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Schalay'nung Sxwey'ga Emerging cross-cultural pedagogy in the academy

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1. The pole arrives (photo by Janet Riecken)

Cross-cultural dialogue between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous educators serves to strengthen schools and communities by drawing a new vision of the future through the interaction of divergent epistemologies. Educator Yatta Kanu (2003) suggests that humankind is at a historic point that demands a culturally combined approach to curriculum reform, “where relations are no longer unidirectional or univocal, flowing from the colonialist to the colonized” (79). Post colonial theorist, Homi Bhabha (Rutherford, 1990) calls for new sites to be opened up for a “third space” where cultural discourses can weave together and create an alternative discourse of change. This is a space where unequal cultural power can mix and shift.



As teacher educators we, the authors, have difficulty with the continual emphasis in the academy that focuses on the relationship between the colonized and colonizer, a relationship founded on conflict and adversary approaches. This stance leaves little room in the academy for, in this case, the Indigenous world as articulated by the Indigenous people. The challenge for the academy, which is built on Western perspectives of teaching and learning, is to create spaces within these foreign and alienating environments that provide an opening to the Indigenous world.

Predominant theories on cross-cultural relations that impact education often focus on the following: the combination of cultures through the notion of hybridity and third space; the unequal power relations founded in colonization; and the narrow definition of the culture of ‘the other’ as material goods and objects. There has been very little theoretical work on bringing Indigenous knowledge and learning into the academy with breadth and depth. We are at the beginning of a journey to develop and articulate possible theories in this area while maintaining the integrity of Indigenous knowledge and learning. Because the whole endeavor of theory making is based in the process of breaking things down and abstracting them, we are faced with many challenges to do this while keeping Indigenous knowledge and learning intact.

A course offered to pre-service teachers and graduate students in the Education Program at the University of Victoria takes a unique and successful move towards this timely and crucial challenge. Entitled “Thunderbird/Whale Protection and Welcoming Pole: Learning and Teaching in an Indigenous World” it was first offered in the fall of 2005, and was pedagogically based in an Indigenous teaching and learning experience—the construction and installation of a Thunderbird/Whale house pole. The course was designed within the Indigenous ways that include the essential elements of inclusivity, community building, and recognition and celebration of individual uniqueness. The course was situated within a typical Canadian teacher education program and most of the students were Western-educated student teachers—both Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal.

The intent of this writing is in keeping with the philosophy of the course which gives people the opportunity to have a lived experience in Indigenous ways of knowledge and learning. In this article, we are attempting to take that lived experience and build new theory around that experience. Hence, we have consciously chosen not to embed our thinking too deeply in existing theory and in this way remain true to the overall philosophy of the project. Academic discourse on cross-cultural work typically has been focused on the colonial and unequal power relationship. To discuss Indigenous knowledge and learning from that perspective leaves out the Indigenous world from the Indigenous perspective.

By telling the story of this course without attaching it too closely with specific theoretical language, we are exploring how to bring this knowledge into the academy by sharing this story. This is consistent with the Indigenous practice of sharing the story and honouring the listener to take from the story what resonates with the listener. By adding this perspective we hope to further the conversation on Indigenous knowledge and learning by making the Indigenous world available to people who will be entering those worlds in practice and research.

From its conception, the course took an atypical path—in addition to the pre-service teachers, education graduate students and faculty joined the class to work alongside an Aboriginal artist-in-residence and an Aboriginal mentor carver/educator. As part of an interactive learning community the students experienced the principles of traditional

Indigenous ways of teaching and learning including: mentorship and apprenticeship learning; learning by doing; learning by deeply observing; learning through listening; telling stories and singing songs; learning in a community; and learning by sharing and providing service to the community.

The course integrated hands-on practical activities with theoretical and academic objectives. The explicit goal of the course was to witness, experience, carve, learn, and position a Lekwungen and Liekwelthout pole in the lobby of the MacLaurin Building which houses the Faculty of Education at the university. More implicit, but equally as important, was the goal of modeling an Indigenous process of instruction within the university context. It is the latter aspect that this paper addresses. We, the authors, were both integrally involved in the course. Lorna Williams designed, implemented, coordinated, and was lead mentor for the course, drawing on the Indigenous ways of teaching and learning of her Lil'wat heritage. Michele Tanaka was enrolled in the course as a graduate student and was the facilitator for one of five work-groups that were part of the experience. Together we have had numerous cross-cultural dialogues with each other and with the class participants that inform this writing. In addition, we draw from student writing, our observations, and a variety of class discussions.



2. Butch and Fabian planning (photo by Janet Riecken)

In every step of planning and implementing the course, the two distinct worlds of the academy and the Indigenous people needed to be negotiated, and compromises found. For example, the course schedule needed to be extended, the number of student contact hours were longer, the carvers needed to have at a set carving time each week rather than the usual working pattern of starting at dawn and ending when the work felt complete for the day. The carver mentors did not have Masters degrees and required special permission to be instructors for the course. The course was planned for teacher educators but their schedules would not easily allow them to take the course. Hence, the program supervisor and advisors were obliged to see where there were possible openings in the schedule and to encourage students to register for the course.

The course design included the participation of faculty, undergraduate students in education and other disciplines, graduate students, and high school students. This class composition was important to creating a community experience in a university setting that would be similar to an Indigenous learning community. Establishing the course as a pass/fail rather than using the usual graded system was also important to keeping the class respectful of Indigenous ways. Students could be freer to engage in the activities without fear of affecting their final grade. In addition, it honoured the Indigenous way of not measuring an individual's worth against that of their peers. Inviting the community to witness, acknowledge, and recognize the work of the class at the midway point and at the end of the class was in keeping with the Indigenous way of measuring accomplishments.

When looking at the many ways that the remnants of Canada's colonial past continue on in society today, there is obvious and extreme cultural favouritism in how schools and universities are organized and how learning and teaching occurs within them (Marker, 2004; Menzies, Archibald & Smith, 2004). Indigenous ways of knowing are beginning to emerge in mainstream pedagogical dialogues but their significance is yet to be fully appreciated by the dominant culture (Battiste & Henderson, 2000). To gain a more balanced cross-cultural awareness and create educational programs that reflect that balance, dialogue becomes essential (hooks, 1994; Isaacs, 1999). Westerners rarely have an opportunity to reflect on and appreciate that their way of learning and the content of what they learn is privileged. When an individual is embedded as a member of a dominant culture everything is designed to fit that cultural world. From this position of relative comfort, it is difficult to even notice that there are people who might have a different approach, or a different way of thinking than what is familiarly known and believed. By reflecting and dialoguing on taken for granted daily habits of mind, light can be shed on cultural influences and biases, and the dominant culture's tight grip on facile beliefs begins to unravel.

This is particularly relevant in adult educational settings (Vella, 2002). But how do educators interpret what it means to be in dialogue with someone? What are the implications of dialoguing with another? In the book, *A Pedagogy for Liberation: Dialogues on Transforming Education* (Shor & Freire, 1987), Paulo Freire describes dialogue as being rooted in a historical past:

...dialogue must be understood as something taking part in the very historical nature of human beings. It is part of our historical progress in becoming human beings. That is, dialogue is a kind of necessary posture to the extent that humans have become more and more critically communicative beings. Dialogue is a moment where humans meet to reflect in their reality as they make and remake it (98).

In this sense, dialogue is an important bridge from the past that leads to future possibilities. The pole course was an occasion for multi-layered dialogues to occur. It became a site for transformative conversation for many of the students. Within such dialogue lies the opportunity for change based in cross-cultural awareness. Freire continues:

To the extent that we are communicative beings who communicate to each other as we become more able to transform our reality, we are able to *know that we know*, which is something *more* than just knowing...and we human beings know also that *we don't know*. Through dialogue, reflecting together on what we know and don't know, we can then act critically to transform reality (99).

This *knowing that we don't know* became a significant part of the pole course experience. Because the course was embedded in a Western university, participants came to the first meeting of the class with a pre-conceived set of expectations of how the course would proceed. During the first session, it became apparent that assumptions about teaching and learning would have to be suspended and each student would have to be open to unfamiliar pedagogical possibilities. One of the student teachers enrolled in the course, describes the first session.

Laura (European-mix [\[1\]](#), student teacher):

The very first day of this class I felt an energy present that was different from any I'd felt in a class before. We started off in a circle, facing each other. We discussed what we would be doing in the class, but not the ultimate goal—aside from the completion of the protection pole... There was no outline, no list of things to get done, no break-down of mini assignments and projects. It was scary, and it would be a while until I would see that it was actually liberation. To me, this was a completely new approach to learning and teaching. As a teacher, I can't help but to be challenged to develop an understanding of this approach, especially as it has transformed my own opinions and perspectives. The lack of rules calls me to draw from the knowledge within myself and to build on it (in Tanaka, Williams, Benoit, Duggan, Moir & Scarrow, 2006).

As a Non-indigenous, Western-educated emerging teacher, Laura was at the beginning of an open dialogue across cultures. The perspectives she was familiar with, based in a historical colonial past, were being challenged. As the course proceeded, her dialogue continued with fellow students, the artist-in residence, the mentor teacher, and the course instructor. It took the shape of one-on-one conversations, small group discussions and whole class sharing circles. Gradually, over time, her pedagogical perspectives were being altered by her involvement in Indigenous ways of teaching and learning. This pattern was echoed for other members of the group throughout the course.

There are numerous significant factors that influenced the changes in Laura and, in fact, all of us who participated in the course. The following is an outline of the influences that we the authors, observed over the 5 months of the pole course. These include the concepts of: *cwelelep* (being in a place of dissonance, uncertainty and anticipation); developing a listening openness; transformative learning through affective connections; and *kamucwkalha* (the energy that indicates an emergence of a group sense of purpose).



3. During the tree planting ceremony (photo by Janet Riecken)

Cwelelep

The experience of *knowing that we don't know* can be difficult to identify and describe. Amongst the Lil'wat there is a parallel process, Cwelelep—the discomfort and value of being in a place of dissonance, uncertainty, and anticipation. Laura experienced cwelelep on the first day of class, and most of us—students and teachers, Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal alike—experienced it repeatedly as the class continued.

The seemingly unstructured format of the course created a space for uncertainty to emerge. In our conversations with students, they spoke of their familiarity with the historical, Western dichotomous approach to learning and teaching that relies on knowledge transfer from teacher to student. Students were acutely aware that the Indigenous approach in the course was fundamentally different to what they were used to. A student teacher describes how it felt for her to be in Bhabha's 'third space':

Jill (Scottish, student teacher):

Undoubtedly, it is challenging any time, when one "steps out of" their culture and into another. It's like you're suddenly completely naked, without the weight of your own cloak of culture, wrapped around you. In these experiences, your sense of open-mindedness can dissolve easily into a dark cloud of doubt. The term coined by social psychologists to describe this feeling, "cognitive dissonance" (Franzoi, 2003) highlights the immense challenge one faces when his or her knowledge or ideas about knowledge are challenged. There's no denying, when you're unprepared for this, you experience a moment when it feels like you've stumbled, but a moment to learn from, nonetheless (in Tanaka et. al, 2006).

The value of being in this place of dissonance, uncertainty and anticipation is threefold.

First, dissonance shakes an individual out of their historical epistemological sense of the world. This dissonance sets up an orientation towards a search for meaning. In this space one is drawn to listen harder and be more motivated to seek out alternative ways of knowing. Second, uncertainty creates a space where open listening can occur. Third, anticipation sheds light on new possibilities of understanding—in this case, how one sees oneself as a teacher and learner.



4. Adzes to carve the pole (photo by Janet Riecken)

Developing a listening openness

The experience of cwelelep allows a space that is ripe for developing listening openness. Listening openness includes the suspension of assumptions and certainty. It leads to a space that allows for power balances to shift, and cross-cultural meaning making to occur. In the previous section, Jill began to actively suspend her assumptions and opened herself to new possibilities within the cross-cultural experience. Instead of settling in to play familiar historical habits, she paused and watched to see how this context might be different than those she was used to. In our experience, educational settings heavily embedded in the colonial traditions too often do not foster spaces that encourage learners to take part in the fertile silence of uncertainty. But in this tenuous space, taking a silent pause proves to be key in the development of strong and healthy cross-cultural relationships. This allows for an engagement in conversations that are, as Bronwyn Davies (1994) suggests,

...another kind of conversation in which each listens to the other, not to find the weak point through which it can be entered and dismantled, but to comprehend what is said from the point of view of the speaker and to see whether one's own understanding can be elaborated, made richer, expanded in light of the new way of seeing made possible by listening to the other (168).

Within an existing space that is culturally different, this listening involves an active silence that honours the presence of others. It involves observation, critical reflection, and awareness. Awareness is aligned with attentiveness, or the Buddhist notion of mindfulness

(Hahn, 1976). Heidegger uses the term *gelassenheit*, a “releasement towards things” and David Levin (1989) expands this definition:

Gelassenheit, i.e. letting-go and letting-be, as a mode or style of listening. In learning Gelassenheit, the art of ‘just listening,’ listening without getting entangled in the ego’s stories and preoccupations, one learns a different way of channeling, focusing, attending. (48)...Gellassenheit clears a ‘neutral’ space for good listening; it situates us in a space of silence that makes it easier to listen well and hear with accuracy; it enables us to hear what calls for hearing with a quieter, more global, and better informed sense of the situation (228).

Rather than assuming a position of familiarity and control, listening openness requires the listener to assume the position of learner, and a position of increasingly balanced power with the person with whom they are engaged. This position requires the suspension of assumptions, and therefore, the suspension of certainty. The result is a reciprocal relationship of contribution and reception, of knowledge and understanding, within a processual and holistic learning environment (Tanaka, 2006).

An awareness of the possibilities within a cross-cultural relationship opens the door for the *shifting of power relations*, which nurtures strong and healthy connections. Indigenous beliefs embrace an ethic of non-interference (Piquemal, 2001) that has an equalizing effect on the power within relationships. When the listener becomes quiet and aware in a relationship, a space is opened which allows for a shift in the innate power imbalance that might historically exist within the relationship.

When the underlying power in a relationship is out of balance, the transfer of knowledge is affected and the goals of cross-cultural communication begin to break down (McDonald, 2004). As Kanu (2004) suggests, relations flow with unidirectional intent, from the colonizer to the colonized. When this space is opened through careful attention, the power begins to shift like water seeping into an empty vessel. It naturally moves to spread out and equalize. Ripples and waves become part of a relationship’s natural ebb and flow, a fluid balance that is created between individuals and across cultures.

The suspension of certainty is critically important in a cross-cultural context where both the learning style and learning environment exhibit alternative characteristics to a mainstream Euro-North American classroom. The students in the pole course embraced the ability to temporarily release their personal doctrines of learning and teaching. This opened up a space to interact in a less biased way and be more aware of a knowledge flow that moved towards them rather than from them. By taking a stance of listening openness and accepting uncertainty, these emerging student teachers, and the other participants in the course, began to understand a pedagogy that departs from a typical Western model based primarily in transmission. An appreciation towards new definitions of what it can mean to be a teacher is set in motion.

Yvonne (French, student teacher):

Sometimes I walked away feeling full of new knowledge, but not knowing exactly what I had learned. I struggled to put it into words, as I do now. However, I will do my best to articulate my learning. I believe that I have learned that our Western way of forcing understanding upon a student may work to destroy meaning and kill motivation. I believe that this approach to learning will only result in a superficial understanding of a concept, and may result in the student walking away with

nothing. However, presenting a concept and letting the student approach it on their own will give the learner responsibility of their learning.

Although it may be a slower process than we are used to in our fast-paced society, the student will be more likely to seek out opportunities to discover answers for what they want to learn with more passion and enthusiasm than seeking out answers for what we want them to learn. This is a concept taught in university classrooms, but has had very little meaning for me until now (in Tanaka et. al, 2006).



5. Students smooth the back of the pole (photo by Janet Riecken)

Transformative learning through affective connection

Inherent to the process of cross-cultural emergent curricula is the notion that people must change their epistemological and ontological assumptions. Models of transformative learning in adults are evolving to include a more sophisticated and combined understanding of what it means to encourage cross-cultural awareness (O’Sullivan, Morrell & O’Conner 2002; Tisdell 2001). While the field has a rich history of understanding transformation of individual consciousness and individual behavior, many theorists place transformative learning solidly in the realm of social change (Schugurensky, 2002).

Within teacher education, there is an attempt to implement programs that encourage a deeper level of social interaction and transformation. One program incorporated a socially transformative aspect into Masters level courses in teacher professional development (Wood & Hicks, 2002) through the use of a form of reflective discourse entitled, *Theatre of the Oppressed*. Through this experience, participants had the opportunity to practice how things might be different—to change their story—and act out non-oppressive behaviours.

Wood and Hicks discuss the intrinsic difficulties in such an approach, including the influence of market-driven notions of efficiency, teacher resistance, and ethical issues. Despite these challenges, they argue that,

...education must, in fact, open spaces for both learners and communities to express who they are, to imagine what they might be, and to struggle to become worthy of their best aspirations. (90)

An emphasis on *becoming* is a critical piece in a combined curriculum. Again, the notion of

change as a necessary component of the transformative process is apparent. It is important to note the inclusion of ‘communities’ in the above quote. Change occurs on a personal level, but it also happens in the context of a social community. In this model, *communities* change, and become what the members of the community collectively aspire to be.

So how does this happen? How do communities change? Transformation on a personal level requires critical reflection on assumptions, and is a process that involves individual cognitive, conative, and emotional components (Mezirow, 1997). Does social transformation have the same requirements? We would argue that social transformation happens in communities where there is a depth of complex cognitive, conative, and emotional involvements. And how does a community *aspire to* something? In the context of the pole course it occurs through meaningful reflective discourse.

This raises the question of what makes discourse meaningful. Writing on the politics of positionality, Elizabeth Tisdell (2001) explains how affective connections can be a significant factor in influencing cross-cultural awareness through socially transformative experiences. In her article she gives an in-depth description of a university course that she teaches, including a particularly powerful session that revolved around a discussion of the book by bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress* (1994). From the cross-cultural class discussions, many of her students reported experiencing an educational transformation in a way that parallels the notion of combined curricula. Tisdell attributes the students’ changed perspectives to the development of hope through critical reflection and the *affective sharing of vulnerability*.

There appeared to be a similar occurrence within the pole course. The group engaged in numerous collective activities—carving the pole; planning ceremonies; disseminating the story of the pole through print, video and a web site; organizing visits by local schools children; and eventually raising the pole. Each group had to rely on the work of the other groups in order to achieve their goals. This enmeshed sense of purpose forced the participants to think individually, as small groups, and within the class community as a whole. These community endeavors demanded that consensus was arrived at about intentions and actions. And consensus required an engagement in reflective dialogue. But more than that, the members of the course became involved *affectively* with the process and with each other—caring about the course processes and activities in deep and sincere ways.

This is demonstrated in the following transcript excerpt of a conversation that was video recorded in one of the small groups on the last day of class. They refer to the fact that even though the class is officially over, there was still more work to be done before the Old Man (the pole) was raised. The conversation was taking turns around a circle.

Winnie (Gungzhou, a graduate student):

The first class that we had, we were all introducing ourselves to the Old Man, and... there was just a lot of emotion, there was a lot of...positive energy. And that was how we started the course. And I don't ever remember any class in university, having that much love, you know.

And I think that's where this whole transformational piece comes, it's because we actually married, you know, the mind piece with the heart, and brought those two together for this course. And I think that heart piece—it's carrying us through this. You know, and we're all still committed to it until January 20th. We're committed to this, because we have our heart in it. And I don't know how we can speak to

academia about this because, you know, I think that learning isn't just about educating and filling the mind.

Val (Kwakwaka'wakw, a student teacher):

I think...that too. How often (is it) that we get a chance to make that investment (tapping hand to heart) into what we're learning here at the university? I would say that I have more of an investment in this course than any other course I've taken. I, you know, in the end I want to see it through, even though after this it's all voluntary time. It's, I don't know (shrugs). I do think in other courses we take here, we do need some emotional investment into what we do here. So, how do we do that in other programs?

Erin (British, student teacher):

It's definitely a huge motivating factor. Every Wednesday I'm going to miss this class, that's for sure. It's like getting together with friends. It's been a blast.

Val:

Mmm hmm, but I mean, think about our education program. We are a community. From the day we start that program, we stay, we remain a community, but it's just... (trails off). Now, if the program, the courses, can become a part of our community—that would be so much more valuable to us as future teachers. (excerpt from the class DVD project, 2006).



6. Moving indoors before the rains come (photo by Janet Riecken)

It should be noted here that the pole course was offered on a credit/no credit basis for the undergraduate students. Initially, the same was true for graduate students, however after the course ended, it was discovered that administratively, the graduate students were required to receive a mark. However, all the students engaged in the class under the assumption that the requirements to pass included participation, keeping a personal reflective journal, and a final summative paper that included a statement of how each individual would carry what they learned into their lives beyond the course. Within the structure of these three open-

ended requirements, the learning experience was explicitly left up to each individual. This created an environment free from the typical pressures of academic competition and performance, leaving each student to explore the learning environment in whatever ways s/he preferred.

What occurred in the course was the formation of a relatively close-knit learning community. During each weekly class, affective connections grew in ways that were not typical to university level courses. By working together across cultures on a mutual goal, emotional were made through tacit understandings. These affective experiences enabled individuals to make deep transformations in social understandings.

The depth of these self-reported transformations was impossible to measure. Initially, some members of the course were skeptical about how significant these changes could be. In a continuation of the above circle discussion, another student speaks:

Chris (Laich'kwil'tach, student):

Just one comment I guess I have to make is—thinking back on my thoughts on the course—from the beginning and all the way through—it's changed a lot. You know, because, I'm gonna admit something here..I'm kind of ashamed of this feeling I had. But at the beginning, I kind of thought that everyone was making claims of these realizations, and, you know, "I'm learning so much about Indigenous ways of learning and teaching." And being a First Nation's person I was kind of like, well how? How are you learning this so easily? It was like, I don't know, I wasn't seeing what connection they were making to make such realizations and claims.

But, being a part of it, and looking back on the realizations and breakthroughs that I've made personally, I, you know, I take that back. Because I could see how someone could do that (nodding head). And I had the same kind of mentality in Lorna's Indigenous education class last year, and just witnessing those breakthroughs and stuff, of other people in the class, it was really touching to me. So, I just wanted to say that.
(excerpt from the class DVD project, 2006).

These transformative experiences occur in what Mary Louise Pratt refers to as a 'contact zone,' the "social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths, as they are lived out in many parts of the world today"(Pratt, 1991, 33). Chris however, is questioning how people can learn Indigenous ways within the brief context of a course without the perceptible grappling and conflicts that Pratt refers to.

In the context of the pole course, historical patterns of colonial relations were broken down in part, because the participants derived 'affective pleasure' (Olson, 1998, 50) from acts of *solidarity* not dominance. The 'contact zone' became a space of mutual goals and eventual understandings. This is not to paint a picture too rosy—certainly there were clashes experienced based in cultural differences. But when members of the class grappled with those issues, there was overall, a mindful respect for each other because of the mutual intention and goal of working together as a community. Additionally, and in contrast to Pratt's external model, their 'contact zone' for grappling with these issues was frequently *within* themselves. We saw evidence of this in their journals, through observation and in conversation.

In these ways, transformative experiences resided in social change and a true combining of cultures occurred within this learning community. Butch Dick, the master carver and sessional instructor in the course, speaks:

Butch (Lekwungen, mentor teacher/carver):

And it's difficult, because we're dealing with, we're dealing at the university... and we're trying to tie in First Nation teachings and culture into a very structured sort of place. And...actually, it's working! And it's going to mean a lot, to a lot of educators, especially these young educators when they get into the community, in terms of how they present First Nation people, and they're not going to present them as those people that used to be on this land, but...on whose land we stand, and whose history, and teachings that we're talking about.

(excerpt from the class DVD project, 2006).



7. The "Old Man" emerges (photo by Janet Riecken)

Kamucwkalha

Returning to Tisdell's work, recall that she observed in her students, the *development of hope* through affective sharing and critical reflection. A second Lil'wat concept, Kamucwkalha, helps to illuminate how hope is developed within the course. The term refers to the energy current that indicates the emergence of a communal sense of purpose. As noted in the last section, this developed over time within the third space of this cross-cultural course. The emphasis here is as equally focused on the concept of communal as it is on that of a sense of purpose. Laura speaks of how it illuminated a sense of future direction for her as an emerging teacher.

Laura:

Kamucwkalha... That is what this class community has created. Or maybe it is

always present and we just need the right tools to draw it out. I felt it from the beginning, and the energy was so strong the night we all worked together to move the log from the cool outdoors into the warmer inside. How exceptional would it be to have our own individual classrooms focused on a common goal, excited about that goal, and filled with energy related to that goal? By goal I mean a general love of learning. Students excited to learn, involved in their own learning processes.

How do we get there? What is it that is present in this class that has been missing in so many classes at this university? Whatever it is—is it missing from the classrooms of elementary students too? I have a suspicion that it may be. There is community here in this class. We share our ideas, we discuss, and we embrace the thoughts and ideas of others. We have been respected by those who have trusted us to take this challenge and present it in new ways to those both within and outside the class, and in return, we respect others (in Tanaka et. al, 2006).

Through an awareness of the energy of Kamucwkalha, Laura feels inspired and hopeful in terms of what she might do in the future with her own students. She is grappling with the complexities of cross-cultural education in thoughtful and deliberate ways. The pole course appears to have given her experiences that will support her ability to engage in personal critical reflection, dialogue reflectively with peers, and be affectively aware of how she might keep a community oriented approach alive within the curriculum of her own future classrooms.

In today's complex world where pedagogy is driven by market economy, young teachers can be served by what O'Sullivan (2001) refers to as a politics of hope. He calls for replacing the grand narrative of transnational competition through globalization, with a "formative narrative" that supplants the bottom line of profit with the core value of quality of life.

We need stories of sufficient power and complexity to orient people for effective action to overcome environmental problems, to address the multiple problems presented by environmental destruction, to address the massive nature of human destructiveness, to reveal what the possibilities are for transforming these, and to reveal to people the role they can play in this project (320).

O'Sullivan, citing the work of Charlene Spretnak (1991), goes on to explain the importance an Indigenous perspective can have in understanding the complexities of these global problems. While participants of the pole course surely have varying levels of awareness as to the myriad of global concerns that Spretnak and O'Sullivan bring up, the pole course has offered a powerful story to draw from as participants collectively continue towards democratically making the world a better place to live. Not only does the course give a model for effective cross-culture communication, it provides Western trained minds with numerous glimpses into different ontological and epistemological perspectives of how the world works and where solutions to global problems might be found.



8. Carving behind the knees (photo by Janet Riecken)

Along with hope, the experience of Kamucwkalha offered a place of comfort and well-being. This was a space where many of the class members felt free to allow their true voices to emerge. In this space, the level of trust was high, and students felt free to be themselves, and there was a sense of confidence that their voice was being heard. Engaging in a community in this way did not mean a loss of self because each individual was honoured within the communal process.

Working together to carve a pole and report on the process, the participants of the course felt the energy of Kamucwkalha and the feelings of hope and well-being that come with working together towards a common goal. We speculate that this experience may lead some of our students to teach in ways that engage “audacious hope-in-action” as described by Gretchen Generett and Mark Hicks (2004). They are concerned with how teachers succeed amidst the “no child left behind” environment that is so closely tied to market driven globalization.

We argue that inspiring teachers to dream their world as it could be otherwise requires a theory of hope-filled action that leads to change...we conclude that a professional development curriculum that seeks to both transform and respond to the anesthetizing quality of schooling must enable teacher-students to not only reflect deeply about their craft but consciously, audaciously work to bring that change to bear (Generett & Hicks, 188).

Whether or not our students work audaciously for social change, is left to future study. Our hope, hypothesis, and in fact, our expectation is that some will. The cross-cultural understandings engaged in through participating in the pole course may come to bear in

countless and unexpected ways in the future lives and classrooms of these young educators.



9. Schalay'nung Sxwey'ga:
teaching of the ancestors, to be a true history; man (photo by Michele Tanaka)

Creating a Different Narrative

Lorna (Lil'wat):

Universities have a long history in their practice, in their values, and their philosophy that, I think, that they guard...very, very carefully. And...in a sense, universities are the tradition keepers of the Western world. And to bring Indigenous ways of learning, to bring Indigenous ways of being, to bring Indigenous ways of teaching, to bring Indigenous knowledge into the academy, and to try to construct it being faithful to the Indigenous ways, is the only way I think that people can take, even a tiny step into experiencing another way of being.

And, so, for me, to be able to have the pole carving course here, it changes, first of all, the space. It changes peoples' sensibilities. It calls people to build a different narrative, finally, into this space. Which can only alter people's relationships. People now can't go back. And the people who have been immersed in the project,

the students...will leave the university, but this experience won't leave them.
(interview excerpt from the class DVD project, 2006).

The Indigenous pedagogy course is a step towards building a different narrative into the spaces of academia. By creating a place where Indigenous ways can exist unhindered, a narrative develops that crosses over cultures and creates curriculum that truly combines two very different ways of teaching and learning. It is not a question of choosing one pedagogical perspective over the other. Rather, it is finding a way to make space for both—and to be enriched by both. This is a process that requires the dominant academic discourse to pause, listen, and make room for a discourse that may seem incongruous and dissonant at times. It is an inefficient and often messy process. We are grateful that the Faculty of Education at the University of Victoria understands and supports the importance of such dialogue.

Butch:

I think already the (students who) are working on this program, they've opening a lot of doors, and even if they are doors that they hold within themselves...they've opened their minds to First Nation culture in a different way...And it's very important because they're actually going to go out and share what they've learned, and what they've learned about the teachings of First Nation people, and bring that to younger people... They've brought gifts here, and then they've compiled more gifts and then they're going to go out in the community and share that, which is really important. So, it's a first for the university, and it's probably the best thing that ever could happen to a teacher who's going to be involved with First Nation children.

(interview excerpt from the class DVD project, 2006).

Future courses in this Indigenous pedagogy series will give multiple opportunities to research deeper into the transformative experiences that occur within this combined and emergent curricular model. At this writing, two specific research projects are planned. The first study will be a summative review of the impacts of the pole carving class drawing upon the documentation collected throughout the course and also using subsequent interviews with Faculty members. The second project will be situated in the 2006 Indigenous pedagogy course, *Earth Fibers Weaving Stories: Learning and Teaching in an Indigenous World*. It will focus on the self-reported transformative experiences of the pre-service teachers both within the course and as they continue on in their practicum placements.

The journey that the pole course has started and the story that has begun to be told, is complex. The pole, now placed upright in the lobby of the MacLaurin Building, is a constant reminder of the mutual goals that extend from the course. The course demonstrated that Indigenous knowledge can exist and live in its own right, alongside other forms of knowledge within the academy. The participant comments reflect on how experiencing a course based in Indigenous principles can extend and deepen knowledge—whether they be Indigenous, non-Indigenous, undergraduate, graduate, or faculty. The challenges of scheduling, mark distribution, integrating academic goal and respecting Indigenous practice can be met.

After the completion of the course, at the installation ceremony, the Old Man was given a new name. He is now called *Schalay'nung Sxwey'ga*. The first word, *Schalay'nung* has the double meaning of 'teaching of the ancestors' and 'to be a true history.' *Sxwey'ga*, means 'man.' He stands at the heart of the space where educational activities take place, and

reminds those who pass by of the cross-cultural story that has begun to form in the context of the pole course.

At the naming ceremony we heard from community leaders, university leaders, and students. Their stories tell us that there is a sense of getting past the historical wrongs that have led to unequal power relations. Because the academy holds the power of knowledge, for these feelings of reparation to occur here is significant. As educators, we work to be true to our shared history, remembering where we have been so that we can move forward in the creation of new learning and teaching environments. Settings that are based in an engaged, combined, and emergent pedagogy that more fully respects the multiple histories and knowledges people bring to the learning environment.



10. One of the Old Man's relations standing in a forest on Vancouver Island (photo by Janet Riecken)

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About the Artists

Butch Dick is a Coast Salish artist, teacher, storyteller, drummer, designer, illustrator and carver. For over 20 years, he has brought his stories, songs, and artwork into many classrooms in the Greater Victoria area. He served as a mentor carver and educator within the Thunderbird/Whale Protection and Welcoming Pole project.

Fabian Quocksister is an Inherent Hereditary Chief of the Laichkwiltach Nation. He has been carving since 2000 and creates dance masks, rattles, and paddles, along with silver, gold, and copper smithing. He is a strong believer in his culture and spirituality, and was the Instructor and main carver of the Thunderbird/Whale Protection and Welcoming Pole.