

A NARRATIVE INQUIRY INTO EXPERIENCES OF URBAN INDIGENOUS
YOUTH WITHIN AN INTERGENERATIONAL AFTER-SCHOOL WELLNESS
PROGRAM

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Abstract

In the fall of 2013, my colleagues, Sean Lessard, Lee Schaefer, and I were awarded funding through Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada to implement an after-school program for urban Indigenous youth within an urban centre within Saskatchewan, Canada. Our intent from the outset was to create a connecting space that would allow us, as narrative inquirers, to ethically enter into the community and to develop relationships with youth and their families. The after-school program occurred each Wednesday during the school year, within an elementary school gymnasium. With an interest in physical activity, I looked to engage youth in numerous movement activities. All the while, I was intentional from the early beginnings of the program to co-create with the community an intergenerational program that included not only youth, but also volunteers from the community, including First Nation elders and knowledge keepers, and pre-service teachers from the local university.

My inquiry revolved around the experiences of three Indigenous youth mentors that were each part of the program for two or more years. It was through coming alongside these youth that I was able to gain an understanding of how they were experiencing the experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). What surfaced from the inquiry was a juxtaposition to the dominant narrative within existing literature pertaining to after-school programs for urban Indigenous youth. The research literature placed youth who partake in such programs as being at-risk and in need of an intervention to enhance either academic achievement or social success. This notion of beginning from a place of deficit suggested that an after-school program was the solution to supporting youth who were categorized as insufficient. This starting point, if you will, lends itself

to the dominant research paradigms found within the literature designed to substantiate the success of such interventions.

This inquiry has brought forth another story of Indigenous youth. Stemming from a reconceptualization of play, these three Indigenous youth were part of an after-school program community, which positioned each as knowledge holders. Through this narrative inquiry, it became apparent that the research participants did not see themselves as being in deficit, and in fact were strong contributors to the children in the program. I came to understand the tremendous wealth of knowledge these youth held, knowledge that positioned each as teacher. Dissimilar to the research literature, these youth were in fact impacting the program of which they were involved. Through the co-creation of a relational community I was able to come alongside the youth to relive (Clandinin, 2013) stories, which in turn allowed us all to see differently, shifting our stories to live by (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999).

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To members of my committee, Dr. Nick Forsberg, Dr. Lee Schaefer, Dr. Brenda Rossow-Kimball, Dr. Sean Lessard, and Dr. Paul Hart, thank you for the wisdom and guidance you each have provided. You each have challenged my thinking and supported me throughout this journey.

To my friend Joseph, I say kinanâskomitin. You have been a tremendous guide throughout this inquiry.

To Candice, Clary, and Colin, thank you for allowing me to come alongside each of you as we learned together. The lessons each of you has taught me are immeasurable and have helped me become a better teacher, parent, and person. I will continue to hold your stories close as they guide me moving forward.

To Sean and Lee, I say thank you. I continue to be challenged and inspired by your words and your actions and will forever be indebted to you both for joining me on this journey. A journey that began with a conversation on a cold winter day more than four years ago has impacted my life more than you know. The experiences we have shared continue to shape who I am and who I am becoming.

Dedication

To my wife Amy, I love you and I thank you for inspiring me each and every day. Your unconditional love and unending encouragement have never gone unnoticed. To my amazing daughters Maeve and Grace, thank you for helping me understand what matters most in life. The two of you teach me each and every day, helping me to see the true joy in play.

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Chapter One: Early Beginnings

Moving Backward to See Forward

I begin this writing with a sense of excitement, similar to the excitement felt starting my research journey four years earlier when my colleagues, Sean Lessard, Lee Schaefer, and I were awarded funding through Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada to implement an after-school program for urban Indigenous youth. The enthusiasm back then stemmed from the uncertainty of where the journey would lead, I was willing and open to learn from what was to come. Today, the exhilaration of putting to paper what I experienced over these years is palpable. Being able to express in writing something that has been tremendously impactful cannot come fast enough. It is with this exhilaration I begin this voyage of sharing the experiences had and lessons learned from my doctoral journey, *A Narrative Inquiry into the Experiences of Urban Indigenous Youth in an After-school Wellness Program*.

Connecting the dots.

It was an amazing Saturday morning spent with my daughter Maeve. We ventured out to a local restaurant for breakfast. I remember feeling somewhat apprehensive only because at twenty months old, breakfast out with my little girl could go many different ways. We sat side by side in a booth looking out the window at a crisp autumn morning. A favorite activity while waiting for our meals to arrive was to colour or complete any puzzles that we may find as part of the kids menu. Arriving with my much-needed morning coffee, we were given a small booklet and a package of three crayons. Upon abruptly removing the red, blue, and green crayons from the plastic, we looked for a page to work on.

Flipping past a crossword, past pictures of animals, Maeve stopped at a dot-to-dot activity on the last page. This was the page we would work on together. It was clear to me before any dots were connected with that bright red crayon; together we were about to draw an elephant. The activity, like most with a toddler, was short-lived. Soon after connecting dots C and D our breakfast arrived and the booklet was set aside.

(Field text, September 2016)

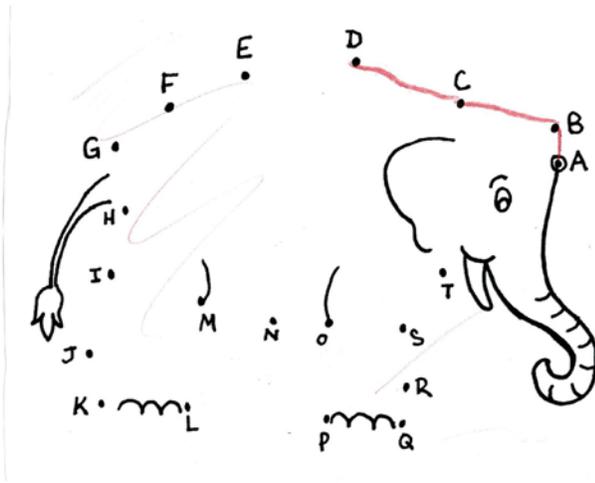


Figure 1. Maeve's dot to dot.

The experience shared of connecting the dots with my daughter is one that brought me back to my childhood. As a child, I recall always trying to guess what I was creating before ever connecting the initial dots. I remember quickly moving my pencil from beginning to end, finishing most times a picture that I had already drawn in my mind. The numbers guided my pencil allowing me to craft animals, fire trucks, and my favorite action heroes. I recall always challenging myself, or at times my older brother, to finish the connections in record time. Many years had passed from my final rendition

as a child to sitting beside my daughter on that brisk Saturday morning. Together, the two of us moved the crayon from dot, to dot, to dot, outlining an image I could already see. I could see it, but I wondered if my daughter, Maeve, could see it as well? At such a young age, could she already begin to see what the numbered dots wanted us to create?

This notion of connecting dots not only brought me back to memories of my childhood, it is one that resonated with me as I considered the work undertaken within my doctoral studies. As I move forward with this dissertation, I will carry with me the experience shared with my daughter as we sat side by side with crayons in hand. I wondered at the outset if indeed Maeve could see the elephant. Perhaps she did, or perhaps she saw something different. Do I tell her it is an elephant? Do I tell her what dot is connected next? If we continue to see only one picture, telling youth what they see, can we truly understand those youth and their experiences? The dots on the page create one image, a transcendental view of experience.

Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) reference Dewey's (1981) conception of experience, noting "it does not refer to some precognitive, precultural ground on which our conceptions of the world rest" (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 39). Dewey's pragmatic view of experience, the underpinning of Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) narrative view of experience, is transactional in that "representations arise from experience and must return to that experience for their validation (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 39). It is with this lens I choose to view experience, to view the dots on the page. The dots are no longer static, outlining one transcendental image. For me, the dots move and shift, and it is not until I, as an inquirer, come to understand experience that I can begin to see a picture of that experience.

As I moved through my doctoral journey with this view of experience, tension arose on a number of occasions. This tension appeared each time the metaphorical dots were connected outlining a transcendental picture, if you will. Be it through the literature search I completed early on into the inquiry or the course work that came within my doctoral program, I came to see that while on this journey I was at times bumping with what I came to understand as dominant research paradigms. I was reminded by Maxine Greene (1995) to question the tensions. Greene asserted, “this is how learning happens and that the educative task is to create situations in which the young are moved to begin to ask, in all the tones of voice there are, ‘why?’” (p. 6). I saw these moments of tension as moments for learning. I could see how these tensions moved me beyond accepting what has always been, to questioning and seeing otherwise.

Moving from chapter to chapter my intent is to animate those moments of tension that I felt over the past four years while coming to know the youth involved in my inquiry. As I travelled backward and forward, inward and outward, I came to see these moments of tension as moments that brought tremendous learning. It is from recognizing these moments of tension I gained a greater understanding of not only myself, but also the youth that I had been so incredibly fortunate to come alongside. We all begin to see differently by asking *why*.

Who am I in This Inquiry?

It was the fall semester of 2013, and as I sat at the table with other graduate students enrolled in my first narrative inquiry methods class I saw a few familiar faces, as well as many that I would be meeting for the first time. I recall us going around in a circle introducing ourselves. We were each asked to share where we

were from. Similar to past graduate classes I had taken, introductions repeated a common pattern. All introductions began with a name, followed by a brief explanation of where they were from. In every case the introduction ended with the number of classes remaining to complete one's master's course work. I remember jumping up and down in my head, shouting internally, "not again!" As I longed to learn more about my new colleagues of which I would be learning with and from over the semester, I was left wondering who "class four" was, or what experiences brought "my final class" to the table.

(Field text, September 2013)

As I think back to those introductions I see now that within graduate studies we can get caught up in seeing the end, rather than experiencing the journey along the way. Perhaps it is a reality of the school landscape, where end results and finish lines are a common narrative. Each class was conceivably a dot on the page, and by connecting enough of them, one can see finishing a degree; at times seeming to be less about the process and more about the product. This idea of finishing, connecting that final dot on the page, in my opinion takes away from the experiences that occur along the way, experiences that continue to be impactful.

Today, as I think about how we started that narrative inquiry methods class with the end in mind, I see the irony. As we all came to the table each week that semester I believe all our eyes were opened to the importance of experience and the ongoing impact past experiences continue to have moving forward. I saw how that group began to slow down that semester as we all began to inquire together into our own experiences, as well as each other's.

The course was my formal introduction to narrative inquiry as conceptualized by Connelly and Clandinin (1990). Conversations around the table that semester centred on chapters from the text, *Engaging in Narrative Inquiry*, by Dr. Jean Clandinin (2013). Travelling back to my initial read of the text, reading pages with my pencil in hand, I found myself circling words, highlighting what I saw as important phrases, and more often than not, writing wonders and questions in the margins. Today, as I come to sharing my inquiry, I continue to go back to the literature, including this text. As I thumb through the bent pages, reading and re-reading, I revisit the circles, the highlights, and the words in the margins. Each time I do so, I see the words on the page differently as I continue to develop my understanding of narrative inquiry. It seems the dots have shifted.

One quotation in particular reminds me of the need to situate myself within the inquiry. “As narrative inquirers, we become part of participants’ lives and they part of ours. Therefore, our lives—and who we are and are becoming, on our and their landscapes—are also under study” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 30). As I came to know narrative inquiry through this journey, reflecting often on the words of Clandinin (2013), I began to see and feel that I too was part of the inquiry. Perhaps dissimilar to other research paradigms in which the researcher is removed from the experiences and positioned as observer, I was in fact living the inquiry alongside the participants. It is with Clandinin’s (2013) notion of *who we are and are becoming* that I consider personal experiences that have brought me to this inquiry, travelling temporally to moments that continue to shape me moving forward in this inquiry. Understanding that I, too, was under study, I move back and forth considering experiences that occurred on various landscapes.

Teaching/learning experience(s). The day felt much like the day before. Sitting at my desk and writing seemed to be commonplace over the last number of weeks. At times the process became overwhelming, calling for me to pause and re-engage. Taking a moment to stand and stretch, I tapped my phone to restart the music I had been playing in the background. Tapping the screen, I noticed the tiny red dot letting me know that I had new email. Perhaps an excuse to extend my break, I scrolled through drawn to a subject heading I had been hoping to see. Opening the email confirmed that I was successful in being short-listed for a tenure track position I had applied for months earlier. As I excitedly raced through the details of the job interview process, I realized that in a week I would be presenting to the faculty as to how I believe I fit into the position.

Part of the faculty presentation was to share my teaching experience. That next week saw me reflecting on my teaching career and the experiences I was part of that I felt shaped who I am, personally and professionally. As I began to put the presentation slides together, I shifted from times early in my career to moments not so long ago. While plotting past jobs and places of work, a timeline of sorts appeared under a heading of *teaching experience*. As words continued to fill the slide depicting my teaching journey, I continued to see the heading at the top, *teaching experience*. Pausing, I took a moment to look at the heading once more. How did I see experience?

The timeline that I had created was a visual reminder for me of John Dewey's (1938) notion of experience. His two criteria of experience, interaction and continuity enacted in situations, are what Clandinin and Connelly (2000) pulled from as they established a narrative view of experience. Their narrative view was the same

interpretation I had of the word experience. As I looked at the words on the screen, *teaching experience*, I saw the words through a Deweyan lens through which “every experience lives on in further experiences” (Dewey, 1938, p. 27).

As I travel back to creating those presentation slides, I see how my view of experience shaped the presentation. It was essential to make explicit in my presentation that my range of teaching physical and health education in kindergarten to grade 12 systems, as well as at the post-secondary level, was not just teaching experience, it was learning experience as well. There are experiences that continue to live with me today, integral to who I am and who I am becoming. I knew the heading needed to change, and with the clicking of the keys, it was replaced with *teaching/learning experience(s)*.

When the time came to share my teaching experience to the faculty, I shared moments both on and off the school landscape. As I think temporally, I see how these shared moments I presented within my presentation first surfaced from my time spent inquiring autobiographically within that narrative inquiry graduate class. It was in that first doctoral class that I (re)visited experiences that I have carried with me through my career and into my inquiry. Moving forward, I share some of these experiences that have helped shape who I am and who I am becoming.

Tawny.

The end of the year brought about a gift from Tawny. She had made a pie for me and attached a card. I first thought it odd to receive such a gift. Thinking now, I see the work and special thought that went into it. Attached to the pie was a card that I didn't read initially when Tawny brought the gift to my office. Later that night when at home, I opened the card. The message was short and sweet. She

wrote how much she enjoyed being in my Wellness class. Tawny explained that until this year 'gym' was not a class she enjoyed. Until this year, her physical education experience involved the "custom" of choosing teams. Tawny ended her card by thanking me for never using captains when organizing teams.

(Field text, October 2013)

My story of Tawny is one I hold close and cherish. Reading the card was the moment I came to truly understand how others experienced physical education, how others maneuvered their way in and out of that school gymnasium. Shifting temporally to my experiences of physical education growing up, I recall nothing but positive. As a student, physical education was a place where I saw tremendous success. The gymnasium was an encouraging space for me, constantly reminding me that I was athletic and relatively good at most sports that I attempted. I had never felt any type of fear or anxiety entering into a gymnasium as a student. Physical education worked for me.

That same comfortable feeling I experienced as a student travelled with me as I moved to a small rural town to begin my teaching career. Of course, I was aware from my time spent within a gymnasium as both a student and a teacher that youth came with a multitude of skill sets from a physical perspective. I was, however, oblivious to how detrimental that gymnasium space could potentially be. As I read the card Tawny penned for me that day, I could see that physical education as she came to know it, was much different from my experiences. From Tawny's early memories of elementary school through to grade 9, physical education was a subject she hoped to avoid. Year after year, with each class, Tawny was reminded of her limited skills and physical

abilities. Each day her classmates, the captains, reminded Tawny of her shortfalls, of her potential negative impact on the game results. Each day Tawny was picked last.

My story of Tawny is one of many that have shaped my teaching in the area of physical education. It was this experience, shared through a thank you card, that has remained with me as I moved into many other gymnasiums throughout my teaching career. It was an experience that helped me to see different, to understand that a dominant narrative of physical education existed. The narrative Tawny had been part of was one of winners and losers. Physical education looked, sounded, and felt much like that of sport, where play determined who would be successful and who would not. I too had lived within that dominant narrative as a student, however, I was ignorant to the impact of such a narrative for the simple fact I was successful within that structure. The story suited me.

Shifting back to my presentation to the faculty, I looked at the slide filled with experiences around teaching, many of which connected to the gymnasium space, to physical education. On that slide I also plotted experiences that happened outside of physical education, outside of a gymnasium. These were experiences that helped shape who I was and who I was becoming, experiences that continued to help me see differently.

One becomes two.

As I sat in that empty basement classroom, I watched as the 31 names were written on the faded green chalkboard. Pointing to each name one by one, I was asked to simply reply. “Yes, yes, no, I am not sure, no”. With every affirmative declaration, an “N” was placed by chalk above the name, drawing me further

inward. “No” resulted in a “W”, while uncertainty brought with it a question mark. As a young teacher, I couldn’t speak out. Thirty-one names on the board, layered by one of two letters or a question mark. Soon the 31 names split in half, classroom A or classroom B. Where one existed, now became two.

(Field text, October 2013)

To bring context to the above field text I shift back to the days leading up to me sitting in that basement classroom. I had recently moved from the rural community in which I began my career to take a temporary teaching contract in an urban centre. The school year began with 23 students in a grade 8 classroom. Month by month the numbers grew, by February reaching a total of 31. The classroom was crammed, and the dynamics of the space were challenging for all of us. Looking back now, I see this class as my most difficult challenge of my career. What was most difficult was the fact I could not give the time I felt was needed to students that were struggling. I felt that students were feeling lost in a space packed with desks and tables.

I made a decision, in consultation with the school administration, to expand the classroom, taking advantage of an empty space across the hallway. I moved some of those desks and tables, decorating this additional space to emulate the look and feel of every other classroom I had taught in. This extension of the classroom, as I saw it, would allow for students to have more room and allow me to work with smaller groups. The idea was that I could be working in one room with students that I felt needed more support while the other room would be supervised by a teacher assistant. I would be able to shift from space to space throughout the day, but my intent was to allow those that

could work more independently the space to do so and those that needed more of my support the space they needed as well.

That next day, with the classroom extension in place, was a day of teaching I will always remember. I went home from work that night overjoyed. Using the two rooms allowed me to connect with more students and to support those that were struggling. It was later that evening I received a call from my principal saying that I had been accused of separating the students. She asked me if I separated the *White kids* from the *Native kids*. I could not believe what I was being asked.

Arriving at school the next morning, I first met with the senior administrator responsible for that school. I was told that I needed to get all the students in the one room before the start of the day. I remember feeling a sense of guilt, like I had done something wrong. At no time was I asked to bring context to my situation or to share how the previous day was for all the students. Administration was not interested in hearing it at the time, I suppose. The powers that be were only concerned with optics.

It is with this notion of optics I shift temporally to that basement classroom, as I sat with the 31 names on that faded green chalkboard. I found myself answering *yes* or *no* to a senior administrator tasked with creating two classrooms from the original one I was working with. Knowing that all eyes would be on the “make-up” of those two new classrooms, administration wanted to be certain each had an equal “representation”. As I sat in that basement classroom listing off who I knew to be *Native* and who I knew to be *White*, I felt a disease I had never felt before. I was asked to begin from a starting point I had never started with, race. The youth themselves were not a concern at this moment, just the colour of their skin.

This experience helped me to see differently on many levels. Initially, I saw that optics seemed to outweigh needs of the students. I was awakened to a starting point, one that positioned the youth. This story of positioning the youth was one I came to know even before taking the temporary teaching contract. Called the year prior for an interview for a teaching position at this “community school”, I learned there were connotations associated with *community*. I was told in the interview, this *community school* had many *at-risk* students, with *troubled family situations*. This was one of the *tough* schools.

As I see those words used to describe a school I had yet to step foot in, I can see how for these youth the dots were connected. Beginning from a place of deficit, I was given a picture of *at-risk*, *troubled*, and *tough*. I can see now that I did not want to tell that same story. I did what I could to allow opportunities for all the students I worked with to feel success in the classroom(s). Coming to know the students over time, gave me the confidence to make decisions to support each of them. My starting point was the needs of the student, as I worked to shift the overtones and connotations I heard about community schools. I was seeing great potential in all the students, and when the accusations of racial divide surfaced I remember feeling angry. I was upset with the parent that made the accusation, a parent that I had never met personally. I felt I was putting the needs of the students first. I was not seeing each as Indigenous or non-Indigenous.

As I travel back to this early experience, I no longer feel that sense of anger. I have come to understand that I certainly did not see race back then and that I certainly did not separate the youth based on who was Indigenous and who was not. What is

imperative for me to understand is the fact that as a non-Indigenous man I came to that school each day from a place of privilege. I did not need to worry about race; I never experienced what it was like to be other. I came awake to this over time and from my experiences alongside people I have met. Today, I understand that a grand narrative exists for Indigenous youth, a narrative that I would come to learn more about within this inquiry.

Without question, these two moments early in my career remain with me today. The stories of Tawny and the two classrooms are certainly not the only experiences that have shaped who I am and who I am becoming, however, they are two that continued to surface as I inquired autobiographically. Over time I came to know that many lived the story Tawny had lived, that dominant story of physical education and sport. My experiences in physical education were different. Tawny helped me to see that. I learned, too, that there was a dominant narrative that existed around Indigenous youth, around particular communities. Positioned based on race or geography by some, I was seeing the youth differently. I would continue to carry these experiences with me moving forward with my work alongside youth.

Sustaining story. Sitting in my first master's class in the fall of 2009, I remember a sense of excitement as well as a feeling of apprehension that comes with staring anew. Early into the semester, we were challenged to consider the notion of sustainability. At the time, and still to this day, I am aware of the immense breadth and depth of this word. Certainly, there was not one agreed upon definition. "What sustains your well-being?", was a question posed to the class, a question that we always came back to.

I remember wanting to dismiss my initial thoughts, thinking for some reason my response must not be correct, needing to be more philosophical perhaps. However, over time, I was more and more convinced that part of what sustained me was my work with youth in a movement setting. My entire teaching career to that point had involved me working with youth of all ages. As a physical education teacher and a coach, I knew that my place of solace was that of a gymnasium, hockey rink, or playing field. As a child, I felt a connection to movement, to play. Sport and physical activity came easy for me and brought such joy. My experiences with sport and physical activity allowed me to connect to community, bringing a sense of inclusion. It was my memories of movement that I learned were different from how others experienced physical education and sport. As discussed, Tawny and others helped me to see that.

I came to that master's class having recently shifted from teacher to curriculum consultant. Over the 12 years in the role of teacher, the youth and I were living a different story of physical activity and movement. From my perspective, we had established places of belonging, places in which all could see success. However, I would learn that how I saw physical education and sport as a teacher in the school community I was within did not look the same elsewhere.

In the role of consultant, I was responsible for supporting physical education teachers, often times working alongside them in their home schools. Additionally, I was responsible for organizing the elementary school inter-school sports program that had a long history within the system. Travelling from school to school, I was seeing stories of physical education, and now elementary sport, that mirrored the narrative Tawny was told for the first nine years of school. Teachers, in essence, were teaching what they

knew, what they had likely experienced in school as students themselves. Physical education was imitating sport. Inclusiveness at times took a back seat to rankings of winners and losers. I was seeing elementary school physical education emulating high school physical education, and high school physical education emulating competitive sports. I knew from my time as teacher, this could look different.

Returning to that master's class, I continued to think about how I felt in the gymnasium. I knew from my childhood that the gymnasium space could be a very positive space. I now recognized it could be a negative space as well. Furthermore, I recognized that my well-being was sustained through the joy I felt seeing youth engaged in movement in a way that was inclusive, different from the dominant narrative I was seeing in gymnasiums throughout the city. The feeling of seeing youth freely enjoying movement was part of what sustained me. I knew that all youth could feel as I did when engaged in physical activity. Transitioning into the role of consultant meant I was no longer getting to build connections with youth through movement as I did while teaching. Questioning what sustained me helped me to see that.

It was then I made the decision to offer evening and summer programs for youth. From my experiences, I knew physical activity and movement could look different. I wanted the youth and families to see and experience this difference. My imagined story of youth programming was not centred on a particular sport. Notions of winning and losing were replaced with finding ways to build an inclusive community. The youth that I saw coming to the programs, were youth that would perhaps not be considered the athletes within a class or be on a team. The way we looked to play together in the

gymnasium was a way that Tawny experienced in grade 10. It was inclusive, to an extent.

For two years, I moved alongside youth in evening and summer programs in a number of school gymnasiums throughout the city. We continued to find ways to move in the gymnasium that allowed all youth to see success and to feel part of a team. Though inclusive within the shared space of a gymnasium it was in fact exclusive, implemented only in suburban communities. Travelling the city as a consultant, I came to know each school community. I learned that within some areas of the city, opportunities for youth programming around physical activity did not exist. Outside of school hours, some gymnasiums sat empty. Each time I welcomed the youth to the program, I remembered my experiences of “community” schools. I continued to question internally, what about the rest of the youth? If I continued to offer this programming to an area of the city that already has many programs, was I not telling a new story of exclusivity? It was at the same time I was asking myself these questions that I found myself sitting at a table on a cold January day with my colleagues Lee and Sean, as we began to imagine a research space.

Connecting to the Community – Community-Based Research

From September 2013 to present date, Sean, Lee, and I have been engaged in an after-school program alongside urban Indigenous youth. The program engages Indigenous children (primary elementary students), youth (middle and high school students), volunteers (university pre-service teachers), as well as Sean, Lee, and I as

researchers, in various movement and physical activities within the Lindberg¹ school gymnasium. With an interest in physical activity and wellness, we used these content areas to organize structured and purposeful experiences every Wednesday after school, from September to June inclusively.

As I shift back to our early conceptualizations on that January day, our intent was not to simply create an after-school program for youth. We were intentional as narrative inquirers to ethically enter into a community to come alongside youth and families, to co-create a narrative inquiry research space. It just so happened our interests and past experiences brought us to use a gymnasium as our connecting space. As narrative inquirers beginning with an interest in experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), our commitments to inquiring alongside those within the program proceeded from an ontological position, a curiosity about how people are living and the constituents of their experience. As we began to imagine the research space, we knew that who we each were as narrative inquirers would shape this space. With the help of Connelly and Clandinin (2006) we defined narrative inquiry in the following way:

Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. Narrative inquiry as a methodology entails a view of the phenomenon. To use narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular view of experience as phenomenon under study. (p. 375)

Dwelling with the notion of phenomenon under study, we recognized that as researchers we would arrive at the program, to the gymnasium, with stories of sport and

¹ Lindberg is a pseudonym name for the elementary school of which the after-school program accesses the gymnasium. It is commonly known to those in the community as Lindberg.

movement, stories of being alongside youth, as teachers, as narrative inquirers. We also recognized that the youth, too, would arrive at that gymnasium bringing stories as well. Being interested in these stories to live by (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999) of the youth and ourselves, we were thoughtful about creating a relational space that would allow for interaction and conversation. Connelly and Clandinin (1999) noted that stories to live by are “given meaning by the narrative understandings of knowledge and context” (p. 4). Knowledge conceptualized narratively as personal practical knowledge, is knowledge “imbued with all the experiences that make up a person’s being. It’s meaning is derived from, and understood in terms of a person’s experiential history, both professional and personal” (Clandinin, 1985, p. 362).

Our conceptualization of this research space, in which all brought knowledge imbued with experiences, reminded us to move slowly and to listen to the community. I would come to know from my review of the literature, the majority of after-school programs were designed as interventions (Halpern, 2002; Kremer, Maynard, Polanin, Vaughn, & Sarteschi, 2015), looking to provide a potential solution to a problem. As narrative inquirers interested in experience, we saw the after-school program not as an intervention but rather as a vehicle to begin to build relationships within a community. Those relationships included the youth, as well as community guides, First Nations Elders, and knowledge keepers.

Justifications

As I again peruse the bent pages of Clandinin (2013), a pink sticky note draws me to page 35. Circled in the middle of the page is the word justifications, surrounded by the questions of “so what?” and “who cares?” As Clandinin (2013) stated, “without

being clear about our responses to these questions of purpose and justification, we, as narrative inquirers, set ourselves up for that kind of simplistic reading of the research” (p. 35). Through my coming to know narrative inquiry, I at times found myself defending my choice of methodology, seen by many as nothing more than going out, asking a few individuals to tell some stories, and then simply writing those stories down. By justifying the inquiry three ways, personally, practically, and theoretically/socially, I can clearly respond to future questions of research puzzles, appropriate methods and field texts, as well as who I am as an inquirer (Clandinin, 2013). As I share the three justifications, I do so beginning each with a field text of an experience. The intent is to animate through these field texts why this inquiry matters to me personally, how this research may impact practice, and how my work alongside Indigenous youth may have theoretical or social impact.

Darcy – personal justification.

We were into October and I remember being contacted by Deanne saying that we needed to meet to discuss a new student that will be moving to our school. The next day, as we sat in my dimly lit basement classroom, Deanne explained how within the school division there was a unique school for those that struggled in a regular classroom. She went on to explain that these students typically had major anger issues and lacked decision-making skills. The hope from a division standpoint was to have students work within this alternative school to develop needed skills to then be placed back into the mainstream. Because these students typically carried with them a stigma of a bad student, it was thought a fresh start was important for a successful transition. Darcy would be coming to our school

next week. It was not the school in Darcy's community. He would be coming to our classroom as a grade five student with what Deanne classified as severe anger management issues.

(Field text, October 2013)

The feeling of unease encompassed me as I coveted to hear more about Darcy other than his prognoses or downfalls. I was told little about Darcy other than he likely would not last a week. I wasn't sure what to think at the time. How do I prepare for this? It was suggested that I spend time reading through Darcy's cumulative file. Eventually I did, but it was not something I felt compelled to do from the onset. The meeting seemed to be a snap shot of that file, filled with scores, terminology, and shortfalls. I wanted to get to know Darcy for myself. I didn't want to welcome him into class with a perceived idea of what he was before I even met him.

(Field text, March 2013)

My experience in that dimly lit basement classroom remains with me today and continues to impact me personally and professionally. The notion that experiences grow out of other experiences and that these experiences lead to further experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), helps me to think about my personal justifications for entering into a narrative inquiry from a methodological standpoint. Shifting back temporally to the tension I felt many years ago listening to who Darcy was based on a cumulative file, helps me to recognize how my thinking narratively came long before beginning into doctoral studies. This starting point of beginning with definitions and prognoses, placed over the individual's experiences, was something I came to see as commonplace in other

methodologies. Narrative inquiry as a methodology resonated on a personal level, allowing me to begin with the individuals I would be working alongside rather than the ideologies and frameworks prevalent in what would be considered dominant research paradigms.

Personally, as I pondered in the early beginnings of this inquiry as to who I was and who I was becoming, I drew on experiences that allowed me to see things differently. I felt that through a narrative inquiry alongside Indigenous youth, opportunities of seeing different could exist as well. “To use narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular view of experience as phenomenon under study” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 375). It is this view that allows me to see beyond the metaphorical dots on the page, coming to understand the youth within this inquiry as I did Darcy.

Kelly – practical justification.

Sitting at a local coffee shop, Sean, Lee, and I were putting the finishing touches on some planning for the program and some possible excursions with the youth. Located in proximity to a high school, it was a regular occurrence to see teachers I have come to know from working in the city. On this day, Barb stood in line for a coffee striking up conversation with our group. Barb was a counselor at the neighbouring high school, the same school that Kelly was now attending as a grade nine student. Over the three months of working with Kelly within the after-school program and driving him home each day, I was aware of some of his struggles in school. Each time I listened to his school situation, which comprised of unexcused absences, tardiness, and suspensions, I kept thinking of how well he

has performed as a mentor within the program. Never having missed a session, Kelly was always engaged with the youth and worked hard to ensure all were supported within the gymnasium. I could see early on that Kelly had incredible talents of working with others, not to mention an exceptional gift of physical ability. I mentioned to Barb that Kelly was one of the employees of the program and a tremendous asset to the program. Her look of astonishment was telling. She questioned if we were talking about the same Kelly? She was in disbelief.

(Field text, January 2014)

A few weeks later Kelly came to the program letting me know that he was changing schools. The school had in place a policy that saw students removed from a class once they had been late 15 times. Kelly mentioned how he would be starting over at a new school. At the time, I remember feeling a range of emotions from that of frustration wanting to know more about this attendance policy, to one of worry, knowing starting fresh in a new school mid-semester came with its challenges. Confusion also set in knowing Kelly had yet to be absent for the after-school program. Perhaps all of these emotions stemmed from knowing Kelly's story when it came to getting to school each day.

Kelly lived with his younger brother and his father mere blocks away from the gymnasium of which the after-school program was situated. The winter season was a busy time for Kelly's father who worked for a snow removal company. Working early mornings meant that Kelly took on the responsibility of getting his younger sibling ready for school. Part of this obligation involved Kelly walking his 6-year-old brother to school each morning before racing to catch a city bus to his high school, a high school

that was a considerable distance from home. Kelly's reality meant that often times he was late for first period.

As I considered what I had come to know about Kelly and his reality of school, I dwelled on the structure of high school all the while reflecting on the graduation rates of Indigenous youth as compared to those of non-Indigenous youth within Saskatchewan. While Indigenous peoples comprise 15% of the total provincial population, merely 25% to 30% of Indigenous students complete high school within the typical three years it takes to advance from grade 10 through grade 12 (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2009). Can we perhaps see differently as to what school can look like? Is there an opportunity from this inquiry to perhaps see school differently, where credit is attained for involvement in such programs?

With pre-service teachers involved as volunteers within the program, is there an opportunity from this inquiry to see implications of involvement in grass roots settings outside the university? What dots have these future teachers connected when it comes to working in a gymnasium or alongside Indigenous youth? How have past experiences of these pre-service educators, as well as the experiences within the program, shaped their stories to live by and, therefore, shaped who they are and who they are becoming as teachers?

Joseph – theoretical/social justifications.

There was no audience. Just us boys enjoying a Sunday afternoon playing at the local football field. It was a rip roaring body release as we pretended to be football stars or heroes. Speaking of heroes I remember that our heroes were no longer from the First Nation people from our respective communities. For me my

heroes were comic book heroes like Superman, Spiderman, Thor, Daredevil, Flash and Fantastic Four. I'm sure there were others. Cowboys from dusters would also be my heroic figures. I'd grow to admire and depend on them to feel confident and okay for years after those days. As I recall now, no one wanted to be an 'Indian' due to the way they were portrayed in the dusters (cowboy shows), which was inferior or less heroic.

I can't imagine how I survived the residential school experience without some form of physical movement and education. I attribute the movement aspect ultimately to my survival and ability to go through the extreme traumatic events that occurred before and after the residential school experience. (Field text², January 2017)

I consider myself very fortunate to have crossed paths with Joseph. Joseph is a humble, soft-spoken man who has taught me the need to slow down, to listen, and to come alongside the youth. Joseph is from Sturgeon Lake First Nation, in Northern Saskatchewan. His school experience was one of residential schools. I remember sitting one day with Joseph over a bowl of soup on the university campus and him telling me about his experiences as a young First Nations man. The very university we gathered to chat was the university he attended at 18 years old. He explained that there were just five others “like” him on the entire campus; six First Nations students that stuck together. His five friends at university brought him comfort, as did the boys many years earlier out on the field.

² This text was part of a written story Joseph shared with me. As negotiated, Joseph gave me permission to use an excerpt of his story.

Witnessing Joseph in the gymnasium with the youth from the program, I saw an energy come out of him. He is in what he would call a “happy place”, and I certainly could relate with that feeling of being in a place of comfort. It was after reading Joseph’s words shared just recently that I came to appreciate just how important movement was.

I can’t imagine how I survived the residential school experience without some form of physical movement and education. I attribute the movement aspect ultimately to my survival and ability to go through the extreme traumatic events that occurred before and after the residential school experience.

Those moments Joseph shared on the field with *just us boys*, were an escape for Joseph. “*Just us boys* were what others saw as Indians”, Joseph explained. Never knowing or seeing himself as First Nations back then, Joseph knew himself to be one of the “intermediate boys” as they were categorized at the residential school. When they played on that field however, they were just us boys, sometimes superheroes but never “Indians”.

Conversations such as the one Joseph and I shared over a bowl of soup provided guidance and wisdom as I continued to work with Indigenous youth throughout the inquiry. Joseph helped me to see how my experiences with Darcy impacted my work in the program. He helped me to see how absent Indigenous youth can feel in the institution of school, as Kelly experienced. Joseph has told me that he sees himself in the stories of Darcy and Kelly. The dots were connected for Joseph many times, with pictures of who he was, who he was not, and who others wanted him to become.

Joseph continues to remind me of the importance of creating a connecting place for youth, and reinforces my beliefs around building an inclusive community. Our time spent moving together in a gymnasium alongside the youth was a reminder for Joseph of early times playing on a field. Joseph has helped me to see through his experiences; creating a sense of belonging is essential to establishing a mutual and respectful relationship alongside Indigenous youth. Through this inquiry alongside Indigenous youth, an opportunity arises for Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples to find ways to move forward together at a time deemed by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRCC) as “a rare second chance” for reconciliation (TRCC, 2015, p. 113).

Narrative Inquiry Research Space

Moving through this initial chapter has allowed me to revisit experiences that have shaped who I am and who I am becoming. Like the youth I came alongside each week in the after-school program, I arrived at the gymnasium with stories to live by imbued with experience (Clandinin, 1985). Taking the time retell and relive (Clandinin, 2013) stories brought me to justifying my inquiry alongside urban Indigenous youth, which in turn permitted research puzzles to surface.

Emerging research puzzle. I was drawn to consider the experiences of three participants who are part of the after-school program. Candice, Clary, and Colin³ all connected to the after-school program as high school mentors. I was interested in the experiences and knowledge these participants brought to the program. As they shift from place to place, bringing with them all the experiences that have shaped and

³ Candice, Clary, and Colin are negotiated pseudonym names of the research participants.

continue to shape their identities, I wondered how they were experiencing the experience of being in the inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). What is it the participants were coming to understand from their participation in the inquiry? How did the participants see themselves within the program? I wondered if the participants saw this program space differently from school or familial landscapes (Huber, Murphy, & Clandinin, 2011). How have their stories to live by shifted from being part of this program?

Summary

Once again, I think back to the morning shared with my daughter over a dot-to-dot activity. Is it just adults that see the picture before connecting the dots? I wonder if youth see differently? What dots are connected when I share my interest of inquiring into the experiences of urban Indigenous youth within this after-school wellness program? Is there a picture already constructed around Indigenous youth? After-school programs? Are we left only to simply join the dots? To that point, is there a different picture when it comes to the storied lives of urban Indigenous youth?

As I moved forward with my inquiry, I continued to reflect back on the experiences that have helped shape who I am within this inquiry; I continued to wonder. As I worked through the literature review shared in Chapter Two, I continued to view experience narratively (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Looking at the literature through this lens while continuing to work alongside the youth of the after-school program, I saw threads emerge from the search, threads that at times brought tension. I was again reminded by Greene (1995) to ask *why*.

Chapter Two: Engaging With the Literature

Findings from an extensive review of literature pertaining to after-school programming for urban Indigenous youth informed my work within this inquiry. It was essential to understand what currently existed within the literature to provide direction for my work. Through the review I was able to identify common threads within the literature, and identify opportunities for this inquiry from both a theoretical and methodological perspective. It is through identifying these threads that I am able to identify the need for a narrative inquiry into the experiences of urban Indigenous youth within an after-school wellness program.

Review Methods

I began the literature review with the search terms *after-school programs* and *Aboriginal⁴ youth* or *Indigenous youth*. Databases searched included ProQuest Education, Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), and Canadian Business and Current Affairs Education (Canadian Education Index). The search resulted in 580 items. To narrow the search, I added the search term of *at-risk youth*.

Why the term at-risk youth? At-risk youth are commonly defined by (a) low academic performance; or (b) characteristics typically associated with lower student achievement, including low socioeconomic status (SES), racial or ethnic minority background, and a single-parent family (Miller, 1993). Would at-risk be a term used to identify Aboriginal or Indigenous youth? If I consider once again the statistical data within Saskatchewan, one could certainly see a parallel between Aboriginal or

⁴ “Aboriginal Peoples” is a collective name for the original peoples of North America and their descendants. The Canadian constitution recognizes three groups of Aboriginal peoples: First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, 2016).

Indigenous youth and the term at-risk. As highlighted in Chapter One, under 50% of Aboriginal Saskatchewan students complete high school (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2009). Calls to action within the TRCC (2015) demand for a strategy to “eliminate educational and employment gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians” (p. 2). Considering the statistical data, I would suggest that many would equate Aboriginal youth to being at-risk.

A search with these four terms, *after-school programs*, *Aboriginal youth*, *Indigenous youth*, and *at-risk youth*, resulted in just over 200 items. Next, each of the abstracts were read to determine if the piece of literature did indeed pertain to after-school programming for Indigenous or at-risk youth. As I worked through the abstracts, I noticed that a high number of articles discussed programs incorporated into the school day and/or curriculum. Often the word ‘program’ was highlighted in the abstract, however, there was no connection to the after-school time period, rather it was a program embedded into the school day. The articles selected met two criteria: (1) the participants were Indigenous or at-risk youth, and (2) the program existed outside of school hours. I was interested in understanding what literature existed with respect to programs that are not connected to the institution of school. As well, I needed to understand what literature existed with respect to working alongside Indigenous youth. Upon reading through each abstract, 56 articles were placed into RefWorks, read in their entirety, and added to an annotated bibliography.

Array of Perspectives

The review of the literature from a broad perspective helped to solidify what I came to know from engaging in numerous doctoral classes. As I worked through this

review I was also immersed in course work, which helped me to see the vast array of perspectives when it came to qualitative research. Considering this evolution of thinking surrounding educational research along with the assortment of ideas around qualitative research helped to situate and ground my inquiry theoretically. Research paradigms, which exist and have evolved or shifted over time, bring with them systems of inquiry, methods, as well as ways of knowing. Lukenchuk and Kolich (2013) discussed a number of paradigms, highlighting the growth of educational research away from positivistic undertakings, to a new vision of science and scientific inquiry (p. 62). Be it interpretive, critical, or post-structuralist, each paradigm has what Lukenchuk and Kolich named as a conceptual repertoire, “a figurative expression that means an endless list of conceptual ingredients, . . . whose endless and different configurations can generate multiple productions” (p. 65). These *conceptual ingredients*, which have evolved over time, connect to epistemological assumptions which in turn lead to corresponding methods of analysis (Lukenchuk, 2013, p. xxvi). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) discussed this evolution of research paradigms, naming eight moments in qualitative research. These moments or phases suggest a definite influx in qualitative research methods specifically over the last 20 years. The postmodern phase (1990-1995) saw researchers engaged in what many considered experimental forms of inquiry. As the decade was drawing to a close, new ways to study and portray lived experience were emerging which led to what was referred to as the methodologically contested phase, where methods were being questioned. This of course brings us to the eighth moment, what Denzin and Lincoln named as the fractured future (2005 to present). This is a time presently when qualitative research is constantly facing pressures to slow this movement

down, transitioning back to associate more closely with positivistic characteristics (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, pp. 14-20).

This vast array of perspectives, this tapestry of beliefs (Lukenchuk & Kolich, 2013), was important to recognize and remain awake to as I entered into this review of the literature around after-school programs with Indigenous youth. My beliefs and my commitments to experience as a narrative inquirer fall within this tapestry. Somekh and Lewin (2005) highlight how some see educational research as “primarily for the benefit of the individual and others see it as the means of producing the human resources necessary to maintain the economy” (p. 8). I see how this perhaps connects with Denzin and Lincoln’s (2005) notion of a fractured future. Moving through this chapter and the review of literature I animate how in fact much of the literature is interested in *producing the human resources to maintain the economy*, to quantify the success of interventions. I highlight how the interest lies in evaluating the impact of after-school programs on youth. Studies found in this review came from an epistemological stance unlike that of narrative inquiry as I conceptualize in later chapters. This stance positions youth in deficit with the understanding that an intervention study will assist in the understanding of how to fix youth within after-school programs. The studies looked to provide generalizations, transcendental findings, that were decontextualized and reduced. Though the studies included a variety of methods, the common goal across all studies was to provide an *understanding* of the impact of what were often termed as interventions.

This approach of understanding impact brought about studies that were appropriate in relationship to the kind of question being addressed. As I move forward

with this chapter, I do not look to debate the selection of methods; rather I look to suggest the overwhelming need for my chosen methodology, a need to see the metaphorical dots differently.

Common Threads

As I moved through the process of reading the articles and developing an annotated bibliography, I did so not knowing what would come to be of the readings. Over time, with each article and research study read, I began to see commonalities surfacing; what I called *threads*. Upon completion of the annotated bibliography, I was able to look across the literature. Five threads emerged from this review: (a) rationale of programming, (b) extension of school, (c) approaches, (d) effective programming, and (e) program models. What follows is an explanation of each of the five threads with reference made to specific studies.

Rationale of programming. Why begin an after-school program? What is the intent of these programs? What are programs hoping to alleviate? The most prevalent thread from my review of the literature revolved around the notion of a starting point or what would be the rationale for youth programs to exist. Halpern (2002) traced the origins of after-school programs to the early 1900's in North America. These programs were designed for two types of youth: youth who lived in unsafe communities, and youth with parents who were beginning to enter the workforce. Kremer et al. (2015) explained how diverse the current goals and presumed benefits of after-school programs are. The authors stated:

Goals of after-school programs range from providing supervision and reliable and safe childcare for youth during the after-school hours to alleviating many of

society's ills, including crime, the academic achievement gap, substance abuse, and other behavioural problems and academic shortcomings, particularly for racial/ethnic minority groups and low income students. (p. 617)

Kugler (2001), Fashola (2002), and Gaudreault, Shiver, Kinder and Guseman (2016) suggested that after-school programs are needed to provide experiences that can improve socialization, decrease youth crime, increase physical health, and improve academic achievement.

As I continued to review the literature, I found a large number of citations from North America, particularly the United States. As Lauer et al. (2006) posit the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 has driven massive increases to funding to support youth, subsequently increasing the number of programs as well as the number of research studies intended to provide evidence on the effectiveness of the services. In essence, many of these studies are beginning from a place of deficit, and are intended to determine if specific programs or interventions can alleviate the perceived problem (Woodland, 2016).

Hanlon, Simon, O'Grady, Carswell, and Callaman (2009) presented a study on the effectiveness of an after-school prevention program targeting grade 6 students residing in what they called a 'high-risk' urban area. The intent of the program was to provide social skills development and improve academic performance. The study compared two sites serving what they called "essentially equivalent urban communities" (p. 96). Although the sample size was small, the authors indicated a reduction in delinquent behaviour for middle-school youth after year one of the program. A similar study by Keating, Tomishima, Foster, and Alessandri (2002) involved participants in an

after-school mentoring program that were deemed 'at-risk' by a professional (concerned adult, school counsellor, school administrator, etc.). Sixty-eight participants (one identified as Aboriginal) between the ages of 10 and 17 years were placed in either the intervention or non-intervention group for a 6-month time period. Pre- and post-interviews were conducted with all participants. In addition, all youth completed three scales: Hopelessness Scale for Children, Self-Report Delinquency Scale, and Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale. The findings concluded that "mentoring was successful in helping to decrease problematic behaviours, suggesting that exposure to caring adults helped youth to feel better about themselves and to engage in less destructive behaviours towards themselves and others" (p. 731).

Another program, titled Youth Empowerment and Support (YES-P), was designed to decrease drug use and build connections to school for at-risk youth living in what is considered high-risk environments. A study by Moody, Childs, and Sepples (2003) used a pre/post one-group design to evaluate the YES-P. Ten nursing students and 13 inner-city youth ages 10 to 12 years were part of the program. At post-test, youth participants had increased levels of what are considered to be protective factors for at-risk youth, including perceived higher levels of self-esteem, social skills attainment, school attachment, and mindsets of abstaining from drug use as minors.

Mano (2007) highlighted the Across Ages program that was originally developed as a drug prevention program. Drawing on Taylor and Bressler, Mano described the specific risk factors the youth participating in this program face including:

Economically depressed neighbourhoods and communities, characterized by poverty, a high incidence of substance abuse and drug-related crime, . . . School

attendance is poor, achievement is low, and suspension rates are high; many of the children are at least 1 year behind in school. (Taylor & Bressler, as cited in Mano, 2007, p. 88)

The Across Ages program was developed to address many of these risk factors through a mentoring method. Youth in grade 6 were paired with an ‘elderly’ mentor (minimum 55 years of age). Mano hypothesized that a multifaceted intervention approach would result in the most positive changes on 11 measures. The study randomly assigned youth to three different groups: Group One, which had no intervention; Group Two, in which participants only participated in the Positive Youth Development Curriculum (PYDC); and Group Three, in which participants participated in PYDC and were also matched with older mentors. Youth in Group Three scored significantly better on four evaluation measures: attitudes toward school, future, and elders; attitudes toward older people; attitudes toward community service; and reactions to situations involving alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs (Mano, 2007, p. 91).

What became evident as I moved through the literature was this underpinning of beginning from a place of deficit and the need for intervention. There needed to be a reason for youth programs, and in all cases those reasons included the desire to support youth considered to be at-risk socially and/or academically. The term after-school program implies programs that happen outside of the institution of school. However, the second thread resonating from this review animates how both researchers and programmers view after-school programs as an extension of school rather than as a separate entity.

Extension of school. A report by Saskatchewan Parks and Recreation (2011) discussed the pivotal role that schools play in the implementation and success of after-school programs. The report touched on an idea that I, as an educator in the province, have heard numerous times. The idea being, extend the school day until after 5:00 pm in order to provide programming to support the diverse needs of youth. The tension highlighted in the report, echoed by many of those spoken to, was the notion of more school (p. 6). This notion of more school was a thread that resonated as I examined the literature. I discovered that many after-school programs had a goal to enhance academic performance and/or increase attendance in school. Zief, Lauver, and Maynard's (2006) meta-analysis, *Impacts of After-School Programs on Student Outcomes*, found that schools were the service provider for the majority of programs studied. Of the studies within the meta-analysis, the school implemented 80% of after-school programs with the remaining 20% of programs delivered by community organizations. Vandell et al. (2005) acknowledged that many comprehensive after-school programs include academic enrichment and homework help, suggesting once again an extension to the school day.

The literature also illustrated a partnership between after-school programs and educational institutions. The Rec and Read Mentor program (Carpenter, Rothney, Mousseau, Halas, & Forsyth, 2008; Johnson & Halas, 2011) involved high school students, a neighbouring elementary school, as well as the researchers. The Rec and Read program centred on a mentorship program that incorporated physical activity and numerous educational games and activities. Through a participatory action research study, the researchers looked to determine how the values of Van Bockern's (1998) Circle of Courage, shaped the students' engagement in the program. Carpenter et al.

(2008) provided experiences of the mentor research team, which included three staff members who were connected to either the elementary school or high school involved in the program. Though not measuring academic performance directly, it is worth noting that the Rec and Read program does look to embed literacy into the program with hopes of increasing youth engagement.

Shepard (2009) illustrated a partnership between the Spokane public school district and Gonzaga University in the selection of participants for the Campus Kids program. Youth in grades 4 to 6 who were considered to have a high risk of academic failure were selected to be involved in Campus Kids. Grineski (2003) acknowledged that both university students and elementary youth benefit from involvement in programs such as Campus Kids. Shepard (2009) concluded that the program results in improved attendance and school performance for youth, as well as a deeper understanding of poverty and social injustice for the university students.

Barker and Forneris (2012) discussed the challenges and opportunities in implementing an after-school program connected to an alternative school within a large urban centre. The PULSE program was implemented in year one as a pilot study during which youth were brought in to one location from a multitude of schools. This proved to be difficult due to transportation and transient participants. In year two of the program, the approach was to house the program out of one school, with all participants being from that school. Participant numbers in year two were smaller (eight students), but transportation and transiency were no longer barriers to delivery. The authors noted that removing these barriers allowed the program leaders to focus on program implementation.

Often schools are the connection between program and participants. King, Vidourek, Davis, and McClellan (2002) described the use of a survey that was distributed to all fourth-grade students (283 students) in a suburban public school. The data from the survey, along with grades obtained for each student, were analyzed to select the students 'in need'. The collaborative selection process selected 32 students to participate in the 5-month program entitled Healthy Kids. Upon completion of the program all fourth-grade students once again completed the survey, providing data for analysis from both an intervention and non-intervention group. Results of the study showed increases in student self-esteem, academic achievement, as well as positive school, peer, and family connectedness.

As discussed throughout this thread, the extension of school can take on different looks. Schools are often the service provider, allowing for more opportunities for youth to improve academic scores through additional school time and homework help. Other programs rely on the extension of school to provide programs through a partnership approach. In other studies, school administration and staff are tasked with choosing which students are to be included in programs; furthermore, at times school staff are assessing performance of these youth in school with the hopes of correlating the results to these after-school programs. Schools have been shown to play a pivotal role in program implementation and evaluation. However, others suggest that, to be effective, strategies for disadvantaged youth should "not be too closely identified with schools and, hence linked to the uncaring and unknowing attitudes that neighbourhood parents and youths characterized as typical of local schools" (Heath, 1994, p. 32). Should programs be an extension of school? What works, and how after-school programs should be

implemented and evaluated, is another thread that surfaced throughout the review. The next section discusses the thread of approaches, acknowledging the numerous types of youth programs that exist, various implementation models, and program evaluation methods.

Approaches. Another notion that became apparent throughout the review was the thread of approaches. Specifically, the literature acknowledged the array of program designs that constitute after-school programs. What do these programs look like? The intent of this thread is to provide a brief overview of some of the approaches found within the literature.

Some common approaches were found in the literature regarding designing after-school youth programs. The most common approach found was mentoring. A number of programs designed to support at-risk youth had a mentoring component. In most cases, the mentors were adults within the community such as the Big Sister program (Westhues, Clarke, Watton, & St. Claire-Smith, 2001). There were exceptions, however, as to who was considered the mentor. Akiva, Cortina, and Smith (2014) identified the sharing of program decision-making, in which teenage youth contributed to supporting the younger participants, to be “both more common and more salient for high-school age adolescents” (p. 1858). In their program, Carpenter et al. (2008) designated one day each week for the high school mentors to work with the mentor research team to design program experiences and prepare nutritional snacks. Collaborative in nature and “adopting a look, listen, speak approach” (p. 53), the research team of adults looked to provide non-intrusive modelling, being sure not to shape the behaviour of the youth mentors through direct instruction. On a second day of that same week, the youth

mentors would then take what had been planned and implement it in an after-school program for elementary youth.

Klinck et al. (2005) recognized:

While non-Aboriginal mentoring is more focused on the mentor/mentee pair and often involves a one-to-one structure, Aboriginal learning and child rearing more commonly takes place in a group setting. The latter typically is a more informal atmosphere where there is less distinction between who is teaching and who is being taught. (p. 115)

In a similar vein, Crooks, Chiodo, Thomas, Burns, and Camillo (2009) suggested mentoring of Aboriginal youth “is not a unidirectional enterprise; both parties gain valuable experience and skills in the process” (p. 46). Furthermore, Hall (1996) suggested that the community raises the child and that the responsibility of teaching is not confined to the biological parents.

After-school programs that contained a form of tutoring were also apparent in the literature (Lauer et al., 2006). Considering once again the rationale of after-school programs discussed in thread one, program goals often revolve around academic performance. Lauer et al. (2006) looked at 30 studies in which after-school or summer programs were implemented to support academic performance. In all but one study, the tutors within the programs were either teachers, paid post-secondary students, or a mix of paid and volunteer adults. Mooney (as cited in Lauer et al., 2006) was the only study from this meta-analysis that used peer tutors as opposed to adults.

Kremer et al. (2015) defined after-school programs, distinguishing them from other content-specific or sports related extra-curricular activities. Simply stated, an

after-school program must offer more than one activity. Considering once again the first thread, rationale of programming, youth programs were created and evolved to enhance academic and social performance. Thus, many of the programs within the literature have a multi-modal approach. For example, the idea of having one-to-one tutoring would be one aspect of a program. In most cases, one would also find activities to complement this academic component. Arts-based programs (Charmaraman & Hall, 2011; Wright, Burgos, & Duku, 2011) for example, not only enhance art skill development but also behavioural outcomes. The Rec and Read program (Johnson & Halas, 2011) focused on an intermingling of reading with physical activity. All studies within Zief et al.'s (2006) meta-analysis included programs with both an academic and recreational component, with over half the programs having a developmental component as well.

Effective programming. As previously mentioned, since 2001 there has been a dramatic spike in after-school programming, due to increased government funding with the introduction of the NCLB Act in the United States. Within Saskatchewan, after-school programming has become increasingly funded by national, provincial, as well as municipal levels (Saskatchewan Parks and Recreation, 2011). Of course, with governmental funding comes the need for accountability. After-school programs must demonstrate they are successful and that money is being well spent. Proving a level of success from the implementation of an after-school program was essential to being accountable, which in essence would lead to future funding.

Yi, Landais, Kolahdooz, and Sharma (2015) discussed 5 components that were considered essential in the implementation and delivery of programs targeting urban Aboriginal youth in Canada: (1) youth based and youth driven, (2) community based and

community driven, (3) culturally appropriate, (4) enabling and empowering, and (5) sustainable. The authors also discussed barriers for such implementation, citing the need for programs to be predicated on the needs and aspirations of the urban Aboriginal youth. Thus, establishing a long-term relationship with the youth, as well as connecting with Elders and knowledge keepers within the community is crucial. In a similar vein, Ungar, Russell, and Connelly (2014) suggested an essential need of youth programming to include a cultural component and show sensitivity to contextual variations among participants.

Other studies echoed the need for youth to connect to community, particularly positive adult role models. Wright et al. (2011) suggested that a common trait within successful after-school programs was long-term staff offering consistency and longevity to youth and families. A review of 15 evaluations of community-based programs for at-risk youth found that longer-term, more intensive programs that engage youth throughout adolescence appear to be the most effective (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2000). Morris, Shaw, and Perney (1990) concur with the need for high quality adult role models, and suggested the importance of providing a training component for volunteers. These training programs, as suggested by Durlak, Weissberg, and Pachan (2010), should include four essential features; the training programs should be sequenced, active, focused, and explicit.

Greene, Lee, Constance, and Hynes (2013) examined factors of engagement in out-of-school programs for middle school and high school youth. Survey data were collected from 455 youth attending 30 out-of-school programs throughout the state of Pennsylvania, most of which were located in urban centres. What the researchers

deemed a significant finding of the survey was a positive correlation between staff quality and youth engagement. Similarly, a standardized set of open-ended questions was used to survey youth within the RESCUE program (de Anda, 2001). The focus of this study was to ascertain feedback through a pre-test/post-test analysis to determine if the program met the expectations of the ‘at-risk’ youth involved. de Anda (2001) provided partial responses from participants within the article to elaborate on common themes and findings. The author concluded, “youth developed a strong bond...which enabled them to make positive developmental changes both emotionally and socially” (p. 113).

Wood, Larson, and Brown’s (2009) qualitative study was focused on understanding how youth come to see themselves as more responsible through participation in youth programs. This study involved high-school youth participating in what were deemed high quality programs. Participants from 11 programs (N = 108) completed a total of 648 semi-structured interviews. The study then used grounded theory data analysis to identify patterns in the youth’s reports on their experiences. What was deemed the most critical component to the process of developing responsibility within the program centered on providing youth with three types of demands. These three types of demands—task demands, role demands, and time demands—all included expectations that were structured into the program.

Lauer et al.’s (2006) study, *Out-of-School-Time Programs: A Meta-Analysis of Effects for At-Risk Students*, considered five program characteristics in their evaluation of programs outside of school hours: (1) timeframe, (2) grade level, (3) program focus, (4) program duration, and (5) student grouping. The authors concluded that the

timeframe of implementation, be it after-school or during summer, had no impact on student academic achievement or social behaviour in school. With respect to grade level, Grossman, Walker, and Raley (2001) determined that secondary students are less attracted to after-school programs than are elementary students, and thus, far more difficult to recruit and retain. The third characteristic, program focus, reminds me again of the discussion within thread two—extension of school. Miller (2003) explained that when it comes to program focus, effective programs look to support a wide variety of activities. Miller goes on to suggest that for youth who struggle within the context of school, the notion of applying similar learning strategies and experiences in programming outside of school hours would not likely be beneficial.

The importance of long-term programming, along with the need for consistency, was also discussed in the literature as a key program component (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2000; Wright et al., 2011). McComb and Scott-Little (2003) also saw the need for long-term programs, suggesting that youth who attend programs more, benefit more. Lauer et al. (2006) noted that when it comes to academic learning, “the amount of time is less important than what occurs during that time (WestEd, 2002) and that extending the time for learning does not mean that students will spend that time in learning (Karweit, 1985; Ascher, 1990)” (p. 280). The final characteristic examined by Lauer et al. (2006) referenced studies by Fashola and Barley et al. which indicated tutoring or peer-tutoring as a promising practice in the improvement of academic achievement in after-school programs.

Additional literature was found within the search that acknowledged the implementation of particular models as being a significant contributor to the success of

after-school programs for youth. The idea of formulating a program around a particular model resonated with my early experiences in applying for program funding for our after-school program. It became abundantly clear; a model seemed to be common language among funders, providing a clearer understanding of how deliverables would be achieved. Perhaps less significant of a thread in terms of its prevalence within the literature, I chose to include a fifth thread specific to program models because of the explicit connection to my experiences working alongside Aboriginal youth.

Programming models. As mentioned, the final thread resonating from the literature relates to framing after-school programming around a particular model (Sale, Weil, & Kryah, 2012) or theory. This thread, dissimilar to the previous four, was a thread apparent in a small number of citations, however, I feel an important aspect to ponder when considering after-school programs with Indigenous youth. Anthony, Alter, and Jenson (2009) discussed the use of programming models as an:

Application of theory to programs and policies for high-risk children and youths would likely reduce service system fragmentation, increase the feasibility and usefulness of outcome research, and perhaps even create upward pressure to encourage policymakers to address service integration. (p. 45)

The authors go on to argue for the “adoption of a risk and resilience framework” (p. 45), and suggest how this particular framework may create change in programs for high-risk children and youth along with their families. Broussard, Mosley-Howard, and Roychoudhury (2006) conducted focus group interviews of youth advocates, as well as parents, to determine the effectiveness of a program that was framed around a resiliency approach that looked to instil or improve protective factors for youth considered ‘at-

risk'. Moody et al. (2003) evaluated YES-P, what they referred to as a community-based intervention program. The focus of this program was to decrease youth drug use, and strengthen connections to school and community. The theoretically based program applied two frameworks, the resiliency model, as well as the developmental asset framework.

Brokenleg and Van Bockern (2003) and Carpenter et al. (2008) discussed the Circle of Courage as a holistic approach to reclaiming youth; “in order to thrive, all children need the opportunity to be reared in schools and communities that cultivate belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity” (Brokenleg & Van Bockern, 2003, p. 22). The DRUMBEAT program (Faulkner, 2012; Faulkner, Ivery, Wood, & Donovan, 2010) was implemented across Australia and New Zealand to support Aboriginal youth, which most often exhibit risk factors associated with academic struggles and risky behaviour. Faulkner et al. (2010) described the program as having a strong focus on values, “a focus that mirrors the underlying philosophy of the Circle of Courage model” (p. 19).

Johnson and Halas (2011) in describing their program, Rec and Read, shared how the Four R's methodology introduced by Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991) shape both the research and the planning within the after-school program. The Four R's—respect, relevance, reciprocity (relationships), and responsibility—“guide the development and delivery of an urban Aboriginal after-school mentor program” (p. 24). The authors concluded by expressing:

Our approach is not meant as ‘the only way’ to run a mentor program; rather it is ‘the way’ that works for us and may be of use for others who also wish to invest

in the often untapped potential of the children and youth in their schools and communities. (p. 24)

Previous to this literature search, I had reviewed literature around Hellison's (2011) teaching of personal and social responsibility (TPSR). Hellison's teaching model focuses on developing high levels of responsibility through physical activity and movement opportunities. These opportunities are typically structured for youth who are what Hellison would term as 'underserved', and who would commonly be referred to in the literature as 'at-risk' youth. This model was the framework for after-school programs focused on supporting at-risk youth in urban communities (Buckle & Walsh, 2013; Walsh, Ozaeta, & Wright, 2010; Wright, 2012). Traditionally, the TPSR model includes five levels of responsibility, with the intention being for youth participants to reach the final level—a transfer of responsibility outside of the program setting. In many instances, the intent of implementing the TPSR framework within a program was: (1) to help youth in their psychosocial development; and (2) to offer a developmentally appropriate experience with physical activity (Barker & Forneris, 2012).

Discussion

Five threads were highlighted and discussed. Through engaging with the literature, I continued to consider the opportunities that have been presented with an attention to ways my inquiry would contribute to the field.

Shifting the context. I see an opportunity to contribute to the literature from both a Canadian perspective, as well as from an Indigenous perspective. Much of the literature pertaining to after-school programs related to youth considered to be at-risk comes out of the United States. These youth, typically of African American or Latino

descent, are considered to be at-risk based on criteria that include their socio-economic status, racial or ethnic minority status, performance in school, and the location of that school (Kremer et al., 2015). Perhaps it could be suggested that within Canada, Indigenous peoples would fit into this category of at-risk when considering the statistical data both provincially and nationally. However, the context of Indigenous peoples within Canada is quite different. The colonial history of Canada saw a desire to eliminate Aboriginal governments, ignore rights agreed upon through the Treaties, and assimilate Aboriginal peoples (TRCC, 2015). The establishment and operation of residential schools in Canada was not meant to educate the youth, rather “to break their link to their culture and identity” (p. 5). The trauma of residential school survivors can no longer be denied, and the truth of Canada’s history is now, more than ever, being acknowledged. We need to continue to seek opportunities to understand the experiences of Indigenous peoples of Canada as we all move forward with reconciliation. Understanding the experiences of urban Indigenous youth that we have ethically come to know within our after-school program is one such opportunity.

Knowledge holders. What became evident from this review of literature was the need to prove the success of after-school programs, primarily through statistical data connected to academic or social performance. The programs highlighted in the research studies were in fact interventions designed to help at-risk youth perform better academically or socially. As a narrative inquirer, this notion of intervening brought tension, insinuating that the researchers and program facilitators have the knowledge needed to fix youth perceived to be at a deficit. I do not see the after-school program as an intervention, but rather as an opportunity to learn from youth, elders, families, and

communities, all of which are knowledge holders. Dissimilar to many of the studies found within this review, our intentions behind creating the after-school program was to build a connecting space, a space where we as researchers could ethically build relationships with youth, families, and the community. What happens when we see communities and youth as knowledge holders, rather than beginning from a place of deficit? By recognizing youth as knowledge holders, the role of the researcher shifts from seeking to understand an intervention, to being interested in the experiences of others.

Moving with a purpose. As discussed, multiple approaches exist when it comes to after-school programming for youth. The inclusion of mentors or tutors was an essential support when it came to enhancing youth's academic performance. Complementing the academics, in some instances, was the implementation of physical activity or recreation. I was interested in understanding approaches taken to incorporate physical activity in after-school settings and the role movement played within the program. What I discovered, however, was a lack of literature pertaining to this topic. The implementation of movement was included simply to increase physical activity levels of youth. I am interested in how purposeful, planned movement that is developmentally appropriate, might shape youth's experiences with movement and how they may conceptualize wellness. I wonder if this may help youth become more confident and competent movers. I wonder how playing together in a purposeful and inclusive manner may tell a different story.

Returning to the Discussion

Travelling temporally, I move back to my early beginnings and coming to understand the literature that existed with respect to after-school programs for Indigenous youth. At the time of the review, I was in the midst of working within the after-school program. This inquiry would not be a linear process in which I would do the review, and then move into course work solidifying my understanding of methodology and theoretical frameworks, only to then begin the study. I was immersed in the program from the onset, at the same time of the review and while coming to know narrative inquiry as both a methodology and phenomenon under study (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

It was at the completion of the initial literature review that I included a discussion upon moving through the five threads. Today as I read the discussion, I can see a direction the threads seemed to be taking me. At the time I had identified three discussion points which included notions of shifting the context, wonders around knowledge holders, as well as ideas pertaining to physical activity and movement and how it pertained to self-conceptualizations of wellness. I could also see looking back at the discussion that I needed to take time to be more critical of the literature.

I recall a discussion I was part of in one of my doctoral classes. We were discussing the levels of literature reviews moving from what would be considered a first scan through to the fourth level, which required a critical review. As I originally worked through the review, pulling five common threads through the process, I recall at times feeling tension with what I was reading. It was essential that I inquired further as to why I was feeling tension at the time of the review. Thus, what follows is a further inquiry

into tensions felt, in essence that fourth level of review I discussed with my colleagues some time ago.

Returning to the Threads – Thinking Narratively

Temporally speaking, this critique, this thinking narratively with the threads, came at a time just prior to beginning research conversations alongside Candice, Clary, and Colin. Returning to the literature threads allowed me to not only revisit how others were approaching research of after-school programming, but the return also helped to shape the research conversations.

Rationale for programming. The notion of rationalizing an after-school program was the most prevalent thread within the review. The tension surfaced for me as I read of programs being implemented to support or help youth deemed to be *at-risk*. The starting point for these studies was of an intervention, placing the youth in a position of deficit. Epistemological assumptions tied to this notion of at-risk lead to corresponding methods focused on measuring program impact. As a narrative inquirer interested in experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), this starting point in my mind discounted the experiences and in fact the knowledge I felt the youth would bring to a program.

Thinking about this thread of rationale takes me back to the opening narrative in Chapter One. This notion of connecting the dots was in fact a metaphor for this common thread of starting from a point of deficit. This transcendental view that groups all at-risk youth, or in our case Indigenous youth, was tension-filled for me. I would equate this approach to the connecting of the dots, to a pre-conceived knowing of what the picture in fact is. The dots for these youth have been connected and there is one picture that

represents all. Moving forward with the remaining threads, I found this common approach remaining prevalent. In essence, all threads stemmed from this starting point of deficit, continuing to see after-school programs as interventions, as opportunities to fix the picture outlined by static dots on the page.

Extension of school. What was it these programs were looking to fix? What was the intervention? Essentially programs were looking to help youth become more successful in school. Programs were implemented to improve the academic scores of youth or their social behaviours within school. I too would hope to see all youth achieving success in school, however, I wondered if *more of the same* was the approach youth needed. The knowledge landscapes of schools are filled with outcomes and indicators from provincially mandated curriculum. This same content, if you will, was driving the programming. I often wondered if all the youth in schools could see themselves in those curricula. If indeed youth were struggling in school, would more of *it* change things? Perhaps there is a need to look at trying a different approach.

Going beyond the curriculum, the content of the programming, I noticed that some structural components of school also remained. The saying, *teachers teach and students learn*, held true in many of the programs found in the literature. The teacher was typically an adult that worked to teach the youth. This common narrative of school continued to position youth and continued to bring tension.

What bumped was that I was seeing the youth as teachers. This sentiment was not shared within the literature. We as researchers never entered the space as experts or with a desire to improve anything, to teach anything in particular. We were looking to co-create a relational space, a connecting space in order to come to know the youth.

Again, we always envisioned the youth as knowledge holders. Positioning the youth as teachers, as knowledge holders, was not a common narrative on the school landscape. Coming back to this notion of starting points, the youth were seen to be in need of intervention, perhaps lacking something. By offering programs that were an extension of school youth continued to be positioned in deficit, whereas I was seeing youth to be knowledge holders that I could learn from and with.

Approaches. With a common rationale to initiating programs and with a common look of school, what became common as well were the approaches to implementing these interventions. Adults in the role of a mentor or tutor were commonplace. Once again, I felt tension as in my mind the youth and the knowledge they brought were being discounted.

Coming to know the youth through my inquiry, I knew there was a different story. The high school mentors that arrived at the gymnasium each week, in my narrative view, were bringing with them knowledge gained on landscapes beyond the institution of school. They were in fact teachers. So too were the youth that joined us each week.

What also came to be understood in the literature as a common approach to after-school programming was that of a multi-modal plan. The intent of this plan was to complement the academic component of the programming by incorporating what I felt to be secondary or supplementary programming. Be it an arts component or the addition of physical activity, these additions to the programming seemed to be more of a means to an end. These multi-model plans still remained interested in academic achievement, in fixing a deemed deficit. I had come to see the incorporation of movement, of play, as an integral component to our program. It was becoming a vehicle in my mind to building

relationships, thus allowing myself as researcher to come alongside (Clandinin, 2013) the youth. Physical activity was not an add-on or supplementary approach within my inquiry, it was in fact a key component to building relationships. The tension for me came from seeing the use of physical activity as nothing more than, in my view, an afterthought. I believed movement and physical activity could be much more. Perhaps this notion stems from my years of teaching physical education.

Effective programming. Accountability is a term I have come to know well in my years as an educator. For school divisions, there is a need to show success and progress. I agree that formative feedback is essential to understanding practices, providing schools and teachers with data that can essentially improve learning. Within the literature there was an obvious thread around effectiveness of programming. I consider again how educational research is seen “as the means of producing the human resources necessary to maintain the economy” (Somekh & Lewin, 2005, p. 8). Beginning again from a starting point of deficit, programs looked to measure success of interventions. Policy makers look to research to evaluate the impact of programming, using predominantly quantitative measures. What could be measured from an accountability perspective? What could be quantified to show funders the success of the programs? Quantifiable data of test scores, improvements to attendance, and academic achievement, were what funders were looking for. By no means am I discounting the importance of attendance or academic scores of youth within school. However, this approach to justifying a program did not seem to allow for youth voices to enter the picture. This research failed to take into account the variables in the social context of

after-school programming. I was interested in understanding the experiences of youth within the program to potentially learn from them.

Models. This notion of beginning with a model was a story that we lived as we first looked to secure funding for our program. What model could be implemented to achieve the success of the program? The tension arose from thinking about youth and programming transcendentally. The idea behind a model is that what works in one community will work in other communities as well. Thinking narratively, I felt that the implementation of a model was an approach that placed a framework over the experiences the youth would be bringing to the program. I associated the model approach to what I previously discussed around the extension of school thread. A model is essentially a curriculum, where in both there is a pre-determined notion of what counts and what is considered to be important. It once again came back to the idea of starting points, where a model would help youth and impact youth.

As animated in Chapter One, the starting point of this inquiry was from a narrative view of experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The program was in fact conceptualized as a narrative inquiry research space with a commitment to understanding the experiences of Indigenous youth. We, as researchers, were not looking to intervene or to provide our expertise. As researchers, we entered in the midst (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) to build with the youth a relational community that would allow us to come alongside (Clandinin, 2013). Our starting point was not to intervene or to fix, it was to understand experience.

The tension upon critically thinking with these five threads arose from this notion of starting points. Beginning from a place of deficit resulted in the implementation of

more school, led by adults, to then measure what is deemed important on the landscape of school. Programs were framed around a model, a curriculum of sorts, leading to what I saw as a transcendental approach to programming. With a starting point of deficit the end points remained the same, bringing about these common threads time and time again. The dots on the page continued to outline the same image. What would happen to the picture if the starting point changed? Would the dots shift? What different end points potentially surface?

Chapter Three: How We Come to Know

Narrative Conceptions of Knowing: Thinking Narratively

It was the first class of the semester. Sitting in the epistemology course I saw many familiar faces, which brought a sense of ease. This sense of comfort seemed to dissipate with each discussion we engaged in with respect to the weekly readings. Each time we discussed how knowledge was constituted, I felt the sense of being on an island. I felt that how I was thinking about knowledge and experience was different. Perhaps wrong? Classmates would discuss aloud positivist, critical, and post-structural theories of thinking, all the while I kept asking in my head... “are there not other ways to think about experience?” Perhaps if we get the chance to converse in smaller groups, I may decide to ask the question so others can hear.

(Field text, March 2015)

As time passed, I did get the opportunity to be part of a discussion with a small group of colleagues, all of which were part of the same epistemology course. We had decided to meet outside of class to discuss the readings and to share our thoughts on some upcoming assignments. Our conversations shifted to a conversation about how it is we come to know, a conversation I may have selfishly instigated. Like previous conversations in this particular class, the epistemological frame used most often when thinking about knowledge and knowing seemed to be related to either post-structural or critical theory conceptualizations. The majority of my colleagues seemed to be in consensus; how we come to know is determined by binaries or ideologies that exist within society. Similar to my experiences in the larger class, one would share their

epistemological commitments followed by a nod of agreement from the majority of others. Dissimilar to the classroom, I was comfortable enough in this space to ask aloud, “are there not other ways to think about experience?” The question was not asked to imply that others did not think about experience; within any theoretical frame experience becomes important. By posing this question, I wanted others to entertain the idea that there are different ways to think about experience. My colleagues viewed studying experience as a way to better understand the reality that exists outside of individual experiences. Thinking narratively about experience, I often argued that our individual lived experiences make up our realities. How could I animate my thinking to my colleagues? It was then I drew on a conversation from an earlier class. I recounted:

I remember being very intrigued by the discussion we had. We were talking about how riding a bike might be framed from differing epistemological frames. I listened intently, perhaps expecting to hear something different. It was then I blurted the question, “but what about the actual experience of riding the bike?” After a few moments of silence the class discussion shifted to a new topic, one I was inattentive to as I metaphorically returned to my island.

(Field text, February 2015)

After reminding the smaller group of this class discussion, I was now able to expand on what I was asking. If we read about riding a bike, or we discuss, or perhaps view pictures of how to ride a bike, do we truly know the experience of riding that bike? Everyone in the group could agree, being on a bicycle is the only way for each of us to experience being on that bicycle. How we were conceptualizing the reality of being on the bicycle is what seemed to differ. For me, riding that bike with the wind blowing in

my face and the rush of excitement building with every successful pedal was the reality; it may be different from how others experience riding a bike, however, that experience would be my reality. From other epistemological frames, the bike ride became an experience to explain a greater reality outside of that experience, or an exercise in attempting to find others who experience the same thing to see if it is a *true* experience. The bike ride experience, my experience, is nothing more than a means to an end.

When I posed the question, “are there not other ways to think about experience?”, I was challenging my colleagues to consider other theories about how we come to know what is real. Thinking about experience in this way is part of thinking narratively. This thinking narratively, of which I came to know over time, is underpinned with Dewey’s (1938) pragmatic ontology. Though touched upon in earlier chapters, it is imperative as I continue to think further about the theoretical framework of this inquiry to think about Dewey and how his notions lead me to consider narrative conceptions of knowledge.

Dewey’s Pragmatic Ontology

John Dewey’s (1938, 1958) view of experience is cited most often as the philosophical underpinning of narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). When I questioned my colleagues in regards to thinking about experience differently, I was considering Dewey’s (1938) pragmatic ontology in which experience is knowledge for living; experience is what makes up who we are. Simply put, “what you see (and hear, feel, think, love, taste, despise, fear, etc.) is what you get” (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 41). However, our experience does not exist (or occur) in isolation. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) established a narrative of experience, a view underpinned with Dewey’s two criteria of experience—interaction and continuity enacted in situations—both of

which help me to think about experience in relation, never in isolation. As Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggest, people “cannot be understood only as individuals...always in a social context” (p. 2). Within this social context:

Experiences grow out of other experiences, and experiences lead to further experiences. Wherever one positions oneself in that continuum—the imagined now, some imagined past, or some imagined future—each point has a past experiential base and leads to an experiential future. (p. 2)

Experience and the Three-Dimensional Narrative Inquiry Space

Continuing to draw on Dewey’s (1938) criteria around experience, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) developed a metaphorical three-dimensional narrative inquiry space. Attending to experience through inquiry into the three commonplaces of place, temporality, and sociality, is one of the aspects that distinguish narrative inquiry from other forms of qualitative research.

It is essential to stay awake to the three dimensions of place, temporality, and sociality. The commonplace of temporality is influenced by Dewey’s view of experience with relationship to continuity and interaction. Inquiry is “within a stream of experience that generates new relations that then becomes a part of future experience” (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 41). As we think this way, we see the interconnectedness between experiences lived and the stories people tell about these experiences. These stories “are the result of a confluence of social influences on a person’s inner life, social influences on their environment, and their unique personal history” (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 41). Put simply, these stories are influenced by the three commonplaces of

sociality, place, and temporality. All experiences are connected, bringing each individual to knowing.

Narrative Conceptions of Knowledge

Thinking about stories of experience and framing experience narratively, lead me to consider other narrative conceptions of knowledge that have evolved over time. Clandinin and Connelly (1995) described what they call teacher's personal practical knowledge as "that body of convictions and meanings, conscious or unconscious, that have risen from experience (intimate, social, and traditional) and that are expressed in a person's practices" (p. 7). Clandinin and Connelly (1992) first emphasized personal practical knowledge as dialectic between the social and personal within one's life (p. 3). Even though my research was situated within an after-school time period, outside the institution of school, the concept of personal practical knowledge remained pertinent as I thought about how my knowledge would be expressed in this research space. If we consider once again Dewey's notion that "every experience lives on in further experiences" (1938, p. 27), my years as a teacher continue to impact my practices and my inquiry. I could not simply leave those experiences at the paint chipped door each week as I entered that small gymnasium.

I once again shift back to the conversations I had with my colleagues in that small group setting outside of the weekly scheduled class time. It was apparent that how I was thinking about knowledge and how I viewed experience was rather different from my classmates. It was clear to me that each of us who were part of that epistemology course arrived with a diverse "body of convictions and meanings" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, p. 7) that stemmed from our own experiences. My personal practical

knowledge had been shaped differently from others in the class. Perhaps it was my connections to movement, sport, or the outdoors that helped shape my thinking around experiential learning. For others, perhaps the experiences of school and seeing the teacher as the knowledge holder in that setting limited any questioning or thinking differently. As I position myself within that epistemology class today, I recognize for certain that we all had different experiences and have come to know in different ways and, therefore, identify with this inquiry in different ways.

Thinking about the complexities of how we come to know shifts my thinking to how this coming to know shapes who we are and who we are becoming. Connelly and Clandinin's (1999) narrative conception of identity, which they call *stories to live by*, illustrates the fluid and temporal ways that we might think about identity. *Stories to live by* is in fact a narrative way to understand teachers' identities, a term that allows one to "understand how knowledge, context, and identity are linked and can be understood narratively" (p. 4). Dewey's (1938) notion of continuity and interaction continues to resonate as I constantly reflect on how my identity is shaped by my experiences and the multiple landscapes (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995) in which they occur.

My personal practical knowledge (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995), and my stories to live by (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999), are shaped by experiences upon these multiple landscapes. Clandinin and Connelly (1995) created a metaphor of a professional knowledge landscape to think narratively about school contexts. This metaphor of landscape allowed for a conceptualization that considered the three commonplaces, as well as acknowledged that landscapes are "filled with diverse people, things, and events in different relationships" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, p. 4). This conceptualization of

the school context brought Clandinin and Connelly (1996) to consider “the intellectual and moral dilemmas teachers experience as they navigate their professional knowledge landscapes” (Huber et al., 2011, p. 4). As I consider my experiences as a teacher, a consultant, an after-school program coordinator, and a researcher, I am attentive to my own stories to live by, the personal and professional knowledge landscapes within which these experiences occurred, and how these narrative conceptions shaped who I am and who I am becoming.

Once again I ponder a bike ride and how I saw that experience otherwise. My experiences on the school landscape have helped to shape my stories to live by, my identity, and how I view experience. The multiple experiences that have happened outside of this professional knowledge landscape have been equally integral to how I have come to know. I arrived to that epistemology course shaped not only by stories from my professional landscape of school, but also by personal stories from landscapes that look very different from that of the institution of school. Perhaps it is these experiences outside the school landscape, upon personal knowledge landscapes (Clandinin et al., 2014), that have allowed me to come to know differently. How I understood knowing was different from others, different from what I would say is the dominant narrative within research. The story of the bike ride animates the tension that can exist on the school landscape. The knowledge that I brought to that landscape was somewhat discounted, leaving me feeling isolated, alone to ponder upon my island.

As I continue to consider personal knowledge and how that contrasted with what counted within that doctoral class, I am drawn to thinking about the youth within the after-school program and the personal knowledge they acquire upon a multitude of

landscapes outside of school. What knowledge do the youth bring to the program, a program centering on wellness, health, and physical activity? What is it they have come to understand about these concepts upon their personal knowledge landscapes? Has this knowledge been discounted on other landscapes? I wonder if they too have experienced the bumping up against the school landscape. Do they feel like they too are on an island, isolated because their knowledge from personal landscapes is not seen as important within a provincially mandated curriculum?

Conceptualizing a Narrative Inquiry Research Space

We travel to the gymnasium from multiple locations throughout the city. At different times we converge on this connecting space, a gymnasium filled with young people. The entrance to the gymnasium is marked by stairs...through the long dimly lit hallway step by step, paint chipped doors pushed open, we enter into the gymnasium attached to a school. It is a place that we have come to know over time.

(Field text, June 2015)

Arriving from the attached school, the parking lot, a bike ride, or the closest bus stop, each of us arrives to the program from different locations bringing diverse experiences that have shaped who we are and who we are becoming. We not only consider where we all come from, we begin to think about the knowledge we arrive with and how this shapes our stories to live by—an ongoing identity-making process that is unfolding each week.

Entering the gymnasium in these various physical, social, cultural, and geographical ways, the youth find themselves with markings etched from past

experiences, some more visible than others. Their bodies, in many ways, carry stories of experiences as students from the institutional landscape of school. What about the other landscapes that are part of their identity and their stories to live by, which the youth continue to carry within them as they arrive at the program each week? We must consider not only the institutional narrative, but also the cultural, social, familial, and linguistic narratives within which lives have been composed (Clandinin, 2010). What knowledge do the youth bring from other landscapes that contribute to their conceptualizations of health, wellness, and physical activity? I consider the following field text as I continue to dwell on the youths' personal knowledge landscapes:

Water stains on the ceiling mark the physical space over time...drip by drip. In many ways, the gymnasium is a metaphoric space. It is an appendage of the physical structure of school. It is a place that is connected, but disconnected.
(Field text, June 2015)

Throughout the designated school day, the gymnasium is an extension of the school landscape. Day after day, youth engage in lessons designed by teachers as they collectively work towards achieving curricular outcomes. In essence, the teacher gives the knowledge to the youth. As the story goes, *teachers teach and students learn*. A concept such as wellness would be defined from a school curriculum perspective, and this definition of what it means to be well would be passed down to the youth. What happens when the school bell rings at the end of the day and the after-school program begins? Though the physical structure remains the same, the gymnasium becomes disconnected, no longer an extension of the school landscape. The gymnasium structure is now an out-of-school research space designed around narrative conceptions of

knowing. The structure has shifted to a space in which the knowledge of youth is integral to us all gaining a better understanding of wellness. What does it mean to be well in their personal knowledge landscapes? Furthermore, what do these personal landscapes look like and what experiences have the youth had upon them?

Familial Curriculum Making

Huber et al. (2011) looked across several narrative inquiries with children and youth. In their conceptualization, they recognized that children have two worlds of curriculum making. Huber et al. elaborated on this notion suggesting that children's lives and curriculum making also occur in meaningful ways outside of the institutional place of school. It is in this world they describe a familial curriculum-making world shaped by diverse linguistic, social, familial, and cultural narratives. I am awakened to the complexity of co-composing a curriculum of lives (Huber et al., 2011); co-composing that includes the curriculum making (Clandinin & Connelly, 1992) that children and families and others engage in their familial curriculum-making worlds, as well as the curriculum making that children and teachers do in their school curriculum-making worlds (Huber et al., 2011).

The narrative concept of familial curriculum-making helped me to think of the youth who enter the gymnasium each week to engage in an after-school program. The knowledge each youth arrives to the program with is the product of two curriculum-making worlds. How the youth have come to conceptualize wellness is the by-product of knowledge acquired in both a school curriculum-making world, as well as a familial curriculum-making world. To that point, how the youth conceptualized the gymnasium space is a by-product of multiple curriculum-making worlds.

In regards to curriculum, we are often only concerned with school curriculum. For many, the school curriculum is the knowledge that counts. I have come to know there is a wealth of knowledge gained outside the landscape of school that counts as well. How do I ethically engage with youth to learn about their lives outside of school? How do I begin to understand their personal knowledge? How do I ensure youth do not feel isolated, left alone to ponder on their island?

Conversational Spaces

This process of coming to know participants in relational ways through the development of a connecting space in a community, is not one that is entirely unfamiliar as I consider Clandinin and Connelly's notions of conversational spaces for telling and retelling life stories specific to teachers, identity, and within the institution of school. Conversational spaces were first theorized in relation to teacher identities, specifically teacher identities within institutional settings. The negotiation of teacher identities within dominant institutional narratives opened up spaces to consider conversational spaces in schools and what this might look like. Although this concept derived from studies involving teachers, it has been a grounding theoretical concept that has shaped and continues to shape narrative inquiry research studies alongside youth (Clandinin, Steeves, & Caine, 2013; Lessard, 2015; Lessard, Caine, & Clandinin, 2015).

Conversational spaces are central to the relational and ontological commitments in narrative inquiry research (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). A narrative inquiry proceeds from an ontological commitment to experience, with an interest of how people are living and the elements of their experience. To engage deeply with experience, an ontological commitment is, then, a relational commitment (Caine et al., 2013).

Conversational spaces theoretically and pragmatically provide opportunities to see big rather than small (Greene, 1995), to reshape the dominant structures that limit conversational relationships both in and outside of schools. Much of the literature which I reviewed provided statistical data in the form of numbers to describe the effectiveness of an *intervention*. I wonder how conversational spaces open opportunities to see bigger, to see beyond the numbers, but also to see youth filled with knowledge rather than in need of intervention. “One must see from the point of view of the participant in the midst of what is happening if one is to be privy to the plans people make, the initiatives they take, the uncertainties they face” (Greene, 1995, p. 10).

A gymnasium attached to a school, it is a place we have come to know over time. Located in a neighbourhood that is rich in trees...full of growth. The gymnasium is a circular brick building connected, but separate, from the cathedral style school, a reminder of architectural builds at this time.

(Field text, June 2015)

Looking back to the field note, I am again reminded that a community and a building can be seen in many different ways. “*Located in a neighbourhood that is rich in trees...full of growth*”—I saw opportunities to further inquire into the experiences of youths’ and families’ lives, perhaps through the notion of being intentional around creating conversational spaces. These conversational spaces helped me to understand the perspectives of the youth, helping me to gain an understanding of their curriculum-making worlds.

‘World’-Travelling

The gymnasium is broken down in many ways...paint chipped off the walls...broken basketball hoops hanging... an out-dated, wooden scoreboard on the wall.

(Field text, June 2015)

Physically, the gymnasium is a place in need of fixing, one may suggest.

Dissimilar to many of the gymnasiums I have worked and played in, it would be easy to dismiss this gymnasium as a place of need, a place of hardship, viewed only from the surface as needing to be ‘fixed’. I wonder as we (researchers and youth participants) physically travel to the program each week, how our perceptions may shift over time.

Concepts such as conversational spaces are important delineations as we are intentional in the research design process with participants in narrative inquiries. It is through the possibilities within the conversational spaces that we are also able to travel with more ease to the children’s and youths’ worlds of experiences as conceptualized by Maria Lugones (1987). Lugones described ‘worlds’ as constructions of society, and that ‘worlds’ can be both big and small (Greene, 1995), part or whole. Her description of ‘worlds’ comes through her narrative experiences of an Indigenous woman and the stories of her family, in particular her mother. Lugones’ ‘worlds’ include the necessary travel that she makes both physically and metaphorically through the perceptions of who she is, who she is becoming, and who she is perceived as in multiple worlds or constructions.

Lugones found it necessary to animate this description as she also is described and perceived as she moves back and forth in multiple forms, thus speaking to an

identity that is fluid and able to move between worlds. This work, and how she eloquently describes it, resonated throughout my inquiry as I too wonder about the importance of travel and how one is adept to travel with more ease, not imbued with dis/ease. Perhaps through this travel, I may better understand the knowledge landscapes of the youth within our program.

The ability to ‘world’-travel to worlds that are different than our own is a difficult negotiation for both researcher and participants. Lugones spoke of this difficult negotiation in her work as she addressed the ideas around "arrogant perception" (p. 5) and "loving perception" (Frye, 1983, p. 75). As we ‘world’-travel, we do so perceiving what that world may be. To travel with arrogant perception, one sees others’ “worlds” as classifiable (Lugones, 1987, p. 18), predicated on social constructs. Lugones acknowledged the importance of perceiving lovingly as opposed to arrogantly to truly begin to understand others’ ‘worlds’. She explained:

I come to characterize as playful ‘world’ travelling. To the extent that we learn to perceive others arrogantly or come to see them only as products of arrogant perception and continue to perceive them that way, we fail to identify with them- fail to love them-in this particular deep way. (Lugones, 1987, p. 4)

As I prepared to engage in this inquiry, I wondered how this shapes us. Do we arrogantly perceive the children and youth that we are coming to know? How do we continue to shift our perceptions and travel to a ‘world’ that is imbued with loving perception? The necessity to ‘world’-travel throughout this inquiry became a touchstone, helping me stay awake (Greene, 1995) to perceptions and to the possibilities within what we may not be able to see at first within the lives of children and youth.

“The gymnasium is broken down in many ways...paint chipped off the walls...broken basketball hoops hanging...” The gymnasium is a space where we come to know the children and youth, and where they quite literally take us home to their experiences outside of school. ‘World’-travelling with loving perception continued to be a theoretical concept that I would dwell within, helping me to pay attention and move beyond the physical structures of a school building, moving beyond the inner desire to ‘fix’ or rebuild the physical space. Dwelling within this concept opened up spaces to examine my perceptions; perceptions that were shaping influences that impacted the ability to potentially and/or possibly travel to a ‘world’ beyond our own in hopes of understanding youth experiences and the worlds in which they live.

How Do We Come to Know?

How is it we come to know? How I have come to answer this question comes after taking the time to think narratively. As I consider narrative conceptions of knowing, all of which connect back to Dewey’s (1938) pragmatic ontology of experience, I am able to theoretically frame my inquiry. Thinking with Dewey’s notion of continuity and interaction, I am able to situate myself as researcher within the study, acknowledging how my experiences from multiple landscapes have impacted my stories to live by (Clandinin & Connelly, 1999) and how I come to know. It is through this self-situating that I am able to recognize that youth also have experiences on personal landscapes that impact their identities, and shape how they come to know. This has led me to consider multiple curriculum-making worlds conceptualized as familial curriculum-making (Huber et al., 2011), which in turn brought me to consider the narrative concepts of conversational spaces (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) and ‘world’-

travelling (Lugones, 1987). Taking the time to come to know narrative inquiry as both methodology and phenomenon under study (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) transferred into a theoretical frame for my inquiry.

Chapter Four: Methodology

Coming to Know Narrative

It was the first class of the semester and I recall the apprehension and excitement I was feeling moving through the syllabus, discovering what the assignments would be for this research methods doctoral class. I was drawn to a group assignment where we had an opportunity to provide a workshop on a methodology of our choosing. I quickly scanned the list hoping my preferred methodology was included on the list. There it was... Narrative Inquiry. At the time I had no idea how many different ways those two words, narrative and inquiry, could be interpreted.

(Field text, September 2014)

When I think back to the early beginnings of my doctoral studies and the opportunity to further understand narrative inquiry, I quickly discovered those two words—narrative and inquiry—had many different meanings and interpretations within qualitative research. The assignment required us to construct a workshop on our understandings of a chosen methodological approach. Early on in the class, we were given the opportunity to examine workshop presentations and final papers that had been previously submitted. As I looked over the bibliographies that supported these presentations, I remember feeling confused and overwhelmed as I had not read nor even recognized many of the pieces listed. Prior to this doctoral class, I had spent the previous year coming to understand narrative inquiry as conceptualized by Connelly and Clandinin (1990). Having read a number of books and articles on the methodology, I had in my mind an idea of the significant readings pertaining to narrative inquiry.

Scanning the bibliographies, I recall how perplexed I was seeing only limited mention of Clandinin or Connelly, if any at all. Reflecting on this experience, I can now say I was naive to the breadth of narrative research and what I would come to understand as a co-opting (Caine, Estefan, & Clandinin, 2013) of the term narrative inquiry.

Narrative Methodologies

It was becoming apparent that how I came to understand narrative inquiry as a methodology was just one of numerous conceptualizations. As Riessman and Speedy (2007) discussed, “narrative inquiry in the human sciences is a 20th century development; the field has ‘realist’, ‘postmodern’, and constructionist strands, and scholar and practitioners disagree on origin and precise definition” (p. 429). The term narrative carries with it numerous meanings, and within the social sciences it often is synonymous with stories. These stories or narratives are thought of as data in qualitative methodologies, such as phenomenology, ethnography, case studies, as well as narrative inquiry. Regardless of definition I would suggest that narrative or narrative analysis or narrative inquiry, and the aforementioned methodologies among others, would all fall into the larger paradigm of narrative research. These narratives or story forms of representation are by no means new phenomena, be it that human beings have always been living and telling stories about their living (Clandinin, 2006). What can be considered as new, perhaps, is the rise over the past 15 to 20 years of emergent *strands* of narrative methodologies within social science research using stories of experience as ways of representing results or findings in various qualitative and quantitative approaches. As I considered my understanding of narrative inquiry it was imperative to

recognize these emergent strands exist, but more importantly, to understand the current literature pertaining to the possibilities and tensions surrounding these methodologies.

This emergence of narrative methodologies has allowed researchers to tell a story through a literary form that provides a way for silenced voices to be heard and felt (Blumenreich, 2004; Dowling, Garrett, Lisahunter, & Wrench, 2015). Perhaps for this reason a number of methodological off-shoots (Gard, 2014, p. 93) have surfaced. Scholars (Gilbourne, Jones, & Jordan, 2014; Linghede, Larsson, & Redelius, 2016) within narrative research see the potential to provide marginalized voices an opportunity to be heard through showing rather than telling the complex nature of human life (Linghede et al., 2016). Admittedly these emerging methodologies are not intended to produce absolutes but perhaps provide some understanding of other experiences (Phoenix & Brannen, 2014). Methodologically speaking, narrative research takes account of the fact that “narratives, however, seductive, are, like all accounts, partial” (Phoenix & Brannen, 2014, p. 14). In a similar vein, Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) suggest that not all qualitative research rests on the assumption that a singular truth is possible. Instead they posit the notion of crystallization, which “provides us with a deepened, complex, and thoroughly partial understanding of the topic” (p. 963).

This emergence of narrative methodologies has been criticized for its seeming inability to produce anything new within literature (Dowling et al., 2015). Gard (2014) suggests “narrative writing deflects criticism in a way that ‘normal’ academic writing is less able to do” (p. 96). This notion of *normal*, this gold standard (Lincoln & Cannella, 2004), is the “difficult academic work of generating new and important research” (Gard, 2014, p. 93). From this point of view, the *potential* of narrative research does not seem

to be innovative, rather a repeat of what has already been done, research that is *partial*. It is this incomplete nature of representation which is a concern. Misfud (2016) acknowledges how this incompleteness is due to what Koro-Ljungberg (2008) describes as being caught with a tension between the desire to know and the limits of representation. It is these limits, this partiality to some, which leads to questions of validity. Kim (2016) highlights that narrative research is always interpretive at every stage of the process. We as narrative researchers do not stand outside in a neutral, objective position analyzing what has been said (p. 190).

On many occasions, the research emerges from the researcher's personal biography and lived experience . . . the ways in which they go about gaining access and building relationships with those who they do not see as "data" but rather as peoples and partners in research. (Brown, Carducci, & Kuby, 2014, p. 6)

Nunokoosing (2005) sees this emergence of research from lived experience of the researcher as a major flaw within narrative methodologies. "It is the researcher who reconstructs the text of the transcript from the talk of the interview". The natural course of research is to start by asking, "What do I want to know?" and the researcher reconstructing the text often times will answer the next question, "How can I know?" (p. 699). The concern arises how to write about other people's lives and engage with the narrative that they have provided (Leskela-Karki, 2008). The role of the researcher is seen as problematic as he/she alone is constructing the narrative itself (Blumenreich, 2004) and therefore can be selective in order to find what it is he/she is in search of based on initial research questions.

Moving forward I am awake to the both the possibilities and tensions that have been highlighted in the literature; the possibilities of acknowledging sometimes silenced voices as well as tensions that exist when it comes to interpreting these voices resonates with my work alongside Indigenous youth. I continue to ponder where narrative inquiry as conceptualized by Connelly and Clandinin (1990) fits within the ever-evolving strands of narrative methodologies. Subsequently, I seek to identify how my chosen methodology differs from other forms of narrative research while remaining aware of the critiques within the literature.

“Narrative” “Inquiry”

There it was . . . Narrative Inquiry. At the time I had no idea how many different ways those two words, narrative and inquiry, could be interpreted.

(Field text, September 2014)

Considering once again the opening narrative, I can recall a tension while designing the workshop on narrative inquiry, which in reality was to be a workshop on narrative research. As I worked through the process of constructing the presentation on narrative inquiry within my research methods course, I recognized the tension I was experiencing stemmed from the theoretical debate about the phenomenon that narrative inquirers are studying. Clandinin (2007) acknowledged that there is a definite distinction within narrative inquiry where we “are studying either lived experience as a storied phenomenon or the stories people tell about their experiences” (p. xiv). I considered this notion of distinction as I thought about my experience of constructing a workshop.

Figure 2 illustrates this distinction. Whereas “Narrative Inquiry”⁵ as conceptualized by Connelly and Clandinin (1990) is how I as a researcher came to the research methods course, others came with an understanding of “Narrative” “Inquiry”⁶ or what one may determine to be an inquiry into the narratives or stories, if you will.

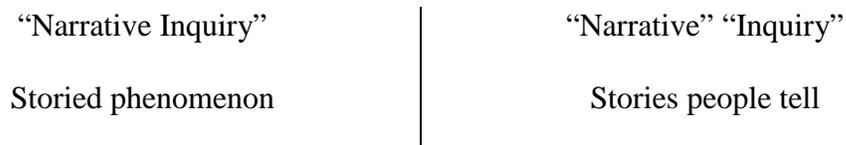


Figure 2. Storied phenomenon.

Looking back, being asked to describe “narrative inquiry” and “narrative” “inquiry” within the same workshop was difficult for me for what I would surmise as naivety on my part to the vast array of conceptualizations and definitions within academia. The works of Daiute (2014), Wells (2011), and Webster and Mertova (2007) are just a few examples within the literature that define their work as narrative inquiry and in fact use narrative inquiry in the titles of their books. Yet, when examining these pieces I see what I would deem as narrative research in which the authors are interpreting or analyzing others’ stories. I was beginning to see the terms narrative research and narrative inquiry used interchangeably, which as an emerging scholar brought about confusion and self-doubt.

⁵ The term “Narrative Inquiry” as such refers to a methodological approach conceptualized by Connelly & Clandinin (1990). Moving forward in the paper, any reference to narrative inquiry is taken from this conceptualization.

⁶ The terms “Narrative” and “Inquiry” as such refer to narrative research in general, not particular to Connelly & Clandinin’s (1990) conceptualization.

Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber's (1998) book *Narrative Research: Reading, Analysis, and Interpretation*, is cited regularly in narrative research. Lieblich et al. defined narrative research as "any study that uses or analyzes narrative materials" (p. 2). The authors go on to describe a model for the classification and organization of types of narrative analysis. They contended, "upon looking at different possibilities for reading, interpreting, and analyzing life stories and other narrative materials, two main independent dimensions emerge—those of (a) holistic versus categorical approaches and (b) content versus form" (p. 12). This process of analyzing narratives on what is said or what is written, or how it is said or how it is written etc., speaks to the notion of inquiring into narratives or 'narrative' 'inquiry' as opposed to 'narrative inquiry'.

Of course, how one goes about analyzing narratives is up for debate as well. Polkinghorne (1995) suggested further distinction within narrative analysis itself between narrative analysis and analysis of narrative. Whereas Lieblich et al. (1998) look to take the narrative data and analyze common themes (analysis of narrative), narrative analysis according to Polkinghorne seeks to organize the narrative data to create a narrative plot that amalgamates the data. Though approaches may differ, both Lieblich et al. and Polkinghorne are interested in interpreting the stories of participants. This interpretation of one's story or narrative is what narrative researchers would agree is the central focus of the research. However, what counts as stories, the kinds of stories they choose to study, how they collect these stories, or the methods they use certainly vary. Within the framework of narrative research, researchers use a number of approaches, strategies, and methods (Dowling et al., 2015; Gard, 2014; Lieblich et al., 1998) all of which are intended to analyze or interpret others' experiences.

Days prior to presenting in our research methods course I was introduced to the 2013 article by Caine et al. entitled, *A Return to Methodological Commitment: Reflection on Narrative Inquiry*. This article reinforced my new found understanding of just how diverse narrative research is and how terminology brings with it many interpretations. It became clear that the debate of what is narrative, or narrative inquiry, or narrative research, has been ongoing within academia for a number of years; I was simply new to the game. Caine et al. highlighted distinctions to make evident how and why narrative inquiry, as conceptualized by Connelly and Clandinin (1990), is vastly different from other forms of narrative research. The authors discussed how the uses of story and narrative seem to be *co-opted* under the label of narrative inquiry and go on to explain the tension this brings, a tension that I experienced in the early days of my doctoral journey as I tried to work through defining narrative inquiry and distinguishing the methodology from what it was not.

My intent is not to contend other conceptualizations of narrative research. Rather, I look to acknowledge the distinctions that exist from what I have come to know about narrative inquiry. These distinctions are animated in Pinnegar and Daynes' (2007) chapter entitled, *Locating Narrative Inquiry Historically*, as they discuss four turns or changes in direction from one way of thinking toward another. The authors stated:

...we become narrative inquirers only when we recognize and embrace the interactive quality of the researcher-researched relationship, primarily use stories as data and analysis, and understand the way in which what we know is embedded in a particular context, and finally that narrative knowing is essential to inquiry. (p. 7)

A “turn” to narrative inquiry as suggested by Pinnegar and Daynes, implies the distinction from other forms of narrative research discussed earlier with the introduction of Figure 2.

How I think about narratives or stories as a narrative inquirer differs from how others within narrative research think about them. David Morris (2002) discussed the distinctions between thinking about stories and thinking with stories. Morris’ thinking resonated with me as I continued to explore the distinctions between narrative inquiry and other forms of narrative research.

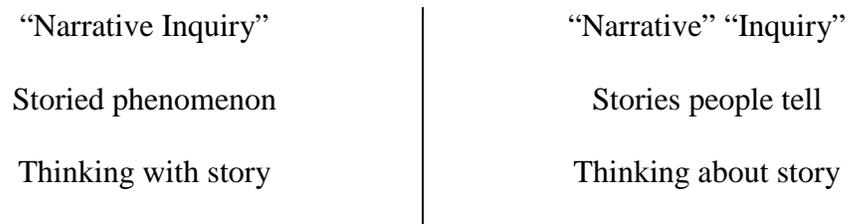


Figure 3. Thinking with story.

To think about stories, one conceivably considers that story to be an object, something that can be analytically represented. Conversely, thinking with stories is seen more as a relational process. As narrative inquirers we do not see the experiences of participants in isolation, apart from our experiences as researchers. Rather, we become part of the participants’ lives and they part of ours, always in relation. We as narrative inquirers come alongside our participants becoming a part of their lives and they part of ours. “Therefore, our lives—and who we are and are becoming, on our and their landscapes —are also under study” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 30).

Ontological and Epistemological Commitments

To further animate the distinctions between narrative inquiry and other forms of narrative research from both an ontological and an epistemological standpoint, I consider the following field text. Inquiring into this field text, I will illustrate tensions that arose as my ontological commitment to experience bumped with dominant research paradigms.

The assignment was clear, yet the clarity brought about tension and dis/ease.

The assignment asked us to describe our epistemological approach by positioning our research within one of three research paradigms: positivism, interpretivism, or critical theory. The assumption that had been made was that my epistemological commitments as a narrative inquirer 'fit' into one of these dominant paradigms. (Field text, January 2015)

Reflecting on the above experience, I recall an uncomfortable feeling. Being asked to fit my thinking and commitments as a narrative inquirer into a dominant paradigm reinforced the notion of co-opting the term narrative inquiry (Caine et al., 2013). If one sees “narrative inquiry” and “narrative” “inquiry” as being the same thing, the assignment makes perfect sense. For “narrative” “inquiry” (narrative research), the fit is indeed interpretivism. Narrative researchers are thinking about stories, looking to interpret the narratives. They are interested in the stories people tell.

As narrative inquirers enter into a research space they do so interested in the storied phenomenon, beginning with an interest in experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). A narrative inquiry proceeds from an ontological commitment to experience, with an interest of how people are living and the elements of their experience. Narrative

inquiry does not proceed from epistemological perspectives (realist, constructionist, or postmodern), rather how we seek to understand and evoke experience arises from within the inquiry (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). John Dewey's (1938, 1958) pragmatic ontology and his view of experience are cited most often as the philosophical underpinnings of narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). Dewey's two criteria of experience, interaction and continuity enacted in situations, are what Clandinin and Connelly (2000) drew upon as they developed a narrative view of experience. Considering the notion of interaction, they wrote, "people are individuals and need to be understood as such, but they cannot be understood only as individuals. They are always in relation, always in a social context" (p. 2). With respect to the second criterion of continuity, Dewey (1938) stated, "every experience lives on in further experiences" (p. 27). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) concur with Dewey stating:

Experiences grow out of other experiences, and experiences lead to further experiences. Wherever one positions oneself in that continuum—the imagined now, some imagined past, or some imagined future—each point has a past experiential base and leads to an experiential future. (p. 2)

These criteria of experience ground Dewey's pragmatic ontology around the notion that our experiences are transactional rather than transcendental. The following quotation stemming from both Dewey (1981) and Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) helps to frame the research with this transactional thinking:

The regulative ideal for inquiry is not to generate an exclusively faithful representation of a reality independent of the knower. The regulative ideal for inquiry is to generate a new relation between a human being and her environment--her life, community, world--one that "makes possible a new way of dealing with them" (Dewey, 1981, p. 175). In this pragmatic view of knowledge,

our representations arise from experience and must return to that experience for their validation. (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 39)

Further to this, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) explained:

The contribution of a narrative inquiry is more often intended to be the creation of a new sense of meaning and significance with respect to the research topic than it is to yield a set of knowledge claims that might incrementally add to the knowledge in the field. (p. 42)

Beginning with experience and continuing to return to individual experience is what makes the work transactional in nature. I consider Biesta's (2014) notion of relationships between our experiences and possible actions or responses of those involved. The truth, if you will, is always contextual which also means the truth is itself *temporal* (p. 41). This transactional thinking often bumps with dominant research paradigms that look to find answers that are more generalizable, transcendental in nature. Clandinin and Rosiek's (2007) chapter, *Mapping a Landscape of Narrative Inquiry: Borderland Spaces and Tensions*, provides opportunities to place narrative inquiry alongside other paradigms to gain greater understanding of one's own commitments and the subtle and not-so-subtle affinities and differences that exist. Through my journey of coming to know narrative inquiry, it has been most beneficial to not only come to understand what narrative inquiry is, but also what it is not through considering the borderlands of dominant research paradigms. All paradigms exist on a research landscape, if you will, each bordering the other. Rather than thinking about these paradigms as having distinct borderlines, suggesting each paradigm is completely distinct from the others, the notion of borderlands allows for possible connections and commonalities to exist (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 58).

As discussed in Chapter Two, Denzin and Lincoln (2005) identified eight moments that help one to understand the steady growth within the social sciences. A postmodern phase saw researchers engaged in what many considered experimental forms of inquiry, which in turn led to a time in which new arts-informed ways were used to study and portray lived experience. This vast array of conceptual ingredients (Luckenchuk & Kolich, 2013) has allowed for a tremendous breadth of qualitative research among borderlands, all of which look in one form or another to represent lived experience. I am cognizant that within educational research there has been an embracement of this experimental moment, which has contributed to a shift “from a focus on processes of description to a discussion of the process of representation” (Rosiek & Pratt, 2013). As Phoenix and Brannen (2014) remind me, “no one method produces ‘objective’, comprehensive knowledge” (p. 11), however the intent of bringing about new insights remains a constant. This notion of no one method suggests that there is a wide range of ways to move away from the conventional form of analysis and representation, and that narratives are not something that are found but rather something created (Brannen, 2013; Misfud, 2016; Schiff, 2012; Watson, 2011). The point being, there are a number of thoughts as to what constitutes narrative as researchers look to “chart new paths” (Misfud, 2016, p. 867) and consider applications for addressing participant representation (Byrne, 2017; Galman, 2009). This notion of new paths draws me to consider what Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) offered, that narrative inquiry “is a quintessentially pragmatic methodology. What genealogy is to post-structuralist Foucauldian sociology, what critical ethnography is to critical theory, what experiments are to positivism, narrative inquiry is to Deweyan pragmatism” (p. 42).

As I came to understand other research paradigms and continued to think about borderlands, the term narrative, representation of participants, and where narrative inquiry was situated, I needed to find a way to represent my thinking. I looked to explain how I viewed experience and how that differed from other paradigms. To illustrate, I developed a visual representation of a funnel. Figure 4 is what I consider a critical approach to understanding experience. The experience still exists; however, how that experience came to be is layered with ideological factors that tend to reduce the experience. The experience is relegated to the bottom of the funnel and is in fact the 'residual effect' of what is placed within. If one were to look down through the funnel to view the experience, it would of course be clouded, covered. The same visual could be used when beginning from a post-structural frame. Instead of ideological factors, the funnel would be filled with existing binaries. From this paradigm, one would listen to stories by listening through that story to hear the operation of a broader social discourse that is shaping that persons' experience, once again clouding the experience.

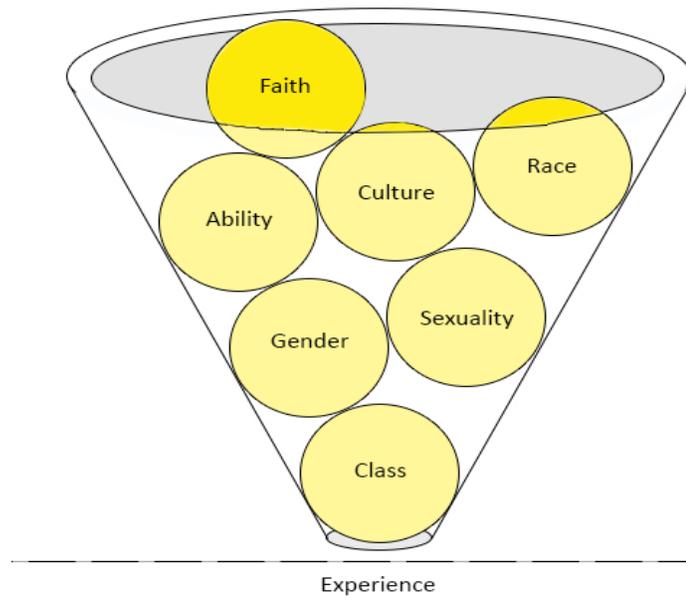


Figure 4. Critical view of experience.

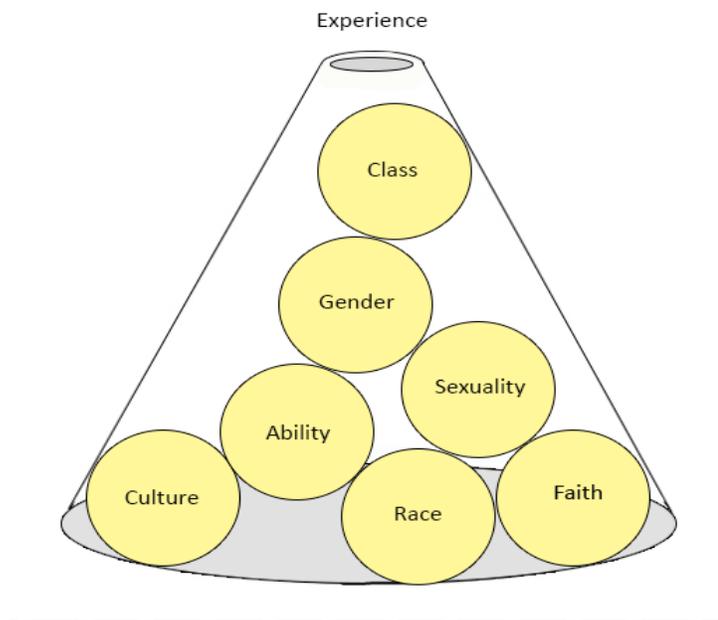


Figure 5. Narrative view of experience.

What if we were to flip the funnel? Figure 5 still acknowledges sociality, both personal and social influences; however, in contrast to the previous figure, this visual begins with experience explicitly. This flipped funnel is representative of an ontological commitment to lived experience. Considering these two funnels, I am reminded of Greene's (1995) notion of seeing small and seeing big:

To see things or people small, one chooses to see from a detached point of view, to watch behaviours from the perspective of the system, to be concerned with trends and tendencies rather than the intentionality and concreteness of everyday life. (p. 10)

We see small as we peer through the first funnel, entering with a preconceived understanding of experience. Conversely, the intent of a narrative inquiry is to see big, that is to see each individual in his or her particularity, as illustrated in the second funnel.

Thinking Three Dimensionally

Stories are just that until we spend time inquiring into the experiences. How do we ensure that we are looking beyond thinking about the story to thinking with the story (Morris, 2002)? Continuing to draw on Dewey's criteria of experience, continuity and interaction as well as his notion of situation, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) developed a metaphorical three-dimensional narrative inquiry space. The three dimensions encapsulate a space in which narrative inquirers work throughout the inquiry.

As narrative inquirers, we need to remain awake to the three dimensions of place, temporality, and sociality. Attending to experience through inquiry into all three commonplaces is, in part, what distinguishes narrative inquiry from other methodologies. Through attending to the commonplaces, narrative inquirers are able to study the

complexity of the relational composition of people's lived experiences both inside and outside of an inquiry and, as well, to imagine the future possibilities of these lives. Place is defined as "the specific concrete, physical and topological boundaries of place where the inquiry and events take place" (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 480). All experiences occur in specific places or sequences of places. The sociality dimension focuses on the personal and the social. Social conditions refer to the milieu, the conditions under which people's experiences and events are unfolding. Thirdly, the temporality dimension considers when events take place. Events are in temporal transition (Clandinin, Schaefer, & Downey, 2014), meaning all events and people have a past, present, and possible futures. While inquiring into the lived experiences of participants, it is imperative to continue to think of experience three-dimensionally.

Research Puzzle or Research Question

Our class had just ended and like most weeks, Kelly and I continued the conversations we were having around our proposed research as we began our walk to our vehicles. As we continued to walk, talk, and prepare ourselves to enter into the cold, we bumped into a friend of Kelly's. I was introduced to Darryl, who had recently defended his dissertation. Our conversation was brief, explaining to him that we just finished class and that we were just discussing our potential research. Curious to know, Darryl asked the question, "What is your research question?" My initial internal response was, "how much time do you have?"

(Field text, February 2015)

Numerous times I have been asked the same question Darryl posed. From my experiences within doctoral studies it became evident that formulating a specific research question was an integral step within the process of proposal writing (Schram, 2006) within many research paradigms. Determining the research question leads then to determining a valid methodological approach. Narrative inquiry is different. Each narrative inquiry is composed around a particular wonder, and rather than thinking about framing a research question with a precise definition or expectation of an answer, narrative inquirers frame a research puzzle that carries with it “a sense of a search, a ‘re-search,’ a searching again . . . a sense of continual reformulation” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 124). By thinking around a puzzle rather than a specific question, the researcher remains committed to the experiences of those they are working alongside. Narrative inquirers view entering into the research with a specific research question as reductionist, as a discounting of the complexity, the multiplicity, of individual lived experience.

Formulating a puzzle of wonders as opposed to specific questions brings with it a level of uncertainty. Often times within research, uncertainty can be seen as a negative. Considering the notion of a research puzzle further animates distinctions between narrative inquiry and other forms of narrative research. A puzzle, full of uncertainties, allows for multiple stories, not just one.

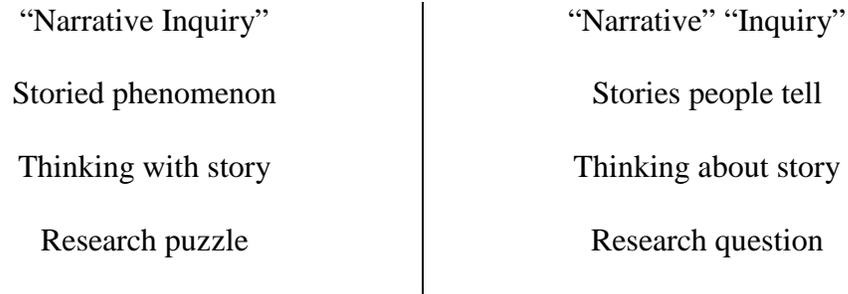


Figure 6. Research puzzle.

Those that inquire into narratives within other dominant methods are in search of a specific answer, hoping to find that answer through the analysis of participants’ stories. I wonder what is potentially missed with this approach, perhaps discounting experiences which at first glance do not connect to the research question. Going back to Clandinin’s (2013) need for justification because of the perceived simplistic process of narrative inquiry, the uncertainty of narrative inquiry is often critiqued by those from other research paradigms as an undemanding approach. Contrary to this thinking, I see the notion of a research puzzle as an opportunity for multiple stories to surface as we enter in the midst, and end in the midst, of experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Taking the time to acknowledge the distinctions within narrative research specifically, as well as to recognize the borderlands that exist with other paradigms, has assisted in my doctoral journey, helping me to recognize the uniqueness of narrative inquiry. Acknowledging the affinities and differences of narrative inquiry and other research methods strengthened my inquiry moving forward and reinforced the processes of the inquiry. Though not necessarily a linear process, particular checkpoints occur on the journey from the early beginnings of formulating a research puzzle, to final research

texts and published works. The remaining pieces of this chapter bring to light specific components of my inquiry.

Ethical Considerations

Often times, the ethical considerations for a research study are a section that would come towards the end, after a full description of the methods. If one were to simply constitute ethics as the institutional approval, this of course would make perfect sense. I, however, choose to discuss the ethical considerations prior to explaining the work involved in collecting data. To engage deeply with experience is a relational commitment (Caine et al., 2013) where ethical matters need to be considered over the duration of the inquiry. Of course, institutional ethics is a critical component of the research process, holding the researcher to a high standard of ethical care. As a co-researcher within a larger study, I have already been part of the process of completing the university ethics board application. I found there to be a definite discrepancy as to what ethics boards deemed important within the process and what I as a narrative inquirer imagined ethics to be. We did not want to enter into this particular research space as the experts, or as the sole knowledge holders. Yet, the institutional ethics application wanted us to know how many ‘interviews’ we would conduct, how many participants we would gather data from, and in many ways wanted to know what we would find before we even began the research.

With a commitment to experience and understanding, narrative inquiry is very much relational where both researcher and participants are under study. It is imperative to continually remain awake to the relational ethics. “For those of us wanting to learn to engage in narrative inquiry, we need to imagine ethics as being about negotiation,

respect, mutuality and openness to multiple voices” (Clandinin, 2006, p. 52). Our ethical commitments do not end with ethics board approval, quite the opposite in fact.

Throughout the narrative inquiry, we as researchers co-compose alongside participants moving from field texts to final research texts, always considering the lives we enter in the midst and eventually at some point exit.

This notion of relational ethics remained with me as I moved through the inquiry. Over the 3 years of coming to know Candice, Clary, and Colin, we have spent and continue to spend countless hours together. We have not only spent each week together within the program, we have also shared experiences elsewhere, such as meals together or family barbeques. A relationship has developed with all three participants. It is this relationship, which within other paradigms may be seen as a creation of bias, that is the foundation of this inquiry. Our ever-evolving relationship brings with it a level of trust, which lends itself to my commitments as a narrative inquirer from a methods perspective. The time taken to build these friendships is critical to our researching alongside each other, and provided a co-composed study within which the youth were always involved.

Remaining awake to the relational ethics that is foundational in narrative inquiry as I came to understand it, I must acknowledge that power remains present, as it is in all human interactions. Even with years spent alongside the youth in the community, a non-hierarchical position is not possible. In nonpositivist paradigms, including narrative methodologies, research is seen as a coproduction in knowledge (Karnieli-Miller, Strier, & Pessach, 2009) in which “the division between researcher and subject is blurred, and control over representation is increasingly shared” (Gergen & Gergen, 2000, p. 1035).

Different forms and degrees of power characterize this *coproduction*, which shifts back and forth between researcher and participant, both of which “may use their respective powers to negotiate the level of information provided about the study” (Anyan, 2013, p. 4). This shifting of power exists due to the fact the participant possesses the information about the study and the researcher owns knowledge and experience for the study (Karnieli-Miller et al., 2009). At best as I research alongside the participants within the inquiry I can be involved in seeking reciprocity (Nunkoosing, 2005). Nunkoosing (2005) explains that this attempt at reciprocity is likely futile as in the end the researcher is the one who reconstructs the transcripts (p. 699). As I animate in the subsequent methods section I do see how narrative inquiry, as I have conceptualized it, allows for more of a co-composition than other forms of narrative methodologies. Regardless, there continues to be a positioning of self in relation to other (Watson, 2012) that I must remain awake to as I consider the methods of the inquiry.

Methods

Puzzle and participants. I knew from the early beginnings of my doctoral journey my research puzzle would revolve around the experiences of youth involved in the after-school program I was part of since 2013. Final decisions as to who the research participants would be did not come until early 2015. It was important for me to begin by establishing relationships within the program and allowing time for the many relationships to take shape and grow organically. As I think again around the literature I reviewed, there was a common tension felt with respect to the notion of relational ethics (Caine et al., 2013). Many of the studies felt to me to be in a hurry to find research participants to fit the question they were looking to answer. Research participants

needed to simply fit the categories of at-risk or in need of intervention in studies that were interested in understanding programs. I, on the other hand, was interested in understanding youth's experiences, thus I knew it was an ethical responsibility to take the time to truly build relationships.

As relationships continued to develop through weekly interactions, I saw a strong connection being made with the high school mentors. In part, this was due to my ability to connect with each outside of our weekly program hours through social media venues or in-person conversations. At times, our best conversations came when an offered car ride home on a cold winter day was accepted. From my growing understanding of narrative inquiry, methodologically speaking I looked to select three participants for this inquiry. As it came to be, Candice, Clary, and Colin agreed to become participants within the inquiry. Candice and Colin were both high school mentors in grades 12 and 10, respectively. Clary was a high school volunteer at the inception of the program in 2013 and was now enrolled in university, continuing to volunteer as a mentor.

What experiences and knowledge do these participants bring to the program? As they shift from place to place, bringing with them all the experiences that have shaped and continue to shape their identities, I wondered how they were experiencing the experience of being in the inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). What is it the participants were coming to understand from their participation in the inquiry? How do the participants see themselves within the program? I wonder if the participants see this space differently from school or familial landscapes.

Field to field texts. Entering in the midst places the researcher alongside the participants in what Clandinin (2013) calls “an ongoing relational inquiry space, a

relational space we call the field” (p. 45). We begin by listening to the stories of our participants, and being alongside as they live and tell their stories. This process is seen more as conversation as opposed to interviews. These conversations allow a space for the stories of both researcher and participant, whereas an interview is typically thought of as a means to answer predetermined questions.

The collection of field texts, what other paradigms call data, can be collected, composed, and created many ways, all however, drawing on the experiences of participants and inquirers. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) began using the term field texts as opposed to data, acknowledging how the work in the field is a co-composition that is reflective and experiential. These field texts are essentially records of this co-composition and may include field notes, transcripts of conversations, artifacts such as photographs or drawings, as well as writings (from both participant and inquirer). How this looks is certainly contextual to the circumstances of the research space and participants. Clandinin (2013) points out that these field texts are diverse and it is important as researchers to stay awake to the multiple ways to tell and live experiences while continuing to keep the three-dimensional space in mind.

Specific to my inquiry, numerous field texts had been developed. At the conclusion of each week’s program, I entered a reflection on experience in my journal or through recorded dictation, which was then transcribed. These reflections varied, at times being centred on a short conversation with youth or from observations I made that seemed to resonate. I also collected annals created by the participants and myself as we considered experiences within the program. Specifically, I at times would ask the youth to represent in a drawing or through text what the after-school program meant to them.

How could they explain the program to others? I also spent time with the youth mentors, considering what experiences have brought us to this program and impacted our conceptualization of topics such as wellness, school, community, and leadership, to name a few. A particular artifact that each mentor created was a personal blog post in which each wrote about personal experiences, as well future aspirations and advice to the youth they were working with in the program. To support the writing of this blog post, each participant also created a timeline of sorts, where moments that each felt impacted who they are were recorded on the page. This visual representation of significant moments was an artifact that we returned to often while engaging in research conversations.

It was at this stage, that I began to see the co-composition process within narrative inquiry taking shape. Field texts were not simply collected and created by me, the researcher, as would be the case using other research paradigms. As the researcher, I saw the collection of field texts as something I did in conjunction with participants. It is important to note, this collection of field texts developed over the first year of the inquiry was a vast collection that contained field texts connected to many participants within the after-school program. This initial collection of field texts was started prior to any decisions being made with respect to who in fact would be research participants.

With the selection of participants determined and field texts continuing to be compiled, I negotiated with each participant in the spring of 2016 to participate in research conversations. From April to June 2016, I engaged in five 90-minute research conversations with each participant. While considering what I have come to know from the literature review, as well as my personal experiences within the program, I sought to

begin each research conversation by posing some of my own wonders connected to my initial research puzzles. The first research conversation centred on how the youth experienced school, and how they saw our program. In research conversation two, I was interested in hearing about the participants' experiences working with the youth within the program. Were there experiences outside of the program and outside of school that helped them to work alongside the youth? Thirdly, I was interested in hearing what the participants thought about working with Indigenous youth from their community? Conversation four focused on the notion of knowledge. What knowledge did the participants bring to the program that perhaps was not counted in other places? The final research conversation revolved around the notion of play and purposeful movement. Were the movement experiences within the program similar or different from what the participants had experienced in other settings? What role did movement play within the program? All research conversations were recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Field texts to interim research texts. At a point in the research, I had to step away to consider the vast array of field texts collected from living alongside the participants. Detailed field texts support the transition to research texts, filling in the richness, nuances, and intricacies of the lived stories as well as the landscape (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Within many forms of research, this would be a time to analyze the data. From a narrative inquiry perspective, this is an opportunity to continue the co-composition process. "Interim research texts are often partial texts that are open to allow participants and researchers opportunities to further co-compose storied interpretations and to negotiate the multiplicity of possible meanings" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 47). This was an opportunity for me to begin the process of writing 'narrative accounts' based

upon the lived experiences in part with the participants as it related to the initial research puzzle(s).

The term narrative account, or perhaps narrative accounting, allows us to give an account, an accounting, a representation of the unfolding of lives of both participants and researchers, at least as they became visible in those times and places where our stories intersected and were shared. (Clandinin, 2013, p. 132)

At the core of this process remained the relational commitment within narrative inquiry.

Heeding the advice of Clandinin (2013, p. 131) around the initial drafts of narrative accounts, I implemented a strategy of mapping out what I was considering including in the account for each participant. With this sketched-out guide I was able to show Candice, Clary, and Colin what I had planned to include prior to the writing of the narrative accounts. Together we took the time to discuss what was mapped ensuring each participant was not only comfortable with the direction of the first draft of the narrative account, but also had the opportunity to interpret the narrative account in their own way. In retrospect, this crucial step in the co-creation of the narrative accounts was instrumental in ensuring that the accounts were representative of the youth and their experiences shared in and out of the after-school program, and not simply an interpretation by the researcher. This process of continuously checking and re-checking with each helped me to feel confident that the words being put to paper were in fact our shared work.

I chose to complete an initial draft of one participant prior to beginning other accounts. I wanted to ensure that I was committed to that individual, and did not want any of the account to be influenced by what I would be creating within other accounts.

Co-composing the accounts involved time spent moving through initial drafts together. This process of co-composing research texts helped to ensure that I, as the inquirer, did not write over (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) the participants and formalize a research text based solely on how I would look to represent them. Through the negotiation we were able to co-create a representation of the “unfolding of lives” (Clandinin, 2013, p.132) that occurred over time spent together in and out of the after-school program.

Upon completion of each individual narrative account, I then looked across all three accounts, looking for common threads that resonated among them. Threads identified included conceptualizations of play, school and education, community, as well as cultural narratives. As I thought across these three narrative accounts, I did so while once again considering personal wonders that resonated from both my experience in the program and from my extensive literature review. All the while, I considered the cultural, social, familial, linguistic, and institutional narratives within which our lives have been composed (Clandinin, 2010). It was this metaphorical laying alongside one another as Clandinin (2013) described from her inquiry that allowed me to see “resonances or echoes that reverberated across accounts” (p. 132).

Interim research texts to final research texts. Moving to final research texts was not a linear progression where data is collected, analyzed, and then published as findings. As we continued to co-compose these texts, we remained within the three-dimensional space. These final research texts, what other research paradigms would call findings, reflect the three commonplaces of temporality, place, and sociality, all of which are interconnected. As narrative accounts were revisited through this three-dimensional lens, I could see more clearly the multiple meanings of experience. With the conclusion

of the co-composition, final narrative accounts for each of the three participants were realized.

Eventually, final texts needed to be written. This process was organic in nature filled with a number of twists and turns along the way. There was not a linear approach to composing final research texts, as there was not one research question I was trying to answer as is often the case in other research paradigms. Clandinin (2013) reminded me “final research texts do not have final answers, because narrative inquirers do not come with questions” (p. 51). The intent of these texts are to “engage audiences to rethink and reimagine the ways in which they practice and the ways in which they relate to others” (p. 51). With the abundance of field texts collected over the years while coming alongside each participant, it was never my intent to try and compile all these experiences into a finding or an answer to a question. My intent was to try to represent the complexity of Candice, Clary, and Colin’s lives and experiences.

The creation of final research texts, this final representation if you will, saw me returning to the personal, practical, and social justifications of the work while always keeping in mind the initial research puzzle that evolved early on in the inquiry. What were the experiences of three participants within an after-school wellness program for urban Indigenous youth? Considering the research puzzle, the justifications, as well as the literature I came to know through my review, I again looked across the narrative accounts for *resonances or echoes that reverberated*. As I read and reread field texts and narrative accounts while keeping in mind temporality, sociality, and place, resonant threads appeared.

I identified two resonant threads, common plotlines that appeared and reappeared over time and place in all three narrative accounts: conceptualizations of a) play and b) community. These were two prevalent threads that I continued to inquire three-dimensionally while developing final research texts. As mentioned, only some of the field texts were shared in these final research texts. Field texts selected supported these two resonating threads, texts that were part of the co-composition of narrative accounts. These chosen field texts helped to animate the bumping up of participants' lives with the dominant cultural and institutional narratives I had come to know. The final research texts shared in Chapters 5 and 6 allow readers to enter into the stories of Candice, Clary, and Colin, not to bring forward absolute answers, rather opportunities to wonder alongside those involved in the inquiry.

As discussed in this chapter, inquiring around a research puzzle rather than a research question brings with it a sense of unknown. Moving through the inquiry without a specific question may leave readers feeling lost, wondering in what direction the study will go. At the outset of this inquiry, I did not know that I would come to inquire into threads around play and community, which helped to frame two of the chapters in this dissertation. These two threads, common in all three narrative accounts, were threads we continued to come back to in our research conversations.

I recognize the subsequent chapters may perhaps feel disjointed; perhaps not topics one may expect to delve into. Dissimilar to what was found in the literature, this inquiry was not looking to justify the impact of an intervention program. Readers may be surprised not to learn how this particular program influenced Indigenous youth, as this is the common story as animated in the second chapter. I feel this speaks to the strength

of this inquiry and connects again to the metaphorical dots on the page I have weaved throughout this dissertation. Methodologically speaking, this narrative inquiry allows for new opportunities with respect to after-school programming and the youth engaged within such programs. This narrative inquiry did not begin with a desire to measure the impact of a program. Thus, this inquiry not only positioned the youth differently, but also allowed for the subsequent chapters to emerge.

Chapter Five: (Re)Turning to Play

Introduction

As discussed in Chapter One, we all come to the after-school program with experiences that continue to shape us. My stories of Tawny, Darcy, and Kelly are just some of a host of experiences that have impacted my thinking and how I imagined the gymnasium space to be. My view of experience, a narrative view (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) shaped by Dewey's (1938) notions of continuity and interaction, remained a touchstone as I moved into research conversations alongside Candice, Clary, and Colin. As I travelled temporally to my early beginnings within the program and getting to know Candice, Clary, and Colin, I continue to wonder today what each had pictured when asked to be part of an after-school program that was taking place in a local gymnasium. What pictures appeared in their minds? Did they consider they would be playing in an after-school program? Each embodied imagined stories that they carried to that small gymnasium, experiences that shaped what play looked like, sounded like, and felt like. As our conversations unfolded I began to wonder how these experiences had become part of their identities, their stories to live by (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999) of play. Clandinin (2013) described how we *live, tell, retell*, and *relive* our experiences through stories. Each of these narrative conceptualizations of *living, telling, retelling*, and *reliving*, has particular meanings in narrative inquiry and helped to create a framework for this chapter. Prior to Candice, Clary, and Colin coming to the after-school program they were indeed living, and telling stories. As human beings, we all live, and then tell stories about this living (Clandinin, 2013). As Candace, Clary, and Colin entered into the after-school program space, my lived and told stories began to

interact with their own lived and told stories. This is part of what Clandinin described as a relational interaction. Cognizant of the critiques around interpretation (Blumenreich, 2004; Gard, 2014; Leskela-Karki, 2008; Nunkoosing, 2005), it was essential to continue to revisit this notion of relational interaction. Through our weekly connections, we were coming to know each other, coming to know each other's stories, and in turn building a relationship. Establishing this relationship over time allowed me to come alongside each of the youth, as we all began to inquire into lived and told stories. Inquiring three-dimensionally into these stories was in fact the *retelling* of stories. As Clandinin posited, "as we retell or inquire into stories, we may begin to shift the institutional, social, and cultural narratives in which we are embedded" (p. 34). It was through this unpacking of the lived and told stories, this retelling, I began to see how stories of play had changed. Through this narrative inquiry I came to understand that the youth too were seeing play differently. The term play had shifted over time for Candice, Clary, and Colin. "Because we see that we are changed as we retell our lived and told stories, we may begin to relive our stories" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 34). It was through inquiring into their experiences, through retelling stories of play, we were able to return to a play that once was, allowing us to *relive* stories that bumped with the *institutional, social, and cultural narratives* of play.

Imagining Play – Early Stories to Live By

From the outset of this inquiry, I have been interested in the experiences Candice, Clary, and Colin brought to the after-school program. What were their imagined stories of an after-school program situated within a small gymnasium? In order to comprehend these imagined stories, I needed to inquire into experiences Candice, Clary, and Colin

had around movement prior to the four of us coming to the after-school program. What were their experiences as children prior to entering onto the school landscape? What did it mean to play in school? What stories were they *living* and *telling*? Interested in Candice, Clary, and Colin's early conceptualizations of play⁷, I provide a look into experiences each shared with me.

Candice.

*Seeing kids have fun and play
Makes me feel
Feeling young
Forget about the what's and where's*

*At Dad's it was just three
Playing...
In the backyard.*

*When I got older
If you win, you win
If you lose, you lose
Last place in a race
Wouldn't come anymore
If they kept losing*

*We support them, applaud them.
Feels like we belong
Important
Treated equal
Interacting
Communicating through the ball
Together*

*Some homes weren't very good
They kind of hurt us
I learned that no one should be treated that way.
Taught how to take care...and how to care...
For me it's always kind of been*

⁷ The use of the word play moving forward is used in the context of how I interpreted Candice, Clary, and Colin's conceptualizations of play from their experiences growing up. How they imagined play was based on experiences re-visited in research conversations.

*Don't think they understand
About different races
And how that all works yet*

*Maybe they thought,
Because we're from this neighbourhood,
Getting into trouble,
Alcohol,
Drugs,
Having babies,
Not finishing school.*

*When we go places,
Changes people's perspectives and how they see us*

I feel proud of who I am.

The lines above are part of a collection of spoken words Candice and I co-created as part of her narrative account. This notion of organizing spoken words was something that resonated with me as I reviewed other narrative inquiries prior to embarking on this inquiry. Meeting with Candice one afternoon, I shared a few examples of what I would call found poetry from Clandinin's (2013) *Engaging in Narrative Inquiry*. Candice welcomed my invitation to work together to create this found poetry. The words, highlighted from pages of transcription, were transferred to a page, moved and (re)moved until we could agree on a final resting place upon the page.

Candice and I would return to the collection of spoken words often throughout the process of co-creating the narrative account. During a conversation around play, I had asked Candice what stood out to her amongst the found poetry. She chose four lines:

*When I got older
If you win, you win
If you lose, you lose
Last place in a race*

This co-composition spoke to Candice's experiences with what she considered play. I came to understand *when I got older* as a way for Candice to refer to her memories within school. The use of the phrase *prior to getting older*, referred to Candice's experiences with play and movement prior to beginning school. As we continued to inquire into the four lines above, we saw a connection to three other lines:

*At Dad's it was just three
Playing...
In the backyard.*

When she spoke of early memories of movement, those prior to getting older, Candice spoke of play, of times spent in her father's backyard or a local park playing with her brother Louis and her sister Emily.

We spent a lot of time together, like the three of us, we'd go to our mom's, go to our dad's together. When we were at our mom's, our other siblings were there, but when we were at our dad's it was just us three and we'd all just play in the backyard and stuff. We would always play tag. We had those cars and we'd push each other in those. (2, p.13)

Candice discussed the experience of joy that came from *just us three* playing at an early age prior to entering school. The three siblings would push each other around in big plastic cars, or simply use their imagination to create a scenario that led to hours of enjoyment. These lived and told stories of play were filled with the three of them, Candice, her brother, and sister, laughing, running, and relishing the outdoors.

Candice spoke of how that joy found in the backyard with her siblings was not realized as she came to know play within the context of school. There was a bumping

between Candice's stories of play and the grand narrative of play on the school landscape. These grand narratives began to shape her notions of play. Candice began to see that most opportunities for play were connected primarily to memories of physical education, which was "no longer fun" (3, p. 10) in her eyes. "The teachers didn't try and make it fair so that everyone felt better. It's just like if you win, you win. If you lose, you lose" (3, p. 6). "Some people take it [winning] seriously and you might not like that person anymore, because some people can be very competitive. They might not like anyone or hate someone because they lose" (3, p. 7). I was beginning to see how to Candice, the gymnasium and the school playground and how she and her classmates played, did not bring people together but instead led to animosity towards classmates. Those spaces and the activities upon them looked to place youth on a continuum of sorts, separating rather than creating an inclusive feeling.

Candice recalled an early memory of elementary school helping to animate this notion of a continuum. In the fourth grade, she was involved in a track and field day with her classmates. Candice was entered in a race, the 60-meter dash. As Candice described the experience during our account negotiation, I sensed disdain for that race through her brief description. Candice finished in last place, and remembers that later in the day she was entered into yet another race. With memories of that first defeat that described her "classmates racing away from her" (Narrative account negotiation, January 2017), Candice had no intentions of repeating the story of defeat; she refused to run in the next race.

It was through this narrative account negotiation that I came to understand Candice's experience of being last was a feeling she did not enjoy. For a young girl that

had experienced a great deal of negativity in her life, “that race brought back memories of being alone” (Narrative account negotiation, January 2017). Thinking temporally, I recognized how different this experience was in relationship to the moments shared with her siblings in the backyard. The joy felt from playing in her dad’s backyard seemed to be less about the actual activity Candice was doing; the meaningfulness stemmed from being engaged in activity with her brother and sister, together. Now standing on the start line, Candice was not playing with anyone; rather, she was competing against. These lived experiences shaped told stories of play of winners and losers, which became the reality for Candice in school. Games played at school, both in physical education and on the playground, became a race for Candice, both literally and metaphorically. Losing seemed to be part of this new reality and often times took place in isolation. I would later come to understand that for Candice, isolation was a large part of the stories she lived and told growing up.

Moving from elementary school and into high school, Candice’s lived and told stories of play remained connected to physical education. With her transition to high school, play also became connected with the extra-curricular sports Candice looked to participate in.

When I played basketball, I wasn’t as good as some of the players so I wasn’t out more. I guess that would make sense, like they want to win so they put the better players on. I don’t know. It just felt a little bit unfair. (2, p. 8)

Though unfair in her eyes, Candice seemed to believe this approach made sense to an extent, even though it did not feel fair to her. This grand narrative of play told in high school, in fact told Candice that playing less made sense. High school athletics have

traditionally been about winners and losers, of elitism (Kirk, 2004), a narrative that Candice seemed to accept. Though part of the team, isolation remained the reality and was customary as such, for the time being.

Clary. “Play meant having fun, interacting with others or objects like toys, using my imagination and exploring” (5, p. 8). Like Candace, Clary’s earliest memories of play took her back to playing “out on the block or in the backyard with her friends” (5, p. 8). Games of tag that went on and on until “I got tired or my mom called me in” (5, p. 9) were some of Clary’s earliest lived stories of play. Similar to Candice, Clary’s lived and told stories described times she was able to use her imagination, to explore, to interact with others, to have fun (Narrative account negotiation, February 2017).

There's a lot of . . . like in elementary school, like I said, there's play, there's recess and all that kind of stuff. We played a lot of games like dodge ball. It was more about playing different games. When I was in elementary school, I played a lot of sports. I played basketball, volleyball. (2, p. 3)

Also similar to Candice, Clary described experiences of play which seemed to change over time. As Clary shared memories of play in school, I was temporally taken to the gymnasium, to *gym class*.

Yeah. It was one of my favorite classes. I don't know, I find it silly when kids these days don't like phys. ed. class and to me it doesn't make any sense because it's the easiest class ever. All you got to do is participate and then you'll pass. There's no right or wrong there. You just got to interact and play and then you can get a mark for it. That's pretty much all you have to do. (1, p. 4)

As a little girl Clary loved to play sports, eventually gravitating to volleyball in high school. I came to understand that Clary's experiences with sport were exceptionally positive. On the court playing volleyball or at the rink playing hockey alongside boys her age, Clary was successful. Clary conceded sport was something she excelled in and that physical education, too, seemed to work for her. It did not make sense to her at the time as to why her classmates did not want to participate, to play. As a young female hockey player that grew up playing with and against her male counterparts, Clary recognized she was more athletically talented in comparison to other girls in school. Clary's reality in the school gymnasium, like the hockey arena, was a place she saw success; thus, it made sense she also associated play to physical education.

From the inquiry I came to wonder if Clary could see the *race* Candice experienced. I wondered if Clary could understand what Candice may have experienced. A metaphorical race was certainly part of Clary's conception of play, though less prevalent. Or perhaps being someone in the race who was winning, made the race more acceptable. As Clary continued to share her early experiences of play, I found myself temporally travelling to my early memories in the local hockey arena or the school gymnasium. I connected with Clary's experiences for I too saw success upon those landscapes. Clary's lived and told stories of growing up on the other end of the continuum resonated with me. Through the negotiation of the narrative account, both Clary and I came to see how similar our lived and told stories within the school gymnasium truly were. This story of play seemed to work.

Even though Clary had predominantly positive experiences with play growing up, she became awake in recent years to how others may not be situated the same way.

Her lived and told stories of the athletic girl, the volleyball player, the hockey player, allowed Clary to see success, to be at one end of the continuum. It was her returning to those lived and told stories that led to worry for Clary. She spoke of her younger sister, who was at the time trying to manoeuvre her way through high school:

She didn't want to participate (in physical education) because she doesn't want people to judge how fast she can run and what she is capable of doing. She feels like the students, not the teacher, are grading her on it. She doesn't want people to make fun of what she's doing and if she's doing it wrong. I think a lot of kids are scared to do things because they don't want . . . they want to be accepted. (1, p. 4)

This idea of the students *grading her on it* jumped from the page each time I re-read her words. I was brought back to my conversations with Candice and the feelings she described being the last one to cross the finish line. From my inquiry I came to see the feelings Candice experienced were similar to what Clary described of her sister's reality in school. Through sharing her sister's experience, Clary was able to recognize how play was isolating, placing youth on a continuum. I could see how concerned Clary was for her sister as she shared further. "She's being judged by the students in how well she can perform, because she's not like a very physical person. She doesn't run very fast, and maybe the students will judge her because of that" (2, p. 2).

It was with those words I again travelled back to Candice in the 60-meter dash. I allowed my imagination to take over for a moment as I placed Clary and her sister alongside Candice on that same start line. How did each feel waiting for the race to start? How would this race impact imagined stories of play and their *stories to live by*?

With the metaphor of the start line, I began to consider how Colin too would fit into this metaphorical race.

Colin.

The only reason I've stayed in basketball is because I like to . . . I didn't like the part where I wasn't involved much in the games. I love going in practices. I love getting better at it. It's a lot of fun. (3, p. 6)

I begin with words Colin shared in one of our research conversations around his early experiences with basketball, a game he loved to play. Colin's lived and told stories of play also connected to the institutional landscape of school, similar to the stories of Candice and Clary. The stories Colin lived through elementary school told the story of a young boy moving, playing, and absolutely loving "gym class" (Narrative account negotiation, February 2017).

The program had ended for the day, leaving myself, Colin, and the other youth mentors to put the equipment away. As we began gathering things, Colin grabbed a basketball, dribbling it repeatedly as he pretended to avoid imaginary defenders on his way to a lay up. Challenging me to an impromptu game of 21, I dropped the bags I was carrying and made my way to the foul line. Knowing what I knew about Colin and his basketball skills, I understood I was in trouble! (Field text, May 2016)

From a young age, Colin was drawn to the sport of basketball. When he was old enough to play elementary school basketball at Lindberg, Colin recalled moments of anxiety due to what he described as limited skill and somewhat timid demeanour being years younger than his teammates.

In basketball when I was in elementary, I loved playing but when I'd hold the ball in a game, I get really scared. When I get the ball, I always get that feeling I'd really be energetic but yet, I'll be really scared so I would just pass it right away. I wasn't really involved much. (3, p. 4)

It was the incremental improvements, the *getting better at it*, that kept Colin motivated and wanting to continue to play. The fact that Colin was younger than his teammates spoke to how athletically talented he was. It was because of his physical ability Colin was able to see moments of success, even though he was two or three years younger than the rest of his teammates. Colin's lived and told story of the gymnasium was that of a positive space, in large part to him being quite good at all the games played. It made sense to Colin, as we thought about why this space was so positive. "If you have the skills, or are bigger or faster, you do well" (3, p. 23).

Colin continued to *do well* shifting to his final year in elementary school, his grade 8 year. The gymnasium space was a place Colin continued to see a great deal of success. He was involved in all school athletic teams and was awarded male athlete of the year at the year-end celebration. As I picture once again my imagined start line with Candice, Clary, and now Colin all waiting for the starting pistol to fire, I can understand how each would see that race differently. Colin might not be feeling the apprehension felt by Candice, as each had different lived and told stories of play within school. This metaphorical race worked for Colin, of course, but perhaps not for Candice. The structure of play in elementary school fit for Colin, who was faster than all others on that start line.

It was from coming to know Colin as an eighth-grade student at Lindberg, that I understood how important sports and physical education had become. Colin was eager to play on the sports teams in high school. With his success in elementary school and my seeing his physical talents each week in the program, I was confident the gymnasium space would continue to be a positive place for Colin moving forward.

The program was done for another week and like weeks past, Colin and the other mentors stuck around to clean up equipment and shoot a few hoops. I remember the conversation being short in duration. Standing at the sideline, underneath the dangling, torn basketball net, Colin mentioned to me that basketball tryouts were done and that no one in grade nine made the team. A number of thoughts and questions entered my mind at that moment. Before I posed any questions to Colin, he had moved on to the court to shoot around with his brother on the same hoop he played on for years through elementary school.

(Field text, November 2014).

I struggled with the news Colin shared a mere three months into his grade 9 year. The thoughts and questions that entered my mind in that brief conversation with Colin stemmed from what I already knew about high school sports in the urban centre we lived in. Colin's high school, like many others in the city, held tryouts for extra-curricular sports. For Colin, tryouts looked much different in his elementary school experience where he was the athlete of the year. The reality at Lindberg was different from high school. At Lindberg, Colin was a standout on the team, playing from a young age. The stories lived and told in high school are different.

As Colin explained in a later conversation, grade 9 students didn't make the team as this was the coach's unwritten rule at the time. It was seen as a rite of passage of being in the ninth grade. This selection process Colin experienced brought me back to what Candice had shared, sitting on the bench watching the *better players* play. Both instances helped to animate the realities of high school extra-curricular sports—that being to win. The stories of high school sport lived and told by Colin and Candice, told a story where play was meant for some but not for everyone.

Shifting back, what was most troublesome listening to Colin share this news was how on the outside it did not seem to bother him. Recalling Candice's words, *I guess that would make sense, like they want to win so they put the better players on*, I was seeing a similar acceptance in Colin. An acceptance of this dominant story of high school athletics in which success was measured in wins and losses. His thinking and the reality of being cut for being perhaps smaller, slower, or simply younger, did not seem odd to Colin. In my initial read through of the transcripts, I became awake to the normalcy that seemed to surround the exclusion from sport, the exclusion from activity. When I asked Colin about this again during the negotiation of the narrative account he noted this notion of exclusivity was the "reality of high school sport" (Narrative account negotiation, February 2017). Colin was now beginning to see and to experience play from a different perspective, one in which he was not the most athletic, the most talented physically. Colin was now living and telling stories of the dominant narrative of sport that is extenuated in high school. For Colin, no longer the fastest or most skilled, the metaphorical race looked much different now one year removed from grade 8.

Dominant stories of play. This *reality of high school sport* was part of the stories shared by Candice, Clary, and Colin, part of what each came to see as play. It was through living and telling these stories I came to see this story of play, a story that I have certainly heard throughout my career as a physical educator. The experiences Candice, Clary, and Colin shared around play did not come as a surprise. There has been a vast array of research in the field of physical education (Tinning, 2015) that would support the notions of play Candice, Clary, and Colin conceptualized prior to coming to the program. Historically, physical education had ties to elite sports (Evans, 1990; Kirk, 1992; Kirk, 2004) in which physical strength and dominance were at the forefront (Flintoff & Scraton, 2006). Physical education was a key site for the maintenance and reproduction of hegemonic masculinity (Bramham, 2003; Light & Kirk, 2000). The research supports the youth's notions of isolation and inequities (Stolz & Kirk, 2015) as commonplace in physical education settings. These stories lived and told by Candice, Clary, and Colin were what many would call the dominant narrative of physical education.

While we know from post-structural and critically framed theories that these larger hegemonies and ideologies exist, what became quite interesting in this inquiry is how the youths' lived and told stories began to help both support these theories as well as disrupt them. Stories lived and told around their experiences of play were part of Candice, Clary, and Colin's stories to live by (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999), and as such it was essential that I took the time to understand these stories. Together we would continue to inquire into these stories, continue to *relive*.

Inquiring Three-Dimensionally into Early Conceptualizations of Play

Thinking narratively about a phenomenon—about Candice, Clary, and Colin’s early experiences—is a way of understanding and inquiring into experience. This thinking narratively involves in part being attentive to the three commonplaces of narrative inquiry—temporality, place, sociality (Clandinin, 2013). Through inquiry into early experiences, I began to understand how Candice, Clary, and Colin conceptualized play prior to our coming to know each other in the after-school program. I was beginning to comprehend what pictures appeared for each as they came to an after-school program. As I took the time to look across the narrative accounts (Clandin, 2013), the pictures of Candice, Clary, and Colin’s imagined stories became somewhat sharper. Their stories to live by (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999) became more prevalent as I continued to inquire, *reliving* stories to further understand “the interconnectedness of knowledge, context, and identity” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 78).

I often reflected on our weekly experiences in the after-school program by asking myself three questions: What did it look like? What did it sound like? What did it feel like? Considering each question allowed me to inquire three-dimensionally, considering place, temporality, and sociality. It is through thinking within this three-dimensional space, I could begin to understand Candice, Clary, and Colin’s experiences of play. Their conceptualizations of play shifted from early memories of exploring *on the block* or *in the backyard*. Those early memories were filled with descriptors such as freedom, easy, worry free, fun, inclusive, and imaginative. Play was unstructured and often involved the self-creation of characters and scenarios in a make-believe world. The only interruption came when it was time to stop and eat or it was time to get ready for bed.

Similar to the literature around dominant discourses of physical education and sport, the literature around unstructured play or what some refer to as active play (Hyndman, Telford, Finch, & Benson, 2012; Pellegrini, 2009) is also quite prominent. Studies exist debating the implementation of structured or unstructured play within schools (Hyndman, 2015; Salmon, Owen, Crawford, Bauman, & Sallis, 2003) as well as after-school spaces (Dobbins, De Corby, Robeson, Husson, & Tirilis, 2009). With increases in sedentary behaviour, unstructured play is seen as one way to improve the health of children and youth (Sawyer et. al., 2008; Telama, 2009), with implementation in schools as a common approach to increase physical activity (Kriemler et al., 2011; Ridgers, Salmon, Parrish, Stanley, & Okely, 2012).

My experiences as a teacher, consultant, and researcher certainly resonate with the literature. The literature around unstructured play took me back to time spent building forts with my friends in the bush on the outskirts of town growing up in Northern Saskatchewan. As we all worked together to create our multi-level compound of sorts, we became absorbed in the process. Time seemed to cease. I could relate to Candice's stories of creating scenarios with her sister and brother that led to hours of play. I could relate to what Clary meant when she said that they only stopped when they got *tired*. Play did not have an exorbitant number of rules and regulations. As I played with my friends in that fort, time seemed to stand still as I imagined it did for Candice and Clary. No one was telling us how to play or what to play, that was decided amongst the group, those who were in fact playing.

Like Candice and Clary, as time went on my memories of fort building were replaced with memories of sport. As time went on stories of play became situated

around common sports and embedded with grand narratives. Through the inquiry, I came to understand that Candice, Clary, and Colin could each see how their early memories of play looked, sounded, and felt different from how they experienced play in physical education or in sports as they progressed through school. As we continued to negotiate narrative accounts leading to final research texts, I continued to ask about these differences. Looking across their experiences temporally, it was apparent that their stories, lived and told, were changing. As time passed, play seemed to be situated for the most part within the school gymnasium or on the school playground. Play was now, for the most part, connected to school and more specifically memories of physical education, of *gym class* and sports. The story of play was that of the dominant narrative of play in physical education (Evans, 1990; Kirk, 2004; Tinning, 2015).

As we continued to *relive* this notion of play, I needed to inquire into the space of which many of their experiences unfolded—the gymnasium. Both Candice and Colin attended Lindberg elementary school, playing as students in the very same gymnasium the after-school program was situated. Clary, like myself, had not stepped foot in Lindberg’s gymnasium until that opening year of the program. Personally, as I walked into Lindberg’s gymnasium for the first time, I felt like I had been there before. I wondered if this was the same for Clary.

Like any qualitative inquiry, as a researcher I made decisions based on both the participants’ experiences and my own experiences. As I think about the significance of how place shapes an experience, it is not surprising that I became focused on the gymnasium space. I am reminded that to this day, entering a gymnasium prompts past experiences that are continuously interacting. From early moments as a student to times

as a physical education teacher, I have been in many gymnasiums. Regardless of where that gymnasium is situated, be it a rural community or this urban centre we live in, once inside the gymnasium a common look appears. Six hoops on the walls, lines painted on the floor outlining the courts of the common sports, and benches along the sidewalls. As I continued to inquire into experiences shared within a gymnasium, I came to see how the space, though different geographically for all of us having grown up in different communities, still remained a common place. The common place of a gymnasium contained many of the same stories, regardless of where the physical structure was situated. Thinking again with Dewey's (1938) notion of continuity, I remained awake to how these stories lived and told within the common place of a gymnasium, continued to shape the stories to live by of Candice, Clary, and Colin.

As I considered again the *common look* of a gymnasium, I did so thinking back to conversations had with Candice, Clary, and Colin. The *six hoops on the walls* took me back to Colin and Candice's experiences with basketball. At times seeing different levels of success, Colin and Candice came to situate the game of basketball alongside realities of play. The hoops on the walls, the same height in every elementary and high school, also served as a reminder that "if you have the skills, or are bigger or faster, you do well" (Colin, 3, p. 23). It is also a reminder that equity and inclusion have not been attended to in very meaningful ways in physical education (Dowling, Fitzgerald, & Flintoff, 2012). This inattentiveness to an equitable and inclusive environment, apparent in both the literature and the experiences shared within this inquiry, serves as a reminder that Candice, Clary, and Colin are not alone. The thoughts and feelings shared around

reliving this notion of play are experienced by many youth in physical education and sport settings.

As I pictured the *lines painted on the floor*, I was reminded of the common sports played in gymnasiums. The dominant story lived and told in physical education centred on games which had boundaries and required the scoreboards that were affixed to the wall. These games of common sports were what counted, and still count, in the gymnasium. Those that could excel in these games were successful in this space.

As I looked across the narrative accounts I was reminded of the common story told by Candice, Clary, and Colin particular to the *benches along the sidewalls*. The benches, used often by some, were a place within the gymnasium for those not playing. The long, wooden benches “were occupied at times by those eliminated from a game and at other times with those opting out, choosing to sit” (Narrative account negotiation, February 2017). Never by choice did Candice, Clary, or Colin find themselves sitting on the sidelines, though each recognized this to be the reality for classmates. The benches, similar to the lines on the floor, told a story of who was in and who was out. These long wooden benches situated on the sidewalls were a common place within the gymnasium. This common place—a place to sit, a place to no longer participate—was obvious to everyone.

As I continued to relive stories of play alongside Candice, Clary, and Colin, the gymnasium continued to remain a *common place* transitioning to high school. The high school gymnasium, though more grandiose, still had six hoops on the walls, which oddly enough are the same height as the hoops that exist in the elementary gymnasium even though the students are up to 10 years apart in age and development. The lines painted

on the floor outlining the courts of the common sports, and benches along the sidewalls, all also the same dimensions as in the elementary gymnasium. Unlike Candice, Clary, and Colin's elementary schools, yet shared within their high schools, were the hanging banners of past city and provincial championships. These banners served as a reminder of how the gymnasium space perhaps shifted from a place of physical education to a place of sport. I wondered if this shift did indeed happen. Perhaps there wasn't a shift, but rather an extension of physical education. Historically physical education, and the gym, had been a place for elite sport (Kirk, 2004), a place to create better athletes, specifically for the common sports so that more championship banners could hang from the rafters. This dominant narrative of physical education and sport was the story Candice, Clary, and Colin lived and told in high school.

Retelling the stories of Candice, Clary, and Colin helped to create a storyline of play prior to coming to the after-school program. It was important to take the time within the inquiry to temporally travel back to their experiences. These told stories of play animated the imagined stories that each carried to the small gymnasium of our program, experiences that shaped what play looked like, sounded like, and felt like. These lived and told stories of play had become part of their identities, their stories to live by (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999). With this storyline now illustrated, I returned to the narrative accounts. I wondered what stories each were living and telling from within the program. As I continued to inquire into all three narrative accounts, I was beginning to see a shift from how Candice, Clary, and Colin experienced play in the after-school program—a re-imagining, if you will.

Re-Imagining, Re-Telling Play

This notion of re-imagining, re-telling, brought me to consider once again the words of Clandinin and Rosiek (2007). They argued that:

The regulative ideal for inquiry is to generate a new relation between a human being and her environment—her life, community, world—one that “makes possible a new way of dealing with them, and thus eventually creates a new kind of experienced object, not more real than those which preceded but more significant, and less overwhelming and oppressive” (Dewey, 1981b, p. 175). (p. 39)

It was through the reliving of stories we were able to begin to see this *new relation* between Candice, Clary, and Colin, and their environment, a new relation between youth and play. This re-imagining of play makes possible a *new kind of experienced object*, *retelling* story of play. This retelling, as Clandinin (2013) put forward, helped me to see that we are *changed as we retell our lived and told stories*, and thus we may begin to *re-live* our stories, shaping who we are and shifting our future stories.

Shifting stories to live by.

It was our second to last experience of the year. As we walked through the parking lot to the awaiting bus, the bright sunshine and the 30 degree temperatures reminded me that another year of the program was nearing its end. As the 26 of us shuffled one by one onto the bus, saying hello to Christopher, our driver, I could not help but think back to the early beginnings and our first trip to laser tag. The excitement was palpable then, just as today.

As the youth entered the facility with hellos and smiles, they calmly lined up to receive an alias name for the much anticipated game of laser tag. Prior to entering the playing area, a staff member named Sarah asked the youth if they were interested in playing a short game first. Excitedly, the youth, as well as the high school mentors gathered in a circle around Sarah who was holding one bright red ball. The instructions took only a short time to explain. Each participant around the circle was to cross their arms on their chest. When Sarah tossed the ball towards anyone around circle, the goal was to catch the ball. Failing to catch the ball would result in the participant being eliminated, relegated to the sidelines. The game would end when only one remained standing.

The game began with a toss to Jacob, who attempted to catch the shiny red ball, only to see it bounce on the multi-colored tile floor. Sarah exclaimed, “you’re out”, and immediately Jacob scurried over to sit beside me. As I put my arm around him, he softly whispered, “that wasn’t very fun”, to which I replied, “it’s ok, we will hang out together!” Soon after, others joined us on the bench.

(Field text, May 2016)

The above field text animates an experience shared in the third year of the program, at the same time I was immersed in research conversations with Candice, Clary, and Colin. As I looked back through the pages of field notes and transcribed conversations, this moment was one all three participants needed to talk about. It was a moment in retrospect that helped Candice, Clary, and Colin to return to how play once was, play *on the block*. The story of the one red ball allowed the three to return to

playing *in the backyard*. It was through retelling these childhood experiences of play that I came to understand Candice, Clary, and Colin's conceptions of play. I sought to learn more about their experiences in the after-school program.

Clary.

I noticed right away when they said, "Okay well you are out," and then you win a prize for not being out, that's something we don't really go by and we don't really do. You don't reward them for being the last one in and we may never make somebody go out really, so that was really different. (3, p. 2)

It was a few days removed from our trip to laser tag that I found myself sitting across from Clary in her living room, engaged in a research conversation. It took only moments for Clary to return back to the story of the one red ball and how that experience was *really different* from the after-school program. It was this notion of different that I wanted to explore further. As I considered her words—*that's something we don't really go by*—Clary helped me to see how our starting place was different within the program. Our starting place was not structured around an end result. What is it that we *go by*? Our starting place was around inclusion, around community. Stories lived and told within the program were of playing in a way in which all youth could see some form of success.

Clary went on to share her thoughts around how that game was organized and, specifically, how that organization could potentially impact the youth from the program:

I think about kids like here in our program, the kids I'm connected to that wouldn't be successful there. That's why it resonates with me because I can

name so many kids that wouldn't be successful the way that was structured. (3, p. 2)

It was a way of playing that Clary could now clearly see as different from how we played in the after-school program. It was a structure or a way of playing that Clary certainly recognized as we both moved back to her earlier notions of play. The game with the one red ball reminded me of the metaphorical race previously discussed, with one winner and all participants plotted on a continuum. The game with the one red ball looked *really different* now to Clary from how play occurred in the program. Different from the program, the game with the one red ball was something that Clary figured was likely learned in school “because well that’s where I learned a lot of that stuff, I learned a lot of the games with elimination and everything. I learned it all in school” (3, p. 2).

The after-school program helped Clary to retell a story of play that bumped with the dominant story she came to know. How Clary experienced physical education in school did not emulate play within the program.

We give them more of an opportunity. We give a number of balls type of thing.

They all have an equal chance to go and play with a ball and to practice and learn how to handle the stick or whatever. There's not just one ball. (2, p. 18)

Those words again spoke to the notion of starting points. Beginning with a different starting point, we can begin to imagine a different end point.

There's not just one ball brought me back once again to a moment shared around that one red ball, but also spoke to my interpretation of Clary's understanding of who seemed to benefit from playing in such a way, a way she saw growing up playing hockey and in physical education. “If there was only one ball, only that specific group of kids

who are really good at gym would probably get to touch the ball even. The kids who aren't, wouldn't even probably get to touch the ball" (2, p. 18). It is with these words I think again about the *lines painted on the floor*, reminding me once again of the common sports played in gymnasiums. Games played within these painted lines, these common sports, were games played with *one ball*. They were games that worked for a *specific group of kids*, as Colin reminded me; *if you have skills, or are bigger or faster, you do well*. Who does not *do well*? *The kids who aren't*; the youth that are not the biggest, fastest, and most skilled. Play structured as Clary had come to know it within physical education and sport, valued those that can, leaving the rest without opportunity to touch that one ball. Stories Clary lived and told within the after-school program were disrupting this dominant narrative of play.

Candice. Clary's notion of the after-school program being *different* or *not school, not physical education*, was a sentiment that Candice also shared. "We don't announce any winnings or losings. We just end the game and we don't bring up who won, who lost, who has more, who has less. We try to avoid that" (2, p. 5). I came to see Candice's reference to *we* as a reference to the after-school program. Her descriptions of *we* helped me to see how she saw play in the program and conversely outside of the program. Candice agreed that the game of the one red ball looked similar to games played in school, games that seemed to require an ending, a result of some kind. As Candice explained the way *we* play supported more than just the physical development of children. "The emotional. Children would probably get upset and feel bad or feel like they feel bad about themselves, they didn't do good enough if they lost, and then they would feel negative and we don't want that. We make sure that kids are

happy . . . They feel a part of the program (2, p. 5). From these words, I came to further understand Candice's experiences with play upon the school landscape. The score was never a focus; the end result looked different because the starting points were different. End results within the after-school program were attentive to notions of inclusion, of belonging. "Yeah, we sort of change the rules of the games we'd play, kind of to make everyone feel included and to kind of help make sure everyone's interacting with each other" (4, p. 14). This notion of changing the games spoke to how Candice saw games before coming to the after-school program. Her words, *feel included*, reminded me not only of her experiences of isolation but also her earlier memories of play in the backyard.

Colin.

Yeah, because in the way we play, we change the way we play to the kids who are playing, because some kids ain't as skilled as other kids. (4, p. 14) They'll all get a chance. Let's see. Maybe that it doesn't matter if you're the slowest one in the gym, that you'll always be included. (3, p. 9)

This notion that *you'll always be included* regardless if you're the slowest one in the gym helped me to understand how a sense of belonging was important too for Colin. Colin's association to play was for the most part a positive experience given his athletic ability and natural talent. Colin acknowledged that growing up "play was not fun for others" (Narrative account negotiation, February 2017), and at times his peers would choose not to partake. From what Colin perceived, physical talents and abilities hindered the sense of belonging. It was after being part of the program Colin could see a distinct difference.

Colin's notion of *changing the way we play* reminded me once again how early conceptualizations of play were shifting as these three mentors continued to work alongside the youth each week in the program. This notion was in fact a reliving and retelling story of play. Colin was retelling how play could be, a play that was different from experiences within school. Like Clary and Candice, Colin was seeing that this different way of playing was allowing more youth to see success. Colin acknowledged that he only continued with basketball at a young age because he was able to see success. Again, for Colin the success had a great deal to do with his athletic talents. What about the youth that were not perhaps as *athletic*? Through the inquiry I came to see how Colin came to understand that part of seeing success was not worrying about failure. His retold and relived stories of play considered others, considered those left out of the dominant stories of play. As Colin put it, "they wouldn't be afraid of not being successful because they're not losing anything. They have nothing to lose when they're playing in the program because we're not playing to be winners or anything. We're playing to have fun" (3, p. 7).

It was this retold story of play, this notion of *not losing anything*, I found to be insightful. This change in the way play was structured, reduced the pressures youth seemed to place upon themselves in games that were situated around an end result that required a score to be kept. Colin's words helped me to think about what could be lost when the end result of playing is solely focused on winning. The game could be lost, but so too the fun. Within the program, the *end result* did not correlate with a score, rather a feeling of belonging, of taking care of one another.

They're not losing anything. I continued to inquire alongside Colin around this notion of losing. I began to see how focusing on an end result was divisive rather than inclusive. I asked Colin, "if you saw kids in a regular phys. ed. class sitting on the sides, do you think it's because they just have an attitude and they don't want to play or move?" "No. They probably really like the game but they're afraid of not being successful and embarrassing themselves in front of their teammates and friends," Colin replied. Colin was helping me to see how this sense of belonging removed pressures of performance, winning, and being included, all of which youth placed upon themselves. The enjoyment that Colin felt engaged in play was in large part because of the success he experienced. By reliving and retelling what play looked like, Colin saw how more youth could see success as well. The game perhaps could still be lost, but not the fun. The enjoyment came from the inclusive feeling that came from play within the program. The worry of failure, of dropping that one red ball, no longer entered into the picture of play.

Inquiring into shifting stories to live by. Returning once again to the game played with the one red ball, I continued to inquire into how that experience looked, sounded, and felt for the youth.

With my arm around Jacob, I greeted the steady stream of youth making their way to the bench. As the numbers on the bench began to outnumber those in the circle, I made an observation of who remained, two youth and four mentors. As the one red ball continued to dart back and forth from Sarah to the outer circle, soon the game found it's two "finalists", Kaya and Colin.

(Field text, May 2016)

The game of the one red ball is a fitting metaphor for the lived and told stories of play that Candice, Clary, and Colin grew up with in school prior to coming to the program. The notion of *finalists* surfaced in elementary school and remained the focus of play into high school. As I think again with Dewey's (1938) notion of continuity and interaction, I am reminded that as the mentors transitioned each week from high school student to mentor within the program, experiences continue to be re-lived. Each week, the mentors brought with them experiences from high school, experiences of play that had become part of their *stories to live by*. I learned that these experiences within high school sports and physical education were quite different from what we were all living in the after-school program each week.

I think about these grandiose gymnasiums Candice, Clary, and Colin each played in through high school. I pictured those championship banners on the wall signifying the end result of being a *finalist*. As each made the journey to the after-school program, Candice, Clary, and Colin certainly saw many of the same features in the small gymnasium of Lindberg as they did in the much larger gymnasiums of high school. Lines painted on the floor outlining the courts of common sports, designated in and out. Six nets on the walls situated in the same place at the same height. The benches along the sidewalls, at times a place for team members and at other times a place for those that perhaps felt defeated. A scoreboard in both places, one elaborate in style, the other made of wood; both reminders of what was important within a dominant narrative of sport, a narrative that all three participants helped to animate through lived and told stories. I came to understand through this inquiry how Candice, Clary, and Colin saw these

common features of a gymnasium shift within the after-school program as they relived and retold stories of play, disrupting the dominant narrative.

Within these retold stories, the benches were never used. Candice reminded me of that through her words:

We make sure everyone gets a turn. We make sure everyone feels like they're being treated equal. (2, p. 8) It's important because we want all the kids to feel happy and feel like they belong. We make sure that everyone feels like they're being included in the activities. (3, p. 4)

How play looked, how it sounded, how it felt within the program, meant benches did not have occupants, occupants concerned with fitting in or being successful. A different end result was being realized, one that attempted to help everyone belong. Though the lines painted on the floor still existed, they no longer represented signifiers of who was in and who was out. Within these relived stories of play, the lines did not dictate what games would be played. The scoreboard, affixed to the end wall of the small gymnasium sat idle. Success was measured a different way, bringing me back once again to an experience shared with that one red ball.

Making eye contact with Colin, I sensed the uncomfortable position he found himself in. Requiring a quick and thoughtful decision, Colin knew that the ball would soon be coming his way. I knew that Colin could continue to catch the ball and it would be only time until Kaya misplayed a pass. It became apparent Colin too was aware of this reality. When the next pass of the red ball came his way, we all watched it bounce on the floor rolling toward the long bench that was now

overflowing with spectators. Kaya had won and was allowed to pick a prize.

(Field text, May 2016)

This field text was a reminder of who would see success when play was structured as it was for Candice, Clary, and Colin within school. Who would typically win, who would see success? This was a question I often asked growing up playing sports and participating in physical education. It was a question I, like Colin, usually did not have trouble answering because I did more winning than losing. It came as no surprise to me that the game with the red ball saw Colin remaining at the end. I do not think it came as a surprise to Colin either. The dominant narrative saw those with the physical skills continue to have opportunities to hone their skills, while those that are “smaller or weaker” (3, p. 5) as Colin explained, would likely spend more time being excluded. Colin was the type of person physical education and sport were created for.

Who Won?

As Candice played in her dad’s backyard, the question—Who won?—never surfaced. Like my fort building days, it seems there was no finality to play back then.

With respect to the game of the one red ball, Kaya won. She was of course the last remaining participant; she was allowed to pick a reward from the trunk of prizes while the rest looked on. The mentors that stood around the circle that day could have easily been the last remaining participants in that game. The mentors each saw as the game progressed that they were beginning to outnumber the youth within the circle. The mentors made the decision to start removing themselves from the game, allowing them to join those sitting on the long, wooden bench. Colin recognized, as did the other

mentors, the game was different from how play looked in the program. He also understood that when the ball came back to him, he too would make a choice.

In a later research conversation Colin shared something I already knew, he missed the ball on purpose to ensure Kaya won. You could perhaps say that Colin was restorying play, shifting “the institutional, social, and cultural narratives in which we are embedded” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 34). Colin knew that the game needed to change. As that one red ball made its way towards him, Colin chose to take the game back to what play once was as a young child, a play that Candace, Clary, and Colin said looked similar to that in the after-school program. Colin changed the rules of the game, bringing us all to the backyard, so to speak. Colin and the other mentors were able to shift the social fabric of the place they entered into; they were in fact retelling stories of play, shifting the game with the one red ball. Is this something they were taught in the after-school program? Was it the program that taught Candice, Clary, and Colin the importance of inclusivity and community? The silent observer, the proverbial fly on the wall if you will, may see the empathy Colin showed as an outcome learned through the after-school program. The program would then be seen as an intervention, helping the youth to perhaps care for each other.

In fact, Candice, Clary, and Colin were enacting what they had learned from other knowledge landscapes (Huber et al., 2011). Each was drawing on a multitude of experiences that had become part of their identity, their *stories to live by*. Perhaps inclusivity had always been of far greater importance than any physical skills gained. The program did not teach the youth this; at best, the program just allowed for an opportunity to showcase their knowledge, to relive and retell stories. The program

allowed the mentors to travel back to early memories of play, where end results were trivial and feeling the connections to family and friends seemed to be most important.

As we continued to engage in research conversations and as we continued to inquire together into experiences, I was seeing the dots shifting in another way as well. There was a dominant picture for Candice, Clary, and Colin growing up in this urban centre. A grand narrative of Indigenous youth existed that told the story of deficit. This story positioned Indigenous youth as at-risk or in need of intervention. As was the common story within the literature I reviewed, an after-school program could in fact be an intervention.

Chapter Six: Re-Conceptualizing Community

The after-school program Candice, Clary, and Colin were part of could in fact be an intervention. If one was to begin from the common starting point within the literature surrounding after-school programs there would be a need for such intervention. These Indigenous youth would be considered at-risk, in need. The starting point, the dots outlined on the page, would outline a picture of deficit. As we continued to inquire alongside each other, I came to understand that all three youth saw the after-school program not as a place of intervention, but instead a community built on inclusivity. I also came to understand through the inquiry that how Candice, Clary, and Colin felt within the gymnasium, how they perceived themselves, was different from how they maneuvered each day within the urban centre we all live within. In this chapter, I inquire further into how the after-school program has been conceptualized by the youth as a community that positions each as teacher and knowledge holder, not as being at-risk or in need. Their conceptualization of this community allowed me to gain further understanding of the multiple community knowledge landscapes the youth maneuver between each day. Inquiry into these community knowledge landscapes is weaved throughout the chapter.

Play Builds Community – Community Builds Play

Animated in Chapter Five through my inquiry and the retelling and reliving of stories, Candice, Clary, and Colin had returned to early memories of play. Each saw play within the program as a return to early memories like those *in the backyard*. The metaphorical dots had shifted, in a sense returning to how play once was. The narrative of play each youth came to know in school was similar to the dominant narrative within

the literature that saw ties to elite sports (Evans, 1990; Kirk, 2004) in which physical prowess was of great value (Flintoff & Scraton, 2006). This was not the play Candice, Clary, and Colin were experiencing in the program, instead the play seemed to resonate with their earliest memories.

Similar to Chapter Five, in this chapter I use the terms *live*, *tell*, *retell*, and *relive* (Clandinin, 2013) as a framework. Through our ever-evolving relational interactions, Candice, Clary, Colin, and I continued to come to know each other through the living and telling of stories. As we moved to retelling stories, inquiring three-dimensionally, I was attentive to much of the literature around after-school programs that position youth in deficit. With this in mind, I was once again drawn to the metaphorical dots. The dots I was now seeing outlined a dominant picture for Candice, Clary, and Colin, a grand narrative of Indigenous youth, a story that positioned each in deficit. Continuing to come alongside the youth, I came to understand further experiences that have shaped each of their identities, their stories to live by (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999). It was through the *retelling* and *reliving* of stories that allowed me to see a different story being told of Indigenous youth and after-school programming; a story that bumped with the grand narrative found in literature that placed Indigenous youth in deficit.

Through the inquiry and the negotiation of narrative accounts, I recognized that experiences lived and told in the program were in fact connected to feelings around belonging. Candice, Clary, and Colin all felt that the way we played in the gymnasium each week assisted in building a communal feeling, a feeling they did not seem to connect to sports or physical education. As described in Chapter Five, play had returned to being more about *the who* and less about *the what*. Within the program, all three were

experiencing a shifting of the starting point away from the dominant narrative lived and told in school that saw youth *playing against* each other. Play was once again a story of youth *playing with* each other. I was beginning to see how play was in fact a vehicle of sorts, driving the co-creation of a community, one infused with a sense of belonging and inclusivity. Through this inquiry, I came to understand how Candice, Clary, and Colin were impacting the creation of a community within the gymnasium.

I had struggled to try and conceptualize what I meant by referring to the program as a community. Mentioning this to other programmers or researchers seemed to come off as an empty signifier. I could not quite describe it, until I read Clary's transcript from one of our research conversations.

I think it [after-school program] probably instills more of a belonging thing, too, because it's more like a family or sense of community. Because that's how community family is, not everyone's all the same age, there's not just kids and then adults, there's a lot of different things going on in a community. (4, p. 9)

Clary's notion of both the after-school space and community are quite profound. For Clary, community was more than a geographical designation, more than an area within the city. I got the sense from Clary's description that a community is not just about a place, but also about the people in the place and the intertwined relationships. Community shifts from an almost inanimate object to become a feeling, or perhaps a sense of belonging. *Because that's what community family is.* Community was everything to do with that collective of people within that gymnasium space and less to do with where it was situated within the context of this urban centre. This *collective* was intergenerational with both young and old coming together. As Clary shared in our

narrative account negotiation, a community is in essence a family filled with young and old taking care of each other because “that is what families do” (Narrative account negotiation, February 2017).

Fitting in is just wanting to be a part of a group or a class or anything, and what we do is we make everything equal. We like to keep things equal and make sure everyone is happy and we're not like picking favourites and we don't have favourites. We make sure that kids are . . . They feel a part of the program. (2, p. 7)

The words shared by Candice too help me to see how the after-school program was much more than a place to play. As shared in the previous chapter, play within the program was different from that experienced in school and in sport. Candice’s words, *equal, fitting in, part of the program*, resonated. Travelling back to early conversations alongside Candice, notions of inclusivity were apparent. I came to understand Candice’s role of big sister, taking care of siblings in early days of foster care. It was a role that Candice embraced, as she tried to ensure her siblings felt safe, felt wanted. Perhaps this role of big sister stemmed from her stories of isolation, stories that went beyond the 60-meter dash; stories of lessons learned from early memories of foster care.

Because I was being abused, I knew how it felt and I didn't really want other people to feel that way. I learned that no one should be treated that way. (1, p. 9)

I would come to know that for Candice, feeling alone, feeling different, was something she experienced often at a young age. From this inquiry, I came to understand it was these lived and told stories of isolation Candice carried to the program each week, experiences that helped shape her identity, her story to live by. Belonging was an

integral part of Candice's story to live by and as such she recognized how the people within the program were in fact contributing to the inclusion of others. As I continued to inquire, I came to understand how the program was building a community through a sense of belonging. Candice expressed how "everyone feels like they belong. It's important because we want all the kids to feel happy and feel like they belong. We make sure that everyone feels like they're being included in the activities" (3, p. 4). As I came to learn, this sense of happiness was not something Candice always felt as a child, however, it was a feeling that always returned when she was surrounded by family, by community.

These notions of community remained with me as I shared a walk with Colin. It was a sunny day. Colin and I decided to engage in our research conversation while meandering through the streets of his neighborhood. As we ventured up and down sidewalks, at one point stopping to sit on a park bench, Colin talked about experiences growing up in the city we live in. Speaking about the youth he said, "they are growing up in a community that doesn't change if they are not as strong as the rest. They fall behind, kind of, in a way" (4, p. 15). This *larger community* as Colin named it, was in fact the urban centre we were all living within. Colin's notions of strong and weak bring about a sense of hierarchy. The words, *doesn't change*, could be interpreted as a structure, a static entity that remained constant, similar to that of a ladder perhaps. Colin displayed an awareness of this larger community and how it functioned. Those *not as strong as the rest* would find themselves left at the bottom of that ladder, while others in the community continued to climb.

Colin was in fact differentiating between the *larger community* and the after-school program, which he named as “our community” (4, p. 16). *Our community*, which I will refer to as the program community moving forward, was “different from the community they [the youth] are growing in” (4, p. 16). Continuing to live and tell stories of this larger community, I came to understand that what Colin was experiencing in the program community was unlike his experiences to this point within the larger community. Dwelling on this difference returned my thoughts to what Colin mentioned when describing the larger community—*they fall behind*. I was beginning to see the complexities, affinities, and differences between the many community knowledge landscapes the youth were living upon. What were the social conditions (Clandinin, 2013) upon these community knowledge landscapes, in terms of the “cultural, social, institutional, familial, and linguistic narratives” (p. 40)? In learning about the re-conceptualization of play and how the after-school program helped in this (re)turn to play, I began to wonder more about the socio-cultural environment being created within the program. As I continued to dwell upon the *program community*, this particular knowledge landscape, and then speaking to Candice, Clary, and Colin further, I began to gain greater insight into the multiple communities, knowledge landscapes they live within. Through inquiring into experiences upon these community knowledge landscapes, distinctions between each became more prominent.

Conceptualizing the Program Community

Reimagining teacher. I continued to wonder around the notion of program community. From working within the program over an extended period of time, I felt a sense of belonging. From the inquiry, I came to see this sense of belonging being a

much more important part of the program than I could have imagined. Through the inquiry and the negotiation of narrative accounts, I was seeing that this sense of belonging went beyond the way we played. Indeed, the way we played helped to shape the program community, but I was also seeing that the community we were co-creating was allowing for such play to occur. I was seeing how Candice, Clary, and Colin were integral to this co-creation of community, teachers to myself and to others. I wondered how each had storied themselves within the program as we continued to inquire into their lived and told stories.

Candice. I continued to relive stories within the program that centred, for Candice, around this notion of inclusivity. From an early age, Candice grew up with her Aunt Ruth. I came to know that Aunt Ruth was in fact not Candice's aunt, but her foster parent. Affectionately known to all her foster children as Auntie, Ruth had been a constant in Candice's life from the age of 8 years old. Candice acknowledged that Ruth had been a tremendous teacher.

I think she taught me more about being respectful and a better person. She taught me how to be proper, like how to have manners and that's kind of what she taught us all these years and how to be polite and how to act in public, stuff like that.

(1. p. 11)

Those teachings from Ruth were teachings Candice looked to pass on to the youth she worked with. Candice saw that the after-school program was about more than keeping youth active.

We're also teaching on how to be polite, how to have manners, how to be respectful. Because school isn't really teaching them, or isn't really focusing on

teaching them manners and stuff like that, and that's kind of what we're doing so they learn those manners in the program and take them to school. (4, p. 9)

How Candice described the after-school program was telling. The fact that Candice included herself in the collective of who was doing the teaching acknowledges that she in fact saw herself as teacher. She recognized that she had knowledge to pass on to the youth about how to care for others and how to treat others. Furthermore, her words helped me to think about what knowledge seemed to count in schools. To Candice, the stories lived and told on the school landscape were not *really focusing on teaching them manners and stuff like that*. Candice acknowledged that the *teachings* Ruth passed down to her perhaps did not count in schools. When asked what her teachers in school would see, Candice mentioned, “they’d see us teaching those little kids how to behave properly, how to treat each other” (4, p. 16). Candice’s words were helping me to see a belief that the knowledge she shared with *those little kids* was important, it counted.

Colin. “They are different” (1, p. 2). Colin too was seeing that what counted in schools differed from what counted elsewhere. It was clear to Colin that there were things learned in school that were important and would allow one to be successful in *school*, however, there was also *education*. Education was the learning that happened outside of school, “real life stuff” (1, p. 2), as he would put it. “Education is a part of our life. We start learning the day we're born” (1, p. 2). As I listened to Colin talk about how he saw education, I was reminded of an experience that happened mere moments earlier as we made our way to my office. Arriving at the top of the stairs, we approached a set of doors seconds prior to a group of three coming down from the third floor.

Seeing that converging parties were making their way to the same doorway, Colin scooted ahead quickly to open and hold the door. I asked Colin who taught him to open doors for others. “My grandma, she really helped me understand manners and everything” (1, p. 10). His Grandma Jean, affectionately referred to as Grandma, I would come to learn was a tremendous influence on Colin and how he treated others. Similar to that of Candice, Colin had knowledge passed on to him from family, knowledge gained outside of school.

I continued to think about Colin’s notion of education and school being different. I wondered if Colin felt he had knowledge that came more from an *education* or *school*. His lived and told stories situated Colin as a knowledge holder on different landscapes outside of school. It seemed to me that education occurred, in Colin’s eyes, on multiple landscapes. This realization surfaced in one of our conversations around Colin’s physical education experiences in elementary school. The gymnasium that hosts the after-school program was the same gymnasium Colin experienced physical education as an elementary school student. I asked him if the space seemed different now from when he was a student. He responded by stating, “in Phys. Ed. there's just one teacher. But now in the program, there's five teachers, six teachers, seven teachers sometimes” (1, p. 16). “Would you consider yourself one of the teachers, I asked? Colin’s one word response of “yeah” (1, p. 16) brought a smile to both our faces; we both knew that knowledge gained from other places counted. The knowledge from a multitude of landscapes—family, community, the program—all counted.

The words *five teachers*, *six teachers*, *seven teachers sometimes*, animated how Colin saw himself and others as teachers in the after-school program. Considering what

I have come to know about Colin, how he had come to explain education and school as different, I saw a connection to how he had self-identified as teacher. This self-designation was quite telling as it spoke to how Colin positioned himself as a knowledge holder. We continued to unpack what teacher meant to Colin:

Brian: What is the common story of who the teacher is?

Colin: The people that get all the attention.

Brian: Okay. In the classroom, in the school, who is the teacher?

Colin: The person standing in the front, most likely.

Brian: Do you feel like you're a teacher when you're in school?

Colin: No.

Brian: But you feel like a teacher when you come to the program?

Colin: Yeah.

Brian: I wonder why you never feel like a teacher in school?

Colin: I'm the one taking notes and listening. (2, pgs. 8-9)

Knowing now how Colin saw himself as teacher within the program yet not at school, I was curious how he thought the youth perceived him. "Probably as a teacher or an elder, or maybe an older brother, older sister" (1, p. 9) he responded. He went on to explain:

A lot of these kids, they don't have older brothers. Or if they do, they don't really interact with them. Everyone looks up to someone or something. When we're playing with these kids, we're helping them. By doing that, it gives us the figure of that older brother or older sister. (1, p. 9)

What I took away from those words revolved around the definition of teacher. The words teacher, elder, brother, sister, were synonymous to Colin. For Colin, teacher and older brother carried the same meaning. This implied that learning also happened in the family, outside of school. Colin's lived and told stories of teacher included more than adults found within a school.

Clary.

I asked the class to help me position the chairs in a circle to prepare for the discussion. With forty of us in the classroom, it took some doing to ensure we all had a place to sit. It was after the chairs were placed and most had found a spot to sit that Clary arrived.

As we sat together Clary shared her experiences in the after-school program, her experiences growing up, and her experiences in school. Clary talked at length about what she had come to know about play and moving together in the gymnasium, sharing thoughts around community and what that meant to her now. She was not the only one to speak that day, but when Clary did the rest of us hung on every word. At times the conversation became hard, filled with emotion for many.

As our time came to an end, many from the class approached Clary thanking her personally for sharing her experiences with us. After a few minutes it was just the two of us remaining in that university classroom. Looking at me with a smile on her face, Clary told me that she wouldn't have been able to do that a few short years ago.

(Field text, October 2016)

A teacher was never an occupation Clary had imagined while growing up. As she ventured through high school, Clary had aspirations of working in the medical field. Today, Clary is completing her third year of nursing at the local university. It was an experience shared on that university campus that helped me to see how much of a teacher Clary truly is.

Knowing that Clary had a break between her classes, I had asked if she would speak about the after-school program with a group of pre-service teachers I was working with. Reliving this story alongside Clary I wondered if she was seeing herself as a teacher within the after-school program, as well as a teacher that day in that university classroom. It was clear to me that Clary had knowledge that others did not, knowledge that counted within the after-school program. In this case, Clary was able to share experiences and insight with pre-service teachers that I could not possibly provide. Clary had lived and told stories that I have never experienced. Certainly, I could have come into that university classroom as the teacher, sharing what good teaching in a gymnasium looked like. But could I come into that classroom and teach those pre-service teachers how to build community? Not the same way Clary could; my lived and told stories were different.

The pre-service teachers connected to Clary, perhaps because of similarities in age or because some could relate differently with her. The youth, too, connected to Clary for as she explained, "...each kid they relate to a different person. Some kids like you better, some kids like me better. It's not that they like us better, just they can relate more to us I guess" (3, p. 6).

The notion of being able to *relate more* reminded me again of how all three mentors had equated teacher to that of big brother/big sister or family member. Clary further elaborated acknowledging that:

Some of the youth have multiple siblings sometimes and when they go home they may not get that kind of attention. When they come and see us I think they get that one-on-one time that maybe they need. Every kid needs one-on-one time.

(3, p. 7)

This relatability makes me wonder about shared stories, stories the youth of the program have lived and told that are similar to those of Clary. I wonder of common experiences that I do not bring to the program that Clary and the other mentors do, experiences that bring with them knowledge.

Together in this program community, we have been able to reimagine teacher. I am awake to how this conception speaks to Candice, Clary, and Colin's shared belief that family is perhaps the greatest teacher. Through the retelling of stories each realized that they have knowledge to share, knowledge gained from multiple landscapes. What, and how, each is teaching has been instrumental in the creation of this program community. What is it each has learned that contributes to the formation of this community? What knowledge are they sharing with the youth? What lived and told stories are Candice, Clary, and Colin returning to? Where is it they have gained this knowledge? It was with these wonders I once again sat with the narrative accounts, coming to understand the wealth of knowledge each mentor arrived to the program with every week.

Stories of knowledge holder. Shifting back to Chapter Three and the narrative conceptions of knowledge, I am reminded of the multiple landscapes from which youth have experiences that impact their identities, stories to live by, and shape how they come to know. Through the inquiry I was seeing how knowledge gained through past experiences was integral to Candice, Clary, and Colin’s role of teacher and to their work alongside the youth. The knowledge Candice, Clary, and Colin were passing on to the youth within the program was knowledge that perhaps did not count in school. Shifting back to what I came to know from the literature, their knowledge would seem not to count in the common story of after-school programming as well. As discussed in Chapter Two, the mentors within *effective programming* were adults. Throughout the literature, youth were seen to be in deficit, certainly not seen as knowledge holders. It was through stories lived, told, and relived that I was able to see the rich knowledge each youth had gained; knowledge that I saw as integral in building this program community.

Clary. Shared in the previous chapter, Clary loved to play hockey growing up. I learned that the cost of the sport made it difficult for Clary’s mom financially. Clary recognized this struggle, sharing with me how she made the decision to stop playing hockey at a young age, appreciating the cost incurred to play. Hockey was a sport Clary truly enjoyed but did not want to see her mother take on more work to pay for it. Her mom wanted her children to have a “normal life” (Narrative account negotiation, February 2017), but Clary knew it would be easier on her mom if she stopped playing.

As we continued our conversation, talking more about the financial struggles her mother faced as a single parent, Clary retold a story of turning 12 years old. Clary recalled being able to babysit “legally” (3, p. 7) as she put it, allowing her to earn some

money. As the story unfolded, I shifted back to thinking about when I was 12 years old. What would I do with money at that age? At that time, hockey and anything connected to the sport seemed to consume my life. If I was not playing hockey, I was reading hockey magazines or trading hockey cards with my friends. I was an avid collector of hockey memorabilia and could not wait for my weekly allowance so I could run down to the local convenience store to buy as many card packs, stickers, or magazines as I could afford.

Shifting back to listening to Clary tell her story of babysitting, I wondered what it was she did with the money.

I just grew up really fast. I started babysitting the next-door neighbour right away as soon as I could get my babysitting license. My mom used to hate it but I would take my money and I would, like we had food, we were never one of those families where we absolutely had no food in the house, but we would have just a little bit, we would have enough to get by. I would take all my money and go buy groceries and then I would come home and even the one point she tried to make me take them back and I was like, “I’m not taking them back”. (3, p. 8)

I just grew up really fast were words that stayed with me, and words that I think about often when I think about Clary. I learned that day just how important it was for Clary to support her mother and her siblings. The knowledge she had and the resiliency she showed were profound. My experiences as a 12-year-old were so very different from what Clary experienced. Stories lived and told within her family were stories of support, of taking care of each other. Clary had learned from her mother that “just because something gets a little hard they can't just give up on it” (2, p. 4). As I inquired

into Clary's words, I see how her mother was living and telling stories of perseverance time and time again. Clary lived and told stories of the importance of family and doing what it took to keep family together. The story Clary's mother grew up in was that of foster care and family members not caring for their children. From Clary's point of view, her mom did what she could to shift that story, to make life *normal*.

Candice. In our research conversations, Candice shared experiences of living in different foster homes prior to moving in with Aunt Ruth. There were moments she could recall in great detail that stuck with her all these years later. As she described it, "some homes weren't very good, they kind of hurt us" (4, p. 9). These lived and told stories of foster care were in fact stories Candice acknowledged as moments that had taught her how to treat people.

I didn't want anyone to be treated the same way I did so I just tried to make sure people were happy. (1, p. 9)

Candice went on to tell me that the abusive homes "taught her how to take care and how to care" (4, p. 9). This notion of making sure people were happy had surfaced at other times throughout the inquiry. Through retelling these early stories of foster care, Candice was in fact reliving stories alongside the youth. Her learning *how to take care and how to care* was being relived as Candice worked within the program. "Growing up with younger siblings, I feel more soft when I'm around children. That's just how I feel with children" (1, p. 14). Candice's caring demeanour shined through when she interacted with the youth, and the joy she brought to them was reciprocated.

I enjoy seeing kids have fun and play, so it kind of makes me feel happy. It makes me feel like if I play with them, it makes me feel young I guess. I don't know. I like seeing little kids happy, so it makes me happy. (2, p. 12)

I came to understand just how important it seemed for Candice to see the youth happy. Happiness was perhaps not a word Candice would have chosen to describe early memories of school. Many of Candice's early memories of school dealt with questions about her sister Emily⁸.

I don't know. Like after what happened to my sister, I had a lot of things going on with her and a lot of those memories were mostly about students asking me what happened and stuff like that. It's kind of what I remember about my younger years is just all these questions and stuff like that about her. (1, p. 18).

When she explained the all too common questions she faced in school, I was reminded of how I was first introduced to Candice. Prior to meeting her in person, I was told that Candice was the sister of Emily. I still remember the tension I felt that day wondering how often Candice was described that way. I came to learn that not a day goes by that Candice doesn't feel that people see her as the sister of Emily. "You kind of feel like you know what they're thinking or feeling" (Narrative account negotiation, February 2017). That feeling, I learned, is a feeling of discomfort, the same feeling she felt when her classmates would ask her questions about her sister. Candice explained that back then her only comfort came from being with her siblings. Candice feels that same

⁸ As negotiated with Candice, we agreed to not provide further context of Emily within this dissertation.

comfort now in the program being with others, playing and laughing together, reminding me again how the program was a community.

Colin. I return once again to Colin holding open that door as the two of us were making our way to my office. It was a “life lesson” (1, p. 3) as he described it, his Grandma Jean passed down. It was one of many teachings from Jean that stressed the need “to be generous and caring and learn to forgive people” (1, p. 11). The notion of learning to *forgive people* was a reminder to me that Colin’s home situation had not always been a positive one, as he has not always lived with his Grandma.

It wasn't a nice one for me, my little sister and my older sister. It wasn't a good experience. The brother would always yell at us a lot. He seems like he was 19, 18, around that age. He would always push me around and stuff. I didn't really have that much of a memory back then. My sister remembers a lot more than me. But I remember some days, they wouldn't feed us because ... I don't really remember why, but that's how things were. Sometimes at nights when we were hungry, we would sneak up at night and go get food in the kitchen. It wasn't nice. It was scary. (1, p. 4)

Colin was placed in foster care at the age of 2 years old. For a number of years, Colin and his sister would move from home to home, at times being together and at other times only seeing each other at scheduled visits. Colin, being the younger brother, looked up to his sister who was two years older. One home in particular was not a healthy situation for Colin.

For Colin, his older sibling was his protector, someone he could count on. As he moved from home to home, there was not a great deal of consistency other than his older

sister. Even though it was a devastating time for Colin, he acknowledged that he did learn from his time in foster homes that he simply categorized as “not good” (1, p. 4).

I won't say I hate those people, because hate is a strong word. I just don't want to be anything like those people. I try to learn from that and learn not to be like that. Yelling at people, disrespecting them, bullying them. I try to be honest, generous and respectful. A lot of the stuff I went through as a kid, I try to learn through that stuff. (1, p. 5)

All of these *life lessons*, as Colin named them, were much greater lessons in his eyes than anything that was taught in school. Perhaps it is these life lessons that allow Colin to see school differently. Colin's past experiences are, as Dewey (1938) explained, interacting and continuous in a way that helps him to see things that others may not. As Colin so eloquently put it, “anyone can teach you one plus one, but can anyone really teach you what generosity means?” (1, p. 3). His words once again reminded me that teaching goes beyond mandated curriculum in schools. Colin experienced trauma that I could not begin to imagine. Through these experiences, Colin gained knowledge that might not be visible in schools. Colin held knowledge that most certainly counted. What Colin *went through as a kid*, he learned from. Thinking narratively we could see these life lessons as part of his identity, his stories to live by.

Candice, Clary, and Colin were able to relive stories of inclusion, of care, of family. These stories relived were what was truly building the program community each spoke of. Now self-perceived, and perceived by the younger students, as teachers, Candice, Clary, and Colin identified the after-school program as its own community, different from the realities in which the youth were *growing up in*. The knowledge

Candice, Clary, and Colin gained through a multitude of experiences upon multiple landscapes counted in the program. It was knowledge they each had carried with them from lived and told stories outside of school. I was seeing how their identities, their stories to live by, were now acknowledged as each reimagined teacher, reimagined knowledge holder.

The stories lived, told, retold, and relived in the small gymnasium space were not the stories Candice, Clary, and Colin were hearing in the larger community. Through the inquiry process, Candice, Clary, and Colin spoke about the different communities they lived in, and I began to wonder about how these differing landscapes required different knowledge, different skills, and different teachers. I began to see how the youth were constantly required to move between these landscapes, and in many ways were constantly negotiating these landscapes.

Conceptualizing the Larger Community

Each week, Candice, Clary, and Colin shift back and forth from time spent in the program community to the school community and to the larger community. Through the inquiry I came to understand there is a story being told upon this larger community, a grand narrative of Indigenous youth that supersedes Candice, Clary, and Colin, day after day. These social conditions (Clandinin, 2013) continued to be inquired into as I came to understand this grand narrative through their lived and told stories. It is these stories relived, I share to further animate this grand narrative that continues to exist in this larger community.

Lived and told stories – the grand narrative.

Greatness *isn't always easy*.
Do not *doubt* yourself.

Anyone can be successful so long as you want to be.
(Field Text, January 2014)

The above field text⁹ is made up of words that were written by Clary to the youth within the after-school program. Written a few short months upon connecting to the program, I remember reading what Clary wanted to share with the youth. These four lines were part of a written piece she had put together as an introduction. At the time, I recall reading the words like a teacher, looking for grammatical errors and editing to ensure it flowed well. As Clary's story continues to work on me, the words she wrote resonate on a much deeper level.

It was after going through Clary's narrative account one final time, the two of us decided to go back to those initial words and think about them once again. Clary wanted to leave a reminder of just how different things can look. We decided to take Clary's words and rearrange them to once again tell the story heard day in and day out, this dominant story of Indigenous youth within the urban centre we both live in. Sitting together each with pen in hand, Clary and I rearranged the words to reflect the grand narrative.

Greatness *isn't always easy possible*.

~~Do not~~ *Doubt* yourself.

Anyone can be successful so long as you ~~want to be~~ are not Indigenous.

As I look at the words, I am reminded of the many stories shared, allowing me to further understand how Indigenous youth are perceived daily within society.

⁹ The field text appears how it did within the narrative account as negotiated between Clary and myself.

If you get a good reputation and you go to a store, no one's going to following you around like they do sometimes to me. That makes you feel good. When I'm getting followed around, for some reason, I feel guilty. I don't really feel good. It's not good for my well-being I guess. (3, p. 19)

This perception, or what Colin called a reputation, came from "how you dress or your skin colour" (3, p. 18). It was a reputation that Colin lived with each day as he explained, "...sometimes when I'm in a store or something, there'd be people following me around. I don't really like it very much" (3, p. 19). Within the urban centre of which Colin lives, he often feels different, lesser than others. He recognizes that because of his skin colour there are people that have in a sense grouped him into specific categories based on what he calls a "bad reputation" (3, p. 17). What I have come to know about Colin makes it difficult to hear these lived and told stories of this larger community. Colin recognizes the grand narrative that exists around Indigenous youth. Each time he comes face to face with it, he feels a familiar sense of discomfort. *When I am getting followed around, for some reason, I feel guilty. I don't really feel good. It's not good for my well-being, I guess.*

"They assume that First Nation people are . . . They didn't finish school, they don't have jobs, they're living off welfare and they have lots of kids and maybe alcohol and drugs" (3, p. 19). These perceptions, this reputation, or what Candice referred to as assumptions, position Indigenous youth. ". . . Because I know, sometimes they feel like when they look at me or they look at a group and they see us. You kind of feel like you know what they're thinking or feeling, but they have it all wrong" (Narrative account negotiation, February 2017). Candice grew up hearing this narrative, hearing and feeling

these assumptions playing out in her community. She has friends and family members that perhaps fit that grand narrative, but she also has friends and family members that live a very different story.

As I looked across the narrative accounts (Clandinin, 2013), there was a continuous thread that resonated which positioned Candice, Clary, and Colin as other. These stories lived, told, and retold through this inquiry helped me to further understand the grand narrative that exists within the larger community, a narrative that resonates with the literature positioning Indigenous youth in deficit. The intent of sharing these stories was to animate the distinctiveness between communities as Candice, Clary, and Colin experienced each. As the inquiry progressed, this notion of seeing differently, seeing beyond the metaphorical dots, became more prevalent. As these three mentors relived stories lived and told, we came to see a shifting story of Indigenous youth.

Relived stories – shifting narrative. It is not only when I can see other, but also experience other, feel other, that I can then imagine other. This is something Candice, Clary, and Colin taught me throughout this inquiry. From their words, I see that they identify themselves as teacher; each experienced being teacher in the program. All three felt that what they knew counted. The knowledge they gained upon multiple landscapes was integral to building *our community*. *Teacher* and *knowledge holder* were part of Candice, Clary, and Colin's stories to live by. I was also taught that when the three walk out the doors of that small gymnasium of the after-school program, each enters back into a larger community where the stories being told of Indigenous youth are not the stories they were experiencing in the program.

Candice, Clary, and Colin all see that they are impacting the program they are a part of. They are helping youth imagine a different story, a story playing out in the after-school program. They are helping me imagine a different story. Now having felt and experienced a different story, the three looked to transfer these feelings to the larger community. As I continued to inquire, I began to see that for these youth it was important to change the picture that has been laid out for them, outlined by static dots on a page.

Candice.

When we go out to, when we take the kids out on outings, it's like mostly when people see us, it's like bunch of First Nations kids and First Nations mentors, and they might assume that's going to be hard with us there, or they're going to have troubles with us. It's the total opposite. They have it all wrong.

(Narrative account negotiation, February 2017)

In retrospect, Candice sees why it is so important that as a group we venture out of the gymnasium to various locations in the city. She admits that when we move to these locations, the uncomfortable feelings of being judged surface. That feeling, steeped in the assumptions, is felt when we enter an establishment. I see this and feel this too. We walk into local establishments and there are parents and grandparents there with their families. They stop, they see us, and I can feel too there is a perception of our group, of this group of *First Nations kids and First Nations mentors*.

With only a few minutes remaining before we had to gather the kids to board the bus I was approached by Grace, who introduced herself as the grandmother of a little one that was bouncing amongst us. Grace asked what group we were. After

explaining briefly about the GYM program, I asked if she would be willing to help us out by providing some feedback. Welcoming the opportunity, Grace handed me back after a few short moments a completed “How are we doing?” checklist with a note on the bottom . . . “What a splendid group.” (Field text, October 2017)

With each excursion into the larger community, we continue to ask, “How are we doing?”¹⁰. The youth voiced the importance of knowing how others perceived us as a group when we ventured out into the community. The youth determined what criteria would be important to include on a checklist to understand how the public perceived them. Each returned checklist tells a different story of this *bunch of First Nations kids and First Nations mentor*. Candice’s words, *they have it all wrong*, confirmed for me she saw a different story from the grand narrative of Indigenous youth. As she continued to relive stories of inclusivity, Candice passed on to the youth *how to take care and how to care*. Grace and others were seeing this in the group as indicated in the positive feedback regularly received from the checklist. Teachings shared by Candice and others, gained from multiple landscapes, were essential to the building of the program community, a community that travelled to places throughout the city shifting assumptions—shifting the grand narrative.

Colin. We discussed the idea of well-being and how Colin mentioned that it was not good for his health when he ventured out into the larger community, being seen as other. This sense of ranking and being judged brought us to a conversation of

¹⁰ How are we doing? is a formative assessment checklist that we offer to staff of establishments, bus drivers, etc. that interact with the after-school program.

assessment in school and the anxiety that can bring for some. Assessment was just another form of ranking in Colin's eyes. It was then I mentioned the How are we doing? checklist we used, wondering if it was indeed an assessment or test for the youth.

Colin: I don't think it really bothers the kids but it kind of for me because I got to make sure the kids stay in order, something like that.

Brian: You think it's an assessment though but it doesn't bother the kids. Why not do you think? Why is it different?

Colin: It doesn't really affect them as much as it does for us.

Brian: Do you feel a little pressure with that?

Colin: A little.

Brian: Is that a good thing or a bad thing? That's interesting. We've never talked about this.

Colin: A good thing.

Brian: It's a little bit of a motivator for you?

Colin: Yeah.

Brian: What do you want the checklist to look like?

Colin: I want it to look positive.

Brian: Why is that important to you? Is it so you look good?

Colin: Not me, our whole group, the kids so that the next time they go back, they're like, "Oh, it's that program again." The kids know they're great. They're fun to have around.

Brian: Why is that important to you?

Colin: Good reputation, I guess.

Brian: Speak to that a little bit more. What kind of reputations are there?

Colin: If we have a bad one, maybe next time you ask them if we could go there, they're going to be like, "No, not today, Brian. No." (3, pgs. 16-17)

The pressure Colin feels stems from both his realization of the grand narrative we discussed, as well as the opportunity to shift that narrative. I sensed that this was a heavy burden for Colin to carry. “You get a good reputation and you go to that store, no one’s going to follow you around like they do sometimes to me.” (3, p. 19). Though I could not comprehend what it would be like to feel as Colin felt being followed each time he entered a store, I got a sense of how important it was for him to change that story for the youth he worked with. Though Colin feels the pressure, he understands the potential he and the youth have to change people’s perceptions. Discussing further this notion of pressure Colin stated, “I don’t want the youth do be judged the way I am in the community” (Narrative account negotiation, February 2017). His words, *the way I am*, awakened me further to not only the heavy burden Colin places on himself, but the perception that exists when it comes to Indigenous youth.

Clary. “Would you think that I was going to be successful in high school? Probably not. Because if you tell people my story, there’s a lot of key bullet points that would say that I shouldn’t be successful” (Field text, 2, p. 22). These few words are words that I continue to dwell on and continue to come back to time and time again. The more time I spent in conversation with Clary, the more I understood her drive to tell a different story. This drive is unmistakable when I share time with her. I can feel how important it is for Clary and her work alongside the youth.

Yeah, I think it gives them something to look ... like role model, like someone to look up to whether they're just doing one on one situations or one on one with them at all. I think sometimes, especially a lot of them that are First Nation kids, when I was a kid, you don't meet a lot of First Nation people that are successful

in their high up careers like being a doctor and stuff like that. I think if they see high school students working towards going to university and university students to become whatever their career goal is that they'll realize that that's okay and that's possible and whatnot.

(1, p. 5)

That's ok and that's possible. Through time spent coming to know Clary I came to understand her imagined story was different to that of the grand narrative. As I sat with her words, I got a sense Clary recognizes that the *bullet points*, the metaphorical dots on the page, do not outline a picture of success to others. I also came to understand Clary's determination for the youth within the program to see that regardless the bullet points, a different picture exists. She is telling a story to the youth that perhaps they are not hearing in the larger community.

Seeing Different

Through this inquiry I came to know that the metaphorical dots on the page had outlined a dominant picture for Candice, Clary, and Colin. It was through the living, telling, retelling, and reliving of stories that the dots once again shifted, outlining a picture that looked nothing like that of the grand narrative each had come to know. Candice, Clary, and Colin were all seeing a different picture, not necessarily a new picture, just different. The seeing different was in fact the reliving of stories lived and told upon several landscapes. Stories told by Aunt Ruth, Grandma Jean, and Clary's mom. Stories of isolation, of resiliency, and of belonging, all shaping stories to live by. As I moved through the process of putting into words what I came to know from Candice, Clary, and Colin, I too was seeing differently. As I think back to my early

beginnings in Chapter One, I recognize that this notion of seeing different has been a touchstone throughout this inquiry, wondering what would be if we looked past the metaphorical dots on the page.

It was mere months before completing edits to this dissertation that I found myself part of a one-day conference for Indigenous youth on resiliency. Lee, Sean, and I were asked to present on the work happening in the after-school program. I still remember the tension felt at that time, as we each were asked to *teach* on the topic of being resilient. Could I teach resiliency? As I consider that question today, I am reminded again of the five threads from the literature pertaining to after-school programs for Indigenous youth. The commonalities between the literature and this youth conference helped me to understand why I was in fact feeling tension, wondering if I should be teaching resiliency to these youth. Was I the best teacher? The after-school program I was part of was viewed by the organizers of the conference the same way programs were taken up in the literature. The program I worked within was viewed as an intervention designed to impact Indigenous youth. From this view, it would make sense that we as the adults within the program would be best suited to teach the youth at this resiliency conference. From this view, Candice, Clary, and Colin would be positioned as at-risk. This positioning would suggest the need for a program to intervene, to support these youth. Never would it be assumed that Candice, Clary, and Colin were in fact resilient enough. Each would need mentoring from adults to understand what it means to be resilient. At no time would Candice, Clary, and Colin be seen as teachers, this was a role reserved for the adults implementing a program framed within a model for resiliency.

These notions of programming and this dominant story within the literature contradict what I have learned through this inquiry. The youth are the teachers in the program; the youth are the knowledge holders. Each has brought to the gymnasium experiences from various landscapes that have helped to shape what we are all coming to know in the program. The program itself is not an intervention on the youth; rather, it is a connecting space, a space that allowed me to come alongside the youth to begin to understand their experiences, their stories. The intervention was in fact on me; I was being taught by Candice, Clary, and Colin. Their stories continue to shape who I am and who I am becoming.

Through the interaction of our lived and told stories, I have come to understand the knowledge Candice, Clary, and Colin hold on a deeper level. This speaks to the strength of this community-based narrative inquiry. Being awake and attending to the stories of Candice, Clary, and Colin has allowed me to learn from them. Through the co-creation of a relational community the youth brought me home, allowing me into their experiences and their stories, allowing me to see a different picture a bit more clearly. I wonder what I would have missed had Lee, Sean, and I entered into this inquiry looking to fix a problem, to intervene. What would have been passed over if the three of us came in as experts? Would the same community be realized through play? If I began from a starting point of deficit and intervention, would the after-school program have looked the same as it did? If we simply connected dots on the page, outlining a picture we already could see, how could new possibilities ever be imagined?

Chapter Seven: Looking Backward to See Forward

I conclude by shifting back to the emerging research puzzle that I shared in Chapter One. Through this inquiry I have come to understand the experiences and knowledge Candice, Clary, and Colin brought to the after-school program. What was it that each was coming to understand from being in the inquiry? How were they experiencing the experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000)? I was curious how each saw this program in comparison to school or familial landscapes (Huber et al., 2011). Furthermore, I was interested to know how their stories to live by (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999) had shifted from being part of this after-school program. Shifting back to a cool autumn morning sharing a connect the dots activity with my daughter Maeve, I have continued to wonder what things can look like if we can look past the metaphorical dots on the page, the grand narratives that often become so common they are all we see. To that end, with the starting points of this inquiry, I was able to see a shifting of the dots, a picture unlike the grand narratives that I came to know. As I came alongside Candice, Clary, and Colin through the *living, telling, retelling, and reliving* (Clandinin, 2013) of their stories, I was able to animate pictures of after-school programming and Indigenous youth that were unlike the common depiction within the literature and within the urban centre we all live in. I once again look backward, reflecting on my journey within this inquiry, which offers me opportunities to imagine forward-looking stories.

Impact

We arrived on campus with a few minutes to spare. As the youth and I began to remove our winter coats, Sean and Lee arrived to round out the group. We were

asked to meet with a photographer who was capturing images for an upcoming media release by the university. Our community-based research was one study being highlighted. Soon after our group had situated in the meeting area of the studio, two photographers greeted us. Based on their reactions, I sensed that neither expected to see a group the size of us.

(Field text, November 2015)

The field text helps me to reflect on this narrative inquiry journey that I have been part of over the past four years. The picture of seven youth mentors alongside Lee, Sean, and I, is a terrific reminder of experiences shared in an after-school program. A reminder of time spent coming to know each other moving in and out of a small school gymnasium that was *connected but disconnected*. As I look at the picture I recall the stories lived and told within the program, as well as the stories that each of us brought to the gymnasium.

The picture became a one-page promotional piece distributed within University Affairs Magazine, local media publications, and upon the university's website. Ten smiling faces, grouped together with the words "Our commitment to research that has impact" (2016) centred across the top. The title of the promotional piece was not one that we chose ourselves. It was this notion of *impact* that brought me to revisit my inquiry, what I had come to know on this journey alongside Candice, Clary, and Colin.

When our group of ten met that morning it was evident from the conversation with the pair of photographers, each group had imagined researchers differently. It was the photographers' understanding that they would be leading a photo shoot with researchers from a community-based research study. I guess in retrospect we all thought

the same; Lee, Sean, and I just had a different understanding of researcher. This misunderstanding, if you want to call it that, was a reminder to what I had come to know on this journey with respect to this notion of *impact*.

I am thankful we were adamant the youth were included in the photo. Imagine for a moment if it was just the three of us. The impact perceived would perhaps fit that of the dominant narrative I discovered within the literature, a perception that we as three researchers were in fact impacting youth. We were entering into a community, unlike our own, to change things—make things better. We were the experts, the interventionists.

Even with the youth in the picture standing alongside the three of us, I wonder of the perceptions of impact. Perhaps now being able to see the youth, seeing each was Indigenous, the dots on the page would once again outline a common picture. Once connected, those dots would trace a picture of three researchers impacting Indigenous youth, fixing them and the community they live in. This perceived picture of course fits the five threads that resonated from my comprehensive review of the literature around after-school programs for Indigenous youth. Studies that were in fact looking to transcendently answer questions, looking to provide generalizable data to government agencies, private funders, and schools on how to help at-risk youth. How can we increase high school graduation rates of Indigenous youth? How can we fix a community that is seen by many within a city as dangerous? How can we, with our research and our programming, fix things? In what way can we *impact* the youth?

As I came to know through living within this inquiry, the impact did not come from Lee, Sean, and I, or from the program we were part of over the last four years.

Through my inquiry, I have come to see that the impact was made by the youth within the program. The youth were teaching me every day. The impact branched out as well, and was felt within the community. The youth were teaching the employees that had us playing games with one red ball. Candice, Clary, and Colin are teaching university pre-service teachers how *to take care* and *how to care*. Each is teaching people we encounter in public spaces what it means to be inclusive. Candice, Clary, and Colin relived stories of play from their early childhoods, changing how we played and shifting that dominant story of play. The knowledge the youth are sharing around play and around community begins then to spread, to permeate within the larger community, shifting the dominant story of Indigenous youth each time.

Continuing to see that picture of the ten of us, I return to my early beginnings within Chapter One. I see the picture filled with stories, stories *told* and *retold*, stories *lived* and *relived*. Stories that each of us brought to the program. I am once again reminded of Dewey's (1938) criteria of experience, notions of continuity and interaction. I came to this inquiry with stories and experiences that have shaped my identity, my stories to live by (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999). I see how the stories I animated in Chapter One, stories of Tawny, Darcy, Kelly, and Joseph, continue to influence me and my work alongside others. These stories, these experiences, continue to live on in further experiences (Dewey, 1938). I brought these and many other stories to the gymnasium each week. So too did everyone else that stepped foot in that small gymnasium, each bringing their own stories. Each carrying with them a wealth of knowledge from a multitude of experiences upon multiple landscapes to a gymnasium

space, a space we all had come to know. As I looked at that picture of the ten of us, I was reminded of those stories.

The words, *our commitment to research that has impact*, brings me back to the five threads from the literature shared in Chapter Two. These threads essentially surfaced from a common starting point, that of deficit. From this starting point the picture of the ten of us looked different from how I was seeing it. The program would be for the Indigenous youth who were in the picture. The youth would not be seen as the teachers in the program as that role was reserved for adults. The effectiveness of the program would come down to these youth finishing high school or improving test scores perhaps.

The research studies I was finding in the literature were transcendental in nature, looking to find answers that were more generalizable. It was after coming to know narrative inquiry, chronicled in Chapter Four, that I began to feel more tension with the threads within the literature. As I came to know narrative inquiry as methodology and phenomenon under study (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), I came to understand the two words—*narrative* and *inquiry*—were taken up in very different ways. As a narrative inquirer I was studying experience as a storied phenomenon (Clandinin, 2007), thinking with story (Morris, 2002) rather than about stories. I was inquiring into these stories three dimensionally, considering temporality, place, and sociality. I came to understand that the research studies I reviewed in the literature were from dominant research paradigms, which were indeed attempting to be transcendental in nature. Moving through Chapter Four, I began to see the affinities and differences that existed between

these dominant research paradigms and narrative inquiry. My transactional view of experience was in fact positioning the youth in this inquiry differently.

It is with this transactional thinking, this narrative view of experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), that I considered narrative conceptions of knowledge shared in Chapter Three. Connecting back to Dewey's (1938) pragmatic ontology of experience, I theoretically framed my inquiry. Returning to Dewey's notion of continuity and interaction, I was able to situate myself within the inquiry, recognizing how experiences from a number of landscapes have impacted my stories to live by (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999). This self-situating allowed me to recognize that Candice, Clary, and Colin also had experiences on personal landscapes that impacted their identities, shaping how they come to know. It is this theoretical frame, which evolves from a narrative view of experience, that positions this inquiry not from a place of deficit, but rather, from a place of promise. As I return to the picture of the ten of us, I see a group of knowledge holders, of teachers, of co-researchers. This picture is one that became clearer moving through the narrative inquiry, arriving over time at final research texts. This arrival allowed me to animate in Chapters Five and Six what I came to know living within this inquiry alongside Candice, Clary, and Colin. Through the living, telling, retelling, and reliving of stories, each was able to reimagine play, to reimagine community. Through the inquiry I saw a (re)turn to play that allowed for the shifting of Candice, Clary, and Colin's stories to live by. I came to understand that this re-imagined story of play opened up opportunities to also re-image community. All three relived stories that shifted the grand narrative of Indigenous youth within the larger community. Contrary to the common story within the literature, I learned that these youth were in fact the

drivers of the program, shaping what occurred each week in the gymnasium or out in the community.

Impact did indeed occur from this inquiry. Perhaps this inquiry was more alike the research studies I found in the literature after all. I learned that there was in fact an intervention; there certainly was impact from this study. However, the intervention was not that of the dominant story found in the literature and within the larger community I came to know. The intervention was on myself as the *researcher*. I learned that neither the after-school program nor I were impacting the Indigenous youth. The impact was not *on* the youth, it came *from* the youth. The youth were in fact intervening on me. Candice, Clary, and Colin were teaching me that the literature had it backwards. If Lee, Sean, and I would have started from a point of deficit, think of what I would have missed coming to know. These youth taught me what play could look like and what play can do to build community. These youth taught me the tremendous amount of knowledge they hold, knowledge that was not gained on the landscape of school, yet knowledge that definitely counts.

Seeing Forward

This narrative inquiry was a way of understanding and inquiring into experience, “nothing more and nothing less” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 13). I am reminded by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) the purpose of this inquiry:

The contribution of a narrative inquiry is more often intended to be the creation of a new sense of meaning and significance with respect to the research topic than it is to yield a set of knowledge claims that might incrementally add to knowledge in the field. The narrative inquirer does not prescribe general applications and

uses but rather creates texts that, when well done, offer readers a place to imagine their own uses and applications. (p. 42)

I know that this inquiry does not hold hard and fast answers to working with Indigenous youth, as it also does not hold specific answers to how after-school programming, physical education, or sport should look. The intent of this inquiry was not to bring *knowledge claims*, answers to how after-school programs work and impact youth. My hope from this inquiry is to open new wonders, encourage new discussion, to perhaps begin to see differently, and to look critically at how we position Indigenous youth in the literature, in research, and in school.

Personally, this work has opened up possibilities for new starting points alongside youth. As I imagine forward-looking stories, I continue to hold close the experiences of Candice, Clary, and Colin. I think about how youth can be positioned in schools and in communities. Perhaps this work will bring about shifts in the starting points with youth. Rather than positioning youth in deficit, I wonder, as did Huber et al. (2011), what school and community may look like with new starting points positioning the youth as knowledge holders. To that end, I wonder what curriculum in schools could look like if youth were seen as knowledgeable. What if the knowledge gained from personal landscapes counted on the institutional landscape of school? What if school did not discount students' lives (Huber et al., 2011)?

As a teacher of physical and health education, I continue to think how a (re)turn to play, similar to what Candice experienced in the backyard, could help shift the dominant narrative in physical education and sport. Considering once again this notion of starting points, I wonder what play could look like if we began from a different place.

What would physical education and sport look like if the end goal was the building of a community, perhaps similar to the program community Candice, Clary, and Colin described? I am left to wonder if this notion of community needs to be the new endpoint, different from a dominant narrative which revolves around creating better athletes. To that end, I again question if we can consider new ways to measure success in physical education; a question Lee, Sean, and I posed near the outset of this inquiry (Lewis, Lessard, & Schaefer, 2013). With new endpoints, there would of course be a need to revisit what is assessed and what counts.

As I think once again around the literature that exists pertaining to after-school programming for Indigenous youth, I see further need for new perspectives, new starting points. We will continue to see the same end points in research if we insist on beginning from the same starting points. These points, placed on a page, when connected will continue to outline the same picture. This narrative inquiry is one such study that offers a re-situating, if you will, as to where to begin. There has yet to be a narrative inquiry done like this one, that looked at Indigenous youths' experiences outside the context of school. Perhaps this inquiry will provide methodological offerings to other narrative inquirers who want to engage in community, in particular with Indigenous youth.

(Re)Connecting the Dots

With John Dewey's (1938) notions around continuity and interaction guiding my thinking throughout this inquiry, I return one last time to the story I began with. Sitting side by side with my daughter Maeve, pushing that red crayon from dot to dot, I again wonder if she too could see the picture of the elephant? Over my four-year journey, I have come to know that too often the dots are connected before ever coming to

understand the unending possibilities, the never-ending pictures that can be imagined if we do not accept the dots on the page as static.

Candice was seen as the sister of. Colin lived with a *reputation*. Clary had too many *bullet points* to ever be successful. This was the grand narrative each had come to understand, a narrative of deficit. It was a story told by connecting dots before ever coming to know the experiences of each youth. These dominant stories did not begin with a name—Candice, Clary, or Colin. These stories started with descriptors—Indigenous, at-risk.

Candice, Clary, and Colin knew this story well, however it was not their story, not a story any of them believed. Through coming to know these three within *our community*, our co-created narrative inquiry space, we together retold and relived stories that were nothing like those of the dominant narratives. These stories, were the stories Candice, Clary, and Colin had always believed. These stories counted again. These are the stories they look to pass on to the youth in their community. I have come to know now more than ever, we will continue to see the story one way if we continue to look at the dots one way. Candice, Clary, and Colin have and continue to shift those metaphorical dots helping us all to see differently.

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Appendix A

Narrative Account – Candice

“Are you at the Uni today?” A short text message from Candice, asking if I had time to meet up on campus before her next class. With the text message came memories of experiences we have shared over the last three years. A sense of pride came over me as I walked the crowded hallways of the university to meet Candice for a quick hello. Along the walk I (re)played many of the experiences while coming to know this young woman who was now finding her way in the first days of university life.

Be positive,
Learn the best you can,
Achieve the things you want,
Stay away from negativity

(Field Text, April 2016)

The above field text was written by Candice as part of a blog post she put together. When asked what advice she had for the youth that she worked with, Candice offered this one, succinct sentence. As I move through this account, I continue to dwell on her words. Reflecting on our experiences together over time through creating this account has helped me to see Candice’s words differently from perhaps those who read them for the first time. My intent is to animate these words through the co-created narrative account with Candice, allowing others to see the words differently also.

*Seeing kids have fun and play
Makes me feel
Feeling young
Forget about the what’s and where’s*

*At Dad’s it was just three
Playing...
In the backyard.*

*When I got older
If you win, you win
If you lose, you lose
Last place in a race
Wouldn't come anymore
If they kept losing*

*We support them, applaud them.
Feels like we belong
Important
Treated equal
Interacting
Communicating through the ball
Together*

*Some homes weren't very good
They kind of hurt us
I learned that no one should be treated that way.
Taught how to take care...and how to care...
For me it's always kind of been*

*Don't think they understand
About different races
And how that all works yet*

*Maybe they thought,
Because we're from this neighbourhood,
Getting into trouble,
Alcohol,
Drugs,
Having babies,
Not finishing school.*

*When we go places,
Changes people's perspectives and how they see us*

I feel proud of who I am

The above collection of words, a compilation of research texts, seemed to jump from the pages for me. What I mean is, the words continually appeared as I worked through the first draft of Candice's narrative account. Of the three narrative accounts, this one was for me the most difficult. As mentioned in other accounts, writing first

drafts brought trepidation as I sought to represent individuals I have come to know and build a true friendship with. Going over research texts time and time again, these words resonated. This process of taking these words and organizing them with Candice, allowed the co-creation of the account to begin.

Having met Candice for lunch on campus, I asked if she wouldn't mind reading what I had put together. Candice moved to the front of her seat, having now set down her pita, and intently began to read the few stanzas I had arranged. She finished, looked up, and told me she really liked the idea of this representation and thought it was cool how all the words were words she had spoken. Knowing Candice's love of photography, I asked her if she would like to put pictures to the words. Instantly she lit up, expressing how that would be something she wanted to do. I had a sense Candice was excited with the opportunity to represent herself through her pictures. Moving through this narrative account, I will return to pieces of the word compilation accompanied with images from Candice. In doing so, I hope to bring life to these words we pieced together over time.

Early Beginnings

It was August of 2013 and I had approached Anne, the principal of Lindberg, in search of some potential past students that would be interested in working within the program as high school mentors. Candice was one of three names provided as a potential fit. "A strong student that would be a great asset to your program" (Memory) is what I was told. It just so happened that when I was chatting with Anne, Candice's Aunt Ruth, whom Candice lived with, walked past the office. Ruth, a member of the school council, would regularly be in the school I was told. I took the liberty to introduce myself, and over the next few minutes in the hallway I explained the intent of our

program and how we were looking to connect with some high school mentors to work with us. Ruth thought Candice would find this opportunity interesting because of her love of sports, and said that she would mention it to Candice at home that evening.

I remember my first meeting with Candice in the halls of Lindberg elementary school. It was a week removed from my introduction to Aunt Ruth. Candice, who was beginning grade 10, returned to her old elementary school on occasion, this time with her Aunt. “Hi Brian”, Ruth called from down the hallway. Walking towards her, I saw whom I would come to know as Candice standing beside Ruth. Our meeting lasted only a few moments. Candice explained how she appreciated the offer to work with us, but with her commitments to high school soccer, she did not feel she could find the time.

Today, as I reflect on my initial meeting with Candice, a few thoughts surface. To understand these thoughts, I go back once again to the initial conversation I had with Anne and the three names of potential mentors she provided that day. When it came to the third name on the list, that being Candice, the conversation began, as did the first two with a strong reference of her character and undoubted belief she would be an asset to the program. It was what came immediately after the reference that brought tension for me. Anne offered Candice’s last name and informed me that she was the sister of Emily, a name known to many in the community, a name I was familiar with as well. I recall the tension I felt at that moment, wondering if that is how Candice was always described. How does that information help me to understand who Candice is, or does it simply paint a picture based on assumptions?

Shifting once again back to my hallway conversation with Candice, I remember feeling disappointed the timing was not going to work. “If it ever works for you, there

will always be a place for you” was my response. We happened to find two terrific mentors that first year. On occasion, I would see Candice as she sometimes stopped by the school to meet her younger siblings who were involved with the program. She would always say hello, and I would always tell her there was still a spot for her if she wanted a job in the program.

It was the following year of the program, in early autumn, that Candice took me up on my standing offer. As I sometimes did, I arrived early to the school saying hello to staff and any youth I would see in the hallway. Outside of the office was a great place to have those one-leg conversations (Hellison, 2011) that allowed me the chance to learn more about Lindberg and for Lindberg to learn more about me.

Candice walked in the front door with her younger brother Louis. As she walked up the stairs of the grand entrance common to schools from another time, I remember asking Candice if she was coming to work. It was a question that I probably asked her a dozen times only as a friendly reminder that she was always welcome. When she responded this time with a simple “yup”, I was taken aback.

Coming to Know in a Gymnasium

Presently, Candice and I are in our third year of working alongside each other in the after-school program. Our time spent together in the gymnasium each week has been central to us getting to know each other and developing a friendship. I have connected too with Candice outside of the four walls of the gymnasium. From the occasional lunch, to practicing her driving with me as the co-pilot, we have grown to know a bit more of each other with each experience. Now, with both of us being on campus, Candice and I get a chance to share a lunch, a hot drink, or a conversation on a bench

quite regularly. Each time I sit with Candice I think about where we have come from our initial conversation in the hallway of her old elementary school.

In the spring of 2016, Candice and I sat together over a six-week period to engage in research conversations. Having worked on a weekly basis with Candice for the last two and a half years, we had come to know each other through our interactions in the program, as well as through times spent outside of the program. Moving through the five research conversations allowed me to gain a much deeper understanding of Candice. At times the conversations flowed easily, while at others we found ourselves sitting in silence. All instances, both those filled with words and others filled with stillness, were teachings for me and brought about thoughts and wonders. Some of these wonders seemed to resonate each time I went back to the field texts. Other thoughts from these research conversations transported back to experiences shared prior to these formal conversations. These wonders and thoughts became pieces of a puzzle, when put together by us both, co-created this narrative account of Candice.

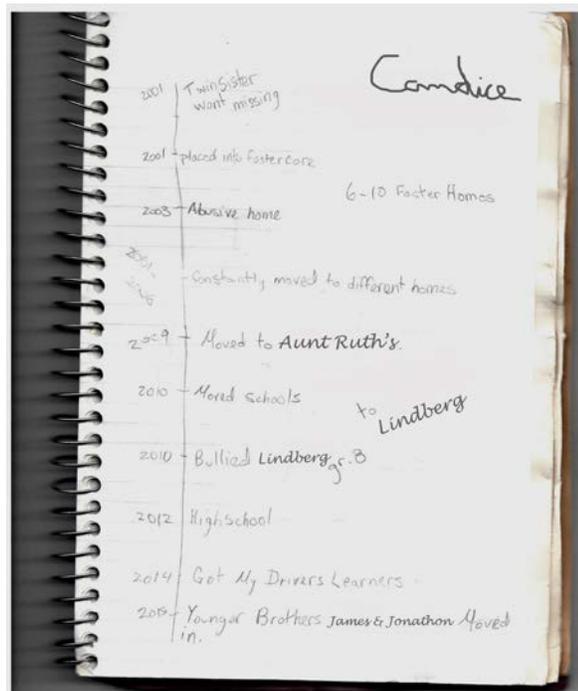
Growing Up

*Some homes weren't very good
They kind of hurt us
I learned that no one should be treated that way.*

I came to know that Aunt Ruth was in fact not Candice's aunt, but her foster mom. Affectionately known to all her foster children as Auntie, Ruth has been a constant in Candice's life from the age of 8 years old. As I reflect back on my ever-evolving relationship with Candice, I now see just how slowly I moved when it came to understanding her past experiences. I know that Candice was aware early on that I was cognizant of who her sister was. It was a conversation that I didn't bring up, but at times

the story surfaced. Reflecting back, I didn't want to focus on Candice as being the girl from a particular family, or as the sister of Emily. Remembering the tension I felt in the principal's office, I just thought that was something she experienced too often. I really wanted to know Candice.

It was late winter of 2015 and I met with Candice to practice her driving. We hopped in my old Subaru Forester and started driving around the city. For a moment, I understood what it was like for my parents when it came to teaching me how to drive. I was ecstatic that we made it to our lunch destination without me acting too paranoid. Over lunch we talked about the goings-on in school and how basketball was going for her. I asked Candice if it would okay if I had her write something for me in my notebook. I wanted her to create a timeline, whatever that looked like to her, of moments in her life that she felt impacted her. These moments or experiences set on this vertical timeline were moments that resonated throughout our conversations.



I see the words situated on the page at the beginning of her timeline, “Lost contact with Emily”. Different from how she was described to me that day at Lindberg, however, is the fact this description is not a starting point per se, rather a part of Candice that she sees as impactful. “Sister to Emily” is not solely who she is, it is just one part of Candice.

Immediately after being separated from their sister, Candice and her younger brother Louis were placed in foster care. Candice shared with me on a number of occasions experiences of living in different foster homes prior to moving in with Ruth. There were moments she could recall in great detail that have stuck with her over time, yet she could not remember just how many homes she was in; a profound realization that accentuated the obvious impact of these experiences. Some very negative incidents shared in conversation were in fact moments Candice acknowledged as moments that have taught her how to treat people.

Because I was being abused, I knew how it felt and I didn't really want other people to feel that way. I learned that no one should be treated that way. I didn't want anyone to be treated the same way I did so I just tried to make sure people were happy. (1, p. 9)

Big Sister

*Taught how to take care...and how to care...
For me it's always kind of been*

As the older sibling, Candice took on the role of protector. At an early age Candice learned how “to take care and how to care”. These learned skills have allowed Candice to connect with the youth she works with in the program.

Because I grew up with younger siblings and I was taught how to take care of them and how to care for them. Growing up with younger siblings, I feel more soft when I'm around children. That's just how I feel with children. (1, p. 14)

Candice's caring demeanor shines through when she interacts with the youth and the joy she brings to them is reciprocated.

I enjoy seeing kids have fun and play, so it kind of makes me feel happy. It makes me feel like if I play with them, it makes me feel young I guess. I don't know. I like seeing little kids happy, so it makes me happy. (2, p. 12)

Poor living conditions and abusive homes caused Candice to move from foster home to foster home. As she described it, "some homes weren't very good, they kind of hurt us" (4, p. 9). With the moves came the reality of at times living apart from Louis. Eventually the two found a stable and loving environment with Ruth, where they continue to live today.

Teacher

We support them, applaud them.

Feels like we belong

Important

Treated equal

Interacting

Communicating through the ball

Together

Candice acknowledges that Ruth has been a tremendous teacher and continues to teach her to this day.

I think she taught me more about being respectful and a better person. She taught me how to be proper, like how to have manners and that's kind of what she taught us all these years and how to be polite and how to act in public, stuff like that.

(1. p. 11)

These teachings from Ruth are teachings Candice looks to pass down to the youth she works with. Her role, as she sees it, is a role of teacher in the program. Her knowledge, gained through her experiences growing up, is now being passed forward to the youth from her community. She was able to see that the after-school program was about more than keeping youth active.

We're also teaching on how to be polite, how to have manners, how to be respectful. Because school isn't really teaching them, or isn't really focusing on teaching them manners and stuff like that, and that's kind of what we're doing so they learn those manners in the program and take them to school. (4, p. 9)

How Candice described the after-school program was telling. The fact that Candice included herself in the collective of who was doing the teaching acknowledged the fact that she sees herself as a teacher. She recognizes that she has knowledge to pass on to the youth about how to care for others and how to treat others. As Candice taught me, she at times is teaching through applauding the youth with words of encouragement.

I think they come back because we ... How do you say this? We support them and we applaud them if they're doing good and we say positive things about them, and we make sure they're having fun. We don't force them to participate. That probably makes them feel good. (4, p. 18)

In other instances, few words are spoken. How Candice plays and moves with the youth are also teachings for the youth, at times “communicating through the ball” (4, p. 16). This notion of communicating through play was one I looked to explore further, and led to early memories alongside her sister Emily and brother Louis.

Backyard

*At Dad's it was just three
Playing...
In the backyard.*

Candice talked about the joy she felt from playing with her sister and younger brother in their father's backyard. They would push each other around in big plastic cars, or simply use their imagination to create a scenario that led to hours of play. It was the three of them, laughing, running, and enjoying the outdoors. Candice talked about how she and her sister were sure to watch over their younger brother. Candice was very proud of her little brother, and to this day feels almost a motherly sense of taking care of him. With a big smile on her face, Candice told me about the one time in the backyard that maybe just for a moment they were not focused on her brother. Being around two years old at the time, Candice's brother Louis had climbed the stairs of the backyard deck and was playing along the railing. As would any curious toddler, Louis maneuvered his head through the spindles of the railing. With a hysterical laugh, Candice explained how they couldn't get his head back out and in fact they had to call the fire department to cut the spindles and release Louis. Though likely a traumatic time for her brother, Candice's memories of that backyard were happy ones. Playing outside with her siblings brought great joy for Candice, joy I could see in her eyes as she explained it to me.

How We Play

*When I got older
If you win, you win
If you lose, you lose
Last place in a race
Wouldn't come anymore
If they kept losing*

Candice's experiences with movement and play shifted as she got older. No longer fun in her eyes, her physical education and sports experiences felt different. "The teachers didn't try and make it fair so that everyone felt better. It's just like if you win, you win. If you lose, you lose" (3, p. 10). For Candice, the notion of inclusion was very important. The way we played in the after-school program brought her back to her childhood and days spent in her dad's backyard. How we played in the program also served as a weekly reminder of times when play became about winning and losing.

Candice shared an experience she had in elementary school on the school track and field day. She was entered in a race and ended up finishing in last place. That feeling of being last was a feeling she certainly did not enjoy and for a young girl that had experienced a great deal of negativity in her life, that race did little to help her feel included. Candice recognized that how we structure play in the after-school program does not look like a race per se, where "if you win you win, if you lose you lose" (3, p. 6). This notion of a race is something that Candice experienced her entire schooling with respect to physical education, where the games played and the structure of the class had a traditional aspect to them. We agreed that many of the games that we played still were competitive in nature, but different from a traditional approach to games and sports; the score was never a focus. By altering the amount of equipment or having different guidelines we shifted how a game felt for those that would perhaps finish last in a race as she did.

Yeah, we sort of change the rules of the games we'd play, kind of to make everyone feel included and to kind of help make sure everyone's interacting with

each other. Whereas if we're in a regular gym class, that stuff kind of doesn't matter. It just matters about winning or losing. (4, p. 14)

Each time that we would have a conversation about how we play in the program and what it looked like, we undoubtedly spoke about the youth. We both agreed that the youth that came to the program would likely not be the kids that thrived in traditional sports. We could see through weekly experiences, many of the youth would become frustrated when they felt they would not be successful. Often, the mentors spent time working one-on-one with those that seemed to be lacking confidence and needed encouragement. It was apparent to Candice, if we played in the traditional sense we would likely lose youth. “Yeah, I think probably a few kids wouldn't come anymore if they kept losing. I couldn't say who though because no one really loses, but I know that some kids get upset when they do something wrong” (3, p. 8).

It became obvious as I listened to Candice talk about how we played in the gymnasium how drawn she was to the inclusive approach to the activities. “We make sure everyone gets a turn. We make sure everyone feels like they're being treated equal” (2, p. 8). Candice recognized how this notion of inclusivity was perhaps not the norm.

When I played basketball, I wasn't as good as some of the players so I wasn't out more. I guess that would make sense, like they want to win so they put the better players on. I don't know. It just felt a little bit unfair. (2, p. 8)

Of course, her feeling that sense of exclusivity from participating in high school basketball paled in comparison to many of her memories of feeling alone. She only had to revisit her early memories of foster care to understand just how critical it is for youth to feel a sense of belonging. Candice could see that sense of belonging in how we

played together each week. “Everyone feels like they belong. It's important because we want all the kids to feel happy and feel like they belong. We make sure that everyone feels like they're being included in the activities” (3, p. 4).

Escape

Seeing kids have fun and play

Makes me feel

Feeling young

Forget about the what's and where's

At the time of our research conversations Candice was mere weeks away from completing grade 12. With that came added stress of completion of assignments and thinking about what she would do next. She mentioned how her frustrations with school were something she could set aside when she came to the program each week. “Yeah, because you're focused on those kids and you're focused on working with those kids. It makes you forget about what you were or where you were before you went there” (3, p. 14). For Candice, the youth were a source of “happy vibes” (3, p. 13). Of course, the stressors of completing high school was just one example of the “what's and where's” Candice was able to forget about each week as she played with the youth.

As we continued to discuss the idea of forgetting about the “real world” (Narrative account negotiation) as Candice put it, she was reminded of times in elementary school. Many of Candice's early memories of school dealt with questions about her sister Emily.

I don't know. Like after what happened to my sister, I had a lot of things going on with her and a lot of those memories were mostly about students asking me what happened and stuff like that. It's kind of what I remember about my younger years is just all these questions and stuff like that about her. (1, p. 18)

When she explained the all too common questions she faced in school, I was once again reminded of how I was introduced to Candice.

Today, Candice can still “feel that people see her as the sister of Emily. You kind of feel like you know what they're thinking or feeling” (Narrative account negotiation). That feeling is a feeling of discomfort, the same feeling she felt when her classmates would ask her questions. Comfort for Candice came from being with her siblings. Candice feels that same comfort now in the program being with others, playing together, and laughing together. “When we come to the gym each week, the kids do not see us as First Nations, or anything. They just want to play with us” (Narrative account negotiation).

*Don't think they understand
About different races
And how that all works yet*

This notion of an escape is one that continued to sit with me. If it was an escape for Candice to work with the youth, I wondered too if it was an escape for the youth to work with her. What are the “what's and where's” that we all bring to the gymnasium each week? Candice seemed to think the youth perhaps would not see it as much of an escape as she did. Perhaps the escape is in part because Candice is aware of the grand narrative that plays out each day in this urban centre we live in. I asked Candice if she felt that awareness lead to the notion of escaping reality. “Yeah, I think it does because older people have more of an understanding about races and stereotypes. I don't think the kids understand different races and how all that works yet” (1, p. 16). The kids would see Candice differently than say those living outside of our community. For

Candice, being in a space where in fact she is not living within the grand narrative was a great feeling and a big part of why she loved being in the gymnasium each week.

Stories Told

*Maybe they thought,
Because we're from this neighbourhood,
Getting into trouble,
Alcohol,
Drugs,
Having babies,
Not finishing school.*

As mentioned, Candice has an understanding of race and stereotypes within the city she lives in. She is aware of the grand narrative that exists. Many people “assume that First Nation people are ... They didn't finish school, they don't have jobs, they're living off welfare and they have lots of kids and maybe alcohol and drugs” (3, p. 19). Candice grew up hearing this narrative and seeing this story played out in her community. She has friends and family members that perhaps fit this narrative, but she also has friends and family members that live a very different story.

When we discuss this grand narrative or the perceptions others have of Candice and other Indigenous peoples within her community, she has told me a number of times how she can feel what “people that are not from that neighbourhood assume” (Narrative account negotiation). Candice not only hears this grand narrative regularly—she feels it. Touched upon earlier, this feeling does not exist within the gymnasium because “the kids, they don't come in and see the other kids and mentors as their skin colour, they just see them as peers” (Narrative account negotiation).

In retrospect, Candice sees why it is important that as a group we venture out of the gymnasium to various locations in the city. She admits, when we move to these

locations, the feeling she talked about surfaces. That feeling, steeped in the assumptions, is felt when we enter an establishment.

When we go out to, when we take the kids out on outings, it's like mostly when people see us, it's like bunch of First Nations kids and First Nations mentor, and they might assume that's going to be hard with us there, or they're going to have troubles with us. But it's the total opposite. They have it all wrong.

(Narrative account negotiation)

Perspectives

*When we go places,
Changes people's perspectives and how they see us*

I feel proud of who I am

I remember asking Candice early on in our research conversations why she thinks we take youth to other locations throughout the city. Her initial response centred around giving the youth new opportunities, to see new places. As we continued to think about this notion of seeing new, we found ourselves eventually talking about not only the youth seeing new, but also about those we encounter each time we ride a bus to other parts of the city. She could see that we were changing the perceptions of others, and as we discussed the idea, I could hear the pride in her voice. “Yeah, when we go places, the children are behaved very well and I think that changes people’s perspectives and how they see us like where we're coming from and they see how good the children are” (1, p. 17).

“It makes me feel happy. I feel proud of who I am and I feel proud to be First Nations when I go out in public. I don't know. I just feel proud” (1, p. 17). There were times when Candice mentioned she felt “ugly” about herself and how she was perceived

because of how she and her friends behaved in public in previous times. There were times when she did not feel that sense of pride as a First Nations female growing up. That ugly feeling stemmed not only from acting inappropriately even though knowing it was disrespectful, but more from reinforcing a grand narrative that many non-Indigenous youth in her community were telling. That ugly feeling has been replaced with a sense of pride and self-worth.

Forward Looking Stories

Be positive,
Learn the best you can,
Achieve the things you want,
Stay away from negativity

(Field Text, April 2016)

I return once again to the advice Candice shared with the youth. On the surface, the words may seem to be the proverbial good advice, a cliché of sorts. It is when one understands the person sharing the words that depth of what is written can surface.

Be positive. As I was in the midst of co-creating this account with Candice, I was asked to participate in a youth conference that was developed around the notion of resiliency. Hundreds of Indigenous youth from the province would be in attendance, and organizers were eager to provide messages of resilience, staying positive, pushing forward, and persevering. Knowing what I have come to know about Candice, it was clear to me the message that needed to be voiced was not a message from me, but from the youth. Candice is one of those youth that can and does teach what it means to be resilient. Candice is the first to say life has not been easy, however, good things can still come if you remain positive. I think about her positive outlook knowing what I now know about her experiences growing up and many of the struggles she faced early on. It

would be easy in a sense to continue to believe the grand narrative of Indigenous youth in her community; a narrative that paints a picture of a reality unlike that of which Candice is living.

I had asked Candice what message she would want to share with adults working with youth, particularly the youth from her community. “To know my experience... You can have a tough life but still turn out good” (3, p. 23). “How about awesome?” I asked. “Turn out awesome. Yeah.” she replied.

Learn the best you can. Similar to the notion of staying positive, Candice also offered to the youth the advice of learning the best you can. Through our narrative account negotiations, I came to understand even further the importance of inclusion to Candice. “Growing up in school I saw many with special needs, kids that need a bit of extra help I guess. I just want kids to know that no matter what, they can still be successful” (Narrative account negotiation). Candice went on to reiterate her thoughts around perceptions and how at times adults judge youth before even knowing them. These perceptions are limiting in Candice’s eyes, knowing that the youth are “capable of so much more” (Narrative account negotiation). Learning the best you can essentially comes back to not letting others determine the story you want to live. “In the program, we do not have perceptions of others. We can all see success in ourselves and each other” (Narrative account negotiation).

Achieve the things you want. Animated throughout the account, Candice has grown up hearing day after day the dominant story of young Indigenous people in her community. Shifting back once again to the conversation with Ann at Lindberg school, I think about the stories that have followed Candice; a young Indigenous female, the sister

of Emily. These starting points for many would equate to a lifetime of struggle, a hard life. To use the words of Candice, “they have it all wrong”.

Candice chooses to live and tell a different story, and is proud of what she has accomplished and the role model she is within the after-school program. With each week and with each trip out into the community, Candice sees a new story of Indigenous youth being told. The youth are seeing people from their own community committing to a program, completing high school, enrolling in university, and taking the time to simply “communicate through a ball” in a small gymnasium situated in that very community. A community that has been for too long living a story that was not their own.

Stay away from negativity. Candice acknowledged how shifting the story of Indigenous youth in her community is not easy. Candice made it clear through all our time together the importance of surrounding herself with positive people. She shared earlier times of feeling “ugly”. A feeling that stemmed from her knowing that what she and her friends were doing at the mall in that moment only perpetuated the grand narrative Candice knew only too well.

Appendix B

Narrative Account – Clary

Greatness *isn't always easy*.

Do not *doubt* yourself.

Anyone can be successful so long as you want to be.

(Field Text, January 2014)

The above field text are words that were written by Clary to the youth within the after-school program. Written a few short months upon connecting to the program, I remember reading what Clary wanted to share with the youth. These four lines were part of a written piece she had put together as an introduction. At the time, I recall reading the words like a teacher, looking for grammatical errors and editing to ensure it flowed well. Today, I see the words much differently. Over time and through inquiring into field texts such as these, I have come to understand what Clary meant when she offered this advice to the youth.

Early Beginnings

I first met Clary in the autumn of 2013. Sean had been doing some work with a local high school and mentioned the after-school program to the principal and a few other teachers. The after-school program was in the infant stages and Sean, Lee, and I were working to engage youth of all ages. As a grade 12 student with aspirations of becoming a doctor, Clary was looking to find volunteer opportunities in the city. The school principal and teachers mentioned to Sean how great of an addition Clary would be to the program. We were told Clary was a high achieving and compassionate person, with tremendous leadership skills and a strong desire to connect to her community.

Before even meeting her face-to-face, I felt a confidence that Clary would be a strong contributor to the program. Over time, in and out of the small gymnasium space in which the after-school program took place, I would come to know just how true my first intuition was.

It was a typical Tuesday session, with music playing and youth filtering in through the paint chipped doors. Many of the faces that popped in were familiar ones from weeks past. For me this was a busy time, a time to say hello while still trying to learn names. Clary arrived and we introduced ourselves quickly. Like most sessions, the time went by quickly. I remember Clary engaging in activities like she had been there for months. I could instantly see her connection with the youth and a genuine care for those within our after-school space even though she had not been engaged previously. It was like she knew the youth and they knew her.

I would come to know Clary through our weekly interactions with the youth within the program. Not only did we come to know each other through the conversations we shared, before, during, and after the program each time, but also from playing in the space together alongside the two high school mentors and the ten or so youth that came regularly. Travelling backwards to those early moments in the gymnasium, I can now appreciate how much I came to learn about Clary from seeing her interactions with the youth. In my eyes, she was well beyond her years instantly connecting with the youth while playing. I could see how Clary was keen to ensure all of the youth were engaged and had a smile on their faces. If she was to notice someone on the sidelines or looking disheartened, she immediately would approach with a smile and words of encouragement to bring a smile to their faces.

We spent that first year together, with Clary attending every session. As spring approached and her grade 12 year was coming to a close, I remember us finding time to talk about what would happen next. In that year, I came to know Clary and her story in much greater detail. Thinking back on how her teachers described her and the image I had of Clary even before I had a chance to meet her, I can see now why she was held in such high regard at her high school. I could now see a clearer image of who Clary was; each week and each interaction bringing more detail to a picture that is still currently being created. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) talk about a tension that relates to people, a tension that is indeed connected to and generated by temporality:

We take for granted that people, at any point in time, are in a process of personal change and that from an educational point of view, it is important to be able to narrate the person in terms of the process. (p. 30)

As I move through this account and dwell on our experiences together, I can certainly appreciate this notion of process, as we are all constantly evolving and changing.

Shifting temporally has allowed Clary and I the opportunity to recognize the growth and change that has occurred over the last three years.

Moving Away

With the end of a school year comes change. As a teacher, I came to understand the month of June as both a time of excitement as well as a time of melancholy. This same mix of emotions resonated as we brought pause to the program until the following September. As we all said our goodbyes, I was left to wonder how many of the youth would return in two short months. I would learn over time that many of the youth would transition to other places within the city or home to their reserve. In Clary's case, she

had made plans to move to attend university in a different province. Clary, along with her boyfriend Elliot, would be living with her father. Many years earlier, Clary's parents had divorced, and for six years she did not have any contact with her father. I could sense in our conversations her excitement, as well as her nervousness, of moving away and living with her dad. Her apprehension was outweighed by her desire to begin the journey of post-secondary education, a journey that no one in Clary's family had yet to experience.

It was June 2014 and we planned a trip to an outdoor swimming pool with the youth as a windup activity. I remember the day coming to a close and saying goodbye to all the youth and mentors. As I gave Clary a hug, thanking her for all she had done for the program, I felt a tremendous sense of pride. Feeling our paths would once again cross, I wished her luck and told her to keep in touch. The sense of satisfaction I felt was perhaps that of a big brother seeing his little sister achieving her goals. I came to understand how important school and beginning this journey was for Clary, and I think she knew that she could always contact me for support. There was never a doubt in my mind that Clary was going to achieve what she set out to do.

Coming "Home"

I remember being contacted by Clary in the early winter of 2015. It was a short text saying she moved back to town and would like to connect with the program. She had returned home and was working at a local coffee shop. She mentioned that she was interested in coming back and helping out with the program, if it worked in her schedule. I recall the mixed emotions of hearing she was back in town. Selfishly, I was ecstatic she was back and wanted to re-connect to the program. At the same time, part of me

wondered about her experience at university and what would become of her goal to pursue medicine.

Elliot and my families really rely on us. My mom was having health issues, my sister had cut her wrist and was dealing with a lot. We felt that we couldn't really help unless we moved back. I was also having a tough time with anxiety and battling depression. Something that I didn't tell you or anyone was that right around when I graduated high school, Elliot and I found out we were pregnant. I had a miscarriage and I think that had a lot to do with my state of mind and feeling depressed. It all kind of just kept bottling up until Elliot and I decided we needed to move back home. (Narrative account negotiation, November 10, 2016)

It was Clary's first week back in the after-school program. We picked up as we had left, surrounded by youth, once again playing together in a gymnasium. A number of the faces had changed, but Clary seamlessly returned to the program attending regularly when it did not conflict with her work schedule. In the back of my mind, I wanted to ask her about school and what her plan was moving forward, but I knew that I needed that to surface on her terms. Eventually, Clary mentioned that she didn't really enjoy being away and felt good about her decision to return and enroll at the local university for the fall of 2015. Of course, she also mentioned how she hoped to still be involved with the program come fall.

When are We Starting Again?

Clary - "Hey Brian I was just wondering when the program was getting started this year?"

Brian - "Hey you! Shooting to start two weeks from today."

Clary - "Okay perfect Wednesday's again? I think I can make it work but only until January then I'll be taking a couple of weeks off as I'm having a baby now ☺"

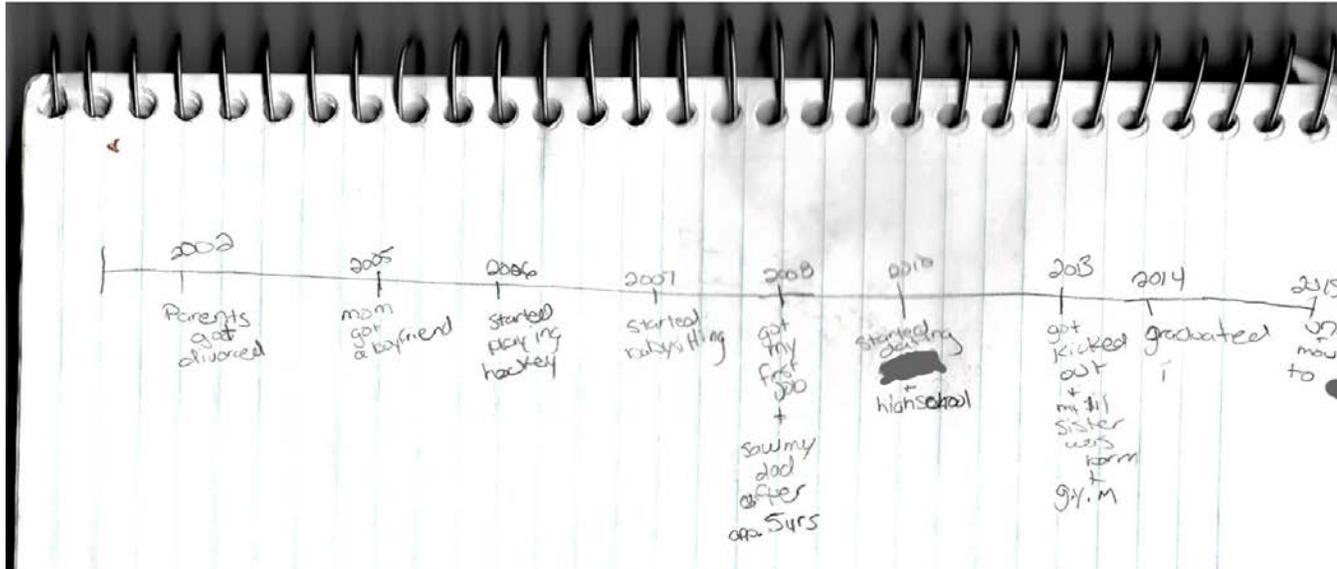
"Yes I know it's kind of a shock I'm expecting a little boy on January 18th ☺"

(Field text, September 2, 2015)

September 8, 2015 was the next time I would see Clary. Receiving the text days before with the news she was expecting brought with it an added excitement to catch up with Clary and hear how she was doing. Having recently enrolled back in university, the big brother in me wondered how she would be able to manage. After picking Clary up at her apartment because her car was in the shop, we drove to a nearby coffee shop. Shifting back and thinking about that conversation over a coffee, I can vividly picture us sitting in that coffee shop, one that I had spent some time in prior. Up until this point, my interactions with Clary had been in the gymnasium of which the after-school program occurred. These two parts of the city, the gymnasium and the coffee shop, would be considered two very different parts of town. Located in an area which many would refer to as dangerous, rough or poor, the gymnasium space has become a place I got to know Clary. Conversely, the coffee shop was located in an area described typically with words such as affluent and safe.

It was at this time in the busy coffee shop I had asked Clary a favour. I opened up my notebook to an empty page and asked if she would be able to list some moments in her life that she would consider to be shaping moments, experiences that were impactful to who she is today. Immediately, Clary was able to jot down moments on the

page. The horizontal line, plotted with moments in time, would be experiences that would resurface many months later in our research conversations.



Conversations

It was some two and a half years from our initial meeting that I found myself sitting with Clary for our first research conversation. It was early May 2016 and we decided to meet at the apartment she shares with her now fiancé Elliot and their little boy, Elijah. With Elijah just 4 months old, it was important for Clary to maintain sleeping routines, which as a father I could certainly relate to. Much had changed for Clary since our first meeting in that small gymnasium. Now a mom and university student enrolled in nursing, Clary had her hands full to say the least. As I entered the apartment and sat on the couch, I was drawn to the pictures Clary had on the wall. Pictures of her and Elliot's high school graduation photos, as well as photos of them as a

family of three. These pictures reinforced what I have come to know about Clary; education and family were very important to her as displayed so lovingly on the wall.

Family

As I consider what I have come to know from Clary about her family and experiences growing up, I continue to dwell on the advice she provided to the youth years earlier. “Greatness **isn’t always easy**”.

I think, as cheap and silly as it sounds, my number one role model was probably my mom because she came from a family where she was adopted out. All her siblings and whatnot, they're alcoholics and they don't take care of their kids.

Their kids are all in foster care and whatnot. She's the only one who's ... she took care of all of us. We're all pretty grown up now and having kids of our own and whatnot. We're all productive people.

(Field text, 1, p. 12)

Animated in the above field text, Clary’s mom “came from a very broken family” (Narrative account negotiation). Her mother worked hard to keep the family together, often working a number of jobs at a time. At an early age Clary’s parents divorced, and the struggle for her mom to provide as a single parent became the reality. Clary shared with me how she recognized this struggle and made the decision to stop playing hockey, appreciating the cost incurred to play such a sport. Hockey was a sport Clary truly enjoyed but did not want to see her mother take on more work to pay for it. Her mom wanted her children to have a “normal life” (Narrative account negotiation), but Clary knew it would be easier on her mom if she stopped playing. As we continued our

conversation, talking more about the financial struggles her mother faced as a single parent, Clary recalled an experience at 12 years old.

Sitting in her living room with Elijah in her arms, Clary re-played a babysitting experience. Having recently turned 12, Clary was now able to babysit “legally” as she put it. As the story unfolded, I recall shifting back to when I was 12 years old. The idea of earning money was very enticing, allowing me to purchase even more hockey cards or hockey magazines, adding to what was already an excessive collection. It was what Clary did with the money she earned babysitting that struck me.

I just grew up really fast. I started babysitting the next-door neighbour right away as soon as I could get my babysitting license. My mom used to hate it but I would take my money and I would, like we had food, we were never one of those families where we absolutely had no food in the house, but we would have just a little bit, we would have enough to get by. I would take all my money and go buy groceries and then I would come home and even the one point she tried to make me take them back and I was like, ‘I’m not taking them back’. (3, p. 8)

I remember sitting in the living room in silence for what seemed many minutes, but was in reality meager seconds. Part of me was almost ashamed of having replayed moments prior my exorbitant hockey card collection and how I would have spent money at 12 years old. “I just grew up really fast” were words that stayed with me and words that I think about often when I think about Clary. I learned that day just how important it was for Clary to support her mother and her two younger siblings. Clary felt a sense of responsibility.

Four years later, at the age of 16, Clary was kicked out of her home and moved into a basement apartment with Elliot.

I didn't have time to transition into being an adult kind of thing. I had to just let it happen, I guess. I didn't have the time to learn this is what you need to do to pay rent and whatnot. I just had to end up doing it. If I didn't, like if I ... it was like a sink or float situation. (1, p. 13)

This sense of responsibility and care is still evident today. As I think again about our conversation of Clary moving home from university, a large part of the reasoning pertained to supporting family. Her mom relied on her and Elliot, and Clary did not feel she was any help living so far away.

“Just because something gets a little hard they can't just give up on it” (2, p. 4).

For Clary, this sense of modelling came at a very early age. Her mother, Alice, was a tremendous role model for Clary, providing teachings around perseverance time and time again. Her mother modelled every day the importance of family and doing what it took to keep family together, contrary to how she was raised. Alice was as determined as Clary is to tell a different story. The story her mother grew up in was that of foster care and her siblings not caring of their children. Alice did what she could to shift that story. Looking back, Clary recognizes the sacrifices her mother made and for that she will always be a role model to Clary.

Telling a Different Story

Do not *doubt* yourself.

“Would you think that I was going to be successful in high school? Probably not. Because if you tell people my story, there's a lot of key bullet points that would say that

I shouldn't be successful" (Field text, 2, p. 22). The question Clary poses, and the answer she provides, remain with me each and every day. These few words are words that I continue to dwell on and continue to come back to time and time again. The more time I spent in conversation with Clary, the more I understood her drive to tell a different story. This drive is palpable when I share time with her. I can feel how important it is for her. Clary understands her role when working with the youth within the program.

Yeah, I think it gives them something to look ... like role model, like someone to look up to whether they're just doing one on one situations or one on one with them at all. I think sometimes, especially a lot of them that are First Nation kids, when I was a kid, you don't meet a lot of First Nation people that are successful in their high up careers like being a doctor and stuff like that. I think if they see high school students working towards going to university and university students to become whatever their career goal is that they'll realize that that's okay and that's possible and whatnot.

(1, p. 5)

Float or Sink

As I sat across from Clary in her living room with her son Elijah playing on the carpet in front of us, I asked her to look at what she had written in my notebook months ago. Handing her the notebook opened to the timeline she scribbled in pencil at the local coffee shop, I asked Clary to tell me what seemed to resonate today. She first selected from the timeline the year 2013, "when I got kicked out" (1, p. 13).

I think that it taught me that there's a lot of situations in life where you either float or sink. There's no one way to do it. I just got to find different ways to do it and to make it work. As long as you wanted to work and you're willing to make it work, you usually can. You just have to be willing to put in the effort to make

it happen. For me, graduating high school on time was really important. I know my mom kicked me out and everything like that. But she didn't do it knowing that ... she knew that I would be able to do it. She didn't do it thinking, 'She's just going to end up on the street.' She would never do something like that to me. She knew that I would be okay, that I would be able to make it work and I did. (1, p. 13)

Clary's advice to the youth, "do not doubt yourself", speaks to her lived experiences of being kicked out of home and struggling to make things work. Clary by her own accounts grew up fast, but looking back she acknowledges the tremendous lesson learned around perseverance. Changing the story was not something that was easy for Clary, just as it was not easy for her mom.

Looking once again at the timeline scribbled in my notebook, Clary's eyes were drawn to the words, "moved to Treymont¹¹" (1, p. 14). As she peered at those words, I could see her eyes beginning to fill with tears.

Yeah, yeah I think it was upsetting because of that and it's upsetting because I guess I wanted to be different. For me, when I got pregnant I felt like I was just another statistic. Kind of like the statistics in that grand narrative or whatever, they haunt me I guess. I remember when I was pregnant and I was depressed, I even cried one time because I thought, "Oh I'm just like every other story." And everything like that, I was like, "I'm never going back to school." And all that sort of stuff. (Narrative account negotiation)

The notion of wanting to be different was striking to me. Perhaps it was because I would have thought she feels different most times being a young Indigenous woman

¹¹ Treymont is a pseudonym name for the city in which Clary moved to and attended university.

living in a suburban, predominately White, neighbourhood and attending university where the Indigenous population hovers around 10%. It is within her Indigenous community, within her family, that she wanted to be seen as different. When she moved home from Treymont, for a moment she believed her story had shifted to a common story of Indigenous youth in her city; young, pregnant, with no education, and no career. For Clary, this was a time where her plan took a turn and doubt began to enter the picture.

I don't know. I think that was something that was really important to me and I ended up not doing it. I ended up coming back. I ended up taking time off school, doing stuff that I didn't really plan on doing. (1, p. 14)

Thinking back on that experience was emotional for Clary, bringing her back to a time where she felt like just another statistic. From an early age, Clary had a vision of what life would be like for her, different from that grand narrative we talked about regularly in our conversations.

Not everything goes as completely planned. I'm okay with having Elijah and I'm pretty good at being a mom and I love being his mom. But I want to be able to, I guess, I'll be able to teach him the same things that my mom told me that you have to work hard. (1, p. 14)

Reconnecting

In our third conversation, I asked Clary why she thought the youth kept coming back, week after week. “Maybe they come because they know that we want to play with them and we do, we love them and we care about all of them” (3. p. 12). Perhaps this is why Clary reconnected with the program upon her return home. Perhaps part of her

reconnecting was to feel that community, having lost that when she was away. The sense of love and care in that gymnasium space was perhaps needed.

I think it probably instills more of a belonging thing, too, because it's more like a family or sense of community. Because that's how community family is, not everyone's all the same age, there's not just kids and then adults, there's a lot of different things going on in a community. (4, p. 9)

Clary's thoughts about community speak to the role she feels she fills within the program. This intergenerational approach, bringing together people of all ages, allows the youth further opportunities to see different stories of Indigenous youth.

For me, it was being able to interact with youth and to show them that going to high school is important and doing these things in life is stuff that's important, stuff that's okay and stuff that's possible. It was just like trying to be a good model to them.

(1, p. 15)

Clary's determination and desire to be that good role model for the youth was part of why she reconnected with the program, after going through what she described as a difficult time in her life.

I think it's just important for them to see that these kinds of things do happen. I had a baby really young, but I still go to school and he goes to daycare and we still go on with life. I don't just stay home or anything like that. There's more than just the typical story I guess. (Narrative account negotiation)

The notion of taking care of each other is a learning that was instilled in Clary at an early age as her mom worked to shift the story of family. From early times of buying

groceries, to coming home in large part to be closer to her mom, Clary has demonstrated a family first mindset. As we continued to converse, we talked about the community, the family if you will, that we were all creating together in the gymnasium each week. The more we talked, the clearer it became, how we played was different from what Clary grew up knowing.

Shifting Stories of Play

Anyone can be successful so long as you want to be.

At the time of our second research conversation we talked about physical education in school and what many would call gym class. Clary had told me on a number of occasions that her experiences with gym class throughout school were typically positive ones. I remember her asking me if I thought that was the case with most youth. I told her that what I had come to know from my experiences alongside other teachers and future teachers, the gymnasium and memories of gym class were far from positive in many cases. I then shared with Clary how the gymnasium, in my eyes, could be an extremely positive place, but it can potentially also be a place of failure and defeat.

I think that conversation brought Clary to share with me the worry she feels with respect to her younger sister who is currently trying to manoeuvre her way through high school. I get a sense from Clary of the daily struggles her sister encounters with respect to self-esteem, as well as body image. The gymnasium is not an easy place for her sister, and Clary can now see how it can look different.

Like the whole being judged thing. She doesn't feel comfortable showing her body and stuff like that. She feels like she's being judged, like people are judging

how big her arms are or how big her waist is and different things like that, like she's being judged by the students in how well she can perform, because she's not like a very physical person. She doesn't run very fast, and maybe the students will judge her because of that. (Field text, 2, p. 2)

This sense of ranking is something Clary experienced in high school and still experiences today.

Even in a university, that makes me think of in nursing we get our grades and we're ranked out of 115. When you see your rank it makes me feel so bad if I did really bad in my ... for my midterm I got a 70 which is pretty good, but I thought I did better, but then I saw the rank and I was 49th of 115 or something. It makes me feel crappy because I'm only halfway there I guess. (Narrative account negotiation)

Clary would tell me that the after-school program was not school. It was obvious to her the youth were learning, but there was not that sense of being ranked.

They're getting better skill-wise. I think they're getting better because we give them more of an opportunity. We give a number of balls type of thing. They all have an equal chance to go and play with a ball and to practice and learn how to handle the stick or whatever. There's not just 1 ball. If there was only 1 ball, only that specific group of kids who are really good at gym would probably get to touch the ball even. The kids who aren't, wouldn't even probably get to touch the ball. (2, p. 18)

Clary could see the distinctions between the program and what she experienced growing up.

Yeah, I can see the difference. I can see the difference when I think of instances when I wasn't very good at sports and I always feel bad or something like that.

Whereas these kids I don't think that they go home feeling bad that they weren't doing good at the sport or anything because the focus isn't on just them or anything like that. It takes away from the traditional aspect of gym, I guess.

(Narrative Account Negotiation)

This notion of not feeling bad is one that I, as an educator and coach, have literally defended in conversations with parents of youth I have worked with. Countless times, I have been told that youth need to experience failure and that is what will truly prepare them for the real world experiences they will face as adults. Sharing this back-story with Clary, I wanted to get her opinion on such a philosophy. Her response came in the form of a question:

I agree like kids need to learn they need to learn disappointment, sometimes there is disappointment in things that goes on, but when they are just trying to have fun do they really need to be disappointed? I don't really know. (3, p. 11)

Is it a time that youth need to feel disappointment? This reminded me of earlier stories Clary shared of her sister in high school physical education. It also brought me to a game we all shared, centred around a shiny, red ball, prior to entering into a game of laser tag.

As the youth entered the facility with hellos and smiles, they calmly lined up to receive an alias name for the much anticipated game of laser tag. Prior to entering the playing area, a staff member named Sarah asked the youth if they were interested in playing a short game first. Excitedly, the youth, as well as the

high school mentors, gathered in a circle around Sarah who was holding one bright red ball. The instructions took only a short time to explain. Each participant around the circle was to cross their arms on their chest. When Sarah tossed the ball towards anyone around circle, the goal was to catch the ball. Failing to catch the ball would result in the participant being eliminated, relegated to the sidelines. Additionally, Sarah mentioned, if she was to fake a toss and participants were to uncross their arms, they too would be eliminated. The game would end when only one remained standing.

(Field text, June 2016)

When I heard the instructions of the game I chose not to participate, as I knew within moments there would be one lone participant sitting on the long wooden bench looking on as others caught or dropped the ball. Clary did participate in the game, but spotted how that game with the red ball was different.

I noticed right away, now I notice right away when they say, “Okay well you are out,” and then you win a prize for not being out, that’s something we don’t really go by and we don’t really do. You don’t reward them for being the last one in and we may never make somebody go out really, so that was really different. (3, p. 1)

I asked Clary where she thought that staff member got the idea for the game we played. “Probably school, because well that’s where I learned a lot of that stuff, I learned a lot of games with elimination and everything I learned it all in school” (3, p. 2). She continued to consider the youth that joined her around that circle that day:

I think a game like that one that we saw yesterday, I think about kids like here in our program the kids I'm connected to that wouldn't be successful there. That's why it resonates with me because I can name so many kids that wouldn't be successful the way that was structured. (3, p. 2)

Seeing Different

I move back to the opening field text, Clary's words of encouragement:

Greatness *isn't always easy*.

Do not *doubt* yourself.

Anyone can be successful so long as you want to be.

As I began this account, I shared how I now see the words that Clary had written back in January of 2014. I see them today with more clarity than any day previous and I will continue to see the words differently moving forward. What picture do these words outline? What is the story being told? It was after going through the account the final time, the two of us decided to go back to those initial words and think about them once again. Seeing them differently now, having grown together, we wanted to leave a reminder of just how different things can look. We decided to take Clary's words and rearrange them to once again tell the story heard throughout her life, the grand narrative of Indigenous female youth in her community.

Greatness *isn't always easy possible*.

~~Do not~~ *Doubt* yourself.

Anyone can be successful so long as you ~~want to be~~ are not Indigenous.

Is this the grand narrative that Clary has heard and continues to permeate each day in our society? Do these words represent what the dots on the page create, a picture too often seen by those within this urban centre?

Appendix C

Narrative Account – Colin

It was a cold, overcast autumn day and an early morning drive to the university. I picked up Colin and the other mentors to spend the day on campus. The initial intent of the visit was to get some professional photos of the group taken. Lee suggested the mentors could take part in his class in the afternoon, a secondary physical education course with third year undergrads. When I mentioned this opportunity to Colin a few days earlier, I could see his face light up.

The afternoon came and Colin arrived to the class changed into his PE gear, shoes tightened up, and ready to go. I remember just stepping back and watching as Colin stood amongst the thirty or so pre-service teachers, intently listening to Lee, eager to join in on the physical tasks described. It did not take long for the rest of the class to see the physical gifts of movement Colin possessed. His pure joy and enthusiasm seemed to be contagious with those he was engaged with, bringing about a friendly, yet intense competitive spirit with those he had just recently met.

As the class moved into the final moments, Colin stood once again amongst the large group, listening to Lee and others discuss the experience. The class concluded with claps, high fives, and handshakes amongst all within the gymnasium, Colin just one of more than thirty.

(Field text, November 2015)

I begin this account with the opening narrative, as it is a day I remember fondly when I think about time spent alongside Colin in and out of the after-school program.

That experience with Colin, a day spent on the university campus, when unpacked helps to animate a young man that I have come to know over the last three years. As I move through this account, I will do so at times coming back to this opening narrative.

Temporally travelling backward and forward with experiences shared, allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of Colin. Each week working alongside Colin in the after-school program brought new experiences that helped me understand him at a deeper level. Having the experiences outside of the gymnasium, the conversations, the experiences such as the one at the university, were other opportunities to know Colin.

Early Beginnings

I first came to know Colin as a student who attended Lindberg school. Lindberg, as it is often called, is a kindergarten to grade eight elementary school, of which our after-school program uses the gymnasium each week. It was October of 2013, and we were a few months into the initial year of the program. Daniel, the physical education teacher at the school, connected to the work we were doing in the program and became a terrific support. I asked Daniel if he could recommend any youth from Lindberg that may be interested in volunteering to assist within the program, particularly as extra support when we took the youth on monthly excursions throughout the city. Daniel was more than happy to assist with a list of names. I then organized a time to meet this small group of grade 8 students to explain just what it was they would be volunteering for.

As it came to be, Colin and his brother Adam were two of six students that consistently joined the group on excursions that year. Occasionally, Colin also joined us in the gymnasium to play with the youth. He moved in the gymnasium as he did that day

on campus alongside the pre-service teachers. Colin was completely encapsulated with the games we were playing, engaging in a caring way with the youth.

Having Colin join us that first year of the program allowed me to see attributes that we were certainly looking for in future mentors. On an early spring day, Colin popped into the gym to say hello. It was at that time I asked him if he would be interested in working with the program once he moved into high school. I am not sure he initially thought I was serious, or perhaps it was just something he had not yet experienced, being pursued for employment.

That next year I met with Colin and Adam, both of which were eager to work with us as we entered into year two of the program. As a grade 9 student, I could see how much Colin enjoyed coming back to his old elementary school. Only a few months removed from being known as an elementary student, I sensed Colin was quite proud to return each week in his role as a mentor in the program. It appeared to me, returning each week felt like home for Colin, bringing a sense of comfort and familiarity. The gymnasium, in particular, appeared to be that space within Lindberg that Colin flourished in. In later conversations with Daniel, my early assumptions were warranted. Colin not only excelled in physical education at the elementary level, but also found success in extra-curricular sports, particularly volleyball and basketball.

This comfort in the gymnasium was evident with each activity we played with the youth. Colin was front and centre, engaged in games that were often new to him. At times Colin was engaged too much in fact. Being so completely *in the game*, Colin would get lost in the game forgetting his role of mentor and support for the youth. As I travel back to these early moments together in the gymnasium, I am reminded how much

Colin loves to move and engage in games that pit him against others, no matter the age. His demeanour reminds me of myself at a similar age, getting lost in play.

Not only was Colin very talented physically, he had a tremendous ability to relate with the youth. He loved to be engaged in the various activities and games we attempted each week and found great joy in being alongside the youth, some of which were more than half his age. Those feelings of joy seemed to be reciprocated by the youth who regularly followed Colin throughout the space. They too could recognize Colin's skilful ability along with his competitive spirit. The youth always wanted to challenge themselves by competing against Colin, if possible. This reality was something both the youth and Colin embraced.

School and Education

One of our early research conversations took place at the university of which I worked. Sitting together in my office we talked about a number of things, asking each other several *get to know you* type questions. It was November 2014, and even though I had been working with Colin for a number of months in the gymnasium, this was a great opportunity to slow down and spend some time to chat. It was also an opportunity for Colin and I to get to know each other outside of the program. I began the conversation by telling Colin that he could ask me anything he wished. Immediately the exchange moved to family, with Colin questioning the number of siblings I have. This initial question opened the space to share for the next ten minutes or so, an exchange of each other's family structures. Obvious to us both was the simplicity of my family tree in comparison to Colin's. Having just one older brother, I was fascinated to listen to Colin map out for me his family tree. He talked about older siblings he would see on occasion

in passing throughout the neighbourhood, uncertain of what they did or where in particular they lived. Colin went on to share stories of his family with whom he lives with to this day.

As I go back through that early conversation at the university, I am drawn to what we discussed after coming to understand each other's families. It started with a question of what Colin would do once he was finished school. I think he was intrigued that I was still in school as an adult. "Maybe I'll do construction or something for a while, and stay at that for a bit" (Field text, November 2014). It was not unusual to me that as a grade 9 student, Colin was still trying to imagine what his life would look like after school. What was undeniable to Colin was the need to finish high school. I simply asked him why finishing was important, which brought us to discussing Colin's notion of education.

Colin would tell me that there is school and there is education, and that they are different. It was clear to Colin that there were things learned in school that were important and would allow one to be successful in school, however, there was also education. For Colin, education was the learning that happened outside of school. "Real life stuff", as he would put it. "Education is a part of our life. We start learning the day we're born" (1, p. 2). School for Colin was essentially teaching him how to master school. For Colin, education was the teachings that were essential to "making a name for yourself" (2, p. 4). I asked him what he meant by making a name. "Well, people who aren't trying to focus on getting a good education and stuff, they do drugs, they hang with the wrong people and they get older, they die, and no one really... What's the respect for that?" (2, p. 4).

As I listened to Colin talk about how he sees education, I was reminded of an experience that happened mere moments before as we made our way to my office. Arriving at the top of the stairs, we approached a set of doors seconds prior to a group of three people coming down from the third floor. Seeing that converging parties were making their way to the same doorway, Colin scooted ahead quickly to open and hold the door. In our conversation, I asked Colin who taught him to open doors for others. “My grandma, she really helped me understand manners and everything” (Field text, November 2014). His Grandma Jean, affectionately referred to as Grandma, I would come to learn was a tremendous influence on Colin and how he treated others.

Grandma Jean is Colin’s foster mom whom he has lived with since he was 8 years old. In spending time with Colin and his siblings and getting to sit down for tea with Grandma Jean, I got a sense of how Colin was in a caring environment surrounded by his brothers and sisters, some paternal, others not. Sitting at the kitchen table with Jean allowed me to gain yet another glimpse of Colin outside of the gymnasium.

Jean explained to me that as a young boy, Colin was a very angry person. By the time Colin arrived in Jean’s care, he had had a “lifetime of trauma” (Memory of conversation). As Jean explained, it took time for Colin to understand that he was not going to be going anywhere.

Jean had spent most of her adult life as a foster mom. At the time of us coming to know each other, Jean had seven youth in her care. The implicit care for others became clear from my time spent with Grandma Jean. I could feel how important it was for her to show Colin and all of her children unconditional love. “She cares for me.

Even if I'm coughing a little bit she's like, "Oh, are you feeling okay?" She worries about the littlest things" (Field text, November 2014).

As I consider those early conversations and my time spent at the kitchen table, I appreciate at an even deeper level the distinction Colin has made between school and education. Colin's home is an educative place, where he has come to understand how to treat others and how to care for those that are perhaps faced with challenges unfamiliar to many. "My grandma taught me a lot, to be generous and caring and learn to forgive people" (Field text, May 2016). The notion of forgiving people was a reminder that not always has Colin's home situation been a positive one. These "life lessons", as Colin named them, taught by Jean, were much greater lessons than anything that was taught in school. As Colin so explicitly stated to me, "anyone can teach you one plus one, but can anyone really teach you what generosity means?" (1, p. 3).

As we continued to talk about school, I asked Colin to think about what came to mind when he heard that word, *school*. "Students. Like teenagers, specifically. Teachers, hallways, books, bullying and groups. That's really what I imagine when I hear the word 'school'" (1, p. 4). He went on to describe school as both a positive word and a negative word. Colin conceded most of his experiences with school were positive, however, he has had classmates confide in him many negative encounters in that very same building. The fact his classmates feel comfortable enough to disclose personal issues with Colin, speaks to his character. As Colin stated:

I don't really judge people a lot. When they tell me to keep things secret, I do that. I look at things through their perspective, like I'm the one being bullied and

picked on. It's not a nice feeling to be in a corner and picked on like that. (1, p. 4)

As time passed I would come to know what Colin meant by being in a corner.

Not Good

Colin was placed in foster care at the age of 2 years old. For a number of years, Colin and his sister would move from home to home, at times being together and at other times only seeing each other at scheduled visits. Colin, being the younger brother, looked up to his sister who was two years older. One home in particular was not a healthy situation for Colin. I asked if he had ever felt backed in the proverbial corner, already sensing the answer to be yes. With Colin's confirmation to the question, I asked if he would be comfortable sharing.

Yeah, I don't mind. I remember feeling that way a long time ago, in one of the foster care homes I was at. It wasn't a nice one for me, my little sister and my older sister. It wasn't a good experience. The older brother of ... I forget how much people lived there. I think there's a mother, a father. There's an older brother and a younger sister. I'm pretty sure they had a baby. The brother would always yell at us a lot. He seems like he was 19, 18, around that age. He would always push me around and stuff. I didn't really have that much of a memory back then. My sister remembers a lot more than me. But I remember some days, they wouldn't feed us because ... I don't really remember why, but that's how things were. Sometimes at nights when we were hungry, we would sneak up at night and go get food in the kitchen. It wasn't nice. It was scary. We'd always get yelled at. I don't even remember that much. (1, p. 4)

For Colin, his older sibling was his protector, someone he could count on. As he moved from home to home, there was not a great deal of consistency other than his older sister. Even though it was a devastating time for Colin, he acknowledged that he did learn from his time in foster homes that he simply categorized as "not good" (1, p. 4).

I won't say I hate those people, because hate is a strong word. I just don't want to be anything like those people. I try to learn from that and learn not to be like

that. Yelling at people, disrespecting them, bullying them. I try to be honest, generous and respectful. A lot of the stuff I went through as a kid, I try to learn through that stuff. (1, p. 5)

The two words—*not good*—stayed with me. Seeing Colin’s eyes each time he talked of those experiences helped me to gain just a small glimpse of how intense the memories remain. Colin does not forget the trauma, but recognizes how those experiences have made him the person he is today. A compassionate young man that, literally and figuratively, has been backed into a corner; Colin can truly empathize with others’ experiences of feeling alone and unloved. They are feelings Colin does not want others to experience. Each time I witnessed Colin interacting with the youth, I was reminded of those “not good” experiences, encouraged by how he has chosen to support others to perhaps not feel what he did growing up. “I look at things through their perspective, like I’m the one being bullied and picked on. It’s not a nice feeling to be in a corner and picked on” (1, p. 4).

I consider once again the opening narrative:

As the class moved into the final moments, Colin stood once again amongst the larger group, listening to Lee and others discuss the experience. The class concluded with claps, high fives, and handshakes amongst all within the gymnasium, Colin just one of more than thirty.

(Field text, November 2015)

I travel from our conversations around school and education that started in my office to a gymnasium one year later, situated on the very same university campus. As I think about how Colin defined both school and education, I see the opening narrative

differently now as *Colin stood once again amongst the large group, listening to Lee and others discuss the experience*. I think about the “education” Colin has received thus far in his life. Though in grade 10 at the time, Colin, like all others in that university gymnasium, had a wealth of knowledge from multiple landscapes. I wondered now, how Colin perceived himself in that space. Did he see himself as teacher? As university student? Both? Neither?

“I felt like the rest of the university students” (Narrative account negotiation), Colin would tell me in a later conversation. He explained that as he engaged in all the games, he felt that he was like those he played with. He was on a level playing field. Some of the games looked familiar to how we played in the after-school program which allowed Colin to have another level of familiarity, allowing him to feel other than that of high school student.

Teacher

I received an email from Tiffany, a local reporter, interested in learning more about the after-school program. Three days later Tiffany, with her notepad in hand, joined the high school mentors for a conversation. As we sat in a small circle of chairs, Tiffany began by asking each to share a bit about who they were and perhaps what they wanted to do after high school. When eyes moved to Colin, he quickly revealed that he wanted to be a coach or a physical education teacher. Up until that moment, I understood Colin’s imagined story beyond high school to be one of construction worker, a story he shared with me in the past. I remember wondering how long he had been imagining this new story.

(Field text, December 2015)

As I continued to ponder Colin's future aspirations shared that day, I also considered again his notion of education. It became evident to me that Colin felt he had knowledge gained outside of school that counted. Within the after-school program Colin was seeing himself as a teacher. This realization surfaced in one of our conversations around Colin's physical education experiences in elementary school. The gymnasium that hosts the after-school program is the same gymnasium Colin experienced physical education in. I asked him if the space seemed different now from times as a young boy engaging as a student. He responded by saying "in phys. ed. there's just one teacher. But now in the program, there's five teachers, six teachers, seven teachers sometimes" (1, p. 16). "Would you consider yourself one of the teachers?" I asked. Colin's one word response of "yeah" (1, p. 16) brought a smile to both our faces.

Having worked in the program as a grade 8 volunteer and now entering into his third year as a paid employee within the after-school program, Colin recognized the role he filled. The field text animates how Colin sees himself and others as teachers. Considering what I have come to know about Colin, how he has come to explain *education*, I see a connection to how he has self-identified as teacher. This self-designation is quite telling as it speaks to how Colin sees himself as knowledgeable.

We continued to unpack what teacher meant to Colin:

Brian: What is the common story of who the teacher is?

Colin: The people that get all the attention.

Brian: Okay. In the classroom, in the school, who is the teacher?

Colin: The person standing in the front, most likely.

Brian: Do you feel like you're a teacher when you're in school?

Colin: No

Brian: Ever?

Colin: Not really.

Brian: But you feel like a teacher when you come to the program?

Colin: Yeah

Brian: I wonder why you never feel like a teacher in school?

Colin: I'm the one taking notes and listening. (2, pgs. 8-9).

Knowing Colin saw himself as teacher, I was curious what he thought the youth perceived him to be in the program. "Probably as a teacher or an elder, or maybe an older brother, older sister" (1, p. 9), he responded. He went on to explain:

A lot of these kids, they don't have older brothers. Or if they do, they don't really interact with them. Everyone looks up to someone or something. When we're playing with these kids, we're helping them. By doing that, it gives us the figure of that older brother or older sister. (1, p. 9)

What I took away from this statement revolved around the definition of teacher. The words teacher, elder, brother, sister, were synonymous. For Colin, teacher and older brother carried the same meaning. Thinking once again to his experiences in foster care in which his older sister was his support, she was in fact teaching him. The notion of caring for others and teacher go hand in hand.

I once again return to the opening narrative as *Colin stood amongst the thirty or so pre-service teachers*. With his experiences within the program, Colin did not enter that university class as a grade 10 student. To the contrary, Colin arrived to that class with a story of teacher.

Perhaps if one were to walk by that university gymnasium pausing to scan the group of pre-service teachers, one would see Colin as a guest? Perhaps not? That is the funny thing about perceptions, they are just that.

Reputation

It was a sunny, warm late afternoon in early June. I had just picked Colin up from school so we could have one of our research conversations. Dissimilar to previous conversations, we decided to go for a walk in the neighbourhood as we conversed. We saw many familiar faces as Colin and I meandered up and down the streets, at times passing youth from the program and greeting them with a hello. We discussed early into the walk how, to many people, this particular neighbourhood within the city had a reputation of being a rough area, filled with poverty and hardships. For Colin, it was his community, the neighbourhood he has grown up in.

As we continued to saunter along the sidewalks, I shared with Colin that on the day prior my garage had been broken into and my bike stolen. There was no intent to bringing up this story from a research conversation perspective; it was simply me sharing. We wondered to each other as to where my bike ended up. Colin joked saying that if he saw it in the neighbourhood he would let me know. His humour came in part from what he came to refer to as the reputation of his community within the city we live. I decided to ask him more about the reputation of his community and specifically of those within it.

“What’s the dominant story? Who would have broken into my garage?” I asked.

“Someone who isn’t white” Colin replied.

“You get a reputation of how you dress or your skin colour... sometimes when I’m in a store or something, there’d be people following me around. I don’t really like it very much”.

Colin went on to explain that “different people like me; people who actually steal from the stores and no one wants someone to steal from a store so they watch out for people just like us.” (3, p. 18)

Within the urban centre of which Colin lives, he often feels different. He recognizes that because of his skin colour there are people that have in a sense grouped him into specific categories based on what he calls a “bad reputation” (3, p. 17). What I have come to know about Colin makes it difficult to hear this story. There is a grand narrative when it comes to Indigenous youth. Colin understands this and each time he comes face to face with it, he feels a familiar sense of discomfort. “When I am getting followed around, for some reason, I feel guilty or it’s weird. I don’t really feel good. It’s not good for my well-being, I guess” (3, p. 19).

At one point, our conversation drew us to assessment in school and the anxiety that brings for some. Colin has always said to me that the after-school program was not school. “For one reason we do not test the kids” (3, p. 16), which to him was a common practice in school. It was then I mentioned the How are we doing? sheets, wondering if they were not indeed an assessment or test for the youth.

Colin: I don't think it really bothers the kids but it kind of for me because I got to make sure the kids stay in order, something like that.

Brian: You think it’s an assessment though but it doesn’t bother the kids. Why not do you think? Why is it different?

Colin: It doesn’t really affect them as much as it does for us.

Brian: Do you feel a little pressure with that?

Colin: A little.

Brian: Is that a good thing or a bad thing? That's interesting. We've never talked about this.

Colin: A good thing.

Brian: It's a little bit of a motivator for you?

Colin: Yeah.

Brian: What do you want the checklist to look like?

Colin: I want it to look positive.

Brian: Why is that important to you? Is it so you look good?

Colin: Not me, our whole group, the kids so that the next time they go back, they're like, "Oh, it's that program again." The kids know they're great. They're fun to have around.

Brian: Why is that important to you?

Colin: Good reputation, I guess.

Brian: Speak to that a little bit more. What kind of reputations are there?

Colin: If we have a bad one, maybe next time you ask them if we could go there, they're going to be like, "No, not today, Brian. No." (3, pgs. 16-17)

The pressure Colin feels stems from both his realization of the grand narrative we discussed, as well as the opportunity to shift that narrative. "You get a good reputation and you go to that store, no one's going to follow you around like they do sometimes to me. That makes you feel good (3, p. 19). Though Colin feels the pressure, he understands the potential he and the youth have to change people's perceptions.

Cut Day

The program was done for another week and like weeks past, Colin and the other mentors stuck around to clean up equipment and maybe shoot a few hoops. I remember the conversation being short in duration. Standing at the sideline, underneath the dangling, torn basketball net, Colin mentioned to me that basketball tryouts were done and that no one in grade nine made the team. A number of thoughts and questions entered my mind at that moment. Before I posed any questions to Colin, he had moved on to the court to shoot around with his brother on the same hoop they played on for the last two years of elementary school basketball.

(Field text, November 2014)

It felt to me that it was fine for Colin that he was cut. At the time it was just the reality of high school sports. “They decided only to keep the grade 10 players this year” (Narrative account negotiation). This reality of sport for some and not for all was the culture of high school sports and extra-curricular activities in general. Perhaps this is the reality to better prepare youth. As numerous coaches and teachers have told me, this reality is preparing youth for the real world. Not all can make the team in the real world.

Colin summarized it this way when thinking about the youth:

*The community they're growing up in,
doesn't change if they're not as strong as the rest.
They fall behind, kind of, in a way.*

As I think about Colin's notion of community and how some fall behind, I considered the youth within our program. Would some of those youth fall behind in the community, in the reality as some phrase it? What was interesting to me was how Colin

was seeing it differently with the youth. The notion of cutting youth from our program would be foolish to consider in Colin's eyes. The program and how we interact in that space is in fact different from the larger community Colin speaks of.

*We change the way we play,
Changes the way our community is...
They'll all get a chance.
Doesn't matter if you're the slowest one in the gym,
You'll always be included.*

No one loses anything when they lose.

“They wouldn't be afraid of not being successful because they're not losing anything. They have nothing to lose when they're playing in the gym because we're not playing to be winners or anything. We're playing to have fun” (3, p. 7). Colin could now see how this was much different from his experiences with high school sports in grade 9. Ultimately with the coming of his grade 10 year, Colin was successful in making both the basketball and volleyball teams. The larger community, of which high school is a microcosm of, remains with a new crop of grade 9 students left on the outside looking in. It sounded to me a right of passage to an extent.

This larger community is not what the gymnasium space emulates week after week.

Yeah, because in the way we play, we change the way we play to the kids who are playing, because some kids ain't as skilled as other kids, we try and adapt to that it changes the way our community is between the community they're growing in. The community they're growing in doesn't change if they're not as strong as the rest of the people around them. (4, p. 14) They'll all get a chance.

Let's see. Maybe that it doesn't matter if you're the slowest one in the gym, that you'll always be included. (3, p. 9)

Brian: So what happens with the youth in the community outside of this gymnasium, this program? What happens to those that aren't as good at something, or skilled, or whatever?

Colin: They fall behind, kind of, in a way. (4, p. 15)

The dialogue above between Colin and myself helped me to think about the social context of community both inside and outside of school. Colin was making connections of how we move together in the gymnasium each week and how that was building a community that looked different. "No one loses anything when they lose" (1, p. 15). Colin was seeing there could be a different way of playing with youth in a gymnasium. How we went about playing games in the program did not have to look or feel the same as his experiences with high school sports in which rankings, winning, and losing had become the reality.

His pure joy and enthusiasm seemed to be contagious with those he was engaged with, bringing about a friendly, yet intense competitive spirit with those he had just recently met.

As I mentioned, watching Colin engage with the pre-service teachers from the university was a moment I continue to cherish for many reasons. The activities shared that day looked nothing like that of high school sports, and everything like what Colin was experiencing in the after-school program. This was certainly not by chance, as Lee too sees the need to shift what high school physical education looks like. I witnessed

Colin and the other 30 or so pre-service teachers caught up in games that brought people together rather than ranking them. *The class concluded with claps, high fives, and handshakes amongst all within the gymnasium, Colin just one of more than thirty.*

Seeing Success

The only reason I've stayed in basketball is because I like to ... I didn't like the part where I wasn't involved much in the games. I love going in practices. I love getting better at it. It's a lot of fun. (3, p. 6)

Colin explained further how when he started playing basketball he was not very involved and was quite anxious when he played. If he would ever receive the ball, he always looked to pass it right away in order to avoid messing up. Today, he recognizes how his skill level has improved and he can see more success when he plays. He can "see how fun it is" (3, p. 6) compared to what it looked and felt like as a beginner. "It's disappointing that I didn't get to enjoy that as a kid" (3, p. 6).

Colin can relate because of these early experiences with basketball. It is a game that he has come to love and become quite competent in. He can, however, see how the spotlight was on him, with one game and one ball in play. When we talk about the program and what it looks like, he can see without hesitation how this process helps kids like Colin. There is not a fear (3, p. 7) as Colin explains it. The youth are not "afraid of not being successful because they are not losing anything. They have nothing to lose when they're playing in the gym because we're not playing to be winners or anything. We're playing to have fun" (3, p. 7).

I wanted to know more about what was fun. What specifically makes it fun and what is it about the program that allows the youth to be less concerned with things like

score and more interested in simply playing together. “Yeah, because we're not just helping them being active. We're helping them by letting them know that they're special and they don't deserve any kind of rude punishment or rude treatment and they're their own person” (4, p. 22). Colin helped me to think about what it is youth can lose.