

COYOTE STORIES: ATTENDING TO NARRATIVES AS LIFE-MAKING

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

Master of Education

in

Curriculum and Instruction

University of Regina

By

Cori Lea Saas

Regina, Saskatchewan

March, 2017

Copyright 2017: C. L. Saas

UNIVERSITY OF REGINA
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
SUPERVISORY AND EXAMINING COMMITTEE

Cori Lea Saas, candidate for the degree of Master of Education in Curriculum & Instruction, has presented a thesis titled, ***Coyote Stories: Attending to Narratives as Life-Making***, in an oral examination held on January 30, 2017. The following committee members have found the thesis acceptable in form and content, and that the candidate demonstrated satisfactory knowledge of the subject material.

External Examiner: *Dr. Carl Leggo, University of British Columbia

Supervisor: Dr. Ken Montgomery, Faculty of Education

Committee Member: Dr. Patrick Lewis, Faculty of Education

Committee Member: *Dr. Janice Huber, Adjunct

Committee Member: **Dr. Lee Schaefer, Adjunct

Committee Member: Mr. Dean Shareski, One-Time Committee Member

Chair of Defense: Dr. Philip Charrier, Department of History

*Via teleconference

**Not present at defense

ABSTRACT

Living, telling, reliving and retelling my own autobiographical stories of experience, along with the stories of experience of students from my early years as a teacher, I entered formal narrative inquiry with two co-participants, Isabel and Anne-Marie. My personal and social justifications for this research were rooted in my living and living out silenced stories inside and outside of educational landscapes. In the midst of the inquiry journey, my research puzzle shifted, changed, and emerged: *How might I live alongside students, attending narratively to our stories of experience, particularly to silenced stories, and then how might our identity making stories, stories to live by, come to be relived and retold?* (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999, p. 94).

Further puzzlings emerged: How might these stories alter and shift my connections with students? How might these stories and the process of coming to attend to them shift my practice and make me retell my own stories of school? How is the storying phenomenon of my youth akin to narrative inquiry? Does attending narratively to students' lives offer an educator deeper insights into students' tensioned, messy, difficult and bumping up stories of experience? When students' stories of experience have been attended to narratively and mindfully, connected, over time and in place, might there be the potential for these students to understand their ability to live, tell, relive, and retell their own stories to live by?

As my familial stories, my own stories, the stories of former students and the stories of the two co-participants looped and intersected and at times were difficult to follow, I came to see the unfolding and weaving of a larger, messier and gentler narrative

of experience. “There is no one way to compose [final] research texts” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 206). Narrative inquiry is both a methodology and a phenomenon (Clandinin et al., 2006, pp. 176-181).

During the narrative inquiry I noted that we are shaped by both our familial and familiar stories, that our stories of experience matter, that there is no certainty in narrative inquiry, nor is there certainty in storying; we can choose to relive or retell our stories of experience.

Through the inquiry I came to understand that attending to stories of experience is relational; students seek someone who will attend to their stories. Keeping the tensioned stories untold is a continuing dominant narrative inside and outside of educational landscapes. Coming to relive and retell our stories of experience is a space of potential for youth, where they might come to know their stories of experience differently. Time and stories loop and can live out on multiple and complex plotlines. Educators must attend mindfully, deliberately and with awareness, to the wholeness of students’ stories. It is not the stories of experience alone that are important but the experience of attending to the narratives that is difference-making. Storying is identity making.

I came to a deeper understanding of knowing differently the stories of school and school stories. I came gently to the space of attending to our silenced stories in the ebb and flow of stories that were often messy, difficult, tensioned, silenced, yet filled with a great deal of beauty amid uncertainty. I learned that the experience of attending to our own stories gives meaning to our work as educators. I came to understand that there is profound awareness in narrative inquiry. Storying as a process is as unique as each narrative, as each storier. Storying is life-making.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To Isabel and Anne-Marie - Thank you for the many ways you opened the attending spaces between us. Thank you for trusting me with your stories and for continuing to trust me along the way. Your courage and willingness to share openly the messy, complex, and beautiful stories of your lives has opened a place of knowing differently for me. To the staff at 11th Street - thank you for sharing your grief and your love. Thank you for being the keepers of the Gratitude Rock, for being family, for loving me, and for fiercely living transparently and vulnerably alongside youth.

To my family - thank you for loving me. Thank you for allowing me time and conversational spaces to share and share and share, and to figure things through in my own way. Thank you for walking beside me, for building campfires with me, for hiking prairie, for taking me on adventures, for adventuring with me, for listening to my silences, for laughing with me, for bringing me coffee, and for believing in the work with unending encouragement. Thank you to my sister who always believes my work is extraordinary. Thank you Mom for sharing your feedback, you have made me a better writer, a finer Mom. Thank you Dad for sharing your stories, you have made me a finer human. Thank you Jessie Lee for your calm and kind ways, you have made me, in all ways. Thank you my family, for always entering through the opener of story.

To Ken, my supervisor - thank you for your support of this work. Your steadfast commitment to attend to the process was a calming force throughout this often messy and complex journey. Your willingness to allow me to grow, to try, and to be creative allowed my work to push limits, to ask difficult questions of the process, of educative experiences, and most importantly, of myself. Thank you Ken for staying the course with me through an often murky and messy journey, and for believing that somewhere there would be storying, potential and learning.

To Jan, Dean, Lee, and Patrick, my committee members - thank you for your many questions, wonders and thoughts as we traveled this journey together. I deeply appreciate the depth and diversity each of you offered along the way, pushing me to think with stories of experience differently, helping me to ask the silenced questions. Thank you Jan for living alongside me throughout this journey, for sharing stories of your family and for allowing me to understand that you believed in my work with youth, and in me. Thank you for leading, sharing, and believing in the circle-rock stories. Thank you Lee for helping me to attend to the emerging puzzles of this work, the wonders and the implications of storying to a greater body of work. Thank you Dean for bringing the perspective of a teacher in the field to this journey, for living as a real person for me, making me accountable to myself and to my family, while the swirl of a story of crisis carried forward, and, I agree, the work lives, as you coined, as “a love story.”

To my friends whose lives have become interwoven around sharing circles at the many University of Regina Works-in-Progress groups and other life and spirit-giving sharing circles, thank you for opening a space of trust, where I can share and where my stories are attended to. Thank you for attending to my stories of grief and change, and my stories of joy and beauty. Thank you for checking in on me and for taking the time to attend to me when I am silent. For Duane, thank you for sharing your stories and for pushing back hard. I “got ‘er done.”

To the University of Regina Research Ethics Board - thank you for approving and supporting my master of education research.

POST DEFENCE ACKNOWLEDGMENT

To Carl, my external examiner - your inquiries into the language and depth of attending to stories of experience have long echoed within me. Thank you for attending my defence, and thank you for asking about my Dad, and the Coyote Stories story. Your voice and kindness matter deeply to me.

For Dad and Jessy Lee with love

Table of Contents

Stories of Return – Narrative Beginnings.....	1
Thinking with Home Stories.....	6
Returning to Home Stories.....	9
Finding Home with Graduate Studies.....	12
A Story of Sociality	18
A Story of Temporality.....	19
A Story of Place.....	20
A Story in Discovery	21
Thinking with Dad’s Teachings.....	24
Telling Stories of Attending.....	25
Brandon’s Story	27
Thinking about Attending to Brandon’s Story.....	30
Wondering about Former Students’ Stories.....	31
Story of Grounding Narrative and Narrative Inquiry	34
In the Midst of Stories alongside Isabel.....	48
In the Midst of Stories alongside Anne-Marie.....	51
Stories of Trust.....	62
Story of Connecting to Place through Trust	69
Puzzlings Emerging in the Midst.....	73
Puzzlings with Puzzlings	74
Story of Sacred Spaces.....	79
Story of Tellings	80
Stories of Return	82
Thinking with a School’s Story alongside Isabel and Anne-Marie	83
For the Ones who could not Take Part: Story of Josh’s Invitation to Inquiry	85
Stories of Entering into Narrative Inquiry	88
A Story of Anne-Marie	94
Thinking About Attending to Stories.....	101
Dominant School Stories	102
Dominant Stories: Grade Five Story of Return.....	105
Puzzling with Anne-Marie’s Stories.....	107
Isabel’s Story of Return to 11 th Street.....	108
Thinking with Isabel’s Stories	112

Thinking with Stories of Tensions, Silences and Bumping Up Places.....	117
A Story of Behaviours and Skills.....	118
Silent Stories	119
Stories of Return: Attending to Anne-Marie’s Stories	119
Puzzling with Anne-Marie’s Stories.....	124
Teachings of Retelling and Reliving.....	125
Stories of Return: Attending to Isabel’s Stories	128
Stories of Belonging: Time.....	133
Stories of Potential.....	134
Stories of Meaning Making	137
Thinking with Anne-Marie and Silent Stories	140
Puzzling with Anne-Marie’s Silent Stories.....	143
Returning to Attend to Anne-Marie’s Stories.....	147
Questioning and Wondering about the Place of Attending	149
Story of Silenced Stories Today	152
Stories of Ours	153
Story of Narrative Resonance	156
Living Narratively Is Complex	156
Narrative Inquiry Is Identity Work: Stories to Live By.....	161
Returning to Return.....	162
Storying Is Knowing Differently	163
Story of Return: Thinking Relationally and Narratively	163
The Bumping of Stories Privileged and Loving the Field	164
Story of Coming to Attend.....	166
Storying as Phenomena.....	168
Inside and Outside Educational Landscapes Future Stories: Retelling and Reliving.....	169
Stories Made Visible.....	176
Stories That Matter	180
Stories of experience matter.....	181
Story of Return to My Sacred Space: Knowing Differently: Retelling and Reliving	182
Storying Return.....	183
Life Making Stories	185
Storying matter of experience matter.....	185
Stories of Experience	187

Storying.....	187
Return to Wonderings: There Is a Teaching There.....	188
References.....	192
Appendix 1 COC rubric	202
Appendix 2 Approval Form	203

Stories of Return – Narrative Beginnings

Maybe it's November, perhaps it's April. I have returned. Here. Where I always return. The frog pond. The small deep pool of water, my oasis. The wind is here. On my cheek. I feel it. I hear here. I listen. The poplar sing and the willow smile. The water is like glass. A hundred yards north, down the long sandy shore, the lake. Cold and vast and rough. I breathe deeply and venture out. The wind is strong and I am strong, here. I walk into the wind, into the horizon. Words have no meaning here. I breathe deeply. Soon a rock calls to me and I stop. I stop. I am awash in place and wind. My rootedness here. My rootedness in me. I pick up my rock. Cold and iced and run round smooth from experiences, and beautiful. My rock is full of stories. I fold my fingers tightly around my rock. I put my hand into my pocket, look long across the waves off towards the magic where sky meets horizon, take a deep breath and step homewards. (Field text, 2011-15)

I am home here, returning to walk along the shores of lake, feeling wind on face. I am home, stopping to or being stopped by the call of rock as I trek along prairie hillside. I am home where wind blows and where I feel rooted, attended to and connected. Here, I am home. When I was young, those long summer days when the trees were young, I pulled the box of comics, dragging the never-ending green garden hose from tree well to tree well under the sun, for four hours each morning. We would make the circuit, the comics, the stool, the hose and I; then we would do it again and again. And then noon and I was free. And the run to the frog pond, to dig and to explore the afternoon away. A place where I was free to stray away. Maybe because Mom and Dad understood the sense of wonderment that pulled me to the water and that the seizures would come, and oh the

call of the shoreline, with waves and rocks and horizons. And Mom and Dad understood. They understood wind-call, rootedness, and trusted me enough to allow these spaces. Soon Sam arrived, my adventure friend, a Golden Labrador. We hiked hills and explored our frog pond. Somehow, he understood too, like Mom and Dad had explained, never to allow me to swim too far. He trekked prairie miles alongside me, a treasured secret keeper.

Years later, I would return to our pond, returning to the place I had trusted alongside Sam, though now driving a motorbike along the ridge. Often I would stop to stand the bike up in the sand near the pond on a small wooden platform that Dad had made for me and had taught me to strap to the bike with a stretchy cord. Here, I was free. I was wild and I was home.

I am thinking deeply now with my enduring need to return to the lake-pond treasured place. The place fills me with such strength. Here I am profoundly mindful to attend narratively to my own stories of experience. Here is the place where I come home. I am deeply mindful of attending narratively to my own stories of experience as I step, foot in front of foot on the sand and feel wind on my face. I have learned to carry the sacredness of these teachings inside me. I have carried the beauty of this sacred space that I found when I was young to a space that, when I am aware, when I am calm, I can return to within myself.

Home becomes a place of grounding, a place of return often from a circular journey.

I began to think about how the unfolding of identity-making stories circle, weave and loop, and the beautiful messy complex ways our stories of experience return to live

and live out on multiple plotlines. I thought about how I hoped the structure of this thesis would attend narratively to stories of experience. The stories of co-participants, Isabel and Anne-Marie, both high school students, and of me, live in such unfolding and looping ways. The thesis is structured to read as a whole narrative, as one complex whole. Often our stories of experience, Isabel's, Anne-Marie's, and mine, may seem to live disjointed, often objectified, or even perhaps narratively attended to. Throughout the thesis, bumping up places and tensions are created structurally, to push and to nudge the reader to attend narratively to our stories of experience.

In structuring the thesis in such a complex storying way, I hope the reader will come to sit alongside Isabel, Anne-Marie and I, come to attend narratively to our stories of experience, becoming aware of our unfolding and heart pulling aches. Stories of experience loop and return, and sometimes, as I often feel as an educator, I find some sense of awareness, and at other times, I feel a sense of being lost. Storying threads, often difficult to keep straight, may emerge. In these bumping up spaces where question and confusion abound, the reader is encouraged to attend narratively; read on. Stories of experience are often messy, attending to narratives of experience takes time.

And I return...

I have been storying my whole life; I grew up in a home where my stories of experience were honoured. Dad was the kind of father who would come home after school with his bin of marking, set it down on the kitchen counter, slide onto one of the benches of the picnic style built-in kitchen table he had made, and listen to my stories. And I would be there waiting for him. And I would share. I would go on and on about

Sheila¹ and Robert and magic spells and basketball and Mrs. Yaschuck, my second grade five teacher who told me I “wrote beautifully.” I would always be waiting and Dad would always stay sitting, letting the twilight settle long around us and never getting up to turn on a light.

At home it was Dad and I and Sam, our golden lab. Thursday nights were stewed cabbage night and later, when I was in high school, Dad would take me on dates to the Esso-On-The-Highway for chips and a pop. Often, Sheila came along and we would talk about school and boys. Sometimes I have wondered how Dad put up with our stories but now, as Jessy Lee’s Mom, I know these moments with her, in her ‘friend spaces’ when she allows me entrance, are moments of beauty. It is in these spaces alongside her that I feel living is most tangible, most comfortable; it is in these same moments I feel the space between us deepen and pull away too. These moments with her are sacred spaces, wrapped in the midst of the unknowable, in the certainty that I am happy. *Dad calls this a teaching. Teachings are more than a life lesson; they are a way of being with the experiences of life, a way of storying experiences mindfully, simply being aware of and learning through moments of experience.*

Though Dad was there listening to my stories, it was Mom listening to my silences, asking me if I needed to be on birth control, and sitting me down soon thereafter, looking me in the eyes, which was her way of asking me again. She was the

¹ As much as possible, throughout the narrative, pseudonyms have been used in place of directly naming people, schools, organisations and to protect the anonymity of co-participants, colleagues, and friends. Dad, Mom and Jessy Lee are actual names of the people in my world. They have read these stories of experience and understand the visibility of their stories of experience as they weave alongside mine. Within field texts, interim field texts, field notes and school work shared in this inquiry, I have taken the liberty of changing names within the text.

one who, with keen understanding, said to me after I had left my marriage, “Don’t tell me why you left. Someday you may forgive him, and though you may be able to, I never will.”

I never did tell anyone all that I recalled, although I suppose my mentor and Jess have a sense of most of my stories of experience. Someday I may open all the mismatched journals with their satin-tongued ribbons hanging out, and hand them to Jessy Lee. Someday I may share all that I have written and all that I remember. Some days, I have come near to sharing. Mostly, I think Jessy Lee does not need to know every story. The gentle stories are as needed as the messy stories, along with all the stories that live forever in the midst.

My stories of experience were attended to at home. Mom and Dad, in different ways, created spaces where I felt safe to live, to tell, to retell and to relive my stories. I learned to story by watching my parents’ story. They were open about the experiences that storied their past and who they were now. Mom grew up in a lower middle-class well-educated family. Dad grew up on his own, having walked away from his family home just before grade eight. Both my parents’ parents’ lives were profoundly affected by alcoholism. Though these were the facts of my parents’ pasts, the stories of experience that were told of their homes become my stories of experience, shields and badges of honour. These became my naming and identity stories of experience, my *stories to live by* as I grew.

Stories to live by “refers to identity, is given meaning by the narrative understanding of knowledge and context” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999, p. 4). Stories to live by are shaped by the weaving of plotlines within our personal knowledge landscape.

Stories to live by then, is deeply a narrative term for identity. “A concept of *stories to live by* allows us to speak of the stories that each of us lives out and tells of who we are, and are becoming” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 53). Thinking of identity as a composing of complex narratives over intersecting and multiple plotlines allows educators and students to understand that identity is co-composed and is living in multiple complex ways “over time, in different relationships and on different landscapes” (p. 53).

Thinking with Home Stories²

In an early draft of my narrative beginnings, in this section where I begin by sharing my autobiographical stories of experience, I originally used the words “affected by alcoholism.” As the drafts progressed, I began to transition from telling a familial story of the effects of alcoholism, to reliving and retelling past stories of experience. I began to think with my narratives of experience. I moved from leaving this section as an endnote, hoping no one but the keenest readers would dive into the depths of these silenced stories, to reliving stories of experience in this narrative journey, making visible at this beginning place, an overlapping, complex and ever weaving narrative.

[P]recisely what is learned through experience is rarely, if ever, immediately evident to the learner or to the teacher. When there are immediate and discernible effects, teaching is deeply satisfying. But the most profound learning often occurs long after the time of deliberate pedagogy.... Learning spills outside the official times and places of pedagogy. This is the most amazing and wonderful thing about teaching. (Davis, Sumara, Luce-Kapler, 2000, pp. 259-60).

² The co-participants and I decided that chapters felt chunked and nothing like sharing and inquiring should be. Hence the use of headings and a looping way of sharing our stories of experience came to be.

As I reread those words, “affected by alcoholism”, and reflected on them, I wondered at the silent spaces of stories of experience and the way I was allowing silenced stories of experience to continue to recount stories of my past as part of today. I shared with my mentor about messy, tensioned, puzzling and bumping up feelings of keeping some stories of experience silent. I reflected long on the language of socially constructed gentle, positive, and kind stories of experience. Certainly, those experiences had been ones that had been telling stories of me in school and in this inquiry for a long time. I wondered at my responsibility to tell and retell stories of experience mindfully.

And so I return. And as I returned and returned to this narrative of experience for me, woven alongside the experience of two co-participants, Isabel and Anne-Marie, our travels took many moons.

I continue to puzzle through the stories of experience that I deliberately keep silent and those of which I am unaware that I keep silent. I am thinking deeply about why I continue to keep some stories silent and why I make others visible. I am thinking deeply about the ease in which I share some stories of experience and with whom and why. I am thinking deeply about the trust I gain, the power I receive by making stories of experience visible while keeping others silent.

I am thinking deeply about how youth often experience these same tensions as they share their stories.

I think deeply now how I live, tell, relive and retell stories of experience because of the stories of addiction told, lived, retold and relived through my parents. I know both my parents were raised by alcoholics and by those affected by alcohol. I know that the stories of experience told to me about my paternal grandparents were of people who were

unkind to Dad, who neglected him and who continued this behaviour throughout his life. I know that my maternal grandpa was a mostly distant man who had little time for kindness and, as I was navigating my childhood, his lack of empathy toward my brilliant Mom, my kind Nana and my own hyperactive efforts to please him, left me with a sense of bewilderment.

I understand that these are not fun or easy or comfortable stories. I understand that I am making visible, messy, difficult, and tensioned stories. Perhaps, when I enter into the midst, it is my silent stories that most have voice. "I tell these stories not to play on your sympathies but to suggest how stories can control our lives" (King, 2003, p. 9).

I think about Mom's need to be first in everything she pursued, from grade school spelling tests to graduate work. I am thinking deeply about her need to control her children, especially my older sister, and the tidiness of our childhood home. I am thinking deeply about Dad's need to be present for every event in our childhood, never missing a sporting activity, mine or one of his students'. I am thinking deeply about how Dad went out of his way to create family rituals that would foster a sense of belonging for me, for my sister, for Mom and for every human who knew Dad: my friends, his students, our neighbours, his colleagues. I am wondering about my sense of compulsion to compete with myself, and my instinct to care for and nurture the students I live alongside. I wonder if it might be my internal drive and the need to nurture that creates an exhaustion that brings joy. I am wondering how rooted my actions are in a home and school culture that is profoundly affected by silenced and often unknown stories of the experience.

I am thinking deeply about the stories of experience that we all choose not to share, those stories that live, perhaps metaphorically but in real feeling and almost

tangible ways, set apart from, either deliberately or justifiably. Perhaps not the stories of glory or violence. I am thinking deeply about the wholeness of these stories that help me make meaning of my life.

I am thinking deeply, as I enter this initial space of sharing my narrative beginnings, similar to the way I would reflect at the beginning of a school year. Why am I sharing stories of experience? Why am I keeping some stories of experience silent? I wonder how often I gloss over my behaviours without attending to my own stories of experience. I wonder how often other teachers do the same. How often am I sad about Dad's declining health and why do I not share? How often do I ask students to allow me time if I am upset? How often do I allow students this same time to feel? I wonder how often the sacredness of the space for sharing stories of experience is missed because it goes silently unattended, or perhaps because it is unknowingly or deliberately unattended.

Returning to Home Stories

Though my Mom grew up in a home where my grandfather drank, the familial stories that I learned to live by, that I learned to tell and retell most from Mom were of a family with a long line of empowered, well-educated, well-read women. We called ourselves "Wiens Women" (Mom's maiden name) and we felt mighty. Mom told stories of her grandmother arriving for extended stays in the summers and in the winters by bus with a suitcase full of books, and Mom having a sense of awe; books, after all, were the best gift. I grew up listening to Mom recite passages and lines from stories and poems she had learned as a child, and knowing the treasured volumes were neatly tucked upstairs in our family's cabin. "We tell our stories to invite others to consider our meanings and to construct their own, as well as to better understand those experiences ourselves.... We

live storied lives” (Short, Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson, 2014, p. 5). As a child, story time, bed time, was a gift, curled in next to Mom as she read for hours from *Anne of Green Gables* or *Little House on the Prairie*. I knew that on every family adventure, during every camping trip, if I closed my eyes, I could hear the sound of a cougar scream, just like how Pa had heard it and had described it to Laura. The stories that were read to me swirled around me, filled my imagination as a teen, and ground me now, becoming ever woven into my stories we live by.

With Dad we grew wrapped in stories of love and kindness almost as though it was a mythical tale that had come to life out of a story book, though it was absolute. Mom nodded when we asked about Dad’s past; Dad tensed. Dad’s father had told Dad that he was not to return to school on one of those final summer days before grade eight. Dad wanted an education. He wanted a family. He did not want the life his family was living. Dad walked the 10 miles to town. He had the clothes on his back. He put himself through grade eight, through high school. He moved between living in an abandoned car in the garbage grounds to living with a friend in town, and was often taken care of by a kind family, spending much time at their church.

Once, in our privileged understanding of the stories of what it must certainly mean to spend time with family over the holidays, my sister and I had complained about people having to work on Christmas day. “Shouldn’t the stores be closed so people can spend time with their families?” Dad was full of stories that day. He was eating a butter tart, sitting in his big brown recliner. I was young and arrogant, newly divorced, newly independent. Jessy Lee was curled on the sofa watching him. The lights from the tree twinkled. The fire was warm. Dad pushed his chair way back and his feet lifted. He did

not settle into a story like he normally would. Instead, the words slipped from him like crumbs tumbling, an afterthought not truly meant for elaboration. “I liked having a place to go when I was a teenager. It was nice sitting in a café, having someone to spend Christmas with” (Lived Memory, my early 30s).³ My Dad. That deep resonance of “how had I never thought to ask where he had spent his holidays?” I had assumed, as I sat there wrapped so perfectly, so absolute in the warmth of Mom’s and Dad’s love, Dad’s stories of family and love and home. What were his stories of experience? From where had his ability and capacity to love come?

I remember that night leaving the door to the loft above the living room open, Jessy Lee and I having headed up early to read. Dad staying up.... The weight of those words lingering. He was watching a television production of the play *Fiddler on the Roof*. I remember hearing Mom walk in. “Do you remember we took the girls to this?” “Twice.” I heard her settle into her big chair beside him. Books suspended, Jessy Lee and I hung on every squeak of chair, every note that wafted up to wrap around us. And then he sang, “Do you love me?” I remember reaching across the gap between our beds and clasping Jessy Lee’s hand.

We grew up knowing the beautiful engulfing stories of love that Mom and Dad shared. Sometimes, through this thesis journey, through the retelling and reliving of my experiences, I have been critical of Mom, lesser so of Dad.

After a hemorrhagic stroke paralyzed Dad, forcing my parents to live apart, and throwing our family into grief, still all I saw in Dad was kindness. He never asked why.

³ For me, the term “lived memory” means a field text which is a remembrance of a past event, conversation or place.

All I saw in Mom was love. What I saw was a story of love between my parents that fiction writers and movie makers might strive to capture. What I loved most in watching them was that my daughter attended to these stories also; she grew rooted in the stories of what the stories of the love experience ought to be. And these stories of experience created a profoundly mindful life-making space. It is a powerful gift to know there is love in this world.

Together, Mom and Dad sought a family, sought a home, and sought an education. Mom and Dad love each other and me. These are the stories, the truth-stories, and the mantras that I lived in and lived out, that swirled around home and storied me as I grew.

When Dad felt I was pushing a boundary, he would make certain that we would go for a walk, that I would listen to the wind in the trees or that I would sit around the campfire and look at the northern lights. Eventually, I would share. These were the teachings Dad shared, to listen long and to attend beautifully.

Finding Home with Graduate Studies

I read Lessard's (2010) work in the spring of 2012. I was taking my first graduate class; the instructor who recommended graduate studies had suggested the thesis route. I had hesitations. At that time, the classroom where I taught was filled with ongoing passion, curiosity, and inquiry-based learning. A project route would have felt simple. And too, I felt comfortable in the academic university process of study-produce-product that course work seemed to offer. I clung to the joy that inquiry based learning offered students and myself as we explored new ideas together, new ways of being and ways of storying alongside each other. The project route felt comfortable. I reflected deeply on

my teaching journey of experience; I felt deeply the experience of living alongside instructors in co-created learning spaces.

I remember an instructor reading aloud from the novel, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part Time Indian*. I remember her asking my undergraduate peers to pull our tables and chairs close together, into a circle, and her reading. I remember how she returned to the story, and how many of my peers pushed back against the moments in the midst of that experience. I remember she read, and kept on reading to us, as adults. I felt honoured, mindful that something more important than reading was happening in those moments. She opened the book and read through all the messiness and the bumping up spaces of the themes present within the text: racism, prejudice, bullying, addiction, violence, neglect, poverty, death. She read through her students putting their heads down, of her students questioning the value of reading aloud to adults, of her students not attending. *I wondered: What is her purpose? What am I to gain? Why does this space, those filled with questions and wonderings, feel safe, like the spaces I came to know alongside Dad? What am I meant to hear?*

Then I began to trust. And then I began to listen. *In those moments I felt a shift and the Aha! Oh, the tangible beauty that some things gift us as educators when we attend to the bumping up places inside and outside of educational landscapes; I heard the whispering of beautiful, gentle educational pedagogy. I felt the deliberateness of the living and living out of messy stories of experience come alive through instruction.* The goals of her instruction were fuzzy in the messy and puzzling spaces. I watched classmates walk out to return to the cafeteria, return to lesson planning and unit planning.

She read on, rereading some lines twice, “Nervous means you want to play. Scared means you don’t want to play” (Alexie, 2007, p. 181).

I am reminded that sometimes when our stories of experience are too messy, when the stories of experience are too tensioned, it is the stories of experience of others that we cling to or tell or hold as a way to make sense as we navigate the bumping up places inside and outside of educational landscapes. I am reminded that often in the stories of courage of Dad or in a lyric of a song, I found the ability to navigate the often tenuous experiences of my youth, until I was able to come to tell my own stories of pain. I often wonder if these empowered quotes offer a jumping off place, like script stories of experience or tattoos or words on a wall, stories by which we begin to risk.

The sense of a sacred space the instructor had created allowed me the safety to risk puzzling with tensioned stories of experience alongside her and allowed me the safety to risk recreating those same spaces with students. I also began to retell the stories of experience that helped create my identity stories about my personal practical knowledge. Personal practical knowledge is an educator’s “narrative understanding of schools and teacher practices” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 37) and is knowledge that “is in the teacher’s past experience, in the teacher’s present mind and body, and in the [the teacher’s] future plans and actions” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999, p. 1).

I always found a fit and a bit of comfort in bumping up spaces. I found myself pushing back against stories of linear novel studies and units plans. These became my identity stories of experience, my teaching stories to live by. I needed not only a space in the graduate program and the freedom to study differently, but trust in that space. I needed to trust that those supporting me would understand that I attend to the

sacredness of rock and wind, and that for me, the socially accepted academic parameters of structure might prove difficult.

I am thinking deeply about how I came to live in the midst this thesis journey. I am thinking deeply how I came to narrative inquiry, both a phenomena and a methodology. As I attended to the swirl of my stories of experience in the midst of this inquiry, emerging stories in the midst, as these stories lived alongside co-participants' stories of experience, our understandings deepened.

Narrative inquiry is a way of understanding. It is collaboration between researchers and participants over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interactions with milieu. An inquirer enters this matrix in the midst and progresses in the same spirit, concluding the inquiry still in the midst of living, and telling, and reliving, and retelling the stories of experience that made up people's lives both individual and social. (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 20)

As narrative inquirers think relationally, we do so returning to how experience is grounded in three commonplaces: temporality, place, and sociality/relationality.

“Narrative inquiry is relational in all ways that our Dewey-inspired view of experience makes visible; that is, it is relational across time, places, and relationships” (Clandinin, p. 19, 2013). Dewey's (2009) understanding of experience is that life is experience and experience is education; all education is connected, thus experience is connected relationally and is also situated in time and in context. Narrative inquirers, including myself and the young people I share stories of experience alongside, take Dewey's understanding further and also connect experiences with place. As my stories and the

stories of those I live alongside become visible, the interplay and bumping between the three commonplaces become more visible.

Thinking with stories of experience within narrative inquiry is to think metaphorically. Stories of experience are situated on shifting and inter-looping plotlines that live and live out on three dimensions: the temporal, the personal-social, and in place. Within narrative inquiry these three dimensions are understood as the three commonplaces. The temporal dimension exists in the future, past, and present, looks inwards and outwards, looping back and forward again. The personal-social dimension opens spaces to look inward, and seeks interconnections among people and ideas. The place dimension suggests that our stories of experience are woven on diverse and ever changing landscapes, over time (Clandinin et al., 2006, pp. 22-23).

I am thinking deeply about the narrative underpinnings within this inquiry. I am thinking deeply of the experience of how I came to open a space of trust with students, with co-participants. I am thinking deeply of the recurring questions of ‘so what’ and ‘who cares’ within the context of academic research, so often verbalized about the inquiry method. Why this work? Why now?

Students matter and their stories of experience matter.

However, inside educational landscapes, even those that are well-meaning, well-purposed, and well-crafted to lead by student voice, student stories and teacher stories most often do not matter. Clandinin et al. (2006) show how teachers “could live and tell... [conflicting] stories only at their peril” (p. 8). These conflicting stories are stories that bump up with the dominant stories of school and “are short-lived as teachers are unable to sustain them in the face of the dominate stories of school” (p.8). These stories

these “competing stories” lived as stories told in “positive tension with the plotlines” (p.8) of the stories of school. Clandinin et al. (2006) share a common story of school (Kumashiro, 2004), a story of a young student being late, getting a late slip, and the student dropping the slip on her teacher’s desk as the student arrives to class. The wholeness of the stories of the experience of the late, of the recurring lates, disappears in the mound of papers on the teacher’s desk, the student’s and the teacher’s silence and the need for the day to carry on with ease.

When I think deeply about the questions of why this work and why I now find myself returning first to my narrative underpinnings, I find myself thinking deeply about how I think narratively and how thinking narratively helps me to answer the questions of personal and social, and practical justification for my narrative inquiry research journey. I think deeply about the need for shifting the knowledge of student/teacher environments, curriculum, pedagogy, ethical relationships and boundaries with students, student teacher relationships, storying and mindfulness, potentiality, teacher identity, stories to live by and how this shapes our pedagogy and classroom spaces.

As I return to thinking about how I think narratively, I return to the three dimensional narrative space, the three commonplaces, of narrative inquiry. “Attending to experiences through attending to all three commonplaces simultaneously, is, in part, what distinguishes narrative inquiry from other methodologies” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 39). Place, temporality and sociality, specifically, and these stories lived out in my school landscapes provided a strong personal justification for this thesis journey. I began this thesis journey with great hope. I wanted to better understand the deep and almost sacred

sense of the storying space that lived inside me, that I understood was rooted to Dad and to those moments sharing stories alongside him at the lake.

As I entered into the midst of this thesis journey, I came to understand how my professional practical knowledge landscape had been profoundly impacted by silenced stories told of me and for me, and how I felt students were continuing to be silenced inside and outside educational landscapes. My social justification began with hope for a sense of difference-making for students, teachers, and educational policy makers too. My practical justification emerged with a sense of hope that educators would attend narratively to students' and teachers' stories of experience.

A landscaped metaphor...allows us to talk about space, place and time.

Furthermore, it has a sense of expansiveness and the possibility of being filled with diverse people, things and events in different relationships. Understanding professional knowledge as comprising a landscape calls for a notion of professional knowledge as composed of a wide variety of people, places, and things. Because we see the professional knowledge landscape as composed of relationships among people, places and things, we see it both as an intellectual and moral landscape. (Clandinin and Connelly (1995) as quoted in Clandinin et al., 2006, p. 6)

A Story of Sociality

I love study. I did not, however, always love study in school settings. I am thinking about tiny Mrs. Lyndsey, my second grade teacher, with her long thick red hair spilling loose down her back. I felt like she shifted my world, helping me to retell the stories of school and of myself in so many ways different from the Catholic school pain

experience I had known prior to the sanctuary of Mrs. Lyndsey's room. Mrs. Lyndsey let other students and me gather in her room after school and in the mornings to visit. In these moments it was like time stopped. Here, often, recesses lasted hours. She took us outdoors to learn. The magic of summer sacredness entered into our school spaces. A continuum had been shifted in my way of understanding how time and structure ought to flow. One spring sunshine afternoon we run along the river. I remember learning the names of animals swimming in the waters and returning to our classroom home to make dandelion salad, bitter and very much belonging to each of us, retelling stories of weeds.

A Story of Temporality

Years later, I came to know Mackado, an undergrad instructor with whom I travelled back in time and found the comfort of my grade four days and of those walks with Dad I had as a child. These experiences are moments when we become "world travellers" (Lugones, 1987, 14), a way for us to move forward and inward and back and forward, again in and out of memory. Here, in Mackado's classroom, grouped around tables, I never had to succeed or fail in isolation, much like the way I learned alongside Mrs. Lyndsey, and always alongside Dad. I remember that as we arrived to class, Mackado would be moving around the room, humming, and I heard then too, Dad, as I had when I was 16, downstairs in the mornings when we lived at the lake, making hard boiled eggs. In Mackado's classroom, we would discover a question on the table, on the board, and off we would go, discovering away for two and half hours. Mackado was quiet and safe, like Mrs. Lyndsey, like Dad. I returned often to chat with Mackado during my undergraduate journey, to borrow books, to listen, daring to try the ideas he suggested, the ones I would dream up and run past him, much in the same way I would run ideas

past Mom and Dad, and still do. I used his inquiry methods in other subject areas too. Because I had felt safe to succeed, to fail, and to wonder in his space, I felt keen to trust these instructional practices elsewhere. Attending works like the ones referenced here, I returned to Mackado's pedagogy over and over. I would often quip, "I'm Mackadoing it." I am thinking deeply how the students I learn alongside today often remark, "I just pulled a Saas" or "That's so Saas," the comments linking us to each other, relationally yes, and connecting us to place, reverberating temporality. Months, years pass and we feel the stories of experience of having 'travelled worlds' together (Lugones, 1987).

A Story of Place

As I was completing my undergraduate work, I became friends with one of my instructors. To some, our friendship was messy, a tensioned story, uncommon in the teacher education program. I found beautiful comfort in the conversations and passion for study that the instructor and I had in common. In these academic dialogues, I had never, until those moments, felt such personal and intellectual resonance and belonging. I am thinking deeply that I did not even know these ways of thinking lived inside me. I had returned to post-secondary at nearly 30 years of age. He was studying for his doctoral comprehensive examinations. As he read texts he would lend them to me. I slurped them up as fast as he could finish making notes. Though I appreciated the conversations with my friend, I found, for the first time, a rootedness in study, in learning, and in the place of schooling in these texts. It was during these months that I first learned about the complexity of fractals (Varela et al., 1992), and found familiar resonance later reading the work of Davis et al. (2000). I felt a sort of deep re-learning or learning differently about the idea of interconnectedness that I had come to learn to appreciate through Dad's

teachings; I felt my experiential learning - my personal practical knowledge - come alive in academic stories that seemed then, to thrill me to my toes.

A Story in Discovery

Later, nearing the end of my undergraduate work, I read *Curriculum Intertext*, a gentle autobiographical text exploring narrative experiences in curriculum making. Here, Leggo (2003) reflected meaningfully on his experiences. The text included essays by some of my instructors who had also crafted haunting sharings while I had been a student in their learning spaces. *Curriculum Intertext* reverberated profoundly as one in which I could envision myself as one day having a voice. I felt independence as a learner for the first time; I saw learning profoundly differently from my friend's perspective. I understood myself as intrinsically part of the narrative; my stories were restorying within the context of the stories of experience of those around me, of the stories that came before me and the stories that were to follow. My understanding of Dad's teachings was an ever deepening ontological understanding of narrative experience. I understood that we "lead storied lives" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 13). There were narratives of experience at every turn. I felt it. I understood it. I sought no part in being a voyeur. I wanted to participate. I wanted to attend to the stories of experience around me. I felt, perhaps for the first time, that there was a space for me to learn inside school spaces. For the first time, I felt a sense of belonging to school.

During my undergraduate program, I took several classes, some mandatory and some as an elective, with an instructor with whom I did not connect. I was fond of her instructional practices, finding myself, one day, being beautifully lost in the experience of her teaching how to teach and then feeling myself pull myself out of the doing to make

mental note that I needed to remember what and how I was experiencing so that I could do the same at some future date with students. The experience of that experience of pulling-away-from-doing is what I choose to name “absolute wonderment.” I continue to think deeply about how my language learning courses are as much modeled after what she taught me as they are in contrast with how she pushed back against connecting with me, and I with her. Because, during those undergraduate years, I had such a growing sense of relational belonging in most areas of my academic world, I knew I needed to fill this need in her subject area. When I signed my first teaching contract, I found a teaching-subject area mentor who used similar instructional methods to hers; however, in our shared mentorships space, we shared tea, shared stories of her many years of teaching experiences, of my brief teaching experiences, of Jessy Lee, of her children and grandchildren. I feel deeply that navigating relational space, even the most difficult, is the foundation of all narrative inquiry. I think deeply about how I have moved from school to school these past years, sometimes by choice, sometimes because of changes within my school division, and though I miss the schools, I grieve mostly about the broken connections, connections that come to live as part of how I make meaning of my connection to school. In this way, the social-personal commonplace of narrative inquiry is the most necessary, making narrative inquiry entirely relational.

I am wondering about how temporality, place and sociality shift students’ and teachers’ stories of belonging inside and outside of school spaces. I am wondering about the interplay between the school milieu and students’ and teachers’ ability to tell, live, retell and relive their stories of experience. I am beginning to wonder about the bumping up places and messy and tensioned stories that are often not shared, silenced or hidden

within the educational milieu. I am wondering about the possibility of the sense of identity-making that might be possible for students and teachers as they share stories of experience together within that milieu. “[F]rom the narrative point of view, identities have histories” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999, p. 95). Identities are complex narrative constructions that are impacted situationally, and can be fixed or changed. More so, I am thinking deeply about how identity-making implies the ability for our identity narratives to shift and to become fluid over time, place and connection. Often narrative identities can be “sustained” (p. 96). Our stories to live by can be stories told of us and the stories we tell of ourselves. Stories to live by may live and live out differently in each of our landscapes: the stories I tell of myself as teacher, the stories I tell as a mom, the stories I tell at a new school, the stories told for me as I begin a new class, these stories to live by may overlap, weave or live entirely separate from one another. Thinking about identity-making, the ability to compose, sustain and change our stories to live by, is complex and a deeply thoughtful responsibility. I enter here mindfully aware of how stories of experience have been composed and continue to live, and to live out their histories, influencing the ways in which I tell stories of myself and of others. I enter here mindfully aware that others will tell stories of me and of those I live alongside which will shift my stories and their stories to live by, sometimes in ways I understand, and often in ways I can never understand. Identity-making, is one of the most profound understandings Dad shared with me, the ability to understand that I can chose, in part, the stories I tell of myself, finding a place inside of myself across multiple landscapes.

I am wondering about educational landscapes that do not attend to students’ and teachers’ stories of experience. I am wondering whether living relationally inside and

outside educational landscapes is life-making. I am wondering deeply about the possibility for students and teachers who live in the midst of tensioned stories to find a sense of wholeness in their stories, in their sharing, a mindfulness that is sacred.

Our research puzzles were shaped and reshaped by our growing understandings that the curriculum being made in schools is a curriculum of lives, that is, in schools, teachers', children's administrators' and families' lives are being storied and restoried. What happens in schools is an identity-shaping process; lives are written and rewritten, storied and restoried. The identities, the stories to live by of children, teachers, administrators, and families are all being expressed, and in those expressions, being open to being restoried, to being silenced, to being erased, to being shifted in educative and mis-educative ways. Attending to the complex, unfolding shifting interplay among children's stories to live by, teacher's stories to live by, subject matter, and milieu become another way for us to understand our research puzzle as a puzzle in how curriculum making can be understood.

(Clandinin et al., 2006, pp. 15-16)

Thinking with Dad's Teachings

As I read Lessard's (2010) work during the spring that I began my graduate studies, not only did I fall in love with narrative inquiry, but his work felt like a return home; I was deeply reminded of the most influential teacher in my life. I was reminded of Dad. Lessard (2010) writes of an Elder and the oral stories the Elder shares with him. The Elder "used the conversation to teach, approaching a difficult subject through the opener of story" (p. 21). To me, Lessard was not only referring to the teachings in his own life; I heard the teachings of Dad. When I first read Lessard's work (2010), I smiled. I felt like

Lessard too had been influenced by Dad. I remember Dad's ways of being with me, through story. Sometimes, moments, days, years later, found deep within the sacred space of one of Dad's stories, heard for the twelfth time, I would discover a teaching. Dad also shared wisdom by listening. I found a teaching often embedded within the words that I would repeat, words that I shared as stories of experience, walking alongside Jessy Lee or a student. Teachings are a way I make meaning of stories of experience, a way I make meaning of who I am and who I am becoming within the context of living and telling, retelling and reliving stories of experience. Teachings are life-making spaces, and they begin in the midst of story.

Telling Stories of Attending

During my pre-internship, I was drawn to students' stories of experience. I found a rootedness in weaving together my teaching stories. These were all the stories of experience I told of who I was and who I was becoming. Teacher stories are also narratively referred to as personal practical knowledge (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995). As I began my first pre-internship, a new-new educator, the concept of personal practical knowledge was unknown to me. I was filled with a sense that I deeply understood my stories of experience. The stories of experience of my life served like a kind of guide-book to understanding other's stories of experience. At that time, Dad's teachings had not yet come to resonate with me. I was also rooted in my understandings of the stories of teaching. I felt the school landscapes were places I understood because I had grown up surrounded by stories of school and stories of teaching and stories of kids.

As I entering into my pre-service placement, my professional knowledge landscape, (Clandinin & Connolly, 1995), was in part, composed of experiences and

beliefs about school and schooling that I had learned from my parents. And though I did not understand or know of the term at the time, as my stories of experience inside and outside of educational landscapes grew, so did my understanding of my professional landscape as being “narratively constructed with historical, moral, emotional and aesthetic dimensions” (Clandinin et al., 2006, p. 6).

There was a comfort in my fictionalizing Mom’s and Dad’s stories of experience and transferring their understandings to my practice. These were the stories and beliefs of school landscapes that I carried forward as I began my pre-service placement. I thought deeply about the stories I lived by and told as I entered that pre-internship experience: high school stories of experience, stories of not fitting in, stories of being bullied, stories of being labeled, stories of being thought a “partier,” stories of being thought stupid, stories of expectations, stories of being misunderstood, of being labelled as gifted, sullen, loved, silent, loud, quiet, or a reader or writer.

Through the experience of having my stories of experience attended to I came to trust in the space of living in a relational way with people. I felt safe to cross tensioned boundaries though the opener of story. Through the opener of stories I am safe in the experience of coming to trust. Though I would not openly share why I felt connected to these stories at that time, these stories of commonality offered me an entrance into the midst, and offered emotional navigation between the worlds of my professional knowledge landscape and personal practical knowledge where, in the beginning, I wondered if others might think me a bit too small for my shoes (Clandinin et al., 2006).

Although I entered relational spaces seeking to hear students’ stories of experience, *I did not initially enter with a willingness to attend to these stories. I was also*

absolutely unaware I needed to begin by attending to my own. Though attending had been modeled by Dad, I did not initially understand the need to live Dad's teachings as I moved forward in living out my own teaching stories. I am thinking deeply about my narrow view, and the profound resonance of common comments from many instructors at post-secondary, "Oh, it's easy when you're here to create dynamic lessons and not fall back into using outdated material, but many do, many simply do."

In the beginning, or the stories before this beginning, I entered seeking stories. I am reminded to ask myself, as woman, mom, daughter, friend, learner, inquirer, this beautiful question, "What *does* narrative inquiry help us to learn about our phenomenon that other theories or methods do not?" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 123). I had a narrow understanding of attending. I had a narrow understanding of listening, of conversational spaces, and most certainly, of Dad's beautiful lived way of storying. I am encouraged as an educator and narrative inquirer to learn that Clandinin (2013) returns to her question over and over, reminding me that the answer remains difficult.

Brandon's Story

I had met Brandon during fall pre-internship, the third year of my teacher-education program. I was with Brandon for two weeks. In the beginning, I was Brandon's educator one period a day; by the end of my two-week placement, I taught Brandon three classes a day. Brandon was in grade ten. I felt drawn to Brandon because like me, he had spoken of feeling disconnected with school, of feeling left out.

On the last day of my placement, the students and I said farewell. I had fallen in love with kids, with their stories of experience and with connecting, and I told them so. I

told them that I loved them and that I would never lie to them. Brandon looked at me and said, “Well you’re doing it right now” (Lived memory, fall pre-service field placement).

Brandon’s words made me think deeply of how I have come to approach loving kids, and how I have heard teachers speak of loving students. Almost without fail, not an educational writing group, staff meeting, professional development event, or staff meeting passes when teachers gather that there is not mention in some way that teachers are in the field because we are caretakers, because we love kids, because we want to help, or because we want to serve. However, when I think about the way I have loved and lived alongside youth, these ‘loving- kids’ mantras sound like a grand narrative, an “unquestioned way of looking at things” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 21). The sentiment reminds me of words so easily uttered in front of colleagues and youth, like a podium statement, trite and meaningless, entirely different.

I listened to Brandon with a lens focused on saving him. I assumed his problems, his conflicts, and sought ways in which I, as teacher could help. And darn-it, I would care about him, because we did get along so well. I would become one of his life stakeholders and help him. Brandon neither needed my help nor sought it. He was not in conflict, but helped me to understand my own conflict, specifically, my professional fog of the stories of saving. He attended, through all my arrogance, he attended to my stories of experience. He shared stories of hunting, and treaty-rights and family, and he stood tall beside me while I spewed jargon until my words fell silent and the silence began to resonate.

I wonder if Brandon understood my words in the same way that he lived his stories of experience, separate from others telling stories of him. I wonder how many people tell stories of others because they seek an easy story, such as I had inadvertently

done with Brandon. From my own stories of experience inside and outside of educational landscapes, I know that educators do not often attend to students' stories of experience. At some point we leave. At some point we leave by choice, not attending at all. At times we leave by allowing the educational systems to privilege our ways of knowing how to live alongside youth, and how to best attend to our own personal practical stories of experience. Our systems, policies, practices and silences pride themselves in declaring that educational landscapes will protect kids, that educational leaders know what is best for kids. I think often how I thought I had entered into the relational space of trust in an attending way alongside Brandon. Yet I had entered with an "arrogant perception" (Lugones, 1987) embedded in my teachings. My epistemological certainty that I could love, though it was superficial, and could, in such a short time, attend to the wholeness of a life, saddens me now. I think deeply about how I had silenced a student's stories of experience. I wonder now if the tension I felt in that moment was much because I had been merely thinking about Brandon's stories of experience instead of thinking narratively with his stories of experience. I wonder too at how little I actually know about Brandon or ever did come to know of him. I have come to believe that it was Brandon who change my understanding of myself as an educator. He changed my stories.

Brandon spoke to me beyond my "arrogant perception" (Lugones, 1987) and pushed me to question my behaviour; he made me question how I came to storying. Brandon's comment resonated, reverberating deeply within me. I had not been lying and, as much as I was able at that time, I did love him. I had told Brandon I would never leave and when I said it, I meant that I would always remember him, that I would love him forever and that he was important. What he heard was that I was leaving. What he heard

were my actions. We had not had enough time together to understand one another's lived stories of experience, different from told stories. "[L]iving a story of a student in school was just one thread in the stories [students like Brandon] lived by" (Clandinin et al., 2006, p. 155).

Thinking about Attending to Brandon's Story

When I think with my understanding of my relationship with students now alongside my understanding of love, Brandon remains and those stories of experience in the midst remain. I have come to try to better attend to his stories of experience; I have made an effort to think deeply about what I have learned from living alongside him those brief moments.

I wonder about remembering and loving students. I know there are times, Fridays and Saturdays, when I hike. I take to the back country, thickets, abandoned homesteads, and back roads. These disappearances, brief and deliberate though they may be, happen because of a need to be away from people and to nurture other needs. Though there are times when needs intertwine, the silence of hillside subduing the spinning that seems to overtake mind and heart that only wind, sun, and exhaustion cure. There are times I ache to be nameless, to live in a world where I can, even if it is in my imagination, pull the threads of my stories from alongside those moments of calm, like absolute certainty woven only with love. Like those afternoons woven with love with Dad. So I hike. Love is spirit hard and maybe sometimes I do leave, in a way, to return to this storying sacred space within. Storying is hard. I admit I do try to forget the swirl of bumping up places, and messiness, and tension that spins with the connected student and teacher stories of experience.

I wonder what would happen if more students understood, as deeply as I have come to know, that our sacred storying spaces are deep inside, that there is perhaps a sense of greater peace if we were to continue to attend to these spaces. Sometimes I wonder if I am the only one who feels the connection to the world deepens when someone takes the time to attend to my stories of experience. When I think about my capacity to live, yet my inability to attend relationally to Brandon's stories, I think about different ways of "knowing" (Davis et al., 2000; Ellsworth, 2005). Was it wrong for me to listen to Brandon in the way that I did? Did the listening bring me here? Was Brandon attending to my stories? Was Brandon mindful of sacred spaces about which I would later be able to retell and to relive inside and outside school spaces? Was Brandon's way of knowing far more attentive than mine? "The child is the starting-point" (Dewey, 2001, p. 107). I am imagining an educational landscape with multitudinous ways of knowing; I am imagining honouring curriculum-making potential.

Wondering about Former Students' Stories

Remembering the wisps of experiences with Brandon helps me to pause and to think deeply about the two co-participants who lived alongside me sharing stories of experience during this narrative inquiry, Isabel then in grade 10, and Anne-Marie then in grade 9, both students at 11th Street Alternate School where I taught, and Duane, a former student whose stories of experience wove throughout Isabel's, Anne-Marie's and my thesis journey as our stories of experience were lived, told, relived.

I am thinking deeply about the stories of experience of Duane, a former student from my first year as an educator, whose stories of experience continue to impact my life and my teaching. I have situated his stories of experience alongside our stories because

our stories do not live in isolation. Isabel and Anne-Marie came to know my beginning-teacher stories, my family stories, and my school stories, as we told, lived, retold and relived our stories of experience.

I am thinking with how I came to attend narratively to Duane's stories of experience and how he in turn came to attend to mine. I think about the days and months when I first came to know him. I learned stories about Duane long before I had spoken to him. He was storied by the educators in the building with telling comments that were tossed about almost the first moment as I entered the staffroom, "you should", "just wait", "that kind of kid, you know", and long eye rolls. And I pushed back silently; I did not know. Years later, I asked Mom why she felt I was so connected with Duane and she reflected that she felt we shared a same sort of understanding of our principles. And perhaps that was one of our truths. One of many storying bonds that knitted Duane and me together these years was our ways of seeing.

I remember how Duane was storied by his teachers, and what I had come to learn by his community as well, as a drinker and a youth with behaviour issues. He was a young adult with so many stories of experience that he ached not only to share, but to have someone attend to. There became a sort of ritual between Duane and several other students during my months at the school. We would stay after school and share stories, pulling desks into a haphazard circle, or writing collaborative verse on the board, sometimes writing reflective sharings in journals. Often, Duane, who had taken to sitting in the teacher desk, crafted poems on loose leaf, staying on the periphery of the circle, swivelling away, while the rest of us, four, maybe six of us, chattered, read, shared on.

Duane would tuck his journals away in the side drawer before the group of them left, or his family of band members would wander down the hall, into the gymnasium and up to the stage to practice, “Saas, you stoppin’ in to listen for a while before you head out?” and I would. Sitting on the floor at the far end, listening to them bang out their stories of love and freedom and despair and hope.

What stayed with me was the way that Duane accepted my stories of experience as truths, and I guess, maybe this is what pulled him to me. Maybe it was that he did not have a family who would tell him what they thought, bluntly, when asked, and I did. And he was mostly grateful for my candour. While he finished high school we remained as close as most teachers and treasured students might be. We talked, but not often, no more I did not want to talk with him: he was brazen, and loud, and vulgar and, admittedly, high. I told him to call me when he was clean, when he was sober. Several months passed with absolute silence and then he called.

“Is it all true?” he asked. He was referring to the stories of experience of my past. “Yes.” And we sat in silence for a long while. I was sitting in my parked car in the graveled parking space behind my house. He was parked on the side of a gravel road. We stayed silent like that for a long time. “There’s more that you didn’t tell us, isn’t there?”

We sat for a long time. And that became our way. He would call and check-in and share with me about school and the sunsets, and his family. I listened and I have never told him *the more* to those stories of experience that he wondered about. Some stories, though they are never spoken, and kept locked as silent, live loud and understood by those who attend to them.

Stories of experience do not live in isolation.

During the many months that I came to know Isabel and Anne-Marie and their stories of experience I understood that they were living alongside my stories of experience as well. They understood the intricacies and intimacies of my stories of experience of people who sit with you for long moments, who walk beside you. In the swell of this narrative inquiry, Isabel and Anne-Marie came to understand how deeply connected I can become to former students, and so did I. As I lived alongside Isabel and Anne-Marie, I shared stories of changes that were happening with my family, Dad having had the stroke. I also shared stories of Duane, a former student, who checked in every week, who continued to attend to my stories of experience, specifically my grief stories of experience as it was unfolding in the midst of this inquiry.

I am thinking about Isabel and Anne-Marie who seemed to gather round the stories of experience of former students like Duane who were still in my life, as though these stories of experience granted us permission to share our stories of grief, our stories of joy, our stories of transition, and our messy stories. Sitting around a table Isabel, Anne-Marie and I shared, and not always alone, nor were we three always together. “One time....” *We shared stories of experience that, somewhere along the way, jumped to become our inquiry puzzlings.*

I am thinking of Isabel who told her own stories of herself. I am thinking about Anne-Marie who shared her stories in silent ways. I am thinking about how important it has been that I had learned to attend to these narratives of experience.

Story of Grounding Narrative and Narrative Inquiry

Living in the midst of stories of experience, Dad and I, Jessy Lee and I, former students and I, and now co-participants and I attended to “threads of connection [that]

opened spaces where the lives of the participants and our lives as researchers shaped the questions, wonderings, and emerging inquiry threads that moved our narrative inquiry forward” (Clandinin et al., 2006, p. 25). Living relationally implies that the researcher *and* co-researchers “are not seeking narrative connections as a way to live or to tell a smooth, happily ever after inquiry” (p. 25) but a space of trust and connectedness.

I remember sitting around the circle of a narrative inquiry writing group. I remember a fellow inquirer nudging me to think deeply about why entering into these conversations in the midst was import. I remember his gaze holding mine and in kindness him saying, “You had better be prepared to answer” (Lived memory, 2013). I think about the words and the stories of experience that came to me driving home along the dark highway that night, and as I pulled over and recorded my thoughts into my phone, and later as I dreamed weavings of interim field notes⁴, letting the memoires travel and return to me as I hiked the hills near my home. I feel that what he wanted was not so much for me to explain a purpose to readers but to have a deep living sense of it so that I could grasp it, almost tangibly, when the journey became tensioned and long, a hope that I might come to live mindfully to the experience of the narrative experience (Clandinin, 2013, pp. 206-207; Greene, 1995).

⁴ For this narrative inquiry, field texts are items such as poems, photographs, classroom assignments, journals, audio recordings. Some texts were specific for this research and are noted as such in the thesis. Field notes are reflections, wonderings and or perhaps puzzlings on field texts, conversations and or perhaps the journey itself. Interim research texts reflect compositions co-composed with all research participants in conversation with field text and/or field notes while thinking deeply about the eventuality of transitioning these toward a final research text (Clandinin, 2013). Within this final research text there are several larger interim research texts. As we attended to the complexities and silenced stories of experience, these interim research texts, both deeply grounded and shifted my narrative inquiry. The final research text, *Coyote Stories*, is crafted to share the unfolding messy and beautiful complexities of teacher and students attending narratively to our storying lives.

Answers are tricky business in narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Clandinin et al., 2006; Clandinin, 2013). Entering into the midst of narratives of experience is important. As a narrative inquirer I must find a way to think with stories of experience. So why think with these stories and why think with them now?

When I was in my mid-twenties, I stood in a friend's porch while my three-year-old daughter and her three-year-old son scampered past us on their way downstairs. Our husbands were away that day, working. She was several months pregnant with her second child. Standing in the front porch I already felt the uncomfortableness of my marriage experience. Before that moment standing in that porch, with the smell of wet shoes and grease from the kitchen and dampness from old walls and wet gravel road dust, I could not give name to the experience.

As our children hopped by us, her son said to Jessy Lee, "Come, I'll show you my Dad's special toys" (Lived memory, almost two decades ago). I met his mother's eyes; she smiled, almost placidly. I knew well of the drug paraphernalia in her basement. I knew in that moment that I could not continue to allow the effects of drugs to be another part of my daughter's home stories of experience.

That porch moment was a moment in the midst of storying my life, of living, telling, reliving and retelling my stories to live by all in the swirl of a moment. I understood little of the profound and haunting and beautiful effects of that moment in the moment. And yet, I understood them all. This is a messy story, but the moment remains, even as I share it now, it has become a life-making story.

Clandinin & Connolly (2000) caution that "the place of theory in narrative inquiry differs from the place of theory in formalistic inquiries....it is more productive to begin

with explorations of the phenomena of experiences rather than in comparative analysis of various theoretical methodological frames” (p. 128). As a narrative inquirer, as I enter into conversational spaces in the midst, it is those stories of uncertainty that draw me and push me, that are the bumping up places of potentiality (Ellsworth, 2005, p. 132), where meaning and life-making might happen. “Narrative inquiry begins and ends with a respect for ordinary lived experience” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 18).

Narrative inquiry, both methodology and phenomena, is entirely relational. Thus, this work is *relational narrative inquiry*. In the space of the inquiry, inquirers attend to stories of experience. I begin through story.

[H]uman beings have lived out and told stories about that living for as long as we could talk. And then we have talked about the stories we tell for almost as long. These lived and told stories and the talk about these stories are one of the ways that we fill our world with meaning and enlist one another’s assistance in building lives and communities. What feels new is the emergence of narrative methodologies in the field of social science research.” (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 35)

I have been living and telling and reliving and retelling stories all my life. I learned this from Dad. I learned this from students. I learned this from teachers, from family, from my basketball team. I learned this from the prairie grasses and trees. I learned this from the feel of wind on my face. I learned this by listening to my own stories to live by.

When I began to think deeply about the students I lived alongside, when I began to listen to their stories of experience, to live with them in relational spaces, I began to

sense that I needed to do more than hear their stories; I needed to attend mindfully to their stories of experience.

As I began the thesis journey and lived alongside students as a narrative inquirer, I became aware of a shift in the way I attended narratively to students' stories of experience. This shift came to resonate as a mindfulness. Mindfulness is an action of deliberateness and awareness (Green, 1995). Though I believe I had often attended narratively to students' stories of experience, I felt I was not often mindful of the process: the deliberateness, awareness, authenticity and consistency in which I attended to students. Though attending to stories of experience is fluid and ongoing and often happens in the spur of the moment, I became keenly aware of the need to attend narratively to stories, no matter whether they were critical stories of experience that demanded the attention of many educators or whether they were silly one-liner stories of experience. Stories of experience live as vibrant threads, thick and thin, woven in the midst. I became keenly aware of the need to "sta[y] awake to possible moments and places of tension" (Clandinin et al., 2006, p. 32). I began to understand that to attend narratively and mindfully opened spaces for deeper conversations and deeper trust. I wondered at the long-term shift in my practice as I came to understand that attending both mindfully and narratively was in fact a pedagogical practice. To attend narratively and mindfully is "to *attend* actively" (Green, 1995, p. 148, emphasis in the original) though through the action there will "never be endpoints" (p. 149).

I wondered deeply about the students' stories to live by and about how stories were told for and of them. I thought of Brandon for whom, with an arrogant "perception" (Lugones, 1987), I told stories of experience. Then, my epistemological understandings

of narrative were more attuned to narrative analysis or narrative research, a distant and beginning cousin to the continuity and ever changing uncertainty and fluidity of narrative inquiry.

I closed the door and pulled the kids together. A Christmas Concert. We had to spend the final month of December using our ELA time preparing for a Christmas concert. And we couldn't even call it a Winter Concert. I was offended at the narrowing language, I am not Christian, The school is a public school, and I shared this with the kids. I remember they sat around me, one always in the swivel teacher chair. Some perched on the counter beside me. Someone made popcorn. So what would we do? We had to come up with something. The day before at the staff meeting, it had been decided the entire school would use period three to prepare for the concert. We had no choice.

Then I shared a story: I told the students about a winter at the lake, when Jessy Lee was young, with mom and dad and my sister. One of the final holidays before we decided not to spend long periods at the lake. I told the students about how we had spent an idyllic day opening gifts and eating by the fire. The next day, Jessy Lee was hiding under the kitchen table, listening to my mom and sister argue. I shared that the 'Christmas' break wasn't all commercialized glitter and reindeer joy. Jess and I didn't have the money to buy presents, and often didn't. Often never had a tree. I shared how we forget that many family members drink too much, and kids are forgotten. And the room was silent.

I remember the concert. As the senior group, we went last, wrapping it up. The students had prepared well. Music, video and live messages on their

experiences of winter break, some stories of peace and family joy, other stories of pain and abandonment. A packed audience, four hundred strong.

The silence that followed. Parents came up afterwards and asked, “How dare you?” I remember my principal, red faced standing beside me following the program. I only understood afterwards her presence was to protect. Neither of us understood the community backlash from making our silenced stories public.

There were phone calls all through winter break.

When we returned, though, there were a few parents, a few community members, and a few grandparents who walked their students to class and shook my hand. There were some who encouraged us to keep sharing. Mostly, that first day back, the students wrote and wrote, most asked openly that we continue to share. (Lived memory, two winters before I began my graduate work)

I often think about that moment when the community member approached me and asked me “how dare you?” I did not understand what she was saying to me, her words did not register. I remember having the impulse to hug her, but her still body language told me to stand still, as did my administrator’s red face and stiff stance. I did not know how very near I had come to being professionally reprimanded. Or I did not understand until after the winter break. I remember, with a blindsided sort of quality, asking students if their families had been upset and listening as some responded that they had been offended. One family refused to attend student-parent-teacher conferences for the next two years. I remember feeling lost. And confused. I had grown in the safety of being able to share my silent stories at home. And though I kept many stories silent, I knew I could share, especially with Dad. I wondered at an educational space that might open for youth,

in nurturing and trusting ways, and honestly, for community and educators, where silent stories could be shared. I think what happened at the concert, or what came near to happening was a sharing of secret stories, or those that belonged not only to us, but also to others. And that is a tenuous and tricky space. I have returned to think about this tension, and offering and opening spaces of trust with students. I began to wonder about shifting the tensions of making silenced stories visible, about weaving silenced stories into educational practice, about finding educational and community support for making visible silenced stories. I wondered at a gentler way to come to understand these answers.

We arrived by bus on Friday afternoon in late June. We unloaded outside the café, carrying folders of paper and guitars and paintings. The cafe had set up a microphone and speaker near the front windows. We moved the furniture to form a circle like it was in our classroom, turning to face the makeshift stage. We ordered coffee, each of us, at 1:15 on a school day. Someone bought me a triple espresso. I curled in an armchair. This sharing was neither formative nor summative assessment, lived as their ELA year-end field trip; we went swimming later. They stepped to the mic. Even those who had decided to give their poems and free writes and stories to others, stepped up. One by one. Then groups of them. We drank more coffee. And they had prepared. Poems for each other, for the end of the term, for me, songs, written lyrics, small skits. Soon, strangers began to linger, stop, sit and sip coffee too. Some, offering nods and smiles and comments of “that was great” and “awesome man.” (Lived memory, first year of teaching)

I had no expectations for what the students would share. They asked me if I would try to book a year-end field trip for our ELA class the same way that other classes often were entitled to field trips. Financially we made it work. The kids wanted to share their stories. They had been journaling all term. Some had filled four journals, some several notebooks. Some wrote song lyrics. We had studied performance poetry, and they wanted to share publicly. I remember sitting in the coffee house surrounded by students and strangers feeling at home, surrounded by the students' stories of experience. The ease and freedom they found in being able to give voice to their stories, even their stories filled with tension, even when they had arrived claiming their stories would remain silent. I wondered what the magic was in the process. Was it our bond? Was it the coffee house? Were they able to share because they were given time and the freedom to do so on their own terms? Was it the coffee and the public space? Was it that their stories, here, lived simply as their own stories, not prescribed or curricular mandated? Was it that we came here through joy and caring? Oh, I wondered as my heart raced from the espresso, would it be possible to find such sharing shapes with youth again?

As I learned to let go of some of my epistemological underpinnings, my thoughts returned to the storying space in which I had lived alongside Duane. In our unfolding and often messy journey, we came to attend to who we were and who we were becoming inside and outside educational landscapes. As a narrative inquirer it is important to attend to the wholeness of the experience landscape.

Framed within this view of experience, the focus of narrative inquiry is not only on individuals' experiences but also on the social, cultural, and institutional narratives within which individuals' experiences are constituted, shaped,

expressed, and enacted. Narrative inquirers study the individual's experience in the world, an experience that is storied both in the living and telling and that can be studied by listening, observing, living alongside another, and writing, and interpreting texts. (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, pp. 42-43)

Nana used to share stories of her teaching experiences and the teaching experiences of her mother, Alice, who was educated during the First World War with a two-week Normal School experience, and spoke to her daughter of her reverence for John Dewey. Her daughter, Nana, trained in the depression-era with a one-year Normal School experience, referred to John Dewey's work when, in the 1950's, Nana accepted the challenge of becoming one of the first kindergarten teachers in Saskatchewan. Nana would share with Mom that Nana respected Dewey's ideas that "knowledge is best learned through active participation in the inquiry processes" (Darling & Wright, 2004, p. 254). When Mom shares about how she became a Dewey follower she says she "doesn't know but I think it was because of Nana." Mom would share that she learned by living alongside kids. If kids could rearrange things, build things, even with words, those concepts became real for them. I asked Mom how she knew whether it was Nana who gave Mom her reverence for Dewey's theory about how kids learn best and she answered, "remember I started this conversation with I think" (Lived memory, 2014).

I am thinking deeply about Mom's reflection. I wonder how she first came to know the theoretical and epistemological underpinnings that informed her pedagogical and methodological educational practice, yet did not form it. Her ways of being with students, living alongside students and listening to their stories of experience became her way of living alongside kids; these became curriculum making ways for Mom and her

students. I think this is what happened with me as well. I continually wonder how I came to live and live out narrative inquiry as pedagogy – the stories to live by that shaped me to live this pedagogy are part of my ongoing tensions.

Dewey (2009) reminds narrative inquirers of the changing qualities, of the turns and shifts, of experience. This transformation is part of an ongoing continuum always in the midst of the social and personal, and the temporal (Dewey, 2009).

And I return to the feel of chill, wind on my face, the pond near home.

Clandinin & Connelly (2000) add to Dewey's (2009) understanding of educational theory by grounding the work of narrative inquiry within the three commonplaces: temporality, place and social/personal. I am thinking about the places to which I am deeply connected. I am thinking about the ones which I have had to leave and how the leaving has shifted (reliving and retelling), the way I once understood (once told as my stories), and how I would live out my life. I am thinking deeply of Dad who grew without being connected to a home place. I am thinking deeply of Dad who from that lack of connection to place, from a young age, retold and relived his stories of experience to a story of home for himself, for Mom, for my sister and me, and later for my daughter. The continuity, comfort and meaning-making of our stories of experience are also profoundly rooted to place.

Dewey (2009) frames his theory of experience as having two elements, the active and the passive; there is no action without a consequence. Through all experience, "We learn something" (Dewey, 2009, p. 109). Without the transactional return the moment is only fact (p. 109). Clandinin & Connelly (2000) think with the idea of consequence differently. They think with the idea of consequences relationally and narratively,

grounded in the three commonplaces of narrative inquiry, furthering our understanding of experience. Clandinin & Connelly's (2000) shift in thinking moves Dewey's theoretical work clearly to the field of narrative inquiry as both a methodology and a phenomenon.

There are shifts in the ways that narrative inquirers come to understand experience (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). For each narrative inquirer, these shifts are different and do not unfold linearly (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). Thinking with the 'turns' that Dewey (2009) explores, Pinnegar & Daynes (2007) reference four expected shifts for those who think narratively.

An example of an expected shift is in the relationship between inquirer and co-participant. Coles (1989) addresses the connections he comes to have and learns from those with whom he shares stories during his psychiatric residency. Coles attends to patients as people, as people with rich stories of experience. He continues to return to their stories, over time. He invites his patients to share, to lead the conversation.

Another example of an expected shift is from the use of data to the use of words. Beautifully, Coles (1989) helps narrative inquirers move from quantitative research to qualitative research as he lives in conversational spaces alongside his patients. He listens to his patients share their stories. He allows them to lead and from these ongoing conversations, an inquiry is found together. I return to the powerful, rhythmical sharings which Lessard (2010) penned and which I read that first year of my graduate studies. Lessard attended to students' stories, to family stories, to conversations, to the wholeness of stories of experience; he sat alongside his co-participants, had coffee perhaps, and lived in conversation not through questions or numbers.

A further example of an expected shift is from looking universal to looking specific. Narrative inquirers think with and understand the importance of stepping away from generalizations, allowing uniqueness of stories of experience to have voice, seeing things big not small (Greene, 1995). “One of the simplest ways of saying this is that in formalist inquiry, people, if they are identified at all, are looked at as exemplar of a form of an idea, a theory, a social category” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 43). However, the narrative inquirer does not seek exemplars. “[D]ue to the ontologically honouring experience, we give up epistemological generalizability” (Schaefer, Lessard, Panko & Polsfut, 2015, p. 28). Seeing “big” (Greene, 1995) is being open to passions, initiatives, and wonderings people have while in the midst of storying.

To see things or people small, one chooses to see from a detached point of view, to watch behaviors from the perspective of a system, to be concerned with trends and tendencies rather than the intentionality and concreteness of everyday life. To see things or people big, one must resist viewing other human beings as mere object or chess pieces and view them in their integrity and particularity instead. 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 plans people make, the initiatives they take, the uncertainties they face....When applied to schooling, the vision that sees things big brings us in close contact with details and with particularities that cannot be reduced to statistics or even to the measurable.” (Green, 1995, p. 10)

Yet a further example of an expected shift for those who think narratively is towards inclusionary ways of understanding. I am thinking about suggestions, most often well-meaning, often power-based, of colleagues, family, friends, university professors,

ethics personnel and advisors who suggested this work look, be, feel, sound and live purposefully a certain way. However, narrative inquiry is complex and uncertain work. “What narrative inquirers gain in the proximity to ordinary lived experience and the scope of their considerations, they at times, sacrifice in certainty” (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 46). Stories of experience are meaningful because they are ours. The negotiation of this way of knowing is grounded in the loopings of returning to Dad, or perhaps in the teachings I hear as I rub sage in my hands, taking time to sit with wind, taking time on the prairie to listen to the silences.

These shifts are important to note in transitioning into the midst of stories of experience, mine and the co-participants’. The shifts were noticed, felt and lived out throughout the narrative inquiry. Though the turns are listed above, they are not experienced linearly. There is uncertainty and messiness in the experience of attending to stories of experience. However, understanding the processes of ‘how to attend’, I believe, are not that simple. The process of attending allows educators, inside and outside school spaces, moments of grace in which they may begin to trust those silent spaces and attend to stories of experience.

For narrative inquirers, shifts in our understanding of experience, the reliving and retelling of stories of experience do not happen in a set order. The beauty of these shifts is in the experience of the narrative inquiry experience (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p. 7).

Dewey (2009) reminds us to focus on the child; Clandinin & Connelly (2000) remind us to begin with stories of experience; Coles (1989) reminds narrative inquirers to attend to stories of experience.

Mom, Nana's daughter, an educator with three degrees, embraced Dewey's ideas that we learn best by doing. Mom says that "it will never be truly learned until the learner has interacted with the concept, touched it, used it, and related it to the learner's own life" (Lived memory, 2013). What Mom and Nana storied was a profound regard for experience as education. I wonder how stories of experience can come to be understood as curriculum-making spaces and life-making spaces. I wonder why stories of experience are not held in the forefront with teachers and in learning spaces. I wonder why single stories (Adichie, 2009) of who we are, come so easily to be retold as stories of school mandates, policies, and innovation and why is it only thus that they come to be celebrated.

As I continue to return to Brandon's stories of experience, as I continue to return to Duane's stories of experience, as I continue to return to Isabel's and to Anne-Marie's stories of experience, to Jessy Lee's, to Dad's, to our connected stories of experience, I am filled with questions. I am filled with wonderings. I am filled with uncertainty. "[A]ll thinking is research... all thinking involves risk. Certainty cannot be guaranteed in advance. The invasion of the unknown is of the nature of an adventure; we cannot be sure in advance" (Dewey, 2009, p. 116).

In the Midst of Stories alongside Isabel

I remember the first day of school in the fall of 2014 when I handed out the letter inviting students into the inquiry journey. I recalled later how the actual handing out of the letter had been easy and that it had felt awkward. I had expected some sort of fireworks or whistles or shouting mostly because of the long and stressful stories of experience, the bumping up place, and the process of navigating the research ethics

board. Having survived the story of the research ethics journey, I had this hyperbolic vision of an armed ethics guard wearing an ugly polyester tie and stiletto heels swooping in and snatching the document from my hands as I gave it to the students, shouting, “Ah ha, joke’s on you, one more semester of box checking and angst.” Yet, all day the resounding voice of hope could not be silenced; at the end of the day I wrote that I had felt a whisper fill my body: “I begin today” (Field notes, September, 2014). I remember how thrilled I was to finally be trusted to begin. I remember how thrilled I was to finally learn which stories of experience we would tell.

I felt that a shifting in the way educators come to understand students’ stories of experience might be possible.

But mostly, I forgot about the research, and the letters until after 2:00 pm and [another student] and Isabel were drafting their [proposal] to schools for national suicide awareness day and I moved away, gave them space to chat, to make decisions without my input. On the desk were the white pages, folded once [the invitations ready to be handed out]. (Field notes, September, 2014)

I remember seeing the papers, folded, noticing the time. I was just about to head down the hall and ask the other teacher to hold his group of students following daily checkout so that I could hand out the letters of invitation. The administrator, who knew that the narrative inquiry had received University of Regina ethical approval and school division approval before its commencement, stopped in to remind me to hand the letters out.

The night before I had written, “*I wonder what the kids are thinking. I wonder what they will wonder tomorrow*” (Field notes, September, 2014).

At the beginning of that new school year, at my school, teachers' caseloads were divided into two groups. The other teacher, male, had mostly boys, and as it turned out, I had mostly girls. After I handed the first group their letters I returned to the room. Students on my caseload were reflecting about their day in their journals. Not everyone in our circle was there. A few students were gone in the afternoon, having begun the transition process back to a regular high school on the first day. I offered the letter to the three girls present. Anne-Marie was sitting, as she normally did, at the small circular table off to the side. I wrote in my notes that I had explained the letter to each of them and asked them to read it and if they had questions, or were interested to get back to me.

After we followed the routine of checking out, sharing stories and takeaways about our day, Anne-Marie left. I can only imagine what she did with her letter of invitation. One of the students held her letter and displayed a sense of reluctance to open it in front of me.

Isabel opened the letter sitting at the table in front of the remaining student. She read through the letter and burst out, "*I'm in! I'm so in!*" (Field notes, September, 2014).

The remaining student looked over at her, gathered her books, stood and left the room. I chatted with Isabel about confidentiality and about our need to get in touch with her mother. Deliberately, because I had a sense that Isabel was bursting to share, I switched the conversation and we then chatted about Arts Collective, an afterschool extra-curricular group. I walked Isabel down the hall. She beamed all the way.

In the Midst of Stories alongside Anne-Marie

Uncertain how to live my narrative inquiry role differently from my teacher role, I made field notes the only way I understood, as though I was in conversation, as I did in her response/ELA journal:

Anne-Marie. Yesterday during afternoon checking-in it was just the two of us. I'd waited to chat with you when we had [a few] minutes alone. We seldom have time, quiet moments, our school space one of chatter and stories and rules, food and people, ear-buds and tables, and smiles.

But the other girls in our home check-in circle had gone, hadn't made it through the day come to think of it. Only Tanika had made it through the day alongside you, but she had done her check-out and was off to [catch] the bus.

I asked if you had read the letter I had given you. You said no, that you had thrown it out. I wondered why. I didn't ask you why, though I wish I had. I showed you another letter of invitation.

You held it up to your face, the way you do when you want to pretend to keep the world away, but really, you want to pull the world in. You skimmed the letter, but waited for me to talk.

'Do you understand what it means, Anne-Marie?' I asked.

"I don't know." I can't remember if you were smiling, but you weren't mad because you kept standing there, holding the letter up to your face, your straight hair moving a bit as you watched me.

I told you that I was taking a University degree, writing a thesis, which was like a book, that I was doing research for my degree and that I wanted to listen to students' stories. Your story. That you could be co-researchers.

"Can I share my story?" You said it the moment the words had left my mouth.

"Yes." I told you that the research would be confidential, so no one would know it was you.

Before I could say more, you pulled the paper down from your face and sort of shoved it towards me.

"Okay," you said, the movement your act of commitment.

"Okay," I questioned. "Anne-Marie do you understand what this means? You can't tell anyone you are part of this research. I won't interview you. I'll just listen. Sometimes, I'll keep track of what you say and...."

"Yeah." You had begun to walk away.

"Anne-Marie, your Mom will have to sign a consent form. You aren't 18. I'll call her."

"I'll talk to her."

You left the room.

You walked a few feet, stopped, returning to the doorway walking backwards, you gave me a smile from underneath your hair, head tilted.

[The next day.]

Today you smiled often. Your phone didn't come out. You walked beside me during walk. Well, not beside me, but just a few steps near me. You smiled sometimes.

We got out early and in check-out you mentioned that your Mom was coming to the school, but would arrive 25 minutes after [the] bell.

After school you talked about getting slushies for both of us while we waited. Instead, you smoked cigarettes standing by the bench in front of the school. You sent your Mom in alone and I sent her to go get you.

[The administrator] asked why your Mom was coming in and she made a point of making tea in the staff room [the room across the hall from our room,] while we talked through the signing of the forms.

You picked at your fingers until one of your cuticles bleed as we went through the consent form. In my mind I kept thinking how on earth, why on earth would you want to spend 45 minutes once a week after school sharing stories with your teacher, spend more time at school; I can't entice you to stay for art club, for work out club, for book club.

Your Mom and I went through the consent form. I clarified the language; she asked me what trauma meant. I gave an example from my own life of being abused⁵. As your Mom responded, looking at me and almost smiling that she was certain there was no such trauma in your life, you were looking at me and making certain I saw you looking at me. (Field notes, September, 2014)

⁵ It is important to note that the stories of abuse in my life are not linked to my family of origin, nor are these isolated or single stories belonging to one event.

When I think long back to those first exchanges with Brandon that so impacted my narrative retellings of how I have come to live alongside students, it was Brandon who understood what took me two decades to know: remember to attend to stories of experience, begin through story. When I think about the way Dad used to enter into storying spaces, it was through attending to his own narratives, to mine and to the stories of experience in which he found himself. I recall Anne-Marie understanding these interweavings of connections too. As she looked at me that afternoon in the classroom and I met her eyes, it was with the same sense of awareness Brandon had. I wondered if Anne-Marie was aware that I knew the told stories of her assault; she had met my eyes and held my gaze. Oh how I find questions in that moment. Was she simply looking at me? Was she wanting me to ask her questions? How I was going to attend to those stories was what was important.

Begin by attending with stories. I heard Dad. There's a teaching there. It took the story of Dad's stroke to understand that attending to experiences narratively also meant attending to my own stories of experience. Almost fifteen years before I had begun to attend to my own stories of experience living alongside students. Brandon, a student, understood to begin by attending narratively.

I am thinking of those moments when I sought to listen to Brandon's stories of experience instead of attending narratively to his experiences. However the living out of my stories was rooted in my epistemological underpinnings. All those years ago, in my pre-service work, I entered a space believing I could and should save kids; I believed that I had the answers; I believed my teachers and parents had the answers that I needed. Though not singularly discounting, these underpinnings silenced much of Dad's

teachings, those ontological ways of knowing and coming to return always to know my own stories to live by.

Years ago I lived out the told stories of myself that fit future stories of me, who I was and was to become. The rules I ought to live by were bound and boxed stories that centered on being good, getting good grades, and doing right. These lived stories were fictionalized stories, stories that are shared to push away the stories others tell of us, becoming the “imaginative stories of who [we] might be and who [we] might be becoming” (Clandinin et al., 2006, p. 69), fitting societal and familial stories, though these stories were on some level quite comfortable: go to school, get married, have a child, and be responsible. They were not necessarily my stories; yet living out these stories, and telling them became my identity cover stories.

Cover stories are the “stories teachers told that allowed them to fit within the plotlines of the accepted stories of school. [Cover stories were a] kind of fictionalization of our teacher stories that allowed us a way to continue to live out our stories to live by” (Clandinin et al., 2006, p. 61). I told many cover stories and often continue to tell these stories. Some, I choose not to share, for in sharing, I alter and shift the plotlines of who I am. I told stories of believing and supporting the high school graduation rate, when often, I counselled students and families to look towards transitioning to work at the end grade ten, or long before grade 12. I would help design programs and choose courses and often find mentors that supported these stories of transition to employment.

I told other cover stories as well. One winter a fiercely independent grade twelve student, nineteen years old, who often dealt with a great deal of family abuse at home, had found a way to sneak into the school, past the security alarms, in the wee hours at

night. He came in through a window in a storeroom. He slept. In the evenings he worked. I discovered his entrances when I found him, one afternoon, missing from History, asleep in the storeroom. The room seemed askew. I shared with the facilities operator, not the school administrator. She shared that she had suspected that he was likely moving through the ceiling. We both understood that if he knew that we knew he would sleep in his car, and it was dangerously cold. I tucked \$20 in the bin in the canteen, grabbed a handful of granola bars, leaving them for him.

We were a small, small town. I found a pillow and warm blanket. I set about that afternoon and evening trying to find a place for him to stay in town, without letting his secret become known. Someone who might ask him to come and stay, yet not necessarily pry. He slept at school the rest of the week until I found a place for him. The facilities operator fixed the window after he graduated. We never shared this story with anyone, including my administrator. He ate the granola bars I left for him every day and I allowed him to sleep through most History, and ELA classes. My cover stories included how I often look back at the stories others have told of me; “Why does Jo get to take different classes, you are so unfair?” and “Wow, is she easy on that kid.”

I wonder how many people inside and outside educational landscapes tell stories of others because they seek an easy story, such as I had inadvertently done with Brandon years ago. I wonder how many times as a teacher I silence my own stories of experience, giving preference to different stories of experience. I often pause during a conversation and chose not to share stories of grief or abuse, instead nodding and continuing to listen to students as they share their stories of grief or abuse. I wonder how many times I succumb to believing that multiple stories of experience can not exist. I wonder how

many times I allow familial stories to be silenced because they live in a bumping up place. I wonder how many times I allow the silencing of beautiful stories of experience never to enter into our educational landscapes because these stories of experience are difficult.

The resonance of Brandon's stories has been a shifting space between ache and joy. How will I understand these stories in another decade? How will I come to understand the experience of the stories after I have lived alongside the experiences of other students?

As I sat down at the desk after those first two initial transitional-conversations in the midst with Isabel and Anne-Marie, the first swirls of formal inquiry began, although understanding had really begun with both students seven months previously when each had started at 11th Street Alternate School, Isabel then in grade 10, Anne-Marie then in grade 9.

I had felt deeply the resonance of the months I had lived alongside each student while in the painful midst of my family's stories of change and of loss. I remember sharing these experiences that previous spring living alongside Isabel and Anne-Marie. I remember thinking often during those months, and reflecting later with trusted colleagues and with Mom, that though I was physically present, I felt disconnected from my educational family, and sadly from my teaching responsibilities. I existed profoundly in a state of numbness within the world for fear that if I allowed a splinter more of emotion to enter, I might disappear entirely. It was in this space of vulnerability where Isabel, Anne-Marie and I began to trust. In this space we came to story.

We were each of us in a place where none around our circle could offer hope, critique, support, comfort, or feedback. We had none of it to give. It was a learning moment like none I had ever known. Ours was a vulnerable space. I am thinking deeply about the space where Isabel and Anne-Marie and I first came to attend to each other's stories. The only way to transition was to live and to tell our stories of loss and grief. Through sharing stories we came to trust in the sacredness of our sharing space.

Why does the room feel soft? Not dark. The light slips in gentle waves with the wind from the open window. Maybe, it came from last spring. Maybe, because the window is always open. Who opened the window today? No lights. Silence. Isabel and her sketchbook, and her and the books. And the phone with its case as large as the tiny human making such intricate makings on the page. She reaches for the eraser, and reaches for the eraser. Ha, she would hate knowing I'm writing about the eraser. She doesn't turn the page. I can't hear the boys at the other end of the hall. Tanika has closed her journal. I caught the movement. I write on. She is changing pens, reaching for one of the coloured markers at the center of the table. A breeze returns. I look up and catch Anne-Marie's eyes and she crinkles her nose at me and returns to filling pages in her journal, a flick of blond hair, dramatic swirl of her treasured purple pen. I want to laugh, but I'll disturb the silence. Living here. Does the school exist beyond this room? Does the world. I'm tired. Beautifully calm. (Field text, October 2014)

I am thinking about our space. I was sitting beside the students at the table alongside them. We were journaling, together. I was writing. I wrote with students almost every day. As they journaled or sketched, I did too. We came to our stories gently. Anne-

Marie sat at the round table near the door. I had no intention of students choosing to sit at that table, more a location for art supplies, unloaded and loaded from the storage cupboard nearby as we created. But she chose that place. Maybe, she chose it as a spot where she could see the open hallway and the large bank of windows, and her class? Only slightly to the side of the circle. I wonder if the way and place she chose to sit, always her place, had much to do with the art she loved to make, projects she loved to create. I wonder if where she sat had much to do with how often she left school without letting anyone know. I wonder if where she sat had much to do with how she trusted the space, or me. Towards the final months of research, Anne-Marie shifted her location and moved to sit with her back to the windows, near the teacher desk, the spot at the table I often frequented, or even, taking to the swivel chair at the teacher desk. I wonder at this physical progression of entering a space over the months of attending narratively to Anne-Marie. Does our sense of belonging and trust parallel our attending narratively to place? Does time allow us to come to connect deeper with a place?

I think about Isabel and her backdrop of classroom books and classroom art that I have collected from other students and showcased. Isabel was comfortable near the books. Often when new students would arrive to our sharing circle, Isabel would pull a book from the shelves behind her, open it and begin to read. Not simply appear to read, read, the text would wander to the larger sharing circle with her, and later home. I wonder if books and the walls of books and art provided our circle with comfort and familiarity. The classroom was a small rectangular space, at one end the door, at the other end windows. On the one long wall ran a full-length bulletin board housing students thoughts and writings and comments. Above this, a barbwire student sculpture, "Hope." The

bulletin board of co-created comments grew and grew. Often, pages or corners of journals were ripped and pinned to the wall. On the center of the table were pushpins, coloured markers and a bin of blank index cards, a bin of sharing rocks (sometimes we passed these, shared stories while holding one. Sometimes we just held them. Sometimes we added to the bin. Sometimes we took the rock home, keeping them snug in our pockets, rolling them over in our hands as we walked).

We sat together, at the same table, at the same level. I instructed through stories, often beginning, “so I have a story,” and in the larger groups, someone would grin. Often, students would ask me to share stories. Often students would enter, almost always seated before I entered the space, “Ms. Saas, so this thing happened....” and we would move through our period through stories of experience. At the beginning of each day. Always the end of each day. We shared. We wrote. I remember that day after finishing writing, when I felt Anne-Marie reach for her phone, I folded my journal, put down my pen. I sighed. Silence is hard. “I wrote about our silence, the silence of being here together....” and here, our stories of experience began.

[W]ithin the cultural narrative of Canadian schools, [the dominant plotline] is often how we support children to learn...For [me] it [is] important to interrupt this story. What, however, is an interruption in a child’s story to live by... School landscapes shape more or less educative possibilities for building the relational spaces out of which new school stories mindful of families, children, teachers and principals, can be negotiated and lived out. (Clandinin et al., 2006, pp. 110-111)

I am thinking deeply about the shift in interruption in dominant plotlines that Clandinin et al. (2006) suggest. Entering into educational landscapes, that notion of supporting a child to learn, is the identity-making narrative of coming to attend narratively alongside students and educators, allowing their experiences to live and to tell, and certainly to lead in school settings. This is an honouring way of being, not a setting aside or in-addition to, but a way of seeing. Allowing students to live and to live out their narrative experiences instead of imposing or interrupting these narratives is attending mindfully and attending narratively to students.

After those initial meetings with Isabel and Anne-Marie, I sat at my desk with the familiar feelings of ache and joy and beauty and uncertainty swirling. I sat nervous in my new role as narrative inquirer. I responded then the only way I understood, making notes as if in conversation. I was nervous that I might forget along the way, the importance of living in the midst, of allowing the narratives to unfold, and trusting in the stories of our experience and trusting in uncertainty. I was nervous at how much the educational landscape, the inquiry process would silence my willingness to attend to the wholeness of students stories of experience inside and outside of educational landscapes.

As I think with the narratives of experience that Isabel, Anne-Marie and I shared together, I am beginning to think deeply that it is not the narratives of experience that are singularly important, but our consistency and commitment in attending to them that is the difference as we relive and retell our stories to live by.

Stories of Trust

The trust that developed with Isabel and with Anne-Marie was in part through the opening space found in stories of trust that I shared. These stories of trust had been told and their sharing fostered an environment where new stories of trust were allowed to continue. These stories significantly connected Isabel and Anne-Marie and I through trust, but as well, bonded us together to the classroom place in those first weeks.

I am thinking about how a story of trust came to live with Isabel and with Anne-Marie through the symbolic nature of the items I kept and storied as treasures in the classroom, the books that I had purchased at Festival. I would read from one of the texts and comment, “I remember this line, it reminds me of the time with Dad.” I remember the graffitied-covered piano and would comment, “A former student made that, it’s traveled with me from school to school.” I think now about how I deliberately rotated the displays of student art work, highlighting former students, and thus sharing their stories of experience and, how I would highlight current students, and honour their stories of experience too. I think about how the classroom space was known as the room with the graffitied-covered piano. The enormous piece of student art served always as an introduction for sharing stories of the student who created it for a Psychology 20 final project, and for sharing my relationship with him, and how I had come to treasure the piano, and also the student. When I was transferred to another high school at the end of this formal inquiry, I remember telling the new principal in some sort of temper tantrum reliving stories of connection that I was not going unless my piano would

move with me. The emotional outburst became a meaning-making story of experience of my need to carry the stories of former students tangibly alongside me. Somehow, if the piano travelled with me (Lugones, 1987) so might I ensure that students' stories of experience would travel with me as well.

The stories graffitied on the piano served as opening spaces into conversations with kids and more importantly, the piano connected me with stories of the past, a deep connection, ever rooted to a sacred storying space. The piano served as a reminder more than a story opener for youth. The piano became my reminder to begin through stories of experience. I am thinking deeply about how the space of trust opened and deepened between Isabel and myself, and Anne-Marie and myself. Because 11th Street was such a small school, and because, even though both Isabel and Anne-Marie had non-regular attendance, they were often the only two, or two of few with me in our classroom space. Once we entered formal research, each co-participant wanted to meet with me individually, outside of school sharing time.

I first came to know Isabel and to know Anne-Marie, the spring prior to our time alongside one another in formal narrative inquiry; each of us was living and telling our own stories of trauma. By our own words, we were each of us frightened and untrusting and hesitant to lean on each other. The trite symbols of artwork and literature with connecting life themes did little to bond us to each other. We existed as separate individuals in a common location.

Isabel had come to 11th Street Alternate School after much time away from school. She was guarded and mistrusting of adults and teachers. Anne-Marie

arrived to 11th Street after being removed from her home school. Both girls had no friends at 11th Street when they arrived. That spring Dad had a stroke. As the three of us sat together, alongside others, at times, the sloggish work of meeting goals and learning outcomes (the provincial educational term for learning goals or standards) felt like a painful hammer and nail experience. We were, each of us, it seems now, putting in time, in our own holding pattern, almost dazed and blindsided by the changes and traumas in our lives.

Dad had the stroke in late March, on a Wednesday. I returned to work the following Monday. Both girls were still relatively new to 11th Street. The spring felt a blur. As I sat in class I remember long moments beside Isabel and Anne-Marie, and other girls in my ELA class, where we would sit in silence, each of us lost in our own stories of experience, only the silence of afternoons and each other holding us to place, not mending, not reflecting, not connecting, nor reliving or retelling our stories of experience. A week after Dad's stroke, Duane learned of the stroke and began messaging me. He would send messages every day, sometimes several times a day. At 11th Street, teachers and students always had our phones with us. Teachers would often message students and their families, checking in with them, checking in with students when they had not shown up for school, sorting out transportation, being a support. Most students had most teachers' contact information. This was common at 11th Street. Sometimes Duane would try to call, though I would seldom answer the phone. Sharing, like living joyfully in that silent space those spring afternoons, was nearly impossible.

I remember a moment in the haze of those first weeks receiving a message from Duane. I was at school sitting at circle. I was sort of smiling, laughing, and sighing as I looked at the message. My actions felt outside of me yet they came from me. The girls looked at me and I explained that Duane was a student from the first class I had taught, and that he had just sent a message. A while later, maybe days later, I shared the message with the students. Duane had said he was messaging me now because I had taken care of him all those years ago. Now it was his turn.

A week later I shared a story of Duane staying behind after unloading the field trip bus to shake Dad's hand after the field trip and that was when I understood Duane's character. I remember I had been looking at my phone when I shared that story. When I looked up Anne-Marie was looking at me. She asked me to tell her more stories of Duane and of Dad. And I did. I told her stories of how I had come to know Duane through the stories of experience we shared and wrote in poem form and in conversation in his journal, through his music and song lyrics. These were our ways of retelling our stories to live by. I told her, and Isabel, and the others around the circle too, of the poetry and long conversations. I cried. I cried often. Anne-Marie shared about her relationship with her Grandpa. Isabel drew and drew in her sketchbook. The girls and I returned to that room with its round tables pulled together and florescent lights turned off and silences, and afternoon sunlight pouring in.

I return and think about our times together. As the structure of day flowed we were given 15-30 minutes at the end of each day for daily check-out. Time to

reflect on students' daily goals and to share stories. These times spilled over, often beyond dismissal.

We sat perched all of us, on the computer tables, some watching videos, Jimmie crafting tomorrow's quote of the day, Izzy leaning over and chalk pastels covering so many fingers as we leaned over and smudged each other's images, smiling. Everything, all at once. There were fresh pumpkin-spiced muffins. There were always muffins. We each ate two. And the crumbs mixed with the chalk and we talked again about walking the rails during walk that morning in the long light of the sun, gods, each of us, one foot in front of the other, hands balancing out to the side. (Field note, November 2014)

In the space of sharing those stories of Duane caring about me and me caring about Duane, Isabel and Anne-Marie and I found a space of trust. This space was messy and it took time. This space was painful and awkward and, honestly, with its many uncomfortable spaces in the midst, not one to which I would quickly seek to return. Attending narratively is exhausting enough without reliving stories of grief and change. A heart needs time to rest. Sharing stories of experience is painful. We were vulnerable. I am thinking now that opening a space for our vulnerability felt profound, deeply meaningful. Through the opener of story, we tip-toed towards attending to each other's stories of experience. We allowed each other time to come to share our stories of experience. I wonder if the depth of our trust in each other, a trust that at times intimidated other educators, would have developed had I not known Isabel and Anne-Marie prior to entering

into the narrative inquiry journey. I am thinking about my perception that the trust between student and teacher was unsettling to some of the educators around us. I was continually warned not to believe Duane's stories, continually cautioned that kids could not be trusted to live authentically and that I was perhaps silly to believe in them.

I return to thinking deeply with trust, pushing to attend narratively with a deeper engagement and awareness, a mindfulness. As I lived this journey I sought no part in being angered by the journey. I am thinking deeply about the part that transparency and honesty with my own stories of experience has had in my ability to come to attend to the stories of experience of youth I live alongside.

As I think about those pained long moments in the midst sitting alongside Isabel and Anne-Marie, the months Dad was in hospital and then rehabilitation, I am thinking deeply about the pain Isabel, Anne-Marie, and I were in and how in our sharing space in the midst we grew to trust. I am thinking deeply about how ways that I lived with stories of experience of youth in the past affects the way I am life-making with youth today. "In the absence of significant adult relationships, children can only turn to their peers for help with their confusion.... This is when the listening ear of a caring adult whom the young person trusts is so critically important" (Larson & Brendtro, 2000, pp. 99-100). I am thinking deeply about how the stories of trust given and returned between Duane and me, as teacher/student then as former student/former teacher/friend began to inspire the telling of stories of trust between Isabel and me, and between Anne-Marie and me, and between Isabel and Anne-Marie.

I wonder how many educators first come to know students through stories of experience told of students that entirely negate or exclude the wholeness of students' narratives, students' potential, and students' beauty. Personal practical knowledge (see page 14) is knowledge that is embodied and experiential (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 3). I often think how deeply my personal practical knowledge was formed by living alongside Dad, Jessy Lee, and students like Brandon and Duane. These stories inform an educator's professional knowledge landscape, the stories of teaching and teaching stories told of us, to us and by us inside and outside educational landscapes (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, pp. 178-179). Certainly many of Dad's, Jess's, and former students' stories of experience continue to live and live out in my stories of teaching. I am thinking that attending narratively and attending narratively with a sense of mindfulness are reciprocal. I remember the winter I was 15, a bit wild, beginning to pull away from family. Dad took me for a drive and then a hike in the aspen covered sand hills near home. We cut a Robert Munch sized spruce tree and trekked it back to the truck. Dad put up scaffolding in the living room of our cabin, a renovated barn Mom and Dad had moved 300 km to rest by the lake because they had fallen in love with the barn on a Sunday drive when I was 3 years old. Decorating the tree took days. My friends spilled into the living room, climbed ladders. We made cranberry garlands and hung like gymnasts. My worlds reconnected that holiday. The tree was still standing when we returned months later for April break.

When I think about how Dad attended mindfully and attended narratively, I think about how he deliberately attended to my stories of experience. How he chose to live alongside my stories of experience, as often as he could. How he returned to my stories,

through story openers, through time, through trusted places. He sought opportunities for me to feel safe and connected and to belong, where I might seek to return and to trust and to come to attend to my own stories. I am thinking about Dad and imagining educators “trying to be more fully human [and] trying to imagine something coming of their hopes; their silences must be overcome by their search. [The search is mindfulness in attending narratively]” (Greene, 1995, p. 25).

It is not the narratives of experience that are singularly important, but our mindfulness in attending narratively that is the difference making process. Living alongside Duane I first began to understand how deeply student stories of experience matter.

Story of Connecting to Place through Trust

I met Duane during my first year of teaching. He was in grade ten. He had too-long fuzzy blond hair, baggy black clothes, and a reputation for being difficult and lazy. He was definitely storied as not being bright. His teachers often shared these stories about how difficult he was, rolling their eyes, saying, “You know” (Lived memory). I did not know. I had never met Duane prior to the first day of class.

Just as I had been drawn to Brandon, stories of experience immediately connected me with Duane. “[Participants] lives and ours are also shaped by attending to past, present, and future unfolding social, cultural, institutional, linguistic, and familial narratives” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 43).

Duane felt familiar. Duane was the boy I had married. Duane was my Dad. Duane was me. Throughout high school, no, earlier than that. Like Duane, I lived the stories of school outside the grand narrative, outside the way social constructs deem things ought to

be (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Living stories outside the boundaries was often seen as wrong or loud, or stupid or unethical. For me, this way of living and telling was, a story to live by. “Exposure to difference encourages breadth of attention, a way of seeing that underlies ways of continuing to learn as an adult, for every opening to different cultural traditions is a rehearsal for dealing constructively with inner or outer change, adapting... to one’s own again” (Bateson, 1994, p. 168). Just as Duane did, I connected most with oral stories and images and sounds and nature; like Duane, I needed to be busy.

I often struggle to explain storying as phenomena, practice, theory and methodology in the same way I struggle to explain the nuances of my work, my stories of experience, my research, my behaviour. There is a teaching there. There is the constant dominant story of the need for certainty. There is no such certainty in narrative inquiry or in storying. I return to the rooting words of narrative inquirers who state that we “lead storied lives” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 13); see also (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999, 2006). Life is experience (Dewey, 2009) and our stories of experience are our way of making meaning of who we are and who we are becoming. Perhaps storying is life-making, a living in and living out of our stories of experience as a way of being. The “truth about stories is that that’s all we are” (King, 2003, p. 2).

The educational space where I lived alongside students as part of the inquiry was an alternate school, certainly an educational space that challenged the grand narrative mainstream notion about how students might come to attend our school, by referral only, about what set them apart, and about the specific services we provided. I wondered deeply about the marginalizing language that I often heard from other educators about the kinds of students who attended our school, about staff who taught there (other teachers

who wondered “who would want to?”) and about the quality of our programming.

“Difference and diversity have been overwhelmingly cast as qualities to be ‘tolerated,’ ‘managed,’ and ‘ameliorated,’ rather than appreciated, embraced, and fostered” (Davis et al., 2000, p. 47).

During our walks on the prairie alongside Dad, I came to understand many of my behaviours were indicative of my early stories of experience. “[T]here are statistically normal children-the notion of the normal child has become a pervasive and largely transparent part of educational discourse.... Rather, statistics-based conceptions about normal are most obvious in a proliferation of labels that point to the extremes of the normal distribution-ones that assume a center without actually mentioning it” (Davis et al., 2000, p. 46). Inside and outside of education landscapes stories of how and who students and teachers ought to be and ought to become are being told. These stories are evident in the stories that our Ministry of Education and School Divisions tell about: graduation rates, stories of first-time-teachers, stories of single-parents, stories of non-attenders, stories of addiction, stories of abuse, stories of grief, stories of mental health, stories of detachment and more.

Dad attended to stories of experience, his, others and mine. This was his way of making meaning of his life. I am beginning to understand Dad’s teachings are life-making loopings of attending to stories of experience.

Through Dad’s teachings I was reminded of entering this narrative inquiry alongside Isabel and Anne-Marie, “due to ontologically honoring experience, we give up epistemological generalizability” (Schafer et al., 2015, p. 28). For myself and Isabel and

Anne-Marie, we began our narrative inquiry by living our stories and continued telling our telling stories (Clandinin, 2013).

As Isabel's and Anne-Marie's teacher, I entered into the midst of living and telling our stories together. I began by sharing stories of being a mom, a daughter, the stories of experience of first coming to know Duane, of having journal conversations with him and sharing the messages he later left for me regarding his stories of loss and change. As Duane continued to attend to my stories of loss and change, I lived alongside Isabel and Anne-Marie.

In the weeks that followed Dad's stroke, several former students checked in with me, at first daily, which did not surprise me, but then periodically as the days turned to months. A few former students continued to check in every few weeks: one, Duane checked in every week. Duane did not just message. He called. When the swell of the experience of loss and change did not overwhelm, when it was not too much to share with another person, I would pick up the phone. *"I sit at check-out while the girls reflect on their goals. I don't open my journal. Dust floats. What are we reading tomorrow? There is walk. We will walk. Without waiting they push journals towards me to read. I am making lists, sighing. "Yup." Do I say this aloud? Bus time. Dad."* (Saas, *Lived memory*, 2014) In the moment, I wondered if the stories of experience which were my memories with Dad or my gentle stories like ramblings about racing my motor bike meant anything to Isabel or to Anne-Marie. I wondered if Isabel and Anne-Marie might have connected with me better if I had shared differently in those early moments.

Puzzlings Emerging in the Midst

Before I began to imagine an inquiry journey, I had been living in the midst of high school students and middle-years students in rural K-12 schools. While at those schools, I began to think about a classroom space that would attend to student-stories. I began to imagine a space where students and I would be wakeful to each other's stories of experience. In these places, I became keenly aware of the tensions of sharing my own stories with youth, of the desire to foster a sense of belonging with students and myself while opening spaces where youth were welcome to share, and of the push-back from community when silent stories of experience were shared. Together, over the years, students and I had begun to attend to our stories. At first I saw our journey as only a means to resolve tensions, and an opener for curriculum making. By the time I asked to move to a new teaching and learning space where I might begin this narrative inquiry, we had learned to honour our stories. I was uncertain how this had come about. For many of us, our official stories - the ones that were told about us or for us by others, the oppressive, marginalizing narratives, which we internalized and told as cover stories - could now be retold and relived as our own counter stories, narratives we tell to make change, influence and impact our multiple narrative plotlines, all part of our identity-making stories of experience, "the stories that each of us lives out and tells of who we are, and are becoming" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 53). Sharing our stories brought awareness, brought "the omnipresent choruses of sadness and humour, of tragedy and sarcasm, [and] become, in the end, an honour song of sorts" (King, 2003, p. 117).

The process of coming to find the awareness through sharing 'this honour song', and our ways in coming to know our life-making stories is the focus of this narrative

inquiry. The research question is: How might I live alongside students, attending narratively to our stories of experience, particularly to silenced stories, and then how might our identity making stories, stories to live by, come to be relived and retold?

Further puzzlings emerged: How might these stories alter and shift my connections with students? How might these stories and the process of coming to attend to them shift my practice and make me retell my own stories of school? How is the storying phenomenon of my youth akin to narrative inquiry? Does attending narratively to students' lives offer an educator deeper insights into students' tensioned, messy, difficult and bumping up stories of experience? When students' stories of experience have been attended to narratively and mindfully, connected, over time and in place, might there be the potential for these students to understand their ability to live, tell, relive, and retell their own stories to live by?

Puzzlings with Puzzlings

I had begun work at 11th Street Alternate School in the city where I live. The school is a space for youth who need extra supports and personalized interventions beyond those available from their sending schools. For youth who attend this alternative school, the alternative school can become a new home school or it can be a home for a brief stay. I had imagined living in the midst of new student stories at this alternate school, living alongside students as they stayed at our alternate school and/or transitioned back to their sending/another school, while we attended to our narratives of experience. One month before the end of the formal narrative inquiry, I was transferred to a large high school in the division. I was devastated. The perceived loss of the future stories of

experience that I had envisioned, along with the stories of loss and grief with Dad, left me feeling ripped away, untrusting of educational landscapes.

I am thinking now about the feeling of being blindsided, of having the rug pulled out from under me, similar to the feeling of the students who transitioned to 11th Street. They just showed up, with their deer in headlight look of terror. For me it was an awakening about how it feels to have someone else tell you what was in your “best interest” without asking about your stories of experience. The school that I was transferred to had no idea that I taught language arts or outdoor education or of Dad. Imagine the feelings of young people undergoing a similar transition experience. I am thinking deeply too about Isabel and about Anne-Marie and how we first came to live alongside each other as they were living out their stories of their transitions to 11th Street.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) liken their initial steps into the midst of story with participants as being in the “center of a storm” (p. 24). The authors sense this tension because they find that narrative inquiry challenges grand narratives and forces restorying and “paradigm” (p. 24) shifts for both researchers and participants. The grand narrative is an educational way of seeing that becomes, “‘the’ way [and/or] an unquestioned way of looking at things” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 22). Attending narratively is not always valued. Narrative inquiry is often viewed by academia as work done from the margins (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 25).

At 11th Street we dared to try to imagine education differently. Our classroom spaces, our narrative inquiry space was ours. Students and staff and I were wakeful to each other’s needs for smoke breaks, of hunger needs, of the need for sensitivity to student fears. We had shortened days and took hour long daily walks. We honoured

silence. As much as possible, we learned through hands-on projects. We were pulled together as an entire school, twice a day, once for the noon meal and a second time for snacks, to share stories of gratitude, passing a rock, listening. Students kept daily goal-setting-journals and in our room, they wrote and I responded to their journals every day. Staff made frequent home visits, checked up on students using Facebook and texted with families and students frequently. I remember moving to the big high school and, though my roles were similar, the way they played out was different. It became 'strange' for me to text, to make home-visits. 11th Street Alternate School had 8-25 students who attend classes in grades eight through twelve, depending on the day. Mostly though, students who attended were in grade 10. We were a small staff of six adults including, teachers, administrator, educational assistant, administrative assistant and facilities operator. There were many people in and out of our school space daily, as school community members and family and divisional family were encouraged to drop in, stay for snack or lunch or join us on a walk. The building was also home to other school and community organisations. One morning a week a pre-kindergarten music program could be heard making music down the hall. Once a week our community room overflowed as students and staff hosted a family lunch. 11th Street served students by referral from sending schools or from our superintendent.

As we entered into the midst, Isabel, Anne-Marie and I shared our stories of experience. Entering into a storying space can be filled with tension. Entering into a role as co-researcher can be messy too. Even more difficult is retelling and reliving our stories of experience.

Negotiating this space was ongoing. I anticipated tensions for myself and for the co-participants. We shared our tensions. The sharing did not always happen in as timely or as visible a way as I would have hoped, or in as comfortable a way so as to fit into the landscapes of education, but we shared. There is beautiful authenticity to knowing as I craft these words, that the sharing did come. I was not always comfortable. It was most often not the stories of experience that necessarily healed, or fit alongside plot lines I had imagined, but that unknowing midst of story, where we began and ended was beautiful.

During our time as co-participants we sought ways to create comfortable sharing spaces. We checked in daily, or tried to. Initially, I would instigate the sharing which was most often led by me. Soon into the inquiry, Isabel and Anne-Marie told stories of how they wanted our conversational spaces to unfold, with coffees, journals, sketches, in snapshots from school, and long written pages given to me when they were ready. Our sharing journals evolved, yet this was a process similar to our sharing in our English Language Arts course and in goal-setting where students were asked to respond and I would offer feedback. Conversations were not new (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 176). The sharing journals evolved, of course, into field texts⁶, and then into modified types of field text journals, which both Isabel and Anne-Marie eventually took home. Isabel often stayed after dismissal, folding her sketchbook, pulling her school journal from the green bin, deep at the bottom, and crafting stories. She wrote stories and poems and shared them. I read and responded; she wrote and responded, and so on. I am thinking about the field texts that she shared and how these emerged in a typed formality that she insisted on giving me for the research. She had a new journal, no different than her school journal.

⁶ Field text and field notes are quoted directly, unless otherwise stated.

Sometimes it lived in the green bin. Mostly, it lived in her backpack or tucked away in my desk drawer. Anne-Marie kept her journals, both of them, then a third, with her in her double strapped black cloth small backpack that she carried with her on her back, with a purple pen, lip gloss, hair elastics and ever growing number of treasures from daily walks: a rock, a dried rose hip, a poem we studied in class written by a teenaged girl, GPS co-ordinates, mini-dinosaurs, a bottle cap. Anecdotal notes were kept by me and heaps of field notes taken too, in journals, on my computer, via voice note that I shared aloud, walking on the prairie, driving in my car, parked on the side of the road, and in reflective conversation with my works-in-progress circle, recorded later, mostly before I arrived home.

As we began to co-construct our storying space, I wanted students to understand that I wanted to work at this school. Many years earlier, during my undergraduate studies, I had completed a portion of one of my brief field experiences at 11th Street Alternate School. That experience had been one of my most comfortable school-teaching experiences. I am wondering about how much of that earlier story of belonging at 11th Street was what pulled me to that school during my graduate studies. During the earlier undergraduate experience I would come to school planned and every day, by the end of most days, know that little had gone according to plan. The living out of lives in the midst always seemed to retell my teacher plans. The focus of much of the work during that earlier experience had been identity work, aligning our own stories of experience with our learning outcomes so as to tell stories to live by. Staff designed school-wide activities where student, staff and community worked on reclaiming pride in the 11th Street name. We created small and huge art projects, shared our art globally and locally,

and invited the community to live in conversations with us, through the media and lunches and games nights. My first moments at 11th Street as a certified teacher, were during a staff ‘forward planning day’, where staff and administration discussed ways to change the ‘negative’ grand narrative of the school, of its staff and of its students.

I am thinking deeply with the stories of how I first came to know both Isabel and Anne-Marie. I recall that they both knew I had previously taught at 11th Street, but I do not know how. Once a new student entered our space, I often began by letting the students know there was no other place that I wanted to teach, that I chose them. I am beginning to learn how important it is that our stories of experience tell future stories that mirror what we long for and our hope that our stories will be attended to. Educational landscapes play a vital role in fostering a sense of belonging in youth because often, these spaces are the only institutions where youth live face to face alongside adults on a daily basis (Brendtro, Brokenleg & Van Bockern, 1990, p. 2). When I think of how beautifully stories of experience can be honoured, especially from past experiences at 11th Street, I realize how beautifully Dad took time, all the years of my life, living this teaching alongside me.

Story of Sacred Spaces

When I was young Dad would take my friend, Sheila, and me to the Esso on the Highway on dates. He would listen to us share about boys and school and books; he would attend to our stories. As I grew up I wondered how Dad was able to enter into the sacred after-school kitchen story space so effortlessly. Dad was connected to me through our stories and to the people to whom I was connected. And Dad had shared his stories too. Sometimes, when I was not attending to my own stories, Dad would share a story. At

these times I would learn and relearn the teachings that were to story my life: that Dad had once lived in a car in the garbage grounds, that Dad had courted Mom and that Dad had cried on their wedding day. From the midst of these teachings I became mindful that Dad always cries when he speaks of Mom, of us, and of his school kids. It was from Dad that I learned to begin with kindness, through story. It was from Dad that I learned always to bring the calm and comfort of home into the classroom. It was from my parent-teacher Dad that I learned that if the story of Cori, the bright and hyperactive and reckless me, needed Dad listening at home, that I also needed him (in that sacred space I kept for him inside my heart) listening at school. I am beginning to wonder if all students might need this. From Dad I learned to begin by listening. I am thinking now how having Dad, having Dad's stories of experience, having Dad as my significant adult relationship (Larson & Brendtro, 2000; Brendtro et al., 1990) helped to foster my belief in the importance of fostering scared spaces. Through Dad attending to my stories, I learned to attend to the stories of others. There is a teaching there.

I trusted in the space created through sharing stories and attending to stories. I felt the magic of storying when Anne-Marie would lead the way to our classroom at the end of the day for daily check-out, open her journal, pull out her seat, not even wait for me to sit down and begin to share. I entered with hope to attend to lives in the midst of stories of experience. We entered into the midst through living our stories of experience, Isabel, Anne-Marie and I, each of us in these messy stories of trauma to some degree.

Story of Tellings

Isabel and Anne-Marie and I thus entered into our narrative inquiry journey knowing each other, having spent part of the previous school term together. The school,

labeled by the school division as a service school, supports other high schools, and primarily offers services to meet the needs of the most high-risk youth in our division in grades nine and ten. 11th Street Alternate School functions to provide intensive supports to students and their families so that students may transition back to their home school; typically this happened within a semester or a year.

I have been thinking about the stories I told about the joy of belonging to 11th Street School and being part of its family. I was proud to live alongside these students, in that space and I wanted students to someday share a similar stories of belonging to a regular high school. I could have been teaching English elsewhere, but 11th Street was the place that I repeatedly storied as home. “The repetitiveness of these [told] story lines makes these roles and outcomes for [youth] normal, [recalling as Davis, Sumara & Luce-Kapler (2000) argue normal is but a fictionalized story of experience] and unremarkable [an unheard, untold or silenced story of experience] while reinforcing these concepts ‘under the surface’ of our conscious awareness” (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012, p. 87). My language was important. I thought deeply about how my language storied me and also told stories of students as well.

We came to storying gently. The classroom space was a sacred space where we gathered to share stories of experience. Stories come from students as well as from me. I think deeply about how I came to attend to stories of experience alongside Isabel, alongside Anne-Marie and alongside other students. I think about the gentle, long ebbs and flows to our life-making. We shared our messy often-silenced stories of experience. We shared our writing, our music, our art and our thoughts; we drank coffee and slushies;

we texted and texted and texted; we walked more; we shared through writing to each other, often in our journals, back and forth and forth and back.

I wonder now at all the ways in which Isabel and Anne-Marie entered into our relationship, more than just through language. Our relationship was built through listening, intuition, curiosity, trust, gratitude, forgiveness, hope and more than anything, happened because of our individual deep vulnerabilities. In these spaces, Isabel, Anne-Marie and I began to attend, even in our great muddled up way, to each other's stories of experience.

Stories of Return

I had lived alongside Isabel and Anne-Marie for a semester before we entered into formal narrative inquiry as outlined by the Research Ethics Board; the two students and I had lived alongside each other for six months in a school setting, two months over the summer staying in contact, before I had approval from the university to begin 'collecting data' to begin to attend to our stories of experience. Of course, we had been attending to each other's stories from the moment we first entered in the midst.

Each student had arrived to our school in February to finish the academic year, when Isabel was in grade ten, 15 years old, and Anne-Marie was in grade nine, 14 years old.

We had months together in a small school where we were fortunate throughout the day to spend a great deal of time in small group or, often, one on one. The students and I connected. Isabel and I through art and Anne-Marie and I through oral stories. As the students settled into the story of a new school that spring, it became apparent, to their families and to their school learning team of which I was part, that both girls might be

returning to our school in the fall. Neither student had maintained a consistent rate of attendance.

Thinking with a School's Story alongside Isabel and Anne-Marie

A consistent school rate of attendance was loosely used, in part, as one indicator that students were ready to transition to regular programming in traditional high schools. Often this rate was set at 80% attendance with scores of 3 or 4 on their circle of courage rubric⁷ (a second measure used by our school and supported by the Division, as a further indicator of a student's readiness to transition to a traditional high school).

Circle of Courage is an educational philosophy which claims, "belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity as the central values-the unifying theme-of positive cultures for education and youth programs" (Brendtro et al., 1990, p. 45). The Circle of Courage philosophy was taught to both teachers and students at 11th Street Alternate School. The Circle of Courage rubric was completed with students, hopefully reviewed weekly with students. The rubric looked at the four broad areas of: belonging, mastery, independence and generosity, and then narrowed these into loose indicators which further informed students' specific daily goals. Student goals were set between student and the student's case manager. Success was determined by ongoing discussion with the student's team. There were times when attendance at 80% looked good for the division but was not possible for some students. Students might transition to their regular schools for half-days, or on alternate timetables to best meet their needs. Success was individually determined.

⁷ See appendix 1 – Circle of Courage Rubric.

The Circle of Courage rubric was a loose rating scale that staff and students used to guide daily and long term goal setting with youth. The rubric, created by 11th Street staff and revised alongside students, was read alongside youth and, from it, daily goals were fleshed out and worked on through the development of strategies that could meet those goals. Often, students arrived to 11th Street Alternate School having been traumatised by educational systems, lacking a sense of belonging. 11th Street Alternative School staff worked collaboratively with students to help fill each student's quadrant, finding a sense of belonging, achieving a sense of mastery, fostering a sense of independence, and developing a sense of generosity.

The 12 large indicators, focused on the four quadrants, derived with student input, drove daily goals. These daily goals helped influence the Inclusion and Intervention⁸ goals set with students. The Circle of Courage rubric was reviewed bi-monthly with students. The language of the Circle of Courage Rubric was known to the students and staff, and used daily at check in and check out. Though we had "named" rates for attendance, when students were ready, transition back to a regular high school was based more on observations and conversations. When it was time, all members of the team agreed. Our hope was to have rooted these kids in love. The hope, connection and love of 11th Street has stayed rooted in me.

After that first semester alongside Isabel and Anne-Marie at the alternate school, both students were set to return to 11th Street. Anne-Marie had shown little growth on her

⁸ An Inclusion and Intervention Plan (IIP) is a written/living document developed and implemented by a collaborative team. It is an individual plan that describes supports, strategies and interventions to optimize student learning in an inclusive school setting" (Ministry of Saskatchewan). Each student's learning at 11th Street was guided by an IIP.

circle of courage rubric and her attendance had dropped. Though she spoke of being more connected to school and to myself, Anne-Marie could not verbalize why belonging was necessary to her wellbeing. Isabel had shown significant growth in her personal and social growth rubric. Her attendance had picked up and then dropped off. Importantly, Isabel asked to return to 11th Street in the fall.

Since I knew these two students would be in my class in the fall, as a narrative inquirer I had imagined sharing stories alongside them, just as I had imagined attending to stories of experience with many other students who were planning on returning. I also imagined sharing stories with other students who had not signed the research ethic consent form but who nonetheless shared their stories of experience.

For the Ones who could not Take Part: Story of Josh's Invitation to Inquiry

Stories matter.

Storying is fluid. I explicitly explained to Isabel and Anne-Marie that I would safeguard their anonymity, inside and outside of our storying spaces. I explained that I hoped they would safeguard one another's anonymity and mine, as well. "We realize that our attentiveness to relationship could conflict with dominant stories of what "good" teachers and "good" researchers do. Plotlines for good researchers do not often attend to the aftermath of school for children's lives as their first concern. As narrative inquirers engaged with children as co-researchers, we realized that it was here that we needed to attend" (*Clandinin & Connelly as quoted in Clandinin et al., 2006, p. 20*). Our inquiry begins with our relationships. Living relationally is interacting with others, coming first to listen through our connections with others and is "what narrative inquirers do" (*Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 189*). Narrative inquirers attend to their own and to

others' experiences. The listening connects narrative inquirers to place, a place where the narrative inquirer steps to stories. The stories may be messy, tentative, lasting; our narratives come to be honoured through our connections, where we attend because, this work "is people in relation studying with people in relation" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 189). Together we move beyond storytelling to think narratively with stories of experience, living, telling, retelling and reliving stories of experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In my notes, I reflect on living in relation and entering into the midst:

When September arrived and I handed out the letters of invitation, my angst over having lived in the midst of the story of research ethics journey⁹ was visible to the students. The students had lived [lived alongside me and knew of] my stories of frustration and exhaustion of submitting and resubmitting and resubmitting and sitting before the entire Research Ethics Board, all the while desperately wanting to begin and all the while, in the throes of the [experiences] of change and loss with Dad's stroke. Some students chose not to participate because of the pain and anguish they had seen me go through. They simply wanted no part in a similar journey. One student, Josh, wanted so much to share his stories of experience with me, and admittedly, I ached to share Josh's stories of experience with other educators. I felt [in thinking narratively with his stories of experience that] I had something to learn from Josh.

Josh wrote poetry and messy pained journal entries, folding his writing into eight sections, tossing it my direction and leaving school the moment he had

⁹ The process of applying for ethical approval from the University of Regina Research Ethics Board. I share stories of the ethics journey later in the thesis.

shared. Taking one look at the university's letterhead, the requirement that his father or mother would have to come to school, that his father would know that he was sharing, Josh tossed the letter of invitation at my face, "Fuck this shit." And I [every part of me who recalled the story of being pulled to recited spelling words and marginalized, losing hope and never fitting in, crinkled my forehead] agreed with him.

I am thinking deeply about how the letters of invitation and consent ignore students who lived in harm or who desperately want to share their stories and have them documented and attended to but who would be made unsafe if the research guidelines were followed.

I had this vision of [so many of my student] swaying through the university halls on our way to see my faculty advisor... F-bombs flying. Who would attend to our stor[ies in] the midst of that story experience? I attended to his stories of experience anyway. He wrote and wrote and wrote. But I am not allowed to write about him further [I am not allowed to share specific details of our stories of experiences that he attended to with me and that I attended to with him. Or of Josh attending to and living alongside Isabel and Anne-Marie.] I have no consent. But Josh['s] stories of experience [resonate], so too does the educational landscape in which I was part. I miss him. And by not being able to share his stories of experience, I think each of us misses something here, in this space too. Josh's stories of experience I will hold with me all my days. I cried about Josh at my Works in Progress writing group. I wrote about him. I continue to write with his stories [of] experience. [I continue to think deeply about Josh's stories of

experience, letting the resonance of them whisper retellings of teacher and school stories, stories of teachers and stories of school. Josh frequently shared stories of his home experiences with me, messy stories and tensioned stories, heart-wrenchingly beautiful stories. He shared stories that knitted us together through the commonality of our stories of experience. Josh shared with me, not because I was the only person who knew his stories - certainly for Josh's learning needs, there were many educators and agencies involved in Josh's educational programming - but because I was perhaps non-threatening. For Josh, the beauty of sharing his stories of experience under the control of the university's story of how sharing ought to live alongside the control of home knowing Josh was sharing his stories lived relentlessly contradictory to Josh's living and living out of his stories of experiences.] *I continue to keep in contact with Josh. Only I am unable to share his stories, in his words with you, reader. I wonder here, in the throes of graduate work, how I am still so bound by a grand narrative of a story of safety to [be] wholly unable to attend to the stories of experience that need attending. In this sharing there remain many silenced stories of experience. (Interim research text based on field notes, September/November, 2014)*

Stories of Entering into Narrative Inquiry

And Josh's story is only one story of my experience with the letters of invitation. I handed out 17. "[W]hen the words form I am merely retelling the same story in different patterns" (King, 2003, p. 2). These past months, years, I have been thinking deeply about these other silenced stories of experience, silenced because students could not dare to share with a key adult in their lives. Storying can be messy.

As the story of the ethics journey lagged on that spring, I had imagined attending to our collective stories of experience, puzzling over our stories in the midst. I ached to glean a purpose to the messiness of the process. I wanted our stories of experience to matter. I felt deeply the pain of the ethical process silencing stories of experience. I wondered deeply about the necessity of the ethics process regulating what could be shared, and I wondered about the wholeness of the stories of experiences of youth who led beautiful and complex messy lives that simply did not fit the requirements that gave them the “criteria” deemed by another telling a story for them.... I had then felt naively an academic credibility in embarking on research alongside co-participants. At times when the students would be deep in a long free write, I would journal as well, wondering which among them, if any, might enter into the narrative inquiry space. I would wonder what stories we would puzzle through. In the beginning, my puzzlings felt far away and foggy:

Storying is hard. And messy. Isabel wants so much to share. Was so keen last night. As I write these notes I wonder about the educators who might someday read this work. As I type these field notes every word becomes so deliberate, so important, every moment of today, of yesterday, two days into the year, so aware, so living, so necessary for me to be present, for me to [be wakeful].. I wonder if the ways I come to story are better. I wonder if the stories I share are better, more or if I share them differently than I did before research? I wonder if this perspective, this lens is allowing a space for me to listen [to] what I did not know. Is this a new space? Is this a space that I knew before or that all teachers know, or come to know? Is this a space found only through narrative, through story,

through research? As I write this, I feel a deep sense of educational story retelling in me. I do not understand. I do not know this story. I do not know the comfortable questions, I do not trust questions though I attend to the sense inside of being here, and staying long, long in this midst of mess and tension and wonderment and curiosity and uncertain [ty]. Here there is deep sense of home. (Interim research text based on field notes, September/November 2014)

I am thinking deeply about how I came to attend to Isabel's and to Anne-Marie's stories in the midst. I came to attend from my being present with Isabel and Anne-Marie and vulnerable in those months long before anything was formalized. I entered the space of trust with Isabel and with Anne-Marie not by trying to gain access to their stories of experience but through living authentically alongside them.

However, as I was attending to their stories of experience as their educator, I learned that I was also present as an individual. That spring I learned that Isabel, Anne-Marie and I shared a few similar stories of experience. We shared stories of experience linked by stories of grief and abuse and love and hope and growing up. We were connected by our stories of being children, daughters, students, silenced, confused, joyful, and sad. Isabel shared her stories of experience through art, sharing through anime, putting on an art show in late June. Anne-Marie, needing a way to carry the sense of belonging she felt at school with her over the summer, shared her stories of experience by designing school hoodies, getting the proposal passed by the school community council and having staff and students wear her design all summer.

For me, during that first spring, living alongside Isabel and Anne-Marie, other students, and staff, I existed in an unrelenting fog, a fog that today at times still lives

thick and raw. That March Dad had had a stroke. I remember waiting in the Tim's drive thru and getting a phone call. I seldom received calls on my cell phone. Looking at the call display I remember seeing my sister's name and steeling myself. I could not remember the last time she had called my cell instead of texting first. She told me Dad was on route to the city, an hour and a half away, by ambulance; Mom was following. She said it was likely a stroke. Jessy Lee sat beside me. We were in the drive thru. We had not yet placed our order. Coffees we never drank.

I often hear teachers remark that to be a good teacher means to be present. I continue to think about the stories of being a good or bad teacher and of the notion of being present. I am thinking deeply about grand narratives and of how grand narratives often create meaning of my stories of experience (Kumashiro, 2004). That spring, as I negotiated the challenges of the research ethics board and as I lived my own stories of change and loss, I wonder if I was mindful enough of Isabel's and Anne-Marie's stories of experience as well as I might have been.

Sometimes, I felt I was only physically present in the room. I came in and out of being sensitive to the students in great waves. Sometimes, I was harsh and curt. Sometime, I cried. Sometimes, I was silent and withdrawn. Sometimes, I found myself labouring to respond with care to students' stories of experience. I would teach all day and leave right after work to go to the hospital, later to the rehabilitation center, where Dad spent months. The world continued on in this loop. For me, time was a painful moment-by-moment crawl. I hurt every second. I missed Dad. I missed who I was when I alongside him. I missed my place in my family. I worked hard to find my way. Students read my fog as a grief story. Anne-Marie took selfies with me. She would stay after

school and walk beside me during walk. Sometimes, I wonder if the hoodies were for me too.

In those early foggy days as Isabel and I sat in the café listening to poetry the night of her Art opening, I looked over at her. It was my first night away from the hospital in three months. A titanic wave of normalcy engulfed me. I was suddenly uncertain how to breathe or sit or drink or see. Isabel was already looking at me. She had this knowing look (Ellsworth, 2005; King, 2003) about her face. “Breathe”, she said. Isabel took a sip of her hot chocolate and I copied her.

When I think deeply about how beautifully Isabel attended to my stories of change and loss that spring, I wonder if it was because she understood the telling, living, retelling, and reliving experiences of grief more, better and differently than I. I am uncertain, still. I wonder if Isabel understood change and time in a way I could not.

When I think about how Anne-Marie first came to attend to my stories and after living alongside her, I wonder if Anne-Marie attended to my changes in the way that she wanted others to attend to her stories of experience. She was present. Anne-Marie showed up. Anne-Marie listened. Anne-Marie often asked about Dad and when I was young and the stories he had shared with me. She was keen to understand the experiences I had growing up alongside Dad. Anne-Marie opened spaces for me to share. Anne-Marie attended to my stories of experience.

“Regardless of starting point, narrative inquirers situate themselves in more or less relational ways with participants” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 34). I have often wondered if, through the fog of change and loss, I was neglectful of my students by not being fully present with them, by not being a “good enough” teacher (Lived memory). Dewey (2009)

says that life is experience and experience is learning. Kumashiro (2004) states that in those comfortable spaces, perhaps bumping up spaces where we educators measure ourselves against a grand narrative of who we ought to be, we need to relive and retell stories of ourselves in these ‘crisis’ moments (p. 30). I am wondering if the bumping up places are the moments when stories must be most keenly attended to.

I know during those months students saw me attend to, retell, and relive the messy and often silenced stories of being my mother’s daughter. Students saw me cry and ask for help and felt me return to them. They saw me struggle. They saw me sad. They saw me vulnerable. They saw a staff and school team wrap arms around me and allow me to share my pain, daily. School became a space where my stories of grief were honoured and never silenced. They saw a school space where the stories of joy were not privileged over stories of grief. They learned that their support in attending to my stories of experience was noticed, needed and necessary. *I wonder now if what we learned was an understanding that pain, confusion and uncertainty has a place in the curriculum and life-making of educational spaces.* Messiness is where we began; in the midst is where we attended to each others’ storied lives.

The stories we live and tell are forever fluid; they exist in the midst. There is a profound importance in attending to and having our stories of experience heard, “Sometimes a person needs a story more than food to stay alive. That is why we put these stories in each other’s memory. This is how people care for themselves” (Lopez, 1990, as cited in Lessard, 2010, p. 24).

“Want a different ethic? Tell a different story” (King, 2003, p. 164). I think King (2003) and I are equally pragmatic in examining narrative. Narrative inquirers understand

that stories of experience exist relationally within three commonplaces: relationally temporally, relational in place and relationally socially/personally (Clandinin, 2013, pp. 38-39). Storying is living, doing, and a way of being. *It is not the stories that are singularly important, but our wholeness in attending to the stories of experience that are the difference making process.*

A Story of Anne-Marie

I lived in formal inquiry with Anne-Marie for 10 months during which she shared her stories and I recorded her words, her art and our conversations. The flow of our conversations was guided by Anne-Marie; she took us where she felt her stories needed to take us. Towards the midpoint of our formal research, Anne-Marie, who was fond of journaling and who had grown quite trusting in sharing her stories in this way, asked if she might record her own stories. I agreed. When I think about how Anne-Marie was so set in sharing these stories of experience with me for this research, I am thinking deeply about how clearly Anne-Marie seemed to understand what she wanted to share in this narrative inquiry. In the excerpts that follow, I share them as she shared them – because these are the stories of experience that were important to Anne-Marie. From the beginning there was *the story* she found most gentle and beautiful that she wished to share with me. That beautiful story was much hidden alongside her other messy and tensioned stories of experience.

One of her stories of experience was how she had come to attend the alternate school. These are her words almost a year after coming to our school. I have taken liberties in spacing to help the flow. Anne-Marie's words:

When I first started Ross Street Collegiate in grade 9

*I always went to school
at the start of the year
so like 3 months
after I started skipping
with friends
leaving and getting baked and food and just fucking around
having fun
but now I just regret not going
and I would always skip gym
because I didn't like going
got boring and I hated my teacher
she was a bitch
she would always kick me out
for the stupidest shit ever
people would talk to me
I would ignore them because I [k]now I would get kicked out
but I did anyways
so I stop going
and I would get DT
but I would never go
so the day came
and they got fed up and sent me to 11th Street
(Anne-Marie, Field text, January 2015)*

When Anne-Marie first arrived at our school the stories of Anne-Marie as a student were shared by a student support teacher from her sending school, a common practice when transitioning students. Anne-Marie was storied as a sweet girl who did not go to class but hid in the stairwells, not necessarily leaving the building. The student support teacher shared that when Anne-Marie was pulled away from school, it was by her friends, but that she consistently returned to school, but not to class.

The Anne-Marie I came to know was quiet and reserved and often shared her appreciation for the small class sizes of the alternate school setting, and the open and relaxed atmosphere. I remember in the beginning going through one-on-one goal-setting with Anne-Marie, going through her Circle of Courage rubric a process that informed our work, as Anne-Marie and I came to assess and evaluate, and perhaps begin to make changes to her Inclusion and Intervention Plan. I remember the moment clearly. We had our backs to the open door, sitting at our round table, facing the windows. It was nearing the end of the day. I had slightly pushed the paperwork away and asked Anne-Marie what she really wanted from her time at the school.

“I want to go to counselling with my Mom” (Saas, Professional notes, 2014).

She made quick eye contact with me and then looked back at the pages in front of us. She looked at the spot on the paper where we might write her future plans. I asked her to write that goal in that space. I am thinking deeply, ever so deeply about Anne-Marie’s words, ‘with my Mom.’ I wonder whether the act of writing those words made a difference in her life. I wonder how, from what depths, she sought to ask for help, and how deeply I failed her, on so many, many levels by allowing Anne-Marie to hope that I might be able to, in some small way, facilitate an attending, a storying space, even a

conversational space of counselling between her and her mother. Was it my place to invite her mother in and begin to ask questions for Anne-Marie? I wonder if I failed her in allowing her to name her goal. I feel wind's prairie rhythms clearly on my eyes, like Dad's teachings deeply inside me. I remember Dad opening a space for me to come to speak the questions and wonderings and dreams that circled so deeply within myself, "Names have power. This is the fundamental principle of magic everywhere. Call out the name of a supernatural being and you will have its instant and undivided attentions in the same way that your lost toddler will have yours the second it calls your name" (Robinson, 2000, p. 180). I did allow Anne-Marie to name her goal. And I would again. I did not know that Anne-Marie's retelling and reliving story of experience was to become an unconventional hope story of experience. However, I sense this now.

I remember the days when I first came to know Duane, I remember sitting and listening to his band play. I remember listening for hours as he shared stories of conflict with teachers, late night parties, and heartache. I remember reading bins of books of his poetry. I remember attending to Duane's stories of experience and how, in the beginning, the more I attended to his stories, the more he appeared not to need me to attend. I remember in the beginning I felt like he was not aware I was there.

I think deeply about Anne-Marie's telling of wanting counselling with her mother and I wondered if these tellings and her subsequent living out of stories of experience were her yearnings to have someone attend to her stories. I am thinking deeply about how educational landscapes continued to ignore messy stories of students like Anne-Marie.

The school's administration shared the stories of Anne-Marie's Physical Education class avoidance. I wonder if these stories originated from the entrance

interview the administrator did with each student prior to transition to 11th Street, or through stories shared via one of Anne-Marie's teachers from the sending school. From Anne-Marie's writing, she felt silenced in her Physical Education class. Anne-Marie also demonstrated a great deal of courage and resilience to return, time and again, when she was in conflict with the Physical Education teacher. When Anne-Marie arrived at 11th Street, stories of Anne-Marie as disliking Physical Education class and non-attending was already being told of her. However, in Anne-Marie's retelling, she did attend. She attended "knowing" people would talk to her, knowing nothing would be done to stop this, and knowing she was going to get kicked out. Anne-Marie attended and tried to live the story of a student in class by not talking. She was following the grand narrative, telling a story of educational spaces being places of quiet and obedience, where youth consistently follow orders directed by teachers. Reading Anne-Marie's story as a stand-alone document, it is simplistic to assume Anne-Marie is missing the skill of advocating for herself (asking for her needs to be met). However, from the first moment Anne-Marie sat next to me in that initial conversation she stated that her goal for her time at 11th Street was to go to counselling with her mother. Interestingly, this is a need that she was unable to communicate to her mother, yet had continued to seek help from me, from the mental health councillor and from other school staff.

I am thinking deeply about how Anne-Marie's school support team tried to foster in her a sense of belonging. We tried to offer strategies that Anne-Marie might use to bridge gaps between her and her mother. When I think about the strategies and the meetings and all the tools we had in place, I wonder why I never came right out and facilitated a conversation between Anne-Marie and her mother. Anne-Marie was seeing

the school counsellor and that individual tried to facilitate meetings. It was not until the concern over Anne-Marie's safety became part of her school stories that I even tried to facilitate a conversation. I think about the stories of safety, which so often raise an alarm, stories that are trained into the grand narrative of 'being teacher' inside and outside of educational landscapes. Why did Anne-Marie's support team not set up chats between her and mother? Was this out of the perception of 'norm'? Did I attend to Anne-Marie's stories well enough?

Anne-Marie stopped going to Physical Education class, and in her telling of her stories of experience, stopped attending school. Anne-Marie believed she stopped attending school while the Student Support Teacher at her sending school shared that Anne-Marie was at school, only not in class. I think deeply about Anne-Marie's request to share her Physical Education stories of experience for this inquiry. Did Anne-Marie wish to make visible the discrepancies of the told stories of her experiences with her lived experiences? Was Anne-Marie, once again, asking for her needs to be met? Was she asking in a way that ruffled the dominant narrative? It is only now, after returning to and thinking deeply with Anne-Marie's stories of experience that I am able to retell and to relive the depth and breadth to those experiences. The moment is long past when I have any voice, other than in sharing our experiences with future educators. King (2003) pushes me to continue to ask, well, so what? Who cares?

I remember the weeks after Anne-Marie's grandpa died. Her attendance slipped to a few hours a week. Anne-Marie took her inquiry journals home, saying to me that she was not certain she wanted to continue the inquiry. My thinking that night:

I wonder. You came to us from Ross Street Collegiate a school of 750 students where you hid in the stairwells and bathrooms and never actually left the building. You didn't attend class. The reason for you coming to 11th Street was in part the lack of attendance and the lack of school engagement. I remember you sharing a story of heading to the library and getting caught up with going to the bathroom and this one episode is the series of events of you sitting in the administrator's office, you having meetings with your family and you [transitioning] to 11th Street. 11th Street is a school of a bit more than a dozen kids, four rooms, daily walks, a closed campus, circle talks, gratitude, food, a strong sense of family, a home. No one gets lost here, and if someone begins to, we go out of our way to try to find each other. And lost in every sense we can imagine. (Field notes, November, 2014)

I wonder when, in the temporality of Anne-Marie's stories of school, she had a sense of others telling stories of her. When did she have the sense of her imminent transitioning to the alternate school? How was the rug pulled out from under Anne-Marie? Had she asked other staff at her home school to negotiate counselling with her mother? Had others spoken to her about counselling? Had 11th Street been used as a consequence? Had a possible transition to 11th Street been brought up by her learning team, her support team, or her teachers? Had the transition been negotiated or a threat? Had it been a relief? Was her school refusal, in some part, a retelling by Anne-Marie of a need she had for a recounting of her time at Ross St. Collegiate, for someone to attend to her stories of experience, or for someone to take the time to help her acquire a skill? I am thinking deeply about whether her nonattendance had been a way for her to communicate

with her mother. I wonder if what Anne-Marie wanted was for someone to stop telling the story of Anne-Marie skipping classes and instead find out why she skipped them? I am thinking deeply now about why Anne-Marie wanted to talk with her mother, and why she wanted this conversation negotiated by school personnel. Had anyone given her support and praise for returning over and over to a big, busy institution? I wonder if anyone had given her a journal and asked her to write her needs instead of asking her to verbalize them. I wonder if anyone paused long enough to wonder why Anne-Marie was compliant, silent, in her transition to an alternate placement. I wonder why no one shared the stories of Anne-Marie's elementary school experience. *Students' stories of experience can be messy and tensioned. But messiness is no reason for ignoring stories of experience.*

Thinking About Attending to Stories

Attending to stories of experience is complex work. With these complex "systems that learn" (Davis et al., 2000, p. 76) comes messiness "when assumptions, presuppositions, and taken-for-granted frameworks give way to questions, doubts, and uncertainty, a fair amount of travel in the attractive blind alleys is to be expected" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 24). For Isabel and Anne-Marie and for myself, we were familiar with blind alleys. We were familiar with others telling stories of us to fit us into dominant stories of school. For us, though, we found a sort of unintentional sense of belonging in each other's stories of not belonging. We found a connectedness through our stories of disconnection. Ours was a messy belonging to school.

Living alongside Isabel and Anne-Marie and other students both inside and outside educational landscapes, specifically 11th Street Alternate School, made me think

deeply about the blind alleys and unforeseen ways that educators support students and how educators come to foster belonging spaces for youth. Often educators will bond over commonalities of experience. I am thinking of support groups, meetings, professional development and clubs. Silent and silenced stories of experience that draw adults to support groups often pull youth together inside and outside school spaces in much the same way. Such support groups are seldom advocated for as spaces of belonging within the stories of school.

How does attending to student stories of experience, even tensioned stories of experience, bump up against and challenge my dominant narratives of belonging and fostering belonging? I am thinking deeply about how my own stories became part of the inquiry as I return and think deeply with Isabel's and Anne-Marie's stories of experience. I wonder at the uncomfortableness of tensioned stories and how these stories are often easier left unattended, outside of educational landscapes. I am reminded of Mom, when challenged about providing special services for some students, replied, "*Parents send us the best kids they've got*" (Saas, *Lived memory*). If stories can not live and be lived-out in educational spaces, where will our youth share them? And with whom? We do, after all, all live storied lives.

Dominant School Stories

Dominant stories of school negate some stories of experience while affirming others. Clandinin et al. (2006) describe dominant stories as being about how school ought to be. These dominant school stories are often ritualized and maintained stories that perpetuate the overall stories of school. Dominant stories of school are often told about students needing to graduate to be successful. There are multiple plotlines to these

dominant stories that negate and or silence different stories of success, giving privilege to some plotlines over others. Dominant stories push beyond stories lived and living out inside educational landscapes, telling stories of what students, families and communities ought to look like and behave like to fit the stories of school.

At 11th Street Alternate school we felt the bumping up place of dominant stories that students needed to look well-dressed and come from higher socio-economic homes to be successful. Often, people would drop boxes of clothing off for 11th Street students. The 11th Street students would pack the boxes and drop them off at a school whose School Community Council had requested such donations. Often, at division-wide learning days, grouped to sit with teachers from around the division, I would be asked about 11th Street's students' low abilities. "Come for lunch, and visit with us," I would reply. I wonder how professional development and conversation with youth might help educators negotiate these bumping up spaces and offer opportunities for retelling and reliving dominant school stories. I wonder at the beauty in students leading such learning spaces. I am thinking deeply about all that I have learned from the students I have lived alongside, and from Isabel and Anne-Marie. I wonder what would happen if attending to student's stories of experience came first in the curricular race¹⁰. The "knowledge [and all knowledge is experience (Dewey, 2009)] of young people is subjugated knowledge because there is often a failure to elicit it in the processes and practices of traditional mainstream high schools" (Smyth & Hattam, 2004, p. 18). Attending to stories should matter.

¹⁰ The tireless commitment and singular focus to have students meet learning outcomes/indicators.

Isabel, Anne-Marie and I each had a fractured sense of belonging to school. When I first met Isabel and Anne-Marie we had begun at the door to the classroom. We began our relationship by entering into conversation about the thousands of books that lined the classroom walls, the student art that lined the walls or possibly the enormous upright graffitied-covered piano that stood in one corner of the room. As we entered into conversational and relational ways of living alongside each other, I shared. I shared stories of former students, with permission. I shared the story of the sixteen year old who spent 40 hours writing poetry and then graffitied over a piano because his father wanted him to play classical piano, not write poetry, and not do many other things. I shared Duane's conflicts with his teachers and mine in navigating the world of being a teacher. I shared the stories of having been silenced, at times by teachers and by school too. I also shared my schooling successes where and when I felt my voice was heard. I shared university academic successes. I shared the range of stories because all were authentic and were my way of making meaning of living out my teaching stories. I shared both the gentle and the tensioned stories.

I typically entered into relationships with youth by opening spaces of my own stories of experience to make visible that attending to student stories may not always bring resolution or comfort. I make these tensions visible so students will also come to understand that in our sharing space it is safe to share tensions and that tensions have "reverberated in and through lives" (Clandinin et al., 2006, p. 5). I wanted Isabel and Anne-Marie to understand the intricacies of details of my experiences in much the same way as I hoped to attend to theirs. We "keep at it. What we are doing is telling and retelling, to ourselves and to others, the story of what we are about and what we are"

(Carr, 1987, as cited in Clandinin et al., 2006, p. 8). In telling and retelling our stories to live by, all that we are about, we shift the dominant story of school and begin weaving our narrative experiences alongside.

Dominant Stories: Grade Five Story of Return

“Stories are wondrous things. And they are dangerous” (King, 2003, p. 9). When I was in grade five I spent most of my class time (or what I remember felt like most of my class time) in the resource room. I remember the resource room as the place I was forced to attend, a small windowless room with one table and four chairs. As this memory of experience swirls, it is with a “reflexive gaze” (Schafer et al., 2015, p. 19) that I am thinking of the design of my current classroom. I am thinking of the support room in which Isabel and Anne-Marie first came to know me, filled with natural light, art, literature, circle tables, questions and time, a room specially designed before they arrived, and a space they helped to enhance, adding and changing the artwork work, designing bulletin boards, organizing bookcases. I am thinking deeply that much of the feel of my classroom now may be influenced by the stories of pain experienced in that resource room place when I was in grade five.

Every week the kids in that grade five resource group had to recite by memory the letter-by-letter words of the teacher’s French and English spelling word lists into a tape recorder. When I had finished recording, the recording device and I were allowed to return to class. The strategy was based upon, I believe, a crazy sort of success through embarrassment. The teacher and the other children from the homeroom would gather around her desk and serve as judge, listening with a sort of trained excitement to find my spelling errors. The gathering happened every Friday and when it did, it was quick.

That May, I recorded my one word and returned to class with the machine. There, I was met with the usual near-to-cheering anticipation. The gang of grade five students, of which I did not feel a part, were already gathered around the teacher's desk. I remember feeling ill as I approached the mob. The teacher played the recording. However, as the recorded word played, the class paused. One boy said, "I think she got that right."

The teacher said nothing, but she quickly rewound the tape. She pressed play and the classmates leaned in. I held my breath. But I already knew. The boy and I looked at each other. I repeated each letter in my head as my recorded voice sounded around us. I had spelled the word correctly.

The same boy declared, "It's right! She spelled that right!"

The teacher moved her hand towards the next tape recorder, sniggering, "No. No. Cori never gets them right" (Lived memory, grade five). She moved on and discounted me. It had been just after lunch. When the 2:15 pm recess bell rang, I gathered my sweater from its hook, left school, and walked home. Two weeks later I started at a different school.

In this recounting of experience, what stays with me so deeply is the sense of being singled out, of not belonging and of feeling stupid. I remember sharing the vulnerability of this story of experience with students during a round-table discussion at 11th Street. I remember a student remarking, "But Ms. Saas, you're not stupid." I remember the vulnerability of being labelled different, and storied as 'lower abilities.' I remember how living and living out the story of teacher allowed me to relive and retell my stories to live by into stories of strength and difference and to understand that I was a

finder of strategies, creative and out-of-the-box, and most importantly, that my stories of experience mattered.

Puzzling with Anne-Marie's Stories

I am thinking about Anne-Marie. I am thinking about all the times her behaviour told stories of Anne-Marie that she then continued to live out through walking out of Physical Education class because she felt singled out, picked on and silenced. I am thinking about all the times, midway through a school day, as I watched Anne-Marie step into a waiting car, or van or truck filled with friends. Having left 11th Street, I wondered at my role in her slipping out to the washroom, sending messages and arranging a ride. I wonder how close I was coming to ignoring her stories of leaving school when it was similar to and yet different from my stories of leaving my grade five school. Anne-Marie would consistently return. After the bell rang and I grabbed my sweater, I knew I would not return. When I first knew Anne-Marie, I never asked about the wholeness of her stories of experience, the narratives of experience that came during the months before she came to live alongside me and the rest of the family at 11th Street. I never sought them. I never sought to attend to them.

I missed so much time. I missed so much of Anne-Marie.

I asked after Anne-Marie's family. I listened while she shared stories, provided classroom opportunities for her to share in meaningful ways about her home, her past. I spoke to her sending-school support team, and her family, including the police officers who lived alongside her. I thoroughly reviewed her cumulative learning file and often returned to review it again. Only later, when I came to live alongside Anne-Marie during the inquiry journey did I realize how superficial my original introduction to Anne-Marie

had been. School files and school personnel could not begin to provide the in-depth understanding that came from hearing her stories of experience.

As her educator, I came to realize that we needed time. This thought frightens me. Without fully coming to live alongside students' stories of experience in some way I am negating in part or whole, the relational interconnectedness of their stories. For how many students have I tried to attend to stories of experience and inadvertently found an "over simplified view of what is at stake" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 152).

Isabel's Story of Return to 11th Street

Isabel joined our school family on Valentine's Day. She wore black. The first stories of Isabel I heard was that she missed school because of her health, mostly her heart. Soon, within a day, I was also told that Isabel missed school because of mental health issues. Though Isabel was not on my case load, I connected with Isabel through common passions, a love of fantasy literature, and a love of visual art. Isabel storied herself as a writer, a reader and an artist. Isabel also storied herself as ill. In Isabel's words:

My whole life has been one struggle after another. From the moment I was born to this very second. I have struggled with many unseen health problem[s], starting with my early on heart diseases, a VSD and Pulmonary Stenosis. When I was born my parents were told I [would] die within the day, they were all amazed that I had survived. For the first four years of my life I wasn't able to do anything a regular infant was allowed to do. I wasn't even allowed to cry, they feared it would put too much strain on my heart. The first thing I could do that every other kid could

do was school, it was going well and I loved it, until around grade four when my doctor decided that even school was too dangerous and took me out.

My friends and class-mates were very supportive through the whole thing. They would send me movies to watch and little trinkets from around the classroom, at one point the teacher even made them make cards for me. I was back in school by the end of grade four and I was very grateful for that, it gets really lonely when you can't play with other kids. When I went back to school my life was normal for a while, but then I started getting bullied badly because I was smaller than everyone else, and then about halfway through grade six I went to Saskatoon, Saskatchewan for my regular check-up. I was a bit confused when they said they had decided to keep me at the hospital for a couple days. They had my Mom leave the room so they [talked] to her alone, when she came back she was in tears.

They said I had Long QT Syndrome. They said it was a very rare and dangerous disease, and not only that but instead of having only one gene for it I had two. One that I had gotten from my Mom and one that had mutated in myself. The doctors told me I was a very special child, that there was only a one in a million chance of it happening. I was soon crowded by doctors and interns who wanted to get a look at me[. For] the first while it was very uncomfortable, but after a while I got used to feeling like a guinea pig.

By the end of grade six I had signed up for a special surgery. The doctor who was going to do the surgery took [a] quick glance at me and then looked at my Mom and said "Your daughter should be dead; she should not be here right

now.” At first I could [not] believe that he had said that in front of me, but I knew it as true, I should have been dead. I was told I would get a machine about the size of a medium sized tomato put into my chest, the doctor told me that I would have wires running through out my body afterwards. In grade 7, August 17th 2010, I got what is called an ICD (Internal Cardio Defibrillator) put in. It has two functions, one function is to keep my heart going steadily, and this part is called a Pacemaker. The second part is meant to restart my heart when it [stops], this part is the defibrillator. (Isabel, Field text, January, 2015)

Soon after Isabel transitioned to 11th Street, what she shared were stories of experience of her former involvement in cadets. Many of Isabel’s stories were woven around these experiences, and her older brother’s interactions with another family also involved in cadets. Often, Isabel would share how members of this family had caused her to have to quit cadets, where she shared stories of herself as a leader and as successful. Isabel also shared stories of bullying and of her ultimately leaving cadets.

During the spring of Dad’s stroke and the submission of my narrative inquiry proposal for ethics review, Isabel began to also share stories of depression. Isabel’s stories of cadets faded from her tellings. At 11th Street, Isabel began to take on a leadership role, assuming responsibilities with many service projects and serving as host at 11th Street School’s city-wide event to raise awareness for mental health. I am thinking deeply about what prompted Isabel to find a sense of belonging at school. But she did. She quickly began to retell her stories of experience, dropping cover stories or fictionalized stories, “stories told to maintain a sense of continuity within the dominant stories of school” (Clandinin et al., 2006, p. 7). Isabel was keen to add her permanent

painted hand marks to the 'Wall of Belonging' at 11th Street's community room. In Isabel's words:

After I got the ICD everything was great for a while, until I started feeling constantly tired and sad, I felt like everyone hated me. My Mom brought me to the doctor and I was diagnosed with Major Depression. I had thought that way I had been feeling for so long was normal, but they told me that it wasn't. In grade 8 with my Depression took turn for [the] worst, I got even sadder, anger and severely violent. I didn't know what else to do, so I spend my grade eight days in the principal's office crying my eyes out.... Every time some[one] would talk to me my words would come out as glass shards, and because of this my class mates decided I was psychotic, they wouldn't talk to me, they wouldn't even look my way. I had lost so many friends and I had people telling me that if I talked to them they would kill me. I don't think they realized how much their words hurt at the time. For a while I agreed with them, I thought I would be better off dead.

At the time I had thoughts of suicide usually twice a day, but then I met someone that changed my life. She was going through most of the things I was going through to. She was criticized and pushed out just like me. After a little while we became best friends, I had found someone I could actually tell my thoughts and how I was feeling. She saved me. By the end of grade eight we had decided on different high schools, so we parted ways. When I went to Ross Street Collegiate I met many more people like me, we were all very supportive of each other. Every[thing was]great until grade 10. My depression hit me harder than ever, and I started skipping school. I ended up begin sent to an alternate school

called 11th Street Alternate School, and at this school was the very girl that had saved my life in grade eight.

She hadn't changed very much, she was still the same outspoken person I had met three years ago. We quickly reconnected. She helped me get on my feet again. To this day I still don't know how to thank her. I am still struggling with depression but I have learned to deal with it. It just shows me that no matter what I go through, it will be okay, and for that I am grateful. Nobody bullies me anymore, and I have a lot of friends to talk to. For once in my life, I'm not worried of failing. (Isabel, Field text, January, 2015)

Thinking with Isabel's Stories

Thinking with Isabel's stories of experience, I wonder if Isabel needed to see herself as being safe in order to share her stories of experience inside a school space and to find connections to other students with similar stories. I am thinking deeply about the importance of being rooted to place and how place can help us make meaning of our lives. Place stories us (Ellsworth, 2005; Green, 1995). I wonder if Isabel's freedom to share her stories of depression helped Isabel retell and relive her stories of connection to school but also provided a way for her to re-story these experiences inside and outside of her educational landscape so that she was able to retell a story of herself as leader, a story she once told but had been unable to continue telling.

As I began to live alongside Isabel, I came to learn something deeper about those first cover stories she had shared with me, and with the rest of the 11th Street staff. Isabel had a deep understanding of how she was living and living out her stories of experience. My "arrogant perception" (Lugones, 1987) as I viewed her stories through my teacher

lens initially caused me to label them as cover stories - stories to explain her non-attendance, school avoidance, and her lack of independence. It took me another eight months of returning over and over to Isabel's stories of experience, to come to understand how school staff, myself included, were largely responsible for Isabel's story.

I came to understand that there were stories of tension and stories of mess in Isabel's life that she would never share with me or with other school personnel. She would tell stories that circled around these stories of experience, allowing silences to speak for her, often choosing not to share details. These silences included further details about her mother's health, her parents' divorce and her living situation. Many of these stories looped, revealing the almost absolute secrecy that Isabel maintained regarding her living situation. For Isabel, her living situation was a sacred story to which, as one of her educators, and certainly as a co-participant, I was almost entirely denied access. I knew from the intake interview and her IIP that Social Services involvement had been part of Isabel's family stories. As her teacher I knew that they had been to check to see if she and her three brothers were being 'taken care of.' Isabel was not keen to expand on the stories of these home visits. She was not dismissive or rude; she simply shared that the visits were unwarranted; the kids were 'well' taken care of.

I am deeply considering the respect that Isabel had for me in allowing me the tiniest of entrance into her home stories. I understood that on the mornings when she would arrive quite late, or the many times when she would miss several days in a row, much of the responsibilities at home had fallen to her. Understanding my need to care for her, Isabel allowed me enough access to her stories of experience to calm me, to let me know that she was safe.

I am thinking now that Isabel kept much, if not most of her stories of family separate from her stories of school. If Isabel needed to retell or relive these experiences, Isabel would. Her behaviours were often messy, bumping up tremendously against the dominant narrative of school, even the dominant narratives of 11th Street Alternate School. Isabel missed long periods of school, days, weeks, even months taking care of her mother instead of her mother taking care of her, choosing to stay in a family home even though that home did not offer the support she needed. I would ask Isabel about her parents' divorce, her mother's struggles with mental and physical health, her older brother's non-attendance at school, her two younger brothers whom she cared for, the demands of taking care of a home, and sometimes of school. Some nights she would Facebook message or text, asking meaningful advice about what to do, when her mother was ill or she herself was ill. I would often ask her about her responsibilities at home, getting her younger brothers off to school, reminding her she could go to her Dad's house. In my narrow and over-simplistic understanding of her stories of experience, I would offer simplistic advice that her first responsibly was to take care of herself. I wonder now how often educators use the common sense (Kumashiro, 2004) cliché advice to 'take care of yourself' when all the advice does is comfort the educator rather than the listener. I return to Dad. How can I so effortlessly forget that the living and living out of the story of responsibilities of home are often more complex, and different than the dominant stories of "taking care of oneself." The way Isabel lived and lived out the story of her responsibilities were labeled and retold by her teachers as skill deficits, barriers to her learning. These stories were puzzling and bumping up stories for Isabel's teachers at 11th Street. Bateson (1994) wonders what might happen to our ways of knowing if we

were open to “different views of the world” (p. 226), open to letting ourselves stop telling stories about others. Would we begin to live alongside people? Would we begin to attend narratively to people’s stories of experience? Would we begin to attend narratively to our own stories of experience?

Isabel shared about her home life only briefly. When she would message and I asked if she was safe, Isabel would often reply yes, and would then encourage me not to probe. I had a sense that Isabel was not in danger. She would consistently respond when I checked in with her; she would consistently respond when other teachers checked in on her. I sometimes had a sense she was using drugs or drinking, but neither Isabel nor I spoke at length about these stories. Isabel would tell me, “Don’t ask.” And when I would, she would leave school or shut down. Isabel was the curator of her stories and she set her ground rules. I am thinking deeply about the power relationship between how Isabel lived out her stories of experience and how the school team at 11th Street told Isabel’s stories. I wonder how the tension came from Isabel living and living out stories of school that bumped up blatantly against the dominant story of school.

As I thought deeply with Isabel’s stories of experience, I felt uncomfortable with the way the staff at 11th Street told and retold her stories of experience, trying to fill in the silences; we knew about them. I thought about my own silent stories. I did not want to talk about my stories of trauma. Isabel had come to know that these stories were part of the stories of my past, but not ones I willingly shared. I would share if asked, but not easily or in long descriptive narratives. I was factual and I was succinct. Young (2005) writes that when she reads, “I read a lot between the lines” (p. 121). I am thinking about many of my stories that I tell. Some are short. I leave them undescriptive and tidy. I leave

them for others to choose to complete. I have no desire to fill in the details of the experience. I am thinking about the similarities in the ways that Isabel and I shared our stories of crisis.

I am thinking that I came to attend to Isabel's stories of experience in the space of the silenced stories in the margins. I did not ignore her stories of experience nor did I seek them. I trusted in her when she said "Don't ask." Sometimes, I knew she was planning on using drugs and I requested that she share a safety plan with me and to check in with me the next day. Checking in with me was something she did regularly. I think deeply with the sense that I felt that she wanted her stories of experience to be left alone, or to belong to her, perhaps. In never pushing me, I sense, she understood this of me too. I am thinking that it was perhaps in this space of quiet understanding that we came to connect. There were more stories of experience than those she allowed me to know, but then maybe, she understood that I understood this too. Maybe this way of knowing (Davis et al., 2000) one another was needed by us both.

Isabel neither mocked nor celebrated her stories of her behaviours, nor did she hide them from her family or from school or her teachers. What she kept hidden and did not want to share were her relationships, the effects of those relationships and her feelings. Thinking of Isabel, her needs, her mental health and her being in our care, I wonder now how important was it that Isabel shared every story of experience? I am beginning to think differently about what it means to attend to students' stories of experience; I am thinking deeply about how I originally came to stories with an "arrogant perception" (Lugones, 1987) of a teacher, thinking that I could judge how others choose

to live. I am retelling and reliving what it means to attend to students stories of experience. I am forever in the midst, as are students.

Thinking with Stories of Tensions, Silences and Bumping Up Places

For Isabel and for me, and for others as well, stories of tension live alongside stories of gentleness. I am thinking deeply about how, for Isabel, school tried to separate, to solve, and to find solutions for the complexities of her stories of tension. I am thinking deeply about the stories of artificial consequence. I am thinking deeply about how school tried to tell stories of Isabel that sought to rename her behaviours, to separate out the stories in which she lived so that Isabel's stories might better fit the dominant story of school.

I am thinking deeply about how Isabel might have longed simply to live in and to know, without question, that she could belong to the spaces within which she felt connected, specifically her home and her school spaces. I am thinking deeply now about how stories of living and belonging become insufficient when they bump up violently against the school's dominant narrative of the student in the educational landscape (Kumashiro, 2004).

I am thinking about often the student's stories of experience bump up against the school's dominant narrative about that student. Silencing student's stories of messiness happens with a sort of gallant fist in the air jubilant arrogant celebration becoming an 'I've solved it mantra.' Assigning a behaviour or set of behaviours to a student's stories of experience is entering into a relation with that student through a privileged and silencing lens. Stories of student behaviour become plotlines within the dominant narratives of schools. These plotlines of student behaviour often become the hallmarks

upon which educators allow themselves permission to cease to attend to student stories of experience.

A Story of Behaviours and Skills

I am thinking deeply about the ease with which telling stories of behaviours becomes a means to label. I am thinking about educational initiatives driven by the lens of looking at student behaviours. Stories of behaviours are a way for educators to allocate students to groupings and a means with which support teachers, like myself, design programing, just as the 11th Street learning team did for Isabel and for Anne-Marie, and as far as I know, just as that resource teacher with the tape recorder did for me many decades ago. Coles (1989) writes about coming to understand learning differently as he came to live alongside a youth: “It was left to me, during the silence that followed, to figure out what to say, if anything. I waited just long enough to realize that the youth... had no intention of proceeding further in any direction” (p. 32). Coles’ (1989) reflection reminds me of Isabel and her silent stories of experience. Coles (1989) functioned as a well-meaning advisor who cautioned me to enter into the midst, attending to the silent space without naming behaviors, without analysis or interpretation, “Why don’t... you call yourself a friend” (p. 32).

Isabel told and retold her stories of experience. She told them as she felt they were needed, for herself. Thinking with Isabel’s stories of experience, I am wondering about her often not seeking conversation about what she shared. I am thinking deeply about the space of living alongside Isabel and of attending to her stories of experience. I wonder if Isabel sought only a safe place and a safe person with whom to share. And that was, I think for Isabel, the sacredness of storying, and in part, the wonderment of the formal

narrative inquiry. It's interesting to think of a space where our stories will be attended to regardless of the bumping up places of living alongside grand narratives. I think this fluidity allowed Isabel to come to trust in her own stories to live by. I am thinking about this forwards and backwards movement of attending to the silent stories in the midst and the bumping up places and often disillusionment that can follow when it becomes apparent that some narratives must remain silent. "We should regard responding to ambiguity and living with it as a skill. A kind of literacy, for which we need a new word" (Bateson, 2004, p. 52)

Silent Stories

I am thinking about the silent narratives in students' lives. I think about the stories of experience that I know about, that intuition allows me to feel, that other teachers have hinted at, yet that the student has not shared, even after I have opened a space for sharing. I think now about the silent narratives that I only imagine or will never come to imagine alongside youth. I think about Isabel and how I sensed, so deeply, that there was much about her stories to live by that I would never come to know. I think about how Isabel trusted me in ways she did not trust other educators because I did not try to push past her boundaries to counsel her; I attended to her stories, as she attended to mine, even my most silent and difficult ones. Oh, how I am reminded that we live storied lives. Solving, labelling, and sorting a student's stories of experience ignores the wholeness of a student's stories of experience.

Stories of Return: Attending to Anne-Marie's Stories

In the spring of our inquiry there had been many changes. Isabel had transitioned back to a regular high school. We kept in frequent contact. Anne-Marie had stopped

attending 11th Street Alternate School and had been recommended to try a regular high school for a fresh start. However, when Anne-Marie subsequently stopped attending and because she was only 15, she was again referred back to 11th Street. She was not placed on my case-load. I felt the change of case-load placement personally. Anne-Marie and I were in weekly, if not bi-weekly contact. The contact was often brief, but I felt I was being punished for my connection with Anne-Marie. I have often felt this way. I remember being cautioned by an administrator in my beginning teacher years: “Do not know your kids too well. Do not listen to all their stories.” I recalled the way Dad and Mom lived their experiences inside and outside of educational landscapes. “Who they were becoming as people was intertwined with who they were becoming as teachers” (Clandinin et al., 2006, p. 131). I felt a bumping up against this dominant story of separating personal and professional stories of experience.

On a certain level, I understood the rationale for Anne-Marie’s placement. She had a history of being pulled off task by her peers. There was another group of students returning to us at the same time. Our numbers were up and our classes were full of younger students with different stories of experience than Anne-Marie’s. The administrator felt it was best that Anne-Marie work one-on-one with another teacher (Trent in this document) who came to be her case-manager.

Anne-Marie shared that she was often motivated by social interactions. She loved being around her friends. Isolation was difficult for Anne-Marie. In this new arrangement, Anne-Marie was expected to sit at a desk and work facing the wall. There was no conversation with the teacher, no art, no journaling. Anne-Marie asked me why she couldn’t be with me. Often during her time away from school, she would message me

saying that she wanted to come back to school, to start over. I wonder what stories Anne-Marie told of her different placement. Was it a story of reprieve? Was it a story of punishment? Anne-Marie lasted one and a half mornings.

Soon none of the returning students were attending and the case-manager teacher was returned to his regular teaching duties outside of our building. I reflected that spring:

You haven't been back to 11th Street Alternate School in a month. Trent [your new case manager] stopped me yesterday and asked me about the book you left with.

Speak [the title of the book]. I had given it to you and gone over how I wanted you to write in the text, all your thoughts and comments inking up the pages. This was your assignment. He asked if I had the book. He didn't listen to my response, "I just have no patience anymore for these kids. Maybe I've worked with the younger kids too long. They just want it more. Have you gotten the book back?"

I know [that] Trent and the administrator pulled Anne-Marie from my ELA course, making the book and her responses redundant. Trent's words stayed with me then and now, that Anne-Marie might not want (schooling). I think I tried to explain, to tell the story of Anne-Marie to Trent as best as I could. And I wonder as teachers if this is what we do in the 'who is the student' sections of eIIPs and 'additional information' sections too. Providing little information that simply goes ignored.

I wonder at my place in Anne-Marie's not being at school, I wonder if it had something to do with giving her the book, Speak. I wonder if she had spoken with Li [another student at 11th Street]. Before winter break I had given Li the same book with much of the same instructions. Li was on a different

individualized program. Li would arrive in the morning, do her online [work] for a class for another teacher and duck out early, taking her ELA home with her. We never fussed about this. Sometimes I'd stop in and chat with her, listen to her stories of her world, talk about the themes of the book. Li and Anne-Marie are friends. Not close but they're friends enough in the same way that a story of crisis seems to bind us one to another in a thick and unbreakable way, creating a story of survival and friendship where perhaps [it] never had existed [before]. Their bonding stories swirled through the narratives that had brought them to 11th Street, those very narratives I used to pull literature to act as jumping off points with the girls. The [stories] of assault.... The longer I knew both girls and the longer I worked at 11th Street, the more I came to know that living these stories was never going to become simple or mainstream. It was never going to have happy endings or be easy....

I wondered when Trent was talking with me if Anne-Marie had spoken with Li, months previous or recently, and now she could simply take the book home, read at her [own] pace instead of locked inside the board room, facing the wall, while Trent worked at the big table. Anne-Marie [was marked present] for two days. Long enough to finish her previous ELA credit and get the instruction for the new course.

I remember trying to tell Anne-Marie's story. Trying to explain [about] the boyfriend from long ago who had abused her, that when she arrived to 11th Street last spring she wrote and spoke that all she wanted was to attend counselling with her mother. And that she was now, with her mother's knowledge,

dating a sex offender. I tried to tell her story for her. But it was nearing the time when the other students were to arrive. I needed to open my classroom, and besides I felt that no one was attending to my place in this story anyway. My connection to you had long, long since been averted.

You were brushed aside.

I opened my room, two days later... And realized I'd returned all other poetry submission forms except for yours. I recall having heard from the administrator and Trent that you might return to school yesterday, and you didn't.

I sat down at my desk and texted you. Together via text we wrote your biography. We chatted like you had never been away. I did not ask a question. I didn't interrogate. Or push. I wondered. I wondered if you were with Blane. I wondered if he was the reason you were kept from school. I wondered if you simply ached for someone to tell you no, and I love you.

Anne-Marie was hesitant about writing a biography to send in. She asked for help. I don't know if it was [because,] down the hall other teachers were talking of removing her, instead of spending resource dollars on knocking on her door, taking her for coffee, visiting with her.

This is what I typed up for her, quickly sitting at my desk, "Anne-Marie is a fifteen-year-old grade ten student. She enjoys hanging out with friends. She loves her family. Anne-Marie is creative, drawing and writing when she has time. Anne-Marie laughs often, misses her Grandpa and sometimes even though she is the life of the party, is shy. Anne-Marie is a prairie girl at heart." (Field notes, April, 2015)

Puzzling with Anne-Marie's Stories

For a long time what resonated was that I began brazen, disobeying my administration, sitting in my classroom helping a student to engage at our school by writing her biography, helping her to learn. What I liked was that I believed I was telling stories of rebelling against Trent and the dominant story of seeing youth one way, all that his arrogance represented. Trent's words symbolized the silencing of student stories of experience in educational landscapes by those of power. I knew that I would do it again, and that I had frequently done similar things during my career behind closed doors helping kids when others would not, those kinds of things, things very much connected to my own self-serving ego. I noticed that midway into my field note reflection I am so moved by emotion, anger, passion, and misplaced justice that I begin to address Anne-Marie directly, not some omnipotent reader, or myself, but Anne-Marie. All of a sudden.... We are in a conversational way. The meaning and dependence purposefully authentic. I want Isabel's, and mine, and Anne-Marie's stories of experience to be visible. However, as I learned from Isabel, these are not my stories of experience to share - these are Anne-Marie's stories.

I did share this story with my works-in-progress writing group. I shared how disillusioned I was that my administrator would plan to move Anne-Marie from the room when she knew that was where Anne-Marie felt most connected and safe. I shared how absolutely disillusioned I was with the teacher for speaking about high school kids (kids at all) in such a manner. It had been many years since my first teaching position when I walked into a staffroom filled with negative utterances about what I should expect from students in my care. This potentially life-damaging language amazed me, and yet, it

amazed me that it continues to amaze me that this teacher would be so bold to speak this way to me. He knew, the school staff knew, that at the end of almost every day, I walked down the hall to my room, sat at my laptop and crafted field notes, reflections of the day. Though he did not specifically know Anne-Marie was part of my narrative inquiry, he still knew there was research.

Did he not care how others perceived his living out of his teaching stories?

A member of the works-in-progress circle helped me to think differently with this experience. He suggested that it was not that the teacher did not know or did not care, it was that he did not know how to think narratively with stories of experience: Anne-Marie's, his own, or mine. Imagine how many times I have forgotten to think narratively while living in research? Imagine how many educators do not know how to think narratively.

Aha! My wrath in scooting down the hall and closing the door was not my thinking narratively with the other teacher's stories of experience, it was doing what was best for me, and that dominant narrative of being a better, more liked teacher than Trent. I like being the teacher with whom all the kids remain in contact. I had not attended to my own narratives. Stories of experience are complex and messy, and often, we want no part in them.

I am beginning to wonder if attending to the messy wholeness of stories of experience *with care* is the work of teachers.

Teachings of Retelling and Reliving

I think about the way grade-five-me grabbed my sweater off the coat rack all those years ago, when my stories of experience were silenced. I think about how difficult

it was for me then to share through writing with pen or pencil in words the thoughts that swirled in beautiful prose inside my mind. I remember feeling so separated and distanced from classmates, readings, writings and what I perceived to be the ‘learning’ world. I relive and retell the stories of that experience now every time a consultant, superintendent or principal asks me to respond in writing, the panic building, the horror of being found out. Do not let this experience tell stories of me. Let me tell my own stories. “I chose not to be note taker, thank you.”

Thinking with the stories of experience of my response to Trent, the teacher that April day who had side-stepped both Anne-Marie’s and my stories of experience and our connection with each other, as he spoke with indifference regarding Anne-Marie and all high school students, I wonder if perhaps it is my love for students and their stories of experience that caused me to be so quick to be indignant. I wonder if I simply do not like any stories of experience to be ignored. Perhaps it is the stories of the Momma bear in me, a teaching of Dad’s. Perhaps it was that I ached to care and that it pained me to see an educator care so little.

I am thinking about Dad; I often do so here, in this space of memory, I remember that night with Dad in the hospital following the stroke. He had been moved to a hospital room after being transferred from emergency, then to intensive care. The room was dark. Yellow light from the hall tried to slip past the curtain pulled too loose across the entrance - and I return to Duane.

I remember how Duane shared his stories of experience through his writing, through his music, and through his tears. He shared by allowing someone to attend to his stories of experience.

Through Duane's stories I sat with him on hill tops as the sun rose, beside sloughs as he pondered love, and even cried as we struggled how best to support his closest friend through the death of that friend's Mom.

"These feelings about the field [were] born out of narrative reconstructions driven by our having fallen in love with the field" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 83). I remember. I remember Duane who slurped up every story I shared about how much Dad means to me. Duane, who, after Dad returned with the trailer and the camp supplies from a school field trip years ago, stayed outside with Dad after Duane's classmates had returned indoors. Duane stayed those extra moments to shake Dad's hand, to say thank you, to listen long, to attend to Dad. To attend to me. To attend to himself. I remember. There is a teaching there.

I think of Duane these past years, grown with a family, a job. Here, in this recounting the remembrances of Dad's teachings resonate, loop back and back as Duane began to check in every week since Dad's stroke, asking how the reading was coming, how the ethics journey was going and how my connections with the staff were doing, how the writing was coming along, "*Listen Saas, get'er done*" (*Lived memory, ongoing*). There is a teaching there.

I remember that night with Dad in the hospital following the stroke. He had been moved to a hospital room after being transferred from intensive care. Mom had returned to the suite in the hospital. Jessy Lee was somewhere nearby. My sister had returned home for the night, the stories of our living and living out our life in shifts had begun. The room was dark. Yellow light from the hall tried to slip past the curtain pulled tight over the entrance to keep away the nurses we had not yet come know as family. I was as

near to Dad as I could be without sitting on the bed, perched on the edge of a plastic peach fold out chair pulled between him and the drafty window. His back was to me. It was as though he knew I was there, he reached for me. I stood and took his hand. His blue eyes were sparkling. For me. His breath-words slurred, slurred, slow, slow, “*You, keep going*” (*Lived memory, March 2014*).

In Duane’s words:

I tell it to the late sun and early moon and stars, sitting on the combine, in the back of my father’s truck, having a beer, watching the sun die and the stars beam. This is the one place where I, music, love and life blend together. This is the place where the mask is off. The sun, moon and stars are my secret keepers. They are my people. (Professional notes, 2010)

I am beginning to understand that attending to the wholeness of student narratives can be tensioned and complex work. I am beginning to understand that attending to student narratives of experience can take time and does not always lead to a comfortable resolution. Stories of experience are messy. Storying is messy.

Stories of Return: Attending to Isabel’s Stories

I am thinking about Isabel. In the fall of our research, Isabel’s stories of poor school attendance had become prominent. At-school conversations about Isabel’s non-school attendance no longer centered on her home or health stories of experience. At-school conversations about Isabel centered on her behaviours and the skills she needed so that she could be successful in school. As a member of Isabel’s learning team, it was part of my role to help Isabel identify strategies necessary for building skills.

At that point, Isabel had been a student at the school for almost a year; Isabel was over sixteen years old. The majority of students who attended 11th Street Alternate School during the time of this research were aware that at the age of 16 they were no longer required to be in school (Government of Saskatchewan, Education Act). This artificial age-label defined as far as I could tell, when students and their families were legally allowed to leave school, and oddly, when school personnel were given permission to stop providing the intensive supports to these students. I remember listening to the behaviour consultant and our administrator discuss what they felt were Isabel's lagging skills. I remember returning to the community room at the end of that day, to gather my sweater and water bottle. I had not spoken up for Isabel. I had not tried to add to the conversation about the skills, which were still lagging in Isabel. I have returned and returned to think about this moment, wondering why I was silent. I was feeling angered for Isabel's voice not being part of that discussion, her Mother's voice not being part of the discussion, and for my own worry that Isabel's silent stories would be understood falsely in some sort of retelling without Isabel present.

At 11th Street, much teacher and student time was spent in discussion and reflection on skills: lagging skills, skill obtainment, and skill development, observation of skills, instructional skills, strategies for skill development, and how executive functioning plays part in skill development. The stories of skill deficit lends itself cunningly to a positive-negative dichotomy in our grand narrative way of describing students.

I have been thinking about my hesitancy to add to the discussion about Isabel's lagging skills. My silence lived across multiple plotlines. I had lived my own stories feeling less capable of articulating my knowledge than the other two

educators, knowledge about inclusion and intervention planning. I was fearful that the words that I used would be singled out as wrong. I felt that I had much to offer from my time attending to Isabel's stories of experience; however, I was silent. I did not have a trusting enough relationship with the two educators who were leading the discussion. I did not trust that my stories would be heard. I questioned my instincts. I wondered what might have happened differently if I had spoken up and tried to explain that perhaps Isabel's absences were proof of her ability to juggle her difficult home situation and perhaps proof of her emerging adaptation skills. Instead I questioned myself, wondering, "Who am I to decide that I might offer anything meaningful in telling a story of her experience anyway?"

I wondered about the way Isabel's learning support team had attended to her stories of experience when she was not yet 16. I wondered what would have happened if I asked that we attend to the wholeness of Isabel's stories of experience and use her absences as proof of her ability to manage challenging variables in her life. I feared that "to know the future is to deny it as future, to place it as a given, as past" (Grosz, 1999, p. 6). I did wonder if Isabel had simply aged out of our system. I wondered if it was easier to tell stories of her deficits, her lagging academic skills, and her non-attendance than to attend to her stories of survival in her difficult home situation. I wondered why I was hesitant to tell Isabel's stories of experience as a story of needs. Why was I so nervous to add my voice to such a dominant school narrative? Was my telling in this situation a telling of a dominant school narrative? Perhaps I was so terrified to be the teller of oppressive stories that I became nervous. Perhaps, however, by sharing her stories I was potentially interrupting the dominant narrative.

A “sense of life being linear is only true if one chooses to think about it as such and history is really about who is interpreting what at every moment: There are many possible histories in every event” (Davis et al., 2000, 82-3). And then, months later, Isabel returned to 11th Street.

My notes follow:

When I think about that morning when Isabel returned to school after being away it is like time has [stopped] here in this place untouched. She returns to us smiling and trusting and like nothing has changed, trusting that nothing has changed.

Interacting with us. [Wearing her] black bunny hug clear and holding binder casually and deckled boots clicking across the floor.

“Morning, Isabel.”

I am surprised. I have not seen her but have messaged. I’ve not trusted in seeing her at school.

The administrator and the member of [school division] team have been writing eIIPs.

Discussing so we can write goals, goals based on student needs, and needs, most often based on lagging skills.

We have been focused here for what feels like months. The focus here comes and goes with the beginning and end of term.

The needs and due dates set by the Ministry of Learning seem to be more than the inclusion and intervention plan. I’m certain I’m not supposed to write this, make this visible. Instead I’m supposed to write [that student] goals influence all we do, serve as our guiding principles.

When it comes to living alongside our students.

But this is not truth. We enter these spaces with some flicker of concern about student need, but these flickers are very soon silenced under the bureaucratic rules that govern school places.

I see Isabel today, return to us wholly of her own choosing, wholly disconnected to the goals or [most of the] supports we put in place. She returns to school because she can, because she wants the credits, because she trusts Graeme, and trusts me, and is safe to return.

Safe. Home. Quiet. (Field notes, February, 2015)

I return to think deeply about the three commonplaces of narrative inquiry: place, sociality, and temporality. I am thinking about temporality and Isabel's stories of experience. Thinking with her stories of experience I wrote:

I am thinking with Isabel's story of experience. I wonder how 11th Street offered that sense of return... when I think about Isabel I see her return not as a return.

I see Isabel through her own way of being in our space. A young person with a history of physical illness and mental health stories.

Isabel has stories of experience living in and out of school that lived contrary to the grand narrative of school.

She often spent months away from school, then months in school.

In both these living out of the story of home and story of school, Isabel lives a story of student and a story of daughter successfully in the living and the living out of the school spaces. Isabel is a strong leader. (Interim research text based on field notes, February, 2015)

Stories of Belonging: Time

When I saw Isabel return that day, looking unconcerned, skilled in her return to school, what I wondered was if it might be her educators who needed to be mindful of her stories of experience. I began to understand Isabel's stories of experience as existing in different ways from the dominant school stories that depicted her absence from school as negative. I felt the loopings and reliving and retelling of Isabel's leaving and then returning to school stories. I wondered if Isabel's comfort in leaving and returning to 11th Street was connected to the way she made meaning of her identity, told stories of herself, her stories to live by. I realized that Isabel had grown to trust in her belonging at school. Do we not as educators, tell a grand narrative of school as being a place where students are welcome to return? How authentic is this story? *I am wondering if Isabel believed and trusted in a story of belonging at school that allowed her to pause at home and then return to pick up where she had left off as she lived out her stories of experience such as daughter, sister, and caretaker, and person with an illness and youth in other landscapes.* I am "rethinking temporality in terms of the surprise of the new, the inherent capacity for time to link, in extraordinarily complex ways, the past and present to a future that is uncontained by them and has the capacity to rewrite and transform them" (Grosz, 1999, p. 7).

I am wondering about the stories of Isabel's experience as a non-attender. What if the wholeness of her narratives were given voice? I am thinking about how Isabel trusted in the temporality of her stories. "Be aware of movement coursing through the stillness. Feel the dynamism of the force of movement beginning to take form. Call this incipient action" (Manning, 2012, p. 47). This incipient space is the emerging beauty of narrative

inquiry, the potentiality embedded within reliving and retelling stories of experience. Perhaps Isabel might not have been absent in socially-constructed, educational-policy, behaviour-skills kinds of ways. Perhaps Isabel was just as present at home, attending to the needs of her mother, her brothers, herself, as she was when she was at school. Perhaps there is potential inside and outside of educational landscapes for educators to think differently with temporalities' complex narratives.

As living creatures, we are our stories (Dewey, 2009; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Our identity is tied to our ability to relive and retell our stories. Storying is being wakeful; storying is attending to the *intimacies between spaces*. We must not be tied to socially-constructed forms of time.

As researchers, we come to each new inquiry field living our stories. Our participants also enter the inquiry field in the midst of living their stories. Their lives do not begin the day we arrive nor do they end as we leave. Their lives continue. Furthermore, the places in which [participants'] live and work, their classrooms, their schools, and their communities are also in the midst when we researchers arrive. Their institutions and their communities, their landscapes in the broadest sense, are also in the midst of stories. (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, pp. 63-64)

Stories of Potential

Thinking narratively with stories of experience allows the potential for students to live, tell, relive and retell the wholeness of stories of their experiences. There is a beautiful potential for finding a mindful sacred storying space where students and educators are able to live, tell, relive and retell stories of experience. I am beginning to

understand in living ways that attending to students' stories of experience happens over time, in ways that are beautifully non-linear, like they were with Isabel, and are deeply rooted to place, like they are with Isabel and myself. Student narratives of experience must be attended to. "[S]torytelling is about survival" (Ross, 2008, as cited in Huber et al., 2013, p. 214). Attending to student stories of experience means we understand the ongoing process of the student in self-defining, in these wakeful spaces of schooling, there lives potential; "I am forever on my way. My identity has to be perceived as multiple" (Greene, 1995, p. 1).

I am thinking deeply about the space of potential, which Massumi (2002) states, is not a space but more a "*modification of space*" (p. 75). Each reliving or retelling, also known as an opener of space, allows for the possibility of (re)naming of space between events, people, ideas, thoughts, lands, and of knowing these events differently¹¹. The narrative inquirer uses "the already-constituted abstractions of language ("meaning") and delivers them together to change" (p. 76). I think with this idea in terms of being grateful for difficult lessons or messy mistakes. I have the potential to remain in the space of that event, the people associated with it, and the way I think with it. *Sharing* stories of experience, as Massumi (2002) explores is an "ontological vector" (p. 76). I have the potential to think and feel differently with an event *then again* as another event comes into proximity with yet another event, person or idea. These spaces of potential are openers, found most in the spaces of tensioned stories of experience (Clandinin et al, 2006). We are, after all, storied and storying lives of potential.

¹¹ Knowing differently is storied further on page 163.

Isabel's rootedness to her school story was sustained by her perception that her stories were attended to at 11th Street. Perhaps Isabel's multiple-transitions are illustrative of, as Ross says, someone keenly skilled in survival.

In the moments Isabel walked into the room, returning with no school stories of permission, no home stories, no plan, and no smart goals from her learning team, she breached the tensioned borders between worlds and time and lived, told, relived and retold her own stories of experience. Here Isabel traveled between worlds. Here Isabel's ways of being are understood as potential.

Stories matter (King, 2003). In Isabel's Words:

*Pain
As I stand in front of the mirror,
I see a broken heart.
As tears run down my face,
I don't know where to start.*

*All the things I have been through,
Are destroying me inside.*

*They are all going to find out,
There is nothing left to hide.*

*I can feel my heart racing,
Pounding in my chest.*

*I stare into my own eyes,
Am I really like all the rest?*

*I study them all,
All the scars from years before.*

*How long will it be,
Until there resides more?*

*I hope and I pray,
Through every day.*

*That the images staring back at me,
Will find the right words to say.*

*I will live like I should,
Wearing a mask.*

*But do I really live like I could,
Pretending I can take the task?*

I will stand strong.

*And hope that this feeling
Won't last long.
(Isabel, Field texts, May, 2015)*

Stories of Meaning Making

I am thinking about how I first came to know Duane's stories of experience. I was told stories of Duane, disrespectful, druggie, drinker, and terrible learner, in much the same way I was told stories of Anne-Marie. For Isabel, the educational system continued to tell cover stories of her, non-attender, sickly, and suffering from the effects of mental illness. "This form of label....stops us from coming to know a whole and very complex and unfolding life" (Huber, Response journal, November, 2012). For Duane, Isabel and Anne-Marie their voices would not have been heard across the almost un-traversable gulf created by the labels told of them, had I not paused to listen with their stories. "Student voice [must be] the pre-eminent theme in schools, and it [must be] used to construct a rigorous curriculum and pedagogy around the lives and experiences students bring with them" (Smyth & Hattam, 2004, p. 166).

In Anne-Marie's words:

Grandpa
His heart was pure
His heart was pumping
He was sweet, he was funny
The unstoppable storm, illness that wouldn't stop
His heart was weak, the pumping was slow
It all left so quickly, eyes started to water
It's hard for me to talk about but it makes me feel good
In the end, at least, I got to say
I love you.

(Anne-Marie, Student work, January, 2015)

Home
For me it's a sacred place.
School
A boring, ugly place to be.
Drug
A thing teens like for fun.
Love
Something you can't get enough of.
Abuse
Until the day he hits you.

(Anne-Marie, Field text, February, 2015)

The stories from those first months with Isabel and Anne-Marie, along with Duane's stories of experience, resonate. Attending to stories of experience is tiring. This work, though tension-filled and hazy, is deeply meaningful. Isabel wanted her stories of experience shared here, not ones that were shared or planned by her mother, or me or her principal. Hers. *At times I can not hear or see stories to live by, the way stories have the magic to transform our stories of experience into identity stories. However, the longer I am here, in this attending space, stories reside.* When I think deeply about that teacher who so blatantly labeled Anne-Marie, *I think that perhaps none of us can live all the time*

in the midst of attending to stories. Storying takes time. Storying takes a return. Storying is a trust in the narratives of experiences and the beauty of potential. Storying is a sacred space. Perhaps within this sacred space, in these mindful moments we come to make meaning with stories of experience; “It is not that I learned anything altogether new: moreover, I was made to see what I had not particularly wanted to see. But once seen, it moved me to summon energies as never before to create meanings, to effect connections, to bring some vital order into existence-if only for a time” (Greene, 1995, p. 98). Storying implies a trusting that once a story is heard it can not be unheard (King, 2003).

Story of Return to Silent Stories

“[W]hen the words form I am merely retelling the same story in different patterns” (King, 2003, p. 2). And I am tired too. Storying can be difficult. These past months I have been living, telling, and retelling stories-thinking deeply with my stories of experience in an autobiographical relational narrative way. I am thinking of the phenomena of storying that I learned from Dad’s teachings. Sometimes as I search for my narratives in the attics, basements, storehouses, conversations with loved ones, journals, academic work, outdoors standing in the wind, and in the most important space, in plain sight. Stories shift, a bit less messy for those I live alongside, for those who sit with me at my circle, but perhaps not. Yet once shared, these stories live, certain as “*campfire immortality*” (Jessy Lee Saas, *Lived memory*, 2016).

The circle continues as the stories breathe.

Many years ago, in a different town, I was scrimmaging at noon with the junior and senior boys’ basketball teams. I blocked a layup shot by a student, James, a broad-shouldered, tall grade-twelve student. The force of James’s layup drove his elbow into

my nose. Blood and memory oozed, pain swirled, swallowing the backs of my eyes. I was blindsided by the residual effects of experience. It had been more than a decade since someone for whom I cared had hit me. That fall day, though my feet had remained planted on the gym floor, my mind swirled away into a telling of a story of an experience that James had meant to harm me. The swirling stretched into 15 long, long seconds. I waited. I said nothing to the students. I was silenced by the unplanned reliving of a long-silenced difficult story. I walked to the bathroom. The administrative assistant tipped grey powder onto the gash, clotting the blood. When she left, I closed the door, catching a glimpse of myself in the mirror; I slid down the wall, and wept; I was 21 years old again, blindsided and alone. “This is a story I know” (King, 2003, p. 1).

As I am thinking deeply about the way the whoosh of experience so entirely affected me that day on the basketball court, surrounded by students and colleagues whom I trusted, I think about the lived experiences I had and the way I came to live alongside Anne-Marie. I wonder if my stories of experience meant that I may have attended to her stories of her experiences differently. As Anne-Marie’s stories of experience and my stories of experience intertwined in our sharing space, I felt a hesitation, as her teacher, about whether to say too little (and ignore the possibility of violence in her life) or say too much (and read more into her stories than was meant).

Thinking with Anne-Marie and Silent Stories

I remember writing field notes at the end of the day, and thinking with them much later. Anne-Marie would share stories about her parents fighting and I would wonder where Anne-Marie was during these arguments. I wondered if it was then that she was making the noodles and butter that she so enjoyed. I am thinking deeply now that I could

not understand Anne-Marie's response to her experiences of assault, violence, and fear because these experience, which she shared so openly about her, were hidden so greatly in mine.

I wonder if my stories of experience made me keenly invested in the stories of safety for young women. I wonder if I felt a sense of greater accountability to Anne-Marie's stories of safety because her stories and my stories were tied to research. Did research hold me at a higher degree of accountability in attending to student's stories of experience? I have a sense I lived more mindfully of being watched. Did that affect my accountability to co-participants narratives as well? Did this affect my retellings here of our collective narrative? Anne-Marie was not the first student with whom I had lived alongside and who had shared stories of abuse. Hers was not the first inter-agency narratives of experience that I had navigated, nor was she the last since I stopped collecting field notes. I could not understand her parents' ways of navigating the violence in Anne-Marie's life. As I lived alongside Anne-Marie, I had difficultly navigating her stories of her family's dynamics which were, for me, so far from my own experience growing up.

Towards late winter of our inquiry journey Anne-Marie began to see a young man who was on probation after a conviction for a sexual offence. I had first learned of him the year before when I was sitting around our homeroom table with five female students (including Anne-Marie). The girls talked about a young man, Blane, who had tried to "hook up" with them. I remember the day clearly. Our community liaison officer had been in the building, as was common at 11th Street. I had been working nearby on an independent study course with a young woman a few years older than Anne-Marie, the

two remarkably similar. The group around the table watched the older girl leave with Blane. This sparked the conversation. When I shared the conversation with the constable, he said he could not do anything unless one of the girls shared specific details directly with him, or another officer. However, he said, I needed to know that the young man was being closely watched. I was provided with a few alarming details about Blane.

As the inquiry continued, Anne-Marie's attendance dropped. Anne-Marie began to allow Blane to spend nights at her parents' house. Often she would arrive at school complaining of not being able to piece together the previous night. That winter the administrator and I requested a meeting with Anne-Marie and both her parents. Anne-Marie had distinguishable finger-mark bruises around her neck. We were concerned for her and for her younger sister. That meeting was the only time I met Anne-Marie's father. Though Anne-Marie could not explain the bruises, her mother said they were from a car accident a week prior. I shared that a trend among teens was choking to heighten sexual climax. The administrator and I shared that we strongly discouraged Anne-Marie's association with Blane. Her father said she was losing her car privileges. The administrator and I suggested the hospital for a rape kit. We kept repeating, "*If she were my daughter*" (Field notes, February, 2015).

Anne-Marie's mother took her to the hospital to have them check the bruising from the accident. The next day I asked Anne-Marie if a rape kit had been done. She said her mother had not requested one. After that comment Anne-Marie stood there, her disappointment obvious. From that moment until her return after her messy transition back to Ross Collegiate and back to 11th Street, Anne-Marie never returned to school at 11th Street for an entire day.

What resonates with me looking back at my notes from that day, is how differently I now come to live alongside the messy stories of experience. The administrator and I knew what we believed was in Anne-Marie's best interest.

And we never expressed those concerns to her parents as clearly as we might have.

Puzzling with Anne-Marie's Silent Stories

The administrator and I were only slightly better than silent. Is this attending? And yet Anne-Marie wanted a rape-kit done. Anne-Marie wanted from that first meeting to have a space to attend to stories of experience alongside her mother. And again, as educators fearful of the dominant narratives of "I will get my wrists slapped if I cross the line" the administrator and I were cautious, and side-stepped the reality of the experience.

Why did I not invite the constable to the conversation that day? I had sat alongside him in many conversations with students and their families. I remember Anne-Marie and I talked about that initial table conversation, the stories of the other girlfriend, and at length about the sense of lost time and difficulty breathing that Anne-Marie was feeling after Blane spent a night at her home. Why did I not share all these stories of experience with her parents? Sometime leading up to that meeting was my first call regarding Anne-Marie to Family and Protective Services. Why did I not take Anne-Marie and have her mother meet us at the hospital after Anne-Marie openly shared she was losing time and had bruises? How much would it have mattered if I had made a mistake? Would I have alienated Anne-Marie? Her family? Would I have been reprimanded? How much would it have mattered if I had spoken truths instead of statements first filtered through educational jargon?

When I think deeply with Anne-Marie's stories of experience, there were many stories of experience that wove between us: the stories of finding voice and the stories of change and of grief. That spring, even though Anne-Marie's attendance was sporadic, she wrote extensively about her grandfather. He had died the previous fall. Anne-Marie often sought advice from her grandfather. She had written and published a piece in his honour.

"I'd often see Anne-Marie at school, face ashen, hair pulled back with a bandana, not clean but with freshly applied makeup, looking tired. These days she'd arrive, set a goal 'to make it through the day' and leave before lunch" (Field notes, January, 2015). In the messy and often tensioned spaces as I felt her pull away from school, I tried to attend to her stories of grief and loss and change as she storied about her grandpa.

In Anne-Marie's words:

We met at The Centre when we both did community service I thought he was cute when he saw him but I was too shy to say hi or even talk to him but later on he said hi and we started to talk and talk and talk and get to know one another then we started hanging out all the time we had fun then came the day he asked me if he could kiss me and I said that I didn't care if he did so he did and I kind of felt bad after cause I knew he had a girlfriend after that we hung out a lot and I got to know him and people told me bad things about him and I didn't listen to them cause my grandpa would always say don't listen to no one just listen just myself and that if I like some[one] that don't let anyone come in the way or words just to be myself so I always listen to what he says Blane is cute and funny to hang out with. (Anne-Marie, Field texts, May 2015)

Always listen to what Grandpa says, Anne-Marie wrote. For a moment this resonated like a teaching perhaps from my own experiences; it was at this moment of living alongside Anne-Marie that a shift in how I came to attend to stories occurred. I became mindful that perhaps the stories of experience that Anne-Marie was sharing were truths that did not need my interpreting or retelling. I did not want to. She was sharing about a boy who was harming her. I was uncomfortable. I felt nauseated. We were standing by the bookcase by the classroom door. She looked empowered and angry and grounded. She also looked like she did not need me.

It should be noted that I did follow the teacher code of ethics. My lens as a Mom is first, then teacher. I did, while living alongside Anne-Marie learn to trust in her ability to discern, no matter how horrendously uncomfortable it was for me, which stories of experience she felt were most important.

After the day when my administrator and I had met with Anne-Marie and her parents, I returned home and wrote field notes about the day that were almost unusable. They were more poetry, reflection, rant, than coherent thought. Pain and powerlessness swirled on paper. I returned to long, long before, to how I had first come to know Anne-Marie, stories of which I have had no previous memory, though Anne-Marie did and shared (when she played soccer for a season alongside my daughter when they were both quite young). I recalled a time I had asked Anne-Marie if she would ever like to return to the sport.

Thinking with her response, that day, and our connection, I wrote:

[H]er face, the dream of a green field crossing her eyes, replacing the snow in the streets, but mostly, mostly, it was the pause of having her Mom on the sidelines

that mostly made Anne-Marie pause just long enough to consider. It was only a moment a second or two and she spoke about how her mother used to come to her games. Then the moment passed. Anne-Marie breathed in, deeply of her surroundings.

I wonder if this is what always drove Anne-Marie? Her desire for her mother's attention? I wonder? How was Anne-Marie to compete with a younger sister who was an athlete, superstar? How was Anne-Marie supposed to compete with a younger sister who was attending school?

I wonder if these reasons were what drew Anne-Marie and her brother so close? I wonder if this is what made Anne-Marie go through her world in such waves of ups and lows. (Interim research text based on field notes, June, 2015)

I remember hearing Gabor Maté¹² at a professional learning workshop the spring of our narrative inquiry. He stated that educators should begin every uncomfortable situation inside and outside educational landscapes, every situation where there is the “story of behaviour” by first asking “do you like the student” (Lived memory, spring, 2015). If the answer is no, the stories of experience are where we need to look to understand the ways we are telling stories of students. We must first understand our own feelings towards the students before we can mindfully and narratively attend to those students. If we do not like students and we try to listen to them, chances are we come to their stories telling dominant narratives of who they are and how their stories of experience live out. I liked Anne-Marie. I was terrified at how much of a long ago never-told-stories of experience I saw living out in front of me. I was terrified at my

¹² Gabor Maté is a Canadian physician specializing in addiction and developmental psychology.

powerlessness to shift her narrative. And the wanting to shift her narrative lived loudly as a dominant story of changing someone else, while at the same time living out a different plotline of my own stories of abuse by way of her stories of experience. Seeing her silenced narratives meant that I saw a similar ones in myself as well. “[H]ow do these stories and predispositions parallel the stories and predispositions that currently govern communities?” (Kumashairo, 2009, p. 107). Is the keeping silent of messy stories a dominant narrative? I am thinking deeply about how I had always wondered if someone had asked me about my own silenced stories might the plotlines of my stories have shifted. As Anne-Marie’s former care-giver for many hours a day, having lived alongside her stories of experience, I still ache for her today.

Returning to Attend to Anne-Marie’s Stories

The wholeness of Anne-Marie’s deepening stories of experience continued to be difficult for me because her messy stories of experience challenged the norm of how I felt educators and students and families and students ought to support one another. More than anything, she forced me to retell, relive, and make visible my own silent stories. *If I wanted to attend to Anne-Marie’s stories, I needed to attend to my own.* Storying work is entirely work of choice. Attending is life-making work. I am beginning to understand that attending to students’ stories of experience is not simple or easy or anything like telling and living my own similar stories of experience. I came to storying slowly.

I am thinking deeply and sadly about how easily schools and teachers often make assumptions about students’ stories of silence, stories of messiness, stories of tension, and stories of difficulty-stories that are frequently deemed too uncomfortable for students and staff to share. The stories that are kept silent are never openly discussed, are hushed,

ignored, and discounted, pushed aside resulting in students being labelled or marginalized. “Internalized superiority makes us indifferent to learning about the minoritized group because we don’t see them [and their stories of experience] as valuable. If we did see them [and their stories of experience] as valuable, we would seek them out” (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012, p. 74).

Years ago as I sat against the toilet in the staff washroom, I heard the senior student whose elbow hit my face ask after me. After I had washed and after the flush of those silenced memories had passed, some 30 minutes later, I returned to the gymnasium to reassure him. I understood that he had not caused me intentional harm. I knew he needed me to tell him I was okay. I knew he needed this from me because I had spent years attending to his stories.

I have lived alongside students. I have attended to stories of experience. I wonder how my stories of experience are special. I wonder what makes my stories of experience different or needed. Come to think of it, what makes Dad’s or Duane’s stories of experience special either? What make’s Isabel’s stories of experience special? What makes Anne-Marie’s stories of experience special? “I’ve heard worse stories” (King, 2003, p. 8).

The last time that year that I sat in conversation with Anne-Marie, we met on a Saturday. We met off-campus at a coffee house. It was late spring. We sat at the window seats, spots that had come to belong to us. The sun poured in, though the day was cold. Anne-Marie arrived in a low-cut revealing tank top. Her hair, usually down, was pulled up in a ponytail. We drank Jones pops, discussing the rules of drinking every sip before reading the fortunes hidden in the cap. We talked about road tips and her working at a

local fast-food restaurant. We talked about how Anne-Marie and Blane would get into fights sometimes. We talked about the girl Blane was seeing while Anne-Marie went to work and she recalled how he had done the same while he was still seeing his last girlfriend.

An excerpt transcribed from our conversation:

Saas: What the hell happened to your neck?

Anne-Marie: I don't know.

Saas: Wwwhat.... What the.... hell....

Anne-Marie: Is it scratches?

Saas: Ya. It looks like finger marks. Did Blane do that to you?

Anne-Marie: No. no. Maybe, maybe scratches.

Saas: From you guess fighting?

Anne-Marie: From him scratching me.

Pause

Saas: That's all okay with you?

Anne-Marie: [whispering] don't know

Saas: What do you mean you don't know?

Anne-Marie: I don't know

(Transcript of conversation, May, 2015)

Questioning and Wondering about the Place of Attending

Is attending to students' stories of experience my work? Is attending to the students' stories of experience the work of educators? Is attending to our own stories of

experience and returning to retell and relive our own stories of experience the work of educators? Why?

If our stories of experience are not as special as King (2003) asserts, then why attend to them? How does attending to stories of experience at all belong to and become the work of educators? There is often a hint of a dominant narrative in the need to answer these additional questions: What can educators control? What is in our sphere of influence? What matters? Do the answers to these questions affect the way educators listen to stories? Some listen with an end in mind. I am beginning to feel that listening with an end in mind is listening with a privileged grand-narrative perspective which has no place in educational landscapes. I am reminded that King (2003) and more importantly Dad, teach that it is our stories that matter on their own. Attend.

When I completed a beginning draft of this work, I shared the text with Mom. I had never shared the stories of abuse with her. These are stories about which Mom and I have kept silent; these are stories that Jessy Lee and I puzzle through. Some stories of experience are difficult. Storying is difficult. I am thinking deeply of how Mom seemed to hold fast to keeping my silent stories silent, effortlessly. I wonder now at the depth and breadth of her stories of experience. I wonder at the retellings she never sought *to make visible*. I wonder *at her choice* in allowing Dad to share and her staying quiet and busy with school work.

Throughout my teens and early twenties I never attended to Mom's stories of experience. I never paused to allow her stories of experience to live beside mine. Later, I found a space to come to live alongside Mom through the story openers that lived through Jessy Lee and through teaching. But these spaces were never conversational,

relational spaces. After Dad's stroke, in the trying-to-breathe spaces, I began to make meaning of Mom's experiences. I began to see her through the stories of experience Dad told and lived, and through the way these stories of love retold and relived themselves anew. So much love. I felt I had wasted years in the space of not attending.

Experiences are messy. *Lives are messy.* Some months after Dad had his stroke, I journaled:

Mom had [one lobe of her] lung removed in December. Her third time with cancer. In the haze of the surgical ICU recovering room, she held my hand for the first time, seven cords kept her connected, as much to her bed, as to the mist that swirled around us. She held my hand. Reached for me the way I'd seen Dad reach for her hands after his stroke stole his ability to choose to weave his fingers in hers. I leaned close.

She shared stories of who she had fired those first years as a director of education; she shared stories of chasing Dad relentlessly until, so in love with the wild and handsome care free abandoned way in which he lived life. 'I wanted him,' she said, and squeezed my hand. Still she didn't stir.

An hour before the pain meds were to come, with hands set before the monitor lights blinked 'lights out', she said my name. Mom said my name. 'You are a better Mom than I've ever been. I wish I'd done better.'

'I love you Mom. I love you.' The shadows settled long and we didn't get up to turn on a light. (Interim research text based on lived memory, that long winter)

Story of Silenced Stories Today

I am thinking deeply about how Isabel was marginalized by learning goals that were set for her by her absolutely well-meaning learning team, myself included, even without her sharing her stories of experience. I am thinking deeply about Isabel's skills in managing the complex and difficult responsibilities of her life and how these were often told as stories of lagging skills not as stories of skills that she had mastered, outside of school. I am imagining that "[o]ne wholly indifferent to the outcome does not follow or think about what is happening at all. From this dependence of the act of thinking upon a sense of sharing in the consequences of what goes on, flows one of the chief paradoxes of thought" (Dewey, 2009, p. 115).

I am thinking deeply about how Anne-Marie, too, was marginalized by the way I ignored the goal she told for herself at the beginning of our relationship (to have counselling with her mother) and how I, her school, her learning team, and her family continually substituted goals about what we felt was best for Anne-Marie.

Once a story is heard it can not be unheard, according to King (2003) and Ellsworth (2005), and there is more to the "cannot be unheard-conversation." In classrooms, though stories *are* often heard, they are also often silenced or kept hidden. I am thinking deeply of the resource teacher who paused three decades ago hearing me spell a word correctly and in the context of her stories of school she continued to tell a story of Cori as "never getting them right." I am thinking about how that event, retold as part of own stories shaped so much of what I became as a student support teacher, student advocate, narrative inquirer.

Stories of experience can not be unheard. There is a teaching there.

Stories of Ours

I have felt the ripple effects of silenced stories in every community where I have lived, in every institution I have attended, in every school where I have worked, in almost every connection I have made and from most students I have taught. I wonder too about the stories I too try to keep silent. Most of my own behaviour tells of stories of silence; I am not open in the same way as others when it comes to relationships. Much of my behaviour seeks quiet spaces, pulls away from conflict, and runs from connection. I wonder if it is our silenced stories of experience both inside and outside of educational landscapes that most alter our journey.

I am beginning to feel that the academic world finds less value in narrative inquiry than in other types of research. I am beginning to understand that much of my own puzzling tensioned narrative about the perceived messiness comes from my own undergraduate and graduate stories of experience and how I interpreted them to be silenced. I remember questions from well-meaning, well-educated professors, “You’re going to tell stories?” and “Where is the Social Justice?” I am thinking deeply about the messiness of my colleagues’ wondering, “You want me to share my stories with students? To listen to them share theirs?” (Lived memory, graduate studies).

Interestingly, Clandinin & Connelly (2000) share that for beginning narrative inquirers, entering into the midst of narrative inquiry is messy, puzzling, tensioned and absolutely filled with uncertainties, for the narrative inquirer, co-participants, and certainly the academic world, “initially uncomfortable with where this narrative process leads” (p. 45).

I wonder if this same beautiful counsel should be applied to entrance in the midst

alongside attending to students' stories of experience inside and outside of educational spaces. It will be messy, but it will be okay.

I remember the beginning of this process and Mom, a retired Director of Education, a woman who completed her graduate work with great distinction wondering if the process of narrative inquiry is mostly navel gazing. And I do not blame her description. Our methods are different. Narrative inquiry forces us to question what we are doing and to do more than just tell stories. Explaining the methodology and phenomena of narrative inquiry is akin to explaining the layers and beauties and dynamics and tensions of life, a complex ever-changing, moving, connected complexity of our interwoven storied lives (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 55). Oh, I hope Isabel, Anne-Marie and I have allowed our experiences to live.

We ground our stories of experience by relating them to time, place and the interactions of the social and personal. In this way, narrative inquirers shift from merely telling and living stories of experience to understanding that all life and learning is experience (Dewey, 2009). Narrative inquirers have the potential (Ellsworth, 2005) to shift the way we understand our own identity stories by retelling and reliving our stories of experience. Narrative inquirers can return again and again to this process of attending to our own stories of experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Dad, ongoing).

When I think about the narratives of addiction and abuse that have lived, told, relived and retold themselves throughout my life, I also wonder about the way Mom lives in relation with my inquiry puzzlings. I am beginning to understand that her tensions about my inquiry are linked, perhaps, to my making visible the tensioned, messy, difficult and silenced stories of my life-making. And she is Mom, after all, it is rather beautiful,

her stories of love. For me, while retelling and reliving my stories of experience, I am able to find the bumping up places while understanding storying is complex. I wonder if Mom saw her graduate role clearly, with clear questions and answers. Certainly, even now, I have few understandings, many wonderings.

As I write this I hear one of Mom's stories, told in a blunt manner of the time when she was young and my Nana would send her on business trips with Grandpa so that he would be sure not to drink, so that Nana would be certain Grandpa would come home. I am reminded of the stories of the Grandpa I knew, blunt and unemotional, keeping a bottle of half-drunk whisky under the kitchen sink to serve as a victory reminder of the day he quit drinking. I am reminded of Grandpa who attended every sporting event I participated in, when Dad could not attend. I am reminded of the power he tried to exert and how I watched my strong, brilliant Mom tell her own stories to live by, though for much of my teen years I believed it was Grandpa's stories for her that she was living out. I am learning that Mom and I are different. I am also learning that Mom and I have some similar stories of experience and we live, tell, relive and retell them differently. There is a teaching there.

Storying is complex. Narrative inquiry is complex. I am beginning to understand that there is much about our stories of experience that I can only image and that I have yet to begin to imagine. And these stories live in the midst of experience of my familiar and familial stories. These are the stories that spilled from Mom and Dad into their teachings and storied a lived way of being for me, and for Jessy Lee. There is just so much about how I come to understand life-making that is unknown. Storing is complex.

Story of Narrative Resonance

There remains within each of us the resonance of narratives of experience. We feel them. Referencing Jean Clandinin's doctoral defence, Clandinin & Connelly (2000) describe the importance of narrative inquiry's resonance; "engaging in narrative inquiry... allowed Jean to understand how teacher knowledge is narratively composed, embodied in a person, and expressed in practice" (p. 124). Regardless of the bumping up places, Mom wants to read everything I write. We are, after all, our stories; we are after all, a curriculum of lives (Clandinin et al., 2006, p. 135). We are life-making. Such are the phenomena of storying.

Living Narratively Is Complex

I read *Narrative Inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research* early into my graduate journey. Though I have always known, growing up in a home where Mom fiercely followed educational protocol in all her work, that I too would follow the guidelines while conducting my research, I never anticipated the bumping up places that lived in the midst of the dominant stories of the university graduate landscape.

My notes:

I have been here before. The slow slogging and thick fog of telling my story within institutional spaces, I've been here a long time. I've told and lived these stories.

Sometimes, I wonder if I'll ever find a way to retell and relive these stories.

Sometimes, I feel tired and silenced and I wonder if it matters.

I had imagined a different story of experience from this journey, a tale of a great shift for educators and school spaces, but mostly for students. I had dreamed of attending to learners.

I am still that grade five student reciting dictated spelling words into a tape recorder; I am still that teenager asked to take a walk, wearing too much black, dating the wrong person, never silent; I am still that thirty-year-old full of bubbling stomach acid feeling old, out of place, asking too many questions, sitting to the side, second row from the front. I remain tapping the keyboard of someone else's story.

I wanted this thesis experience to be filled with re-storyings. And at times, it feels like a collection of notes in a sketchbook, pieces added, some bits written, others imagined, some points listed, nothing certain, everything open, underdetermined and joined only by the paper on which I've scribbled my thoughts, in the beautiful wonderment of the open space of creation.

At the end of June I attended my [circle group's] final works-in-progress sharing space (WIP). After six months of back and forth submissions with the research ethics board, my application had been approved. I was officially in research hours. I was not to begin work with student co-participants until the start of the following fall term. Over the past six months my WIP family had been attending to my research ethic application stories. I have a memory ... of our circle that night, a friend and narrative inquirer [who was also living] in the midst of her thesis journey. We had shared many stories and she had lived the ethics journey alongside me, attending to the story of my Dad's stroke and the

joys of learning alongside students and sipping tea in the sterile rooms at the University. In return, I attended to her stories. She shared about her mom, her family home, weaving the places she'd lived into tangible landscapes that danced around our sacred circle.

There was magic around our WIP sharing circle. The magic was the trust that my stories were heard and honoured and mine to tell and retell. Here, I was allowed to come and be silent, or to arrive bursting with story; here, I was allowed to retell my story again and again. Here my story belonged.

And I shared. I shared my journey and I sought feedback. I trusted. This was a life-making space.

It amazes me the courage that I find from sharing, and from attending.

For six months last spring my stories of experience swayed between family stories of my Dad's stroke and my stories of the REB journey. I was torn between the juxtaposition of watching.... my Dad who taught me to listen by walking long, long among wolf willow and sage brush and along prairie hills and tasting prairie brome grass, stopping forever always pausing to taste buffalo berry, rose hip and of watching my Dad now paralysed and unmoving, trapped and reading the ongoing, almost relentless suggestions of the ethics board to "reframe my work to look only at students' positive stories."

And there was my Dad, who had taught me to question the narrowness of institutional school spaces, which want so much to tell our stories. I am all of my stories of experience.

I am remembering now as I sat around the gothic wooden oval table across from the REB dressed in their finery, [wondering] if they had any sense of the narrowness of their language. I wondered if they cared. I wondered if they knew that their language when they responded to me, had been a re-storying and an oppressive story of schools, a common story of school and had retold these stories for me, traumatised me, had made me feel like my work with students was meaningless, that the stories of experience of youth that I live alongside [are] meaningless, and that the sharing and honouring of stories of experience of youth was meaningless. I wondered if they knew that across from them I sat disliking each of them in some way, telling a story of distrust, entering into their space this way. And I felt saddened. I felt small and I felt scared; I remember wondering about these feelings. I remember thinking that these people represented my school, they represented my supports.

I remember one committee member asking me how I would plan to handle conflicts with stories of crisis during the research journey. I remember him rephrasing this question and asking me four more times. He was wearing a suit and a matching tie. He sat directly across from me in a spot he had chosen when he arrived and had glanced around the room. The chairperson finally had to intervene, "I believe she's answered the question."

I feel numb sharing this story. And I'm crying. I do not feel connected to my university; I love learning, but not the institution. Is it necessary for my journey for me to feel I belong?

Before they posed their unknown questions, the space of that ethics examination space felt like the most stressful of all exam situations. Worse than reciting spelling words. Worse than sitting across from Mom all those years ago admitting that I had failed so miserably in my marriage.

What if they said no? What if these people who knew so little about attending to stories of experience decided this work did not matter? What if they told a story of me before I had arrived to the meeting? What if the stories I had shared in my proposal caused tension for them, were messy and silly and the circling of my stories was confusing, impossible? What if they didn't like me? What if they didn't like kids? What if they silenced me? And silenced future stories and future life-making spaces? What if? What if I didn't get a chance to tell my story?

I arrived with 70 pages of notes, tabbed, highlighted, and indexed. I had sent the committee 30 pages of Clandinin's readings ahead of time so they might have a better understanding of my work. I didn't curl my hair, because that would have been out of the ordinary. I parked at Sheldon Campus because the plants are pretty there. I left two hours early for a 45-minute drive.

When the chairperson asked the four questions, I sighed. I knew the answers. I know the answers because I knew my stories... Somewhere in the midst of the conversation, I leaned back, crossed my legs and shared. I like sharing. I noticed we looked almost like a circle.

We laughed, some.

As I was sharing, I remembered thinking. I wonder how these folks are thinking with my stories of experience. I never thought I would be sharing my divorce with the suited instructor sitting across from me, or sharing my stories of abuse with the young sessional who teaches some of my former students. Yet, I didn't feel vulnerable with the visibility of my stories. There was a time, perhaps in the living of my stories that I might have. I felt grounded because of my ability to share and think narratively with stories of experience, like the former students who return to share and share and share, finding that circle sharing space we carry within, that we created, came to know, and now trust. (Interim research text based on field notes, October, 2014)

Narrative Inquiry Is Identity Work: Stories to Live By

It is when I experience those forces that are inhibiting, demeaning, or interfering with my freedom, that I am moved very often to tell about them. The shocks I receive are very often those that come when I feel the spaces of my choosing (and my aching) narrowing. It is by writing that I often manage to name alternatives and to open myself to possibilities. This is what I think learning ought to be.

(Greene, 1995, p. 107)

I return to *stories to live by* (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999), “a narrative term for identity” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 37), and the profound connection between identity, identity work and what I have come to understand about reliving and retelling with stories of experience. I am coming to understand that the conceptualization, the way I make meaning about my own identity is also the way I attend to others’ stories of experience as well. *I am thinking deeply about the way Dad would attend to and story with me and with*

his students. I have come to understand that I can retell and relive my own stories in a similar way.

I am beginning to understand that my lived way of identity-making was reflected in Isabel's way of retelling and reliving her experiences into stories to live by, in much the same way that I came to understand that the silenced stories we hold back from retelling or reliving are complex identity stories that help us to check out, to step away. In this way, I have come to understand the stories of experience Anne-Marie told of her world. I have re-storied, relived and retold the story of the grade five student (me) who was not smart (although I know that this story has whispers that run deep). I think about Isabel every time she walked into the school anew, retelling and reliving her experiences into a story to live by.

Returning to Return

“It is only as we look back, looking for tensions, gaps, overlaps, and spaces, we understand the reverberation that shifts the stories to live by in unexpected ways. For us, this becomes a new starting point for further inquiries as we try to engage more directly with children about the intersections of stories to live by as moments of lived narrative interlappings” (Huber, Huber & Clandinin (2010) p. 195). Student's stories of experience when they are inquired into, attended to, and given space and place, retold and relived, become identity-making spaces.

Understanding stories to live by is a narrative understanding and includes an interplay of the narrative commonplaces that continually inform us about who we are and who we are becoming. The storying phenomena to which I frequently refer exist as a

process of continually attending to and learning from my stories and the life-making stories of those around me.

Storying Is Knowing Differently

“[A]n education that is about knowing differently rather than knowing more may be humanity’s best hope” (Davis et al., 2000, p. 9). Mindfully trying to know differently is the life-making space I wonder about most, attending first to my stories of experience as they come to live alongside students’ stories of experience.

Story of Return: Thinking Relationally and Narratively

I remember attending a technology conference a year before I began my graduate work. At that time I was beginning to sense a deep tension about the way stories of experience were told of and for teachers about their teaching skills and their teaching deficits. I was feeling a messiness in the conflicting professional practical stories that I had of myself as a teacher. Was I an Information Technologies teacher? Was I a Language Learning educator? Was I an Arts Educator? Was I an Outdoor Environmentalist Educator? What stories did I want told about me? I began to realize that I am all of these stories of experience, but mostly I am an educator of students.

I am the wholeness of my narratives of experience, the experiences I tell of myself, for myself, my familial experiences, my future experiences, the past experiences, the experiences I hear shared, the experiences I glean second-hand at a coffee shop window on a rainy Tuesday evening watching the world walk past. “I am part of all that I have met” (Tennyson, 1833). I am thinking deeply about how even in the beginning moments of thinking about this larger narrative inquiry, I felt the dominant teacher stories

and my own stories of teaching living out in that bumping up space in the midst of coming to know stories of experience differently.

I remember feeling a deep aversion to that dominant story. I remember searching for a different way to understand students' narratives, just as I had all those years previously when I lived briefly alongside Brandon.

I remember sitting in the food court that day with those three educators, well recognized for their use of technology in the classroom. I had listened to the three chat as we had travelled home from the conference, stopping for lunch at the mall. I felt almost a complete disconnect from two of them. While the two were at the counter ordering, I turned to my colleague, "you know, I'm not doing any of this" (Lived memory). I was reacting to the message that the integration of technology into the classroom was an end unto itself and what felt like a privileging of one way to story an educator over another, and a potential source of fame for the educators. I was uncomfortable with where the life-making of it all seemed to disappear. I wanted to attend to student narratives.

The Bumping of Stories Privileged and Loving the Field

I am thinking deeply that through all the bumping up places, through the tears, the ugliness, the labeling, the horrific experiences, I have been privileged to get to know some beautiful people. I adore attending to stories of experience. I wonder at the risk that, in this experience, I have fallen "in love with the field" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 83). I love learning. I love teaching. I love working with kids and attending to their stories. I do not know how to live other than living narratively. "I think sometimes when you do feel strongly about things though, that marginalizes you" (Whelan, 1997, as cited in Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 57). Often students comment on how passionate I am

about issues that are important to me. I wonder how my passions make me ignorant of other different issues that are often equally as important to others and perhaps, to the co-researchers, and importantly, to all learners in our space. Often what is most important to me are students, their stories of experience and how those stories of experience are living and living out inside and outside educational landscapes.

There is importance in “understanding a story...it is important to know the People and where they came from and what they went through” (King, 2003, p. 116). As I come to live alongside students, just as I came to understand from living alongside Anne-Marie, I came to realize that I must never lose sight of the fact that I too enter into the midst of storying through a privileged lens; I bring my own experiences to our conversations. Narrative inquiry is, in part, living in the midst of stories and allowing the stories to story. In this space I have tried to attend to the need for the co-researchers to push and pull their experiences in our storing midst.

I worry that as much as I have thought with our stories of experience, that I resemble Clandinin & Connelly’s (2000) description of Jean as: “[she] sits at her university professor’s desk, reading the transcripts, she remembers herself as a child in that school, a child taking a test” (p. 58). Similarly, I too am never entirely able to separate my own privileges within the participation of this inquiry. I am beginning to understand that part of me will always push back against statistics that tell stories of kids assigned to categories, like “single partner homes”, “learning disabilities”, one mould fits all. I am beginning to understand that I push back because I have been privileged enough to have had my stories attended to beautifully, and because my telling of push-back is my way of reliving and retelling many of my own stories of experience. I am beginning to

come to understand that the ease with which I accept students as they are is as much to do with my privileged home stories of love, support and lack of worry as it is to do with my nature.

Living in the midst of stories in relational spaces is living open to the entirety of stories of experience, the “complexities we might not have otherwise have experienced. [As inquirer, this relational space is open-ended, where] in both the living and telling of our narrative inquiry we continue to face questions about the differences between positioning ourselves as judging or more deeply understanding a teacher’s, child’s, family member’s, administrator’s, or researcher’s lived or told stories” (Clandinin et al., 2006, p. 21). I entered into inquiry uncomfortable with the deliberate silencing of student narratives inside and outside educational landscapes. I was uncomfortable with the deliberate silencing of teacher narratives inside and outside educational landscapes, but honestly not as uncomfortable with the silencing of students’ stories of experience. I had no solid plan of what to do, but I understood to do nothing meant perpetuating dominant narratives and continuing to silence students and educators.

Attend to stories of experience. This is a teaching that I know.

Story of Coming to Attend

I am thinking deeply about how Mom and Dad came to understand their methodological and theoretical underpinnings in what they believed education should be. I am thinking deeply how I have come to develop mine. I am thinking deeply about the importance of continuing to define the theory and methodology and phenomena of practice. It is not *the narratives of experience that are singularly important, but our mindfulness in attending narratively that is the difference-making process*. I am thinking

deeply about how knowing a young person implies the necessity of attending to that young person's stories and allowing all types of stories, fictionalized stories, cover stories, stories of messiness and tension, silenced and difficult stories to be lived, told, relived and retold. I am thinking deeply about the beautiful and comforting weaving of both former students' stories of experience with my own stories of experience as we knotted together our stories and fashioned a sacred sharing space. I am thinking deeply about how attending to the wholeness of stories of experience is an intricate weaving of Dad's teachings, along with both Clandinin & Connelly's (2000) narrative inquiry methodology and phenomena with Dewey's (2009) theory of experience.

I am thinking deeply about how student narratives of experience might serve as transitional beginning places of learning in life-making ways as students come to know their stories differently and hold a storying space within. The possibilities of attending to stories of experience as curriculum making opens up the potential for knowing differently. "A complexified conception of curriculum would suggest [a space where] each event opens up new possibilities for action, which in turn opens still other divergent possibilities. There is no particular direction - except, perhaps, towards the expansion of the space of the possible" (Davis et al., 2008, p. 203).

When I was a teenager I was often told by those outside my family of origin that I was bad and wild and headstrong and that I talked too much. I was often hushed. During my high school years I often sought reckless adrenalin rushes. When the world, it seemed to me, told stories of me and came swirling in, Dad would take me for a walk. With the wind. We walked out onto the prairie quite a ways, to a grove of Buffalo Berry Bushes and we would leave food for the coyotes. In an ice-cream pail Dad would carry a carcass

of a Saturday chicken. We hiked. I never carried the pail. We hiked. Dad and I. Dad and I and the whole great big prairie, light, wind, song. We would empty the contents of the pail and Dad would stand for a while. The world silent. I wonder now how he never grew chilled, his toque only resting on his nearly bald head, old burgundy jacket zipped up enough only to be fastened, no gloves. Never gloves. And we would return, by the bend in the road, me sharing stories of my week. All the way wondering, “I don’t know?” A few years ago Dad grew tired. The walk became a stroll and he allowed me to carry the pail. We stopped along the way, resting against a withered cottonwood. I dumped the bones by myself. That spring Dad had a stroke. The next year I dumped the bones without Dad. I made the journey with Jessy Lee, though, who has always been asking questions. The stars were overhead. Willows nodding silver in the moonlight. Snow crunching underfoot. I took my glove off, remembering alongside cottonwood. “The truth about stories is that that’s all we are” (King, 2003, p. 2).

Storying as Phenomena

I have been storing my whole life. I have been surrounded by storying. I wonder if what I have been surrounded by as well has been trust and time to come to attend to narratives in my own way, allowing me my own way of making meaning of my world by retelling and reliving my stories of experience. I grew up in a family where I was encourage to attend to my own stories of experience. I have a lived understanding that people “entered into the midst of the stories they were living, telling, reliving, and retelling of their lives in in-and-out-of-school places” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 22). With Dad, my stories of experience mattered. I share the coyote bush story with students. I share these stories over and over. As I live out the stories of my experience

with Dad's stroke, the coyote bush stories is one way of my making meaning of my world. I story my life. I understand storying as the way people connect to themselves and to their worlds.

In a fractured age, when cynicism is god, here is a possible heresy: we live by stories, we also live in them. One way or another we are living the stories planted in us early or along the way, or we are also living the stories we planted - knowingly or unknowingly- in ourselves. We live stories that either give our lives meaning or negate it with meaninglessness. If we change the stories we live by, quite possibly we change our lives. (Okri, 1997, p. 46)

Inside and Outside Educational Landscapes Future Stories: Retelling and Reliving

I am thinking deeply about the stories told of Anne-Marie that silenced her stories of experience. I am thinking deeply about what has shifted during the narrative inquiry or if anything has at all. I came to our story space, mine, Isabel's, and Anne-Marie's, understanding there were stories others told of me too, and that there were also silenced stories of experience that I was not yet ready to share.

During moments living alongside Isabel and Anne-Marie, I felt myself pause sometimes when sharing. I am thinking deeply that this pause happened because trust had not yet been established. I am beginning to feel that the stories of change and grief belong to and are the work of trusting spaces; I am thinking how through sharing and attending to these stories with Isabel and Anne-Marie, and with Mom, and we found ways to trust in attending to one another when before, no other paths opened. I think deeply about Isabel and the opportunities she craved to share her stories of experience differently through visual art, through poetry and through leadership. I shared my stories of

experience too. Sharing takes trust, and trust takes time. Just as I have continued to pause, to return to our stories of experience alongside Duane, similarly, I have paused alongside Isabel and Anne-Marie. Somewhere, decades long ago, there is a phone ringing and Dad calls to ask about my day. These are the deep, deep looping ways I have come to share, to trust, and to be mindful in attending to my own stories of experience.

I am thinking deeply about how sharing my stories of experience deepens and changes my ways of knowing myself, my connections with others, and my beliefs about the nature of teaching. I showed up. I kept at it (King, 2003).

I am thinking about what it means to live a complex and interwoven “curriculum of lives” (Clandinin et al., 2006, p. 135). I am thinking about what it has meant to me. Dad’s teaching experiences ranged from a grade four classroom to teaching in a farm school for ‘at-risk’ youth. All of Dad’s stories felt like stories of owl pellet field-trip adventures, poster-board election-making projects, tree-cutting-business building, and canoe-paddling campfire-quests. Dad and the kids lived in the midst of their own projects; often both kids and Dad would remark, “What subject are we doing?” Through experiences, Dad attended to students’ narratives. Clandinin and Connelly, (2000), Clandinin et al. (2006), and Huber et al. (2012) examine who carries the narratives, how narratives are carried and where narratives live. Their work looks at the complexities of stories, in which we “see how much more complex curriculum making is when we broaden the boundaries of where, and under whose direction, curriculum is made” (Huber et al., 2012, p. 143). I think Dad’s classroom did this as did the spaces he opened up through storying alongside students. Dad often loaded students into his big blue goose station wagon and took students cross-country skiing after school. I remember Saturday

afternoons when Dad would be working in the classroom and he would open the gym for kids who just wanted to shoot hoops, myself included. Here, the kids who hung around became siblings; the kids I found on our front steps became nearer to me in those years than my own sister; these were the kids I saw every day, rode alongside down back alleys and tossed footballs with into the dark; I often saw our stories reflected in our relationships; our stories of experience created who we were and who we were becoming inside and outside of educational landscapes. More and more we discovered that our stories of experience bonded us to the prairie fields and the sage brush that Dad taught us to rub between our hands. Here, in these countless story-spaces we understood we were living out the sacred reverberations of our life-making. Though we likely simply named it home.

The stories of experience that come before allow us to make meaning of our current experiences. I am thinking about how Dad's familial stories and mom's familial stories offer ways for me to inquire into my own stories of experience. In this inquiry space, I live, tell, relive and retell my own stories of experience. I am thinking deeply how Isabel knew to tell me to breathe that day at the coffee house. I am thinking deeply at the purpose which led Anne-Marie to enter into this narrative inquiry. To live alongside students means that I must attend to all their stories of experience inside and outside educational landscapes, fictionalized stories, cover stories, present stories, future stories and past stories that are being lived out in our shared space (Coles, 1989).

Ellsworth (2005) explores embodied ways of knowing, hinting at silent stories: "As living moving, sensing bodies, we all exist only and always in relation even as our individual experience of relationality are singular and unshareable" (p. 166). I have been

thinking about the ways that I easily come to feel a sense of recognition in the stories of experience, how this emotion ties to the stories. I am thinking that as I travel back to the classrooms and students I have lived alongside, I have always felt this pull to certain stories of experience. I am reminded that we live in a “human universe...along with the fact of movement/sensation, what is one way to name the universe and shared fact of being in relation” (p. 166).

I am thinking deeply about the way Anne-Marie was able to message and ask to see me. I think about when she and I met at the coffee shop, sitting at the window seats, about her decision to wear a shirt that revealed the bruises and scratches on her neck and shoulders. I am thinking deeply about how all the moments attending to Anne-Marie’s stories of experience allowed Anne-Marie to sit beside me that day in the coffee house and for her to share her stories of Blane. Perhaps Anne-Marie understood that by showing up with bruises on her neck, she guaranteed that I would make a report. By sharing her bruises she was giving me a message that I had told her without having instructed her. “This is why pedagogy teaches but does not know how it teaches” (Ellsworth, 2005, p. 167). She met me at the coffee shop, the public area, digital recording running, to guarantee no other conversation would take place. My focus was certain.

Anne-Marie had heard my stories of experience about students in crisis; she understood that I would report incidences of abuse to Family and Social Service. Anne-Marie had sat through many conversations about the criteria that I had for journal conversations: the only stories I will share will be “those that speak to harming self or someone else.” Anne-Marie trusted that I would respond, she understood my reaction long before I gave voice to it. And certainly, I did. After I left the coffee shop that

afternoon, I did call, for what was then, a second time, and share what I knew with family and social services. “We come to a knowing only as we emerge from a realm of sensation/movement that is ontologically prior to cognition. We come to the time and space of speaking about a learning only after it has already taking place in a time and space that language cannot name. Language follows that which it would name” (Ellsworth, 2005, p. 167).

I am thinking about those moments when I was drafting Isabel’s Inclusion and Intervention Plan (IIP). I understand now that I came to this inquiry with an “arrogant perception” (Lugones, 1987), with the lens of a student support educator, thinking always with goals, and inclusion and intervention plans as lead. Did the inclusion and intervention strategies that were created to help meet the goals retell new stories of experience for Isabel? Isabel has no memory of the document. The echo of Isabel’s missing voice at the table, in the conversational midst, is a telling for me. I sensed her stories of experience being push away from school. There is no certainty that had Isabel been part of her goal setting conversational space that her stories of school might have shifted. I think about how when she attended school her stories of experience were attended to, and attended to differently. I am thinking deeply about how the attending to her stories paused once she was no longer present, once she had been gone from school a long time and was over sixteen-years-old. I am thinking about how attending to stories of experience becomes ongoing work. The stories of experience of youth are long-term stories. I wonder at the implications for educators and educational landscapes when we think about youth’s stories as ongoing, life-making stories.

I am thinking about the way that Isabel's return to school that morning, happy and content and trusting, after having been away for many weeks, and about how her return with bold stories of empowerment and belonging. I am thinking deeply about how I helped to tell silencing stories because, at first I was telling a 'not-good-enough' teacher stories that silenced what I should have been saying. I was quick to allow others to tell misunderstood stories of Isabel's deficits. I am thinking deeply about how I too needed time and attending, to be able to come to relive and retell those silent passive stories. Would longer observation times, like longer conversational spaces, help educators to better attend? I wonder if meaningful student goals can only happen once we have first begun to attend to the wholeness of our stories of experience. And I return to Isabel, walking into the classroom, already knowing differently how to attend to her own stories of experience (Lugones, 1987).

Living relationally and narratively means being "wakeful, and thoughtful, about all of our inquiry decisions" (Clandinin et al., 2006, p. 21).

Stories of experience ebb and flow. As a narrative inquirer I live in this midst. "What makes me hopeful is not so much the certainty of the find, but that my movement is search. It is not possible to search without hope" (Freire as cited in Leggo, 2003, p. 142). I am thinking about Anne-Marie and her mother. I am thinking deeply about the goal Anne-Marie shared, sitting beside me with our backs to the open hallway door at 11th Street Alternate School, to get counselling for her and her mother. I am thinking deeply of the goal she shared when she first began the narrative inquiry journey, to share her stories of experience. I am thinking deeply about how she retold this goal that day at the coffee shop, covered in bruises and scrapes. I am thinking deeply how she met my

eyes and reminded me that what she wanted most to share, alongside whatever stories of experience I should decide to add to this larger, universal narrative, was her treasured and beautiful stories of experience about her kind older brother. For Anne-Marie, the stories of her brother lived as stories of idyllic joy that swirled in the midst of all the other stories of tension and mess that often storied her life.

I continue to hear clearly the stories of abuse that Anne-Marie shared that day at the coffee shop. Though she was aware I was recording our conversation for this inquiry, I wonder how she came to trust me. I am thinking deeply that Anne-Marie trusted the space between us as teacher and student, the stories of me who is bound by ethics and codes as a teacher, codes that are different and more than the ethical codes of “inquiry” I can not be certain but I feel that she understood my obligations as her teacher. I wonder if, on that last day when she had a knowing look about her, standing in the classroom doorway, taking her journal home, she knew differently. Did Anne-Marie understand that I would likely report her stories as potential for risk? I wonder how often I have jumped to value a student’s story of safety over other stories.

I remember when Anne-Marie received the letter of invitation into the research study. She handed it back to me with fast agreement. I remember Anne-Marie later when we met with her mother to sign the consent, and almost a year and a half after that, when we drank pop at the coffee shop, just checking in. It was important to Anne-Marie that her stories of experience not simply be documented, but remembered. I think for Anne-Marie, the research text may have been her way of having her stories attended to in a way that would counteract the way her stories were silenced inside and outside educational landscapes. I can not be certain whether the silencing was singularly connected to school

or to home or to her peer group. I have a sense that our silent stories do not live as only singularly connected with one another, but rather intricately beautifully connected through fantastically complex and recurring plotlines. Anne-Marie could not, would not, or cared not to expand. Anne-Marie wanted her stories to be documented so that her stories would be remembered. King (2003) reminds me “once a story is told, it cannot be called back. Once told, it is loose in the world” (p. 10). Sigh. This is such a tensioned story. Or it is for me. How do I send our stories out into the world? “Why we tell our children that life is hard, when we could just as easily tell them that it is sweet” (King, 2003, p. 26). I am thinking deeply about how I might share here all the complexities of the beautiful stories of experience of Anne-Marie’s life.

Stories Not Visible

I am thinking deeply about all the stories of experience that were not shared, not by Isabel, not by Anne-Marie, not by me. I am thinking deeply about Anne-Marie’s separating my roles as university researcher, as teacher and as teacher/researcher. Though, I can not be certain if she understood just how fuzzy the lines between these roles ultimately became, I feel she shared with me around and within these lines. I am thinking that Anne-Marie understood the power I held and ultimately used the inquiry process to share her stories to live by, the ‘happy’ stories of her relationship with her brother.

Stories Made Visible

Anne-Marie met with me at the coffee shop that day, wearing a tank top. She met with me under the guise of research co-participant, yet she understood, knowing the ethics and codes that I, as her teacher, had previously shared with her, namely that I have

a duty to report harm. I am thinking deeply about the mantra which I shared at the beginning of each term, namely that if any student were in harm's way, I would do everything in my power to seek help for that student. Anne-Marie understood that I would seek help on her behalf. Anne-Marie understood that I was going to question her about the bruising; she was making her stories of violence visible. I wonder, and I return to this wondering often, if Anne-Marie sought the coffee shop space because she knew that she could share her stories visibly and trust in the reaction of her teacher.

As a narrative inquirer I have tried to live in conversation with texts in order to make meaning from these stories of experience. I have read and reread these texts. I hope it is with a "reflexive gaze" (Schaefer, 2015, p. 19) that I come to think narratively with our stories of experience. Further conversations were needed. Looking forward and looking backward and looking forward again was needed. "[T]here is always the danger that in retelling our stories, we construct...a less-than-adequate, even unhealthy, story and find ourselves in what Dewey called a *miseducative experience*. Honoring our field texts can help us escape these miseducative ends" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 85).

Anne-Marie read a few passages of this text and declined to read the rest, seeking to know if her story of her brother was included. The following story of experience Anne-Marie offered, writing the story of her brother with care for sharing in this finished text. Important for Anne-Marie is that the reader understands that through the turmoil in her life, regardless of her stories of school, the stories of her relationship with her mother or the relationship with her boyfriend, Anne-Marie has a solid trusting relationship with her older brother. I am thinking deeply whether her stories of experience are for her, already deeply meaningful richly composed texts that need nothing further.

In Anne-Marie's words (formatting added):

I live with my mom and dad

I have one brother and a sister

my family is kind of crazy

no one is ever home always busy but still have time for each other

we try not to piss each other off

all my family all of my friends come over

and my mom and sister we always go play rock band my mom sing

it's so funny

and we all have so much fun

my dad is never home

he leaves town every week

I only see him on weekends

so I never really talk to him

I'm close with my mom

and sister

we always spend time with each other

and I like hanging with my brother

all the time

like he's my best friend

but we still fight

like brother and sister

those odd times

but whenever

at the end of the day we're good

(Anne-Marie, Field texts, May, 2015)

I wonder about my stories as a teacher inside and outside educational landscapes when those stories border on the role of a voyeur. I wonder at the similarities in the stories to live by of voyeur and of student support teacher. I am wondering at the ease with which I slip so effortlessly away from attending to students stories of experience. I am thinking deeply about how educational personnel must come to attending to students stories of experience with deep mindfulness and deep sense of thinking narratively. Attending narratively to our own stories of experience and to others' stories of experience over time, in a trusted space is most certainly spiritual work, exhausting work, and it is often uncertain work that digs deeply into and makes visible the epistemological systems in play.

As I came to attend to Anne-Marie's stories of experience, it occurred to me that I never paused to ask her which of her stories of experience, if possible, was of greatest importance in her life. Is it ever possible for us to understand the relative importance of our various stories of experience? Or is it more the way our stories of experience interact internally and externally that allows us a way of assigning significance to our stories within the social dimension. It occurs to me, who has inquired into my experiences? Do I know? Have I sought the answer? Have I ever asked this question of any of the students I have lived alongside? I am thinking about Isabel and Anne-Marie, and Duane. I am thinking about Dad. Mostly though, I am thinking about Jessie Lee.

I am thinking about narrative inquiry as living work, a reliving and a retelling of many stories of experience. I am thinking about all whom I have met and with whom I have inquired along the way. I am thinking deeply about the many beautiful and complex students' stories of experience that I have lived alongside. I am thinking of Mom, Dad, Jessy Lee, my sister, and the experiences that storied me in some way and wondering about the purpose of attending to stories of experience. I am wondering about my purpose in carrying on with storying. Deep inside I hear the weaving-circle stories of those who have walked alongside me, I remember Dad's wisdom, "teachings are what matters" (Schaefer, 2015, p. 28).

Stories That Matter

Anne-Marie understood the epistemological justifications of this inquiry long before I was able to give them voice. For Anne-Marie, this inquiry journey was about believing that her stories of experience which she told about herself mattered. Sometimes I feel research is the garage-sale, academia way to make us teacher-types retell a dominant story that we have discovered so as to demonstrate that students stories of experience matter. The academic/ethical/research guidelines made it a certainty that I would record/document Anne-Marie's stories of experience and the agreed upon methodology suggested I would never ask what 'is your purpose?' Here's the point: our stories already matter. It is what we do with them that is the difference making. Anne-Marie's stories of experience all matter. Living in narrative inquiry alongside Isabel and Anne-Marie caused me to live more mindfully alongside all stories of experience, and to live in a way so as to deliberately attend to stories. Inquiry made visible a multitude of stories of experience, laying them all out on the table to look at them, and then having the

person who had shared metaphorically point to one or to many or to none. And then together, we gathered our stories of experience again and began anew. Throughout the messiness of the horrific narrowness of the ethics journey, I felt from the beginning like the University sought to narrow me, to devalue my stories of experience until I had come to feel that I had returned to that grade five resource room with those recorded spelling words. At times I could not find any meaning in the process. “I probably sound cranky. I don’t mean to.... I was stuffed full of high expectations” (King, 2003, pp. 36-37). So I attended to students’ stories. Deliberately. I took notes. I allowed myself to be confused and allowed us to be in pain and to cry. I allowed our stories of experience to live in a non-linear way, to make sense alongside structures and outcomes and goals and deadlines. A comfortable description that I can offer is that of a big cauldron of narrative inquiry, storying, reflexive gaze, love, trust, time, place, tears, vulnerability, return, generosity, wit, humility, curiosity and laughter. I trusted in the experience of attending to stories of experience.

I trusted in the experience of attending to stories of experience.

When I presented my proposal to my committee, a committee member remarked, “Your thesis had best say more than your writing stories matters” (Lived memory, committee meeting).

Stories of experience matter.

I am thinking deeply about living relationally as a deliberately chosen way to live one’s life. Living relationally was Dad teaching me to be mindful of my own sacred spaces, of my own sacred stories. I am thinking deeply with the consistency with which Duane continues to mindfully return to his sacred storying space, retelling and reliving

his stories of experience. His sense of his own storying space has been generously reflected in his attending to my stories of change and loss, thus giving me the courage to retell and relive my stories of change and loss.

I wonder if this complex interconnectedness of narrative is what Isabel experienced as stories of comfort and belonging when she returned, time and again to 11th Street Alternate School. I wonder if this complex interconnectedness of narrative is what Anne-Marie experienced as retold stories of independence, enabling her to feel safe to share after the 11th Street milieu pushed her away.

Story of Return to My Sacred Space: Knowing Differently: Retelling and Reliving

When I was in my late twenties, I had stood in a friend's porch in the midst of a telling. I felt future stories of experience billowing around me like flakes in a snow globe that someone else was shaking, blizzard-like.

What I felt was the swish in coming to knowing differently my future stories, the change in how I was seeing my own future. I felt a deep longing to live differently, as personal justification for this work. I had felt and heard this longing to live differently whispering, before, from the depths of my sacred spaces. I longed to retell my future stories. I had wanted to leave my marriage long before that moment on the porch. I had understood my longings long before I was able to give name to them. I had felt my own knowings long before in my body. There lived in me deep resonances of knowing. There lived inside me retellings and relivings in the whisperings of my sacred spaces. I knew that the more I attended to those whispers, the more they become empowering stories to live by, as social justification for my work.

I leaned down, tucked Jessy Lee under one arm, picked up her shoes with the other hand, and left. I put Jessy Lee in the front seat beside me, and without a seat belt around her, drove four blocks. I stopped. I took long deep breaths. I moved Jess to her car seat. In all, there would be three similar storying-moments, experiences, in the ninety swift days that nudged me to leave my marriage.

Storying Return

Storying is tricky. Storying changes over time, depending on how deeply I trust, how comfortable I am with people. With each retelling, the ebb and flow shifts and fogs and clears, comforting or confronting the truths and beliefs and justifications to which I cleave in the horizon of reliving and retelling my stories of experience.

Some moments in my stories of experience live crisp while others live in the midst. I knew in my body standing in that porch that Jess would not grow up in a home where there was drug use. I heard Dad's teachings pounding loudly in my mind: if I wanted a different story I needed to tell a different ending (King, 2003). There is "a strength of purpose [in the] continued attempts of the community to right itself and the omnipresent choruses of sadness and humour, of tragedy and sarcasm, become, in the end, an honour song of sorts, a song many of us have heard before" (p. 117).

Some stories must be shared. I am thinking deeply about the stories that I feel need to be shared. Storying is tricky. I will likely change my mind tomorrow, or yesterday. I am wondering what I will come to glean from living with these stories years from now. I can see Isabel's smile as she curves out meaning in her sketchbook; I can see Anne-Marie's smile as she pulls her journal tight to her chest; I wonder if they already glean that knowing? Sometimes, I know how and why I need to attend to my stories of

experience. Sometimes though, I have lived and live out in the midst of these stories, and knowing differently takes time. Sometimes I need a crisis story to nudge me to understanding the complex interconnectedness of narratives. That moment, when the drug stories began to story Jess's future stories, seeing her standing there, tiny and new, on the top of those basement stairs about to live out stories she could never unlearn, I shifted from letting the future be defined by others telling it for us, to choosing a life-making decision that allowed me to tell our own future.

Inside me lives a sacred space to relive and retell my stories. This is the same sacred space that I had heard and understood all those years previously when I walked away from that grade five classroom. This same sacred space that whispers loudly, calls on me to attend to stories which bump up against grand narratives about graduation rates, attendance policies, consequences, chapters, exclusion and all those people who say that 'I should not take it so personally.'

I wonder too about the stories of those recorded spelling words. Learning to relive and retell my stories of experience has taught me to better attend to students' stories of experience. I am beginning to wonder whether being able to live mindfully alongside youth in the midst of their stories of experience is perhaps the only important story; it alone is good enough.

I am thinking about Isabel. She continues to check in. Sometimes we meet for coffee. I am thinking about Anne-Marie. I see her driving sometimes; we wave at each other. Every few months I message and say, "Hi." Occasionally, she responds. I wonder if Isabel and Anne-Marie understood the uncertainty and unfinished nature of the stories that they shared during the inquiry. I wonder if they do now. I have a deeper sense that

Isabel does, knowing that she lives with stories of health uncertainties. Anne-Marie understood in the way she told of the uncertainty of relying on her father. Perhaps, within each of us, there is a feeling of uncertainty in the ebb and flow of life.

I am beginning to wonder what educators might do, how education might shift and how it might feel if we trusted in the changing nature of our stories and abandoned the notion of closure. There is a kindness in attending to ever-shifting stories of experience. There is kindness in thinking with stories of experience as rich in complexities, fluidities, and unfinished beauty.

Life Making Stories

Attending to stories of experience is a life making way of being. I remember the autumn of this inquiry. I remember the blinding echo of sadness. I remember every morning at school during snack time we would pass the ‘gratitude rock’ and we would each begin our sharing with the words “I am thankful for.” The sharing circle in which I lived alongside students and other staff during those weeks following Dad’s stroke was the most honouring and healing educational space in which I have ever lived. I cried. I laughed. I was vulnerable. I was silent. I shared. I healed. I learned. In time I told stories of gratitude. In time I came to retell and relived my stories of experience. The circle was, through these shared stories of experience, not only a curriculum making space, but also a life-making space for me, for many staff, and for most students. The sharing circle became our place where we trusted each other enough to live narratively.

Storying matter of experience matter.

I believe, and perhaps this is what pulls me most to narrative inquiry, somewhere, in some way, there is a profound resonance of one’s own self-awarenesses within

storying. I can not evaluate it or define it; storying is as unique as each story and each storier.

Sharing our stories alters how we think about the experiences within our own unfolding plotlines (King, 2003; Davis et al., 2008). “Once something is presented to awareness, we can act on it... Clearly subsequent events are not determined by what is in the spotlight of the consciousness, but those choices are usually dependent on what is highlighted. What we perceive matters... It is all about how knowing looks” (Davis et al., 2008, p. 35). Both the telling of stories and the hearing of stories changes the world. In turn our own stories of experience are altered, opening new lenses with which we come to attend to stories of experience. Stories have the power to change dominant stories because stories “can control our lives” (King, 2003, p. 9).

When I was young, Dad would come home after school. He would have a plastic bin full of school work. He must have asked how my day went, but I can not really remember questions. I remember Dad listening. By attending to my stories of experience Dad taught me how to attend to others’ stories of experience. I wonder now how Dad learned to attend so beautifully. His stories of his early experiences resonated as stories of neglect. Yet these were not the stories he chose to relive. He chose to retell his stories as life-making opportunities, opening nurturing spaces within me. The way that Dad retold his stories of neglect taught me to be mindful of my own stories of experience. There is a teaching there (Albert Saas, *storying-ongoing*; see also, Lessard, 2010).

Stories of Experience

I trusted in the experience that the mindfulness of storying would come.

I learned that the storying space was within me. I learned through the long messy experience of this narrative inquiry that this space is a sacred space. It is a space to which I must attend mindfully. It is a space to which I return, a space to which I invite others to attend, a space which I share only with those I trust. I learned to take the bucket of coyote food out on my own. I learned to attend to my own stories. I learned to schedule time for joy with Jessy Lee while living and living out my own stories of change and grief. I attended to my own spirit. I retold and relived my own stories of experience. Life is messy. I saw that all those years ago Dad had created a storying space not only for me to listen to him, not only for him to share with me, not only for me to connect to the world around me, *but a space where I might, in time, feel connected enough to my own experiences to come to trust in knowing my own stories of experience as a way of life-making.*

Storying

Dad created the sharing space. *I am beginning to imagine the potential for student narratives to create a space for students and educators to begin to understand their own stories, a space to which they return and in which they weave their own life-making stories.* I am beginning to imagine storying spaces with new groups of students every year, in all educational landscapes. I am beginning to imagine a time when the wholeness of students' stories are attended to.

I am beginning to wonder if mindfully attending to students' stories is work that can only be done by a few educators. Educators, like the youth whom we live alongside,

are different; we attend to the lives of youth in different ways. I watched my parents love me beautifully and differently. They were both passionate educators. They were different educators. Students need different kinds of stakeholders (including educators) to whom they may bond.

I am beginning to understand that it is our narratives of experience, and most profoundly student stories of experience, that have the potential to shift the nature of school landscapes, to change the way that educators attend to youth inside and outside those landscapes. I am thinking deeply of what Isabel and Anne-Marie helped me to relearn: *learnings come from our stories of experience. Storying is messy. Storying requires a constant return to our storied lives through trust. Sharing drives a desire to learn. There is within storying the beautiful sacred space of what we come to learn for ourselves.*

Return to Wonderings: There Is a Teaching There

I have been storying my whole life. I am my stories. My stories of experience live in the pages of my journal as do the stories of experience of students live in the pages of the journals we share, the art work we create, and the photos of the adventures we take.

Duane still writes letters to me. Duane still writes poetry for himself. He still calls several times a week.

Isabel already understood how to live and live out her own stories of experience. Time and story loop, and can live out on alternating plotlines, as Isabel understood. Our challenge as educators is to link our educational temporal plotlines with students' home plotlines. Our challenge as educators is to let go of institutional grand narratives and to attend to students' stories of experience.

Anne-Marie understood what stories she wanted told about her. I see Anne-Marie's mother sometimes, and we often have a similar conversation. She asks me about getting a copy of the book of poetry in which Anne-Marie's poems were published. I wonder, and I have wondered all along this journey, what these stories might have been had we co-composed them alongside family? I return to that that day when Anne-Marie, her mother and I signed the consent form. I am thinking deeply about all the students whom I lived alongside.

I know what resulted from my calls to Family and Social Services, but I choose not to publish those stories here. What Anne-Marie most wanted me to remember, what she wanted me to record and to share in this narrative inquiry, was that her brother is her best friend. Our challenge as educators is to attend to the wholeness of students' stories of experience.

Our stories of experience matter. "The strength and the power of [student] voices are undeniable" (Smyth & Hattam, 2004, p. 14). Our stories live. "Do with it what you will. Cry over it. Get angry. Forget it. But don't say in the years to come that you would have lived your life differently if only you had heard this story. You've heard it now" (King, 2003, p. 119).

Youth matter. Their stories of experience matter.

Maybe it's November, perhaps it's April. I return. Here. Where I always return. Frog pond. Small deep pool of water. Wind is here. On cheek. I feel it. I hear. Listen. Poplar sing and willow smile. Water like glass. Hundred yards north, down long sandy shore, lake. Cold and vast and rough. I breathe deeply and venture out. Wind strong and I am strong, here. I walk into wind, into horizon. Words have no meaning here. I

*breathe deeply. Soon rock calls and I stop. I stop. I am awash in place and wind.
 Rootedness here. Rootedness in me. Rock. Cold and iced and run round smooth from
 experiences and beautiful. Full of stories. Fold fingers tightly. Put hand into pocket, look
 long across waves towards magic sky horizon, breathe deeply, step homewards. (Saas,
 Field note, Living)*

I have been storying my whole life;

And there's a teaching, I return to Dad, tomorrow:

He sits shuffling in the new brown recliner, holding the stainless post
 with his right hand. He watches me search. I've been searching a while.

I stop in the doorway of the kitchen, and catch his look, the slow rumble of words
 building as he clears his throat to talk.

"There's a pail in the cat cupboard, behind the stair vacuum."

He pushes up with his right leg to hoist himself back in the chair. I start to talk,

I always start to talk, but turn and go and check. The bucket is there.

I grab it, walk back to the kitchen and hold it up to him like a prize.

"How did you know?"

He doesn't answer. I start to fill the bucket. "Caaaori."

I turn to him.

“It’s getting dark. Hurry.”

This used to be a long story of him telling me to take a flashlight, fill the bucket full,

don’t stay out too long, be back in an hour. I know this story by heart.

Now his blue eyes twinkle and he watches me.

I know these stories by heart, in his blues eyes twinkling as I look back to meet them,

kiss his cheek before I step out the door.

I know the stories of my experience by heart.

There is a teaching there.

References

- Adichie, C. N. (2009, October 7). TED Talks (Producer). *The Dander of a Single Story*.
Video retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9Ihs241zeg>
- Alexie, S. (2007). *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part Time Indian*. New York, NY:
Little Brown and Company.
- Bateson, M. C. (1989). *Composing a Life*. New York, NY: Grove Press.
- Bateson, M. C. (1994). *Peripheral Visions; Learning Along the Way*. New York, NY:
Harper Collins Publishers.
- Bateson, M.C. (2000) *Full Circles Overlapping Lives: Culture and Generation in
Transition*. New York, NY: Randon House.
- Bateson, M.C. (2004) *Willing to Learn: Passages of Personal Discovery*. Hanover, NH:
Steerforth Press.
- Beers, K. & Probst, R. E. (2013). *Notice & Note: Strategies for Close Reading*. New
Hampshire: Heinemann.
- Brendtro, L. K., Brokenleg, M. & Van Bockern, S. (2002). *Reclaiming Youth at Risk:
Our Hope for the Future*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.
- Brophy J. & Pinnegar, S. (Eds.), Learning from Research on Teaching: Perspective
Methodology, and Representation. *Advances in Research on Teaching*, Vol. 11,
pp. 313–336). Oxford, England: Elsevier. Retrieved from
<http://www.emeraldinsight.com/books.htm?chapterid=1784056>
- Bruner, J. (1986). *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University
Press.

- Busching, B. & Slesinger, B. A. (2002). *It's Our World Too: Socially Responsive Learners in Middle School Language Arts*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Caine, V., Lessard, S., Steeves, P. & Clandinin, D. J. (2013). A Reflective Turn: Looking Backward, Looking Forward. In D. J. Clandinin, P. Steeves, & P. Caine (Eds.), *Composing Lives in Transition: a Narrative Inquiry into the Experiences of Early School Leavers*. (pp. 241-259). Bingley, UK: Emerald Group Publishing.
- Carr, D. (1986). *Time, Narrative, and History*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Clandinin, D. J. (Ed.). (2007). *Handbook of Narrative Inquiry: Mapping a Methodology*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing.
- Clandinin, D. J. (2013). *Engaging in Narrative Inquiry*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.
- Clandinin, D. J., et al. (2006). *Composing Diverse Identities: Narrative Inquiries into the Interwoven Lives of Children and Teachers*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Clandinin, D. J., Caine, V. & Steeves, P. (2013). Methodology. In D. J. Clandinin, V. Caine & P. Steeves (Eds.), *Composing Lives in Transition: a Narrative Inquiry into the Experiences of Early School Leavers* (pp. 43-52). Bingley, UK: Emerald Group Publishing.
- Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (1994). Personal Experience Methods. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials* (pp. 413–427). London, ON: Sage Publishing.
- Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative Inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research*. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons.

- Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2004). Knowledge, Narrative, and Self-study. In J. Loughran, M. Hamilton, V. LaBoskey & T. Russell (Eds.), *International Handbook of Self-study of Teaching and Teacher Education Practices* (pp. 575–600). Boston, MA: Kluwer Academic Publishing.
- Clandinin, D. J., Murphy, M. S., Huber, J. & Murray-Orr, A. (2009). Negotiating Narrative Inquiries: Living in a Tension-filled Midst. *Journal of Educational Research*, 103(2), 81-90. Retrieved from http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00220670903323404#.U7Hvw_P4DDd
- Clandinin, & Rosiek, J. (2007). Mapping a Landscape of Narrative Inquiry: Borderland Spaces and Tensions. In D. J. Clandinin, *Handbook of Narrative Inquiry: Mapping a Methodology* (pp. 35-76). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing.
- Coles, R. (1989). *The Call of Stories: Teaching and the Moral Imagination*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.
- Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (1988). Teachers as Curriculum Planners: Narratives of Experience. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (Eds.). (1999). *Shaping a Professional Identity: Stories of Educational Practice*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Connelly, F. M. & Clandinin, D. J. (1999). Knowledge, Context, and Identity. In F. M. Connelly & D. J. Clandinin (Eds.), *Shaping a Professional Identity: Stories of Educational Practice* (pp. 1-5). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

- Connelly, F. M. & Clandinin, D. J. (1999). Composing, Sustaining, and Changing Stories to Live by. In F. M. Connelly & D. J. Clandinin (Eds.), *Shaping a Professional Identity: Stories of Educational Practice* (pp. 1-5). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Connelly, F. M. & Clandinin, D. J. (1999). Borders of Space and Time. In F. M. Connelly & D. J. Clandinin (Eds.), *Shaping a Professional Identity: Stories of Educational Practice* (pp. 103-112). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Craig, C., & Huber, J. (2006). Relational Reverberations: Shaping and Reshaping Narrative Inquiries in the midst of storied lives and contexts. In D. J. Clandinin (Ed.), *Handbook of Narrative Inquiry* (pp. 251–279). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Crites, S. (1971). The Narrative Quality of Experience. *American Academy of Religion*, 39, 291–311. Retrieved from <http://abs.sagepub.com/content/41/4/558.abstract>
- Crozier, L. (2009). *Small Beneath the Sky*. Vancouver, BC: Greystone.
- Cruikshank, J. (2005). *Do Glaciers Listen? Local Knowledge, Colonial Encounters, and Social Imagination*. Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.
- Davis, B., Sumara, D., & Luce-Kepler, R. (2008). *Engaging Minds*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- DeBecker, G. (1997). *The Gift of Fear: and Other Survival Signals that Protect Us From Violence*. New York, NY: Dell Publishing.
- Dewey, J. (2009) *Democracy and Education*. USA: Merchant Books.
- Dewey, J. (2001). *The School and Society & the Child and the Curriculum*. New York, NY: Dover Publications.

- Dewey, J. (2007). *How We Think*. Kansas City, MO: Digireads
- Dewey, J. (1997). *Experience and Education*. New York, NY: Kappa Delta Pi
- Downey, C. A., & Clandinin, D. J. (2010). Narrative Inquiry as Reflective Practice: Tensions and Possibilities. In N. Lyons (Ed.), *Handbook of Reflection and Reflective Inquiry: Mapping a Way of Knowing for Professional Reflective Inquiry* (pp. 383–397). New York, NY: Springer.
- Ellsworth, E. (2005). *Places of Learning: Media, Architecture, Pedagogy*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Freire, P. (2000). *Pedagogy of Freedom: Ethics, Democracy and Civic Course*. Oxford, England: Rowan and Littlefield.
- Freire, P. (2001). *Pedagogy of Freedom: Ethics, democracy, and civic courage*. Oxford, England: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Greene, M. (1995). *Releasing the Imagination: Essays on Education, the Arts, and Social Change*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Greene, M. (2008). *The Poet, the City, and Curriculum*. Retrieved July 2012 from www.maxinegreene.org/articles.php
- Grumet, M. R. (1988). *Bitter Milk: Woman and Teaching*. Boston, MA: University of Massachusetts Press.

- Greene, M. (1984). "Excellence," Meanings, and Multiplicity. *Teachers College Record*, 86(2), 283-297. Retrieved from http://www.google.ca/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0ahUKEwjdmK6otL_OAhVH1B4KHdD_AX4QFggnMAE&url=http%3A%2F%2Feric.ed.gov%2F%3Fid%3DEJ313006&usg=AFQjCNF0ecQhEVzAyLCRO_4aXijo3SxshQ
- Greene, R. W. (2009). *Lost at School: Why Our Kids with Behavioral Challenges are Falling Through the Cracks and How We Can Help Them*. New York, NY: Scribner.
- Government of Saskatchewan. (August, 2016). *The Education Act*. Retrieved from <http://www.publications.gov.sk.ca/details.cfm?p=487>
- Government of Saskatchewan. (Aug 2016). *Programs and Instruction: Inclusion and Intervention plans*. Retrieved from <http://publications.gov.sk.ca/details.cfm?p=76828>
- Grosz, E. (Ed.). (1999). *Becoming: Explorations In Time, Memory, and Futures*. New York, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Hasebe-Ludt, Erika & Hurrion, W. (2003). *Curriculum Intertext: Place/Language/Pedagogy*. New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc.
- Hooks, B. (1990). *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics*. Boston, MA: South End Press.
- Hooks, B. (2003). *Teaching Community: a Pedagogy of Hope*. New York, NY: Routledge.

- Huber, J. (1999). Listening to Children on the Landscape. In F. M. Connelly & D. J. Clandinin (Eds.), *Shaping a Professional Identity: Stories of Educational Practice* (pp. 9-19). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Huber, J., Murphy, S., & Clandinin, D. J. (2012). *Places of Curriculum Making: Narrative Inquiries Into Children's Lives in Motion*. Bingley, UK: Emerald Group Publishing.
- Huber, J., Caine, V., Huber, M., & Steeves, P. (2013). Narrative Inquiry as Pedagogy in Education: The Extraordinary Potential of Living, Telling, Retelling, and Reliving Stories of Experience. *Review of Research in Education*, 37(1), 212-242
- Huber, J. & Clandinin, D. J. (2005). Living in Tension: Negotiating a Curriculum of Lives on the Professional Knowledge Landscape. In J. Brophy & S. Pinnegar (Eds.), *Learning from Research on Teaching: Perspective, Methodology and Representation* (pp. 313-336). Oxford, England: Elsevier.
- Huber, M. (2008). Narrative Curriculum Making as Identity Making: Intersecting Family, Cultural and School Landscapes. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from (Unknown).
- Huber, M., Huber, J., & Clandinin, D. J. (2004). Moments of Tension: Resistance as Expressions of Narrative Coherence in Stories to Learn By. *Reflective Practice*, 5(2), 181–198. (Unknown)
- Huber, M., Huber, J. & Clandinin, D. J. (2004). Moments of Tension: Resistance as Expressions of Narrative Coherence in Stories to Live By. *Reflective Practice: International and Multidisciplinary Perspectives*, 5(2), 181-198.

- Josselson, R. (2007). The Ethical Attitude in Narrative Research: Principles and Practicalities. In D. J. Clandinin (Ed.), *Handbook of Narrative Inquiry: Mapping a Methodology*, (pp. 537-566). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- King, T. (2003). *The Truth About Stories*. Toronto, ON: Anansi Press.
- Kumashiro, K. (2009). *Against Common Sense*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Larson, S. & Brendtro, L. (2000). *Reclaiming Our Prodigal Sons and Daughters: a Practical Approach for Connecting with Youth in Conflict*. Bloomington, IN: National Educational Service.
- Leggo, C. (2003). Backyard Questions Written in Stone and Water: Alchemic Possibilities in the Space of the Heart. In E. Hasebe-Ludt & W. Hurren (Eds.), *Curriculum Intertext* (131-148). New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing.
- Lessard, S. M. (2010). *Two-stones Stories: Shared Teachings Through the Narrative Experiences of Early School Leavers*. (Master thesis). Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/docview/816599643?pq-origsite=summon>
- Lugones, M. (1987). Playfulness, "World"-Travelling, and Loving Perception. *Hypatia*, 2(2), 3-19.
- Lyons, N. (2007). Narrative Inquiry: What Possible Future Influence on Police or practice? In D. J. Clandinin (Ed.), *Handbook of Narrative Inquiry: Mapping a Methodology* (pp. 600-631). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Manning, E. (2012). *Relationescapes: Movement, Art Philosophy*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Massumi, B. (2002). *Parables for the Virtual*. London, ON: Duke University Press.

- Moore, D. W., & Hinchman, K. A. (2006). *Teaching Adolescents who Struggle with Reading: Practical Strategies*. Boston, MA: Pearsons.
- Neufeld, G. & Mate, G. (2013). *Hold on to Your Kids: Why Parents Need to Matter More Than Peers*. Toronto, ON: Random House.
- Noddings, N. (2005). *The Challenge to Care in Schools: an Alternative Approach to Education*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Okri, B. (1997). *A Way of Being Free*. London, ON: Phoenix.
- Pinnegar, S. & Daynes, J. G. (2007). Locating Narrative Inquiry Historically: Thematics in the Turn to Narrative. In D. J. Clandinin (Ed.), *Handbook of Narrative Inquiry: Mapping a Methodology* (pp. 3-34). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing.
- Richardson, L. (2000). Writing: a Method of Inquiry. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* (pp. 923-949). (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing.
- Robinson, E. (2000). *Monkey Beach*. Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Schaefer, L., Lessard, S., Panko, S., & Polsfut, N. (2014). The Table Where Rich People Sit. In M. Baguley, Y. S Findlay & M. C. Kerby (Eds.), *Meanings and Motivation in Education Research* (pp. 17-33). London, ON: Routledge.
- Sensoy, O., & Diangelo R. (2012). *Is Everyone Really Equal: an Introduction to Key Concepts in Social Justice Education*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Short, K. G., Lynch-Brown, C., & Tomlinson, C. (2014) *Essentials of Children's Literature*. (8th Ed.). New Jersey, NY: Pearson Education.
- Smyth, J., & Hattam, R. (2004). *Dropping Out, Drifting Off, Being Excluded: Becoming Somebody Without School*. New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing.

- Sweetland, W., Huber, J., & Whelan, K. (2004). Narrative Inter-lappings: Recognising Difference Across Tension. *Reflective Practice*, 5(1), 47–77.
- Tennyson, A. (1833). Ulysses. In C. T. Fyfe (Ed), *A Book of Good Poems. Book of Good Poems* (p, 127-9). Vancouver, BC: Copp Clark Publishing.
- Varela, F. J., Thompson, E. & Rosch, E. (1991). *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience*. Cambridge, MA: the MIT Press.
- Wallin, J. J. (2010). *A Deleuzian Approach to Curriculum: Essays on a Pedagogical Life*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Young, M. (2005) *Pimatisiwin: Walking in a Good Way: a Narrative Inquiry in Language as Identity*. Winnipeg, MB: Pemmican Publications.
- Young, M. Chester, J-L., Flett, B. M., Joe, L. Marshall, L., Moore, D, Paul, K., Paynter, F., William, J., & Huber, J. (2010). Becoming Real Aboriginal Teachers: Attending to Intergenerational Narrative Reverberations and Responsibilities. *Teacher and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 16 (3), 285-305.

Appendix 1 COC rubric



Circle of Courage Rubric

Student:

School Year:

Teacher:

Date:

I Belong (Belonging)		1	2	3	4
Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not participate avoids in class activities avoids school activities. 	Requires encouragement to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> participate in class participate in school activities. 	Participates willingly in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> class activities school activities. 	Actively participates in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a variety of class and school activities. Often assumes a leadership role. 	
Cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experiences difficulties working with others Does not respond to reasonable requests. 	Requires encouragement to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> work with others respond to reasonable requests. 	Cooperates, works with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> peers adults Usually responds to reasonable requests	Works cooperatively with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> peers adults encourages others to work cooperatively. 	
Relationships	Has difficulty developing positive relationships with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> peers adults. Does not respond appropriately to conflict. 	Requires support to develop positive relationships with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> peers adults Requires support in resolving conflict. 	Develops and maintains positive relationships with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peers adults Resolves conflict appropriately, seeking help when needed. 	Consistently develops and maintains positive relationships with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peers Adults Responds to conflict appropriately, seeking to resolve conflicts through discussion. 	
I Want to Know (Mastery)		1	2	3	4
Interest and Engagement in Learning	<i>Reluctant Learner</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shows little curiosity or interest in learning engages minimally even in tasks of personal interest. 	<i>Inconsistent Learner</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sometimes curious With step-by-step guidance, will try to learn a new skill. Engages only in tasks of personal interest. 	<i>Active Learner</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Curious and interested. With support, tries to learn new skills/understanding engage in all required tasks(preferred and non-preferred) 	<i>Consistently an Active Learner</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Curious and interested independently seeks to learn new skills/understanding Engages and uses many different ways to accomplish tasks. 	
Goal Setting & Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not participate in goal setting Participates in goal setting reluctantly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sets simple goals with assistance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sets goals and monitors them with assistance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Systematically sets goals Uses a variety of strategies to achieve goals. 	
Self-Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not complete assigned tasks Does not put effort into work. Lacks time management skills. Needs consistent support to persist. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only completes tasks with direct support and supervision. Requires support in managing time. Seldom thinks about quality of the task. Needs some encouragement to persist. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completes tasks with minimal support Manages time well. Usually produces quality to the best of his/her ability. Persists to accomplish tasks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completes tasks independently. Manages time well. is reflective with his/her work, can speak to what he or she did well and where he or she would make adjustments Persists even when the work is difficult. 	
I Am Independent		1	2	3	4
Accepts Responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Denies responsibility for own actions Blames others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resists but with support, accepts responsibility for own actions. Does not readily engage in a plan for change. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accepts responsibility for own actions. Agrees to a plan for change. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Independently accepts responsibility for own actions Creates a plan for change. 	
Organizational Skills	Even with assistance, has difficulty organizing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personal belongings Assignments. 	With assistance, organizes and manages: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personal belongings Assignments 	Independently organizes and manages: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personal belongings Assignments 	Consistently organizes and manages: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personal belongings Assignments 	
Independence in Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Little focus on task Needs constant guidance to work Doesn't see the value in the learning opportunities offered. 	Needs support to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> maintain learning focus Use time well. Easily distracted when working independently 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focuses on learning. Generally uses learning time well. Is able to ignore distractions. Usually works well independently. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistently focuses on learning Seeks to use learning time effectively. Works well independently despite distractions Assists others to work well. 	
I Contribute (Generosity)		1	2	3	4
Caring for Others (Empathy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistently lacks empathy for others Provides feedback inappropriately. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Needs support in extending empathy to classmates and adults. Reluctant to provide feedback. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shows empathy for classmates and adults May provide feedback appropriately. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistently cares for classmates and adults Expresses feedback constructively. 	
Helpfulness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not help others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sometimes helps others when prompted or requested. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Often helps others without a prompt or request. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistently offers help to classmates and adults without prompting or request. 	
Understanding of Rules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disregards rules and procedures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follows some rules and procedures but has not internalized their purpose. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understands generally that rules and procedures should be followed and usually does so. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understands the need for rules and procedures and follows them consistently. 	

Appendix 2 Approval Form



*Research Ethics Board
Certificate of Approval*

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR Cori Saas 1213 Redland Avenue Moose Jaw, SK S6H 3P5	DEPARTMENT Education	REB# 2014-020
SUPERVISOR Dr. Ken Montgomery - Education		
FUNDER(S) Unfunded		
TITLE Stories to Live By		
APPROVAL OF Consent Form Poster Script for seeking meeting to sign consent form from student's guardian	APPROVED ON June 3, 2014	CURRENT EXPIRY DATE June 3, 2015

Delegated Review
Full Board Meeting

CERTIFICATION

The University of Regina Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above-named research project. The proposal was found to be acceptable on ethical grounds. The principal investigator has the responsibility for any other administrative or regulatory approvals that may pertain to this research project, and for ensuring that the authorized research is carried out according to the conditions outlined in the original protocol submitted for ethics review. This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above time period provided there is no change in experimental protocol, consent process or documents.

Any significant changes to your proposed method, or your consent and recruitment procedures should be reported to the Chair for Research Ethics Board consideration in advance of its implementation.

ONGOING REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

In order to receive annual renewal, a status report must be submitted to the REB Chair for Board consideration within one month of the current expiry date each year the study remains open, and upon study completion.

Please refer to the following website for further instructions: <http://www.uregina.ca/research/REB/main.shtml>

Dr. Larena Hoeber, Chair
University of Regina
Research Ethics Board

Please send all correspondence to:

Office for Research, Innovation and Partnership
University of Regina
Research and Innovation Centre 109
Regina, SK S4S 0A2
Telephone: (306) 585-4775 Fax: (306) 585-4893 research.ethics@uregina.ca