

# Indigenous Storywork

EDUCATING THE HEART, MIND, BODY, AND SPIRIT

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Figure 1 Holism: A context for Indigenous storywork

# Image Description

Figure 1 is a graphic of four nested circles. From innermost to outermost they read "Oneself," "Family," "Community," and "Nation." Around the outside are four labels. From the top, clockwise, they read "Intellectual," "Spiritual," "Emotional," and "Physical."

## NOTES

#### Chapter 1: The Journey Begins

- 1 The Stó:lō are part of the Upriver Halq'emeylem-speaking people. Halq'emeylem is one of three dialects of the Halkomelem language, which is also part of the larger Salishan-language family. "Twenty-three languages of this family span an area extending over southern British Columbia, Washington, northern Idaho, western Montana, and northwestern Oregon" (Gardner 2002, 8). The other two dialects of Halkomelem include: Hen'q'emi'nem, or Downriver Musqueam; and Hel'q'emi'nem, or Island version. The Halq'emeylem speakers in this book refer to Halq'emeylem as a language rather than a dialect.
- 2 For more information about the Stó:lo<sup>-</sup>, see Carlson (2001).
- 3 This story is reprinted with permission from the *Journal of American Indian Education (JAIE)* using the same paragraphing format as in the original version. The *JAIE* is published by the Center for Indian Education, College Education, Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona, 85287-1311. Despite the recent claims that challenge Terry Tafoya's Indigenous ancestry, this story has provided numerous people, including me, with important understandings that are not diminished by the aforementioned issues. As will be shown in later chapters, stories can take on a life of their own to become our teachers.
- 4 The Native Indian Teacher Education Program (NITEP) at the University of British Columbia began to conceptualize the holistic approach in 1989 using similar symbolism of the spiritual, emotional, physical, and intellectual as related to the circles of oneself, family, community, and nation.
- 5 See Archibald (1990), which contains a fuller discussion of First Nations orality and its relationship to forms of Western literacy.
- 6 Many Indigenous storytellers use literacy, and sometimes the quoted literature refers to them as "writers." Where the word "writer" appears in this chapter, it implies that the writer is also a storyteller.
- 7 Obviously, without the written text, I would not have learned as much as I did about First Nations orality. Another obvious point is that Indigenous people who are skilled in using the oral tradition can also be skilled with literacy.
- 8 See Battiste (2000, 192-202) for a discussion of cognitive imperialism in public schools.

## Chapter 2: Coyote Searching for the Bone Needle

My work with the three Indigenous Elders noted in this chapter has also been published in my chapter "An Indigenous Storywork Methodology," in J. Gary Knowles and Ardra L. Cole, eds., Handbook of the arts in qualitative research: Perspectives, Methodologies, Examples, and Issues (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2007).

1 Over the years I have participated in various cultural ceremonies, written personal journal entries, engaged in quiet reflection, attended many storytelling events, given conference workshops and talks about storywork as I was learning it, paid attention to my dreams, and continued to visit the Elders – all of which was part of getting culturally ready and worthy in a holistic manner.

## Chapter 3: Learning about Storywork from Stó:lō Elders

- 1 The Coqualeetza Complex was a residential school for First Nations children from 1886 to 1895 (Edmeston 1956). It was first operated by Methodist Missionaries and then run by the United Church. The complex became a hospital after the residential school closed.
- 2 The Coqualeetza Cultural Centre offers Halq'emeylem-language classes to two band schools and one pre-school in the Stó:lō Nation. The education office of the Stó:lo Nation also runs a Halq'emeylem-language program, Stó:lo Sxwali, which develops language curriculum and offers language training to adults. A language-teacher training program is also underway.
- 3 See Appendix, which contains a letter signed by the Coqualeetza Elders' Council approving of and supporting my research work with them.
- 4 Keith Basso (1996) gives examples of Western Apache stories that portray the important social/kinship link between historical stories given to place names. The Western Apache stories seem to give lessons about people who did not follow good teachings at particular places, and the place names and their stories remind people about respectful behaviour. When I read these stories, I first felt uncomfortable that the place names had negative meanings or feelings associated with them, but as I read more, another relationship between the land, story, and people surfaced. Basso quotes Apache Elders, such as Nick Thompson, who said, "The land ... looks after us. The land keeps badness away" (61). The stories associated with the land help people to keep the "badness" away. In contrast, those Stó:lo stories about Xá:ls's transformations that gave places their names resulted from good actions, not bad.
- 5 Ann felt more comfortable not having the tape recorder on during our talks. She told me that I could use my memory and that she would tell me this story again if I did not get it all.
- 6 The term "oratory" in this section refers to the skills of one who is a designated cultural speaker for others at gatherings.
- 7 The tradition of men fulfilling the role of Spokesman is still practised at Stó:lo cultural gatherings today. Women also fulfil a variety of important roles at these gatherings. Women are called to be witnesses to events, such as a name-giving, at which they will speak. All gender roles are respected.
- 8 Earlier, I noted that people were taught to respect the speakers by listening and not talking to others when someone was speaking. Richard Malloway's example of people talking to others may seem like a sign of disrespect, and maybe it was,

but the important point here is that this was their way of giving a message to the speaker that they had heard, had gotten the speaker's message, and did not need to keep hearing the same words repeated in a needless fashion.

9 See Brown (2004) for a full examination of the importance of Indigenous emotional competency to learning and curricula.

## Chapter 4: The Power of Stories to Educate the Heart

- 1 My story is a retelling of life experiences constructed from memory. It is interwoven with personal interpretations and contextual descriptions that resonate with the notions that the narrator can also be a commentator who offers "criticism" (Tedlock 1983, 236) and that "writing, as much as possible, should reflect oral tendencies to engage the larger world in which the spoken word lives" (Sarris 1993, 45). My story also resonates with ideas presented by Clandinin and Connelly (2000).
- 2 For a fuller description of the development and implementation phases of the Stó:lō Sitel curriculum, see Archibald (1995).
- 3 This story is not a traditional First Nations story. A friend sent me a written version of this story, but it did not have an author. I have adapted it and, over time and through repeated tellings, made it mine. I liked it when I first read it and began to use it for some talks in order to have listeners think about making space in their busy lives to hear the beauty of First Nations peoples' songs, words, and stories, which often get drowned out by the dominant society.
- 4 When I tell this story, I explain how I received it, and I say that it is not a traditional First Nations story.

#### Chapter 5: Storywork in Action

- 1 See *Delgamuukw v. A.G.: Reasons for judgment* (1991). This is the historic Gitxsan and Wet'suwet'en land-claims case brought to the Supreme Court of British Columbia. See also Ross (1992), in which the author, an assistant Crown attorney in northwestern Ontario, presents his experiences as a narrative about the differences between Ojibway and Cree concepts of justice and those of the court system.
- 2 For more discussion of the effects of the Indian Control of Indian Education policy, see Kirkness and Bowman (1992) and Battiste and Barman (1995).
- 3 The term "workable" is used here cautiously. The differences between Aboriginal concepts of justice and those used in the Canadian courts will not be resolved through this introductory curriculum for children.
- 4 I am grateful to the Law Courts Education Society of British Columbia for giving me permission to use extensive quotations from the storytelling video and the teachers' guides.
- 5 Some stories fall under a family's domain. Others know this and respect the family's cultural stewardship or ownership of the story. The family ensures that the story is taught to family members, and they have the responsibility to keep it "going." Ellen White's family gave her the responsibility to continue telling "The Creator and the Flea." Ellen White uses the publishing term "copyright" to show that she has cultural ownership of this story. I am grateful to Ellen White for giving me permission to use this story.

## Chapter 6: Storywork Pedagogy

- 1 These two curriculum experiences will highlight some implications for curriculum and instruction about students' attitudes toward traditional stories and the tensions between mainstream schooling pedagogy and storywork pedagogy.
- 2 Sarris (1993) published the story in order to criticize the textual presentation as not being true to a Kasha Pomo way of telling Slug Woman stories, so the pamphlet's version is not presented in its entirety. It is unfortunate that the original version wasn't included in Sarris's book. A story summary is given here to introduce the story and to provide a context in which to place the discussion that follows.
- 3 The Nisga'a Nation is located in northern British Columbia, north of the city of Terrace. To date, the Nisga'a school district remains the only British Columbia school district run by a First Nations community.

#### Chapter 7: A Give-Away

- 1 For some of these sources, see Ministry of Education (2006). This guide, which lists many resources about Aboriginal peoples and cultures, was developed mainly by Aboriginal educators.
- 2 The three-year research study examined the impact of the First Nations Journeys of Justice curriculum on student knowledge, attitude, and behaviour. A mixed methodology of pre- and post-tests, qualitative interviews, observations, and journals was used. Measures of student knowledge and attitude showed improvement ranging from 13 to 18 percent. Students, parents, and teachers felt that the story component of the curriculum had a beneficial impact on students. The study was funded by the federal Ministry of Justice.

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