

Aboriginal Educators Discuss Recognizing, Reclaiming, and Revitalizing Their Multi-Competences in Heritage/English-Language Use

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This project was designed to bring Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal educators into dialogue (Shields & Edwards, 2005) and networks to consider what in their estimation would promote Aboriginal students' educational success with respect to heritage/English language use. This article is a preliminary analysis and report on themes gleaned from the interviews. The situating stories that introduce the article illustrate that the initial development of a way of talking about, a discourse about recognizing, reclaiming, and revitalizing (Smith, 1999) aspects of experience is highly subjective and personal. This discourse development is conceptualized as a dialogue in a zone of Aboriginal education (Atleo, 2008) in a Canadian socio-historical context. The data suggest an initial development of a decolonizing, internal dialogue, which precedes the process of recognizing, reclaiming, and revitalizing bicultural academic development. Participants were able to articulate the nature of the detriment of such experiences to Aboriginal students' success. Aboriginal educators share their stories/journeys and understandings of the effects of multi-competences that heritage language provides for Aboriginal students' academic success: Successful Aboriginal students are associated with early-life experiences of themselves in languages and cultural contexts. This provides a ground for a narrative of lifelong personal development facilitating formal educational achievement despite prevailing adverse conditions. Certainties of multilingual education policy and practice (Hornberger, 2009) grounded in Indigenous research are employed in the summary conclusions.

The project that frames the findings reported in this article was designed to bring Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal educators into dialogue to consider what in their estimation would promote Aboriginal students' educational success with respect to heritage/English language use. The stories told by Aboriginal educators who speak from their experiences of language in schooling and other educational settings illustrate that the initial development of a way of talking about, a discourse, recognizing, reclaiming, and revitalizing aspects of experience, is highly subjective and personal. This preliminary look at the focus-group and interview outcomes suggests development of a decolonizing, internal self-talk that precedes the process of recognizing, reclaiming, and revitalizing competences based in historically outlawed and formally unsupported bilingual and

bicultural development. These stories suggest that successful Aboriginal students seem to conserve their early life experiences in languages and cultural contexts that provide ground for a narrative of lifelong personal development that facilitates formal educational achievement despite continued prevailing adverse conditions. Aboriginal educators share their journeys and understandings of the effects of multi-competences that heritage language provides for Aboriginal students' academic success. The need for a multilingual education policy and practice that is grounded in and recognizes Indigenous experience is discussed based on the work of Hornberger (2009).

The Voices of Two Aboriginal Educators

He was 7 years old; just arrived; small, alone, afraid; standing on the gravel playground behind the residential school. He spied his cousin, "Wai (Relation)!" he called. His cousin's face clouded over with fear and anger as he covered his lips with his finger. *Don't!* he signaled his young relative. The window above them flew open, "English, only English is spoken here!" a fat white face growled. He was silenced. (UmEEK [E.R. Atleo], personal communication, June, 2008)

As a developing social person, he had his first lesson in suppression of the expressive demonstration of his cultural competence as an Indigenous language-speaker. At a neurological level, he would suppress those systems of linguistic competence that he had achieved in those first years. Alone in a system of negative reinforcement, he would learn another language that alienated him from his body, his territory, his heritage, and himself. It would take him many years of self-alienation in the environment structured by English to reconnect to the embodiments of his early years and heritage before he could come home to his language and to himself. As a hereditary chief and an Aboriginal educator, it was a matter of social justice to sort these distances, reduce or eliminate them as a legacy for next generations through his extensions of oral tradition, his storywork, the mamook (work) for his community (Atleo, 2004).

His story is shared, and his heritage truth that was disrespected is aching to surface from under those places layered with policy-driven determination to make *Us* into *Them*.

I (Fitznor) understood the underlying layers of Eurocentric folds that covered the truth about the schooling of Aboriginal children. I did not attend an Indian residential school, yet my being suffered much the same fate because of the imposition of mainstream values on our bodies as young Aboriginal children. Let me tell one story that speaks to the suppression of my Cree heritage, language, and culture: I remember it as if it had happened yesterday. I was one of four girls who were instructed by the local Anglican missionary in a lesson on cooking and setting a table. (These lessons were programmed as if we did not learn about cooking and setting tables at home, or perhaps it was done because it was determined

that we were not doing it the “proper” way?) This event took place at the missionary’s home located near the Anglican church. We were participating in a “girls’ auxiliary” program where the missionary led us in a number of activities. It was the final day, and my cousin and I were teamed to compete for the best-laid table and prepared food. As we were setting out our plates and placing the food on them, my cousin and I started to chat in Cree as we worked. I don’t recall if the other girls were doing the same, but what happened next has stayed etched in my memory to this day, and as I recall that day vividly, I still burn deep inside from the hot iron of denigrating our language: our identity.

The missionary was just coming around the corner from the kitchen area to the dining room when she overheard us speaking our tongue, and she quickly announced that we had lost the competition just because we spoke our language. I remember the other girls giggled (probably with delight because they had won even if by default). I do not recall if we had been informed earlier that we were not allowed to speak Cree, and I found it odd that we lost the competition because of this. I thought that we had a decent meal prepared and a table well set. I do remember the heat of embarrassment from feeling as if we had done something wrong. I felt unsettled by the experience. Over the years in my schooling and from my involvement in the various activities of the church, there were to be many more instances of being told that English was the norm, our Cree language was *not to be spoken*.

Considering my experiences in the church activities as an English-only domain, my heritage, language, and culture were further suppressed by my schooling. I attended a mainstream school, first in a one-room schoolhouse, then in grade 3 in another building that had at least four classrooms. I remember the “different world” we encountered when we went to school. It felt so alien and different from what we learned at home. Our Cree ways and language were definitely not reflected in the school system. We were not allowed to speak our language. If and when we dared to speak our language, we were punished by scoldings or through the withholding of rewards. Despite many incidents that served to alienate me (acts of racism and stereotyping), I remember that I enjoyed learning new things. I had white teachers who were clearly racist and others who were supportive and open although they still taught from mainstream values and perspectives (Fitznor, 2002). It is so critical to understand that what we experience as children and what we are told to value or not value, whether explicitly or implicitly, haunts the hallways of our minds, hearts, spirits, and bodies. As a result, we continually seek ways to heal and honor what was disrespected by oppressive policies and people too eager to enact them. Having our individual stories authentically mirrored back to us in positive social settings and understanding that our collective stories are like the narrative medicine that Mehl-Medona (2007) refers to in using

stories in the healing process to learn to dialogue with the disease that is part of our lives. For us it is an understanding of what has transpired historically for Aboriginal students; it is a way to see the power of a story in order to tell about our experiences for the positive Indigenous growth and development of our lives. Like Mehl-Medona, we can then refer to our narrative stories to hear the healing wisdom of the past for our present and future well-being.

Rekindling Aboriginal World Views and Languages

Such are the stories of many Canadian Indigenous people of the exclusive stage of Indian/Aboriginal Education; they are a reflection of the spectrum of the generalization of a cultural assimilation/conversion model affecting those of Aboriginal heritage and their descendants (Hulan & Eigenbrot, 2008) that resulted in profound Indigenous language loss in Canada (Norris, 2004). Such loss poses a serious threat to the continuity and well-being of Aboriginal knowledge, cultures, communities, and peoples worldwide. Language loss is the evidence of a complex history of sociocultural, psychological, and personal losses over the centuries (Shaw, 2008). Such losses included violent, systematic, early-childhood removal from languages, cultures, and lands of origin (Antone, 2005). Battiste (1983) early on labeled it *cognitive imperialism*, part of a worldwide effort to subject Indigenous peoples.

Stemming the tide of the cultural and linguistic erosion of colonization while also understanding the historical ethos of the Aboriginal learner is a challenge that requires a methodology that can possibly only emerge in dialogical co-construction because it is a cross-cultural communication in the broadest sense. In Canada, the cross-cultural discourse is often subsumed in a multicultural, anti-racist discourse and anti-oppressive education. The result is often that theory is constructed such that it erases the fault lines of socio-historical development of culture and race, particularly in education, so that we are left with good intentions but little substantive grounded evidence of how it works to continue to oppress people in their personal and academic development. Shaw (2008) suggests that the duality at play in Aboriginal education requires a research method and corresponding pedagogy that can constructively respond to the duality of Aboriginal loss: language and psychosocial loss. Hornberger (2009) and Cummins (1991, 1994) maintain that we need to understand how policy and practice affect the work of recognizing, reclaiming, and revitalizing suppressed and neglected Indigenous languages and the educational achievement of the children of these heritages. Cummins (2000) suggests that we need places of empowerment to which the child can say, "This place nurtures my spirit," because in fact the educator participates with the minority student to negotiate identity in the process of academic success or failure. The educator needs to be fully aware of the bicultural space that such children occupy and where their identities develop

psycho-linguistically. Hornberger's ethnographic work among the Indigenous peoples of the Andes points to the vital role of the educator in bringing to consciousness the intercultural process of psychosocial development that occurs in the classroom. Aboriginal educators know this psycho-emotional terrain well, and non-Aboriginal educators are increasingly being encouraged to educate themselves in the demands of Aboriginal education. Recently in Manitoba, the teacher education programming has as a requirement a mandatory course in Aboriginal education for all teacher candidates as part of the strategies and initiatives taken by the province to provide leadership and resources to build success-enhancing environments for Aboriginal schooling (Manitoba Education Citizenship and Youth, 2009).

Consequently, to foreground the potential to *see* and subsequently create empowering contexts in this work at the conceptual level, we use the 4Rs and 4Ds (Atleo, 2001, 2008). The 4Rs and 4Ds are used as a framework in which to question these issues and move between world views (dialectic) into a frame of reference that recognizes both Indigenous and Euroheritage world views in the Canadian landscape, history, and psychosocial development. The 4Rs and 4Ds are a means of anchoring (heuristic) the conceptual framework, which is grounded in seven principles that Archibald (1997, 2008) distilled from the storywork of Coast Salish First Nations Elders: reverence, respect, responsibility, reciprocity, wholism, interrelatedness, and synergy. For this study, the principles were reconstituted with minor elaboration and classification to be understood as a protocol for social engagement from within a cultural context (i.e., this is the way Elders worked with stories). These principles are slightly different from the 4Rs (respect, relevance, reciprocity, and responsibility) articulated by Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991) for cross-cultural educational initiatives, but then the objectives were different. Consequently, this protocol is represented by a conceptual anchoring (heuristic) representing two sets of four attributes that I called *The 4Rs and 4Ds*, a remembering device, a mnemonic, for ease of memory that is consistent with strategies of memory in oral traditions. The 4Rs (reverence, respect, responsibilities, and relations) represent the structural dimensions of the framework. The 4Ds (wholism, interconnectedness, synergies, and reciprocities) reflect the dynamic dimensions of the framework. Together they create a dynamic system in which stories can be told and understood, in which the events and the discussions can be differentially identified. Orientation by this 4Rs and 4Ds heuristic permitted an ongoing and unfolding awareness of the deep patterns of the Indigenous Nuuchahnulth philosophy: all is one, Hisuk-ish-tsa'walk (Atleo, 2004). Indigenous story always included the historical wisdom-based (diachronic) and current socially articulated (synchronic) aspects of cultural relations. Elders did storywork at the level of principle so that people could imagine themselves in and through the

story. These are similar to processes that Mehl-Medonna (2007) articulates in helping us understand the use of history and story in the healing process.

Whereas First Nations storywork traditionally provided means for working through issues and models for transformations and transitions, today such activity has become the purview of the counseling profession that is regulated and certified to broker "healing stories" (Roberts & Holmes, 1999). Storywork migrated from the Indigenous community into the professional repertoire of the non-Indigenous, and the tools for self-determination became distant. Cultural strategies, which have been adaptive for First Nations for millennia, have become impoverished and maladaptive with the penetration of European history (Duran & Duran, 1995) far from the homeland. The heuristic provided a strong frame in which to examine the themes and elements of the learning ideology that the Elders identified in the dynamic realities of the paradoxes and transformations of Indigenous cultural activities (Maryboy, Begay, & Nichol, 2006) in the Nuu-chah-nulth narratives. Recognizing the dynamics and structure of the attributes of the cultural system highlighted by the heuristic permitted a deeper probing of cultural practices and meanings in dialogue with the Elders.

The 4Rs and 4Ds are described in the context of a mytho-poetic discursive frame using the metonymy of basketwork and the metaphor of *qa'uuc*, a large Nuu-chah-nulth burden basket. This strategy allowed the narrative logic of both Nuu-chah-nulth participants in the research (of M.R. Atleo) and Western research traditions to be considered in the same frame. This strategy permitted a foregrounding of figurative patterns of speech such as the metaphors that underlie both scientific and narrative thinking (Oatley, 1996) to develop this methodology of emergence (Atleo, 2008) in which the artifacts of culture are products of cultural strategy (artifice). It becomes critically important and pragmatically significant to differentiate between culture as artifact and culture strategic ingenuity, a way of being that results in particular orientations amid the complexity and confusion of cultural oppression.

Barriers to Kindling, Reviving, and Reclaiming

In the face of an insidious and complex history, Aboriginal peoples have endured despite territorial, sociocultural, psychological, and personal losses of over several centuries (Dalby, 2002; Fitznor, 1998). Such losses include not only language, but Indigenous knowledges, cultures, and peoples both in Canada (Norris, 2004) and worldwide (Blythe & McKenna Brown, 2003; Nettle & Romaine, 2000). These include the violent and often forcible removal or distancing of people from their first language and culture alongside the systematic exclusion from mainstream languages, education, and economies through multiple discriminations and obstacles. The challenge is to find approaches (Antone, 2005; Battiste, 2002;

Reyhner, Cantoni, St. Clair, & Yazzie, 1999) to stem the tide of cultural and linguistic erosion while nurturing the growth of Aboriginal engagement with formal education and lifelong learning. This requires a clear understanding of the paradoxical positions of Aboriginal learners, who may find themselves caught between these two desires when they come into conflict. It requires a research method and corresponding pedagogy that can constructively respond to the duality of Aboriginal loss: language/culture loss and the personal/social psychology of loss (Shaw, 2008). Understanding the institutionalized contradictions inherent in "Aboriginal education" (Atleo, 1997) is necessary successfully to negotiate institutional spaces (Atleo & Atleo, 1997; Battiste, 1983, 1986, 2002; Battiste & Barman, 1995; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996) across cultural spaces. By understanding how to negotiate cross-culturally, Aboriginal learners may thrive oriented by models of learning developed by respective members of Indigenous communities (Canadian Council on Learning, 2007) and identity congruence in the context of formal education (Atleo & Atleo).

M. Bennett (1986, 1993) and J. Bennett (1993) refer to this condition of being "caught between" two languages and cultures as "intercultural marginality." Intercultural marginality is typified by the experience of not feeling at home in any given situation. Aboriginal students often do not feel at home in formal educational experiences, and the outcome can be an apparent lack of motivation to engage in learning. At the same time, this condition of marginality can be transformed. People suffering from this sense of displacement can learn to negotiate shifting contexts to feel at home everywhere. Consequently, it is imperative that both Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal professionals understand issues of intercultural identity negotiation and that this become a critical aspect of all service delivery activities to both groups. The provincial government of British Columbia provided Aboriginal awareness training developed by an Aboriginal organization using the Bennetts' (1986, 1993) model in a dialogic curricular framework that supported development of knowledge and attitudes. This training in turn has supported the development of new protocols and institutional structures in the modern day treaty process during the 1990s to the present day. This experience demonstrated the utility of the concept for developing both the strategic awareness and the intercultural practices required for respectful and productive dialogic relations between Aboriginal people and government workers across ministries.

Although the work of M. Bennett (1986, 1993) and J. Bennett (1993) focused on United States sojourners abroad, other researchers (Atleo & Atleo, 1997, 1999; Kim, 2001; Inglehart, 1997; Wihak, 2004) found intercultural identity dynamics in diverse peoples and cross-cultural contexts. These studies found that cross-cultural communication and formal intercultural training could affect whether intercultural marginality manifested

negatively as social isolation and exclusion (what Bennett and Bennett call “encapsulated marginality”), or positively as a creative “third space” (Bhabha, 1994) of enhanced freedom and choice (what Bennett and Bennett call “constructive marginality”). In his report on the development of educational programming at the University of British Columbia, Aoki (2003), a legendary curriculum theorist, identified that the *third way* played a critical role in Aboriginal teacher development and must be considered in program/curricular development. Teaching opportunities and policies can significantly affect the direction of intercultural dynamics and change toward more positive, and away from more deleterious, effects.

Kim, Lujan, and Dixon (1998a, 1998b) conducted a study of an Aboriginal population of US Indians in Oklahoma to investigate how their intercultural communication patterns related to their intercultural development and well-being. They discovered that those who were able to negotiate both cultural (intra-ethnic) and intercultural (inter-ethnic) identities “to reconcile and piece together their potentially conflicting identities at a higher level of integration” manifested greater “psychological and social well-being” (p. 270). The researchers compared intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic communication patterns on the basis of participants’ reported perceptions, acquaintances, friends, organizational membership, and mass communications in and from each of the two language/cultural communities (Aboriginal and US mainstream). They found that those who showed more intra-ethnic communication also showed higher levels of inter-ethnic communication and vice versa. Furthermore, higher levels of both intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic communication were correlated with higher levels of psychological and functional intercultural integration. Integration here in no way infers assimilation; it was determined on the basis of three measures: (a) functional fitness as measured by the participant’s income; (b) psychological fitness measured by the participant’s sense of happiness; and (c) inter-ethnic identity measured by the accommodation to Indian and non-Indian (US) identities. This suggests that for Aboriginal learners, the ability to communicate both within and across ethno-cultural communities is related significantly to their experience of well-being, both subjectively and objectively defined.

The importance of combined intra- and inter-ethnic communication is reiterated by sociolinguistic researchers, who advocate sustainable bilingual and multilingual programs in formal education as a key strategy to protect Indigenous languages and cultures (Nettle & Romaine, 2000; Crystal, 2000). As Castellano (2000) suggests, “The knowledge that will support [Aboriginal people’s] survival in the future will not be an artifact from the past. It will be a living fire, rekindled from surviving embers and fuelled with the materials of the twenty-first century” (p. 34). To negotiate two linguistic and cultural communities effectively requires multilingual and intercultural competences (MacPherson, 2003, 2004; LoBianco, 2000). As

Aboriginals acquire these competences, they become more intercultural creative and are then able to bring Indigenous knowledges forward confidently, negotiating to the transformation of the “mainstream” into discourse more recognizable and safe for those Aboriginal learners who follow in their footsteps (Atleo & Atleo, 1997, 1999).

Education is an important site that affects whether such cross-cultural incursions and encounters result in intercultural competence and multilingualism or alienation and language loss. The history of education in Canada has tended to be a story of assimilation for Aboriginals and newcomers alike:

The old story is one of destruction and pain, while the emerging one is that of the ongoing vitality of Aboriginal people, from whose experience we can learn. Aboriginal people believe that education is an integral means of helping the new story unfold, and it can happen only when their fully actualized selves are accepted and recognized as the foundation for their future. But we are not whole yet, having been diminished by our past, and we do not know who will articulate that future, that new story. Aboriginal government? Aboriginal politicians? Elders? Educators? The responsibility ultimately rests with Aboriginal people themselves in a continuing journey of collaboration and negotiation, healing and rebuilding, creating and experimenting, and visioning and celebrating. (Battiste, 2000, p. ix)

This is slowly shifting with the constitutionally entrenched recognition of the need to value both diversity and equity in our curriculum and programs. To promote cultural and linguistic sustainability, curricula need to be both intercultural (MacPherson, 2003; Kanu, 2003) and multilingual (Goldstein, 2003). Atleo (2001, 2008) describes “phenomonological orienteering” as a method to trace the movement through and between languages and life worlds. This work is grounded in First Nations storywork with Aboriginal Elders who worked with Atleo to identify learning themes and diverse learning archetypes from the oral tradition of Nuuchah-nulth First Nations (Atleo, 2001, 2010). Based on this, she has developed an intercultural framework for intercultural, multilingual curriculum development for Indigenous education that employs storywork to foreground cultural structures and dynamics essential to Indigenous education: the 4R & 4D Education Framework for Indigenous Education (Atleo, 2001, 2010). MacPherson (2003, 2004) studied innovative bilingual, bicultural curricula among Tibetan refugees in the Himalayas facing similar challenges to their cultural and linguistic survival. Empowering students in each language and curriculum, as well as helping them negotiate multiple forms of code-switching (across languages, genres, contents, curricula, and social systems/values) appeared to be critical. This has been found for Aboriginals in Canada too, at least with respect to legal and cultural codes and values (Jakubowski & Visano, 2002).

The Zone of Aboriginal Education

The Zone of Aboriginal Education, then, is a model to understand an interface between Aboriginal/First Nations/Métis/Inuit/Indigenous

heritages and a settler Euroheritage (see Figure 1). In this zone of power and contradiction the dialectic of the colonial project obscures the control of the state and the resistance of culture (Haig-Brown, 1995). During early settlement, Aboriginal people taught settlers how to survive in the many local climates and contexts that were strange to the newcomers. Consequently, Chapman and Burton (2006) began the *Chronology of Adult Education* as an aspect of history of Aboriginal adult education in Canada with Indigenous residents assisting in relocating colonists with knowledge of local geography, climate, housing methods, transportation, and general survival skills. Thus colonists achieved numeric, social, legal ascendancy, with the memory of such participation lost to settlers. Without the memory of such early participation, it was easy to lose the moral dimension of participation of Aboriginal people in Canadian society and hence their inherent human rights in that society. Although historically, social and educational policy demanded assimilation (Atleo, 2001), more recently there has been accommodation of Indigenous knowledge and Aboriginal content through its integration into curriculum. Institutional control of the process makes individual searches for grounding problematic, at best difficult, at least for the development of personal and community identities and the integration of spiritual principles.

The vertically integrative demands of heritage is a deep project that begins with acknowledgment of differences in world views and then expands and delineates those world views through time, space, families, and peoples to create unique lifeworld realities (Habermas, 1971). It is through the understanding of these deep lifeworld structures and processes that individuals can develop and function across cultural boundaries while maintaining personal integrity. For human rights education, it becomes clear that assimilative and accommodative approaches are inadequate and that a dialogical approach is required for individuals who come from a range of Aboriginal heritages to be met so as to allow them to develop their personal, social, cultural, and spiritual identities. Social justice demands room for the negotiation of spaces in which to live (Atleo & Atleo, 1997). This becomes a major challenge for policymakers, teachers, and administrators that may be aided by maintaining the "studied ambivalence" (Lather, 1991) that is required to permit Aboriginal people to claim and grow in their human rights as citizens of Canada and of the world and systematically reverse the spirit of delegitimation (Goddard, 1997).

The Zone of Aboriginal Education becomes a space for the creation of social justice and meaning-making as we move from assimilationist and accommodationist models of social production to a dialogic, negotiated model of social justice. A constructivist model of social justice requires the recognition of divergent world views, languages, heritages, oral traditions, cultural ideologies, institutions and their origins, technologies, ter-

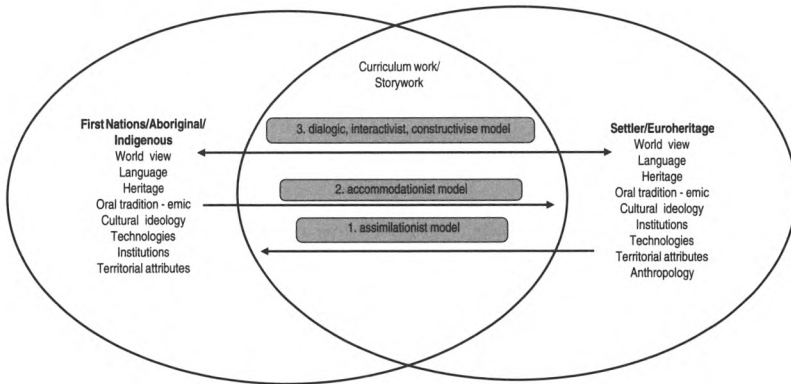


Figure 1. *The Zone of Aboriginal Education—A storywork model.*

ritorial claims, and epistemological and ontological understandings. There is much to negotiate, much work to be done. Much storywork is to be done in the process of social justice through a value of diversity and divergence in Zones of Aboriginal Education in Canada today.

Walking and Talking with the Transformers: Coyote, Raven, Rabbit

As co-investigators (Atleo, 2001, 2008; Fitznor, 2002, 2005) in such a broadened conceptual framework, we bring our embodied knowledges, experiences, and processes as members of Aboriginal and academic communities of practice into the research reflectively and respectfully to handle the embodied knowledge, experience, and process of our research participants. This framework has the potential to map the bicultural shifts of participants as they move between cultural logics to maintain their personal integrity. Such shifts across contexts are expected in traditional Nuuchahnulth culture (Atleo, 2004; Atleo, 2001); stories expressly deal with what are typified as transformation. In popular culture too, Aboriginal culture heroes continue to teach through their self-transformation: Wylie the Coyote is forever trying to catch the elusive Roadrunner; while Bugs Bunny, Br'er Rabbit of old, eludes Elmer Fudd, and Raven sits in the halls of the Vancouver Airport, YVR, the first and last images that visitors to British Columbia see. These tricksters are teaching the transformational tales of Turtle Island. This investigation is one in which we are also engaged in a dialogue that frames this research with a growing literature about how Indigenous and minority education and practice differentially construct citizens in community. Such is the exploratory discourse that frames the research project.

In the spirit of this dialogue, I include myself (Atleo) also. My current Nuuchahnulth name is ?eh ?eh naa tuu k^wiss, a person that can say the

same thing in many ways. I (Marlene) am legally by training, initiation, belonging, self-identification orientation, and procreation, but not heritage a member of a First Nation. I was an immigrant to Canada as a 3-year-old child after WWII and then as a teenager at marriage into the Nuu-chah-nulth community of the Ahousaht First Nation and the more formal designation of Status Indian under the *Indian Act*. A study of terms by which I am addressed indicates the multidimensionality of my identity (Atleo, 2008).

As an immigrant to Canada from Germany, my first direct, remembered experience of alienation was when I was labeled a DP (displaced person) or Nazi when I spoke German in southern Ontario. I lost the umlaut (the dots over the vowel) in my name which publicly branded me as German when I landed in Canada: Fülber became Fulber. In school there was no assistance with academic and cultural integration. I physically shrank into my seat with the rest of the class when the National Film Board presentations in social studies depicted German fighter planes strafing helpless English citizens. I brought home the high anxiety of such sessions. At home I experienced the counter-narrative that provided me with an orientation to the subjectivities of my parents: my mother a 16-year-old conscript into the German Girls' League; my father, a socialist, had spent his young adulthood in Canadian prisoner of war camps as a nonpolitical enemy alien. The Canadian identities of my immigrant parents were shaped by war and their alienated relationship to Canadian history and citizens. My academic development required a level of self-objectification for sheer survival as an involuntary minority (Ogbu, 1994) in which DPs were not welcomed by teachers or students. I had been cut off from my own heritage and language by my parents' decision to emigrate. My personal development surrounded by family, a German community, friends, and regular contact with heritage customs and extended family, allowed me to remember my own history at a personal and public level. I could actively work to integrate the two in a strategy of selective or additive adaptation (Gibson, 1997). In primary school I learned to speak English without an accent. I would occasionally attend German school on Saturdays when there was opportunity. I read historical novels voraciously to discover how life was for other *others* across cultures and time. Because of my felt experience in school, I knew I was not really a part of the normative Anglo, English-speaking *Us* of Canadian society.

When I married, it was to the man who had been the child from the first story of this article. He majored in English in university. We could recognize promise in each other's *other*. When I moved to Ahousaht with my partner, I crossed another cultural threshold to become a voluntary immigrant (Ogbu, 1994). This crossing was welcomed and supported, although his male family members chastised me occasionally if I did not comply with community gender norms. However, the Elder women of the

community were socially, emotionally, and personally supportive and often culturally directive to help me fit in. I was a relation, albeit a naïve, socially inept childlike relation. I was socially and emotionally welcomed as a family member, situated as the wife and mother of relatives. My induction into community and participation into social lifeways was from the perspective of being in relationship and with the potential of achieving cultural competence in my complex of roles. No one tried to convert me. Although there were activities in which I had little skill, my skill levels were accepted and expected to increase. I was treated with respect if consternation at times (Atleo, 2001).

Nuu-chah-nulth was spoken in the extended family where we lived initially and at public community gatherings. I felt comfortable with another language being spoken because this had been my childhood experience. Nuu-chah-nulth is phonemically similar to German; consequently, at an embodied level I felt comfortable and open to learning to understand and minimally speak the language over time. No demands were made to learn the language, but there was an inclusive air about language exploration and experimentation. Some people with relatives in the US still spoke Chinook at times. Over decades of community participation, my language skills are centered around my experiences of childrearing, education, food-gathering, feasting, potlatching, and governance. There were no exams, no social censure if I failed.

Aboriginal educators, as Fitznor (2002) and Atleo (2004) have recognized and documented, have learned to rekindle their stories, their languages, and their world views to begin a process of reclamation. We have found little research in this area. However, as researchers we are aware that we can recognize and respect the type of activity of which Aboriginal educators have spoken in part because of our experiences with culture and language. Working in Aboriginal education, then, requires us to find out how to stand up to the oppression and practice of heritage despite attempts to suppress the sources of Aboriginal knowledges. This has occurred first, among Aboriginal educators in community and with their Elders and experts, and then between Aboriginal community educators and non-Aboriginal language communities and experts. Aboriginal educators have stood in the gap and made themselves cultural bridges as their personal and professional development translates. The heart of this study draws on this ability of multi-competence as a theory of language knowledge (Hall, Cheng, & Carlson, 2006) that heralds a new perspective of literacies. It is a perspective that challenges assumptions that first- and second-language learners are two distinct systems; that there is a qualitative difference in competence between multi- and mono-competence; and that across speakers and context, there is language homogeneity (Hall et al.). Such a perspective suggests that Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal teachers and learners can engage in dialogic communication that high-

lights the use of various Englishes that exist and the continued necessity for code-switching in its multiple linguistic and sociocultural senses to make meaning and success for Aboriginal students without them forsaking their Aboriginal heritages.

Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Teacher Networks: Heritage Language and Aboriginal Students' Success

This project began in 2004 with the objective of creating partnerships between Aboriginal educators and non-Aboriginal educators who taught speaking English-as-a-second-dialect/second language/additional language to enhance Aboriginal students' success across languages and lifeworld activities. Researchers (Atleo, Fitznor, & MacPherson) from the University of Manitoba solicited and received letters of support for this proposal from groups of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal educators in Manitoba and in a regional college in British Columbia. The grant proposal was to establish the potential for a larger project. After the grant was received, there time for awareness to develop through a series of public presentations with the intent to develop a network to pursue studies in this area. The first formal data-gathering activity on which this report is based focused on sharing by Aboriginal educators in three one-hour sharing circles (urban, rural, and inter-provincial) of five participants each in Manitoba and interviews with five Aboriginal educators in British Columbia. A focus group and several interviews with non-Aboriginal educators were also completed, but are not reported here. The participants in the focus groups were able to speak to each other about their losses, competences, stories, and work to promote the educational achievement of Aboriginal youth. The interviewees spoke personally of these same issues in depth. In this first look at their sharings, we reflect on aspects of themes that arose: their language use and kindling of interest in heritage language (Fitznor, 2002; Hargreaves, 2007).

*Englishes: Transforming Figures of Speech:
The Semantic Heart of Code-Switching.*

Three thematic areas stand out in the stories of the participants: (a) their keen sense of self in cultural transformations (their ability to conserve themselves across contexts; (b) their ability to create space in mainstream institutions through their use of English; and (c) their ability to speak in a culturally appropriate manner in the context in which they found themselves.

The circle sharing data exemplified foremost how Aboriginal educators situated themselves with respect to Aboriginal and professional identity so as to maintain integrity and continuity of culture and self. The modeling of this ability over time is an invaluable skill that requires a cultural context in which to develop. Organizations in which Aboriginal educators can work together such as the Circle of Aboriginal Educators of Manitoba

(Fitznor, 2002) and others can provide a framework in which to maintain orientation. By listening to the stories, the participants strive to find balance in their lives and find how to express their Indigenous selves authentically without losing out to the English-language systems under which they operate. Indigenous storywork (Archibald, 1997, 2008; Atleo, 2001) provides the Elder models for Aboriginal people to move across cultural spaces (i.e., justice systems, learning systems). A storywork process (Archibald) articulates a framework (Atleo) in which to acknowledge the socio-historical complexities of the Zone of Aboriginal Education in which Aboriginal people have been required to navigate and orienteer phenomenologically because their language and culture, their semantic starting point, has been denied them. As the world views of Aboriginal educators are evoked in mutual interaction such as the sharing circles of this study, the discussions become amplified and accessible to evidence of learning that transcends structures of language and culture, "catches fire," kindling in the bio-neurological sense (Hargreaves, 2007). The more bicultural the shifting between world views (dialectic) of these high functioning educators, the clearer it was that they were highly motivated by the acknowledgment of the value of this ability.

The resultant transcendent linguistic and semantic structures permit a blending (Atleo, 2001) that is innovative and creates new ways of being, thinking, and learning that transcend strict English semantics to create pragmatic places in which to survive and thrive based on communicative needs. This is consistent with the historiographical work pursued by Nerlich and Clarke (1999) about how concepts are blended or integrated in cross-perspective interaction. They maintain that figures of speech (metaphor, metonymy, and synecdoche) are universal procedures or strategies that result and give rise to multiple meanings (polysemy) historically, structure meaning change synchronically to allow adult speakers to vary word meaning contextually, and make it "possible for children to convey meaning with a very restricted set of lexical items" (p. 7). Each of these strategies permits cultural competence through semantics. For example, metonymy is "cost effective" as it permits shortening of the idea (e.g., The kettle is boiling vs. The water in the kettle is boiling). Metaphor is a mental way of sensing the world with language, sensing connections. Articulating the parts for the whole (synecdoche) provides connections between categories such as class inclusion as, for example, all my relations. Facility with these aspects of language permits Aboriginal educators to move in and out of local contexts to restructure meaning and facilitate change. Moving between language systems requires content knowledge that will freely allow the underlying structures of these semantic and cognitive procedures to develop new linguistic combinations to provide pragmatic spaces in which to live. Some of the stories shared revealed an interesting cadre of linguistic expressions that reflected diverse ways of using the English

language to sound the Aboriginal/Indigenous vernaculars of thinking and speaking about how we interacted, interpreted policies between students and educators, experienced learning, and so forth. The language processes of relying on the exclusive use of English did not seem to suppress the storyways of being-in-the-body feelings of difference as an Aboriginal educator. Combining the concept of kindling and figurative speech processes provides insight into how the code-switching between language communities and institutions may be operative.

The process of *kindling* is also encountered in studies of neuro-plasticity and learning (Hargreaves, 2007), and as such may be implicated in collaborative, experiential, and situated learning beyond internalized language structures. From this we can see that a semantic language base from which to begin is necessary for kindling to be activated. Otherwise, there would be technical and pragmatic apraxia as it is suggested occurs at the group level in Aboriginal-non-Aboriginal relations by Neal (1992) in which there is a neurological break in the ability to communicate. Such theorizing about the expressed experiences of Aboriginal educators permits a deeper understanding of participants' processes and experiences as they talk about and provide rationale for their own language processes, the use of Aboriginal Englishes over their histories and educational development, in the pursuit of social justice through the success of Aboriginal students in the formal education system.

The Zone of Aboriginal Education: Contested Space Organized by Standard English Literacy

Struggling with the standardization of English in ways that preclude and deny bicultural functioning was one of the themes expressed by the participants and how they worked to mitigate the negative effects of this. The Zone of Aboriginal Education (Atleo, 2006) provides a systems model in which to interrogate the strategies of homogenization of linguistic and cultural diversity of an English that serves to standardize and discipline the entire formal education system (Shumway & Dionne, 2002).

In Canada this standardization has been developed into a regulatory framework for maintaining educational and professional English standards, ostensibly for immigrants' citizenship development. It has been developed by the Teachers of English as Second Language (TESL) practitioners of Canada and their partners (Center for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2008) that have not formally included the Aboriginal language communities. Such interrogations are expected to illuminate how linguistic diversity is maintained within and between cultural places that the nation state has used to maintain the tenets of modernity; how such storywork serves to maintain community and permit movement between communities through a code-switching process that permits self-translation across linguistic and social boundaries and groups. Code-switching, then, becomes a means of maintaining personal and social integrity across

multiple communities of participation and practice and identities. Reports of the erosion of linguistic and cultural diversity that bring personal and social psychological losses aim to look at the duality of Aboriginal loss: language and personal and social psychology. Both focus group participants and interviewees could recognize themselves in the process of code-switching as they moved between language communities. They were self-conscious about going home to family, community, and local schools and how they were expected to use “schooled” language and how they reverted to local codes to feel more at home. Alienation was a concept that came with using the non-heritage language. The act of suppressing code-switching and not recognizing multiple codes that can exist in one body may be problematic for Canadians distanced from their heritage languages and in particular for Aboriginal students.

The work of Cummins (1991, 1994) and Hornberger (2009) points to important reasons for providing support for heritage languages to produce multilingual competence in schooling. Cummins makes a distinction between additive and subtractive bilingualism in which the first permits conceptual development from the first language to support second-language development and the second in which the new language is added at the expense of the heritage language. Multilingual competence is then seen as a means to success in schooling. Hornberger’s work with minority populations, especially Indigenous, points to the need for additive solutions in policy and practice language-learning. Hornberger identified “Ten Certainties” by which policies and practices that support additive solutions may also support Indigenous academic participation: (a) creating ideological spaces; (b) requiring local agents to react positively or negatively to such initiatives; (c) requiring accountability for power relations; (d) instantiating linguistic and sociocultural histories and goals contextually; (e) supporting co-development of language status and a language corpus; (f) supporting going beyond mere written and spoken language; (g) fostering language transfer and literacy development along receptive-productive, oral-written, L1-L2 dimensions and across modalities; (h) developing voices that claim the local; (i) providing choices for self-affirmation; and (j) permitting the negotiation of spaces in which to live where there has been little to no life world to inhabit. Cummins and Hornberger suggest that there can be thus a rekindling of Aboriginal desire for heritage language that would enhance English language-learning and competence in schooling.

Conclusion

In a non-partisan gesture in 2008, Stephen Harper, the Prime Minister of Canada, extended his apology to Canadian Aboriginal people for the damage the Indian policies had wrought on Indigenous peoples of Canada. The centerpiece of his statement was the acknowledgment that the future of Aboriginal people was based in Aboriginal culture and

language. Although the apology focused on residential school survivors, the sense was that the real audience needed to be all Aboriginal people and not only the residential school attendees. The apology to extend to other areas of loss was consonant with the scope prescribed by the United Church of Canada (2008) to their congregations to “live as if the apology were accepted.” According to what Aboriginal educators have reported here on the praxis of Aboriginal educators in the Zone of Aboriginal Education, the apraxia (Neal, 1992) of the last 500 years may begin to be understood as disruptions of semantic development of Aboriginal experience. Such was the disruption of communicative processes that required a code-switching strategy to preserve the personal and social integrity of Aboriginal individuals across semantic spaces and places. The development of strategies that provide personal social psychological coherence and integrity may be seen as an adaptive practice that provides narrative coherence that is not only a hedge against suicide (Chandler & Lalonde, 2002), but a means to deal linguistically with the pragmatics of social change and technological development that supports mental health and wellness (Chandler, 2000).

Aboriginal educators can recognize and articulate their strategies of success when they speak about how issues of heritage language have affected them. Such details illustrated how they conserved their identities through embodied knowledge. These educators described the definitional and physiological dialectic with which they navigate the zone of Aboriginal education with code-switching between perspectives, contexts, and world views. They described in detail translating themselves across frontiers of Canadian education at a high cost to recreate and reclaim value for new generations of Aboriginal students. Educational storywork becomes a means to create psychosocial spaces in which to participate in the larger society that leaves them with integrity.

This preliminary examination of the sharings and data of this project provides some examples of how Aboriginal educators deal with localized Englishes, understand themselves in the context of code-shifting, and use their multi-competence of language knowledge and disciplinary content knowledge in these areas to promote understanding in their practices with both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal colleagues, community members, and students. These preliminary findings promise to increase our knowledge about how Aboriginal educators build pragmatic and semantic bridges between their students, local community, and schooled spaces to model academic excellence while articulating the cultural spaces and places in which they remain grounded. These findings also point the way to more specific research in the area of semantic development and use in the Zone of Aboriginal Education to promote Aboriginal students’ success. Research is required to understand which local cultural and academic ways of knowing are not antithetical, but bridged through the

work of these Elders in education. Some other questions might be: How is Aboriginal education different from immigrant education? How are Canadian Benchmarks applied, adapted, and used in local contexts, and are they used with Aboriginal populations? How high is the psycho-biosocial cost of first-language suppression to individuals and nations? Aboriginal educators are living bridges to span the linguistic and semantic developmental gap that has developed in Canadian schooling. In this project, their sharings allow us to begin to develop the beginning of a dialogue to deal with this challenge for a dynamic future for us all.

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