Aboriginal Educators Discuss Recognizing, Reclaiming and Revitalizing Their Multi Competences in Heritage/English Language Usage to Promote Aboriginal Students Success in Formal Education.

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Abstract

Aboriginal educators speak from the experiences of language suppression/oppression and the cost of achievement in formal education. Situating stories with which we begin this paper suggests that the initial development of a discourse about recognizing, reclaiming, and revitalizing aspects of experience is subjective and personal. The project that frames this study was conceived as a dialogue negotiated in a zone of Aboriginal education (Atleo, 2001) in Canada developed initially through policies to transforming “us” into “them”. An early look at the focus group and interview sharings suggests that first there is an internal dialogue which precedes the process of recognizing, reclaiming and revitalizing competencies based in outlawed, and unsupported bilingual and bicultural development that have been to the detriment of Aboriginal student success. Stories by Aboriginal educators suggest that successful Aboriginal students seem to be a product of conservations of early life experiences of themselves in languages and cultural contexts that provide ground for a narrative of life long personal development that facilitates formal educational achievement in spite of continued prevailing adverse conditions.

1 Seonaigh MacPherson was initially on this project and part of the proposal writing team.
Aboriginal educators share their journeys and understandings of the effects of multi-competencies that heritage language provides for Aboriginal student academic success.

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. (personal communication, Umeek (E.R. Atleo), June 2008)

He had his first lesson in suppression of the expressive demonstration of his cultural competence as a developing social person, an indigenous language learner and 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 re-enforcement, 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 (E.R. 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.
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(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 share one story that speaks to the suppression of my Cree heritage, language, and culture: I remember it as if it happened yesterday. I was one of four girls who were instructed by the local Anglican missionary on a lesson on cooking and setting a table. This event took place at the missionary's home located near the Anglican church. We were participating in a 'girl's auxiliary' program where the missionary led us in a number of different activities. The day was the final day for our setting and my cousin and I were to teamed up to compete for the best laid table and prepared food. As we were setting out our plates and placing the food into the plates, my cousin and I started to chat with each other in our Cree language as we were working. (I don't recall if the other girls were doing the same but what happened next 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 lost the competition just because we spoke our language. I remembered the other girls giggled (probably with delight because they won even if by default). I don't recall if we were informed earlier that we were not allowed to speak our Cree language and I found it odd that we lost the competition because of that. I thought that we had a decent meal prepared and table well set. I do remember feeling the heat of embarrassment from feeling like we
did something wrong. I felt very unsettled about 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 was further suppressed by my schooling: I attended a mainstream school, first in a one-room school house, then in my third grade we attended school in a different building that had at least four class rooms. I remember the "different world" we encountered when we went to school. It felt so alien and different than that we learned at home. Our Cree ways and language were definitely not reflected in the school system. In fact, we were not allowed to speak our language. If and when we dared to speak our language, we were punished by being scolded or through the withholding of rewards. In spite of 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 I had white teachers 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 it was taught explicitly or implicitly, it haunts the hallways of our minds, hearts, spirit and bodies so that we are constantly finding ways to heal and honour that which was disrespected by oppressive policies and people too eager to enact them.

Rekindling Aboriginal worldviews and languages.

Such are the stories of many Canadian Indigenous people of the exclusive stage of
Indian/Aboriginal Education which are a reflection of the spectrum of the generalization of a cultural assimilations/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 wellbeing of Aboriginal knowledge, cultures, communities, and peoples, worldwide. Language loss is the evidence of a complex history of socio-cultural, psychological and personal losses over the centuries (Shaw, 2001). 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 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 since it is a cross cultural communication in the broadest sense. In Canada, the crosscultural discourse is often subsumed in a multicultural, anti racist discourse, and anti oppressive education. Theory is often constructed in a way that erases the fault lines of socio-historical development of culture and race particularly in education so that we are left with good intensions but little substantive grounded evidence of how it works to continue to oppress individuals in their personal and academic development. Shaw (2005) suggests 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 psycho-social loss. Consequently in this work we use the 4Rs and 4Ds (Atleo, 2001) as a
framework in which to interrogate these issues and move the dialectic into a frame of reference that includes both Indigenous and Euroheritage worldviews in the Canadian landscape, history and psychosocial development.

The 4Rs and 4Ds is an heuristic for a conceptual framework grounded in seven principles Archibald (1997/2008) distilled from the storywork of Coast Salish First Nations Elders: reverence, respect, responsibility, reciprocity, wholism, inter-relatedness and synergy.

For this study, the principles were re-constituted 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 (1993) for cross cultural educational initiatives but then the objectives were different. Consequently, this protocol is represented by an heuristic representing two sets of four attributes which I called, “The 4Rs and 4Ds” a mnemonic for ease of rememberance which is consistent with devices of memory in oral tradition. 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 discourse can be differentially identified. Orientation by this 4Rs and 4Ds heuristic permitted an ongoing and unfolding awareness of the deep patterns of the indigenous Nuu-chah-nulth philosophy; all is one, Hisuk-ish-tsa'walk (Atleo, E.R. 2004; Atleo, M. 1998; Bunnell & Atleo, R., 1995).
The heuristic also provided a strong frame in with to examine the themes and elements of the learning ideology the Elders identified in the dynamic realities of the paradoxes and transformations of indigenous cultural activities (Nartboy, Begay, & Nichol, 2006) in the Nuu-chah-nulth narratives. Recognizing the dynamics and the structure of the attributes of the cultural system highlighted by the heuristic permitted a deeper probing of cultural practices and meanings in the dialogue with the Elders.

The 4Rs and 4Ds were described in the context of a mytho-poetic discursive frame using the metonymy of basketwork and the metaphor of qa’iuc, a large Nuu-chah-nulth burden basket. This strategy allowed me to draw on the narrative logic of both my Nuu-chah-nulth teachers and Western research tradition and 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 artifice. It becomes critically important and pragmatically significant to differentiate between culture as artifact and culture strategic ingenuity, a way of being which results particular orientations.

**Barriers to Kindling, Reviving and Reclaiming**

Indigenous language loss in Canada (Norris, 2004) and globally (Blythe and Brown, 2003; Nettle & Romaine, 2000) poses a serious threat to the continuity and well being of Aboriginal knowledge, cultures, communities and peoples world-wide. Endangered languages are the visible face of a more insidious and complex history of socio-cultural, psychological and personal losses that Aboriginal peoples have endured over the last centuries (Dalby, 2002). These include the violent and often forcible
removal or distancing 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 (Battiste, 2000; Reyhner, Cantoni, St. Clair & Yazzie 1999) to stem the tide of cultural and linguistic erosion, while at the same time nurturing the growth of Aboriginal engagement with formal education and life long 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, 2005).

Understanding the institutionalized contradictions inherent in “Aboriginal Education” (Atleo, 1999) is necessary to successfully negotiate institutional spaces that Aboriginal learners may thrive (Atleo & Atleo, 1997) and successfully negotiate identity congruence in the context of formal education (Atleo & Atleo, 1999).

Bennett (1993) and 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 becomes
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a critical aspect of all service delivery activities to both groups (Atleo, 1997). The provincial government of British Columbia provided Aboriginal awareness training developed by an Aboriginal organization (Atleo, 1997) using the Bennett (1993) model in a dialogic curricular framework that supported development of knowledge and attitudes that in turn supported the development of new protocols and institutional structures in the Mondern Day Treaty Proccess during the 1990s to this 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 (Atleo & James, 2000).

Although the Bennetts’ research focused on U.S. sojourners abroad, other researchers (Atleo & Atleo, 1999, 1997; MacPherson, in press; 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 can impact whether intercultural marginality manifests negatively as social isolation and exclusion (what the Bennetts call “encapsulated marginality”), or positively as a creative, “third space” (Bhabha, 1998) of enhanced freedom and choice (what the Bennetts call “constructive marginality.”) In his report on the development of educational programming at the University of British Columbia, Ted Aoki, a legendary curriculum theorist identified that the “third way” played a critical role in teacher development (1998) 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 American 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 (intraethnic) and intercultural (interethnic) identities, “to reconcile and piece together their potentially conflicting identities at a higher level of integration,” manifested greater “psychological and social well-being” (1998a, p. 270). The researchers compared intraethnic and interethnic 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 intraethnic communication also showed higher levels of interethnic communication, and vice versa. Furthermore, higher levels of both intraethnic and interethnic 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 subject’s income; b) psychological fitness measured by the subject’s sense of happiness; and c) interethnic identity measured by the accommodation to Indian and non-Indian (American) identities. What this suggests is 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 socio-linguistic researchers, who advocate sustainable bilingual and multilingual programs in formal education as a key strategy to protect Indigenous languages and
cultures (Nettle and Romaine, 2000; Crystal, 2000). As Castellano (2000, p. 34) 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.” To negotiate two linguistic and cultural communities effectively required multilingual and intercultural competencies (MacPherson, 2003; 2004; in press; LoBianco et. al., 1999). As Aboriginals acquire these competencies, they become more interculturally creative and be able to bring Indigenous knowledges forward confidently, negotiating to the transformation of the “mainstream” into something more recognizable and safe for those Aboriginal learners who follow in their footsteps (Atleo & Atleo, 1999, 1997).

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. 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) describes “phenomenological orienteering” as a method to analyse the movement through and between languages and lifeworlds. 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 Nuu-chah-nulth First Nations (Atleo, 2001). 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, 2003, 2004). MacPherson (2000; 2001; 2003) studied innovative bilingual, bicultural curricula among Tibetan refugees in the Himalayans facing similar challenges to their cultural and linguistic survival. Empowering students within 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, with Elijah, Elijah, and George, 2002).

**The Zone of Aboriginal Education**

The Zone of Aboriginal Education then an interface between an Aboriginal/First Nations/Metis/Inuit/Indigenous heritages and a settler Euroheritage (See graphic). 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 context that were strange to the new comers. Consequently, Chapman begins the Chronology of Adult Education (2004) in Canada with Aboriginal residence assisting re-locating colonists with knowledge of local geography, climate, housing methods, transportation, and general survival skills. As such colonists achieved numeric, social, legal ascendance; 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. While, 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 acknowledgement of differences in worldviews and then expands and delineates those worldviews through time and space and families and peoples to create unique lifeworld (Habermas, 1971) realities. 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 in a manner that will allow them to develop their personal, social, cultural and spiritual identities. Social justice demands that there is room for the negotiation of spaces in which to live (Atleo & Atleo, 1997). This becomes a major challenge for policy makers, 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 Canadian citizens and of the world and systematically reverse the spirit of de-legitimation (Goddard, 1997).

Figure 1: The Zone of Aboriginal Education – A Storywork Model
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 worldviews, languages, heritages, oral traditions, cultural ideologies, institutions and their origins, technologies, territorial claims, epistemological and ontological understandings. There is much to negotiate, there is much work to be done. There is much storywork 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 framework, we bring our embodied knowledges, experiences and processes as members
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of Aboriginal communities of practice and educators into the research to reflectively and respectfully handle the embodied knowledge, experience and process of our research participants. Transformation is expected in traditional Nuu-chah-nuth culture (Atleo, 2001). In popular culture, Aboriginal culture heros continue to teach through their self transformation: Coyote’s name is Wylie and Rabbit is known as Bugs Bunny; Raven sits in the sculptures of the Vancouver Airport, all waiting to teach the transformational tales. This investigation is one in which the authors (Atleo & Fitznor) are also engaged in a dialogue that frames this research with a growing literature about how minority education and practice which differentially construct citizens in community. Such is the exploratory dialogue that frames the research project. In the spirit of this dialogue I situate myself. My current Nuu-chah-nulth name is ?eh ?eh naa tuu kʷiss, a person that can say the same thing in many different ways. I (Marlene) am legally, by training, initiation, belonging, self-identification 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 experiences of alienation was when I was labeled as a “DP” (displaced person) or “Nazi” when I spoke German in southern Ontario. I lost the umlaud in my name when I landed in Canada: Fülber became Fulber. At 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 an orientation to the subjectivities of my parents: my mother a 16 year old conscript into the HitlerYouth and my father, a socialist, had spent his young adulthood in Canadian Prisoner of War Camps as a non-political 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) with low expectations for achievement: I had been cut off from my own heritage and language by a decision by my parents to immigrate. 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 actively worked to integrate the two in a strategy of selective or addative adaptation (Gibson, 1997). I learned to speak English without an accent in primary school. I occasionally would attend German school on Saturdays when there was such opportunity. I read historical novels voraciously to discover how life was for other others across cultures and time because I knew I wasn’t 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 paper. He majored in English at the university. We could recognize promise in each others’ 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, even with his male family members chastised me occasionally if I did not
Aboriginal educators, as Fitznor (2002) and Atleo (2004) have recognized and documented, have learned to rekindle their stories, their languages, and their worldviews to begin a process of reclamation. We have found little research in this area. However, as
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researchers we are aware that we can recognize and respect the type of activity
Aboriginal educators have spoken of in part because of our experiences with culture and language. Working in the Aboriginal education then requires us to find ways to stand up to the oppression and practice of heritage in spite of the attempts made to suppress the sources of Aboriginal knowledges. This has occurred, first, amongst 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 developed themselves to be cultural bridges as their personal and professional development translates The heart of this study draws on that ability of multi-competence as a theory of language knowledge (Hall, Cheng, & Carlson, 2006) that heralds a new perspective of literacies. 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, Cheng, & Carleson, 2006). Such a perspective suggests that Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal teachers and learners can engage in dialogic communication that highlights use of various Englishes that do exist and the continued necessity for code-switching in its multiple linguistic and socio-cultural senses to make meaning and success for Aboriginal students without forsaking their Aboriginal heritages.

Networking with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal teachers around heritage language and Aboriginal student success.
This project began in 2004 with the objective of creating partnerships between Aboriginal and Educators who taught speaking English as a second dialect/second language/additional language to enhance Aboriginal student 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 was a period of time for awareness development to take place though a series of public presentations of the intent to develop a network to pursue studies in this area. The first formal data gathering activity on which this report is based is focused on the sharing of 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, competencies, stories and work to promote the educational achievement of Aboriginal youth. The interviewees spoke so these same issues in depth in a personal manner. In this first look at their sharings we reflect on aspects of themes that arose: language use or were kindled.

**Englishes - Transforming figures/speech: The semantic heart of code switching**
Three areas stand out in the stories of the participants: 1) their keen sense of self in cultural transformations that is their ability to conserve themselves across contexts, 2) their ability to create space in mainstream institutions through their use of English and 3) their ability to speak in a culturally appropriate manner in the context in which they found themselves.

The circle sharing data exemplified foremost the manner in which Aboriginal Educators situated themselves with respect to Aboriginal and professional identity in a manner to maintain integrity and continuity of culture and self. The modeling of this ability over time is an invaluable skill. Such modeling requires a cultural context in which to develop. Organization such as the Circle of Aboriginal Educators and other organizations can provide a framework in which to maintain orientation. By listening to the stories, the individuals strive to find balance in their lives and find ways to express their Indigenous selves authentically without losing out to the English languaged systems that they operate under. 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, 1997, 2008) articulates a framework (Atleo, 2001) in which to acknowledge the socio-historical complexities of the Zone of Aboriginal Education (Atleo, 2006) in which Aboriginal people have been required to navigate, orienteer, phenomenologically (Atleo, 2001) because their language and culture, their semantic starting point, has been denied them. As the worldviews of Aboriginal educators are evoked in mutual interaction such as the sharing circles of this study, the discussions become an amplified and accessible of evidence of learning that transcends structures of language and culture, "catches fire", kindling in the bio-
neurological sense (Hargraves, 2007). The more the bi-cultural dialectic of these high
functioning educators 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 to survive and thrive based
on communicative needs. This is consistent with the historiographical work pursued by
Nerlich & 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 in 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 ser of lexical items" (Nerlich & Clarke, 1999:7).
Each of these strategies permits cultural competency 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. Synecdoche provides connections between
categories such as class inclusion (seeing the parts of the whole – e.g., all my relations).
Facility with these aspects of language, permit 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 the 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, how learning experiences were experienced etc. The language processes of relying on the exclusive use of the English language 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 provide insight into how the code-switching between language communities and institutions may be operative.

The process of "kindling" is also encountered in studies of neuroplacticity and learning (Hargraves, 2007) and 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 suggested occurs in Aboriginal - non-Aboriginal relations by Neal (1992) Such theorizing around the expressed experiences of Aboriginal educators permits a deeper understanding of participant 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 precludes and denies bi-cultural functioning was one of the themes expressed by the participants and how they worked to mitigate the negative effects of same. 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 which 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 immigrant citizenship development. It has been developed by the Teachers of English as Second Language practitioners of Canada and their partners (Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2008) that have not formally included the Aboriginal language communities. Such interrogations are expected to illuminate ways in which linguistic diversity is maintained to maintain cultural and personal integrity within and between cultural places which 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 of which permits self translation across linguistic and social boundaries/groups. Code-switching then becomes a means of maintaining personal and social integrity across multiple communities of participation and practice and identities.

The reports of the erosion of linguistic and cultural diversity suppression that brings with it personal and social psychological losses aims to look at the duality of Aboriginal loss:
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language and the 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 very self conscious about going home to family, community, 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 is problematic for all Canadians and in particular for Aboriginal students.

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 wrought. The centerpiece of his statement was the acknowledgement that the future of Aboriginal people was based in Aboriginal culture and language. While the apology was focused on Residential School survivors the sense was that the real audience needed to be all Aboriginal people not just the residential school attendees. The apology needs to be greater to extend to other areas of loss, consonant with that prescribed by the United Church to their congregations to “live as if the apology were accepted” (United Church of Canada, 2008). According to preliminary work report here on the praxis of Aboriginal educators in the Zone of Aboriginal Education, the apraxia (Neal, 1992) of the last 500 years can begin to be understood in terms of disruptions of semantic development of Aboriginal experience and processes that require 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 linguistically deal 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 and when they speak to issues of heritage language over their lifetime. These educators described the definitional and physiological dialectic with which they navigate the zone of Aboriginal education with code switching between perspectives, contexts and worldviews. Translating themselves across frontiers of Canadian education at a very high cost to recreate and reclaim value for new generations of Aboriginal students. These details fore-grounded the manner in which they conserve their identity at the level of the body. Educational storywork becomes a means to create psychosocial spaces in which to participate in the larger society that leaves them with integrity.

This preliminary entry into the data of this project has provided some examples of how Aboriginal educators deal with localized Englishes, understand themselves in the context of code-switching and use their multicompetence 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
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research in the area of semantic development and usage in the Zone of Aboriginal Education to promote Aboriginal student success in which local cultural and academic ways of knowing are not antithetical but bridged on the work of these Elders in Education, how Canadian Benchmarks are applied, adapted and used in local contexts, how linguistic and semantic development is processed bio-psychologically, the psychobiosocial cost of first language suppression to individual and nation.

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