenced, in turn, by their environments can be understood as “complex” (Morrison 2002). My study considers the preschooler as an organism that is inherently connected with and influenced by his or her home environment and is often influenced by family members and play objects (eg, toys, books, technology tools) at home. I use the term *complexity thinking* to represent the sensibilities of complexity theory because, as Richardson and Cilliers (2001) suggest, complexity thinking is “a way of thinking and acting to understand our complex universe” (p 160).

Complexity in Educational Research

Many scholars and researchers in the humanities (eg, anthropology, sociology) and, more recently, education have adopted complexity thinking. From an educational perspective, *complexity* refers to conditions or phenomena in our classrooms that are too complex and intertwined to comprehend in simple linear ways (Davis and Sumara 2006; Fenwick, Edwards and Sawchuk 2011; Jörg, Davis and Nickmans 2007; Laidlaw 2005; Morrison 2006). Complexity thinking can be used to inform educators about the possible formation and transformation of collective intelligence in a classroom (Davis, Sumara and Luce-Kapler 2008). For example, the combined problem-solving efforts of a group of students may provide insights beyond what an individual student could do on his or her own. With respect to a family, while the family members (eg, siblings, parents, grandparents) are important, it is how these family members are interconnected with and dependent on each other that constitutes the family system. Morrison (2002) notes that “a central pillar of complexity theory is self-organization; it contains several features: adaptability, open systems, learning, feedback, communication, and emergence” (p 15). Families are self-organized and emergent systems.

In educational research, complex adaptive systems can be considered learning systems (Davis 2004). A learning system may be made up of human beings—in particular, a class of students and teacher(s) may form such an entity (Davis and Sumara 2008). A complex adaptive system is a collection of interacting parts that act together to bring forward organized behaviours in the system as a whole. In my study, the “learning systems” consist of young children, parents, siblings, playmates, neighbours and extended family members. Play objects, technology tools and resources (eg, books, DVD players, toys) available to the children at home are included in this learning system.

Methodology

Design

This was a one-year ecological study to examine preschool children’s literacy practices in their families. Observations, documentation and artifacts related to children’s multiliteracy practices were collected in children’s homes and in their typical community environments (eg, local beaches, museums, libraries, playgrounds). According to Pahl and Rowsell (2012), an ecological approach enables literacy researchers to consider the home and school as “interconnected systems” (p 21). Neuman and Celano (2001) argue that literacy learning and development cannot be separated from the “individual’s social environment, the ecological niche” (p 8). As a participant observer gathering data in children’s home environments, I could observe naturally occurring multiliteracy practices. Clark (2011) notes that

Observation allows us to learn about children too young to express themselves verbally, including their interplay with parents or each other. Observation has led scholars to venture outside the laboratory into the naturalistic domain of children’s daily lives where they meet children on their own turf. (p 42)

Data were analyzed with the understanding that all data collected were affected by my presence and my participation.

Participants

Participants in the study met the following criteria:

- a) they were children from families with children ages three to five,
- b) the children had not begun formal schooling; that is, Canadian kindergarten or the Australian preparatory year, and
- c) English was the primary language spoken at home.

The participants included ten families from diverse backgrounds, including a total of 11 children.

Procedure

Data Collection

Data were collected through in-home observations as well as interviews and focus group discussions with parents of participant children. Observations were spread over several months (nine months for Canadian preschoolers and three months for Australian preschoolers). Observations were scheduled to fit the children’s availability and the children’s willingness to participate. The total amount of observation time per family ranged from

10 to 40 hours. Some interviews and focus-group discussions with parents were conducted separately from their children.

I assumed a role of participant observer in the children's homes, joined in games/play activities when invited, interfered as little as possible in the everyday activities of the families and assumed an unobtrusive position. I did not initiate any literacy events; however, my field notebook and pen in hand or my iPad recording occasionally initiated requests from the children for some type of literacy practice. During observations, I noted all events of children's literacy practices, including print-based literacy, digital literacy and multiliteracies.

According to Honan (2012), "interviews as a technique for data collection have become a commonplace (almost ubiquitous) component of educational research using qualitative methods" (p 87). She cautions education researchers to remember the danger of the imbalanced power between the researcher and participants. Keeping this warning in mind, all the children's interviews were conducted during informal playtime; some were audio- or video-recorded and transcribed and some were recorded in my field notes.

Hop on Pop, Click on Poptropica

The following two vignettes illustrate and exemplify the complex interconnectedness and emergent learning processes exhibited by the preschoolers in the study. Vignette 1 describes a five-year-old who is a sophisticated technology user as he engages in learning literacy by playing an online video game.

Vignette 1—New Textual Landscapes on Multiple Screens

Tim³ is playing an online video game on his father's laptop; his younger twin sisters are playing a tea party game using a mobile touch screen table app (Toca Boca Tea Party) and their mother is checking e-mail on her smart phone. The children's conversations are mostly about the games they are playing. (Field notes July 2012)

This example demonstrates the extensive presence of new technology tools, media and modes in contemporary preschoolers' home lives. O'Mara and Laidlaw (2011) note that "Our children have had a very different upbringing in terms of their relationships with screen and text to those of previous generations" (p 156). Tim and his siblings

had opportunity, time and space to explore new technology tools, multimedia and multimodality at home and often showed strong attachments to them. The use of digital technologies is rapidly becoming a reality in many children's homes, and mobile touch screen devices mark a turning point in leisure activities for many preschoolers (Hill 2010; Honan 2012; Marsh 2011; O'Mara and Laidlaw 2011). According to Carrington (2005),

If we accept that changes in communications are embedded in larger shifts around technology, social structure, and culture then there can be little doubt that there are implications for young children and, consequently, for those who are charged with their education. (p 13)

Educational researchers (Hill 2010; Honan 2012; Marsh 2011) seem to confirm that young children are experiencing diverse literacy practices at home and that digital technologies play an important role in some children's lives.

Vignette 2—Reading Hop on Pop and Playing Poptropica

Tim invites me to play an online game with him. Quickly, he tells me the name of the game, "Poptropica." I am puzzled; it is an unfamiliar word to me.

"Could you please say it again?" I ask.

"P-O-P," he replies, enunciating each letter clearly. "P-O-P!" He repeats the letters slowly for me. "Like my favourite book. I told you! Like Dr Seuss's Hop on Pop." He reaches for my laptop, keys in P-O-P and recognizes Poptropica within the list of websites that begin with pop. Poptropica appears first on the list. Tim clicks on Poptropica and says, "There, let's play!"

"How do you know that is Poptropica?" I inquire.

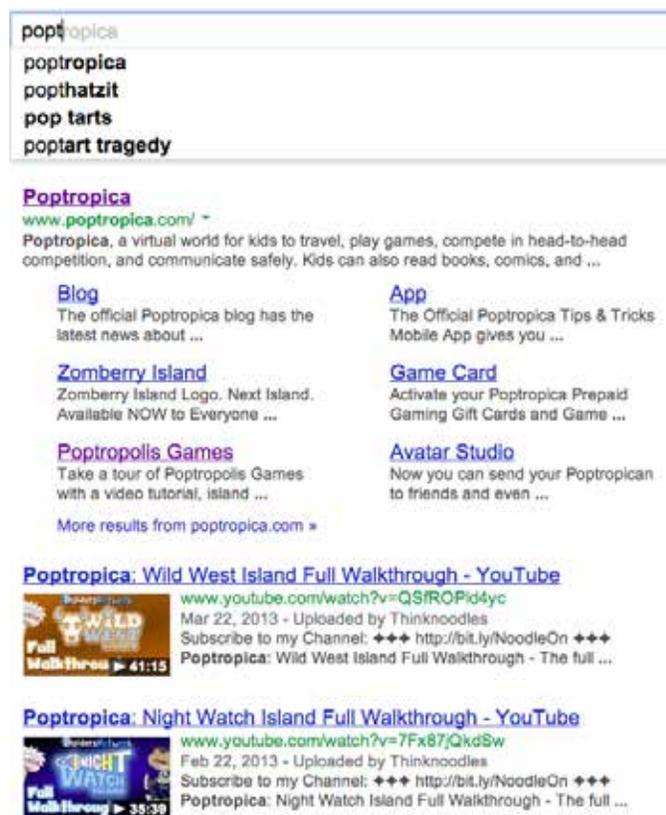
"I just know!" he sighs. "See, it's purple and I played it already today," said Tim.

As vignette 2 illustrates, Tim's literacy experience and knowledge of search practices on the Internet scaffold his early literacy skills. He connects his digital literacy learning with print-based literacy learning in complex ways and makes intertextual connections among different texts (eg, the picture book and the game vocabulary).

Tim used the technology tools available in his home for entertainment, communication and play. Through his interactions with such tools he was engaged in new literacy practices and learning new literacies. He watched his favourite movies on YouTube, sent e-mail to his relatives with his

³Pseudonym.

Figure 1. Search engine word prompt of Poptropica



mother’s help, and played online games with his “Poptropica friends” and sometimes, remotely, with his father at work. Tim was not yet a conventionally fluent reader and writer—he could not spell or write sentences, but by connecting his online and offline literacy experiences, he appeared to understand print concepts. For example, he clearly understood the word *pop* from reading Dr Seuss’s *Hop on Pop* (1963). Then he connected this printed text background experience and knowledge to *Poptropica* as part of his digital literacy practice. This data observation illustrates how Tim, as a typical contemporary child, experienced digital literacy practices as an embedded part of his daily life and used digital tools as play objects in sophisticated and complex ways. From a complexity-thinking perspective, Tim’s literacy learning insight can be viewed as emergent and interconnected

During my observations of Tim in this study, I was also able to witness Tim’s understanding of literacy practices in terms of Green’s 3-D model of literacy, which incorporates three interlocking and interdependent dimensions: operational-technical, cultural-discursive and critical-reflective dimensions of literacy (Green 1988; 2012). These three dimensions of literacy have no hierarchy—they

should be integrated simultaneously. In other words, the 3-D views of literacy function recursively and should be conceptualized as nonlinear and interconnected literacy learning processes with constant changes and complex interactions.

Different Dimensions of Literacy

The *operational-technical* dimension refers to the operating language and technology systems. For example, how adequately and appropriately are children able to read, write and operate technology tools? The *cultural-discursive* dimension focuses on making meaning in different contexts; that is, to know the purpose of a particular text requires understanding relevant elements of the culture. The *critical-reflective* dimension refers to how well children are evaluating and reconstructing meanings in texts.

Operational-Technical View of Literacy

Green (1988; 2012) emphasizes that literacy learning occurs as people participate in the social and cultural practices of making meaning for real purpose. In vignette 2, Tim demonstrated an understanding of the operational-technical aspect of literacy practices within online video games. Fundamentally, the operational-technical aspects address the how-to of literacy. Tim knew how to operate the laptop computer and a search engine, recognized the functions of the word prompt and recognition features of a search engine, identified several letters of the alphabet (ie, *p-o-p*) and appeared to read the environmental-screen text of *Poptropica*. In addition, he connected his previous literacy experience of reading *Hop on Pop* (Dr Seuss 1963) to his online reading of *Poptropica*. The interconnectedness of these online and offline literacy experiences contributes importantly to the development of early language and literacy skills (Pahl and Rowsell 2012).

Tim (vignette 2) purposely selected *Poptropica* as one of the “best games” for me to play with him as a new *Poptropica* player because it was easy to navigate and understand. Later, when Tim and I played *Poptropica* and talked about this game, it was clear that Tim understood the appropriate cultural practices of an online video-game community. He explained that bad behaviour on *Poptropica* was not acceptable. He also understood that my avatar’s gender did not need to reflect my real-life gender, that helping the other *Poptropica* friends was good social practice and that declaring my actual age online was not necessary. Tim’s

statements and behaviour demonstrated his cultural and critical understanding of playing an online game. Tim provided examples of Green's (1988; 2012) operational-technical, cultural, and critical dimensions while playing a *Poptropica* game with me.

Conclusion and Implications

Successful early literacy learning is not simply a matter of acquiring knowledge from experts (eg, teachers or parents) in linear steps. Literacy learning involves being able to learn from multiple interconnected aspects of literacy through multiple textual landscapes. Green (1988; 2012) provides a model to help educational researchers understand the multiple aspects of literacy practices and learning processes. As Tim's examples in this article illustrate, literacy learning processes are complex and interconnected and do not occur in linear or predictable ways.

New digital technologies have placed early childhood literacy at the crossroads of a "tectonic shift" (Honan 2009). The influence of new digital technologies on young children's lives makes it difficult to predict where technology will lead them as they continue in literate lives.

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The All About Me Book as a Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

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Abstract

This paper presents a bookmaking activity called All About Me, which supports young children's literacy learning and builds connections between home and school. The activity is multimodal and draws on children's home languages, cultures and interests.

Through a description of practical steps needed to complete the activity and references to the theoretical ideas and research that inform its design, we integrate research and theory with practice in the field of early childhood literacy and hope to make theory accessible to other educators who work with young children. Most important, the paper recommends that educators adopt a mindful approach to curriculum development.

Introduction

Canadian early childhood education (ECE) classrooms, like schools in general, grow ever more culturally and linguistically diverse. The first purpose of this paper is to present and discuss a curriculum resource called All About Me, which supports the literacy learning of English language learners (ELLs) in preschool and kindergarten classrooms. As part of the literacy curriculum, children and their families show and talk about photographs that tell stories about their family lives. The photos form the basis of an autobiographical storybook that each child creates and the storybook then becomes part of the classroom library. As we will show later in the paper, this engaging but straightforward project can address a wide range of educational purposes, including the following:

1. Engage with the complex system of the English language
2. Facilitate language transfer
3. Provide opportunities to practise multimodal meaning making
4. Add to children's stock of literacy-related play resources
5. Support positive identities and a sense of belonging to a new community
6. Promote conversations among parents, teachers and students

The second purpose of this paper is to show how theory and practice can be integrated in ECE settings. When educators consciously ground their

practices in relevant theory and current research, they enhance learning opportunities for children. Similarly, when teacher educators embed practical examples in their teaching, they increase the chance that preservice teachers will value and employ research and theories beyond the college or university classroom. We have witnessed and participated in the ongoing debate about the relevance of theory to practice in education, and we believe that if there is a disconnect, it is created by how we think about theory and practice rather than by the nature of either theory or practice.

Some researchers suggest that early childhood educators (ECEs) lack the theoretical knowledge to support rich pedagogies in day-to-day practice (eg, Lynch 2011; Stahl and Yaden 2004). Others write of ECEs' lack of time and the pressures to deliver a one-size-fits-all curriculum (eg, Wohlwend 2008; Brown and Feger 2010), which come from both inside and outside education. As early childhood professionals we contest the idea that educators lack theoretical knowledge. While in every profession there are practitioners who lack theoretical knowledge or dismiss theory as irrelevant to practice, there is an increasing number of ECEs who work with theories in meaningful ways and would do so more often if given practical support. The All About Me curriculum resource aims to speak to the needs of both groups: for those who are questioning the usefulness of theory in everyday practice, the article may inspire you to think differently; for those who value theory, the resource presented here is another example of practice informed by theory. It is the authors' belief that theoretically grounded practice should not require copious amounts of time or expenditure, but it does require mindfulness, commitment to listen to children and their families, and willingness to participate in professional conversations about pedagogy—something that is rarely required to teach a scripted, one-size-fits-all curriculum.

The paper is divided into three parts. In the first part we present an overview of current theories about young children's literacy. We then describe the All About Me resource and explain how a straightforward book-making activity can support the kinds of learning listed above. The third section presents stories of practice in which we reflect on ways in which mindfulness has supported our own work with young children.

Young Children's Literacy

A generation ago, children did not begin formal reading and writing lessons until Grade 1. This is not so today. In the last 30 years, it has become

widely understood that very young children can discover how people use print in daily life and figure out how they, too, can use print to get things done (Stooke 2010). The definition provided by Purcell-Gates, Jacobson and Degener (2004), which proposes that print literacy involves the "reading and writing of some form of print for communicative purposes inherent in people's lives" (p 26), reflects an understanding that print literacy practices are situated in broader sociocultural practices.

In general, the idea that print literacy emerges over time and from an early age has been beneficial for children in Canadian classrooms. Early-years teachers have drawn on the emergent literacy perspective to capitalize on children's interest in print by creating opportunities for authentic literacy practices and literacy-enriched play. Recently, however, some literacy researchers have questioned the way print literacy and words in general seem to take centre stage in early-years education, and others have pointed to ways in which the emergent literacy perspective is a monolingual perspective (Gillen and Hall 2003). While most of the research carried out in the 1970s and 1980s examined the emergent literacy of English-speaking children, recent research in early childhood literacies considers cultural and linguistic diversity and multilingualism as resources for teaching and learning. Hence, multimodal literacy (Kress 1997) and culturally responsive pedagogy (Moje 2007) have informed the design of the All About Me curriculum resource.

Exciting work by researchers in the field of multimodal literacy has shown that children make meanings and communicate with more than words—they use a variety of modes, including gesture and dance, sounds and music, and, of course, visual images. Multimodal literacy theorists, most notably Gunther Kress (1997), argue that all acts of communication bring together more than one mode. Kress says "the signs which children make, whether with conventional or unconventional forms, are themselves multimodal" (p 76). These theorists also propose that once a child produces one sign, the child can use that sign to produce new signs. They argue that young children's writing processes are "inextricably interwoven with talk, vocalization, gesture, gaze, and bodily action" (Rowe 2008, 406) and that "multimodality fuels the representational power of literacies by providing multiple avenues for changing the meaning of a sign by making it with different materials, also changing what meanings can be made and who gets access" (Wohlwend 2011, 49). Siegel (2006) provides an excellent overview of multimodal literacy research

and its influences in educational practice and makes an explicit connection between multimodal approaches to literacy teaching and social justice.

Research to date shows that when curricular changes include multimodality, those youth who experience substantial success are the very ones who've been labeled "struggling reader" or "learning disabled" ... Given these repeated findings, perhaps the most significant multimodal transformation we can achieve is to radically transform what counts as "the basics" in school. (Siegel 2006, 73)

Multimodal literacy theory makes it possible to bring toys and other things that children enjoy into conversations about early childhood literacy. For example, in their book *Artifactual Literacies*, Pahl and Rowsell (2010) show how children's "stuff"—what the authors call *material culture*—can support young children's literacy development. Pahl and Rowsell show how material culture is tightly tied to the cultural stories that support feelings of belonging and they urge educators to "mediate across different worlds to create communities for learning that link home, community, and school" (p 28).

Researchers such as Moje (2007) have advocated for culturally responsive pedagogies and articulated the pitfalls of a homogenized curriculum. As Moje would state, it is truly up to educators to ensure that we open "spaces for many different cultural practices to coexist and even nurture one another" (p 3) in early-years classrooms. Moje describes a practice sometimes called "drawing on children's funds of knowledge" (Moll et al 1992). It is an approach to curriculum development that is gaining popularity in diverse classrooms. "Funds of knowledge" are the "cultural artifacts and bodies of knowledge that underlie household activities ... the inherent cultural resources found in communities surrounding schools" (Wink and Putney 2002, 97). "Funds of knowledge" are important here because the All About Me curriculum resource draws on cultural artifacts and bodies of knowledge present in each child's life history.

The All About Me Activities: Theories in Practice

Name of Lesson Plan: The All About Me Book

Objectives

1. To engage with the complex system of the English language
2. To facilitate language transfer
3. To provide opportunities to practice multimodal meaning making

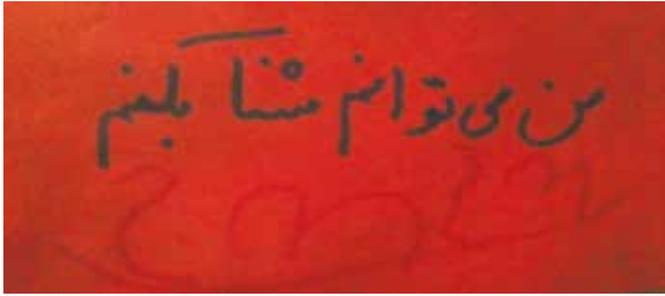
4. To add to children's stock of literacy-related play resources
5. To support positive identities and a sense of belonging to a new community
6. To promote conversations among parents, teachers and students.

Materials: pencils, pens, coloured construction paper, scissors, paint, glitter, markers, crayons, stickers, glue, zip-lock bags, ribbon, hole puncher.

Activity Description

Cover each table with plastic covers. Place coloured construction paper and glue on each table. Depending on your objectives, you may want to place one glue stick per table to enhance children's social skills by facilitating turn taking (Best Start Expert Panel on Early Learning 2007, 24). The early childhood educator must model the appropriate behaviour for the students; gluing pictures onto coloured construction paper, taking turns using the glue, saying please and thank you. Once this process is over, provide students with open-ended material like paint, glitter, markers, crayons, stickers and so forth. Encourage children to write captions above or below their picture in the language they are most comfortable with. Encourage students to follow a consistent format when writing their captions, for example, "I enjoy _____"; "I can _____"; or "Letter A is for _____." Encourage children to illustrate their captions anywhere in their book. Once this process is complete, send their books home to their parents. Encourage parents to translate the captions from one language to the other and have them send their books back to school. Once the children have brought their storybooks back to school, have them laminate each page by placing each page in individual zip-lock bags. Bind the book using a hole puncher, ribbon, rope or string. Below we have provided images from Naz's own practice that illustrate how one can facilitate such a project. This is a process-based activity, so we encourage early childhood educators to be creative in how they facilitate this activity.





In the introduction of this paper, we claimed that the All About Me curriculum resource promotes the literacy of culturally and linguistically diverse children in at least six ways. In this section of the paper we examine each of these ways, though it will soon become clear that the ways in which the resource promotes literacy often overlap.

All About Me promotes student engagement with the complex system of the English language in numerous ways. According to *Early Literacy for Every Child Today* (Best Start Expert Panel on Early Learning 2007), students may be able to enhance their literacy skills by simply describing the events that took place in each image as best they can (p 49). However, the resource not only promotes children's orchestration of knowledge about English phonology, semantics, grammar and pragmatics, but it also provides students with opportunities to explore the English language in ways that matter most to them and their families.

Language transfer gives English language learners access to the meaning of an English word or sentence in their native language(s). An example of language transfer taken from Naz's practical experience is when one of her students, newly immigrated to Canada, used her right hand to point to the English word *apple*, and her left hand to associate that word, *apple*, in English to her native language. Language transfer gives ELLs the opportunity to teach themselves new vocabulary words. It is this process that makes English language acquisition more authentic and meaningful to ELLs. Whether it is a language that uses logographs or the alphabet, people cannot possibly put meaning to graphology when they have not made associations to something they already know.

The All About Me activities provide opportunities to practice multimodal meaning making. For example, children use gestures, talk, vocalization, gaze and actions to tell their personal stories to their peers, family and teachers. Children are encouraged to use whatever it is that "comes to hand" (Kress 1997) in order to tell their life histories. Children can represent their stories in multiliterate ways, and it is important to note here that it is through multiliteracies theory that print is embraced as a

literate practice. This is also what the International Reading Association (IRA) (2002) tells us about best practices for literacy teaching.

The All About Me activities add to children's stock of literacy-related play resources by encouraging them to dramatize their personal stories (Wohllwend 2011) and providing them with opportunities to explore the orientation and familiar conventions of print (Best Start Expert Panel on Early Learning 2007, 51). In Naz's experience of working with this resource, children tend to enhance their literacy-related skills during play by simply handling their texts—holding their books in the correct way, turning the pages and using left-to-right directionality (Best Start Expert Panel on Early Learning 2007, 51). According to Wohllwend (2011), dramatic play gives children the opportunity to place greater meaning behind literacy practices; she contends that children express *deeper* understandings of a book's content through dramatizing the story to give a child personal meaning (Wohllwend 2011, 26).

All About Me supports positive identities and a sense of belonging to a new community. The pictures children incorporate in their storybooks enable them to bring their cultural identities to school, thereby sharing "funds of knowledge" in school and peer cultures (Pahl and Rowsell 2010, 28). This process is also tightly tied to a story, one that can be sourced as part of their cultural identity.

Finally, All About Me has potential to promote conversations among parents, teachers and students. Teachers can learn more about students' lives. They can learn about what influences student behaviour by understanding cultural practices. ECEs should communicate with parents about the bookmaking activities and encourage them to work with their child in choosing familial pictures (cultural artifacts) and writing captions that correspond to the pictures.

To summarize, we believe that the All About Me activities are exemplars of good practice enriched and informed by theory and research. However, we offer these thoughts with a caution to educators that ideas about good practice are not set in stone. Please see them not as prescriptions but as starting points for critical conversations.

Stories from Practice

Implementing culturally responsive pedagogies is not as difficult as it may seem. For example, ECE classrooms are multimodal already, and children do not need encouragement to make meaning multimodally. A mindful teacher encourages and enhances multimodal meaning making to support

children whose “ways with words” (Heath 1983) do not jibe well with the classroom ways with words. But more important, a mindful teacher pays attention to children’s responses. Roz recalls a flannelboard storytelling project with culturally and linguistically diverse kindergarteners (Stooke 2009). The activities were well received, but one of the high points for Roz occurred when she was reviewing the video data with the teachers. It was the teachers who noticed the children losing interest when Roz tried to move away from the multimodal storytelling approach toward a more traditional print literacy lesson, and it was the teachers who noticed the children’s engagement return when the flannelboard characters returned. These kindergarten teachers were certainly motivated to nudge their students toward print literacy, but they saw the evidence of the power of multimodality and reflected on its meanings.

Naz had a similar experience when using the All About Me activities in her practice as an ECE teacher. Naz found that learning was enriched when students were given the opportunity to explore print literacy multimodally and in multiliterate ways. Naz’s students used talk, gesture, gaze and action when handling their texts. They also used a variety of open-ended materials to self-publish their storybooks. Alphabet stickers were the most popular with Naz’s students. Her students enjoyed peeling off the back of stickers and placing each sticker on their paper to form their intended sentences. They would point to each caption and broadcast their sentences, sharing their cultural histories with each other. Naz tried to provide students with more traditional print-related resources, like markers, pens and pencils, but noticed that her students were more interested in using the nontraditional print-related resources, like stickers, coloured construction paper, glue, paint and coloured glitter. Naz witnessed her students engaging in multimodal storytelling and, although it was officially a print literacy class and traditionally taught with pen and paper, she realized that even if her students were using other modes and materials to learn about print literacy, that was okay.

Conclusion

Heydon and Hibbert (2010) have identified a strong need for educators to engage in critical reflection on practice. By using current theory to illuminate and improve an everyday pedagogical practice in ECE, this paper aimed to show that both theory and practice can be powerful tools for reflection. Although the paper draws close attention to the ways in which an autobiographical learning

activity can support the literacies of students learning English as an additional language, we hope readers will agree that the activities are accessible to a wide range of native English-speaking students, too. Research has already established the downside of a homogenized curriculum, so it is up to us to ensure that we open “spaces for many different cultural practices to coexist and even nurture one another” (Moje 2007, 3) in early-years classrooms. If we can create a more mindful community of educators and use theories in our own ways to support professional practices, we can enable children to take with them the knowledge and skill rendered through culturally responsive pedagogies.

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Book Review: *Linguistically Appropriate Practice: A Guide for Working with Young Immigrant Children*

by Roma Chumak-Horbatsch

University of Toronto Press, 2012

160 pages

ISBN: 978-1-4426-0380-6

Xiaobing Lin

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Linguistically Appropriate Practice: A Guide for Working with Young Immigrant Children, by Roma Chumak-Horbatsch, is for early childhood educators who are working with a group of children who have diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds but little or no proficiency in the classroom language. As Chumak-Horbatsch writes, “If you work with young immigrant children, then this book is for you” (p 4). But just what is linguistically appropriate practice (LAP)?

Simply put, LAP is “an inclusive approach to working with immigrant children” (p 51). The author distinguishes three different approaches toward early childhood education for immigrant children: the assimilative approach, the supportive approach and the inclusive approach. The assimilative approach aims to absorb immigrant children into the monolingual majority culture. It dismisses the existence of children’s first language and culture. The supportive approach recognizes the value of home language and culture, and uses children’s home language in classroom teaching where possible. Despite its intercultural approach, it has a similar monolingual goal—preparing children either to assimilate in the host country culture or go back to their home countries. The inclusive approach, different from the other two, has a

multilingual and multicultural focus, and tries to engage and develop children’s home languages in the classroom on daily basis. LAP is a collection of practices firmly based on the inclusive approach. But why is LAP better than the other practices? Why should teachers bother?

Chumak-Horbatsch bases her argument on her research on immigrant children in Canada and her own experience of working with immigrant children. According to Chumak-Horbatsch, previous approaches to immigrant children education reflect a deficiency or “less than” model (p 24), focusing on immigrant children’s lack of English. It establishes the classroom language as the only language worth knowing, learning and speaking, and it devalues immigrant children’s home language and literacy experiences, skills and strengths.

Chumak-Horbatsch argues that “immigrant children are far more than learners of the classroom language. They are emergent bilinguals” (p 23). Such a perspective is opposite to the deficiency or “less than” perspective. It recognizes the riches of children’s sociocultural capital already invested in their first languages. According to this perspective, young immigrant children do not enter the classroom as blank language slates. Chumak-Horbatsch emphasizes that “by viewing them as emergent bilinguals whose two languages are evolving, we recognized the importance of their home language and literacy accomplishments, set aside the many single-language labels that hamper their progress, and concentrate on their bilingual potential” (p 23).

Language is not only a means of communication—it is also the cornerstone of one’s identity. Bilingual development contributes to the development of healthy intercultural identities, which contribute to the building of multicultural societies. If early childhood practitioners can help students grow bilingually, the students “will be proud of their backgrounds, develop an understanding and acceptance of differences, remain connected to their families and communities, master the classroom language, do well in school, and become important contributors to Canadian society” (p 4). On the contrary, if bilingual development fails, immigrant children may encounter many potential risks and difficulties, such as the loss of home language and culture, the experience of isolation and loneliness, language shock, and reticence.

Chumak-Horbatsch very convincingly argues for the importance of understanding the language strengths, abilities, skills, needs and potential of young immigrant children, and the inequity and hardships they face when joining monolingual classroom. But a more important question to ask is: If LAP is important, how do we do it?

The book systematically describes the procedures of how to implement LAP in early childhood classroom practice, such as how to prepare the classroom for LAP, and how to apply LAP in the classroom. The book is highly practical and provides more than 50 classroom LAP activities that match both the developmental levels of children and the classroom curriculum. Chumak-Horbatsch describes in detail strategies for preparing the classroom for LAP, such as classroom language policy, a language survey, classroom set-up, etc. The last chapter in particular is devoted to introducing many useful examples of LAP practices, such as encouraging parents to help young children add their names in their home language in a sign-in book, assigning a colour for each home language, creating a home language book, constructing a home language paper tree, etc. All these activities and strategies are ready to be adopted by teachers either directly or in some modified version that suits their classroom reality.

This book is a must-read for those who work with children in childcare centres and in schools with children who have little or no proficiency in the classroom language. 🧑

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Articles from all educators are welcome. Classroom teachers especially are invited to consider writing about topics that interest them. Submissions are requested that will stimulate personal reflection, theoretical consideration and practical application. Teachers appreciate articles that present differing perspectives; innovative classroom and school practices; recent literature reviews; trends and issues; research findings; descriptions, reviews or evaluations of instructional and curricular methods, programs or materials; and child-related humour.

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Total membership of the council is currently 1,372.

Conference and Other Programs

The council organizes an annual conference for its members on early childhood education. Attendance at annual meetings over the last several years has averaged 700. For information on the 2013 conference, contact Denise Sauverwald, dlegge2010@gmail.com.

Several regional organizations of the council carry on programs for members in their areas. The council supports these regionals. It also occasionally offers workshops and other activities in areas where regionals have not been organized.

Publications

The Early Childhood Education Council publishes a newsletter, *Issues, Events & Ideas*, and a journal, *Early Childhood Education*. Members of the council receive these publications as part of their membership. Nonmembers wishing to receive copies of these publications may obtain them by paying the subscription rate of \$30 (Canadian funds) annually and writing to the Early Childhood Education Council, ATA, Barnett House, 11010 142 Street NW, Edmonton, AB T5N 2R1.

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