

Journey to the Otherway:
How Can I Improve My Practice by Living My Values of Love and Joy More Fully?

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Abstract

This paper captures my journey to create a living educational theory. In an effort to answer the question: “How can I improve my practice by living my values of love and joy more fully?” in an authentic and meaningful way I make use of methodological inventiveness and alternative representation. Throughout the project, I share narratives, reflections, paintings, video clips, songs and voices of “the Other” to articulate, explicate and validate my values and living educational theory.

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I have learned to journey the ‘otherway’ and I could not have done so without much support, encouragement, and most of all love. The love I needed, and now hold in my heart forever, came in many forms from many sources.

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And lastly my mum, whose free flowing love, joy and hope continues to inspire me every single day.

My hope is that you will recognize your own voice in the voices of Anam Foy—she is your combined spirit. Without you, there would be no Anam Foy, no soul journey to the “Otherway.”

Dedication

In memory of my sister, Kathleen McGhee, and my brother, Norman McGhee, whose tragic deaths became the catalyst for seeking the “Otherway.” I found it!

To Mr. and Mrs. Daniel and Ashley Campbell. As you begin your spiritual journey into eternal love, I dedicate my journey to you in gratitude for the new love, hope and joy you bring to our family. The way you generously share your love **will** make the world a better place. We are truly blessed by your sacred union.

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CHAPTER ONE: ROUND PEG SQUARE HOLE

[T]here seems to be no place to stand so as to locate just what has altered and how.

Geertz (as cited in Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 5)

Discovering My Living Educational Theory the “Otherway”

The search for knowledge and understanding flourishes through being open to additional questions and answers—it is an infinite process. Assuming that the search will end at a particular moment in time as specific knowledge or a specific understanding is acquired is not what I consider to be worthwhile learning. I am not interested in facilitating or participating in the type of search for knowledge that ends when *specific* knowledge or understanding is gained. For me, the acquisition of wisdom is an ongoing process—a way of being.

Throughout my research, I have experienced moments of great insight and revelation, moments when I acquired wisdom, and even in those nodal moments I realize I can never know or understand everything and just as I think I'm beginning to know or understand something, it moves beyond my reach. Completing a Master of Education degree and major research project, involving the generation of a living educational theory (Whitehead, 1989), has been an experience that surpassed all of my expectations. It has reignited my passion for authentic learning and, more importantly, provided a new source of personal hope. The challenge is how to share this experience in a way that makes a valid contribution to the academy, specifically the alternative research movement, and has educational significance in a way that enables authenticity.

About a third of the way through the two-year program, my research question began to unfold and evolved into: How can I improve my practice by living my values of

love and joy more fully? I cannot begin to convey to you how this question has changed my life, but it has—significantly. The only way I can imagine providing a glimpse into the process is to share as authentically as possible; hence, the unfolding of the alternative way to represent my knowledge. To this end, you are invited to participate in an imaginary exhibition of art entitled “Journey to the Otherway.”

The art is a compilation of the creative work I completed and/or attempted during the process of completing this research (there was one piece that was abandoned, but is included because it conveys important information) which I believe captures and represents my knowledge and understanding more authentically than any words I can currently produce. Should you accept the invitation, I hope you will encounter an image, turn of phrase, idea, quote, or concept that will challenge or enhance your thinking and/or way of knowing.

My research is a journey in search of my own way where my experiences and voice guide me as I forge and meander my way into discovering the values that are important to me. I am calling this journey “the otherway,” which serves several purposes. One, it recognizes the role and value of the Other (Buber, 1970). Although I place myself at the center of this research, my intention is to improve my practice for the benefits of the learners in my care. Buber’s “I-You” theory resonates with me and is one of the main tenets in my living educational theory.

Every actual relationship to another being in the world is exclusive. Its You freed and steps forth to confront us in its uniqueness. It fills the firmament—not as if there were nothing else, but everything else lives in *its* light. (Buber, p. 126)

Essentially, there is no “I” without “You,” at least not an “I” that appeals to me or would allow me to live a meaningful life. I exist because of You and when I am interacting with the learners in my care, I do so without a desire to impose my ideas or beliefs, or any systemic notions of truth, but rather to address their individual educational needs with love and humility. A more lyrical explanation of this idea comes from O’Donohue (2004a), “love begins with paying attention to others, with an act of gracious self-forgetting. This is the condition in which we grow.” (p. 7)

Secondly, “other” is an inclusional term that invites and embraces alternative ways of knowing, researching and representing because it suggests there is more than one way—there is the “other” way to discover, hold and live our values. Although there may be some universal aspects in the values I discover in “the otherway,” my values are not already clearly defined, but await discovery and may continue to change and evolve even after revealing themselves. Therefore, there is no definitive name for the way—it is simply “the otherway,” thus recognizing and honouring the dynamic nature of the journey for all.

As I discover or rediscover, explicate, and make public, my values, I am learning to live according to “the otherway.” The journey is a lifelong one and although the word “way” infers a destination to somewhere, living “the otherway” is more about the living (as process) than the destination (as product).

Next, I purposefully decided to combine the words “other” and “way” to demonstrate the limitations of the English language and the value of creative freedom. I could not settle on a name for this journey until I gave myself permission to be creative and to look beyond what already existed to find the words to express myself. “The

otherway” is a new way that incorporates old ways, but comes from within—from lived experiences—so using common words in a new format seemed more appropriate for capturing what I was attempting to communicate.

Finally, there is a strong sense of interconnectedness in my research, so to honour this and the universal interconnectedness I believe exists and is slowly becoming known (more on this topic later), I connect the two words for literal and metaphorical harmony.

I hope to find the “otherway” by creating a “living educational theory” (Whitehead, 1989). By sharing this theory and process with others while continually reflecting and acting on my values and critical feedback, I aim to improve my practice and my educational influence. In addition, I wish to share my journey to make the process of values-based reflection and alternative ways of knowing, research and representing explicit so that others may benefit from my journey—this is the educational significance of my research.

The idea of a living educational theory is that it is an explanation produced by an individual to explain their educational influences in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations in which they live and work. (Whitehead, 1999, p.1)

I became a teacher because I want to make the world a better place but somewhere along the traditional way, I lost sight of that dream. This created an uncomfortable and unhealthy environment for both my students and me. Fortunately, I quickly realized I wanted and needed to change, but I had no idea where to begin. Somehow, I had lost my sense of interconnectedness and my hope was on hold. We seem to be more disconnected now from self, others, community (local and global), and

the environment than in any other time in our history. “Unfortunately, the human world, since the Industrial Revolution has stressed compartmentalization and standardization. The result has been fragmentation” (Miller, 2007, p. 3).

I certainly felt fragmented and this caused me to feel exhausted and at times overwhelmed and frustrated—I was lost. As I reflect now, I believe that my frustration came from a lack of understanding and my exhaustion from a will to do better and do more, but I was lacking in the necessary knowledge and skill. I wanted to move forward but did not have the energy or the ability to do so. The only thing I did have was a wilting will. I was a living contradiction (Whitehead, 1989) and I was not content to remain in that mode. Whitehead accurately claims that our research begins when “we experience ourselves as living contradictions when our values are denied in our practice” (2001, p. 5). My values, which have only recently become clear to me, were being denied in my practice. However, I did not have this awareness at that time, in fact, I could not have articulated what my specific values were and this is precisely why my research has educational significance. I hope to demonstrate how generating a living educational theory by identifying, articulating, explaining and validating my values will enable other research practitioners to see the importance and significance of their own values in their practice and educational influence. I share my journey as one possible way to conduct this kind of inquiry.

This is an action research study that makes use of art, narratives, video clips, lyrics, images, reflection, dialogue, fiction, and non-fiction, so I can imagine my way out of a living contradiction and into a living educational theory. Perhaps then I will

be able to determine how to improve my practice by living my values of love and joy more fully.

Links between values and practice in the last decade have come from Whitehead (1989). He encourages us to account for our own educational development through the creation of our ‘living educational theories’. Educational theory should be in a living form containing descriptions and explanations of our own development and, in so doing, acknowledge the context in which the living educational theory is being produced. Living educational theory is an educational theory based on educational practice as lived and experienced by teachers themselves. These theories are ‘claims to know’ which, like all kinds of theory, have to respond to questions of validity. This means that we have to have some standards or criteria that we understand and can use to test the validity of a teacher’s claim to know their own educational development. (Ghaye and Ghaye, 1998, p.50)

My living educational theory generated through my research and the process of researching—my lived experiences—will be presented through an interactive art exhibition entitled “Journey to the Otherway” which captures the process of discovering, creating and making public my living educational theory. During the exhibition my standards of judgement will be revealed and validated. I refer to Donmoyer’s (1996) discussion of validity to explain the inherent challenges of this task:

First the practical problem: Today there is as much variation among qualitative researchers as there is between qualitative and quantitatively orientated scholars. Anyone doubting this claim need only compare Miles and Huberman’s (1994) relatively traditional conception of validity: ‘The meanings emerging from

the data have to be tested for their plausibility, their sturdiness, their ‘confirmability’ – that is, their validity” (p.11) with Lather’s discussion of ironic validity:

Contrary to dominant validity practices where the rhetorical nature of scientific claims is masked with methodological assurances, a strategy of ironic validity proliferates forms, recognizing that they are rhetorical and without foundation, postepistemic, lacking in epistemological support. The text is resituated as a representation of its ‘failure to represent what it points toward but can never reach....’ (as cited in Donmoyer, 1996, p. 21)

I am willing to make my theory public because this is a part of the validation process Miles and Huberman (1994) refer to and I also make use of ironic validity as I unmask traditional methodologies by making use of the living educational theory methodology to transcend the boundaries of scientific claims (Whitehead, 1989).

I am concerned about how to reconnect teachers with their students, beginning with myself, and by doing so, with how to help make the world a better place for everyone. I believe this can be accomplished by generating a living educational theory (Whitehead, 1989). The reason a living educational theory methodology works for me is I believe there is no one single way to define what I do or why I do it. My practice does not rely on the ideas of one particular theory or theorist or even several or a combination, but is an opportunity to investigate and articulate my ideas and values in relation to the ideas of others based on my own experiences—this is the living educational theory methodology. Using a living educational theory methodology enables me to make use of

methodological inventiveness (Dadds & Hart, 1995) to capture, investigate and articulate my values and experiences in developing my living educational theory.

The process of generating a living educational theory involves purposeful reflection, making use of the action-reflection cycle in order to examine my values and discover how to improve my practice by living my values more fully. Through purposeful and focused reflection on lived experiences I can figure out for myself when, where and how I lost sight of the interconnectedness and values that give my life purpose and my educational experiences room to live and grow. As I discover my values in my lived experiences, I need to share them—make them explicit—so that I can be accountable and adjust or revise my actions and/or values to reflect my beliefs based upon my reflections and the feedback in my educational communities—this is the living theory methodology.

Whitehead (2008) explains the need for methodological inventiveness:

Perhaps the most important new insight for both of us has been awareness that, for some practitioner researchers, creating their own unique way through their research may be as important as their self chosen research focus. We had understood for many years that substantive choice was fundamental to the motivation and effectiveness of practitioner research (Dadds, 1995); that what practitioners chose to research was important to their sense of engagement and purpose. But we had understood far less well that how practitioners chose to research, and their sense of control over this, could be equally important to their motivation, their sense of identity within the research and their research outcomes. (2008, p.1)

When our values become our standards of judgement (Whitehead, 1989) and we hold ourselves accountable to these standards by actively sharing them and seeking validation regarding our ability to live them, we are creating a living educational theory that is engaging, meaningful, purposeful and capable of delivering the best professional development we will experience. The living theory methodology is the freedom to create a process for understanding your own experience. What could possibly be richer or more authentic than examining our own practice through our lived experiences with the intention of improving our practice? Only when I live the truth can I hope to understand it as a truth.

Through authentic self-reflection we can come to know this truth as a truth—where we can become reunited with our inner self, our soul. We can read the latest theories; immerse ourselves in historical thinking; watch You Tube clips and TED Talks; attend voluntary or mandatory PD sessions; take additional qualification courses; and pursue other forms of higher learning, but it is only when we live the question that we might discover the answer for ourselves. And the answer lies within each of us as a result of our admirable original intentions, diverse experiences—the stories of victory and ruin (MacLure, 1996)—our genuine desires, our core values and our uniqueness—we are our greatest resource. As an example of this in research is Tuhiwai Smith’s (1999) use of an auto-ethnography methodology model while interviewing women in her own community. She claims: “I remember learning more about research and about being a researcher from that small project than from any research course, any lecture or book” (1999, p. 139). Hopefully, you will learn more about my living educational theory at the exhibition if you dare to journey the “otherway”.

The Indigenous Celt

One of the first books I read as I began this research was *Anam Cara: A Book of Celtic Wisdom* by John O'Donohue (2004a). As I read this text, I felt I was finally home. Every word resonated with my soul and filled me with such understanding and belonging. It was the perfect beginning for my journey to the "otherway" as I was now cloaked in all that I needed to embark on a difficult and challenging task. I had a better understanding of where I came from and the original sources of my worldview. It seemed as though my family blossomed to include all of the ancients. I finally understood why I feel so drawn to the earth and equally comfortable in the darkness and the light. I understood and, possibly for the first time in my adult life, embraced my spontaneity: "One of the lovely things in the Celtic mind is its sense of spontaneity, which is one of the greatest spiritual gifts. To be spontaneous is to escape the cage of the ego by trusting that which is beyond the self" (2004a, p. 87). There were times in my life when I suffered because of my spontaneity or my ability to trust in something beyond myself, and even though I never gave up my spontaneous spirit, I did question and doubt myself. To understand this spontaneity as a spiritual gift brings a new understanding as to how to live with such a gift. Like all gifts, it should be shared and also treasured. O'Donohue also provides a first step for the gradual awakening of our soul:

People have difficulty awakening to their inner world especially when their lives have become overly familiar to them. They find it hard to discover something new, interesting, or adventurous in their numbed lives. Yet everything we need for our journey has already been given to us. Consequently, there is great strangeness in the shadowed light of our soul world. We should become more

conversant with our reserved soul-light. The first step in awakening to your inner life and to the depth and promise of your solitude would be to consider yourself for a little while as a stranger to your own deepest depths.... Gradually, you begin to sense the mystery and magic of yourself. (2004a, p. 92)

The “mystery and magic of yourself” that O’Donohue refers to is the inner self, the soul, that I was trying to awaken. It includes the embodied knowledge of one who is trying to improve his/her practice. The magic is unleashed as life affirming energy and empathetic resonance when we live according to our values (DeLong & Whitehead, 2011).

As I neared the end of this project, I discovered another book that captured almost all of my thinking and experiences during this research. It is a book about Indigenous ways of knowing, research and representation. I have always felt a special connection to and appreciation for Indigenous worldviews and reading the stories in this text solidified that connection. I began to clearly see the commonality of Indigenous and Celtic worldviews, which explained my initial attraction and appreciation. I refer to this text now in an effort to situate and validate my research. In *The Authentic Dissertation: Alternative ways of Knowing, Research and Representation* by Four Arrows (2008) (Don Trent Jacobs) the author claims that:

The concept of formal education is universally acknowledged as a major source for maintaining and improving the social, economic, physical, and spiritual health of our world. Doctoral programs represent the highest level of such education, and dissertation work is the pinnacle event in them. Many educators, however, are not satisfied that this culminating product is really doing all that

much to solve the challenges facing us in the twenty-first century. In fact, a number of us believe that in many ways, directly or indirectly, the “academy” may be partially responsible for our collective inability to significantly mitigate warfare, global warming, social and ecological injustices, domestic violence, loss of habit, racism, economic despair, loss of the commons etc. The dissertation authors featured in this text recognize how tapping in to more diverse perspectives, more authentic experience and reflection, and more creative abilities can address the problems. (p.1)

Similarly, my goal in this research is to create an authentic piece of writing which situates my voice at the center as I re-remember stories and experiences from my past and imagine the stories and experiences of my future. What I have come to realize is that in an effort to establish trustworthiness and validity in my research, I have discovered how to be completely honest with myself. This is something I believed I was doing fairly well prior to this research, but now realize I was not. In this sense, my research has become a spiritual undertaking and the acts of remembering and reflecting with authenticity and with the goal of living my values more fully to make the world a better place are what I now refer to as sacred acts. Throughout this project, I use the term spiritual according to the definition bell hooks (2001) provides: “one who seeks to know and live according to values that promote universal well-being” (p.19).

Four Arrows created a seven-day imaginary conference—a brilliant idea that brings harmony to academic rigour and creativity in order to create authentic research. Inspired and encouraged by the work of Four Arrows and the real and imaginary characters in his text, I have created an imaginary art exhibition to honour living my

values of love and joy more fully and to represent my living educational theory more authentically.

I appreciate the argument Four Arrows (2008) offers in *Authentic Dissertation* for alternative ways of knowing, researching, and representing and agree with him wholeheartedly. Like Four Arrows, my goal is not to suggest that alternative research replace existing traditional modes of research, but that we create a space for other ways of knowing, researching and representing so that the intellectual adventures of such researchers include opportunities to experience authenticity and creativity, and in doing so, as Tuhiwai Smith states, leave an actual “imprint of what is true” (as cited in Four Arrows, 2008, p.4). In this way, we may well discover, or re-discover, truths that can offer alternative solutions to the problems that plague our world today. In essence, recognizing the importance and value of alternative methodologies provides a voice for researchers and honours the search for their own way. When this way is discovered, then a space and place for transformation has been created as the knowledge comes from within, from the lived experience of the knower, not from an ivory tower, a mandated policy, or any other voice of authority. The imprint is exposed; the internal map is revealed. All that is left for me to do is walk the way—“the Otherway”.

My Former Way—The Living Contradiction

I feel passionate about creating the right environment for the learners in my care to feel loved and safe; take risks; co-construct their learning in a creative, meaningful and purposeful way; and to realize their potential as valuable, knowledgeable, worthy, unique beings. The learners in my care are all of the people I directly interact with in my day-to-day living, including students, peers, colleagues, family, friends, neighbours and

strangers. I use the terms teacher and learner interchangeably as I believe it is not possible to teach without openness to being a learner. Ideal learning occurs when there is an opportunity to be the teacher, even if it is simply as a teacher to one's self. In this ideal environment where the teacher is the student and the student is the teacher, authentic and transformative learning can unfold. The most important ingredient for this ideal environment is a loving, authentic, just and honest teacher—a soulful teacher. A teacher who can demonstrate these qualities and also values and lives them has the potential to create and maintain meaningful relationships founded on trust and framed with love; as a result, the educational journey can unfold as it should. I now believe I was this teacher when I began my career, but she became lost in the “mall of education” (Hart 2009, p. 41). I recently had a conversation with a young friend who was just finishing his first year of high school and I asked with anticipation (I'm always the optimist):

“So, how does it feel to have just completed your first year of high school?”

“Okay, I guess. Kind of disappointing actually; the good news is only three more years to go.”

Whether teachers or students, some learners become enculturated as dazed, passive consumers. Education becomes something to go to and get through, rather than a clearing for deep experience. (Hart 2009, p. 41)

I titled Chapter One, “Round Peg and Square Hole” - a twist on the idiomatic expression square peg and round hole to capture my frustrations and fears with both my educational practice and completing a Master's degree. Throughout this academic journey, I have had transformative experiences, but all of them occurred in situations where I was given complete freedom to construct and demonstrate my learning.

However, I am now at the end of this specific journey and have to produce a Major Research Project that meets the standards of the academy. While there is still great opportunity for academic freedom, if I want my research to be valued and respected, I must ensure it conforms to certain standards. To this end, I decided to try and keep the suggested components of an introductory chapter; I even decided to call my first chapter, “Introduction”, but once again, I felt like I was a living contradiction.

This is not the way my work unfolded and to try and make it fit into something it was not felt like hammering a square peg into a round hole. The only way I was going to be able to do that successfully was to start shaving off the edges. It then occurred to me that this was also how I would describe my educational practice prior to this journey, when I was lost in the mall. Only being lost was even more challenging because I was more of a round peg and the hole was square so shaving off the edges was not even an option. Instead, I disguised myself as a square peg—the ultimate living contradiction.

In my situation as an educator and a researcher, the hole being square represents the formal, traditional, Eurocentric, broadly accepted ways of knowing that are quite fixed and rigid (e.g., the expectations, policies, procedures and politics embedded in many educational institutions). I am not square, never have been and never want to be, but as time passed, I found myself shaving away more and more until eventually I realized there would be nothing left of the authentic me, unless I found an alternative solution. The temporary solution for the educator came as I accepted a new position at the system level. The short-lived temporary solution for the researcher was to compromise and create a five-chapter project framed around the big questions (Who Am I? How Do I Know? So What? and Now What?) that evolved from my research. The

rationale for my compromise was that the round peg “I” is more flexible than the square hole; thus, I was more likely to be able to adapt to the environment of the square hole and might actually fit into the square hole, but not completely fill it. This is how I existed for many years in an institution with rigid standards and fixed expectations. However, if the keepers of the square hole would be willing to shave away some of the square hole edges, perhaps we could find away to work together—a peaceful coexistence where there is a space and place for the traditional and the non-traditional. Ideally, this space could become one where there are no pegs or holes, but instead a collective *we* who work collaboratively with trust, love and respect to meet the needs of the learners in our care. In this environment, I could begin to discard my square peg disguise and improve my practice by living authentically according to my values.

However, as I stated earlier, this was a short-lived temporary solution. I found myself faced with subtitles that made me feel confined and stifled my creativity. My voice slowly disappeared from the page as I tried to work within the confines of the suggested and recommended parameters. It is only after completing this project that I can identify the problem and explain the background, context, purpose, objectives, rationale, framework and limitations. If I fill in those blanks like I knew what I was doing all along, I am not being authentic and I am not honouring the process of the research, which was just as valuable as the results of my research. How can I honour the process and remain authentic?

Although I was aware that a problem existed, I didn’t know much more than that and I could not have articulated any details. I could have guessed and perhaps would have been accurate, but I believe this is less valid than saying I want to improve my

practice and I am going to read, think, paint, share, alter my actions, and check my results until I do improve my practice. What that will look like is impossible to predict until I actually do it. If I were forced to provide the particulars prior to commencing my research then I might be tempted (either consciously or subconsciously) to make the research fit the method and thereby stifle my creative flow and jeopardize the authenticity of my work. “If one is unsure of what will emerge during a research project, it seems that attempting to predetermine the structure or focus can block the emergence of creative material” (Four Arrows, p. 15). By adapting a living educational theory methodology, I am allowing the research to unfold naturally and thus making it more trustworthy, creative, authentic and valid. In addition, by embracing an alternative way of representing, I am leaving a more authentic imprint of what actually occurred. In this way, I am holding myself accountable as I make my values explicit and create standards of judgement for my educational practice and, therefore, validating my claims and research.

So What and Now What?

After considerable research, writing and reflecting, I can now state the problem: I want to improve my practice but I don't know how to do so in a way that will honour what I have lived and already know. However, I came to this understanding only after I realized that my educational practice was effective and authentic most of the time. Also I understood that when it was not, this was because I was not teaching and living according to my values. Instead, I was succumbing to external and internal pressures and I felt stifled by policies, expectations and ministry mandates. In desperate need of some external validation for what I knew intuitively and to pursue my passion for learning, I

attended workshops, subscribed to educational journals and read everything I could about improving educational practice. This is when I discovered the term *holistic education*. When I realized that there was theory to support what I was already doing—holistic education—I thought I could do some course work to learn more and improve my practice. Therefore, I made the decision to pursue a Master’s degree. However, I did so reluctantly until I discovered I could deviate from the traditional ways of knowing.

I think there is a system in place that prevents a certain kind of knower from being accepted as an “expert,” and this kind of knowing might have something to offer the world. Kuhn and others have argued that the scientific community is comprised of people whose common beliefs and values create a uniformity that prevent such new ideas from coming forth. This is why paradigm shifts often come from people outside of the area of research. (Four Arrows, 2008, p. 16)

I was reluctant because I was still afraid of not being good enough, discovered as an “ungraduate”, or as someone who doesn’t have enough sense to avoid being assaulted and abused (these will be explained later when I share my narratives). No longer confined by self and other imposed expectations to conform, I was liberated; my fear dissipated as I discovered and embraced the *living educational theory* methodology and ventured into a journey into the unknown. What a huge sense of relief it was to know that I was free to pursue and discover the “otherway”. However, as I realize now, that was much easier said than done. It is difficult to toss aside the preconceived notions of what is considered scholarly and academic and trust in the process and one’s self. This is a valuable learning experience I hope to take to the classroom with me in September as I introduce my students to other ways of knowing. However, deciding to represent my research in an

imaginary art exhibition can only enhance my ability to convey these ideas to the learners in my care. I must first have the experience before I can share the experience with any amount of authenticity. You too are invited to share in this journey.

Warning and Disclaimer

Should you decide to accept the invitation and continue reading please take heed. This may be a rather nontraditional journey as the “Otherway” unfolds and, although you will encounter terms traditionally associated with master of education level work like, conceptual framework, hermeneutic, epistemology, ontology, axiology, phenomenology, methodology and so on, you will also encounter semantic forms not normally associated with rigorous, academic research (with the exception of the discipline of theology) like, sacred, soul, interconnectedness, spirit, blessing, and so on. At times, the information will seem clear, concise and cogent and the logic will flow. However, there will also be times when the concepts, ideas and arguments are not clear and perhaps even contradictory. At times ideas may seem jumbled and chaotic as I work my way through the creative process, “yet the creative phases are vital to an educational enquiry that is continuously pushing the boundaries of what the individual already knows” (Whitehead, 2011, p. 2). In this space, where there is tension, great insights can be gleaned. This is the environment that enabled my best thinking to occur and I am going to attempt to recreate that experience during the exhibition.

Essentially, you will not be guided through a traditional five-chapter paper with subtitles to mark the next turn. Instead, you are invited into a space where you can use your imagination to formulate your own knowing and bring your own experience to the text and images. I will not assume objectivity, instead I celebrate my subjectivity without

apologies. I invite you to bring your subjectivity, which is your honoured story, as you open your heart and listen to mine. I promise no great insights and I am not an experienced painter, so please do not expect to see practiced technique or polished traditional skills. What I can promise you is an honest, authentic and perhaps original adventure.

The Program

To begin, you will find yourself in the next chapter entering an interactive art exhibition hosted by Anam Foy, a fictitious character. She is the embodiment of wisdom and the combined spirit of all who have influenced me educationally. However, the art is real, as is the artist, and the artist's stories. Ms. Foy has invited others who, although imagined, represent the thoughts and ideas of real people. In addition, you will meet and hear from real people, with their blessing (known as a signed letter of permission which satisfies the requirements of The Research Ethics Board) during the exhibition and as you view video footage of our validation group meetings. Video is an integral part of the exhibit. You will also hear from people whose names you may recognize, authorities and/or experts in their field of study, who are real but whose presence at the exhibit is imagined, as is the exhibit.

The remainder of the program is dedicated to showcasing artwork in a variety of forms—story, song, mural, painting, video and dialogue that represents my research process. Throughout the program, you will witness the unfolding of my authentic self as I grapple with fear, flow, belonging, self-doubt, grief, shame, guilt, trust, love and joy. Hopefully you feel and see the tensions and the struggle in a way that enables you to experience empathetic resonance (DeLong & Whitehead 2011). You will witness the

generation of a living educational theory as I struggle to identify, articulate and eventually celebrate the values that give my life meaning and purpose so that I can improve my educational practice (Whitehead, 1989). Woven throughout the exhibition, in the various forms of artwork, are the themes and patterns I have come to recognize as part of my internal and external struggle and the themes and patterns that bring harmony to my being. I intentionally create a space (either in story, song, painting or dialogue) to examine these themes through purposeful, focused reflection so that I can “Journey to the Otherway” with authenticity. Please join me on this journey, as it would not be possible without you—the Other.

CHAPTER TWO: JOURNEY TO THE OTHERWAY PART ONE

(There is a gentle ringing of meditation bells, a silent pause, and then a soft and gentle voice recites the following poem.)

I am the wind which breathes upon the sea,
 I am the wave of the ocean,
 I am the murmur of the billows,
 I am the ox of the seven combats,
 I am the vulture upon the rocks,
 I am a beam of the sun,
 I am the fairest of plants,
 I am the wild boar in valour,
 I am the salmon in the water,
 I am the lake in the plain,
 I am a world of knowledge,
 I am the point of the lance of battle,
 I am the God who created the fire in the head.

Anam Foy—The Voice of Many in One

Anam Foy: Welcome everyone to “Journey to the Otherway”. The poem you just heard was written by Amairgen and according to John O’Donohue (2004a) is

traditionally believed to be the first poem ever composed in Ireland. For Amairgen, I am because everything else is. I am everything and everything is in me. This magnificent hymn to presence outlines the ontological depth and unity of the *anam-cara* experience. (p. 97)

My name is Anam Foy and I am your hostess for this evening's exhibition. My name means soul journey in Gaelic. I come here with an open heart, open mind, and willing spirit and welcome you as we embark on a soulful journey together to the "Otherway". I am honoured to host this journey and already know this will become one of those nodal moments in my life that I will remember fondly for years to come. Already I can feel the energy in the room lifting my spirit and comforting my soul. It feels both like a refreshing breeze and a ray of sunshine. Can you feel it?

(Many participants smile and nod in unison and there is a general buzz of affirmation)

Anam: First of all, I would like to congratulate everyone who is here. Your mere presence indicates a willingness to be part of a paradigm shift. Even if you are here riddled with doubt and skepticism, please know you are most welcome. It is your presence that gives worthiness to these kinds of events. There is no challenge in only speaking to kindred spirits.

Speaking of kindred spirits, I would now like to introduce Liz Campbell, our artist in residence for the evening. When Liz approached me to host this exhibition, I accepted immediately. First, because I was intrigued by the concept of an imaginary exhibition and second, because I have known Liz since she was a small child and never realized she is a painter. So I am quite curious to see her work and hear her story. However, I do know her

as a passionate and adventurous soul who is willing to expose her own vulnerability for the sake of the greater good. I have seen her struggle in difficult times and soar in joyful times. When I knew Liz as a child, she was very shy and would turn crimson if asked a direct question in public. Obviously, she has experienced a lot of growth since those early years. Perhaps she will share a story or two with us so we can appreciate her journey and perhaps learn a little something about ourselves in the process.

When I asked Liz where she came up with such a creative idea she told me about a book she read by Four Arrows (2008) entitled *Authentic Dissertation: Alternative Ways of Knowing, Research and Representing*, and claimed this was exactly the kind of research she was interested in and, moreover, wanted to represent that research in a way that reflected her journey and enabled her to be authentic. Liz claims that the book was one of the most educative she has read in a very long time. Four Arrows' work enabled her to "freely and creatively appropriate [his] ideas in a way, which affirms [her] own sense of creating [herself.]" (Whitehead, 2001, p. 5) Please join me in welcoming Liz and we can witness this creative appropriation for ourselves.

Spiral One

(A polite round of applause greets Liz as she makes her way to the front of the room. The one exception is a voice coming from the front row proudly stating, in broad Scottish, "On yersel' Lassie!")

Liz: (Obviously very nervous and a little embarrassed as she drops the paper in her hand and then bangs her head on the table as she bends to pick it up.)

Thank you and thank you all so very much for coming. There was a voice inside me hoping that perhaps only my family and close friends would come and I would be

spared the challenge before me. I know my mother is present because I heard her shouts of encouragement as I came up here. For those of you who aren't familiar with Scottish slang, "On yersel' Lassie" is the equivalent of "break a leg" or "go for it".

(Liz looks towards her mum and as their eyes meet a warm and loving smile emerges as do two tiny droplets in the corner of Liz's eyes. There is now radiance emanating from Liz and someone snaps a photo. Anam, sensing the intensity in the moment, moves closer to Liz and places a hand on her shoulder. Liz can feel the gentle touch, but is more aware of the current of love flowing from Anam. Liz turns to face her and Anam gently guides her to the first veiled painting.)

Anam: (In a whispered voice accompanied by an all knowing, encouraging nod asks:)

Are you ready to begin?

(In a very quiet and meek voice, Liz whispers a response to Anam and turns towards the audience. Fiddling with the corner of the fabric draped over the painting, she begins.)

Liz: When I was a teenager, I abandoned the idea of learning to paint. Apparently, I had "no creative ability whatsoever." Knowing that the woman who made this statement to me was not only an adult and a teacher, but also an artist, I did not say anything to challenge or question her. I simply put my pencil back into my "Bay City Rollers" pencil case, collected my books, and left the room. I remember little else, except the weight of humiliation, failure and shame. How silly of me to think that I could learn to draw and paint in art class; obviously I did not understand this education system at all. I had many other devastating experiences in secondary school and it is because of those combined

experiences that I decided to become an educator. However, never in all these years did I ever consider myself an artist or attempt to produce art. Not until quite recently did I decide it was time (thirty odd years is not a long time in some cultures) to try again. This painting (*Liz points awkwardly at the painting poised on the easel waiting to be unveiled*) is the result of that effort. Recalling the traumatic experience of high school art class was the beginning of my “Journey to the Otherway.”

I was nearing the end of my first Master’s of Education course and had to submit a project that represented a synthesis of my learning during that course. I would now like to read a letter I wrote to accompany the painting:

Dear Hilary,

This course (EDU5P30) has been a transformative experience for me. I have given much thought (and changed my mind after several false starts) on how to communicate a synthesis of my learning. Finally, I decided to trust in myself and in the process, or as John O’Donohue states in *Anam Cara: A Celtic Book of Wisdom*, “all creativity awakens at this primal threshold where light and darkness test and bless each other. You only discover balance in your life when you learn to trust the flow of this ancient rhythm.” (2004a, pp. 4-5)

I began the synthesis project by reflecting on what I have learned as it was such a layered journey of learning. I had to begin by trying to sort out the practical from the abstract—the specific from the whole. In and of itself, this was a momentous task and simply keeping a journal of this thought process probably would have sufficed for a synthesis project, but I wanted to do more. I wanted to push myself by creating a task that was challenging, yet manageable—a flow

experience (Csikszentmihalyi p. 30). I wanted to be fully involved as that is who I am and how I do things. Or as my son says, “That’s how I roll” (Dylan Campbell, personal communication). I wanted to be true to my journey, my core values, and myself and this meant more than documenting my reflections. In addition, I wanted to honour my guide, namely you—Dr. Hilary Brown. The one who wholeheartedly demonstrated with words and action, whether online or face-to-face how to: ask probing questions; make gentle but profound suggestions; take time to notice and remember the little things; be a teacher as well as a learner; be a guide and friend with professional integrity; value the power of trust, respect, compassion and caring; find balance with the wisdom of the ancients, the rigor of the traditionalists and the knowledge of the contemporaries; create a space for constructing learning in a safe, joyful and engaging environment that surpasses all other learning environments; care for oneself while being an invaluable resource to others; and most of all how to Be.

From the first day of the course, I knew this was going to be a unique learning environment. Initially, I was skeptical as much of my formal educational journey has been disappointing. Time after time, I found myself in places where the instruction was in conflict with the content and I was in constant defense mode and at times overwhelmed by exhaustion and frustration; I would succumb and simply play the game—how very sad. This experience was replicated when I became a teacher—many of my colleagues talked the talk, but for whatever reason, didn’t walk the walk. Fortunately, I never gave up on my students or my beliefs and had a very successful experience as a classroom teacher and would

have probably stayed in that position forever, but it wasn't enough any more. There were many students I couldn't reach and many who were desperate for more. I wanted to be a part of the much-needed shift in education so that more students could experience optimal learning. I took the first step in this process by accepting a position at the board office and the second by signing up for this Master's program. On the first day of the course, I immediately sensed this was going to be different and so it was. I finally found an instructor who modeled what she believed every step of the way. This provided me with the much-needed framework for discovering and learning to articulate my pedagogical philosophy. I not only had permission, but encouragement, support and, most importantly, guidance. Finally, I was free to really discover who I was as an educator and essentially a person and so the journey began.

As you know, initially I was attracted to the course because I discovered that John Miller's (2007) book—*The Holistic Curriculum*—was the text for the course. From the time I began my formal educational journey, I had an intuitive understanding of the value of alternative education. Perhaps because I was not a typical student and I knew there were many others like me who would not thrive in a traditional setting, at every opportunity I investigated alternative models, but unfortunately the opportunities were few and the support and guidance practically non-existent. Nonetheless, I completed my degree and began teaching from instinct, not training. It is necessary for me to tell you about my past experiences so that you can understand the importance of what I have learned in this course and what a crucial role you have played.

One of the valuable things I learned is the necessity of both intuition and training. Essentially, the idea of trusting your intuition, but knowing that it should be grounded in research and the importance of possessing the knowledge to articulate instinctual understandings are integral to my knowing. (Again, the concept of balance leaps to the forefront.) I certainly would have been more equipped to deal with the resistance and criticisms (mostly from colleagues) I received as a classroom teacher if I was familiar with the work of Parker Palmer (2007), Rachel Kessler (2000), Ron Miller (2006), John Miller (2000, 2007) and Tobin Hart (2009) to name only a very few of the contemporary holistic education gurus. (This does raise the question of how the people on the frontline—especially those who don't have the opportunity to pursue a Master's of Education degree can stay more up to date. Should some form of professional development be mandatory? Many teachers complete additional qualifications early in their career to make them more employable or to move up the pay scale or for other reasons, but perhaps we need to consider something for the veteran teachers?) *I am still learning and asking questions even at the synthesis point, but hopefully that will always be the case.* All of these authors confirmed with academic accountability that I was right to trust my instinct, but I have also learned the value and importance of knowledge grounded in and through research.

The forums also provided a rich learning environment. The plethora of insightful comments and questions clearly demonstrated the courage and convictions of my colleagues and reignited my hope and aspirations. I learned I was not nearly as isolated as I once thought and that there is much hope for

education to become more engaging and meaningful for students. However, I also saw the familiar signs of frustration and exhaustion and this has given me another purpose in my current role. I can be an advocate for those on the front line who are trying to do the right thing by taking advantage of my position at the Board level. I can seek out opportunities to ask meaningful questions and have crucial conversations (as modeled by you) and when asked, “but who else thinks this way or would be willing to try this?” I have an extensive list of courageous teachers I can confer with and report back with names, evidence and practical hope. and soon I hope to share in John Miller’s chapter entitled, “Implementing and Evaluating the Holistic Curriculum.” (Miller, 2007)

Discovering a cohort of like-minded unique individuals (not that we all embrace the same theories or espouse the same epistemologies or deontology, but we do have similar core values and at least are willing to consider and/or creatively and critically debate alternatives, while valuing the diversity and uniqueness of different pedagogies) has awakened my sense and understanding of interconnectedness. Through both the community of learners and the affirmations in the wide range of articles and texts on holistic education, I now understand, at a level that is difficult to articulate, this sacred connection. Whereas before I felt frustration and exhaustion, I now feel peace, supported and safe to pursue bliss while simultaneously confronting the challenges of our educational crisis.

Recently, I experienced bliss in my personal life, as a result of another transformative experience spurred by the tragic death of my brother. But I didn’t have the necessary intellectual understanding to apply it to my life as an educator

as well. This created much tension in my otherwise peaceful existence because I have known for a very long time that I cannot separate the teacher from the person. Through the authors and books you shared with the class as well as the personal recommendations you made to me, I am more consciously aware of the interconnectedness of everything. Not only am I connected to other people, but this connection is grounded in nature and is universal—it has no boundaries. (Miller, 2006) Some call it Beauty (O'Donohue, 2004b) others call it soul (. Miller, 2006; Kessler, 2000) and others call it collective transformation or consciousness (Hart, 2009) but all make reference to the interconnectedness and the importance of recognizing, respecting and honouring that connection. This has provided me with great comfort, new courage and endless creativity.

So now it is time to demonstrate my newly found comfort, courage, creativity and connectedness in a way that will honour what I have always known intuitively and am now beginning to understand intellectually. And “Eureka!” an artist is born.

In October, I will be fifty years old. When I was fifteen years old, I was not so politely invited to drop high school art class as the teacher felt I was a hopeless case simply because I could not replicate the vase of flowers with my pencil and blank sheet of paper. Unfortunately, I believed her because she was the expert. I have never taken another art class or ever held an artist's paintbrush in my hand (we never got past the pencil medium), but I have always experienced a sense of awe and wonder in relation to art and a sense of undiscovered connectedness. This sensation was unleashed as a result of the work of Parker

Palmer (2007), Rachel Kessler (2000), Ron Miller (2006), John Miller (2000, 2007) and Tobin Hart (2009) and countless others, but most importantly, Hilary Brown. The holistic education experts provided me with the intellectual understanding of holistic education and specifically of the importance of the arts to optimal learning. But you provided me with the opportunity and courage, and for this I send you heartfelt thanks... [Please remember] how profoundly your work, beliefs, and approach has impacted me and the fact that you assisted in righting a thirty-five year old wrong because your courage, creativity and open connectedness enabled me to find the balance between heart and head and in demonstrating harmony in the most challenging creative way possible for me. The resources you provided from book recommendations and required readings will always serve me in a practical way, but your genuine passion for shared learning and professional integrity are what brought those words to life and gave them meaning and is what resonated with me more than anything I read. You created an environment where flow could thrive and soul could be manifested.

Namaste,

Liz: This is the letter I sent to Hilary to justify and validate my desire to represent my learning in an alternative way. I lived what I had learned in that course and as a result, my learning continued long after the course was over—this is authentic learning. This is evidenced by the post-script I sent to Hilary the next week and the fact that I stand before you today. If you will indulge me a little longer, I will read the post-script to you now.

Synthesis P.S.

I need to write this now while the emotions are still raw, so here goes.

Today, I took my art to the Southampton Art School for the “Emerging Artists Juried Show”. The only reason I did so was because I promised my sister-in-law, Shanni--an accomplished artist, that I would. For some reason, unknown to me, she kept insisting that I promise to enter my paintings and I trust her judgement. And so I did. I knew all along that I was going to feel a bit uncomfortable, but I was not going to go back out on a promise just for the sake of saving myself a little embarrassment or discomfort. I know very well what growth can come from stepping outside your comfort zone.

I just finished my second painting (balance) this weekend and while the paint was still drying I pulled up the registration form for the art show.

~

Liz: It was actually my third painting but I was ignoring my second painting (“Spiral Two”) at the time and you should also know that “balance” is now called “Pumped.”

~

Oh dear, the deadline for entries was a Saturday and this is Monday. I guess I won't be able to uphold my promise. Then I said to myself, now Liz, if this were anything else would you give up so easily and the answer of course was a resounding no. So I called first thing Tuesday morning to see if it was still possible. Well the gallery was closed on Tuesday, but someone answered the

phone and clearly stated it would be fine to bring my work in if I did so immediately. As it turns out, I was just heading off to a meeting and would have to drive right by the gallery. *Crap, not off the hook yet.* So I put my two paintings in a green garbage bag—it was raining out—and headed off to my meeting and the gallery remembering that because the gallery was closed and the doorbell doesn't always work that I was suppose to knock loudly and someone would come down to let me in. As I approached the door, I thought to myself *hmm...how loud is loudly?* I'll just knock normally and if no one answers, so be it. I barely knocked and immediately there was a friendly and welcoming face to greet me. I stepped into the gallery and froze. To my right and left, up and down, everywhere I looked, were beautiful images in a plethora of forms--carefully crafted jewelry, paintings with perfect brush strokes, contrasting colours, complimentary colours, hues I have never before witnessed, wood carvings with texture and detail that begged to be touched, and there I was, a little girl, frozen in time, green garbage bag dangling from my clutched hand. *Just breathe, Liz and you'll be okay. Breathe slowly and deeply and tell the woman why you are here.* Before I could say a word, she said with a friendly and reassuring smile, *so you have brought some art in for the show. Just hang on a minute and I'll go get someone to help you* and poof she was gone.

Just take two steps forward, turn the knob and you are outta here—go now before anyone comes. Don't be ridiculous, what are you afraid of? Everything, I can't recall the last time I have been this terrified, no horrified. What am I feeling—again everything. I feel like a lost little girl, scared, lonely, vulnerable,

frightened and absolutely terrified. I feel like I will burst into tears at any moment. Crap, this is part of the process, this is the growth—I can't bail now it is just getting interesting.

Now all I could think of was the many times my students told me this is how they felt when they had to present to the class or when some adults told me how difficult it was for them when they had to enter a high school years after they had graduated or dropped out. I was always very sensitive and tried to encourage and support students and adults so they could move beyond this stifling experience. I thought I knew how difficult it was for them and I did. I understood in my head how it must be, but now I understood in my heart. It was at this moment I realized I was not going to run anywhere. I was going to see this through for all those who trusted me in the past and also for myself.

After some more little challenges, like adding hanging wire and eye hooks, realizing that most of the other entries were framed and carefully protected by bubble wrap, and having to name a price for my work, I left the gallery empty-handed, still shaking with fear and intimidation, but knowing I had a better understanding now of vulnerability and a story to tell the next time someone needs some reassurance.

~

(There is a quiet stillness in the room as Liz turns to unveil the painting. Wishing she had splurged and spent the extra three dollars a meter for the satiny fabric that would slide away with ease, Liz grips the fabric by the corner that is now all crumpled, curled and damp from her sweaty, restless hands and gives the fabric a tug. The painting

begins to rock on the easel ledge. Anam moves closer, grabs the painting to steady it and suggests to Liz that they each take a corner at the top and gently remove the shroud.)

Figure 1: Spiral One



Liz: Ah, so this is, um, my, ah, painting. *(pause)* I would like to invite you to take a few moments and simply look at it. While you are looking at it try to take note of your thoughts and reactions. What do you feel? What does the painting remind you of? What is the sensation you experience as you look silently at the painting? I will give you a few minutes now to ponder.

(The spotlights on the painting brighten as the lights in the room dim. There is a quiet stillness in the room as the audience contemplates Spiral One. After a few minutes of silence, Anam gently rings the meditation bells.)

Liz: It took me a very long time to complete Spiral One and there are many, many layers, most of which are hidden to the naked eye. I drew many different spirals that, if you look closely, you will see are all interconnected to symbolize the renewed interconnectedness that I feel and which are symbolic of the nature of my learning journey. You might also notice a woman in the center, that is me and all women—we are one. I decided to use contrasting colours for the final layer and those colours are meant to symbolize the tension between darkness and light, nothing and everything. It was very much a surreal experience and it is difficult to put it into words and when I try, well, it seems to belittle the experience. Either the words don't exist or I don't know them or know how to string them together in a way that protects and honours the beauty of the moment. And then there is a part of me that thinks it is not so important to convey this kind of detailed information that focuses on the discipline of education but to continue my educational research:

The significance of this distinction is that 'education' refers to the disciplines such as history, sociology, psychology and biology whereas, 'educational' concerns

improving the social order and explaining the nature of your educational influence in the learning of yourself, the learning of others and the learning of social formations. By social formations (Bourdieu, 1990), we refer to your context of your family, classroom, school, school system/s, society. (DeLong & Whitehead, 2011)

It is the focus on educational research that has given my research meaning and enabled me grow and learn and have a positive educational influence--to journey the "Otherway". By examining the process of my own learning and my educational influence, I find my own voice, share that voice, and hopefully make a contribution to creating a better world.

~

(Suddenly, the lights in the room dim and all that remains is the warm glow of the candlelight emanating from the side tables where the wine and cheese are aesthetically arranged for the reception. A peaceful silence ensues. Everyone's eyes are drawn to the vaulted ceiling where there is a gentle swishing sound.)

Anam: (With a sure but gentle voice exclaims to the crowd)

I would like to introduce you to my friend who has recently come face to face with his secret companion--death. He comes to us from the eternal world. Everyone, this is John O'Donohue—scholar, author, lecturer, poet, philosopher and soul guide. His expertise in Celtic spirituality, Hegelian philosophy, cartography of the soul, and imagination as a spiritual resource has nurtured the reawakening of souls everywhere from the boardroom to the confessional, to the local pub, and to the corners of the earth. Welcome, John. We are honoured and humbled by your visit.

John: Please. It is I who am humbled and honoured. I heard my name and felt an urgency to visit. I am always close by; eternity is nearer than you think. It is here, everywhere, nowhere. It is beautiful, serene and peaceful. When we find our internal rhythm we can sense the tranquility of eternity. There is a very luring collective internal rhythm in this room. There is great spiritual imagination in this space. I think that is why I have come, but I cannot stay long in your time. “All you have is the little stepping-stone of the present moment.” (2004a p. 226)

Anam: You have found great peace and wisdom in the eternal world.

John: I have less than ever and more than enough.

Anam: Do you know my friend, Liz? She is the reason we have gathered here today.

John: I know her in my heart. We have met on many pages. I would like to share a thought with her to give her strength as I see she is searching earnestly.

When you give in to creative passion, it will bring you to the ultimate thresholds of transfiguration and renewal. This growth causes pain, but it is a sacred pain. It would be much more tragic to have cautiously avoided these depths and remained marooned on the shiny surfaces of the banal. (2004a, p 22)

Liz: Yes the pain is great, but so is the joy. I never thought of the pain as sacred. There is such a contradiction between pain and joy, it is difficult to understand how to live with the complexity.

John:

We need to rediscover contradiction as a creative force within the soul. Beginning with Aristotle, the Western thought tradition outlawed contradiction as the

presence of the impossible, and consequently, as an index of the false and the illogical. Hegel, alone, had the vision, subtlety, and hospitality of reflection to acknowledge contradiction as the complex force of growth that disavows mere linear progress in order to awaken all the aggregate energies of an experience. It is the turbulence and conflict of their inner conversation that brings an integrity of transfiguration and not the mere placement of one image, surface, or system by another, which so often passes for change. This perspective makes for a more complex notion of truth. It demands an ethic of authenticity that incorporates and goes beyond the simplistic intentions of mere sincerity. (2004a, p.114)

Liz: Yes, yes, I understand but only recently have I come to know authenticity in its true form and I appreciate the need for conflict in order to experience growth and create transformative moments. I believe I am beginning to live each day with more authenticity but I still wonder if it is enough. My concern is that our educational institutions are in a state of crises and the most innocent among us are suffering. To know that our children are suffering in the name of education tears my soul apart. When I remain in a system that allows and enables this kind of suffering I feel like a “living contradiction” (Whitehead, 1989).

John: Ah, I see you are familiar with the work of Jack Whitehead. Then you are in very good hands, but I do appreciate your urgency. In fact, I can recall the anxiety that this kind of fear created in my earthly life. I always found it helpful to try and identify the fear—what it is that I am afraid of? At times when it does feel like too much remember:

We need to have greater patience with our sense of inner contradiction in order to allow its different dimensions to come into conversation within us. There is a

secret light and vital energy in contradiction. Where there is energy there is life and growth. Your ascetic solitude will allow your contradictions to emerge with clarity and force. If you remain faithful to this energy, you will gradually come to participate in a harmony that lies deeper than any contradiction. This will give you new courage to engage the depth, danger and darkness of your life. (2004a, p. 115)

I have seen you take negative experiences and make them positive. There is much truth in negativity and it can aid in the transfiguration of self. I know you have done this and I need to tell you that your resilience is amazing. Truly, there is nothing to be afraid of and I know you know this, now try to live it. You have loved ones in the world of eternity to guide you and kindred spirits here on earth; you are not alone on this journey.

Liz: Thank you. Once again, I find great comfort and encouragement in your words.

John: You need not rely on my words to find the comfort and courage you need. You already have everything you need—it is already within you. Your second painting, Spiral Two, is a testament to this.

(Suddenly the lights brighten and all eyes turn to the second canvas at the front of the room which is now mysteriously unveiled. John disappears as graciously as he arrived. Anam rings the meditation bells to mark the beginning of silent contemplation. All lights except those on the painting are dimmed. Several minutes of silence ensues.)

Figure 2: Spiral Two



Spiral Two

(Again, Anam gently rings the meditation bells to mark the end of silent contemplation. Without hesitating for even a moment Liz turns gracefully to face the audience and proceeds to speak with poise and confidence.)

Liz: I did this painting right after I finished Spiral One. I wanted to improve on my first effort. I needed to make the spirals more geometrically accurate and I was sure that I could paint a more pleasing tree--something that emerged more naturally from the ground, but also appeared to blend with the horizon. I also imagined I could play with the background colour and create better transitions from one colour to another.

When I finished the painting and asked for feedback, everyone I shared it with claimed they preferred the first painting. They said Spiral One had more flow and natural appeal. It was more aesthetically pleasing. For a while, I was dumbfounded. And then I saw it too. Spiral Two lacked authenticity. I was trying too hard. I stopped trusting in my instinct and resorted to what I thought people expected to see. I was trying to recall the few rules of design that I had once learned in a computer class and I was trying to incorporate them in my art. I was following my head, and had abandoned my heart in the process. I ignored my embodied knowledge and lost the flow of my creativity and became obsessed with conformity. How easy it is to slip back into old habits. How tempting it is to abandon the call to mystery when we have had a taste of success. Was this greed, or a desire for acceptance or acknowledgement? Did I simply want to paint better? I wasn't sure what happened, but I do believe that Spiral One is a better painting.

It was certainly a better experience and I painted again shortly thereafter to try and get back into the space where I was free to express my inner spirit.

Pumped for Transformation

(Liz looks over at Anam, who is standing just off to the side of the next easel, and gives her a confident nod. In one swift and graceful movement, Anam unveils the next painting. (see figure Three) Again, the meditation bells ring, followed by several minutes of silence as the audience contemplates the next painting.)

Figure 3: Pumped



(Slowly the lights in the room brighten as Liz begins to speak.)

Liz: When I came home from the last class with Dr. Hilary Brown, I was pumped. I felt confident and inspired. I was ready to begin the next phase of my transformative journey. Armed with new information, language, and historical and political context, but most importantly, the lived experience of educational moments, I was hopeful once again. I felt that I could return to my classroom and re-create this environment for the learners in my care. Little did I know that this was only the beginning.

Hilary helped me to see how I valued hope and vulnerability and created an opportunity to validate my claims by testing my values with my peers and other social formations. Though, at the time, I did not understand this is what I was doing, I was simply being me and trying to be authentic. I was doing a lot of reflecting and writing, but I did not have a focus yet. It now makes sense to me that I had to go through a general affirmation phase before I could start to look for specifics and particulars. By beginning with what I already knew, even though I didn't know I knew (essentially my embodied knowledge) enabled me to begin the difficult journey to the "Otherway" with some level of confidence.

When I read that Ron Miller (2006) renamed the American educational initiative "No Child Left Behind (NCLB), "Childhood Left Behind" (p. 3) and claimed that "an education that neglects the deep creative source of selfhood will result in a deadening, mechanical routine of school that negates rather than honours childhood" (p. 2), I felt a great sense of relief. I felt the same way for over twenty years, yet, with a few exceptions,

could find little support or affirmation for my concerns. Education **is** in crisis and we need to act now!

(There is a rustling noise and some murmuring coming from the back of the room. Anam glances over at Liz and gestures with a slight tilt of her head that it may be time to hear from the audience.)

Anam: As you may have noticed, Liz is very passionate about meaningful educational opportunities for all. She can speak at length on this topic and often becomes quite animated and excited with arms flailing about and restless pacing. Although I love to witness her “energy flowing values” and “life affirming energy” (Whitehead, 2009) and I know her passion is infectious, she can sometimes intimidate people with her zeal and enthusiasm—it is too much for some. Perhaps her greatest gift is when her internal rhythm is synchronized with the collective energy of the universe. This is when she speaks from a place of quiet, gentle confidence which has the potential to resonate with many. Here too, you can feel her “energy flowing values” and see her “life affirming energy.” When she gets too caught up with urgency, it reminds me of a story John O’Donohue told me:

Baudrillard, a French philosopher, speaks of the exponential speed of modern life. Where things are moving too quickly, nothing can stabilize, gather or grow. There is a lovely story of a man exploring Africa. He was in a desperate hurry on a journey through the jungle. He had three or four Africans helping him carry his equipment. They raced onward for about three days. On the third day, the Africans sat down and would not move. He urged them to get up, telling them of the pressure he was under to get to his destination before a certain date. They

refused to move. Finally, he got one of them to admit the reason. This native said,
 "We have moved too quickly to reach here; now we need to wait to give our
 spirits a chance to catch up with us." (2004a, p.151)

Perhaps if we take a moment to address questions from the audience, it will give
 Liz's spirit a chance to catch up with her. I sensed that perhaps someone in the back of
 the room wished to speak?

*(A young man stands. He is very formally dressed with a suit and tie and appears
 to be a little uncomfortable. He clears his throat and begins.)*

Stranger: Yes, my name is, well never mind, my name doesn't matter. While I
 agree that these are difficult times—political unrest, economic uncertainty enmeshed with
 obsessive consumerism, and ecological devastation and all contribute to the many
 problems that plague our world today—I don't understand how you hope to eradicate
 these problems by adding more to an already packed curriculum. At least the testing and
 standardization can give us some data about how well prepared our children are to deal
 with the problems that their generation will have to solve.

*(A woman standing off to the side quickly makes her way to the front. Anam
 immediately recognizes her and introduces her to the group.)*

Anam: Welcome Rachel. Everyone, this is Rachel Kessler, renowned author,
 dedicated educator and founder of the Boulder-based PassageWorks Institute. Rachel has
 dedicated her life to fostering compassion, connection and character at schools. She is a
 firm believer in the importance of nurturing the inner life of students.

Rachel: Thank you and I am sorry for barging in like this. I was just speaking to
 John O'Donohue and he mentioned this gathering to me. Naturally, I was curious to learn

more. Having only been in the eternal world for a short time, I have yet to master the graceful entrance. I'll have to work on that some more. It just seems that there are so many other things that need attention right now like our youth, for example.

Anam: You have always been an extraordinarily productive woman, Rachel, and always did so with the utmost grace and elegance. It does not surprise me that your eternal life is keeping you busy as well. Your dedication and passion for youth has transformed the lives of many and your legacy has impacted thousands worldwide. We are blessed to have your company.

Rachel: I come here today to remind you that there is still much to be done. The gentleman who spoke earlier made reference to the many problems our youth will have to deal with and I agree with him. Children today will have more challenges than any other generation both in number and in complexity. And this is exactly why we need to adjust our curriculum and revise our teaching strategies. Our job, as I stated in my book (2000) *The Soul of Education*, is to help students find connections: “such experiences not only nourish students’ spiritual development, they also help them transcend prejudice, increase academic motivation, improve focus and cooperation, foster creativity, and keep more kids in school” (p.159). Keeping kids in school and helping them find connections—discovering a purposeful and meaningful life, should be our first priority. The rest will follow naturally.

In guiding our students toward transcendence, we draw forth their yearnings rather than impose *our* own expectations; we recognize and support students’ own passions to take an extraordinary leap beyond what has been their usual performance. (2000, p.118)

We need to help them find hope instead of feeding their fear. The problems that plague our world today all contribute to the sense of fear and hopelessness that pervades our culture.

Liz: You say that so eloquently Rachel and with such passion—it resonates with love. When I read your book and the books of other holistic, contemporary thinkers and discovered the words of Tobin Hart, “We teach who we are” (2009, p.45) and Parker Palmer, “Deep speaks to deep” (1998, p.31), I knew that even one single person could make a difference. This renewed my sense of hope and inspired me to imagine a better future. However, I also realized that to play a significant role in this imagined future, I had to begin by asking who I really am, how I know, and what it is that I want to provide for the learners in my care? In order to reach high, I need to dig deep. This is when the difficult research begins.

Rachel: The way you value reflection and your caring and compassionate empathy for learners will guide you through the challenges ahead of you. You, and your kindred spirits, are our greatest resource.

(Anam and Rachel exchange a knowing look. Anam smiles and looks out toward the audience. She takes a slow, deep breath and gracefully extends her arm in the direction of the reception table inviting the guests to a glass of wine.)

CHAPTER THREE: JOURNEY TO THE “OTHERWAY” PART 2

(The lights slowly dim as the ringing of the meditation bells indicates to the participants that it is time to return to their seats for the next installment of the exhibition.)

Anam: I feel so very alive right now, my soul is tingling with hope—it is fully awake. This feeling and the conversations I overheard during the intermission remind me of something John O’Donohue (2004a) said:

Once the soul awakens, the search begins and you can never go back. From then on, you are inflamed with a special longing that will never again let you linger in the lowlands of complacency and partial fulfillment. ... You are loath to let compromise or the threat of danger hold you back from striving toward the summit of fulfillment. When this spiritual path opens, you can bring an incredible generosity to the world and to the lives of others. (p.7)

When we realize the potential we have to affect each other in a community of inquiry, then we truly recognize the responsibility that rests with us. In order to cultivate the soul and provide an environment conducive to re-connecting with self, others and nature, we have to allow our own soul to resonate, so that others—our peers and students, those who have lived a shorter time than us, or a different time than us—can benefit from our lived and shared experience. Simply by being in the presence of a caring and honest person who has created an atmosphere of trust and love, where silence is honoured and intuition respected, learning can unfold. In this harmonious space where safety and risk co-exist—a space where we can discover our own voice—souls are awakened. Again, I am reminded of the words of John O’Donohue (2004b):

There is a kindness in beauty which can inform and bless a lesser force adjacent to it. It has been shown, for instance, that when there are two harps tuned to the same frequency in a room, one a large harp and the other smaller, if a chord is struck in the bigger harp it fills and infuses the little harp with the grandeur and beauty of its resonance and brings it into tuneful harmony. Then the little harp sounds out its own tune in its own voice. This is one of the most unnoticed ways in which a child learns to become herself. (p.58)

On that note, please help me welcome Liz back for Part Two of “Journey to the Otherway.”

(There is a burst of genuine applause from the audience who has become integral to the flow and energy in the room.)

The Better Looking Teacher

Liz: Thank you. I could have easily mingled for much longer. It is such a pleasure to see everyone and to partake in meaningful dialogue about educational research and our educational influence. The stories of victory and ruin (MacLure, 1996) that we have shared have meant more to me than any of the theory I have studied. I learn so much from the honest dialogue and when you share your values with me, I learn from you about my own values and how to make them explicit. It is a bit like borrowing insight until you can formulate your own.

My next painting is entitled “Borrowed Harmony” as it is a copy of a beautiful painting by Peter Reid about harmony. After playing with paints and canvasses for a while, I decided it was time to take some painting lessons so I could get better at putting the images in my mind onto the canvas. Fortunately, I had some courageous friends who

agreed to participate in the adventure. It is much easier to forge your way in new directions when you know you are surrounded by love.

Our instructor, the very same Peter Reid who painted the original “Harmony”, told us that our task was to “get better looking” and his task was to show us how. Guided by his skill, passion and wonderful sense of humour, we immersed ourselves in the world of acrylics for three days and I must say, we did “get better looking”. We can now see details in colour and we can make hundreds of colours from only a few basics. Having acquired new skills for mixing, blending and creating colour, we were set free to explore. “Borrowed Harmony” (see figure 4) is the result of my playful exploration.

(Liz walks proudly over to the next easel and swiftly removes the cover. Anam rings the meditation bells to mark the beginning of silent contemplation. The audience, now very accustomed to the routine, quickly falls silent and focuses on the painting. The room lights dim and the lights surrounding the painting brighten. There is a sense of awe and magic in the room as the collective energy of the group has a singular focus. Several minutes of comfortable silence follows.)

Figure 4: “Borrowed Harmony”



(Anam rings the meditation bells to note the change in focus. The lights slowly brighten and Liz begins to speak quietly, but confidently.)

Liz: Initially, I was not very proud of this painting because I had copied someone else's work. I did enjoy doing the actual process of painting, but often I was preoccupied with trying to make it look "right". However, there was still a lot of value in this process because I was learning to make colours. None of the colours in this painting are from a tube. I created all of the colours and at times had to recreate a particular colour if I wanted more—no small task when you are enjoying the free play and do not write anything down.

This process reminds me of the value of a literature review. Although my own experiences are the most valuable for understanding and explaining my educational influence, I would not have had the courage, language, or confidence to pursue and complete this research without realizing I did have some valuable embodied knowledge. Reading the work of others affirmed my embodied knowledge and enhanced my theoretical perspectives, but it was reading the living theory action research projects by Jack Whitehead and Jackie Delong and their students that provided a model for me about how to examine and improve my practice in a way that engaged me and made my research as purposeful and meaningful as I wanted it to be. I found true harmony within the framework of a living educational theory methodology. (I will elaborate on this more a little later.) Now all I needed to do was find internal harmony and there was only one place to look that would reveal any authentic information.

Painter to Storyteller

Liz: “The shortest distance in the world is the one between you and yourself. The space in question is tiny. Yet what goes on in this little space determines nearly everything about the kind of person you are and about the kind of life you are living”. (O’Donohue, 2004a, p.135) For years, I have managed to exist without truly acknowledging this space, but I enter this space with the intention of getting to know it better and coming to understand it in a way that will bring authenticity and harmony to my being. I have always had information and knowledge about this space, but I don’t believe I truly understand it and to evolve into a more awakened state, I need to move from “information to transformation” (Hart, 2009). Thus it is critical that I fully understand this space and all the inherent relational dynamics so that I can have a better awareness of the space between me and my students, my subject, and my world. According to Hart, “[o]ne of the ways that information turns into knowledge occurs when we see a story in it. The tendency for reductionist thinking flattens the world into component parts. But stories re-member parts into patterned wholes” (Hart, 2009, p.8). I am going to tell stories from my past in an attempt to see patterns and discover the whole me, including the universally interconnected me.

By telling the stories that are part of my consciousness, I hope to understand how these experiences have informed my practice to date so that I can improve my practice. I will give my story a sense of existence from my own experience, get it out of my mind and make it concrete. (Manley-Casimir, personal communication, October 23, 2010)

Once I unveil the stories, I can examine them and look for the values, patterns and themes that are part of my lived experience.

The following story is an excerpt from the final assignment of a methodologies course I completed with Jackie Delong. I share this story with you now because it reveals the source of one of my most daunting living contradictions.

Narrative #1: Ungraduating

Not a single soul in my work environment knows I did not graduate from high school and the reason for that is not because I was ashamed of myself. No, I am more ashamed of the system and being a part of a system that would allow that to happen. I actually had enough credits to graduate, so it was a bit of a surprise when the call came, but in another sense, it was no surprise at all. The “system” had disappointed me my entire life, why should it be any different as I was preparing to finally leave? So, here we go, the story of “Liz’s Ungraduating” (apparently ungraduating isn’t a word—here it sits in front of me underlined in the all-too familiar red—but it sure is a reality for me.)

Liz, telephone call for you.

Hello, this is Liz.

Hi Liz, this is Mr. Disappointing; I have some bad news for you.

Oh?

Yes, it seems that Mr. Doesn’t have a clue how to engage students, was disappointed in your performance and absenteeism in his class and has decided to take a half a mark off for everyday you missed, which means you fail the course and no longer have enough credits to graduate. (Silence)

Oh.

Were you planning on attending the graduation ceremony?

Yes, of course I was. And my family is coming too and I had a dress made especially for the event.

Well, you are welcome to join in the informal celebration, but you will not be able to come to the official graduation where we hand out diplomas, as we won't have a diploma to give you.

Oh.

I am very sorry, Liz.

Yeah, me too. Sure would have been good to know about this sooner.

You and your family are welcome to come to the informal celebration.

Yeah, you mentioned that. (Stubborn me is thinking...screw you and your useless system, I am coming to the party. You will not have the last word.) We'll be there.

As I write this now, tears are rolling down my cheeks and I feel sick inside; I feel like a frightened little girl. I don't know that little girl and I am thinking it is time I got to know her. I need to find her and tell her everything is going to be okay—in fact, everything is okay. I never felt this way at the time and this certainly needs some reflection, but I will save that for later, when I don't feel so nauseous. I need to let it resonate for a while and then I will deconstruct it as the numbness dissipates. Have I really numbed this for 32 years? Wow! What else have I not allowed myself to really experience? Perhaps this is the first time in my life that I am ready to truly deal with this and other issues. Trust in the....

(A woman springs forth from her seat and begins to applaud. Liz stops speaking, everyone turns in the direction of the applause.)

Christina Baldwin: Bravo and congratulations. I am so sorry to interrupt, but I just had to applaud your courage.

As long as we share our stories, as long as our stories reveal our strengths and vulnerabilities to each other, we reinvigorate our understanding and tolerance for the quirks of personality that in other circumstances would drive us apart. (2005, p. 18)

My name is ...

(Anam interrupts Christina)

Anam: Please allow me the honour, Christina. Ladies and gentleman it is my pleasure to present Christina Baldwin, author, teacher, keynote speaker, learner, listener and best of all, “Storycatcher.” Christina’s passion for story has re-energized modern culture. Please Christina, continue while we listen with the “ear of our heart” (Baldwin, 2005, p.27).

Christina: Thank you Anam. It is very obvious this is a unique gathering. You have all created a wonderful story space with words and images and energy.

(Christina takes a deep breath and slowly exhales...)

“Speaking and listening become like meditation. Our whole way of being with one another subtly shifts: we become the ear in the heart” – we become one. (p. 27).

When I listen to Liz tell her story, I can feel her silent pain and I am reminded of a quote by Marian Wright Edelman that I included in my book: “Learn to become quiet enough to hear the sound of the genuine within yourself so that you can hear it in others.”

(p.28). What a wonderful gift she will bring to the learners in her care and what a creative space she has invited us into today.

In the act of telling story, we relate a world we invite others into. And in the act of listening to story, we accept an invitation into experiences that are not our own, although they seem to be. Story weaves a sense of familiarity (p.7). I am not the least bit surprised that Liz has discovered her values in her stories, “Embedded in the narrative of our lives are common human values, impulses, and longings” (p. 12). By sharing her stories, Liz is allowing us to see our values too. By sharing her strengths *and* her vulnerabilities, she helps us to see our own and the “Other” experiences with more clarity and compassion. This is how we can begin to heal, individually and collectively.

The stakes are high. Those who would control the ear in the heart understand that if people truly discover each other, we will make a million circles and sit own and laugh or cry at our commonalties. And then we will not be so easily led to fight wars. We will not so unconsciously exploit other people’s lives in order to make our own lives more comfortable. We will not be confused by the manipulation of half-truths and lies. Story is a huge component in what we will make of the world. (p. 33)

But I have said enough, I come here today to be a “storycatcher” and I believe Liz has another story to share.

Liz: I do Christina, but I could listen to you all day; the way you share story and the history and value of story makes me think nothing else really matters. I do have another story to share and I know how much work you have done in promoting journal

writing, so I know you will appreciate that I could not tell my story until I wrote it down first.

Writing the “Ungraduating” story made me realize there were many more stories I needed to uncover. As I tell this story over and over again (that was more than a little difficult) and reframe it into something that is more realistic, I realize why I felt so vulnerable for so many years and did not feel worthy of my teaching position. Not only did I feel shame, I felt more shame because I felt shame. I finally understood how fear of disclosure was inhibiting my ability to be authentic and therefore preventing me from creating the ideal learning environment for the learners in my care. Storytelling allowed me to heal and find my self-worth again.

In all the reading, course work and professional development I have completed, I was never able to see myself in the text or even imagine seeing myself in the text. Since learning about living educational theory and generating my own theory, I now appreciate the importance of examining my values, in my lived experiences, in order to improve my practice. However, as valuable as the theory is, I am not convinced that someone would embrace it or even consider it as a valuable methodology unless he/she had the opportunity to live it.

I was fortunate in that I had it modeled for me (thank you, Dr. Jacqueline Delong) and I was in the perfect space to begin a transformative journey. The trust, respect and love that Jackie modeled in the classroom enabled me to take both academic and personal risks. It became quite apparent to me that I was being loved into learning and I was not sure how to deal with the love offered even though it looked a lot like the love I offered my own students. Why am I not worthy of what I offer my own students? I am. I just

never expected it because I had never experienced it before in an educational setting. These are people with authority and power; can they be trusted? Why not? They offer exactly what I offer students and I expect my students to trust me. If I have a difficult time accepting that my professors believe in me and love me, why would it be any different for my students, especially the hard to reach students like me? Are we not all worthy of love?

As I re-read the ungraduating story now, I know that the reason I became a teacher is so that I could make a difference for students, especially the students who did not experience a sense of belonging and worthiness. I have always known that a large part of my motivation was because I did not have a positive school experience, but it isn't until now that I am making the connection to a sense of belonging and worthiness. Taking the time to reflect on this now "opens the door to a richer perception that transforms information, and along with it, the self who perceives" (Hart, 2009, p. 83). If I am feeling less than worthy then it is possible, if not probable, that as I interact with the learners in my care that I am conveying my sense of unworthiness, contradicting the values I want to espouse. I need to love myself so I can love more fully. What is it that I am afraid of? The question I had ignored surfaces again, but this time I write my way through the question, share my writing, identify my values, reflect on the writing and the feedback and then *act*. I search out the other stories that darken my soul. I will share the story that darkened my soul now and by doing so, I bring light into a space where only darkness resided. I could not do this without you—the Other; thank you for creating the space for light to filter in and heal.

Narrative #2- Facing My Fears

The Call

On Saturday, April 9th, 2005 at about 7:00 p.m., I received a phone call from my youngest brother, Doug, who had the horrible task of calling to tell me that our brother Norm had just been killed by electrocution at work—one day after his forty-third birthday and eight months before he was to be wed. This is horrific news for any family, but it is especially difficult for my family to process as we had already suffered a tragic loss when the youngest of my siblings, Kathleen, was killed in a car accident a week before her seventeenth birthday on October 19th, 1986. Although eighteen years seems like a long time, when I received Doug's call and the life-changing news, and today, it seems like it was only yesterday that Kathleen died.

All of the memories of our first loss came flooding back and I knew this was going to be a hell of a journey, but deep inside, I also knew we would get through it. However, the thoughts that consistently made it to the forefront of my mind made me feel physically, emotionally, psychologically and spiritually ill. How can I possibly look my parents in the eye and not feel their pain? How much pain can one person endure? How will we ever fill the gap the loss of my brother created? We are a close family and managed to endure our first loss and I know we will live through this one, but it is going to hurt for a long time. What irreparable damage will be done in the meantime? Are the marriages and relationships in the family strong enough to survive? How will this affect the children? Norm was a special uncle. Since he did not have his own children, he had very unique relationships with all of his nieces and nephews. My daughter, Michaela,

called him “comfy uncle” as she was always riding on his shoulders or cuddled in with him on the sofa. Dylan, my middle son, lived a life full of childhood innocence. In his mind, the courageous and adventurous Uncle Norm would always be there. The week before Norm died, Dylan and Norm spent time bonding in the garage as they shared their drumming skills with each other pounding out their own rhythms to the latest rock ‘n roll radio hits. How can I tell him he will never see his uncle again—no more drumming, bike rides, hikes, chats, drives...no more anything, only memories. Who will fill that gap now that he is gone? Even as the call came in, Daniel, our eldest child, (born six months after my sister Kathleen died, which gave us all the courage to laugh and love again) was ready to be the grown up, to take charge of the situation, something no seventeen year old should have to do. How can we explain this loss to our children? How can we protect them from the imminent pain? How can we help them make sense of a world riddled with violence and crime and then a good and decent man who did plenty for others, even on a global scale, gets electrocuted and falls to his death?

At Norm’s Celebration of Life, my father referred to Norm as generous to a fault. Why does a good and kind man who always put others before himself die before he gets a chance to live the life he always dreamed of with a wife and family? How can I explain this to my children? How can I convince them that the values we have always tried to instill in them are the values they should continue to hold dear? How can I convince others when I am not so sure myself? I know we will get through this, but I also know it is going to be painful and lengthy. I am not sure I have the energy to persevere, but I must, we must. My husband, Leo, will be a pillar of strength, I know he will, but he too has suffered a great loss. He too has lost a brother (people often confused Leo for one of

the McGhee, my family name, boys because they are all so close). Where will we get the strength and support to live through this without losing our wholeness? These are the thoughts, concerns and questions with which I recall being overwhelmed. But I was not alone in my feelings of doubt, loss and fear. Friends and family came from Scotland, Ireland, United States, British Columbia, Nova Scotia, and one group of previous co-workers chartered a bus—Norm touched the hearts of many.

Merely Managing

I had a very supportive administrator at this time and he knew that this was a very traumatic situation for my family and encouraged me to take some extra time before returning to the classroom. Unable to think very clearly for myself at the time, I followed the advice of this caring administrator and took an extra week off work, which allowed me to drive my Scottish cousins to the airport and to see my brother and his wife off as they returned to Bellingham, Washington to try to piece their lives back together.

There was a two-hour wait at the airport after seeing the cousins off and waiting for my brother and his wife to arrive (we had to take two vehicles to the airport as we couldn't all fit into one). I was passing the time with a friend of Norm's who had also come to see everyone off. As we were sipping our tea and making light conversation, I mentioned the extreme discomfort in my neck and shoulders and the fact that I could barely turn my head to do a shoulder check before crossing lanes on the highway. My companion suggested I go for a massage as we waited for the next group to arrive. Again, not being able to think very clearly and anticipating the relief I might experience after a massage, I decided it would be a good idea. Just a few minutes away from where my brother would be arriving was the very service I was seeking. Within minutes, I was

escorted to a private room that was decorated with calming colours and soothing sounds designed to enhance relaxation.

Immediately, I felt at ease. I completed the necessary paperwork, clearly identifying the areas of concern (my neck and shoulders) and listed recent stress as the cause of my discomfort. I removed my outer garments and climbed on to the massage table under the heated blanket awaiting the gentle pressure and muscle manipulation that would alleviate my aches and pains and begin the journey back to physical health and wholeness—I'll take care of the body first and then I'll work on the mind. Finally, after two weeks of numbness, I began breathing deeply and imagining my way to a healthier physical state.

A knock on the door and the registered massage therapist enters, he was on-call and I had to wait for him to arrive from another location where he practiced massage therapy for re-habilitation patients. After a few questions were answered about the kind of pain I was experiencing and the location of the pain, my massage began.

Almost immediately, I felt something wasn't right. This guy kept asking me questions even after I made it very obvious that I did not want to chat and I certainly didn't want to divulge any more information about the source of my stress. I wanted him to concentrate on relieving the tension in my muscles and just let me enjoy the soothing music, but he persisted with his incessant chatter and questioning. I learned far more than I cared to hear about his family and their great accomplishments—I just was not in the mood to celebrate someone else's good fortune and so finally when he asked again why I was so tense and stressed out, I told him, hoping that he would realize I needed some peace and quiet. Unfortunately, my confession had the opposite effect. Instead of

recognizing my need for some relaxation, this man took advantage of my vulnerability and sexually assaulted me.

I left that place in a state of shock. Like a zombie, I paid my bill and left—I even left a tip! All I could think of was that my brother would be arriving any minute and if he found out what had just happened, his reaction could be devastating, and certainly not something that will enhance his return to wholeness. We had all suffered so much and now this. I must do everything I can to make sure no one else has to suffer anymore and so I said nothing, even barely admitting to myself what had just happened. It was so surreal, but a part of me knew it was real and even somewhat familiar.

The entire event was complicated by the fact that this was not the first time in my life I had been sexually assaulted. Just like the death of my brother brought back all the horrific memories of the death of my sister, this episode created an onslaught of disturbing memories and images from an incident that took place twenty-five years earlier. In comparison, this assault was far less severe, but that didn't seem to make a difference in my mind—it remembered everything like it was yesterday.

I survived the first assault because I felt fortunate to be alive. When the predator snuck up behind me and wrapped his hands around my throat squeezing the life out of me, I thought for sure he was simply going to murder me—I truly believed that I was going to die within moments. I remember thinking, “Well, here I come God”. When I realized that it was not my life this man sought, I felt relieved. I was strangely grateful that he had decided to spare my life and so anything else that happened to me that night seemed tolerable.

Several weeks later, while having lunch with a friend, I realized that sitting at the table right next to me with his wife and another couple was the man who assaulted me. I also realized that he had recognized me and was trying to expedite the group's departure. I left my table and went to the public phone (pre-cell phone days) and tried to call the officer who was in charge of my case. Unfortunately, the officer was not on duty until the next day. I did not feel I had the energy or desire to try and explain the situation to another officer, so with no other apparent recourse I went back to my table and watched the man beside me squirm in discomfort until he managed to convince his party to leave. As soon as he left, I felt a sense of panic and knew that I had to do something to try to stop this guy from committing any more heinous crimes. Although my friend may have suspected something was up, nothing was said as my friends and family who were aware of what I had recently endured expected me to act irrationally and did not question any unusual behaviour. I told my friend we had to leave and proceeded to follow the two couples at a safe distance. I watched them get into a car and took note of the plate number and finished my walk home saying the number over and over in my head until I was alone and could write it down.

As I lay in bed that night, not even attempting to close my eyes, hundreds of scenarios ran through my head as I anxiously waited for the sun to come up so I could call the officer in charge.

Two weeks after my report, following the information revealed by the license plate, I learned that the local officer had to consult with police in another jurisdiction and when they finally contacted my attacker, his wife provided an alibi—certainly not one of the scenarios I had imagined—so no further action was taken. The officer tried to

reassure me saying that my actions resulted in a “yellow flag” for this man and it is unlikely that he would be back in our area and his local police detachment are now aware of the accusation against him. Somehow, I did not feel very assured. I was and still am one hundred percent positive that this is the man who attacked me and because his wife (who might be an abused or oppressed woman) says he was with her all night, my word means nothing. After much anxiety and emotional torture, I decide that I must simply let this go, so I can move on with my life.

Ten years later, I see the man again with his wife and the same couple. They were in town to partake in a celebration that involved wandering the closed streets—an activity that would keep them engaged for a couple of hours at least. This time I decide to take matters into my own hands and quickly review my options. I want to say something to this man, to his wife, but I am afraid to approach them on my own. I went home and woke my husband who had just finished working a night shift. Together, we went out and searched for my attacker but to no avail—perhaps this was a blessing. Was I looking for closure, justice, and revenge...or was I simply trying to face my fears?

The death of my brother, combined with my lived experiences prior to this tragedy, and the assault that took place immediately after, including the process of reporting the spa assault (I could remain silent no longer), finally came together in a nightmare dream.

The Dreamsong

One night, shortly after my brother died, I awoke from a terrible dream. As I lay in bed, shivering and sweating simultaneously, I tried to recall the details of my dream with the hope of finding some insight. I remember feeling like a snake was engulfing

me. The snake was huge, dark and eerily moving about inside of me. As it crawled upwards, it became longer and wider, slowly filling every ounce of my being. It was like I was reliving the dream only this time it was real. The snake was exhaustion, anger, rage, terror and hopelessness—all coming together in a life form intent on possessing me.

I watched the snake slowly creep up suddenly realizing that its goal was to consume my entire body. It was then that I had an existential epiphany—I could simply lay back and permit the snake to consume me or I could fight back. I spent the next few minutes garnering all the energy and will power I could as I planned my retaliation.

I imagined a golden light seeping in through the top of my head washing away all the fear and anxiety. As the light touched the skin of the snake, the snake began to dissipate. Slowly, gently, the light filtered down, through my torso and limbs, washing away the snake that threatened to consume me.

My Lost Love

I now believe it was at that very moment that I realized I had been living in fear—fear of death, loss, tragedy, pain, suffering, disappointment, mistakes, perceptions, judgment, and loneliness—and decided I was not going to live in fear any longer.

Shortly thereafter, I wrote this song entitled Norm's Song. "We can find the love our hearts long for but not until we let go of grief about the love we lost..." (hooks, p.x) Writing Norm's song enabled me to love again and with less inhibition. I will share a link to this song with you as quite often when I share it people ask for a copy of it. Usually, you can simply click on the link and the free file sharing web site opens with the song and all you have to do is press play. If you have any trouble, another option is to copy and paste the link into the url bar on your browser.

http://www.4shared.com/audio/lQcdF_12/Norms_Song.html (Campbell, 2006)

(Goodbye, adios, arrivederci, au revoir, farewell, cheerio.

No matter the language, the words are foreign to my soul.

No matter how I say it, feel it and think it, I can't let go.

Give me back the moment when this I did not know.

Goodbye, farewell, adios.

I feel no pain as I do when I am sane,

But crazy with sadness, no hurt can remain.

It lurks and it lingers, fills up my veins

But your memories give joy, hope will sustain.

The tears are warm but they wash away the present.

There are rivers inside me waiting for the moment.

They drown me, they change me, they challenge my dement

But the memory of your embrace protects me from this torment.

So many moments and so many days place you all around me everywhere I stray.

You're in my past, my present, my future, every day.

I thank you for all that you shared from your laughter to your pain.

*I miss you, I love you, I wish you the peace that you showed to all in your own
special way.*

Goodbye, adios, arrivederci, au revoir, farewell and cheerio.

No matter the language, the words are foreign to my soul.

No matter how I say it, I feel it, I think it, I can't let you go.

Give me back the moment when this I did not know.

Goodbye, farewell, adios.

Give me back the moment when this I did not know.

Goodbye, farewell, adios.)

My son, Daniel, wrote the music, plays the guitar and provides backup vocal, my husband, Leo, is the lead vocal, my Dad, who is no longer with us, plays the snare drum, our dear friend Byron Harris mixed the song, and many other musical friends contributed music and vocals—heartfelt gratitude to all of them for helping me re-claim my passion by sharing theirs. The creative act of putting my grief into words enabled me to let go of grief and to begin the search for the love my heart longed for and needed to blossom.

Taking Attendance —Who Is Present?

It is clear to me now, after much reflection, writing, painting and sharing that it took over a year for me to process all that happened. How did I function during that year, what kind of a teacher, mother, wife, daughter, and friend was I? How did these events change me and my perceptions and values? These are questions that arise now as I reflect on this experience and I am not sure I will ever be able to answer them, but perhaps I don't need to. Perhaps acknowledging them is enough.

Be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves. Do not now seek the answers, which cannot be given you because

you would not be able to live them. And the point is to live everything. Live the questions. (Rilke, n.d.)

I am learning to live in the present moment and I hope this will enhance how I interact with the learners in my care. I believe all of my experiences influenced my decision to leave the classroom, but it is only now that I am beginning to understand exactly how and why I changed. Life is too unpredictable to postpone dreams; now is the time for action. What have I got to lose? I know I could be dead tomorrow, so I had better make today count. I am not afraid, anymore. I will try not to let fear be an obstacle in my life. I will love again. This is the clarity I received after the tragic loss of my brother. Although my brother's death was certainly a tipping point in my life, I now believe that all my previous experiences played a part in the fear that prevented me from living my values more fully.

Letting Go and Moving Forward

Understanding and accepting the role of fear in my life has been quite liberating. Being the eldest of five and raised in a family where stoicism, resilience and perseverance are cherished, I don't think I allowed myself to wallow in fear, but I wonder if this was more avoidance than resilience and if a little acknowledgement of the reality might have enhanced my ability to learn from the experiences, instead of shutting them out. Perhaps then I would have found a more balanced harmony within.

Story is both the great revealer and concealer. There is the story of what gets said, and the story of what remains unsaid. There is the story that covers up story. There is the blanket of silence thrown over secrets, like people putting sheets on the furniture when leaving home. It's all still there, the shape of the lamp, the length of

the sofa, the arrangement of things on the coffee table, just cloaked, and in many ways revealed more definitively by the attempt to hide, the desire to protect.

(Baldwin, 2005, p. 17)

James Pennebaker at the University of Texas in Austin did research that proved what many of us already knew: story heals. Pennebaker proved that the act of writing, beyond its mental and spiritual benefits and organizational promises raise the T cell level in the bloodstream (Baldwin, 2005, p. 42). Storycatchers know story has the power to open the heart, even if the mind does not change. Story is empathy in action between people.

Anam: (With the love and compassion of a thousand souls, Anam gazes into Liz's eyes trying to take away any residual hurt and pain and convey to Liz how much she is loved and how the courage and compassion in her stories is also helping others to heal.)
Liz, this is very difficult for you isn't it?

(Liz, glances at the floor, shuffles her feet and nods.)

Anam: Fear is a negative emotion that can be very destructive and many of us have been raised to avoid and suppress negative emotions and seek the opposite—happiness, peace and joy. However, although we may crave eternal bliss in our daily lives, most of us live in a space where there is tension between the positive and negative. Until we learn to coexist with this tension, we often succumb to the effects of negative emotions and are sometimes considered less for doing so. “A negative experience is often regarded as unnatural, a personal affront or failure” (Goldstein & Kornfield, 1997, p.7). Indeed many of us prefer happiness to suffering, but I wonder whether or not our

inability to face fears and give ourselves permission to navigate through the fear in our life actually causes more conflict and pain.

By realizing that, as interdependent expression of this wonderful incomprehensible thing called life, we too, the physical body and the process of thought, are subject to its natural laws, most particularly the laws of polarity, positive and negative, impermanence and change, we come to understand our experiences differently. In an awareness of the present, of how things are, it can be much easier to be one's own person and manage the present situation effectively. (Goldstein & Kornfield, 1997, p. 10)

That would certainly explain the physical, mental, emotional and psychological suffering you experienced. My friends Goldstein and Kornfield (1997) claim that “[a] consequence of this way of thinking is that habitual thought patterns are divorced from a deeper level of intuitive understanding: an understanding which recognizes and accepts its interdependent connection with the rest of nature” (p. 10). Perhaps this would explain your lack of a sense of belonging in the past and your current need to find connectedness, wonder and awe in all that you are and do.

Fear can be a useful guide—it announces dangers that we should heed. But fear can also paralyze us. For decades, educators have allowed fear to keep the spiritual dimension out of schools. “If we can acknowledge this fear and listen carefully to its guidance, perhaps we can also examine our paralysis, respectfully engage our differences, and strive to find some new areas of common ground” (Kessler, 2000, p. 161).

Recognizing that fear is the foundation of all that inhibits us is a powerful insight that can lead to transformation of self and to transformation of community. If Kessler is

correct, and I believe she is, and it is fear that is preventing educators from embracing and advocating spirituality in education, then there is hope. If we can first learn to acknowledge and live with our own fears, like you have clearly demonstrated Liz, then we will be better positioned to examine and combat our collective fear.

Liz: True. I do feel transformed now, but it was not an easy journey. At times, I even doubted my memory and I remember reading Geertz explain the value of narrative inquiry, in spite of its limitations, as the ability to compile

“hindsight accounts of the connectedness of things that seem to have happened: pieced-together patternings, after the fact” and “... how particular events and unique occasions...can be woven together, with a variety of facts and a battery of interpretations to produce a sense of how things go, have been going, and are likely to go” (as cited in Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 6)

The “pieced-together patternings” have enabled me to weave a new understanding. I understand that “ungraduating” caused me to feel shame and guilt and not simply as I indicated in my narrative (being embarrassed by an institution that would enable “ungraduating”), but because I was afraid I was not good enough to be a teacher—this was my shame. The fact that I became a teacher and did not feel worthy of this accomplishment because I did not graduate from high school caused me to feel guilty. In order for me to live (essentially exist and function) with this guilt and shame, and the fear of being “found out,” I had to embrace the dance of denial. This insight never occurred to me until I forced myself to examine my values and looked for evidence of those values in my stories. Now that I am aware of how fear played a role in my personal paralysis and I am willing to embrace vulnerability and make my values public, I believe I can live my

values of love and joy more fully because I know how to keep fear on the sidelines in my life. When fear moves closer, I think I will recognize it, acknowledge it and co-exist with it until I feel safe enough to move out of that space. I have a better understanding of how to find harmony in sorrow and joy. In essence, I am learning to live life more fully in both the darkness and the light. By living more authentically, I hope that my educational influence will help others to have the courage to face their fears and embrace vulnerability.

Christina Baldwin: Liz, “[N]otice the delicate web of witness that is woven between us when we listen to each other with the ear of the heart” (2005, p.44). I believe your shared stories have made you an exceptional storycatcher. “Storycatchers know story has the power to open the heart, even if the mind does not change. Story is empathy in action between people” (p. 46). Your appreciation for vulnerability and your authentic and honest approach will help you to structure a safe space for storycatching with the learners in your care.

Anam: Christina not only hears the truth with exceptionality, she also speaks it equally well. Liz, you have learned to live the way of the artist. You create communicative and transformative experiences for yourself and others. Even if you had never painted, you would still be an extraordinary artist—you create.

Liz: (A little uncomfortable with the comments from Anam and Christina, but knowing that she needs to celebrate what she does well, makes eye contact with each of them and with a gentle nod, acknowledges their statements. Feeling much more confident, she walks over to the last set of easels and turns to the audience.)

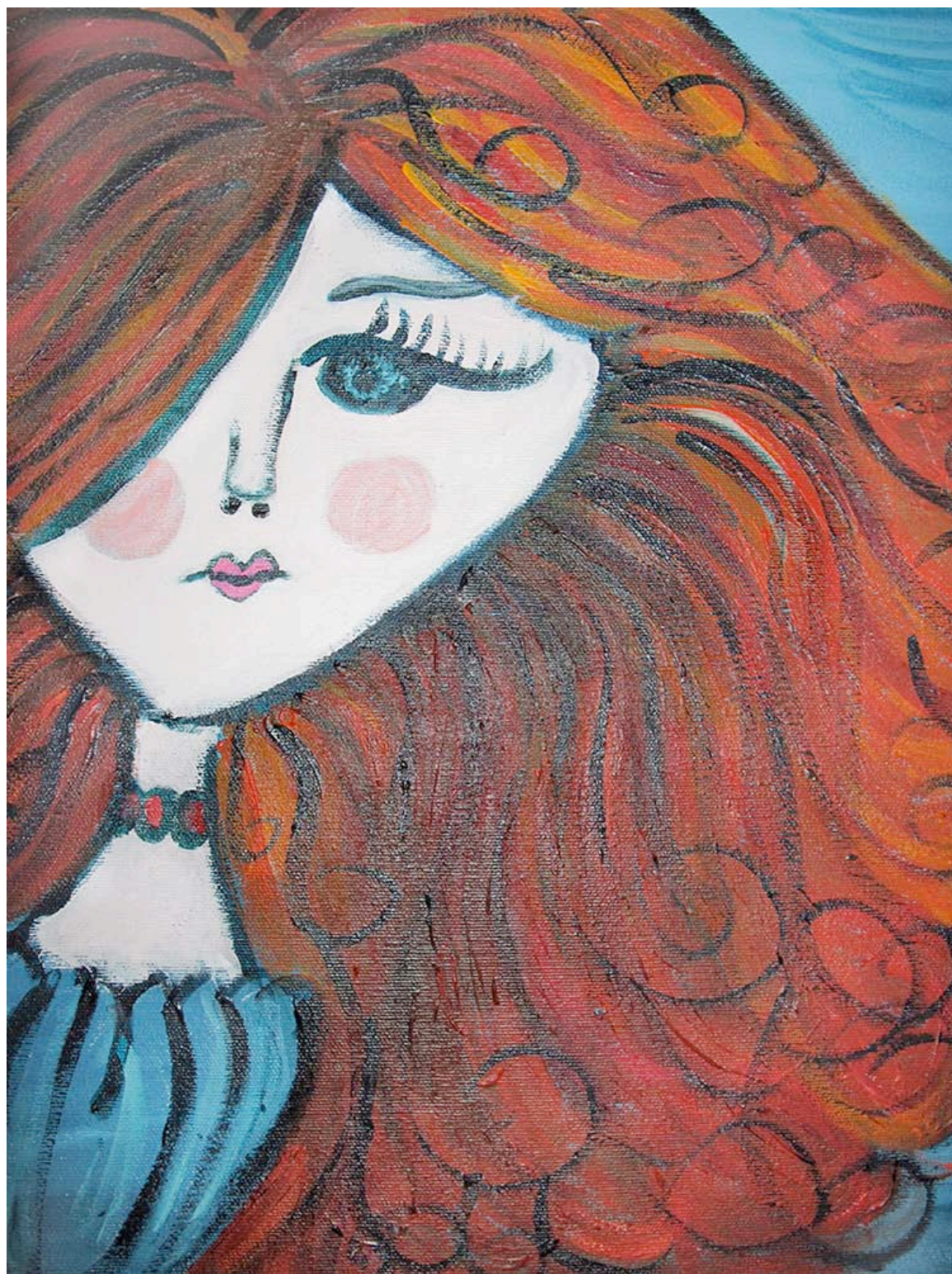
The process of painting helped me to identify and live my values even when the paintings were not a success. The next painting, an example of this, is called “Broken Guitar.” I am also going to unveil the painting that I did shortly after this one to provide juxtaposition. I will say no more but remind you as you contemplate the paintings to consider your thoughts and feelings and to try and remember what the paintings remind you of or what kinds of feelings are aroused as you ponder them.

(Liz leans toward the easels and gently removes the covers while Anam sounds the meditation bells. The very attentive audience who has been listening with “the ear of the heart” turn their attention to the next two paintings. See figures 5 and 6)

Figure 5: “Broken Guitar”



Figure 6: “My Redhead”



Liz: I painted “Broken Guitar” in between writing and sharing narratives. Even though I found the writing process quite cathartic, it was difficult to relive the experiences and with each narrative I wrote and shared, I relived the experience. Then when I shared my written stories with my critical friends and eventually shared the “Ungraduating” story orally with a group of students and, eventually, my peers, I found it easier and easier to re-live the stories. When I stopped worrying about the perception of others and simply concentrated on being more authentic and true to my values of love and joy, I was not afraid any more. As I lived my values, I found they were enough—enough of everything that I needed to give me the confidence to be myself and to be true to myself. However, whenever I doubted myself, I found it quite easy to slip back into the living contradiction mode. Living my values was going to take some serious practice and getting used to.

“Broken Guitar,” my only unfinished painting is an example of this. I began by trying to capture an image that was in my mind and a feeling that was in my heart. I felt that I was progressing well. Then I took my painting to a studio (where my friends and I were invited to come and share in the joy of painting) and shared my work in progress with more accomplished artists. When asked if I wanted feedback, I eagerly accepted. Seeing that I was having difficulty processing the suggestions, another artist asked if it was okay to paint on my canvas. In my heart I was thinking “No,” but my voice said “Yes.” I have never been able to re-visit that painting since. It is not so much the actual painting that disturbs me, but the symbol of my insecurity and inability to speak from my heart that bothers me. It is a reminder of the power that others can have over us if we

allow them. I abandoned that painting, just like I had abandoned my heart and now I have it as a reminder to never let someone overpower my voice again.

The next painting “My Redhead”, which is a borrowed idea, is a representation of my return to authenticity and my willingness to seek support and inspiration from others when needed. I wanted to paint something for my beautiful, strong-willed, redhead daughter. I wanted to do something fun, playful and joyful. Something that would tell her I love her. I began by looking at paintings on the Internet and I found one by an artist named Renee Buchanan. It was exactly what I was looking for as there was an opportunity to play with colour and I felt confident I could create a reasonable facsimile of the image.

I thoroughly enjoyed creating this gift for my daughter; it was a joyful experience of expressing my love through art. She was equally pleased to receive it. “My Redhead” has earned a place of prominence in her apartment. It is the first thing you see when you step in. So you see, attending to my values of love and joy brought me and others more love and joy--quite the juxtaposition to “Broken Guitar.”

Anam: How wonderful for you and for us Liz. It seems that art has allowed you to find your lost voice and has awakened your soul. When you called me prior to this exhibition you told me you wanted to begin a revolution of your mind by searching within and I can clearly see that you have done that. I can relate to many of the feelings you shared, but additionally, I saw different things in your art and know that this is because I bring a unique experience to the art and therefore the relationship I have with your work is also unique. Your shared narratives and art give you a voice, but in that

voice I can imagine my own as well. This is very inviting and powerful; it is spiritually fulfilling. Your search from within is helping us all to move forward.

As Nagler (2009) claims, the key to moving toward solutions is to begin by searching within: “overconsumption, be it food or fuel, is not a problem that legislators can solve for us by passing laws. It arises from a deep spiritual emptiness that can never be filled by anything outside us, anything that we try to consume” (p.3). Moreover, Goldstein and Kornfield (1997) claim that the current crisis will not change simply because of a change in government or a new economic initiative. These are superficial solutions and the source of these problems “is prejudice and fear in the human heart—and their solution also lies in the human heart” (p.4). You have shared your human heart with us and together we can forge a way through this crisis.

~

Much research is compiled and literature written on the topic of how we arrived at this threshold, but we need to realize that we are here and and move on in a more enlightened way. Parker Palmer, in a forward in Rachel Kessler’s (2000) book entitled *The Soul of Education*, refers to the 20th century as “the century of thin soup” because it is the historical moment “in which we watered down our own humanity—turning wisdom into information, community into consumerism, politics into manipulation, destiny into DNA” (p.v). O’Donohue (2004b) claims that, “[i]n a sense, all the contemporary crises can be reduced to a crisis about beauty” (p.3). Miller (2007) asserts that our problems are due to environmental, social, self, and mythological fragmentation. We are disconnected from the world that surrounds us, the people in this world, including the self, and our shared stories. All of this fragmentation exists on a personal level, as well as a local and

global scale. Suffice it to say the consensus is that many of us feel we have evolved into a state of crisis: challenging times, indeed, but not hopeless; nonetheless, one that warrants serious attention and action. Nagler (2009) provides a clear and succinct definition of the problem:

A spiritual crisis occurs when a people (a civilization or a culture) finds itself trapped in an outmoded, suffocating network of values and conceptions, in a worldview, a “creed outworn,” that has become too small to allow people to get on with their cultural evolution. If that people does not shed its constricting vision—a process that we cannot expect to be without pain and struggle—it will die, culturally and perhaps literally as well.... Such is the potential for chaos and violent upheaval in the present crisis, and it grows greater the longer we put off its conscious resolution. (pp.5-6)

Although there is an impending sense of urgency, it took decades for us to get into this predicament and it will take time to find our way out. Time along with patience and commitment, courage and collaborative creativity will hopefully enable us to embark on this journey with renewed knowledge of our values and the compassion and intuitiveness to commit to this wise journey. The spiritual crisis Nagler (2005) and O’Donohue (2004a, 2004b) refer to is not specifically aligned with education, but Kessler (2000) and Miller (2000, 2007) and others are examining this crisis specifically within the framework of education . The indicators of the crisis that Nagler highlights are the very same triggers that have affected education and caused the recent onslaught of educational reform, which like other mandated policy, has not been the expected catalyst for improvement. In the absence of an effective external solution, we must turn to the

internal. Throughout history, there have been numerous crises of varying types and sizes, but this is a crisis unlike any we have experienced thus far, as it is independent of materialism, governance and legislation; it is a being crisis. However, that is the positive and negative—the reality is a paradox, but that very paradox presents an opportunity for new beginnings. In this particular crisis, the beginning of the end is inherent in the problem, so we don't need to look beyond our own being to find a place to begin.

Liz, your research recognizes the dynamic and changing nature of the process of learning, especially reflecting on learning. Although it has been a valuable journey for you to gain insight into self, others, context, and relations, as you indicate it is challenging and demands a new approach and as such has warranted the generation of creative phrases to try and capture the difficulties and inherent value. Marcus and Fischer call this an “experimental moment” (as cited in Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 177) and also note that Denzin and Lincoln (2000), who name the present time of inquiry “the fifth moment” (2000, p.5). Transformational learning is the kind that changes people's values. It is inherently a moral activity, and the most powerful tools to enable it are reflection and adduction: reflecting to find the meaning of a learning experience, and adduction to bring that meaning into future action through knowing and values (Andrews, 2004, p. 40).

Your creative phrase “Journey to the Otherway” is exactly this—an opportunity for you to embrace the moral activity of examining your lived experiences to find, reflect on, articulate, and act on your values. It is obviously a difficult and rewarding journey.

Liz: When I am in a learning situation, I feel the most alive, awakened and engaged and I feel that my life is purposeful and meaningful. Yes, sometimes the

situations are intense, uncomfortable and quite often the most rewarding. If I can determine how to live a more meaningful and purposeful life by living my values more fully, then I can assist others in discovering a more purposeful and meaningful life, which will enable me to live more passionately and authentically. This is the spiritual life that I imagine for myself; this life will allow the soulful me to unfold and, ultimately, die in peace. “And what is the purpose of life if it is not meaningful preparation for the end of life--death?” (Journal entry, April 28th, 2006)

(Sensing Liz’s exhaustion, Anam dims the lights and invites the audience to reflect in silence for a few minutes. Anam takes an empty seat and invites Liz to do the same. The entire group sits for several minutes in complete silence. Even in silence, there is an energy in the room that reaches into the depths comforting the soul and bringing stillness and peace, reassurance and hope to all willing to receive this gift. After several minutes, Anam slowly rises and quietly walks to the light switch and while turning up the lights speaks to the audience in a gentle and calm voice.)

Chapter Four: Art the “Otherway”

Anam: I hope you can all feel the “life affirming energy” (Whitehead, 1989) in this room. Even in the darkness and silence, love resonates all around and through us. Liz has openly shared her love with us by opening her heart to us and by doing so invites us to see and speak to our own hearts.

It is possible to speak with our heart directly. Most ancient cultures know this. We can actually converse with our heart as if it were a good friend. In modern life we have become so busy with our daily affairs and thoughts that we have lost this essential art of taking time to converse with our heart.” (Kornfield, as cited in hooks, 2001, p. xiii)

It takes an artist to accomplish such a feat—to speak to hearts and we are in the presence of many artists today. Whatever our medium of choice, we can create art by first opening ourselves to the possibility, letting go of our inhibitions--our fears, and then acting when the moment is right. Our acts will all differ, but they will be art, nonetheless, when they are guided by spiritual imagination for the betterment of humankind. There may never be a product, but that is not an excuse to abandon the process. Your process has been fascinating and beautiful to witness Liz and I believe your next installment captures that part of your journey. Before we unveil the next piece of art, perhaps you could give us a little background about the role of reflection in your research.

Liz: With pleasure! I could talk about reflection all night. In fact, that was my initial research topic and then I decided that before I started to give advice on how to reflect and the value of reflection, I had better live the process. I had an intuitive understanding that becoming a more reflective practitioner would enhance my practice,

but, honestly, I had no idea how powerful it actually is or how much my practice and my life would change and be enhanced.

Mirror, Mirror On the Wall

“To teach is to express self” (Bullough & Gitlin, 2001, p. 41). We can enhance our ability to reach our students by first knowing who we are. We can only express our true self if we know who that is. We can only get to this place of understanding by first learning to trust ourselves. And we can only do this if we are involved in trusting relationships inside and outside of the educational environment.

Trust has never been an obstacle in my relationships with my family (i.e. parents, siblings, husband and children), but it has always been an issue and obstacle in the education system, as previously alluded to and explained. However, as I began to trust my peers and professors in our Master’s of Education cohort, I slowly developed the courage, confidence and eventual trust to begin a meaningful reflection-action cycle. Next, I began to use video as a reflection tool as I captured, constructed and deconstructed my living educational theory (more on this later.) Through reflection in a trusting community, I have come to a deeper and richer understanding of myself and if teaching is expressing one’s self, as I believe it is (as is authentic living), then the more aware I am of the self I am expressing the more able I am to have authentic relationships and educational experiences.

Too many educators feel exhausted and overwhelmed; they are “living contradictions” (McNiff, 2007). Often in this stagnant, sterile or stressful environment our creativity is stifled and complacency, mediocrity and incompetency can creep in and cause harm and worse yet, permanent damage. Many teachers understand this and try to

create ideal learning environments for students, but when it comes to our own learning, we dishonour the process and do a great disservice by trying to be expedient or because of a lack of genuine trust in the process and, therefore, a lack of authenticity. I have experienced this myself and witnessed it in my colleagues as they shared their stories of victory and ruin in our validation groups.

In addition to educators feeling fatigued and overwhelmed and generally dissatisfied, too many students fail or feel unsuccessful or have negative school experiences. We need to do more than create a culture where “an apprenticeship of observation” is the norm. (Lortie, as cited in Bullough & Gitlin, 2001, p. 41) We have an ethical and moral duty to create environments where all students are empowered to experience success. This obligation cannot be met simply by following provincial mandates in the form of policy, no matter how well intentioned, or by studying the latest theories, no matter how well researched, but by conducting our own research based on our unique experiences of our educational practice because we are unique and interacting with unique individuals in a unique context—the learners in our care.

An essential component for this type of inquiry is purposeful, focused reflection. Ghaye and Ghaye (1998) have written extensively about the reflective practice and the reflective practitioner. They have created a working document that can guide research practitioners through the reflection process in a way that makes reflection explicit and may create opportunities for understanding self in a way that will create knowledge and improve practice for the benefit of students and teachers alike.

Reflection-on-practice also helps teachers make wise and principled decisions. It is about developing teachers’ self-knowledge, the ability to “see through”

teaching situations and understand the meaning of what is happening in their classroom and school. Engaging in the process of reflection is about admitting that practice can always be improved in some way.... Reflection-on-practice is not just about learning from experience in a private and solitary way; it is about knowledge production that has the potential to enlighten and empower teachers. In this sense, it is a creative process. (Ghaye & Ghaye, 1998, p. 3)

Reflective practitioners need to learn various methods for reflection and practice explicitly until it becomes implicit—this is how we will internalize this creative process. We need to purposefully build it in to our daily schedule until it becomes a “habit of mind” (Earl & Katz, 2006). We need to reawaken our understanding of the inner self and the connectedness that makes teaching personal and initiates a process of discovery for both the educator and the learner. We have a wealth of knowledge and experience but until we examine that knowledge and experience with strategies that help to deconstruct our embodied knowledge, and share our thoughts, ideas and theories with critical friends, thus testing the validity of our theories, we are only reflecting in isolation and not likely to make a contribution to the knowledge base. Simply put, learning is complex, and at times, it is difficult and controversial, but it is also framed in beauty and when we seek to see the spark of knowing and/or understanding in a learner’s eye, we are in search of the beautiful. O’Donohue (2004b) lyrically describes beauty in all aspects of our lives.

Like the farmer in spring, we turn over a new furrow in the unlive field. We awaken our passion to live and are no longer afraid of the unknown, for even the darkest night has a core of twilight. We recover within us some of the native integrity that wild places enjoy outside. We learn to befriend our complexity and

see the dance of opposition within us not as a negative or destructive thing but as an invitation to a creative adventure. The true beauty of a person glimmers like a slow twilight where the full force of each colour comes alive and yet blends with the others to create new light. (p. 19)

There is a tension and vulnerability in learning that can inspire or overwhelm even the most audacious scholar (research practitioners and students alike) and it is during the struggle of this tension, the juxtaposition of certainty and uncertainty, when new ideas can emerge. In order to be able to visit and eventually coexist in this space, we must be able to trust the process and ourselves. The first step that we have to take is beginning with ourselves and giving permission for the parts to unite and become whole again. This will, in turn, allow transformative learning to unfold within and create the space and time for us to nurture each other and ourselves through the transformative experience.

My goal is to create ideal learning environments for the learners in my care where they can experience spiritual growth, so I must be willing and able to cultivate my own spiritual growth. So I must begin with myself. The learning theories that are relevant for the students we teach are equally relevant and applicable for all educational practitioners seeking to improve their practice. Parker Palmer (2007) echoes this sentiment when he claims that for teachers to address the spiritual development of students, they must simultaneously cultivate their own: “Deep speaks to deep” (p.31).

When we realize the potential we have to affect each other in an educational environment, then we truly recognize the responsibility that rests with us. However, I propose that it is more than a responsibility, duty or even professional obligation; rather

it is my ontology—my way of being, and it is the only way I can Be if I want to live an authentic life.

I know this made sound a bit gloomy to some, but I am now more prepared to die than ever before and because of this I am able to live more fully—more authentically. I think the best way for me to explain this to you is share some video clips. They are not paintings, but the making, selecting, and editing of clips, as well as the dialogues captured in the clips, are creative acts of hope. These creative endeavours enable me to generate, organize and internalize my living educational theory so that I can share it and test the validity of the theory and hold myself accountable to my theory. Whitehead notes that a living theory methodology includes:

the unique contribution of an individual's methodological inventiveness in the creation of a living theory, rather than referring to some overarching set of principles to which each individual's methodology has to conform, in an impositional sense of the word. There are however distinguishing qualities of a living theory methodology that include 'I' as a living contradiction, the use of action reflection cycles, the use of procedures of personal and social validation and the inclusion of a life-affirming energy with values as explanatory principles of educational influence. (Whitehead, 2008, p.9)

Using video as a values research tool enables me to identify and articulate my living contradictions and my explanatory principles, make use of the action reflection cycle with a digital recording, and validate my values through reviewing and reflecting on my video footage individually and with my critical friends. In addition to hearing the spoken word, video enables me to see myself in action, which helps me to see when my

actions do not align with my values. But it also enables me to see and have a permanent record of when I am living according to my values. When I am interacting with the learners in my care and living according to my values--Whitehead calls these energy flowing values (1989), you can see the life affirming energy.

The idea of communal and/or collaborative learning places emphasis on the interplay between others and me or, as Whitehead states is relationally dynamic (Whitehead, 2011). I use Whitehead's term here because it also clarifies the idea of the changing and growing nature of the interaction(s). Even though I begin with a blank canvas, I have an idea in my mind of what I want to communicate, but during that communication process, my idea may change. As I give my ideas life, I am forced to examine and refine them. Sometimes this could mean abandoning them altogether or merely altering them. When the work of art is complete, it is a representation of an idea and/or experience in a particular time and space. If I did not have the freedom to select my own beginning (i.e., a paint by number set, a blank canvas, a wooden box...) or if I was forced to produce a painting that relied on one particular style, I might never have picked up a paintbrush and would forever be dependent on others to communicate my ideas. The living educational theory methodology enables me to discover my voice and to continue to develop that voice which, in the end, improves not only my educational practice but my life in general and, ideally, the lives of the learners in my care.

We learn who we are through our interactions with others. When those interactions take place in a purposefully created environment with willing, trustworthy participants who are intentionally seeking personal and professional growth, the opportunity for authentic and valid learning is enhanced. This is a place where reflective

practitioners come together with purpose and focus to test and share their reflections and actions. This is where our ideas are validated as we hold ourselves accountable to the values we espouse. I am blessed with a very dedicated group of critical friends (fondly called my beloved validators.) We have supported one another in a very exciting, challenging and rewarding journey. Together, by supporting one another, we each generated our own living educational theories. My journey would not have been the same without their dedication and love.

Also, I want to thank Jackie Delong for videotaping our presentations and conversations during the two courses she facilitated in the Master's program (in spite of the reluctance and resistance of many of us) and encouraging us to view the footage to look for evidence of our claims. The trusting relationship that developed with my peers and my instructors is what enabled me to become a reflective practitioner. We (myself and the other students in my class) have many reasons to justify our lack of ready willingness to use video, but fortunately for me, I was able to overcome my initial reluctance. I would like to share a short story about the very first time I used video to examine my practice.

Narrative Three: First Glance

Many years ago, I believe it was 1986, during the completion of my Bachelor of Education degree, I had to do a presentation to my peers and the instructor (a very wise and passionate educator) videotaped the presentation. Part of our assignment was to view the footage and complete a reflection. I remember framing my assignment around a quote about education as a process of indoctrination that was from the introduction in *The Golden Notebook*, a novel by Doris Lessing and I referenced another quote where

Lessing comments on the number of requests she gets from students seeking clarification and confirmation of their response to her work. Lessing tries to encourage students to appreciate their own interpretations and rely on their own experiences and judgments for meaning making. I no longer have a copy of the book, nor do I have a copy of my assignment, presentation or reflection (pre-personal computer days). What I recall about reflecting on the video is that although I was very, very nervous about delivering a lesson to my peers, my professor commended me on my calm and relaxed demeanour.

It was then that I realized I had the ability to project a completely different façade than what I was feeling inside. As I viewed the video, I also saw a calm and self-assured instructor delivering a challenging and controversial lesson. This gave me confidence to persevere in the field of education. If I could fool my peers, perhaps I could fool others as well, including myself. And so I did. The other thing I noticed in the video was that in spite of being slim and not very well endowed, it is always important for me to wear a bra. I did not have any mirrors at home, except the standard one that comes outfitted in every bathroom and so I rarely looked at myself in the mirror. This was the first time I saw my physical self as others saw me and it was enlightening. I can't help but wonder if there is a connection here to physical and mental reflection. Did I purposefully avoid looking at my physical reflection? What was I afraid of?

It would be interesting to view that video today and I intend to look for it. I have another creative project in mind for next year, but you should know that my motives are not strictly academic. You see, I am not the only one on that videotape....

At one time, the tape used to be housed in our cabinet with the other videotapes we have collected and/or purchased over the years, but I know it was moved to a "safer"

location because one day it was inadvertently returned to our local video store in place of a movie we had rented. I do recall feeling a little embarrassed thinking that folks at the store were viewing my video, but my embarrassment was very short lived when my husband returned from the store after exchanging the videotapes.

It turns out that they were not entertained by a young teacher-in-training, but instead were treated to a glimpse of the bedtime routine in the Campbell household. We had three children under four and at bath time it was not uncommon for one of us to join the children in the tub while the other parent stood on the sidelines collecting the children as they finished bathing and helped them to dry off and put their pajamas on in preparation for the much loved bedtime story. On this particular occasion, my husband was in the tub with the two boys and I was helping my daughter with the rest of her bedtime routine.

My youngest brother, single at the time and very much enjoying the role of “fun uncle,” was visiting and playing with his latest purchase—a new video camera and helped himself to using the remaining footage on my peer lesson tape. Naturally, he thought it was a great idea to capture some bathtub footage as there was always a great adventure in the tub as dinosaurs burst through the bubbly surface of the earth capsizing destroyers and leisure vessels, or complex science experiments were conducted to test the absorption rate of sponges and the resilience of bubbles, or when the children found their creative flow in the tub and the tiles became canvasses for the washable paint as they produced their own version of cave paintings, Egyptian hieroglyphics and modern art. However, in the enthusiasm of the moment, my brother did not realize he was also capturing my husband’s “manliness,” an image that did not go unnoticed by the giggling

young woman at the video store. Needless to say, my embarrassment of being seen in my bra-less days was overshadowed by my husband's cameo appearance in the bathtub scene.

The Search Continues

In spite of all of this, when I was reintroduced to the use of video as a medium for examining my practice, after a little encouragement, I embraced the opportunity. It was time I took a serious look at the woman in the mirror—I was finally ready. The following highlights the beginning of my journey to identify, represent and explain my values. I began the process of constructing and deconstructing my living educational theory by looking for examples of my values by examining video footage of presentations (one is a co-presentation with my colleague Karen Spragg). This is a short movie I made after spending a lot of time viewing and reviewing hours of videotape from presentations and discussions and includes snippets of footage that I believe captures the energy flowing values and life affirming energy (Whitehead, 1989) of my colleagues, myself, and the collective group. Later I will share more clips with you that represent my living educational theory in a later stage of development.

Capturing the Mirror Image



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XoUdefgTivw>

(The room erupts with laughter as the participants appreciate the humour in the video clip and are affected by the infectious nature of authentic laughter.)

Liz: In an effort to become a more effective reflective practitioner using Ghaye and Ghaye's (1998) text as a guide and putting into practice the action-reflection cycle in order to generate a living educational theory (Whitehead, 1989), I reviewed video footage, personal narratives, feedback on my narratives, reflections on my narratives in my journal, and other archives, all in search of evidence of my values. I found clear evidence of my values from the very beginning of my teaching career and I found many examples of the same values from different sources.

At this point I had an extensive collection of data including: student course evaluations, teacher appraisals, thank you cards from parents, colleagues and students, sample work from students, sample course outlines, assignments and evaluations from my philosophy classes, pictures of my students and family, a musical CD I was involved in creating, a copy of a Celebration of Life a colleague and I had been asked to organize and deliver, paintings and narratives, my journal and many other anecdotal and historical data. All of this data provided evidence of my values and I created a table to sort and organize them looking for themes and patterns. It didn't take long to identify an extensive list of values that I believed were important to me. However, it was not until I watched the video footage in the clip you just saw that I was finally convinced that I was in fact demonstrating these values on a regular basis. Seeing myself in action and seeing the reaction and response of others to my actions--my educational influence (Whitehead, 1989, 2000, 2008, 2011) and the ability to view these examples repeatedly helped me to finally identify, recognize and embrace the values that give my life meaning. This was extremely powerful and transformative for me.

At this point in the generation of my living educational theory, all the pieces started to come together and I realized I needed to create a visual to help me process and structure all I had discovered so that I could make a contribution to knowledge production and test my theory in a social formation. Ghaye and Ghaye (1998) explain the importance of reflection as knowledge production and as a creative and transformative process:

Reflection-on- practice is not just about learning from experience in a private and solitary way; it is about knowledge production that has the potential to enlighten and empower teachers. In this sense it is a creative process done by socially committed individuals and groups...It is much more than ‘just thinking about what you do’. It is about a blend of practice-with-principle. (p.3)

The *living wall* is my attempt to combine practice and principle in a creative way that will provide a template or strategy that may help or inspire other reflective practitioners to generate their own living educational theories (Whitehead, 1989)

The Living Wall

(Liz, smiling from ear to ear, and eyes sparkling with delight and joy turns to Anam and confidently nods. Anam reaches behind her and within moments, two large black curtains {which served as a backdrop for the Liz’s paintings} part at the center and very slowly reveal “The Living Wall”)

Figure 8: The Living Wall



The *Living Wall* is a physical representation of the internal (my thoughts) and external (my actions) me —the inner and outer “I” unfolding in time—my living educational theory (Whitehead, 1989). It serves many purposes from the very practical to the abstract. I started the wall because I felt an urgent need to organize my thoughts and the traditional structure offered by a Major Research Project outline was not working for me; in fact, the situation was actually worse than that because the suggested (and I am very fortunate that this was not required) structure actually hindered my thinking process and stifled my creativity. I could not work within this framework and I certainly felt a conflict with the suggested outline and the living educational theory methodology (Whitehead, 1989) I was using. I am certainly not suggesting that everyone would or should sense the conflict; simply that one existed for me. The nature of the living educational theory methodology is such that a traditional five-chapter outline might be the perfect structure for an individual if that is how their research unfolds. The structured outline was far too restrictive and prescriptive for me. It made me feel like I was being intentionally self-destructive as I forced myself into the corsetry of the system. I found myself looking for material to fit within the parameters and when I made my research fit, it seemed to lose something—I felt disfigured. My voice disappeared from the page and my ideas, which seemed to flow previously, now seemed stagnant and dull—the internal rhythm was hijacked.

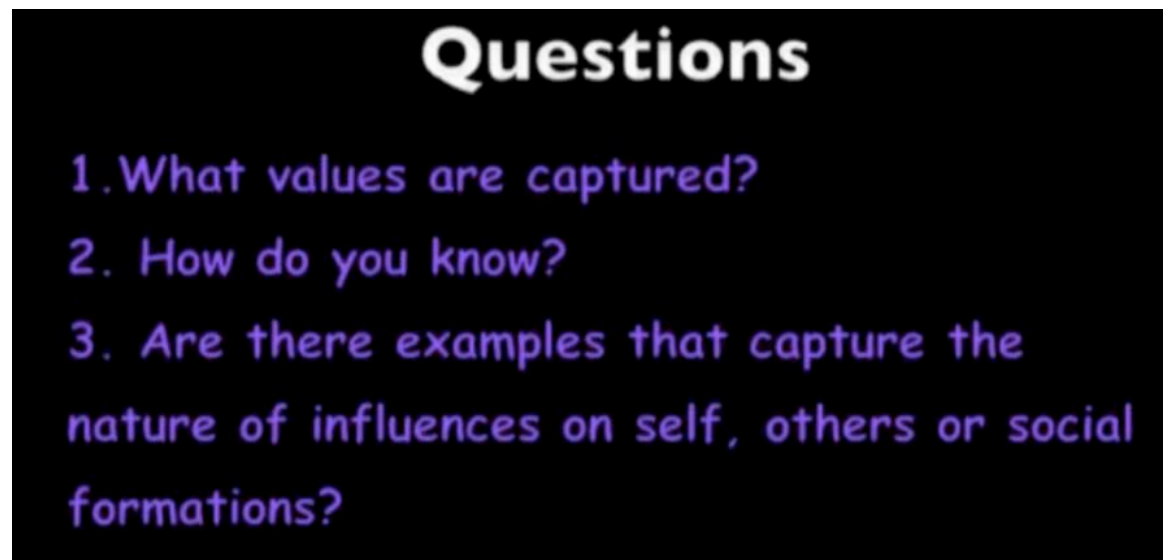
As Ghaye and Ghaye (1998) note, critics contest the use of values as worthy knowledge because of the difficulty in measuring values: “that which can be quantified and measured is what is deemed to be important and worthwhile to know” (p. 47). Other

criticisms include the inherent difficulty of determining common values and the inequalities that can arise from the imposition of values by dominant groups. “This kind of imposition of “alien” values on teachers and their work can lead to conflict or the reproduction of values which pop up and legitimise dominant groups” (p. 48). However, I concur with these authors when they claim that this is precisely why we need to reflect on our values and make them transparent so that we can openly critique them and if need be refine and/or redefine them.

Often this knowing remains rather unconscious.—a state of ‘dynamic equilibrium’. You do not become attached to one set of unchanging values, your values tend to move around and become modified, develop more experience and insight and as the contexts in which you work change. A sense that all our values are static and fixed entities may be far from our lived reality. Our values can and do change. (p. 36)

I would now like to share some video clips of the *living wall* with you that I hope will serve several purposes simultaneously. Although you will be hearing about the creation of my *living wall* which will also provide information about the generation of my living educational theory, you will also be witnessing my theory in action and at the same time you will hear my peers share their thoughts and ideas (which at times differ from mine) as they also generate their living educational theory. In addition, I am asking you to consider the questions asked at the end of the first video I showed you. I will provide a snapshot of that screen for your convenience (see figure 9).

Figure 9: Living Educational Theory Questions



(Anam, who has mysteriously been out of sight for a while stands up suddenly.)

Anam: I must interject here, Liz as I was speaking to a woman named Barbara Mann at the intermission who shared a brief description of her dissertation work and I think we would all benefit from hearing from her now. You will be pleased to know that she attended Four Arrows' conference as well. There she shared "Double wampum" which was the name of her story and is a spiritual principal and dual delivery system. Her story also captures the very creative use of humour in research and representation, while simultaneously addressing very challenging and controversial topics such as critical race theory and the problem of "ONE-thinking" (Four Arrows, 2008, p.42) but I will invite her to speak for herself.

(Anam looks toward Barbara and gestures for her to come to the front and speak.)

Barbara: Thank you Anam. It is my pleasure. First I would like to tell Liz that I appreciate the humour in her work.

The often scatological humour and sheer playfulness of Native American discourse—and particularly the sacred clowning that deflates pomposity—is something else that Europeans and their descendants shake disapproving fingers at. There is a sign somewhere in the constipated bowels of academia that reads: NO LAUGHING ALLOWED. (Four Arrows, 2008, pp.42-43)

I look forward to reading her PhD as I suspect it will be even more entertaining and full of humour as she becomes more comfortable with the sound of her own voice. I discovered my own voice when I unpacked the notion of “ONE-thinking” and discovered how to articulate and defend my “double-wampum format” which is probably why Anam asked me to speak. You are embracing the spiritual essence and dual delivery system of double-wampum which challenges the status-quo.

It finally dawned on me that Euro-Americans cannot see two of anything without assuming that one must be the deadly enemy of the other... This “ONE-thinking” as I call it is a direct reflection of the Manicheanism rampant in European and Euro-derived monotheisms. It is in profound conflict with the cooperative binaries of Native American cultures... The dissonance between Native and European ways of seeing is only compounded by the very unilinear Puritan sermon format shoved down the throats of American academics as the one, true form of discourse...(p.42)

However,

[b]ecause the cosmos exists by halves for us, (Mother Earth/Brother Sky), it is impossible to have one of anything before we first have two of something. That is, the One Good Mind of Consensus can emerge only after the two cosmic halves of Earth (Turtle/Water/Blood) and Sky (Wolf/Air/Breath) have joined in common discourse....This way, the cosmos is represented by being reproduced in human interactions.

To represent this principal in civic affairs, double-wampum messages were constructed. Wampum belts had messages knotted into both sides. (p.41)

Much like the video you are about to show us.

(Barbara looks over at Liz and smiles warmly nodding her head. Liz returns the warm smile and decides no more words are needed and selects play on the remote control to begin the clip.)



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HQrciLGbOwg>

Liz: As you can see, this creative endeavour is more like a collage than a painting. It is a mural of my mind and was born out of a need to create a visual representation of my thoughts and actions, and to capture the process of the generation of my living educational theory (Whitehead, 1989).

In this section I highlight that, although I try to be inviting I realize that when I hand out stickie notes to my peers and invite them to jot down thoughts and ideas to post

on the wall, I was trying to be encouraging and truly wanted them to engage in the interactive potential of the wall. However, I know that although my intentions were good in saying, “Whatever works,” this could be interpreted as “Liz doesn’t really care about our feedback” or may not provide enough information for them to actually know how to proceed. Flexibility and creativity are values that I try to embed in my educational practice as I want to create an environment where learners feel free to express themselves in a variety of forms. This particular footage is an example of a “living contradiction” as my values are not represented in my practice. If I was doing this again, I would either ask for suggestions or propose more options.

Another example of a “living contradiction” can be seen later when I am attempting to explain and describe my wall and my intention is to go through the process as it unfolded in real time. Just as I am getting started, Megan points out the pictures along the bottom of the wall (she is intrigued by them and obviously wants to talk about them) and instead of encouraging some discussion, I simply say “so the pictures along the bottom kind of show the process...” and then proceed with my own plan and begin to talk about the painting that I placed on the wall to represent the transformation process. Here was a perfect moment for me to create an opportunity for my peers to “freely and creatively appropriate my ideas in a way that affirms their own sense of creating themselves” but instead I push on with the agenda I had in mind. (Whitehead, 2001, p.10) That moment is now lost.

However, there are many other examples of energy flowing values as I describe and explain my values and my living educational theory. During these times highlighted with subtitles, you can see my educational influence as my beloved validators, also

known as the learners in my care, experience my life affirming energy and we are all affected by the life affirming energy of the collective group.

One example of this is Megan's passion for and valuing of creativity. Even when the camera is not pointed at her, you can hear the passion in her voice as she speaks freely and openly using language that is clear and precise and her thoughts flow freely as she speaks from her heart and her head (her lived experiences). When the camera is focused on Megan, you can see how animated and engaged she becomes as she speaks about art and the artist and conveys her interpretation of me as an artist. Her eyes light up and her body language, especially her facial expressions and hand gestures, emphasize what she is articulating and we all become completely entranced by her passion. Cathy's comments near the end of this section convey how the ideas in the conversation resonate with her and she openly shares a personal story about the creative experience. My reaction to the discussion, I am deeply moved and rendered somewhat speechless, shows the effect of Megan's and Cathy's "energy flowing values" on me—this is an example of empathetic resonance (DeLong & Whitehead, 2011).

Even as I watch the clip for the umpteenth time, I can feel the love and joy that was in the room that day and I catch myself smiling affectionately and recollecting with fondness the loving-kindness shared by all. This happens when I watch myself and although it is somewhat strange, it is also affirming and enlightening as I learn to accept and celebrate my passion and the values of love and joy essential to me and which inform my educational practice. Reviewing this footage enables me to become more aware of when I demonstrate these values and this will be as informative for improving my practice and understanding my educational influence as becoming more aware of the

times when I am a living contradiction. I find that deconstructing the video footage is very pleasing and invigorating work.

The next clip captures part of a lengthy discussion attempting to define hope. During this conversation, you can see various facial expressions, some that convey love and joy (genuine smiles and intense gazes) and others that convey authentic engagement and active listening. While listening to us trying to explain definitions of love, joy and especially hope, you can hear and see the sincere effort to speak honestly and openly, which is a clear indication of how we all value vulnerability and truthfulness and our ultimate desire to improve our practice.

This clip also reveals the importance of naming and defining our values. Our values are what define us and drive our educational practice. Even though collectively we have well over fifty years of educational practice and experience, we have difficulty clearly defining those values and even more difficulty coming to a consensus. Not that we need to have a consensus about how we define the values, as Megan indicates in the clip, but we do need to validate our ability to clearly communicate and articulate the definitions of our values. This is very interesting and certainly warrants more collaborative inquiry and is an indication of potentially meaningful professional development for educators in general. Obviously, if we are concerned about our educational influence, we need to know and articulate the values that form the basis of our educational theories.

You will notice that I showed you the first clip and then offered some explanation. This time I have provided some background information first and will play the clip for you now.

(Liz smiles out to the audience and presses play on the remote control.)



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wieDxc5fxPU>

Liz: Using a living educational theory methodology enables me to make use of methodological inventiveness to capture, investigate and articulate my values and experiences and to develop my own *living educational theory*. This methodology embraces the use of alternative research and video is one way to capture, explain and represent my lived experiences that represent this valid yet alternative way of knowing. I agree that it is difficult to measure if we resort to the traditional measuring tools of empirical, scientific ways of knowing. In order to measure a living educational theory, it is essential to consider alternative ways of measuring these alternative ways of knowing. Video has the potential to capture what I can't relay with words (at this particular junction in my writing career) and, in some cases, it can portray knowledge I am not even aware of yet. In addition, video provides another voice for layered reflection and evidence that is measureable; you can see and hear energy flowing values which enhance the ability to feel life affirming energy. To those who continue to question the validity of the living educational theory and the use of video to represent a living theory, I suggest while it is different and possibly challenging for some, it is possible to comprehend the value of video for improving practice and experience the validity of the living educational theory, especially if you experience it for yourself. Although I will demonstrate the value and validity as I deconstruct my own video footage, I highly

recommend that critics try the process in order to experience it first-hand before discounting the methodology or the theory.

In my own reflection process and to improve my practice, video is invaluable as a tool for layered reflection as I revisit my own presentations and /or interactions and examine them from a different perspective—although it is still me doing the examining, it is a different me because I have already had the experience of the presentation or the interaction and the thoughts and ideas that follow. Reviewing the video footage provides an opportunity to scrutinize the encounter to substantiate and/or revise both my epistemology and ontology and thus my living educational theory. Moreover, posting the video clips to a public sphere such as YouTube creates more potential for collaborative or communal inquiry and helps to make me accountable to the values I espouse. And until I have reached a state of bliss that no longer requires feedback to be maintained, I welcome every opportunity to grow and make a personal contribution to universal well-being which is why I am sharing the wall with you today.

This time, I will preface the clip with a few questions and share some information with you later. I would like you to consider the following as you view the clip:

1. Did you find yourself smiling, laughing or relating with empathy to anything you see or hear?
2. Try to be aware of your emotions as you view the clip. Can you identify any particular emotions?
3. Can you imagine yourself creating a living wall? What might it look like? Would it be random, structured, colourful or monochromatic? Would it include

pictures, images, graphs or charts? Can you think of any other uses for a similar wall?



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hTmGddBcQ7Y>

I have tried to demonstrate some of the challenges we face as educators in a classroom in meeting the needs of a diverse group of learners. Although the initial purpose of my wall was to help me organize my thoughts about my living educational theory, as I shared the wall with educators and non-educators, it grew into a much more complex and meaningful project. Eventually, I realized that it was not so much the information that the wall contains that is valuable, but the actual process of creating and sharing the wall might be more useful to others. The creation of the wall was invaluable for me in generating and understanding my living educational theory, but once this was completed (or as complete as something like this can ever be) I was reminded of something Christina Baldwin (2005) said about writing and story:

Writing has changed everything about how I live, though it's hard to say exactly how because I have no comparison self who doesn't write. Writing itself is the gift. Writing organizes the mind and the actions that lead from the mind. Over time, the decisions and choices we make in the rush of the moment are informed by the self-knowledge our story gives us. We learn that if we have practiced articulating our story, if we have honored the path to this moment by writing it down, the choices we make are congruent with who we say we are. This is one of

the primary promises of the story: it was true in oral form and remains even more true in written form. For in writing we live twice: once in the experience, and again in recording and reflecting upon our experience. (p.43).

The wall is my writing and my stories and through making it and sharing I have lived it many times. I do not need to live it again, but instead, offer it up as a tool or strategy that may help others to make sense of their story in order to live a more authentic life. I have already received the gift of my own writing. I now offer it to you as an unconditional gift.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE AUTHENTIC SEARCH

Liz: Well, I can see by your response and the radiant smiles on your faces that you see and feel the energy flowing values and the life affirming energy captured in the videos. This was also my response when I watched the clip—laughter is no doubt contagious, but I propose that the other values demonstrated are also contagious. Let me explain.

Reviewing the video footage generated in the validation sessions with my critical friends and reflecting on the *living wall*, which often felt like a form of meditation, enabled me to generate and internalize my living educational theory (Whitehead, 1989). Once I internalized this information, it became part of my very essence, almost every action, thought and decision was now considered in light of the values I had identified and shared. As indicated on my wall, I started out with an extensive list of values, namely, empathy, creativity, trust, compassion, freedom, inclusion, resilience, honesty, respect, justice, vulnerability, open-mindedness, passion, humour, relationships, flexibility, love, hope and joy. I ended up reducing the list to two values: love and joy, and eventually added hope as a third. After much feedback and reflection, I determined that love and joy captured all of the other values and if I just focused on living my values of love and joy more fully I would also enhance my ability to live all of my values more fully. Now that I had my list condensed to something more manageable and I had shared these values with my critical friends, my peers, my friends outside of education and my family, it was time to start putting my values into action. For me, this meant more than responding to situations and queries with more love and joy, but actively seeking out opportunities to share and practice those values.

LOVE AND JOY

I began this journey into more authentic living by creating an electronic email signature (inspired by Jack Whitehead's electronic signature that ends, "Love, Jack") that explained my enlightened state and will help me be accountable to what I espouse, it reads:

"Love & Joy,

Liz

(After many years of teaching, two years of focused reading, reflecting and writing, and new-found courage, inspiration and support, I have decided to create an electronic signature for my emails that captures the essence of my teaching philosophy and more importantly, my authentic self. In doing so I hope to enhance my accountability and truly wish you, my peers in the learning journey, love and joy.)" (Personal email, 2010)

In my current role as a system lead teacher at a board of education, I send out and respond to an average of fifty emails a day. I communicate with teachers and administrators in every secondary school in our board, community partners in two counties, and Ministry of Education officers in Toronto. In addition, my portfolio includes acting as a board representative on three different regional committees that include communicating with both educators from other boards in both secondary and post-secondary institutions, and community partners--people outside of education. Every email I send or respond to includes my new signature.

The response has been quite interesting from no comment to people actually changing their own signatures, some did so immediately and others took more time.

Some have changed their electronic signature to “Love” and their name while others simply sign their emails to me “Love” followed by their name. In all instances what has happened is that an interesting and engaging, and possibly transformative dialogue has ensued. Everyone I work with is now aware of my desire to live according to my values of love and joy. Simply knowing they are aware of this and having the desire to live my values more fully makes me more accountable. This actually enables me to achieve my goal. Again, I am reminded of O’Donohue’s story of the resonating harp. Simply sharing my desire to be more loving and joyful creates more love and joy, which then encourages and inspires me to continue living my values more fully.

Another example of acting in accordance with my values occurred when I attended an Ontario Teachers’ Federation Symposium (C4 for the 21st Century) on May 6th, 2011. We just heard an engaging presentation from Professor Dennis Shirley on the “Ethic of Care”. Dennis is a professor at Boston College. He is an internationally renowned speaker and author of many books who delivers an engaging message of hope and invites educators to become “mindful teachers” who help reshape our educational institutions with a “culture of care.” I was completely engaged with the presentation Dr. Shirley shared with us; he even dared to use terms like spiritual and soul. However, throughout the entire talk, I was waiting for him to mention love and he did not; *not once*. I found this somewhat discomfoting as I believed he was in a perfect position to do so. The “ethic of care” he advocated was more than care; he was talking about love. His evidence was unquestionable and his stories rich, relevant and authentic. He had the full attention of the entire audience, which was comprised of a cross section of educators from all over the province and country from all levels of schooling, including post-

secondary institutions, Ministry of Education representatives, Teacher Federation representatives from all federations, Ontario College of Teacher representatives, student trustee representatives and parent council representatives.

When he finished speaking, the audience was invited to make comments or pose questions. I was having an internal dialogue with my heart and mind debating whether to ask him a question and in the end my desire to live my values fully won. The entire session was videotaped and I sent a request for a copy of that section of the transcript or video so that I could share the original dialogue, but I never received a response. Essentially, I commended Dr. Shirley on an enlightening and engaging presentation and I noted that he referenced “ethic of care” several times throughout the presentation. I then asked him why he did not call it an ethic of love. He paused for a moment and then said that in all the talks over many years that he has given, he has never been asked that question and said he would have to think about it. I smiled and said thank you and returned to my seat. Then he said I suppose it is a cultural thing, many cultures have different ideas about the concept of love and then he said we will have to reclaim a definition of love.

To the best of my recollection this is how the conversation unfolded. Eventually, the audio and/or video will make an appearance in cyberspace and I will be able to get the exact words. However, the exact wording is not as important as the fact that Dennis Shirley truly appreciated the question and he is giving it some serious thought. In addition, many people approached me later and thanked me for posing the question and we engaged in meaningful dialogue about reclaiming a definition of love. We spoke of how as educators we need to openly dialogue about the love we have and share with the

learners in our care. It is a very simple but powerful question and now there is at least one person from each of the groups I mentioned earlier who may also be thinking about the question. If the question did not resonate with someone this time, perhaps it will the next time someone asks a similar question. What I do know is that asking the question was the right thing to do.

(There is a stir of excitement in the audience and gentle whisperings turn into excited buzzing.)

SOULFUL TUNING

Liz: It seems that what I am saying is resonating with some of you now. Perhaps there is someone who would like to share an experience or story?

Ah, it is one of my beloved validators, Cathy. I am so honoured you could be here today. You have accompanied on me on this journey from the beginning and provided much inspiration always already. Please, share with us.

Cathy: What you are describing reminds me of when my actions resonate with my values. There is an observable intensity and energy in my voice that can create a ripple effect. Kessler (2000) describes soul in a similar way. She says when soul, I read life-affirming energy, is present the quality of attention shifts and

we listen with great care not only to what people say but to the message between the words – tones, gestures, the flicker of feeling across the face. And then we concentrate on what has heart and meaning. The yearning, wonder, wisdom, fear, and confusion of [people] become central” (p. x).

When my thought patterns and my actions are aligned with my values, the pure tone of my soul can be heard and it resonates with others authentically. When we talk

about doing something with passion, often it is a sign that we are in tune with our true self. In this instance, “the use of passion emphasises the uncontrollable ‘tingling’ of joy and excitement that consumes the body at this time. The body is ‘telling’ the person that their consciousness, their inner freedom, has put them on the right path towards their true self” (Branson, 2009, p.68). I feel that tingling now as what you are describing resonates with me and the sensations I have experienced. (Griffin, personal communication, 2011)

Liz: Exactly, Cathy. What a beautiful way to describe something that at times seems difficult to describe and measure, but you have captured it perfectly. I really appreciate the phrase “pure tone of my soul.” Jack Whitehead (2007) in an effort to describe the connection between values and energy refers to Vasilyuk's insights:

Although a value as a content of consciousness does not initially possess any energy, as the inner development of the personality proceeds the value can borrow energy from motives operative in reality, so that eventually the value develops from a content of consciousness into a content of life, and itself acquires the force of a real motive...This transformation of a value from a primary motive into a real, perceptible motivational force is accompanied by an energy metamorphosis which is hard to explain. Having once become a real motive, a value suddenly proves to possess a mighty charge of energy, a potential, which cannot be accounted for by all the borrowings it may have made in the course of its evolution. One supposition that may be advanced to explain this is that when a value becomes truly part of life it is 'switched in' to the energies of the supra-individual entity to which that value links the individual. (p.1)

As I started living my values of love and joy, they seemed to take on a life of their own exploding exponentially, like striking oil in a virgin well, or the surge and energy of flood gates opening. As Vasilyuk states, it is difficult to know exactly how to “account for all the borrowings” as the influences are many and layered but as my motives increase, which seems to be happening on a daily basis now, so does the energy in my values.

Although I hesitated slightly about asking Dennis Shirley why he uses the word care and not love (this was the first time I spoke about love to such a large, diverse and somewhat intimidating group), I no longer hesitate. The more I live according to my values, the easier it gets and my life is more authentic and rewarding. I know that there will be times when the situation is more challenging and perhaps politically charged or otherwise intimidating, but I look forward to the opportunity to challenge the status quo because I know three things: I am not alone, the learners in my care will benefit, and my life is more meaningful when I act in accordance with my values.

It is certainly true that the more structured and less complicated quantitative study or literature review seemed more appealing than the exhaustive and messy work of taking an honest look at my lived experiences and deconstructing them to discover and examine my values to determine if and when I was living according to those values. Part of the challenge in a close examination of my lived values is knowing I am likely to discover times when I am not being authentic and that realization along with the inferred notion of change can be daunting. Another difficulty exists in knowing that although the reflective process is simple, it is not simplistic—it has no fixed end and no “right” answer. However, one of the insights I have gleaned from my research is that you cannot go back.

Once I discover who I really am and what my values are, I cannot discount that information, even if I wanted to, without subjecting myself to psychological suicide.

Hosting this interactive art exhibition is another example of being true to my values. My research does not fit the standard / traditional outline, but I could not resort to a living contradiction (Whitehead, 1989) mode to make it fit just for the sake of expediency as that would render all of my research worthless and superficial. Since my ultimate goal is to live more authentically for the greater good and my research is not worthless or superficial, the option of succumbing to the pressure to be a living contradiction simply would not do. At this moment, I realized that making this process more explicit might be of value for others. If I truly value methodological inventiveness (Dadds & Hart, 2001) and the living educational theory methodology and theory (Whitehead, 1989), why not consider making my theory and methodology more explicit so that others might benefit from my learning and in the process. I would find a way to organize my thoughts for myself and create a model of purposeful reflection. In essence, I would be living my values more authentically and this certainly appealed to me.

Zeichner and Liston describe a reflective teacher as one who:

- examines, frames and attempts to solve the dilemmas of classroom practice,
- is aware of and questions the assumptions and values he or she brings to teaching,
- is attentive to the institutional and cultural contexts in which he or she teaches,

- takes part in curriculum development and is involved in school change efforts,
- takes responsibility for his or her own professional development. (as cited in Ghaye & Ghaye, 1998, p. 58)

Examining my own practice to uncover the assumptions and values while being sensitive to the current climate enables me to be an agent of change and simultaneously construct my own learning and make myself more accountable. I now find myself revitalized, engaged, and energized and my research is meaningful and by making it public there is also a possibility of making a valuable contribution to action research and the alternative research movement.

Although reflection and, especially reflection on values, seems fairly straightforward it is, in fact, quite complex. Because of its complexity, purposeful, focused and systematic reflection has the potential to be so transformative and a valuable and worthwhile activity. Not only can reflection improve my practice as an educational practitioner, but it can enhance my overall life by creating opportunities for enhanced self-awareness and for developing an inquiry habit of mind (Earl & Katz, 2006) where inquiry and questioning inform my ability to have the best possible educational influence. This creates a space for individual and community transformation as we are empowered by the realization that “we create this environment and we can change it.” (Ghaye & Ghaye, 1998, p. 6) This potential gives me hope and enables me to carry that hope to the learners in my care.

I have shared with you the explanatory principles of my living educational theory through my creative acts of hope—personal narratives, quotation selections, reflections,

video clips, paintings and so on—with the hope of providing inspiration or a possible model for other researchers to follow or adapt. Although the writing, painting, compiling, researching, editing and sharing has been a transformative experience for me, the pieces I have chosen to share have been selected with great care and consideration of the other.

Anam: I believe that it is quite obvious that your intentions are honourable, Liz. I know that you expressed some concern to me about which pieces to include so that you could provide an authentic representation of your journey and I believe you have done so. Your concern about appearing too caught up in self-help therapy is unfounded. Your initial apprehension to share a story that could be considered over-dramatizing or sensationalizing your experiences is completely negated by witnessing you share your values with authenticity and hope. “Simply offering the experiences might be interpreted as self-serving or sensationalism, but by uncovering the struggle to improve through reflecting on the experiences, you evaluate their sharing to the level of educational.” (Griffin, personal communication, July, 2011). To this end, you are providing individual, your own included and communal transformation. I know that you are still uncomfortable discussing your educational influence in a public forum and I understand that you appreciate the other in the fullest sense of the term, but it is through your creative courage that other practitioners might recognize their educational influence. You are providing opportunities for empathetic resonance (DeLong & Whitehead, 2011) and this is what will help create the paradigm shift you long for. I believe your next piece of art is an example of empathetic resonance, wouldn’t you agree?

Signed Weezie

Liz: Yes, Anam, I agree and you are correct that my next painting represents this. While I know that discussing and explaining my educational influence is important for a variety of reasons (acknowledging the power of the sacred act of teaching, critiquing my practice with the intention of improving it, and creating a space for other researchers to recognize and articulate their influence) it still doesn't feel right to me. I am comfortable with Jack Whitehead's explanation of influence:

You will see that I focus attention on the idea of influence rather than causation.

This is because of my fascination with our lives of intention. I see living educational theories being grounded in the conscious lived experience of individuals who are intentional and imaginative with creative capabilities.

Because of these qualities I cannot say that I have educated anyone other than myself. (2008, p. 14)

I can confidently say that I have educated myself and I have influenced some, but I have had such a rich and layered journey that it gets very difficult to determine the origin of an influence or even begin to know another well enough to interpret the experience of the Other.

This journey is like a very delicate and beautifully complex and intricate web. There is a sense of mystery in the web and too close an examination could jeopardize its delicate balance. Just imagine if I incorrectly identify what I think is an act that may have influenced someone and either I am mistaken. Or perhaps I am not mistaken, but the recipient of my influence is not ready to recognize that influence. This could have a

potentially devastating effect on someone. Is it worth it? I do not think so. I am inclined to think that the act of influencing is enough. People will figure out eventually, or possibly not if they don't engage in purposeful, focused reflection, what has influenced them. Certainly when one's influence is obvious, which most likely occurs when another freely identifies that influence, then it would be safe to discuss that influence. And yes, I do act with the intention of influencing, so I am obliged to examine that influence to determine if I am having the kind of influence I intend and determine if it is a healthy and positive influence for the betterment of humankind. Yet I still believe it is more authentic to allow this to happen naturally—trust in the process. Trying to identify and name the influence, while it could provide valuable information, could also be harmful. If someone shares with me that he/she has experienced a positive educational influence through an interaction with me, and this has happened many, many times in the last two years as I live my values of love and joy more fully, the moment I receive this information, then that person is having an educational influence on me. I do not mean to be so loquacious or philosophical, but perhaps I could make this clearer by sharing my next painting.

(Liz crosses the floor, scratching her head, and stands for a moment in quiet facing her painting before she unveils it. She is wondering why things got so complicated all of a sudden and she is sensing a painting growing in her mind. She recalls with great satisfaction the inherent reward of the painting before her. She turns to the audience and gently, but swiftly removes the fabric covering as the meditation bells ring. See figure 9.)

Figure 9: Signed Weezie



Liz: This painting is called, “Signed Weezie.” Weezie is a nickname my brother Norm gave to me. This is the first painting I have ever signed. I never thought of any of this until after I had finished and signed the painting. The painting was born out of a combination of events. I was experiencing great joy or “empathetic resonance” (DeLong & Whitehead, 2010) as a result of sharing my values and living more authentically. Sardello explains empathetic resonance as “the resonance of the individual’s soul coming into resonance with the Soul of the World.” (as cited in Whitehead, 2010, p.1). This is exactly how I felt at this junction in my journey—the interconnectedness that was missing as I began this journey was recreated with bonds that felt unbreakable. Like Whitehead, I do not equate any religious commitment to my understanding of empathetic resonance, but I do believe it as very much a spiritual concept and event. I also appreciate Whitehead’s explanation of empathetic resonance “to communicate a feeling of the immediate presence of the other in expressing the living values that other experiences as giving meaning and purpose to their life” (Whitehead, 2010, p.1). This is how I want to interact with the learners in my care; this is how I can have the best possible educational influence and this is how my life will also have meaning and purpose. However, I was quickly and harshly reminded of the fact that there are many who operate from a different set of values and standards and sometimes those people can be the most vocal.

On this particular day, I seemed to be surrounded with people who were either all having really bad days or because I was in such a joyful state facing the opposite seemed more daunting than it actually was. Or perhaps I was just experiencing an unusual amount of negativity and destruction—an anomaly. Whatever the reason, I was indirectly involved, simply because I shared the same space, with people who were

conversing about students and/or colleagues with intense bitterness, resentment and anger. After the first occurrence, I moved to another space and a very similar situation was taking place only this time it was one particular student who was the target. Again, I moved to another space and again, I could overhear more anger and negativity than I had heard in a long time. At that moment, in slight state of shock, I decided that I needed to find a place to be alone and figure out what to do. The situation is a bit complicated and very difficult to explain without breaching confidentiality, so I will ask you to trust me that there was very little I could do at the time, but I have since come up with a strategy that will allow me to put my values into practice should I find myself in a similar situation. And, unfortunately, I am quite sure I will.

By the time I got home that day, I was feeling exhausted to the point that I felt physically ill. I entered my home and headed straight upstairs to the room that housed my *living wall*. Here I sat for a few moments contemplating my wall and staring back in big bright letters were the words love, joy and hope. After an intense conversation with my heart, I decided to paint and I painted my way right back into my values. I was thinking about my son's upcoming marriage and thought that perhaps if this painting had any aesthetic appeal, I would offer it as one of the draw prizes for his upcoming "Stag and Doe." (A cultural tradition in our area open to all friends and family of the bride and groom who gather and celebrate prior to the wedding. Quite often, it is also an opportunity to raise some funds to help the bride and groom offset the costs of setting up a home—hence the draws.) I received very positive feedback from friends and family in response to my painting and many were excited that it would be part of the raffle prizes and hoped they had a chance to win the painting. I was quite moved by the genuine

pleasure my painting brought to others, but nothing prepared me for the reaction of the bride and groom to be.

Ashley and Daniel asked to speak to me in private. We moved into the room where my painting stood perched on the easel. They looked at me and one of them, I cannot recall now, asked if it would be okay if they didn't include my art in the raffle. Thinking that they simply didn't want the painting included because it wasn't very "good" and also that it must have been difficult for them to say this as they are both generous and kind, I quickly responded, "Oh sure, no problem..." But before I could finish, they said in unison, "We want to keep it." Now you need to know that my future daughter-in-law is a very talented, gifted, experienced artist and they are going to be living in a small apartment and they want to take my very large painting with them. I was speechless. There was a moment of silence when we just looked into each other's eyes...That was empathetic resonance.

After a very moving moment, and I honestly can't recall how long or what else took place immediately thereafter, we had an engaging discussion about the painting. Both of them shared their interpretations and I was touched again. The painting spoke and they understood. They recognized the tension and the bursting forth of love when tension is sought, acknowledged and embraced. They appreciated the womb of protection for the sacred love and the womb that will give birth to more love. Their statements clearly identified the reaching up and beyond to tap into the life affirming energy that surrounds all of us and is there if we purposefully seek it out and accept it and they understand that when it is not, we need to create a space for it. Sometimes this means finding your voice, venturing down difficult and challenging paths and exposing your

vulnerability. Most importantly, they saw each other in the painting and they felt my energy flowing values of love and joy. Because of them and their reaction to that particular painting, I decided to show my work in an exhibition. This again is empathetic resonance.

(Liz looks around for Anam, but she is out of sight. Somewhat confused as Liz was sure Anam was going to have the final word, Liz turns back to the audience. Pauses for a moment and then realizes Anam has left her because she no longer needs her by her side. Liz turns toward the sound booth and nods to indicate it is time to play the song to close the exhibition. Liz folds her hands over her heart and extends her arms out to the audience as a final gesture of gratitude and love.)

http://www.4shared.com/audio/BvSDRGOa/SEARCH2_.html (Campbell, 2011)

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Appendix A

Ethics Clearance Certificate



Brock University
Research Ethics Board
Tel: 905-688-5550 ext. 3035
Email: reb@brocku.ca

Social Science Research Ethics Board

Certificate of Ethics Clearance for Human Participant Research

DATE: 7/27/2011
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: DELONG, Jacqueline - Education (Adjunct Professor)
FILE: 10-297 - DELONG
TYPE: Masters Thesis/Project STUDENT: Elizabeth Campbell
SUPERVISOR: Jacqueline Delong
TITLE: How Can I Live my Values of Love and Joy More Fully in Order to Improve my Practice?

ETHICS CLEARANCE GRANTED

Type of Clearance: NEW

Expiry Date: 7/27/2011

The Brock University Social Sciences Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above named research proposal and considers the procedures, as described by the applicant, to conform to the University's ethical standards and the Tri-Council Policy Statement. Clearance granted from 7/27/2011 to 7/27/2011.

The Tri-Council Policy Statement requires that ongoing research be monitored by, at a minimum, an annual report. Should your project extend beyond the expiry date, you are required to submit a Renewal form before 7/27/2011. Continued clearance is contingent on timely submission of reports.

To comply with the Tri-Council Policy Statement, you must also submit a final report upon completion of your project. All report forms can be found on the Research Ethics web page at <http://www.brocku.ca/research/policies-and-forms/research-forms>.

In addition, throughout your research, you must report promptly to the REB:

- a) Changes increasing the risk to the participant(s) and/or affecting significantly the conduct of the study;
- b) All adverse and/or unanticipated experiences or events that may have real or potential unfavourable implications for participants;
- c) New information that may adversely affect the safety of the participants or the conduct of the study;
- d) Any changes in your source of funding or new funding to a previously unfunded project.

We wish you success with your research.

Approved:

Michelle McGinn, Vice-Chair
Social Sciences Research Ethics Board

Note: Brock University is accountable for the research carried out in its own jurisdiction or under its auspices and may refuse certain research even though the REB has found it ethically acceptable.

If research participants are in the care of a health facility, at a school, or other institution or community organization, it is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to ensure that the ethical guidelines and clearance of those facilities or institutions are obtained and filed with the REB prior to the initiation of research at that site.

