A Stranger on Indigenous Land: Examining the Ecology of Teaching French on Indigenous Territory

by

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Abstract

I have been teaching core French for over twenty years in the small coastal city of Prince Rupert, BC. Although French is one of the official languages of Canada and is offered in all Canadian schools, finding the relevance of core French in a city such as Prince Rupert can be a challenge. Nestled between the Pacific Ocean, mountains, and forest, Prince Rupert is located on unceded Ts'msyen land, and the Indigeneity of the land is far more prevalent and visually evident than any French or French Canadian influence.

In order to better serve my students, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, I have been journeying for the past eight years on a pathway toward a decolonized and Indigenized core French classroom which recognizes and supports the Indigeneity of Prince Rupert. Through consultation with Elders and other Indigenous knowledge-holders, as well as non-Indigenous educators at the provincial and district level, I reimagined the core French curriculum as imbued with Indigenous ways of teaching, learning, and knowing, as well as local, place-based Indigenous content, and restructured my unit and lesson plans accordingly. As part of this journey, I conducted a three-month inquiry with a group of Grade 9 students, which showed me that teaching according to Indigenous principles creates opportunity for student advocacy and self-awareness, and also opens up a new space in which the teacher and students can examine not only what they learn, but how and why.

Although my intent in beginning this voyage was to better support the Indigeneity of our area through my teaching, I found that this journey was as much about discovering my own place as a French teacher in Prince Rupert and as a settler on Indigenous land. The realization that I was teaching a language of colonization on unceded Indigenous land was a traumatic one, but created an opportunity for personal and professional growth. This thesis documents my voyage of decolonization, and spans a timeframe which began before my doctoral studies, and still continues on.

Keywords: Indigenization; decolonization; reconciliation; French language; pedagogy; British Columbia

Dedication

I dedicate this work to my son Ben, my son Adam and his wife Skil Jáada (Vanessa), and Vanessa's mother Sonia, who have been consistent sources of support for me throughout the doctoral process.

My husband Martin, a.k.a. Zimmerman, has played a large role in both the inspiration for much of this dissertation and in its editing. I am very grateful to him for his guidance and expertise.

A heartfelt thank you goes to my Haida family who welcomed me into their lives with open arms and showed me the true nature of community and connection.

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List of Acronyms

BCATML	British Columbia Association of Teachers of Modern Languages
CASLT	Canadian Association of Teachers of Modern Languages
FPPL	First Peoples Principles of Learning
NOIIE	Network of Inquiry and Indigenous Education

A Note to my Readers

Several years ago, before my high school (Prince Rupert Secondary School) merged with the school across town (Charles Hays Secondary School), I had the idea to do a joint lesson with my Grade 10 core French students and the Grade 10 Sm'algyax[1] students. I wasn't so much concerned about recognizing or honouring the Indigenous language of our area, or even honouring the Sm'algyax students and their teacher, but rather I wanted to find a way to do a collaborative activity as so many of my peers teaching English and Socials were doing. I didn't really know the Sm'algyax teacher, and I didn't teach any of her students. But I forged ahead anyway, choosing a Hallowe'en lesson as it was mid-October.

The collaboration was a disaster to say the least. Rather than actually collaborate, I did all of the heavy lifting in finding vocabulary, suitable colouring pages which could be made into masks, planning the lesson, and choosing the one and only actual date when the students would get together. I didn't give the other teacher the opportunity to be an equal partner in this supposedly joint enterprise. To her and her students, it must have felt as if a bout of bad weather had descended upon their classroom as we barged in, stood in front of the class holding up masks of Frankenstein's monster, ghosts, and witches, and identified our "costumes" in French. When it came time for the Sm'algyax students to present, they gamely stood at the front of the classroom; most of them remained silent.

When my students and I returned to our classroom, we all agreed that the shared lesson had not gone well. Rather than examine the flaws in the planning and execution of the lesson, however, we decided that all the fault lay on the shoulders of the Sm'algyax students, and resolved never to attempt a collaboration again. My students remarked that the Sm'algyax students "never want to try", and "always sit separate at lunch". When I debriefed with the Sm'algyax teacher, we both agreed that the lesson hadn't been very successful, but neither of us delved into the reasons why, and we never collaborated again.

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[1] Sm'algya̲x is the traditional language of the Ts'msyen, the First People of the territory on which Prince Rupert is located.

I now cringe at my past sense of superiority over the Sm'algyax teacher, certainly fueled in part by my pride in teaching one of Canada's official languages and in my students for performing well in our shared lesson. I cringe at the thought that I could suggest a collaboration and not allow space for any shared work. And I am most ashamed at my condoning of my students' racist attitudes toward the students in the Sm'algyax classroom; apparently a part of me agreed with their opinions and was happy to think, "well, I tried, but the French and Sm'algyax classes don't mix well". I was either satisfied with the subtext of that sentiment, or unaware of the elitist, racist agenda it supported.

It wasn't until years later that I embarked on a genuine effort to change the way I thought and taught. As I opened my mind and heart to the teachings of Indigenous writers, teachers, and Elders, I could scarcely imagine the lengthy journey ahead of me; although I was enthusiastic, nothing could have prepared me for its twists and turns, the questionable decisions I made along the way, or the joys and despair one experiences when completely overhauling one's view of self and the world. I not only had to unlearn colonial teachings which began in my home life and continued in my formal education (and stayed with me for the majority of my adult life), but understand that I would not be able to conduct an ethical inquiry without first examining my place in and relationship with the people, land, and culture of Prince Rupert. Rather than situating myself apart, I needed to recognize that I am a part of a web of relationships and connections, and with that recognition, comes an acknowledgement of responsibility to those relationships, be they human or more-than-human (Kerr et al, 2021).

So it was that I found myself drawn, step by step, not only to re-examine my values and sense of place in the world, but also to revise such core aspects of my pedagogy as the French content I used in the classroom, my teaching style, and my approach to assessment. In truth, I was learning alongside my students what it means to be studying French on unceded Indigenous land. While parts of this inquiry took place in my classroom, other parts involved my relationships with people, places, and the literature on decolonizing approaches to education and research. A key stage on the journey was my decision to devote one trimester (three months) in my core French 9 classroom to exploring in detail and depth how Indigenous content and ways of learning might become an integral aspect of my approach to teaching French. This deep dive,

recounted in Chapter 4, helped catalyze and inform an ongoing process of professional growth.

Exploring the idea of a French classroom imbued with Indigeneity informed and inspired me to Indigenize all of my core French classes in the months and years that followed. Beyond an account of that three-month effort in 2018-19, this thesis documents an *ongoing* journey of inquiry into how to make the learning of French a supportive and respectful element of education on Indigenous land.

The Ts'msyen nation's connection to the land is poetically evident from their name alone: "Ts'msyen" translates to "people at the mouth of the Skeena", the massive, meandering river which runs through northern British Columbia for 580 kilometers until it drains into the Pacific Ocean (Fox, 2006). The river, together with all the surrounding land, has played an integral and vital role in the lives of the Ts'msyen for thousands of years, and their language reflects that intimate and age-long relationship. What then, could be the purpose of French language acquisition on these lands, other than fulfilling a federal government mandate? Or more to the point, how can the study of French support and respect the indigeneity of these territories?

Casting my mental eye over my classroom's setup in the early years of my teaching career, I detect no indication of the fact that we were learning French on unceded Indigenous land. The room was bright and cluttered, with art everywhere. A giant 3-D theatre display for Spielberg's Tintin movie lined an entire wall, with student work on the other walls. And beside the filing cabinet, to the right of a whiteboard, was a giant map of La Francophonie: a map of all the countries in the world where French is spoken. My French classroom could be transplanted into any other city in Canada; there was no visible evidence that we were acknowledging and respecting the Indigeneity of Prince Rupert.

Back in the day I would point to that map of La Francophonie and say to my students, "Aren't we lucky that we're learning a language that's spoken in so many countries?" What might the learning outcome of my joyful exclamation to my students have been? Did we investigate the "why" of the spread of the French language, and what languages and cultures might have been adversely affected by French colonization? *Colonization*. A horrible yet obvious realization for a French teacher on

Indigenous land to finally clue into. “You are teaching a language of colonization on traditional Indigenous territory” an acquaintance once said to me. “Am not,” was my instant, unspoken, tearful, and completely mistaken first reaction. It was months before my ego let the smoke clear and I could constructively examine her claim. Of course it was true, and I was either ignorant of or ignoring the fact that both English and French hold great power as colonizing languages, disadvantaging or excluding other languages (such as the original language of this area, Sm’algyax) (Fettes, 2016).

Kelly Biers (2022) notes that:

> World language education programs, and French studies in particular, are in need of a careful examination of their colonialist roots and a significant reworking of their missions and practices. French studies programs have long played a role in establishing Hexagonal French as one among a tiny elite class of global languages, at the expense of local minority and Indigenous languages (p. 245).

If a colonized French classroom is one where French language and culture (as it appears around the world) are at the forefront of the learning outcomes and pinned up all over the walls, doesn’t that take away from the specialness, privilege, and responsibility of teaching on Indigenous territory? If I say that I am proud to be a settler on Ts’msyen territory, why is it then that I teach as if I live in Vancouver, Toronto, London, or in any other city in the world? Furthermore, tests, deadlines, exams, lectures; how do these methods of teaching and evaluation reflect the style of learning that has stood the test of thousands of years on this land? And why on earth should I concentrate on European concepts of lineage, ownership, stewardship, or even food and drink when I teach here, on Indigenous land?

Such questions fueled the changes in my teaching, and my personal journey towards decolonization, which lie at the heart of this thesis. As I developed more self-awareness and critical imagination about how to move away from a colonized approach to language acquisition, the question “how can the learning of French support this Indigenous land?” came to frame our daily learning and my own understanding and practice as a French teacher. There is no definitive answer to that question, of course; as this is a narrative grounded in practitioner inquiry and qualitative research, we are all positioned as fellow adventurers and observers along the pathway of this undertaking,

learning through the process of the journey itself, and perhaps reaching our own personal and professional conclusions at the end.

Organization of the Thesis

In **Chapter 1: A Personal Journey**, I situate myself as a teacher, learner, and settler who realized, after years of oblivious white privilege and false starts at "pseudo-reconciliation," that the road to meaningful change is difficult and can't be embarked upon alone. I also briefly discuss the importance of curriculum and the anxiety felt by some non-Indigenous teachers as they navigate new curricular and societal expectations for fairness and Indigenous representation in classroom teaching.

Chapter 2: Inspirations and Guides is a narrative which takes you on a ride through my own readings and research, some prescribed by my doctoral program, and some discovered through other means. It also includes my experiences in learning from Indigenous Elders, knowledge-keepers, and other Indigenous mentors, as well as lessons learned from time spent on the land. I have constructed this chapter to provide insight into my obstacles, challenges, and breakthroughs.

Chapter 3: My Classroom as a Site of Inquiry documents the methodologies of teaching, learning and practitioner inquiry which furthered my own learning. We will revisit some scholars mentioned in Chapter 2 as I show you how their methodologies for teaching and learning served as a framework to provide a classroom atmosphere of respect and knowledge of local Indigenous culture and ways of knowing for my Grade 9 students. My teaching methodologies, which include a connection to the land, using storytelling and narratives, and deep self-reflection, mirror my own learning needs and structures. The inquiry process itself wove together observation, conversation, and reflection upon the oral and written work that my students created. Each strand of the inquiry process informed the others, helping me obtain a clearer understanding of my students' learning of the French language as well as their recognition of their place as learners on Ts'msyen land. And mine in doing so.

Chapter 4: The Classroom Story is where we take a good hard look at the data which I collected during the three-month data collection period in my classroom. This section will include excerpts from my personal notes, quotes from the students, and detailed information as to what we did, and why we did it. I hope to share my experience

and embark the reader in my self-reflection and learning along my students'. This chapter also includes my interpretation of the data, in the light of my original vision of examining the ecology of teaching French on Indigenous land. I examine my shifting my position as a teacher of French on Ts'msyen territory. What did I think might happen as I engaged in this self-reflective study, what did I hope to accomplish? Do I have any way of knowing if I was successful in being more aware? Do I have any way of knowing if I was successful in being more respectful? Do I have any way of knowing if I was successful in engaging my students in better learning?

In **Chapter 5: The Ongoing Learning Journey**, I examine the significance of my findings, and the ways in which the three-month inquiry process informed my continuing teaching and decolonization journey. The creation and implementation of this reflective inquiry gave me direction for my own continued growth, reflected not only in my current praxis but also in my own self-view and acceptance of myself as a settler on Indigenous land. Beginning with an interview I conducted with my Grade 9 students three years after our inquiry journey, I consider how my practice has changed over the course of my decolonization journey, revisit some of my readings with fresh eyes, and conclude the chapter with encouragement and advice for teachers who are beginning (or continuing) their own decolonization journey.

Who is this Thesis For?

The research described in this thesis is not just for French teachers, or indeed just for teachers of any subject. I am hoping that anyone who finds themselves engaged in a restructuring, a rethinking, and a revision of their sense of identity as a settler on Indigenous land might find some inspiration in this story. We who live on the lands called Canada, we who are non-Indigenous on Indigenous lands, are all being called to examine our historical role as settlers, colonizers, uninvited guests. I've found that there is little point in "skipping over" important steps in reimagining my proper identity here in Prince Rupert; the work of deep reflection into one's own biases and a recognition of privilege can't be bypassed in order to more quickly reach transformative or enlightening conclusions (quite the opposite, in fact). Perhaps in reading about my experiences, the reader might find forms of resonances with their own experiences and peregrinations, useful lessons about mistakes to avoid, or even inspiration for new undertakings.

Although I discuss some lessons which worked well for the specific ecology of my Grade 9 classes, this work is not about designing lessons plans and curricular scenarios that can be applied in a different classroom ecology. My intention is to trigger, possibly, further questioning into our place and roles as educators and language teachers, our responsibility, commitment and relationality to the land and to learners, and to what we teach, and how. I will attempt to offer some practical insights in Chapter 5 into how to find support and guidance in this work. Centrally, though, my intention is to offer my continuing decolonization story in all its messiness and complexity.

Chapter 1. A Personal Journey

As it turns out, I've been thinking about the relationship between Western and Indigenous pedagogy in Canadian classrooms for longer than I had realized (but in a rather disingenuous way, as you will learn). I have reliable evidence regarding my motivations and actions from years ago, as I'm reluctant to throw out any academic work. The state of my home office is often chaotic; not only do I have an inordinate amount of literature cramming the bookshelves to support my learning in my doctoral program, but every piece of art which I have (ever?) created is up on the wall or leaning against something. One entire bookshelf is devoted to my Master's program texts and notebooks. And here's the biggest surprise: I still have notes and relics from my Professional Development Program, completed in 2002 (including a huge green binder of lesson plans for my major practicum: the most unrealistically detailed and extensive lesson plans I've ever made).

Figure 1. My home office, mid-project.

Figure 2. Some of my academic art

In this organized chaos are artifacts from my forays into teaching up until the present day, including books, art, binders, files, and other samples from my learning processes over the last two decades. To offer some context as to my teaching and learning experiences in my professional career, I am including my professional timeline which documents chronologically my formative experiences; I'll be discussing each entry on the timeline throughout the thesis.

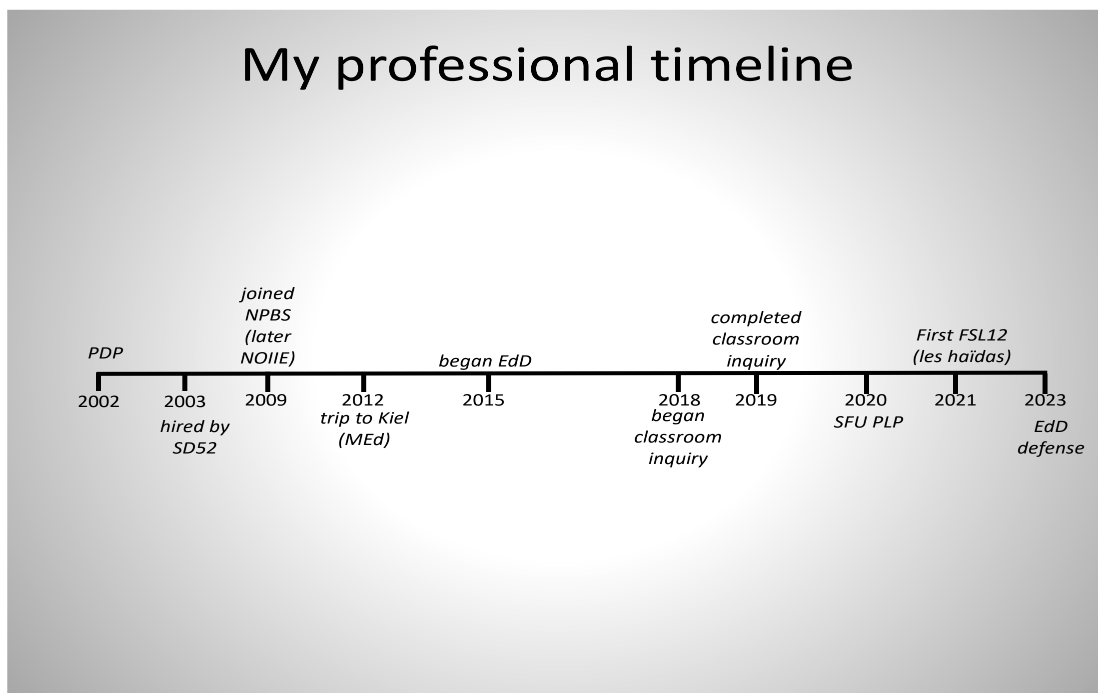

Figure 3. My professional timeline

1.1. Early learnings, early missteps

I can trace my interest in Indigeneity in the French classroom to my "Designs for Learning: French" course notes from my Professional Development Program (SFU, 2002). I'm reminded that as the final project for that course I put forward the proposition that all students in Prince Rupert high schools (there were two at that time) should have access to both French and Sm'algyax, and be encouraged to take both. Despite the fact that this arrangement would be a timetabling nightmare and would interfere with the availability of other non-language electives, I argued eloquently that French and Indigenous languages should stand shoulder-to-shoulder in their right to be taught to all students.

This story is a lesson in context. I don't really need to see my PDP notes to remember my motivation for this project idea, or how it was nearly rejected by my professor. In hindsight, I can easily see that the point of reconciliation isn't *what* you're doing, it's *why* and *how*. True, my proposal sounded good on the surface, but my motivations weren't coming from the right place. I wanted to create a proposal that no one else in the French class would think of; something that was very local to where I lived, and something that would be guaranteed to be accepted. Looking back in hindsight, I can easily admit that about my 2002 self. My first clue is the embarrassing memory of my avowal that students who study Sm'algyax instead of French are condemning themselves to a "linguistic ghetto" rather than learning a language they could use around the world. To her credit, my professor told me to "stop talking" at that point (good thing for me that it was a private conversation). The final nail in the coffin of "Nancy's motivations: 2002" is the fact that I taught a great deal of French in my major practicum (after that Designs for Learning course), and at no point did the possible consequences of teaching that language of colonization on Indigenous land even cross my mind. In fact, when I first started teaching French and was very insecure in my identity as a French speaker, I was at a loss when asked on the year-end report form if I had been promoting Indigenous content in my classroom. This was the first time I had heard anything about it, and I had done nothing all year to promote Indigenous content in my French classroom; I didn't know what "Indigenous content" looked like, how to find it, or how to teach it. I brought this to the attention of my department head at the time, who answered back, "Just write that it's in progress." So I did, knowing full well that in

fact, nothing was in progress, but at least I was probably off the hook for this particular teaching methodology and curriculum content for another year. Later advice included simply including a unit on Louis Riel or showing a video about Bonhomme Carnaval and his Métis sash.

I'm reminded of a tweet from Hayden King:

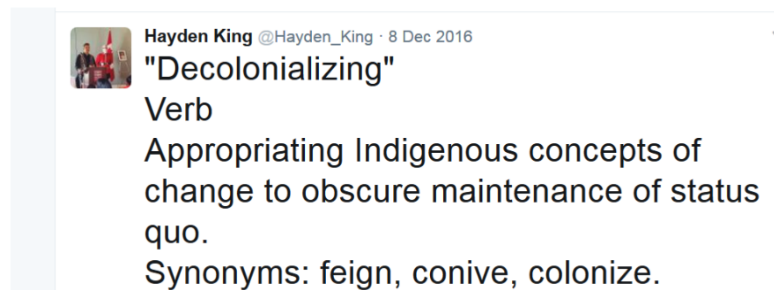

Figure 4. Twitter quote from Hayden King

I remember re-tweeting this statement from Hayden King back in December of 2016, with the sub-heading "ouch". It showed me that one should never stop examining one's motivations and actions. And although I was sincere in 2002 in wanting to offer French and Sm'algyax to all students in their timetables, my motivations weren't selfless, and my knowledge of the situation was quite lacking.

Gorski (2008) recalls a story from his elementary school days when his school issued an invitation to parents for a "taco night". The invitation had drawings of dancing cockroaches, a piñata, a sombrero, and a taco. He indicates in his paper that "there was very little educational substance to the evening" as the only attempt at authenticity made by his teacher was to ask a Guatemalan student in his class if the tacos were done correctly (he shrugged). Gorski says that he took away three lessons from taco night: "(1) Mexican culture is synonymous with tacos; (2) 'Mexican' and 'Guatemalan' are synonymous, and by extension, all Latino people are the same, and by further extension, all Latino people are synonymous with tacos (as well as the sombreros and dancing *cucarachas*), and (3) white people really like tacos, especially the kind in those hard, crunchy shells, which, I learned later, nobody eats in Mexico" (p. 516).

It is the "lack of intent "(Gorski, p.516) of this evening of fun which hits Gorski hard as an adult. The "cultural" experiences provided for him by teachers and parents

only served to solidify the “otherness” of other cultures by implying that shallow, stereotypical, and often incorrect stereotypes represent the total sum of culture.

How easily this phenomenon travels to many other marginalized cultures. I’m reminded of a workshop which I went to a few years ago, hosted by a university. The facilitator of the workshop, a non-Indigenous woman, began the presentation with a graphic of a medicine wheel, and said that she was going to use this “symbol of the Indigenous people” as a metaphor in her introduction. Immediately several people in the group shouted out, “That’s not my symbol.” She was unaware that the medicine wheel wasn’t a “pan-Indian” symbol, a part of the culture and worldview of each Indigenous person, no matter their Nation of origin. She apologized and was flustered, but the negative tone was set for the rest of the workshop. People who are motivated to promote or use hand-picked cultural aspects of a people outside of their own nationality often have good intentions, but without a firm understanding of one’s place in the history of those cultures’ interactions, or at the very least a firm working knowledge of a different culture, disaster can ensue. Again, a “lack of intent” which turned into a negative experience for all. Perhaps the non-Indigenous should “fully embrace the uncomfortable epistemological tension which comes with the realization that they can never fully know the Other; nor should they aspire to do so” (Regan, 2010, p. 26). In fact, insistence in acquiring knowledge of the Other can be seen as in itself an act of colonization, reinforcing the authority of the colonizer (Jones & Jenkins, 2008).

Yet teachers are encouraged to do just that, asked to be accountable for their work on reconciliation, perhaps without a true understanding of the word. As a member of the education profession, specifically an employee of a school district, I’m well aware of how educational paradigms can become trendy buzzwords, a “paradigm du jour”; how many of us have joked about playing “Buzzword Bingo” during staff meetings or visits from district staff? Back in my PDP I obviously misused the concepts of “decolonization” and “reconciliation”; in my non-understanding of these concepts, I used them to reinforce my own white lens of privilege and adherence to what Hayden King referred to in his tweet about the “status quo”, and continued to do so in my early career as an educator. We are asked to “decolonize” our teaching, but not given any guidance as to how to do so; in fact, we are expected to embody “reconciliation” in our classroom while still having students sit at desks inside a building, do homework, take tests, and worry about their grade point average.

Let's take a look at a definition of decolonization, according to the British Columbia's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner: "Decolonization is the dismantling of the process by which one nation asserts and establishes its domination and control over another nation's land, people and culture. It is the framework through which we are working toward undoing the oppression and subjugation of Indigenous peoples in what is now known as British Columbia and unlearning colonial ways of thinking and being".[2]

The University of British Columbia's "Indigenous Education K-12" website further defines decolonization in the educational setting as

> …the process of undoing colonizing practices. Within the educational context, this means confronting and challenging the colonizing practices that have influenced education in the past, and which are still present today…. Nowadays, colonialism is more subtle, and is often perpetuated through curriculum, power relations, and institutional structures. Perhaps the most essential part of decolonization is continual reflection. Schools should be willing to reflect on curriculum, power dynamics, their own structuring, and any action undertaken on behalf of their students.[3]

Curriculum is not neutral, and usually serves to uphold the structures, values and assumptions of the dominant group (Côté, 2019). "Decolonization is not a metaphor" state Tuck and Yang in their paper of the same name (2012), and they make note of how settler paradigms and worldviews take precedence in educational settings. Decolonizing the teaching in a classroom would decentre the settler paradigm to create space for Indigenous world views. But this is a disruptive process which can be unsettling to the non-Indigenous; decolonization has many facets, but begins with a personal and deep examination of one's own colonial bias (Morgensen, 2012). This level of self-reflection, if too painful, might lead to merely using the language of decolonization without making any useful change. Tuck and Yang note with dismay the "ease with which the language of decolonization has been superficially adopted into education" (p. 2), and how speakers at conferences

> …refer, almost casually, to the need to 'decolonize our schools', or use 'decolonizing methods' or 'decolonize student thinking'. Yet, we have observed a startling number of these discussions make no mention of Indigenous people, our/their struggles for the recognition of our/their

[2] https://bchumanrights.ca/key-issues/decolonization/

[3] https://guides.library.ubc.ca/indigenous_ed_k12/decolonization

> sovereignty, or the contributions of Indigenous intellectuals and activists to theories and frameworks of decolonization. (p. 3)

A particular section of Tuck and Yang's paper speaks to me, in haunting tones: the idea of "moving to innocence" on the part of the settler, specifically in the area of "adoption". This section speaks of *The Last of the Mohicans* as well as *Dances with Wolves* as examples of white fantasies regarding adoption into Indigenous nations; this adoption affords the protagonists a firm stance in both the Indigenous and non-Indigenous worlds, to "*become Indian*" without in fact "*becoming Indian*": "The beauty of this settler fantasy is that it adopts decolonization and aborts it in one gesture… Decolonization is stillborn—rendered irrelevant because decolonization is already completed by the indigenized consciousness of the settler" (p. 17).

So undoubtedly there is an ethical consideration when an educator decides to listen to and learn about Indigenous peoples, and as I stated earlier, one's motivations for making this journey should be deeply examined, and often. If one "inserts" Indigenous content into lesson plans without first examining the colonizing nature of curricula, damage can be done (Côté, 2019). Decontextualizing Indigeneity so that it fits seamlessly into existing curricula does not respect Indigenous content or ways of knowing, rather it allows non-Indigenous teachers to make little change to their own ways of thinking, and holds the possibility of teachers "recolonizing as they go" by ignoring the essence of Indigenous epistemology (Jones and Jenkins, 2008). In the early years of my teaching career, Indigenous content and ways of knowing were, in my mind, the domain of the "Other", of which I had no knowledge but a great deal of fear. Fear of saying the wrong thing, of making the wrong assumptions, of stepping where I didn't belong.[4] Kovach (2009) understands these possible cultural missteps, as she has seen it happen when non-Indigenous people attempt to teach in an Indigenous way, or incorporate Indigenous content into their classrooms: "Indigenous contributors... cite the risks of bringing cultural knowledges into Western research spaces and I, too, found

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[4] I attended a workshop at the *First Nations Education Steering Committee* Summer Symposium several years ago at which our facilitator Jo Chrona took a question from a member of the audience which highlighted the fear and trepidation which non-Indigenous educators might feel when asked to incorporate Indigenous content and ways of knowing into their classroom teaching. Jo directed us to follow Hayalthkin'geme (Carey Newman) on Twitter. A member of the Kwagiulth/Salish Nations, Newman tweeted that fear of making a mistake and being in a state of unease and discomfort stems from a sense of privilege. There are many who do not have the luxury of remaining in a state of ease and comfort for any length of time.

myself anxious about the misinterpretations, appropriations, and dismissals that often accompany Indigenous ways of knowing within the academy" (p. 12). So not only did my early students suffer from my lack of confidence as a new French teacher (by-the-book teaching methods, memorizing conjugations, writing out examples of grammar, learning for the sake of learning rather than for the promotion and acquisition of fluency), but they also were robbed of any meaningful opportunity to explore how the French language could be used to discover and honour the Indigeneity of the land we live on, as my attempts at decolonized teaching (putting up Indigenous design posters with no context, or wearing an orange shirt on Orange Shirt Day with no class discussions, for example) were shallow and perfunctory.

1.2. Coming to understand Indigenization

"Indigenizing" is a word I use often in this thesis, so perhaps we should examine its meaning. *Pulling Together: A Guide for Indigenizing of Post-Secondary Institutions* (Antoine et al., 2021) states that:

> Indigenization is a process of naturalizing Indigenous knowledge systems and making them evident to transform spaces, places, and hearts. In the context of post-secondary education, this involves bringing Indigenous knowledge and approaches together with Western knowledge systems. This benefits not only Indigenous students but all students, teachers, and community members involved or impacted by Indigenization.
>
> Indigenous knowledge systems are embedded in relationship to specific lands, culture, and community. Because they are diverse and complex, Indigenization will be a unique process for every post-secondary institution.
>
> It is important to note that Indigenization does not mean changing something Western into something Indigenous. The goal is not to replace Western knowledge with Indigenous knowledge, and the goal is not to merge the two into one. Rather, Indigenization can be understood as weaving or braiding together two distinct knowledge systems so that learners can come to understand and appreciate both. Therefore, we recommend that you use the word *Indigenization* cautiously and take care not to use it when Indigenous content is simply added to a course or when something Western is replaced with something Indigenous. Rather, it refers to a deliberate coming together of these two ways of knowing. (p.21)[5]

[5] This resource is available at https://opentextbc.ca/indigenizationcurriculumdevelopers/.

It is clear from the quote above that simply bringing Indigenous content into the classroom does not mean that one's course has been Indigenized; one must seek out transformation through exploration of relationship to "land, culture, and community". And teaching in Prince Rupert, we are surrounded by endless evidence of Ts'msyen culture through art, architecture, signage around town and on our trails, and the geographical backdrop of mountain, forest, and sea as reflected in the many sacred and historical stories of the Ts'msyen. In our district, educators who wish to weave Ts'msyen culture into their teaching are strongly encouraged to seek guidance from our district Indigenous Education (IE) department. Housed in a separate building named "Wap Sigatgyet" (*House of Building Strength*), a stone's throw from my school, the staff in our IE department have set up an efficient system for teachers to request role models for their classrooms, or make appointments with staff to discuss lesson and unit plans, or how to honour important dates such as the National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Children, National Indigenous History Month (which includes National Indigenous Peoples' Day), and the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, to name a few.

The IE department is the most important Indigenous influence and resource for educators in Prince Rupert, and it's fair to say that they oversee all aspects of Ts'msyen language and culture in our district. Even if I took it into my head to branch out on my own, so to speak, my administrator would strongly direct me to first consult with IE. This consultation can be conducted through a digitized form attached to our district website, emails, and face-to-face meetings. Any project which involves the use of the Sm'algyax language must first be approved by a council of Elders (the Ts'msyen Sm'algyax Language Authority) who would be informed by the IE department of the project at one of their monthly meetings at Wap Sigatgyet. And when putting their ideas in action, teachers are encouraged to invite IE staff to join in on the lessons when they are taught.

This way of working with Indigenization in Prince Rupert has developed over many years, and is more or less in line with the definition offered in *Pulling Together.* However, not all academics agree that Indigenization is the "braiding together of two distinct knowledge systems". Gaudry and Lorenz (2018), for example, argue that educational institutions (primarily post-secondary, but certainly applicable to high schools as well) practice three distinct (and not always compatible) forms of Indigenization:

- *Indigenous inclusion* involves an effort to increase the number of Indigenous faculty, staff, and students;
- *Reconciliation Indigenization* is "a vision that locates indigenization on common ground between Indigenous and Canadian ideals", investigating a common ground between the two, and the nature of the academy's relationship with local Indigenous communities;
- *Decolonial Indigenization* involves a "wholesale overhaul of the academy to fundamentally reorient knowledge production based on balancing power relations between Indigenous peoples and Canadians, transforming the academy into something dynamic and new (pp. 218-219).

Personally, I am drawn to the idea of a common ground or third space which can exist between Western and Indigenous pedagogies. I first came across this idea when reading Margaret Kovach (2009), who states that there exists a common ground between Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers when Indigenous methodologies are positioned in qualitative research. According to Kovach, the "current field of qualitative research is an inclusive place" in which one might find "allies for Indigenous researchers" (p. 25-26). Lowen-Trudeau (2015) examines this common ground as a place where Western and Indigenous knowledges can "mix and mingle" to form new understandings, and has several examples of key questions which one might ask about one's research; by slightly rewording the questions, Lowen-Trudeau shows that there is commonality between the Indigenous and Western approaches (p. 21)[6]. According to Vicki Kelly, one of my Indigenous teachers at SFU, investigating this space can be a "radical act", which can lead us to new ways of imagining ourselves (Kelly, 2016).

Aligning myself with these ideas, I find that I situate myself as a participant in *reconciliation Indigenization* in the way Gaudry and Lorenz (2018) describe it. As my classroom inquiry did not involve my high school as a whole, and I was not attempting to effect change on a school or community-wide level, I cannot claim to be enacting *decolonial Indigenization*, even though I believe this is something that should be worked for and welcomed.

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[6] For example: "Was the research reciprocal?" would be a question situated in a Western paradigm; put in such a way as to respect Indigenous epistemologies, the question might be, "Were there benefits for both the researcher(s) and the participants?" Lowan-Trudeau offers ten research questions which show commonality between Indigenous and Western methodologies.

Envisioning my classroom as a "third space" invites further exploration of what this might mean. Critical theorist Homi Bhabha, in an interview with Jonathan Rutherford in 1990, suggests that the common ground between cultures, made possible by cultural hybridity, "enables other positions to emerge. This third space…sets up new structures of authority, [and] new political initiatives…." He goes on to say that the hybridity "bears the traces of those feelings and practices which inform it" (Rutherford, p. 211). Echoing Bhabha's position, Haida artist and activist Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas, in an interview for *Seattle Magazine*, noted that he sees "hybridity as a positive force that opens a third space for critical engagement" (2019).[7] In his TEDx Talk in Vancouver (2015), Yahgulanaas used his work "Red: A Haida Manga" as a metaphor for his view on the third space between colonizers and the Indigenous (specifically between Canadians and the Haida); he asks the audience to imagine the gutters between the squares (or boxes) of a comic book or graphic novel not just as empty white spaces but as "full, vibrant, and alive", as connecting spaces which enjoys an "intimate relationship" with the narrative which takes place in the boxes. The "third space" expands, pushes, and pulls the narratives together and ensures that our own individual "boxes" can be seen as gardens rather than caskets. As a further clarification, he recounts the protest at Athlii Gwaii in 1985 in which the RCMP and the Haida protesters (protesting against the increased and unregulated logging of old growth trees) reached a sort of détente late one rainy evening and were able to exist together in a new space of mutual understanding (Yahgulanaas, 2015).

Jones and Jenkins (2008) caution us, however, that as settlers we should examine our own biases and motivations when entering into that third space with Indigenous peoples, so that we don't use that space to further exploit, or to exercise our authority as colonizers. They remark that learning from an Indigenous peer can be a "disturbing moment of recognition… that some things may be out of one's grasp" (p. 480-481). I find this concept disturbing in its familiarity. Having never been a great student after Grade 9 or so, I loved the idea of scholarly pursuits but didn't find my feet in academia until I was in my Master's program. Buoyed by my experiences with my professors, my cohort, and the learning material, I threw myself into the program and devoured as much information as I could, feeling energized and purposeful by the fact

[7] This comment was in relation to his work "Carpe Fin" in which he employs a métissage of his own creation: "Haida Manga".

that I had finally figured out how to be a successful student. It didn't occur to me that there is some information to which I am not entitled to curate and use for my own purposes, and when I did learn that fact in my doctoral studies, I felt threatened and unable to conveniently locate Indigenous cultures "within my own grid" (Rutherford quoting Bhabha, 1990). It took much reflection and examination of my own world view in order to develop understanding and respect for Indigenous protocols, and this is a journey which is still continuing. However, I continue to find comfort and guidance in the concept of the third space as a safe place for two people of different cultures to respectfully explore each other's ways of knowing and being.

1.3. Who am I to undertake this work?

It was in the very first class of my doctoral program (in 2015) when I was confronted with the question in this section's title. We had formed groups of six or seven and my group had found a cozy location by a big picture window. We were introducing ourselves to the group, and one of my peers seemed shocked and upset that I taught French in Prince Rupert. "You teach French on Indigenous land? How do you sleep at night?" I often think back to that upsetting event, which took me quite a while to come to terms with. Her words changed me. I had been sure of my abilities to excel, and that the journey I would take would be difficult, but mapped out in a straight line. In other words, coming into the program, I didn't expect that I would change much, not at my core. I would simply become a smarter Nancy.

I'd like to think now that I'm a smarter Nancy, but that is the least important result of my studies and of that vital confrontation in the first weeks of the doctorate. In angrily challenging my authority to teach French on Indigenous land, my cohort associate (wittingly or not) set a fire that burned me right to the ground. As Lyle (2016) states: "examining personal identity as it affects professional practice is messy and vulnerable work" (p.3). Everywhere I looked for comfort or acknowledgement of my "rights" as a student and educator lead to a dead end. My confidence had been shattered, but along with it, my elitist sense of "knowledge ownership" and sense of entitlement. Slowly, I built myself back up, using the raw materials offered to me by the mountains, forest, and ocean, and the words and guidance of Indigenous scholars and knowledge keepers. I wanted to leave the entitled Toronto-born Nancy behind and start fresh, and I needed guidance. Building upon Chilisa (2012), perhaps we praise our stories not just to honour

them, but also to identify and examine them. It turned out, however, that it was far easier for me to leave Toronto and what it represented than for Toronto to leave me.

For example, I soon discovered that my desire to learn Indigenous ways of teaching and knowing still fell directly within the colonizer's bubble. I attended conferences and workshops, and consumed dozens of articles and books written by Indigenous scholars. And I asked many questions, sometimes to be rebuffed as the time or context wasn't appropriate for a discussion. I eventually realized that my attitude of "I would like the information, give it to me please" was inappropriate and problematic in the decolonizing process; realizing that I didn't have dominion over the stories and information of other people was an embarrassing shock. This was defined and clarified through my reading of the powerful work of Jones and Jenkins (2008), in which they discuss this exact phenomenon of settlers such as myself who are beginning their journey of decolonization and unwittingly (or not) use their own colonizing attitudes to pave an "easy path" to reconciliation. "It is the strangeness of difference—the unfamiliar space of not knowing—that is so hard to tolerate for the colonizer whose benevolent imperialism assumes both herself or himself as the center of knowing and that everything can be known" (p. 477).

Another case in point is how I originally viewed *adaawx*, the sacred stories of the Ts'msyen people. These are stories which are handed down orally from generation to generation, and require training to relate properly. Not everyone is allowed to relate sacred stories. Many adaawx have been published, but only after being carefully vetted by our Ts'msyen Sm'algyax Language Authority (TSLA). I recall asking our Indigenous Education (IE) department if I might please translate some of the published adaawx into French, and feeling quite put out when they refused.

Sometime later I was speaking to a Haida knowledge-keeper, who told me that Haida sacred stories, if included in a teacher's lessons, should not be analyzed by the teacher or the students as a novel, poem, or short story from our curricular lists might be. At that point I could not understand what the point might be of including any sacred stories in the classroom if they couldn't be interpreted by teachers and students. It was a long time before I understood that sacred Indigenous stories are not offering themselves up for interpretation, but as an experience to learn from (Kerr and Ferguson, 2021). They are offering "complex information about our world and the ways to

appropriately be in relation with that world", as well as the opportunity for critical self-reflection and an understanding that we, as humans, are not at the center of all narratives (Blenkinsop and Fettes, 2020, p. 1039).

Another example of my colonizer's presumptions is documented in one of my journal entries from 2016:

> One day I found out that a scholar whom I admired very much was related to a friend of mine. I was very excited at the connection between the two, as not only did I feel it humanized the scholar somewhat for me, but in my heart of hearts I have to admit that I thought it might be likely now that I might actually meet this scholar. I planted seeds and hints in my conversations with my friend: "Oh, have you heard from Bob? How's he doing?" or "When do you think that Bob might be in town? Do you think he'd like to get together with us for a coffee sometime?" A bit shameless, but I thought my heart was in the right place; I admired this man greatly, and wanted to get to know him and learn from him.
>
> Taking matters into my own hands, I decided to email him. I introduced myself, made clear the connection with our mutual friend, and let him know about the work I was doing. He wrote back a short but chatty email, acknowledging the connection.
>
> A little while later I found out that Bob and I were going to be in the same city at the same time. Excited, I made plans to visit him where he was giving a workshop, and introduced myself, I have to admit, I was star struck, and despite trying to hide it, I'm sure he found me a bit of a fan girl. We had a short and pleasant chat, discussing our mutual friend, discussing my scholarship, discussing how wonderful I thought his books were. I played it smart and didn't take up too much of his time.
>
> I started following Bob on Twitter, and once in a while, when I saw that someone had mentioned him in a post, I would tweet "@Bob! He's my hero!" I occasionally brought up the subject of Bob with my friend, and she would say, "Oh, we just had dinner with Bob yesterday. Too bad you weren't in town!" The idea of Bob as a possible friend and mentor was so clear in my mind that I felt it was time to move things along.
>
> I sent Bob another email, again reminding him of our mutual friend, again reminding him of my doctoral work. I asked him if he would be willing to consider playing a small role in my thesis defense, which would be taking place no sooner than two years from that time.[8] I was delighted to receive an email back from Bob within the hour.
>
> Upon reading that email, I realized with a thud that I had overstepped my boundaries with Bob. He was thorough but stern in his response, and at

[8] What wishful and inaccurate time estimates!

> the end of the email, suggested that I direct future enquiries (such as requests for him to speak to large groups, not to be involved in an individual's EdD thesis) through his secretary.
>
> I was mortified (again? still?) at my misstep. And I have made that misstep twice more, in my assumptions that Indigenous artists will be as delighted to interact with me as I am to interact with them. My difficulty in determining my place as a settler from a background of class entitlement is described in a line of an essay I wrote in which I had stated that "Decolonizing oneself is difficult, especially if one is attempting the decolonizing by simply continuing to colonize." Not as eloquently put as Hayden King's tweet mentioned earlier, but the point is similar: decolonizing is a settler's paradigm; it's our problem and our situation to fix. Are we "picking and choosing" our terms, our efforts, our encounters so that our "decolonization process" is simply a "maintenance of the status quo" in our minds and hearts, but dressed up with popular buzzwords of the day? A true decolonization practice is vital within Indigenous research, but it must, in Kovach's words, "[focus] on Indigenous-settler relationships and [seek] to interrogate the powerful social relationships that marginalize Indigenous peoples" (Kovach, 2010).
>
> I learned quite a bit from my interactions with Bob and the attitude that I had toward our own individual "hyphen". But I feel that I am still in the place where I feel that if I desire and need information, it should be given to me. I still have a long way to go.

When I look back on this journal excerpt, I can still feel a small twinge of embarrassment for my missteps, but time and introspection have helped me view the situation from a more productive angle. I'm grateful for all the opportunities for learning and growth which I experienced, not just the ones that stroked my ego, but also the encounters which knocked me down so that I could (or had to) re-examine my expectations and my place in this research. In fact, I credit the upsetting experiences with providing me with opportunities for the greatest growth during this journey, and preparing me for the chance to work closely with Indigenous knowledge-keepers in the context of the core French classroom.

Who was I to undertake this work? I was a teacher who wanted to continue to teach French in Prince Rupert, but to learn to do so more mindfully and in a way which honoured the Ts'msyen culture and ways of thinking. I had come far enough in my learning to know that I wasn't satisfied with "adding on" Indigeneity; I didn't want to buy materials which weren't relevant to our area or put up posters showing symbols from distant nations. I hoped to find a way in which the learning and use of the French

language could not only be relevant to our area, but also become a means by which we could acknowledge and honour the Indigeneity of the land.

1.4. The core of my research journey

Thus we come to the heart and soul of my research: whether there is an ethical place for the teaching of core French on Indigenous land, where Indigeneity and reconciliation can be honoured both implicitly and explicitly. I know that there is much to be done in order to honour Indigenous ways of knowing and Indigenous culture in *all* classrooms; my question is, what can be done in the *French* classroom that can support the cause of reconciliation? Indeed, how can the teaching of French on Ts'msyen land be not only morally justified but also an important element of a culturally inclusive education, which deeply acknowledges its gratitude to the Indigenous land on which we're teaching and learning?

This question also begs the larger, more universal question of the appropriateness of language being taught on any land from which it did not originate. Marie Battiste states that "linguistic imperialism in colonial languages has eroded Aboriginal languages persistently" (Battiste, 2013, p. 143). In a discussion paper published by the National Association of Friendship Houses in 2018, participants commented that they felt "overwhelmed by how the dominant languages [*English and French]* have infiltrated all aspects of their lives", and that "this constant exposure to these languages has eroded the use of Indigenous languages" (The National Association of Friendship Houses, p. 20). Fettes (2016) emphasizes the intimate relationship between language and land, and advocates "deliberately restraining the 'orthodox' dominance of English and French in order to let local languages flourish, particularly those attuned to the landforms and lifeforms of particular places" (p. 13). Is there a way in which French can be taught on unceded Indigenous land that supports rather than disrupts Ts'msyen language and culture? Can the core French curriculum, as set out by the BC Ministry of Education, be used to acknowledge and respect Indigenous culture within its Westernized structure?

This is the crux of this thesis: the hope that I will find a place where Indigenous and non-Indigenous pedagogies can exist side-by-side in the French classroom, each valued for their own intrinsic worth as well as their role in creating a pluriilingual space

for learning more about who and where we are. I hope to learn how I might enhance my teaching with the principles of learning and knowledge of Indigenous people as presented in published form, as well as through conversation and quiet observation of Indigenous knowledge-keepers.

But I don't expect that this partnership of pedagogies will necessarily be a peaceful one. When I look back on my own experiences in the past few years, it's clear that the greatest amount of growth, on both a personal and professional level, has been as a result of disruption: disruption of my assumptions, my ignorance, my complacency. I expect that as my students and I move forward toward decolonizing our thinking and learning, we will be challenged and will need to rise to those challenges. It is in the tension of the partnership that we find the opportunities for enlightened growth. We shall see in "Chapter 4: The Classroom Story" what level of disruption was achieved.

In the next chapter ("Chapter 2: Inspirations and Guides") I gratefully acknowledge the authors, artists, educators, and experiences that have been and remain an inspiration to me and to whom I look for guidance as I navigate my decolonization journey. Although I found direction from many sources, there is one experience which deserves mention in this introductory chapter: a dual-language poster collaboration which I did in 2015 with Gitga'at artist Kelli Clifton. I will explain the collaboration in more detail in the next chapter (and show you the posters themselves), but the influence of this experience on my personal and teaching philosophies cannot be downplayed. Through this project I was able to work not only with Kelli but with our IE department and an august body of Ts'msyen Elders (fluent and near-fluent speakers of Sm'algyax) who led us through the protocols necessary when a non-Indigenous person such as myself wishes to integrate an Indigenous person's art into a collaborative piece (a kind of third-space work). The idea behind the posters was not only to showcase Kelli's art but also highlight the values and teachings guiding the decolonizing work in our district. Displayed in both Sm'algyax and French, the posters remind me daily of what I'm striving toward and are deeply enmeshed with the pedagogies and inquiry methodologies (such as my "metacognitive superhighway", explained in Chapter 3) developed, applied and explored in this thesis.

Throughout the entire project with Kelli and the Ts'msyen Elders, I was deeply aware of the trust offered by our guides as they gifted us with words and approval. Each

time we met I felt gratitude for their graciousness in allowing the words of their first language to be juxtaposed with a colonial language which historically was valued more by the school district than the language of the Ts'msyen nation. In their support and guidance I experienced a trust in the potential role of French as a language of education on Indigenous land. My gratitude and observance of protocol allowed me into that ethical third space, and their patience and trust opened the door for the collaboration. And I did not take that trust lightly; it continually motivates me and guides me along a pathway toward my own decolonization, inspiring me to live up to their kindness and generosity not only through the writing of this thesis, but in my classroom and my day to day life. This thesis is, in part, an acknowledgement of the collaborative nature of our IE department and other Ts'msyen knowledge-keepers, and a promise to them that I will do my best to imbue my professional and personal life with the philosophies and protocols which they have taught me.

Chapter 2. Inspirations and Guides

As I sit here and look over the shelves of books which have guided me throughout this doctoral process, my mind floods with the memories of how these books have influenced me over the years; how some were life-changing, others not so much; how some have bent spines, post-it note fringes and much underlining and highlighting, and others are not so well-loved. And what might make a resource not so well-loved? Perhaps its relevance to my own work was less than I had originally hoped, perhaps the writing style didn't mesh with my ways of learning, perhaps there were numerous reasons. Do I even have the right to judge the work of others, not being an expert on the web of influences behind their work? (Wilson, 2008). Perhaps I do, perhaps not, but there's no denying that I found some influences to be more profound than others.

And it's a good thing too, if you recall the picture of my office from earlier in this paper, that I'm not including every resource that I've come across in this literature review. What I'm focusing on in this chapter is a collection of the people, places, and literature which have affected me the most deeply, to which I look for my greatest inspirations or challenges, and with which I feel a deep, transformative connection, the sort of connection which endures long after research is completed, and papers submitted. The sort of connection which comes to mind when people ask me what I do, and why I do it. The sort of connection which informs my daily life.

I've created categories for the resources which have influenced me over the last five years, in order to increase the usefulness of this review for the reader. I start with *Checking the Scene,* which documents my search for existing resources geared to my inquiry question, and *Inspirations and Guides* which presents the books, articles, poster releases, Indigenous Elders and knowledge-keepers with whom I've had conversations, and the experiences on the land which have most influenced me, both before and during my research and writing.

2.1. Checking The Scene

Before embarking on a research project, it makes sense to look for pre-existing resources on one's subject matter. So early in my thesis journey I combed through libraries, bookstores, and the internet to find who might have already done an inquiry

question such as mine; was there an educator out there who had already introduced Indigenous content and ways of knowing into a core French classroom, and had written about it? I emailed teachers in neighbouring districts, and of course reached out to my peers in my own school district. Had anyone already explored the tensions between teaching an official language of Canada (a language of colonization) and supporting the local Indigenous presence?

Although there were articles about teaching French to Indigenous students, and articles juxtaposing French and Indigenous languages, I could not find any resources which paralleled the study I wished to do. But that doesn't mean that I didn't find some of the resources about French and Indigenous languages useful for my purposes. For example, Lavoie, Mark, & Jennis (2007) found that using both the local Indigenous language and French in the classroom can strengthen the language lesson and increase student motivation. This viewpoint, as well as conversations with one of our district's Elders, motivated me to include some Sm'algyax in the French language lessons. Later, in the course of writing this thesis, I came across Côté writing of the tension felt by Francophone academics wishing to instill Indigenous ways of knowing into their classrooms while still protecting their own rights as a minority in Canada; she draws comparisons between decolonization in Indigenous/settler relationships and the decolonization needed in the relationships between Anglophones and Francophones in Canada (Côté, 2019; 2021). Côté's work helped clarify for me the differences between teaching in Prince Rupert, where a French presence is very minimal, to teaching in a larger Canadian centre where French Canadian influences are much greater. Here in Prince Rupert, there are no apparent issues stemming from the colonization of French Canadians which might affect my study, and I don't feel the tension that a French Canadian academic might feel between supporting Indigeneity in their classroom in conjunction with guarding their own identity and rights as a French Canadian.

In other research, Lavoie et al. (2014) describe using Indigenous teaching methods to teach French to Innu students in northern Quebec, incorporating the use of the students' first language into classroom teaching. Their study involved kindergarten students who had a common culture (Innu) and first language (Innu-aimun). Although my teaching situation was quite different than that described in this study, in that I was teaching a multicultural group of teenagers in a high school with multiple first languages (Punjabi, Vietnamese, English, for example), I was able to find relevance in the authors'

conclusions regarding the importance of Elders in a classroom, the nature of relationships in a successful language classroom, and the important use of stories as a decolonizing tool for oral language development (and the use of second language strategies such as repeated retrieval and decontextualizing of vocabulary within the pedagogy of storytelling) (Lavoie et al., 2014, p. 210). The authors put forth that using local concepts for L2 (second language) vocabulary, rather than pre-packaged lists that don't reflect life on Indigenous land, can play an important role in decolonizing the curriculum.

Another use of story as a decolonizing tool can be found in Lemaire (2020), who describes her experiences with conducting the Kairo blanket exercise with her preservice students.[9] I have twice participated in the blanket exercise, both times with my British Columbia First Peoples 12 classes, but have not had the opportunity to experience this activity which encourages students through interactive story to "live" the experiences suffered by Indigenous people at the hands of colonizers. I felt a connection with Lemaire's work through her viewpoint that the concept of reconciliation should be raised above the status of a mere buzzword or a basic knowledge of past atrocities and should inspire transformative learning through empathy and action (2020, p. 301). She analyzed student perception of the blanket exercise through student-written assignments (2020, p. 305-307), and found that, while all of her students considered the exercise to be useful and relevant, some went on to articulate their deep understanding of the effects of residential schools and their sense of empathy toward Indigenous people, a group that some of the students had previously harboured negative stereotypes against.

Lemaire's goals and experiences with the blanket exercise, while not entirely overlapping with my own inquiry, are valuable in that they show that using story to educate students about residential schools can spark beneficial dialogue about decolonization and reconciliation that can be directly related to students' lives. While her preservice teachers learned of the relevancy of their blanket exercise experiences to the professional teaching competencies they are required to follow as teachers (2020, p. 307), I was hopeful that mindful activities with my core French students would also lead

[9] A description of the blanket exercise can be found on the Kairos website (Kairos, website)

to transformative learning and a personal commitment on the part of my students to continue learning and participating in decolonization and reconciliation efforts.

Lemaire discusses a very interesting five-year study which was conducted with Métis Elders and knowledge-keepers in Lac La Biche and Lac Ste. Anne on Treaty 6 territory in Alberta (Lemaire, 2022). They were invited into elementary francophone schools and French immersion programs to share their histories and culture, with one of the aims being that students realize that their knowledge of French could help them connect with the Métis culture and language (the Métis language, Michif, is primarily a mix of French and Cree (p. 42)). Elders came and spoke of such topics as their experiences in residential schools, with the emphasis on developing an empathic relationship between the Elders and the students (p. 44). The common ground between this study and mine is the vital importance of Elders in a classroom to help forge a connection not only personally with students, but also between the students and the local Indigenous culture, and the Indigenous land upon which we're learning.

Campeau (2021) writes of an inquiry done in the 2015-2016 school year in two elementary schools in Quebec, each of which has an Indigenous student population of over 50%. In this study, ten teachers (nine non-Indigenous and one from the Anishinabe-Algonquin nation) worked closely with Elders and other knowledge-keepers to craft a hybrid methodology based on Indigenous pedagogy and place-based learning. Not only did the Elders and knowledge-keepers play a vital role in the writing of the lessons, but they facilitated the lessons in the classroom in the Anishinaabemowin language. Campeau concludes that "the use of the language of the Anishinabeg Aboriginal communities has contributed to contextualize knowledge, making it no longer generic, but intimately linked to a space, a territory" (p. 63). This echoes the work of Fettes (2016), who emphasizes that Indigenous languages are woven into natural and cultural environments and embedded in the living world, and argues that this should be reflected in language pedagogy. Campeau considers how an Indigenous language can act as a "vector of culture" (p. 62) to transmit meaning and connection (with community, and with the natural and more-than-natural environment) which cannot be captured by another language (Smith, 1999; Kovach, 2009; Tanaka, 2016).

In the process of writing this thesis, I found Campeau's article to be motivating, as I could see connections between her work and mine. We both are investigating

hybrid pedagogy: Indigenous and place-based in her study, Indigenous and Western in mine; we both understand the importance of local Indigenous language in a classroom; and we both acknowledge and respect the roles which Elders and other Indigenous knowledge-keepers play not only in the planning of lessons, but the execution of them as well (although it was never part of my study for Elders to teach in my classroom to the extent that they taught in Campeau's study; the Elders are in far too much demand in our district for them to be in my French classroom that often). There are significant differences in our studies, however; for example, her study took place in Quebec where, according to Campeau, Indigenous pedagogies are "unfortunately little known" (p. 65).[10] It is also important to note that her study took place in an elementary school, where subjects can flow from one to the other to facilitate cross-curricular learning, whereas my study took place in a one hour per day core French class, where the primary task at hand is to learn the French language. In her conclusions, Campeau focusses on the importance of Elders in the classroom, and the necessity for the Quebec Ministry of Education to "integrate indigenous knowledge and perspectives, in particular to science and technology" into the mandated curricula (p. 65). Thus it is evident that the goals of our two studies differ, but we found common ground in our views on the importance of Elders, of local language, and of connection to the land.

While there are resonances with the work of these other educators, at the time I was embarking on my research, I could not locate any previous inquiry questions which had a direct connection to my proposed work. Nevertheless, I felt that if done truthfully, my inquiry might not only be useful to myself and my students, but to other teachers as well, and perhaps even to the broader field of scholarship. Despite the lack of similar studies, I found much inspiration and guidance in the writings of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous authors. This leads us into the next category of literature: Guiding Voices.

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[10] Campeau acknowledges the work done by the BC Ministry of Education on Indigenizing of the curriculum: "On peut citer, notamment à cet égard, la Colombie-Britannique qui a intégré les connaissances et les perspectives autochtones, mais également les principes d'apprentissage des Premiers Peuples, au sein de son curriculum » (« *A noteworthy example in this regard is British Columbia, which has integrated Indigenous knowledges and perspectives, but also First Peoples' learning principles into its curriculum")*. (p. 54)

2.2. Guiding Voices

I've divided this section of the literature review into two parts: *People* and *Places.* The section on people will highlight how the readings I've done and the people with whom I've had conversations have influenced how I prepared myself for this journey, and how I conducted my research. Thus, *People* will include documents, articles, and books as well as conversations. The second section, *Places*, may be an odd choice for a literature review, but in my own journey, I had to get out on the land and spend some time in quiet appreciation in order to understand the land's connection with Indigenous language and culture. Through this introspection, I was also able to examine my own motivations and priorities. As I interacted further with the land, I was able to gain insights into my own decolonization journey and better understanding of the importance of my natural environment in my professional and personal life.

2.2.1. People

i. Myself

When I first felt an ethical call to devote myself to the study of Indigenous ways of learning and knowing, a vital part of the journey was to take a good hard look in the mirror, and own who I am and where I come from. Chilisa (2012) states that self-identity, a cherished element of Indigenous cultures, is taught by what are called "self-praise" stories; stories which outline and celebrate the family lineage and history of important events" (p.12). She notes that "the definition of the self [is] related to the environment and its people, animals, birds, and vegetation"—one should work hard not to divorce oneself from one's core relations. She goes on to say that when people hear the self-praise stories of others, they can tell a lot about that person from the stories; researchers, too, can use the stories to gauge the depth of a person's self-definition.

So, what are my core relations, my self-definition? I have written many introductory passages and prologues to essays which situate me in my life, my research, and my geographic place. Some I wrote back in 2011when I was doing my Master's degree, some I've done more recently for my current studies. No matter which prologue I re-read now, I find myself thinking, "I've changed so much since I wrote that." For

example, in my comprehensive exam proposal for the LUCID Master's program[11], I situated myself with one line only: "As a secondary core French teacher..." In another paper, I simply stated that I had a secondary core French classroom in Prince Rupert, BC. In a presentation I gave in 2014 at one of the elementary schools in our district, I introduced myself by name, reminded them of where I teach, and delved right into the subject matter.

I would like to think that I have learned much since then as to the importance of situating oneself: not only for the benefit of the reader, but for one's own benefit as well. Still, the core questions remain. *Who am I to be conducting this research?* Is it possible that, enmeshed as I am in my position of white privilege, I can conduct myself with a minimum of bias? I have a vision to decolonize the second language classroom and encourage honour and respect for Indigenous culture in an otherwise colonial-style classroom. Am I in the right place personally and professionally to move forward on this journey?

In 2016 I wrote a paper for a doctoral class entitled "Storytelling and Interviews as Methodologies towards Decolonization of the Core French Classroom". It begins with an introduction in which I situate myself in a different manner than in previous papers:

> Nancy Griffith-Zahner: Toronto-born, middle-aged Jewish woman, proud mother of two grown sons who live and work in Vancouver with their partners. My oldest son Ben is a sound engineer who dreams of owning a farm with a big red barn in which he can do his recording, mixing, and mastering; his partner Christina, a vet technician, intends to raise rabbits and pigs on that farm (they already live with three rabbits which Christina brought into the relationship: Domino, D'Arcy, and Ms. Liz). My younger son Adam is a chef who lives in Vancouver with his partner Vanessa, and are proud "parents" of a feral Haida Gwaii cat named Misty. Vanessa was born and raised in Old Masset, and her family lives there on reserve. She has recently graduated with her BSc in Ecology and Marine Science, and is beginning her Master's program in September 2017. She plans to return to Haida Gwaii to work for the Haida people in the area of marine research. Adam will be entering culinary school at the same time that Vanessa is beginning her Master's program, and has a dream of being adopted into a Haida clan (as an Eagle), so that he can learn about Haida Gwaii flora and botany from the Elders, and be able to use his restaurant and culinary skills alongside his newly-found indigenous food knowledge to cook at

[11] This was a Masters of Education program offered by Simon Fraser University and associated with the research project *Learning for Understanding through Culturally Inclusive Imaginative Development* (LUCID). I was a member of this cohort from 2011 to 2013.

> potlatches and be of use to the Haida community as he stays at home with the babies to come.
>
> My husband is a Toronto-educated lawyer who turned his back on corporate law and big law firms thirty years ago and devoted his practice to poverty law. We lived all over the country until we decided to settle in Prince Rupert where my husband has had a private practice for the past twenty-five years, and still practices primarily poverty law; ninety percent of his client base is Indigenous, and the bulk of his practice is comprised of criminal and family law, a portion of that under the auspices of the Legal Aid Society. When he's not in court he's on the ocean or the river, fishing for the love of it, for the sport of it, for the sheer joy he receives from being on the land. He releases most of what he catches, and gives away most of what he keeps.
>
> Although I am surrounded by people who have deep connections to and reverence for the land and for the culture of the people to whom the land belongs, it was a difficult and lengthy process for me to shed the negative viewpoints and sense of entitlement as a daughter of Toronto socialites. When I interact with my mother and siblings, I see how far I have travelled away from that colonial, Euro-centric way of thinking (and how far I have yet to go). It saddens me that when I speak to my mother on the phone or visit her in Toronto, I can't discuss my journey with her, or my deep gratitude and sense of peace that I feel when on indigenous land or learning from Elders, as this is not her journey nor one which she wishes to undertake.

When I look back at those words I wrote six years ago, I realize that much has changed in our personal lives: marriages have dissolved, and new ones been celebrated; additional degrees have been earned; addresses have changed. But what has not changed is the chasm between my worldview and that of my Toronto family. It's a struggle for me, in Greg Cajete's words (1994), to "think the highest thought" when I look back at my family life in Toronto. I never got to know my "physical place" in any significant way, I never really understood my relationship with my family, friends, or teachers, and I definitely didn't have the capacity for proper self-reflection and analysis. I never felt any "integration with the culture of a people", and therefore was quite late in my attainment of any sense of empowerment, personal vitality, and maturity, again to quote Cajete. It wasn't until I got married, moved out to British Columbia, and had children that I felt I had not only the capacity but the environment in which I could discover who I really am, and what that identity knowledge means. After all, as Cajete says, "because transformation is a dynamic, creative process, it brings anything but peace of mind, tranquility or harmony... [it] requires a tearing apart in order to create a new order and higher level of consciousness" (p. 46). I've nowhere near completed that

journey of self-discovery, but if you were meeting me for the first time now, I'd introduce myself in this order: I am a mother, wife, teacher, student, friend.

I had half-heartedly and somewhat unsuccessfully begun the journey of decolonizing my thinking and my classroom several years before my doctoral journey. Later in this chapter and in the next one, I'll describe some of those earlier learning experiences. However, looking back on them now, I see that I still had much to discover about how to apply what I had learned to my own teaching in the French classroom.   I was inspired to do better by the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (the TRC), who released their Calls to Action in 2015 (2015a).   Although this document doesn't specifically reference the teaching of French on Indigenous land, its approach to both education and language served as a wake-up call to educators at all levels of the education system across the country. In British Columbia, this was reinforced by the curriculum revisions introduced by the BC Ministry of Education from 2015 to 2019, which among other changes showed their increased awareness of and focus on Indigeneity in the school system. Since this was the curriculum in place over the course of my research, I will describe some of its main features and comment on their relevance to the teaching of core French in Grade 9—the class I chose to focus on in the three month inquiry described in Chapter 4.

ii. The BC Curriculum

A perusal of the core French curriculum, which can be found on the BC Ministry of Education's website[12], sets forth the Big Ideas, Curricular Competencies, and Content associated with this subject for each grade level. Here is the overview for Grade 9:

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[12]https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/curriculum/languages/9/core-french

BRITISH COLUMBIA
Ministry of Education

Area of Learning: CORE FRENCH **Grade 9**

BIG IDEAS

Listening and viewing with intent supports our acquisition and understanding of French.	We can have meaningful conversations in French about things that are important to us.	We can share our experiences and perspectives through **stories**.	Francophone **creative works** are expressions of Francophone cultures.	Acquiring French provides opportunities to explore our own cultural identity from a new perspective.

Learning Standards

Curricular Competencies

Students are expected to be able to do the following:

Thinking and communicating

- Recognize the relationships between French **letter patterns and pronunciation**
- **Derive meaning** from a variety of **texts**
- Use a range of **strategies to support communication**
- **Seek clarification** of meaning
- Engage in **conversations** about **familiar topics**
- Exchange ideas and information using complete sentences, both orally and in writing
- **Narrate** stories

Personal and social awareness

- Explore and share information about connections between **indigenous communities and the French language**
- Explore ways in which Francophone cultures are expressed through creative works
- Explore cultural practices and traditions in various Francophone regions, and their role in identity
- **Describe similarities and differences** between their own cultural practices and traditions and those of Francophone communities in various regions
- Explore the **importance of story** in personal, family, and community identity
- **Engage** in experiences with Francophone communities and people

Content

Students are expected to know the following:

- French **letter patterns**
- commonly used vocabulary and sentence structures for communication in **past, present, and future** time frames:
  - various types of **questions**
  - descriptions of items, people, places, and personal interests
  - **comparisons and contrasts**
  - **sequences** of events
  - simple needs
  - opinions about familiar topics
  - **cultural aspects** of communities
- **elements of common types of texts**
- **common elements of stories**
- **traditions and other cultural practices** in various Francophone regions
- ethics of **cultural appropriation** and plagiarism

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Figure 5. Core French 9 curriculum.

The curriculum is based on the "KDU" model of learning: Content (Know), Curricular Competencies (Do), and Big Ideas (Understand), which all work together to support deeper learning.[13] These three elements of curriculum differ from subject to subject and grade to grade. However, the Core Competencies, a set of overarching capacities to be developed throughout the school years, apply to all courses and ages[14]:

[13] https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/rethinking-curriculum

[14] https://greaterheightslearningacademy.ca/core-competencies/

Figure 6. BC Curriculum Core Competencies

These Core Competencies work with the specific Big Ideas, Curricular Competencies, and Content for individual subjects and grades. Although teachers are not required to assess students on the Core Competencies, nor to access every Big Idea through the course of the learning, both of these can be powerful tools to promote learning. There is flexibility built into the curriculum which honours and respects teacher autonomy and expertise: for example, teachers are not only permitted to choose the most relevant Big Ideas for a particular course, but can add their own Big Ideas to reflect the strengths, needs, demographics, or location of the class. The Big Ideas which were specifically relevant to the classroom inquiry are:

- *We can have meaningful conversations in French about things that are important to us*. Although it is sometimes a challenge to generate truly meaningful conversations in the core French classroom, my aim in the classroom inquiry was to create opportunities for students to bring Indigeneity into their French experience: for example, by situating

themselves on Ts'msyen land, by discussing their Ts'msyen clan (either traditional or non-traditional; the latter being for non-Ts'msyen guests on the land), or by being able to discuss items in our longhouse museum, a well-loved landmark. Just as Lavoie (2004) emphasized the importance of Elder presence and the use of story in the classroom, I aimed to encourage students to find ways to honour our local Indigeneity within the parameters of the curriculum.

- *We can share our experiences and perspectives through stories*. The use of stories belongs to many cultures, but when paired with Indigenous content and the embracing of Indigenous world views, stories take on an enhanced significance and are inclusive of all students in the classroom. While non-Indigenous students might not be personally familiar with certain elements of Ts'msyen culture, there is always enough familiarity in the stories that are shared to interest all the students. Indigenous students who share their own knowledge as part of the stories enhance the learning of everyone in the class.

- *Acquiring French provides opportunities to explore our own cultural identity from a new perspective*. This is a very important Big Idea, not only for my classroom inquiry, but as a guide for all my teaching and my personal and professional decolonization journey. I hoped that by learning about Ts'msyen culture through content and ways of learning, students would not only enhance their knowledge and appreciation of the Indigeneity of Prince Rupert, but would themselves feel enriched as a guest on Ts'msyen land, be they of Filipino, Vietnamese, Chinese, Indian, or European background.

The Big Idea which I presented to my French 9 students during our classroom inquiry period revolved around creating space for acknowledgement of and respect for the Indigeneity of Prince Rupert through the study of French in our classroom. My hope was that this concept would become as natural to them as the existing Big Ideas in the curriculum.

The Curricular Competencies, which outline what students should be able to do in the various subjects and grades, includes in the “Personal and Social Awareness” sub-section that students should be able to “Explore and share information about connections between Indigenous communities and the French language” (see Figure 4 above). This Ministry directive is mandatory, but the examples[15] given for this competency, which include exploration of communities such as the Huron Wendake Nation, Innu Nation, Micmac Nation and others, are suggestions only. So when I reviewed my Grade 9 core French curriculum and noted the competency relating to connections between Indigenous communities and the French language, I found that a local interpretation of this competency would serve my students well. Rather than study Indigenous nations who live on territories where French is spoken, I interpreted the competency to include exploring how the French language can connect with and support our own Indigenous community in Prince Rupert. This might include building a relationship between French and Sm’algyax, insofar as we might include small amounts of Sm’algyax vocabulary in our lessons to deepen our connection to and understanding of Indigenous culture and protocols.

The Content section of the curriculum is also mandated, although teachers are encouraged to adapt the general content to suit the needs of their students (for example, one of the content pieces revolves around the use of past, present, and future time frames, and the non-mandated suggestions include use of the passé composé [*[je suis allé]* present tense [*je vais]*, and the futur proche [*je vais aller*]. No mention is made of the future tense [*j’irai]*], so it is up to the teacher’s discretion as to whether that particular tense should be taught.

Similarly, I interpreted the content piece surrounding the ethics of cultural appropriation and plagiarism as something to be taught in the context of Indigenous culture and art, centering around the Ts’msyen nation but also including other BC Nations (such as the Haida Nation).

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[15] The examples, or elaborations as they are called by the Ministry of Education, can be found by hovering one’s mouse over the bolded hypertext in any curriculum document. There are elaborations offered for Big Ideas, Competencies, and Content.

It was a great encouragement to me to see how our curriculum encouraged adaptations which support local Indigeneity, and I knew that the learning taking place during the classroom inquiry would uphold the integrity of the curriculum.

iii. The First Peoples Principles of Learning

The *First Peoples Principles of Learning*, a set of Indigenous-based guidelines available in poster form facilitated by the *First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC)*, is a very well-known resource in British Columbia. Visible on the walls of most classrooms around the province, the principles are general enough to be applicable to all subjects taught in schools, and teachers are encouraged by administration, districts, and the Ministry of Education in BC to use them mindfully in their classroom.

When I first came across the Principles of Learning, I appreciated the wisdom behind them and the intense work that was needed to distill them from a vast range of Indigenous cultures and teachings in the province, and I chose to display both the English and the French versions of the poster in my classroom. In retrospect, however, since I lacked a deep understanding of the Principles, I found myself making superficial references to them when planning out my units, or writing my department head reports. After attending various workshops in how to use the Principles in a classroom (not a French classroom, but the workshops still presented some very applicable information), it's become clear that my interpretation of the Principles should be ever-evolving and relevant to my continued efforts to Indigenize and decolonize my French language classroom. I speak more about the Principles in Chapter 5.

Although the First Peoples Principles of Learning are arguably the most well-known Indigenous guiding principles in BC, they are not the only important voices to listen to when opening one's heart to Indigenous ways of teaching and knowing. I came across an article written by Kathy Sanford, Lorna Williams, Tim Hopper, and Catherine McGregor in the periodical *in education* (lack of capitalization intended), entitled "Indigenous Principles Decolonizing Teacher Education: What We Have Learned" (2012). Within this article was a list of twelve ways in which a Western curriculum might be re-imagined through an Indigenous lens. This article really was food for thought, as at first glance the dichotomy created between Western and Indigenized ways of teaching were very polarized and organized in a way which gave me pause, but reflection and re-

imagining helped me interpret the article in a way which was very useful in my classroom. I speak more to this in Chapter 4.

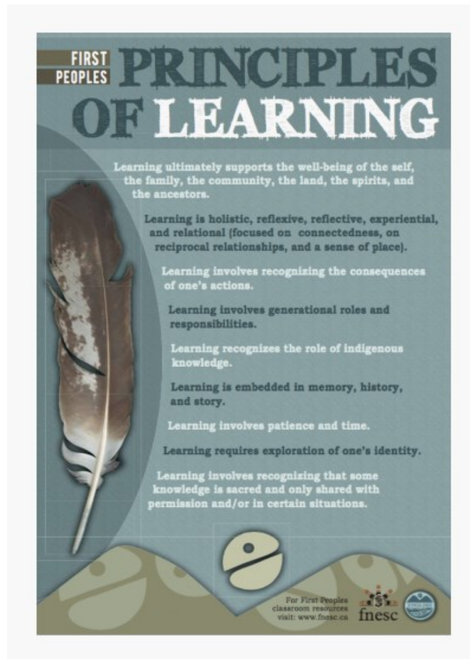

Figure 7. The First Peoples Principles of Learning

iv. The Scholars

There are several authors who were instrumental in helping me find my place in this research, and Linda Tuhiwai Smith is at the top of that list. I was first introduced to Smith's *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* back when I was doing my Master's degree, and I found it a bit threatening and off-putting back then, as I was not ready to hear what needed to be said. Smith states in her introduction the extent to which Indigenous Nations are angered and incredulous at aspects of Western research, by which I felt threatened but in hindsight was a crucial part of letting go of my colonizer's ego. Her book is excellent for those who need to understand the crippling effect of Western research on Indigenous Nations, and the assumption that many non-Indigenous researchers have of superiority and ownership (Smith, 1999).

Two of Smith's "Twenty-Five Indigenous Projects" which are offered in her book are "Indigenizing" and "Intervening", and they helped me centre my thoughts and research. In her definition of the term, "Indigenizing" is a two-fold project, one fold of which is directed to non-Indigenous peoples to centre "landscapes, images, languages,

themes, metaphors, and stories in the indigenous world" (Smith, 1999, p.147). This spoke to my situation: as a non-Indigenous teacher, I visited our IE department for guidance as well as seeking referrals to Elders who could share their wisdom. "Intervening," as the name suggests, involves "the process of being proactive and of becoming involved as an interested worker for change." Smith's suggestions in this section are directed towards broad structural and cultural changes, but her views apply to the smaller changes I was striving to make in my classroom as well. I was inspired by Smith's view that "Intervening is directed… at changing institutions which deal with indigenous peoples and not at changing indigenous peoples to fit the structure" (p. 147). There are many levels of structure in my French classroom which I am powerless to change (such as bell schedules, evaluation requirements, administrative rules regarding absences, etc.), but it was within my power to change myself and my practice, as Smith suggests, by designing a new program and changing the cultural focus of my French program. In doing so, I was hopeful that I would bring about a positive change in my students as well.

As a settler examining the baggage which I bring into a research study like this, I was quite influenced by a line from Margaret Kovach's work *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations and Contexts* (2009): "The relationship [between Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars] begins with decolonizing one's mind and heart" (p. 169). She goes on to say that in this process, one must examine one's beliefs, ways of thinking, values, and indeed one's "whiteness": "It is about examining power. It is ongoing…. Without this work, the alternative is, at best, tinkering with the colonial approach to Indigenous knowledges—which does not provide a foundation for Indigenous research frameworks or pedagogies" (Kovach, 2009). Ghosts of end-of-year forms with "Indigenous content included?" boxes, and Hayden King's tweet about an alternate meaning of the verb "decolonizing" frown at me as I recall so many unsuccessful forays into "decolonization" (whatever I thought it to mean back then). Not emanating from a place of humility and self-knowledge, those attempts, as I now see them, were doomed to failure.

To further understand this point, I turned to *Unsettling the Settler Within: Indian Residential Schools, Truth Telling, and Reconciliation in Canada* by Paulette Regan (2010). Despite my intellectual and emotional journey thus far, nothing could quite prepare me for what I was about to read. Right from the introduction the book was hard-

hitting, as Regan states that she “unravel[s] the Canadian historical narrative and deconstruct[s] the foundational myth of the benevolent peacemakers… to understand how colonial forms of denial, guilt, and empathy act as barriers to transformative socio-political change” (p.11). She goes on to say that in her mind, “Canadians are still on a misguided, obsessive, and mythical quest to assuage colonizer guilt by solving the Indian problem. In this way, we avoid looking too closely at ourselves and the collective responsibility we bear for the colonial status quo” (p. 11).

The importance of understanding one’s place in the process of decolonization was clearly stated in Anne Bishop’s *Becoming an Ally: Breaking the Cycle of Oppression in People* (2002). Toward the end of the book, she describes a situation which took place at a memorial rally in 1990 for the fourteen female engineering students murdered at Montreal’s L’École Polytechnique the year before. At this rally, a young man stormed the stage, grabbed the microphone, and said his piece about the tragic event. Bishop vented her feelings into a journal entry in the form of a letter to the young man, in which she illustrates to him that he “provided a crystal clear example of how not to be an ally to an oppressed group” (Bishop, 2002, p.123). This lesson in understanding allyship easily translates from male feminists to non-Indigenous Indigenists (more on this below), and thus was very useful. Are there times that I can look back upon when I felt that I should be closer to the centre of attention, that I should be the one praised for helping to organize an event, that I should always be at the forefront of my administrators’ minds when looking for information about decolonization or reconciliation? I’m afraid the answer is yes. This attitude was part of the baggage that I brought into my professional (and personal) life. It was only through deep introspection and countless lessons from Elders and Indigenous knowledge-keepers that I was able to identify this baggage, and take another step in my “unlearning” of my privileged identity and need for approval.

As I continued my research and expanded my experiences with Indigenous knowledge-keepers (through invitations to potlatches, attendance at local festivals, etc.), I felt myself being tempted to think that I might write from an Indigenous point of view, and adopt certain aspects of Indigenous culture as my own. I certainly did not learn this attitude from the Elders and knowledge-keepers, it was a viewpoint which I arrived at all on my own. As I noted earlier, it was from Tuck and Yang (2012) that I learned that this is one of several ways in which settlers attempt to assuage their guilt surrounding

colonialism: they may *imagine a distant Indigenous relative*, most often female, in order to "mark themselves as blameless" (p. 10); they may seek to "*become without becoming [Indian]*" by fantasizing that they have been welcomed, or adopted into Indigenous society; they may *describe all social justice struggles as "decolonizing"*, as is evidenced by the expression "We are all colonized", which, according to Tuck and Yang, implies that none of us, therefore, are settlers (p.17); and finally, they may consider that *decolonizing one's attitude is the only step in decolonization* (emphasis mine), as opposed to it being the first of many steps (p. 19). It is obvious that thinking I could claim a measure of Indigeneity in my writing, caused no doubt by my excitement buoyed by my studies and experiences, fell squarely into wanting to *become without becoming [Indian]* I have reflected upon this article many times on my road to decolonization, and Tuck and Yang's advice continues to influence my research and my teaching.

Sean Wilson is another author who was very influential on my work. The first time I ever heard the term "indigenist" was from his guest editorial titled "What is an Indigenist Research Paradigm?" in the journal *Canadian Journal of Native Education* (Wilson, 2008). It was an intriguing term. I had never felt comfortable calling myself an "ally"; it implied that I was judging my own involvement and importance in Indigenous issues, and finding myself just a bit invaluable to the cause. But the term "indigenist": what could it mean? According to Wilson, "I use *Indigenist* to name or label the paradigm that I am talking about rather than *Indigenous*. It is my belief that an Indigenist paradigm can be used by anyone who chooses to follow its tenets…. It is the use of an Indigenist paradigm that creates Indigenous knowledge" (pp 193-194). Wilson goes on to say that the Indigenist paradigm isn't performative: "…the use of one or two (or 10) talking circles as research tools [does not] suffice to make a research project Indigenist" (p.194). Being an Indigenist is like being a feminist (p. 194): while not restricted to Indigenous peoples (or females, in the feminist example), it should be an identity which one works toward and takes on in a "relational context…. our writing should not be separated from ourselves… our own relationships with our environment, families, ancestors, ideas, and the cosmos around us shape who we are and how we will conduct our research" (p. 194). As well, it shouldn't be constantly compared to other paradigms (such as Western teaching paradigms), as there is a possibility of hybridization between the two that might mask the Indigeneity. Wilson's editorial is valuable reading for those non-Indigenous researchers who struggle to find their place in the study of Indigeneity.

Weighty food for thought, too, was Wilson's remark, in his work Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods (2008) that we can "never really remove the [dominant system research] tools from their underlying beliefs" (p.13). He was equally clear about the fact that "researchers, no matter how objective they claim their methods and themselves to be, do bring with them their own set of biases" (p.16). This was one more wake-up call for me to own my own identity as a settler, and to make it an explicit aspect of my research and inquiries. I must, as Wilson states, work toward an identity which is nurtured by a sense of relationality with my surroundings (both natural and spiritual), and learn from these relationships how I might best support decolonization and reconciliation as a life-long endeavour. This involves an immersion into the idea that relationship exists between myself and my students, my peers, my family, the land, and elements of the spiritual world. Such relationality does not wax and wane; it is ever-present and organic (Kerr & Ferguson, 2021).

For the non-Indigenous researcher who wishes to pursue this way of being in the world, author and scholar Gregory Cajete provides invaluable guidance. In his work *Look to the Mountain: An Ecology of Indigenous Education* (1994), he proposes that in order to live a complete life, one must find "one's true face (character, potential, identity), one's heart (soul, creative self, true passion), and one's foundation (true work, vocation)." His work weaves together these three aspects of life to illustrate the importance of a holistic view towards oneself, one's work, and one's place in the world. Examining one's own character, for example, will shed light on what our motivations are in conducting research and why we might react to critique (or criticism) in negative ways. A search of one's identity helps us to centre ourselves in the work and not forget that we are studying a culture other than our own (and must therefore tread lightly and respectfully).

Throughout the research journey, Cajete's philosophies resonated with me, as they nudged me towards deep introspection and motivated me to find a connection with my view of self and what I might consider my "true work". This sort of introspection is not something that can be conducted on a one-time basis; as my work continues and new challenges present themselves, I return to Cajete to re-centre and remind myself that as I learn and evolve, my face, heart, and foundation need to be in balance.

v. The Elders and other Knowledge-Keepers

Although reading and researching various points of view concerning Indigenizing and decolonizing a language classroom is of course important, it is vital to meet with and learn from Indigenous Elders and knowledge-keepers. As already noted, this is a constant theme in collaborative work with other teachers and teaching professionals in my school, and in my district. Our district principal for Indigenous Education, Roberta Edzerza, for example, has met with me many times, not only to help me enhance my lesson and unit plans with Indigenous ways of teaching and content, but also to advise me as to the proper protocols when interacting with Indigenous Elders and knowledge-keepers. She has explained the fluidity of consent and collaboration, and how our way of expressing ourselves evolves as we seek change. As stewards of the Sm'algyax language, Roberta, her staff, and the Sm'algyax language and culture teachers of our district work not only on "visible" projects such as supporting the district's need for Indigenous mentors and role models, but also "behind the scenes" with their tireless work in organizing and digitizing Ts'msyen sacred stories (the *adaawx).* Roberta and her staff are very highly regarded in our district by administrators and teachers alike, and we consult with them and learn from them before any efforts are made to bring Indigeneity into the classroom.

An example of this process, and an instance of profound collaboration, involved myself and Gitga'at artist Kelli Clifton, whom I have known for many years in Prince Rupert (I mentioned this briefly at the end of Chapter 1). I approached Kelli back in 2015 with an idea to create dual-language posters (in French and Sm'algyax) for our district's classrooms which would also showcase her art. I had the thought that motivational words could be written in the two languages (one word per poster)—words which would represent the work done in our school district to honour and work toward decolonization and reconciliation.

For the next eighteen months Kelli and I embarked upon a learning journey of the many levels of protocol necessary for work of this nature. We obtained permission from our district and administration, but more vital than that were the meetings and consultations with our IE Department and the Ts'msyen Sm'algyax Language Authority (TSLA). The Authority chose five words which expressed the nature of the work done in our district, agreed upon the Sm'algyax spelling and English translations of those words,

and approved Kelli's designs. The five posters were then ready to be blessed by our Elder Sm'oogyit Gitxoon (Alex Campbell) in a district-wide ceremony, and distributed to the schools.

Figure 8. Kelli's posters

The five posters, from left to right, translate to "good-heartedness", "family", "nature", "reconciliation" and "respect". I celebrate these posters for a couple of reasons: they represent the respectful nature of collaborative work between an Indigenous and non-Indigenous person who share a vision; as well, they are a visual indicator that the study of the two languages need not compete with each other but rather work together for the common goal of supporting and respecting the Indigeneity of Prince Rupert. But their importance in my journey is much greater than metaphoric. They became a framework around which, along with the BC Curriculum, I structured my inquiry and my teaching: *Nda'aamx* is the foremost reason for decolonizing thinking and teaching, and

all actions in the classroom should be conducted and experienced with reconciliation in mind; *Ama goot* is what motivates me to un/re/learn about Indigeneity in Canada and re-examine my biases and mindsets; *Łoomsk* for self, for others, for the process of learning, and for the land is the foundation from which I journey and grow toward decolonized teaching; *Wilwilaaysk* doesn't just encompass blood relations but also those I consider family, and those in my community from whom I can learn and to whom I might be of service; *Lax yuup* encompasses the flora and fauna of the land, the sea, and the sky, and encourages me to seek out and understand my place on and relationship to the land and what it can teach me.

It is interesting to take a moment to examine the translation of *Nda'aamx* (which also can be spelled *'Nda aam*, depending upon which tribe of the Ts'msyen Nation is being asked), as it has an original meaning which brings an additional nuance to its interpretation. According to Elder Sm'oogyit Gitxoon, its more traditional meaning is "on both sides I forgive you; to each other now a happy reunion".[16] The concept of reconciliation from the Old French *reconciliacion* (14th century) is defined as "renewal of friendship after disagreement or enmity, action of reaching accord with an adversary or one estranged".[17] When one examines the ten principles for reconciliation as outlined by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in their resource *What We Have Learned: Principles of Truth and Reconciliation* (2015b), it is evident that all ten of those principles concern themselves with righting wrongs committed against Indigenous Nations by European settlers. Perhaps we can think of them as initial steps towards the deeper reconciliation expressed by Sm'oogyit Gitxoon, who states: "We welcome [people to] come together, work together; let's learn together. One day we will all lock our arms and move forward. That's my plan."[18] In his words and actions I see the true meanings of *Ama goot, Wilwilaaysk, Łoomsk,* and especially *Nda'aamx.*

The five guiding principles from Kelli's posters should not be considered in a linear fashion, but as accessible during any stage of practitioner inquiry, or as an inspiration for students as they are learning:

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[16] From a private conversation in August, 2023.

[18] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sdI1qckp50Y

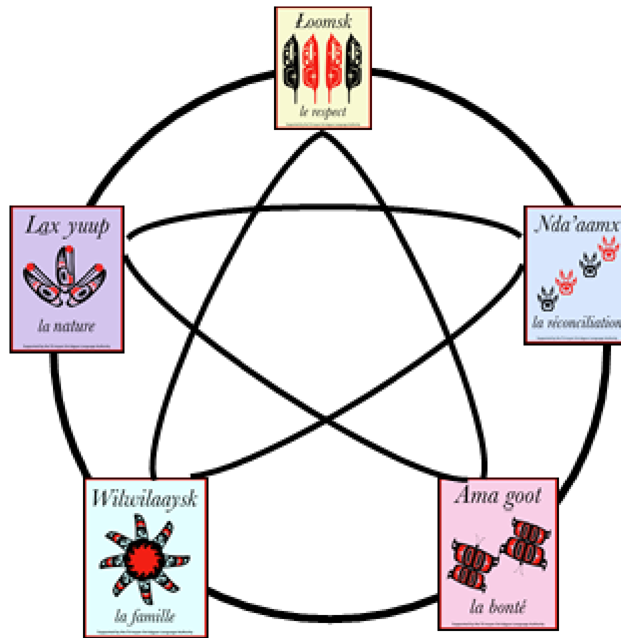

Figure 9. Kelli's posters showing their relationality

For example, although *Nda'aamx* may provide the overarching motivation to begin the decolonization journey, it is not a concept which is abandoned once the journey is under way, but rather is accessed and reflected upon constantly. *Wilwilaaysk* and *Lax yuup* are vital elements of the Ts'msyen world views, which motivate us to reach out to families and community members to share in their learning and their experiences; it is an ongoing, reflexive, and reflective process. We need the many levels of *Łoomsk* in order to encourage transformative learning, and one should re-examine the notion of respect in times of comfort and in times of tension (such as when, for example, one has mis-stepped in their interactions with Indigenous Elders or knowledge-keepers and needs to re-examine the nature of respectful relationships). And without *Ama goot*, efforts toward decolonization and Indigenization might devolve to nothing more than performative, perhaps centering ourselves rather than the Indigenous community.

I have often said that I have spent much time "at the feet of Elders"; what I mean by that is that I have taken every opportunity to listen to them speak, attend classes and workshops that they give, and be of service to them at any opportunity I find. Some of my earliest and fondest experiences have taken place with one of the Elders at our high school, Alex Campbell (his chief's title in Sm'algyax is Sm'oogyit Gitxoon). A hereditary chief of one of the Nine Allied Tribes of Metlakatla and Lax Kw'alaams, he is a busy man

who splits his time between our schools and other district responsibilities. He offers up his time to teach Sm'algyax language and culture classes once a week, and I have attended these classes (I speak more to this in Chapter 4). He has taken my French classes on walks on trails and by waterways, relating the sacred stories of those places (which my students and I discuss in French when back in class). He has come into my classroom and discussed the importance of the land, and the connection between land, culture, and language. I have learned much from him (as have my students), and contact him whenever I have questions concerning protocol, cultural appropriation, and other important matters.

vi. Learning from the Gitga'at Community

An important lesson in Indigenous methodology for generating knowledge occurred when my Master's cohort went to the sacred gathering grounds of the Gitga'at people, Kiel, in 2012. Located southeast of Hartley Bay BC, Kiel has been used as a camp to catch and gather foodstuffs for the Gitga'at people for hundreds of years. We were fortunate to be invited there by a member of our cohort, Cam Hill.

What follows is a journal entry, written in 2012, which speaks to a learning experience I had in Kiel with Cam's sister, Jodi. The cohort had just spent an early morning harvesting sea urchin for an upcoming feast, and Jodi was showing us how to process the urchin:

Figure 10. The sea urchin harvest; Kiel

I really should have worn gloves. My nails and fingertips were stained with purple ink, but I didn't let that stop me from digging my fingers into the sea urchin to scoop out the roe. Thinking I had found a more efficient method of dealing with the spiny urchins than the others were using, I broke the urchin into four parts to have a greater access to the roe rather than maneuvering my hand into a tiny, sharp opening. Quite the innovation, or so I thought.

This was the first time I had gathered sea urchins and I was learning how to process them. We were in Kiel, a traditional and sacred gathering place of the Gitga'at people, located a few hours southeast of Hartley Bay. I was extremely honoured to have been invited with my Masters class to Kiel, where we were applying the educational principals that we were studying (sense of place, community, belonging, connection to the land) to the gathering rituals that are so vitally important to the Gitga'at.

I knew nothing about any sort of gathering when we boarded the boat to gather the urchins at 5:00am, but luckily our host (and cohort member) Cam Hill had been fishing and gathering since he was a small child. He knew where the sea urchins could be found, and what time of day was best to reach them. We saw many, but gathered just a few of the dark purple, spiky creatures.

Back at camp, I watched as Cam's sister Jodi began to process the urchin. She took the handle of a screwdriver and tapped a circle around the bottom of the urchin, and created a hole. She reached into the hole, and scooped out the roe, which she put into a bowl. I watched for a moment or two, then picked up my first urchin.

It's a bit harder than it looks. The sea urchin is spiky, and it's easy to prick one's fingers. And the hole that is created is usually too small for one's hand to reach in easily and maneuver around the roe. After I had done one or two urchins, I came up with the idea that I would break open the urchin into four parts, making the roe much more accessible. I wondered why Jodi hadn't thought of it already.

I broke open the urchin, and before I had the chance to scoop, the roe pulled away from my fingers and became impossible to scoop. Try as I might, I was unable to remove more than a tiny percentage of the roe.

"Jodi, I've ruined this urchin, I'm really sorry. I thought if I broke it into four pieces, it would be easier to get the roe."

"Watch again how I do it, Nancy" Jodi answered. I watched as she repeated her process, which did not include breaking the urchin into pieces. Apparently that causes a reaction which destroys the roe. After watching her again, I mimicked her technique, with great success.

"I'm so sorry I ruined the urchin", I said again. "You must have flinched when you saw me hacking away at it."

"I knew you wouldn't get the result you wanted," she replied. "But making mistakes is an important part of learning."

Of all of the amazing experiences I had during my week at Kiel, her words made the most impact. I contrasted her teaching method with those I have seen in the classroom; rather than tell me what to do, hover over me, correct my mistakes, and have the experience be teacher-centered, she taught by doing, allowed me to join in when I thought I was ready, and permitted me to learn from my mistakes: not only learn the proper way to process sea urchin, but learn that it's ok to do something wrong. There's always the opportunity to watch the lesson again and jump back in when you're ready.

Her methods afforded dignity in the teaching process, and created an experience centered on the student and the subject matter. She motivated me in a way that a dozen workshops could not. When I return to my French classes this fall, I will definitely adopt her methodology in my classroom: model the lesson, allow students to observe until they are ready to try, permit them to discover their own their mistakes, and allow them to try again with no fear of humiliation or sense of failure. In that way, students can feel more of a sense of ownership of the learning process, and allow themselves to enjoy the experience. We may not be gathering urchins, but hopefully we'll get our hands just as messy.

I'm not sure that Jodi was conscious of the fact that she was using Indigenous methodology to teach me how to clean urchin, but after that uplifting experience, I realized that understanding the worldview and epistemologies of Indigenous people would not only help me become a better teacher, but a better person in general.

It's been over ten years since I shared this learning experience with Jodi as a guide, and I have never forgotten it. I appreciated her patient and inclusive teaching methods, and did my best in my classroom to emulate them. Yet it wasn't until I was several years into my doctorate that I was able to fully appreciate her pedagogy and attempted to engage learners in my French classroom in similar ways.

2.2.2. Places

In her work *Decolonizing Education: Nourishing the Learning Spirit* (2013), Marie Battiste writes that it is a difficult job for Indigenous educators to bring Indigenous practices to the attention of non-Indigenous educators, as we need to unlearn what we have been taught by parents and teachers past in order to accept the new realities of decolonization and Indigenized teaching. She stresses that non-Indigenous teachers who wish to teach through an Indigenous lens mustn't simply read articles but must get out onto the land. This advice was invaluable as I developed my relationships with various areas around Prince Rupert, as will be discussed below.

In the course of my learning about Indigenous ways of knowing, as I expanded my circle of Indigenous friends and acquaintances and attended classes and workshops led by Indigenous writers, artists, and educators, I witnessed the extraordinary love, sense of commitment, and deep personal relationship which they felt toward the land. Knowledge of local flora and fauna, of tides, and of the land's history were not only elements of Indigenous ancient history but were a vital and ongoing part of Indigenous present and future. I watched as Elders took Sm'algyax language students in my high school out to learn the sacred stories of the land, to learn about oolichan and salmon by visiting the rivers and ocean, to understand the importance of food plants by going out on trails and picking berries or harvesting Devil's Club for medicinal purposes. Each outing was accompanied by a richness of Sm'algyax language: names for plants, for fish, and for mountains, bodies of water, hills, fields, and trails. While I loved the mountains, forests, and ocean and river access afforded by Prince Rupert, until I witnessed this Indigenous knowledge in action I was unaware of the land's identity as teacher and participant in a set of relationships which involved the natural and the spiritual world (Blenkinsop and Fettes, 2020, p. 1036). I certainly did not consider that I might have a place in this set of relationships. Through my observations of and conversations with Elders and knowledge-keepers, I gradually learned that I would not

be able to Indigenize my classroom authentically if I didn't understand the importance of relationships with the land.

i. The Microsite

I was lucky in that my doctoral program offered opportunities to get out on the land and learn from it; my first experience of this sort was at the beginning of my program through what my professor called the "microsite" assignment. We were asked to choose a small area of land (our "microsite") to visit and get to know over the course of two months. The purpose of this activity, as I understood it, was to develop our senses of observation and appreciation through slow, absorptive learning. It was hoped that we would develop a relationship with the microsite, and perhaps have the site teach us something. Hopefully we might come to appreciate and know the Indigenous concept of relationship to land, and have that relationship inform and guide our spirit, intellect, and ways of knowing. As well, I had hopes that developing a relationship with my microsite would allow me insights into where I was coming from (emotionally, culturally), and how I might find a place for myself in this endeavour to bring together Western and Indigenous ways of teaching and learning into the French class.

I learned quite a bit from this process, as I documented at the time. At first, I was bored at my microsite (a small clearing off of a trail which I like to hike), and a bit resentful at having to be there when it was cold and rainy. I wasn't used to sitting quietly outside and remaining idle for thirty minutes at a time; no book, no electronics, no other person to talk to. But as the days went on, I found myself either better prepared for the weather or caring a bit less about it; I paid attention to the subtle changes of the environment from day to day, the smell and texture of the place, the essence of it. And my mind wandered to aspects of my own personality that I wanted to examine more closely. Here is an excerpt from the daily journal I kept at the time, after five days or so:

> My site feels familiar to me now. I see little changes in the vegetation as the days go by; I don't come here every day, so the changes are discernible. There are more mushrooms now than there were on my first day here. And I'm noticing that I feel completely differently about the site if I'm here in mid-day than if I'm here later in the afternoon, as well as whether I'm here on the weekend or on a school day. For example, when I first searched for the site, it was a school day, but my true Day 1 was on a weekend, not too late in the afternoon. Day 2 was a bit later in the afternoon, but today I'm here closer to dinnertime, and my feelings are different. I feel that I need to "fit this in" before I go home and make dinner;

I feel that it's a bit late to be on the trail (anytime that I've walked the trail in the past, I'm usually done by 4:00 at the latest). So there I was on my damp log, in my rain pants, trying to empty my mind and be in the moment, but I'm very much caught up in my own schedule. Is this important? Should I schedule my visits here more carefully, or should I shift my thinking so that whenever I happen to be here is the appropriate time?

I've been trying really hard to be more in the moment rather than always in the past or the future. It seems that whenever I'm doing something, I'm always thinking about what already happened or what is going to happen. For example, when I'm driving home from school, I usually think about any bright (or dark) part of my day, as well as what I have to do before dinner (shopping, cooking), and whether or not I have the evening off, or I have to work. Seldom do I actually enjoy the ride home. How does this habit manifest itself? Usually by me being impatient with bad drivers.

What would be preferable would be if I could find a way to just be in the moment rather than looking back and looking ahead. I'm lucky to have a car to drive around in, and lucky that I live in the wonderful city of Prince Rupert. I usually see people whom I know when I'm driving, and that's always nice. So why not accept the fact that when I'm driving home, I'm exactly where I should be, doing exactly what I should be doing? No need to rush, no need to try to manage all the future plans of the day into those few moments. The car is a safe and warm place which represents a privileged area of my life for which I should be more actively grateful. My city is beautiful and I love being in it. I shouldn't wish away the time I spend in the car.

I'm going to try to adopt the same attitude when I'm at the microsite. Why should I expect the microsite to entertain me? If I'm fidgety at the site, perhaps it's not the site that needs to change, but me. When I'm at the site, being there is my only job, there is no thinking about what I've done that day, there's no thinking about what I still have to do, but just where I am.

I did break a rule as the days wore on: my son Adam and his partner Vanessa Zahner (Skil Jáada is her Haida name), who lived in Vancouver at the time of this assignment, came over to Prince Rupert for a visit, and I invited them to come with me to the site. I was supposed to go to the site alone, but I was anxious to show my site (and my learning) to Vanessa. The three of us engaged in deep conversation about Indigeneity, land, English place names on Indigenous land, among other topics of mutual interest. Here is an excerpt from my documenting of the experience:

There are certainly many lessons to be learned from this encounter, experienced in a lush setting smelling of earth, cedar, compost, and rain. I think it's possible that if we had been indoors, or in any other non-natural setting, our conversation might have taken a different turn (or might not

have occurred). What was it about this place that encouraged not only the topic, but the tone, cadence, and length of our conversation? It's almost as if the microsite, although relatively silent, was a member of the discussion. When pauses occurred, I let my mind consider the points of view of the others as I breathed in the lush air, listened to the water flowing and felt the cool breeze: Vanessa's interest in the renaming of the site to reflect the Indigeneity of the land; Adam's hesitation to let go of the geographic names he had been used to his entire life. We could have discussed the teachable moment of a settler realizing how it feels to have one's culture disrespected, but our ferns and twigs and swaying branches didn't encourage that sort of smug observation.

Being at the microsite awakened and sharpened our sense of connection to that place. Talking about our views created an interesting amalgamation between our intellect and our senses, but I think that it was in the time that we weren't talking, in those spaces in-between, that we all became lost in the moment and traveled off to another place in our hearts, a very private space. I felt such a sense of connectivity and belonging, sitting on that damp log between my son and his partner, feeling almost as if Nature was wrapping me up inside of herself. I'm feeling really fortunate that this place exists, and that I'm here and open to however it wants to manifest itself. I hoped that Adam felt the same way; that he should feel a sense of belonging in every place he honours and respects, no matter what label we put on the sign. Perhaps that's more a lesson for me.

I speak more to the lesson I learned from the microsite in Chapter 4: The Classroom Story.

Figure 11. Adam and Vanessa join me at the microsite

ii. Butze Rapids Trail

Butze Rapids Trail is a popular hiking spot in our area. In my journal entry from 2016 I write of how the forest floor and the trail itself act as mentors for me, guiding me to reach out to others for assistance and understanding, and inspire me on an artistic level:

> A mere stone's throw east of Prince Rupert along Highway 16 is the Butze Rapids Trail, a beautifully developed and much-loved 5.5k looped hiking trail composed of inclines, declines, and sprawling flat surfaces. "This trail will take you through mystical old-growth forests, coastal wetlands and fascinating forest bogs, which Prince Rupert is known for the world over" according to one of many websites devoted to this area of the world.[19] It offers a sampling of forest, water, and mountain. As I walk along the trail random students jog by, in training or just enjoying the physical activity, waving and calling out a greeting. Accented tourists comment on the profusion of huckleberries and "raspberries" (I delight in telling them: "They're actually salmonberries, with a long cultural history in this part of the world"), and ask me the time of day when the rapids best display themselves. Groups of hikers with dogs (usually Labs or Retrievers) laugh and apologize as their pets leave smudgy nose prints, slobber, and mud on my clothing before leaping away to find the next adventure, running and barking as their owners call out to them in a half-hearted way, not really expecting their pets to obey. I laugh and wave, smelling now of wet dog, but happier for the interaction.
>
> The trail is a wonderful place to go with friends, and it's fun to run into other people who are also enjoying the scenery and fresh air. But oftentimes I'm looking for something a little different when I head out to Butze. I don't always need to be energized by the company of others, but by the presence of nature, culture, and history.
>
> The best time to walk the Butze Trail if you want to see the rapids in all their glory, is between high and low tide. As the rapids are in fact a part of the ocean, they reverse their direction at Fern Passage due to the tidal action around Kaien Island, and are an incredible sight to behold. Perhaps that's why there are so many people on the trail between high and low tide. But if one wants a bit more of a private experience, early morning is best.
>
> The weather is often foggy, cloudy, or rainy at that time of day, and the trail can be quite damp and chilly. The declines can get slippery, and I'm grateful for my unattractive yet practical heavy-tread shoes. Physics is defied as I'm both hot and cold at the same time. Yet there is a connection to the land, the ocean, the mountains that I feel when hiking alone on Butze Trail in the morning; bugs and hikers not yet awake, eagles complaining loudly as they're chased and bullied by the ravens, spider webs covered in rain and dew like shimmering wet dreamwheels. With no one to chat with,

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[19] http://www.trailpeak.com/trail-Butze-Rapids-trail-near-Prince-Rupert-BC-2571

run into, no one's dog to pet, and certainly no music to listen to, I find myself more open to my surroundings and my relationship with the trees, wildlife, water, and mountain. I pass a tree that looks like a Tolkien nightmare: part tree trunk, part J-branch curving out like an arm waving hello, the tree is at a 45 degree angle to the trail and has what seems like acres of squid-like roots sprawling out, ready to wrap around the unsuspecting leg of an interloper. I wonder, what has happened to this tree? Did it fall over in a storm, then adapt to its new position? Is it culturally modified? There is no signpost, website, or book which mentions its story, so I'll never know.

I'm distracted by a massive growth of huckleberries, and as I move through their growth I bump a branch and receive a deluge of hidden rainwater from the overhang above. The huckleberries are worth it, although the first couple of berries are a little more bitter than I remember. My mouth has to acclimatize to the taste of huckleberries; "if you can't handle huckleberries, stick with raspberries" my son once told me with a scoff. Challenge accepted. I pick a handful and eat them, proud of the stains that are now covering my fingers. I snap a picture of my hand and send it to my son. I wonder how many generations of people have picked huckleberries from this area, from this particular bush or its descendants? Were huckleberries as prized by the indigenous peoples as were salmonberries? I'm not sure.

I have lots of questions when I walk Butze Trail. For example, there are plenty of signposts explaining various flora, fauna, and sea life, but most of them are so faded that they can't be read. Why aren't these signs replaced? I also wonder, as I read the signposts that are still legible, why there is no mention of Ts'msyen adaawx? There are explanations of the rapids, explanations of the topography of the trail, even an explanation of the bizarre name of the trail. There is a small mention of culturally modified trees, but their location is not indicated and there is no signage identifying the trees, and there are two mentions of the Ts'msyen people, but not any meaningful information. Where is this signage? Where is the culturally and historically appropriate name for the trail? Where are the adaawx?

Through my experiences on the Butze Rapids trail, I felt a sense of place; despite the fact that I am a settler on Indigenous land, I felt a sense of home that's tinged with reverence and a deep sense of gratitude that I have access to such a beautiful and culturally meaningful place. Having reflected in a calm manner over a period of time, I gained the hope that I could conduct my work in a meaningful way.

These experiences led to an evolution in my understanding of the importance of our connection to the land, and this evolution had a major impact on my teaching, and indeed my overall outlook on life. On one level, my experiences at the microsite and Butze Rapids trail changed how I physically interacted with my classroom: wanting to bring elements of the land into this learning space, I have decorated it with potted plants, vines, sea shells, and driftwood. Yet they also led to a deeper, philosophical and

fundamental realignment of my approach to teaching. Little by little, I came to see connection to the land as a vital aspect of creating a more complete, holistic teaching experience for my students; one which includes not just book learning, but an understanding of the land is a co-teacher and a central part of education (Blenkinsop and Fettes, 2020). That means not limiting ourselves to classroom decorations, but to go out trail-walking, to spend time at our longhouse museum, and whenever possible to take part in walks with Elders who can tell them the sacred stories that are associated with the very ground on which they stand.

2.2.3. An Additional Note

As I look back on this chapter at the people, written resources, and places which influenced my research, I see that what I've written here represents a small sliver of the materials I've studied. However, listed here are the resources which have most deeply influenced me and had a lasting impact on my work. You will hear more about Alex Campbell, Vanessa Zahner and many of the authors listed above in my chapter about my experiences with my students over the three-month duration of this study; I will be relating how their words directly influenced not only what I taught, but how I taught it.

Chapter 3. My Classroom as a Site of Inquiry

3.1. My History of Inquiry: The Network of Inquiry and Indigenous Education and other Learning Experiences

I have a long history with classroom inquiry. Before becoming a teacher, however, I considered the concept of "research" in only a quantitative way. Initially, the only form of inquiry I was familiar with was one gained from high school science classes: that of observation, development of a hypothesis, and the proving or disproving of that hypothesis. Later, at university, qualitative research was not taught or discussed in my undergraduate degree (English literature). Our assigned essays were either based on pure research or an expression of a personal opinion which could be backed up by the research of others. As I came to learn, none of these forms of research aiming at objective, generalizable truth suit the subjective and evolving nature of a self-inquiry grounded into one's own classroom practice.

As I progressed through my teaching career, I wanted to examine my practice in a deliberate way so that I could improve my teaching and create a more fun and positive learning environment for my students. In 2008 I put together a personal inquiry on the use of metacognition in the core French classroom (Grades 8-11) which I presented to my administration at the end of the school year. My inquiry question revolved around the use of metacognitive strategies and whether the awareness and use of them might have an effect on student completion of projects and their willingness to tackle a difficult concept rather than shy away from it with a "Je ne sais pas." The inquiry was useful to me on several levels (helping my students, consolidating my own thoughts, and keeping my administrators in the loop as to what was happening in my classroom), but more importantly, it helped me see that using scientific method for classroom inquiry wasn't the most useful approach for my purpose, just as the format of my inquiry question (yes/no) did not yield useful responses. During this initial inquiry, I would wonder whether and how a particular teaching method was successful or not, and report on my observations. There wasn't much emphasis on the process of the inquiry, just the results, and I have to wonder as to the validity of those results, as I didn't "present the results to others to understand the experience of a common phenomenon" (Fusch,

Fusch, & Ness, 1989, p. 20). This form of inquiry proved limited for my self-development, and lacked the richness and depth I needed to improve my practice.

Some of those limitations came from working alone as opposed to conducting inquiry with a group. Having no one to discuss ideas with and learn from, I was working in a vacuum without the benefit of the creativity and critiques of my peers. Much later, reading up on the "qualitative turn" in educational research, I learned that this type of collaboration (when practitioners work together) is sometimes called *investigator triangulation* (Fusch, Fusch, & Ness, 2018), and is one of several approaches employed by qualitative researchers to guard against personal bias and enrich their understanding. Others include conducting research across several groups of participants, such as students in different classrooms (*data triangulation*), using different methods to collect data (*methodological triangulation*), or exploring several different hypotheses in regard to the same research (*theory triangulation*) (Fusch, Fusch, & Ness, 2018). I will speak more to methodological triangulation at various points in the coming chapters, but for now I will just acknowledge that engaging in inquiry with colleagues would have made my early forays into classroom research more meaningful and well-founded.

My first experiences in conducting inquiry with a team came about through my decision, in 2009, to join the Network of Performance-Based Schools (NPBS), a supportive organization for those wishing to enter into the world of teacher inquiry, or continue on as seasoned researchers/ practitioners (Halbert and Kaser, 2013). The Network (subsequently renamed as *The Network of Innovation and Inquiry* and then *The Network of Inquiry and Indigenous Education (NOIIE)*, its current form) is active throughout BC; it depends upon the work of volunteers who act as regional directors; these directors reach out each year to their local school districts, encouraging interested educators to participate in the Network by developing an inquiry in their particular school context and applying for funding to cover substitute teacher costs when team members attend regional meetings. Working with the Network was my first exposure to the methodologies of practitioner inquiry and action research which I would later draw on in my doctoral studies. Over time, the Network came to place increasing emphasis on transformational change involving Indigenous learners; one researcher has described it as a powerful means of creating "cultures of innovation that decolonize education spaces in schools" (McGregor, 2014, p. 103).

The Network uses this concise graphic known as the “Spiral of Inquiry” to summarize the process for teams of teachers to follow in planning and conducting their research:

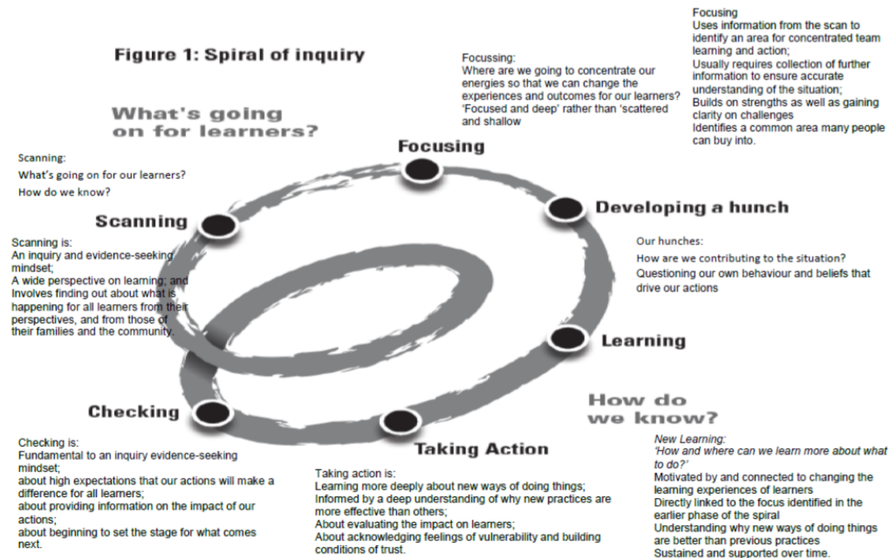


Figure 12. The Network's Spiral of Inquiry

I have participated in Network inquiry projects almost every year since 2009, taking a year off here and there to accommodate other studies (such as my Master’s and Doctoral programs). This extended experience has changed how I see myself as an educator. Over the years my understanding of classroom inquiry and the value of teamwork have developed, and both served me well during the writing of this thesis. I’m very grateful to NOIIE, as it was through them that I learned that inquiry isn’t linear, but iterative; that methodologies aren’t set in stone but can be revisited and refined; and that the best teacher inquiry involves contributions and feedback from other people.

My NOIIE teams have explored many questions over the years, including:

> “Will increasing our awareness of diverse student levels of comprehension and engagement using strategies such as aboriginal cognitive tools and differentiated instruction improve student investment in their own learning?”
>
> “What will happen if teachers purposefully encourage and support self-efficacy and self-advocacy in the classroom and the school?”

Our inquiry of 2018 stands in my memory as the most successful and creative. For this particular study, my peers and I decided to form a club and encourage as many

staff and administrators as possible to join in the research and celebration, at whatever level of commitment suited them. Our peer Donna, a Tahltan educator, suggested the name "Sugiygyet" for our club, which translates to "new generation". Our qualitative inquiry proposal submitted to NOIIE took the form of a statement rather than that of a question and read*: "This inquiry will investigate the process of creating a decolonized teacher, and the evolution of the spirit and mind in the decolonizing journey."* We spoke to staff members to gauge their comfort level with the integration of Indigenous content into their lessons, put up displays, and sent out emails and newsletters to our staff on a regular basis. Our research investigation coincided with the adoption of the new BC Curriculum, in which the recognition of Indigeneity was emphasized (see Chapter 2), so we felt that exploring educators' beliefs and practices around the Indigenization of the curriculum would be both timely and useful for all.

In May of 2019 we presented our findings using a tent and campfire (using lights and tissue paper as we were inside of an auditorium) as a metaphor for our land-based teaching, complete with camping chairs and small tables for coffee and tea. It was a very fulfilling project which made our group aware of our own learning process in our decolonizing effort and encouraged us to keep asking ourselves: "How can we use this learning to further ourselves on the decolonization journey? Are we in the position to help others, and if so, what would that help look like?"

I learned a great deal from this study, not only about my own decolonization efforts, but about what my peers were experiencing in their own journey. Through our surveys and questionnaires to staff I learned that many teachers felt intimidated at the thought of Indigenizing their curriculum and were wary of any group (including mine) that was trying to "push" anything upon them. Through conversations in the staff room and hallway I learned that many teachers felt they would consider Indigenous content and ways of teaching only if they had the time; if they were busy or behind in their work, they felt more inclined to switch back into more traditional, Western methods as they were more familiar to them. I also learned through our staffroom displays and email updates to staff that many teachers felt that the Indigenizing of the classroom was something that "we," Sugigyet, were doing, rather than a model for teachers to observe and adapt for their own classrooms. We did not receive the support we hoped for our project from the staff. Nevertheless, the study was still very valuable for our team. In our discussions after our presentation, we reminded ourselves that the process of decolonization is slow

and personal, although we had expected that our enthusiasm would spur on others, notably with our staff colleagues. Enthusiasm isn't always as inspiring as one might hope, especially when one's audience includes educators who feel overwhelmed and overworked.

So why did I experience this study as "very fulfilling"? The process demanded collaboration, and all of the listening and compromise which a good collaboration requires; it was a journey of creativity in which our learning shaped into meaningful metaphors (such as a campsite to represent our learning and being visitors on the land); as an "evolution of spirit and mind", the study encouraged us to open our hearts to the spirituality of Ts'msyen culture, and be touched and changed by it. In the years which followed this study, I saw that we had all indeed grown: our relationships with each other in and outside the school were deepened, our excitement in sharing information had been rekindled, and a true sense of community was formed between us. We shared articles, websites, and Twitter feeds with each other and members of the staff (through email blasts), and we volunteered to work together in other projects which came up as time passed.

I was in my doctoral program when I was part of this NOIIE team, and there was a fair amount of overlap between my university studies and the process of conducting this high school inquiry. I was grateful that I was able to enter this NOIIE inquiry with some experience in Indigenization and with having done some deep soul-searching as to my role as settler-ally. The journey which I had begun in my doctorate helped me to be a better team member: more patient, more interested in listening, and less concerned to put myself at the centre of the study. I had been slowly learning to work through my ignorance of Indigenous oppression in Canada, and to get past the stage of wanting and needing to control the "ownership" of knowledge. When my NOIIE team began this inquiry, I was ready to listen and learn, to collaborate and reflect, and to continue to work through my own ignorance.

3.2. Refining, Expanding, Defining

There's a reason why I participated in NOIIE for so many years: not only did I enjoy the process, but that sort of inquiry fell naturally into the scope of teaching, and provided results which were an accurate representation of what happened in my

classroom. These deep, introspective dives into my teaching pedagogies and how those pedagogies affected student learning were invaluable for both me and for my students. As my inquiry journeys unfolded, I found that NOIIE's inquiry framework prompted me to closely examine my own personal narrative to uncover my own biases and long-held beliefs (Samaras, 2011). In retrospect, I can see that my doctoral journey along with my work with NOIIE were both pushing me in the same direction of personal and professional growth (Shagoury and Power, 2012). Critically examining my own actions helps me discover why some of the lessons I design and teach are successful while some aren't, and helps me realize the importance of making "mistakes", and how to interpret them as steps in growth.

Eventually, my doctoral studies led me to read more extensively about the value of this form of teacher or practitioner inquiry (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 2009; Shagoury and Power, 2012; Samaras, 2011) as well as the nature of action research (Klein, 2012; Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 2009). One of the insights that struck me was that the most powerful understandings and applications of the inquiry process come about through one's own questionings and refinements. For example, when I began this doctoral thesis, I still had in my mind the idea that imbuing Indigeneity in the core French classroom could have measurable effects on my school and perhaps even my entire community. I had hopes of including the input and participation of Elders and other Indigenous knowledge-keepers, and of involving the families of my students as co-participants in this inquiry. Hoping to initiate significant change in beliefs, positionalities, and practice, I thus initially envisioned a collaborative participatory action research as a framework to carry out my study.

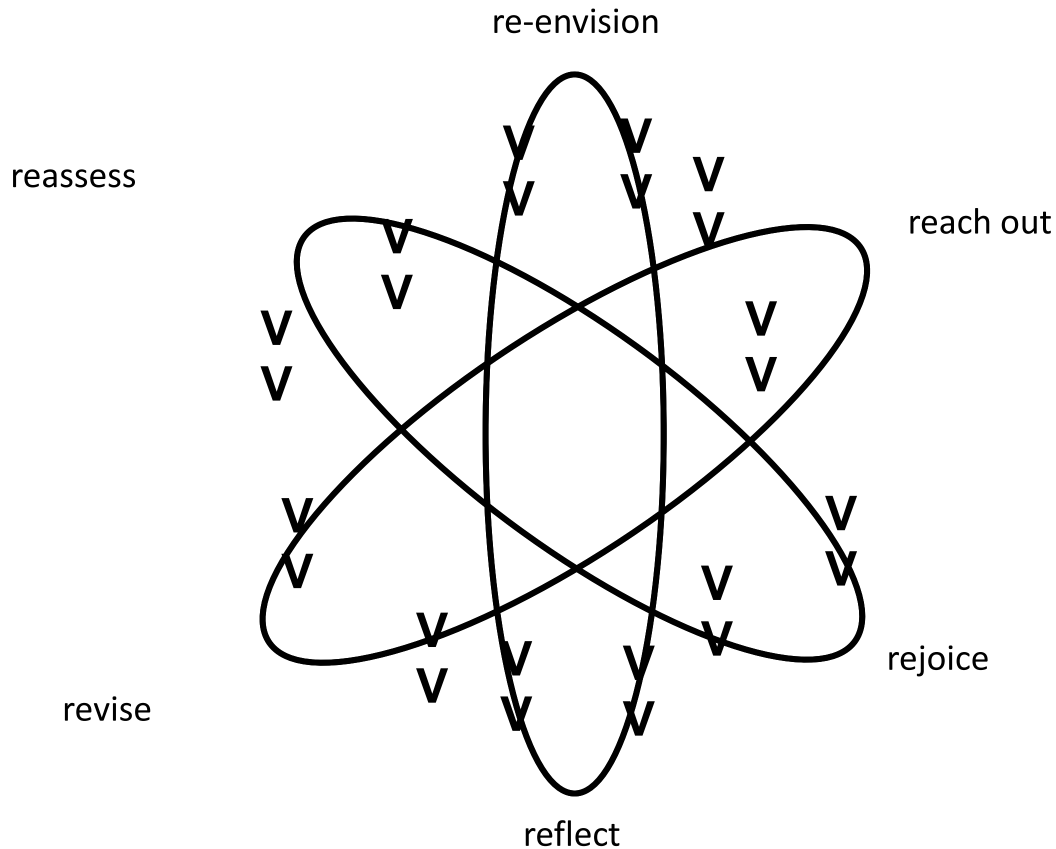
However, through my reading, I realized that inclusive engagement with an alliance of many stakeholders involves a sustained inquiry, long months of dialogue and collaboration, and trust-building, in order to implement change (in curriculum design, school practices, etc.) (Klein, 2012; Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 2009; Carinhas et al., 2023, 2020). As I worked through my proposal, I found that an action research lens was not necessarily the one most suited to my situation and my purposes. First and foremost, I wanted to learn about myself and my practice, and self-reflect on my journey towards a decolonizing approach to teaching and learning. This would require me to situate myself by describing where I had come from (geographically, culturally, and socially), to work to understand the shifts in my mindset and my worldviews and how

they had started even before I began this doctoral inquiry, and in fact, to understand why I chose to engage into this doctoral inquiry in the first place.   These realizations came about in part through my engagement with the Indigenous and decolonizing literature described in Chapter 2, which clarified why it is important to deeply examine one's own motivations and biases in order to truly engage in a decolonization process in education. Thus, after some deep thinking and reading, I realized that the practitioner inquiry process was much better suited to my purposes and needs than action research, supporting me to examine my own assumptions and develop local knowledge by posing questions and reflecting deeply (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009, p. 40). Practitioner inquiry allows a deepened relationship between self and the research, and that was the sort of inquiry which was calling to me.

Self-study, which involves both reflective and reflexive teaching (Dinkelman, 2003), is an important element of practitioner inquiry as it focuses on both the personal and the professional development of the practitioner. Self-study can "disrupt normalized assumptions" about what constitutes valuable knowledge (Lyle, 2018), and encourage practitioners to expose their judgments and actions to the vulnerability of critique from peers and the academic community (White & Jarvis, 2019). While the "self" in self-study might suggest an individual process of reflection, Bullock & Bullock (2022) see critical friends as providing "a useful framework for thinking about how we navigate and negotiate our shared understanding of our collaborative work…. [E]ach one...helps to make intelligible what is not necessarily and make visible the invisible in each other's reflective practice" (p. 101). I didn't realize this at the time, but my inquiry projects undertaken through NOIIE held elements of self-study, in that "others' perspectives [were] critical to developing knowledge informed by personal experience" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009, p. 45); perspectives of my own team were vital to the inquiry questions, as were the perspectives offered by our audiences both locally and regionally as we presented our yearly findings.

After being involved in NOIIE for a number of years while studying my Master's and doctoral programs, I realized that NOIIE's spiral of inquiry might be adapted to include the personal nature and importance of self-study in practitioner inquiry.   Wrong turns can sometimes be the most interesting part of a journey; one can get "pleasantly lost", as my mother used to say, in the false starts and changes of mind of an inquiry such as this, and those events should not be seen as failures or excluded from the

study. So rather than use a spiral, I developed the following shape to indicate the nature of inquiry I aimed to engage in:



I've nicknamed it my "Metacognitive Superhighway", with my intentions being that each of the "arms" of the graphic are to be seen as bi-directional off-ramps which the teacher researcher can visit at any time during the inquiry process. This graphic differs from the NOIIE Spiral in that one doesn't need to start with any particular stage, as each element can be implemented at any point in the inquiry process. For example, I could begin my inquiry process by reaching out to another teacher, Elder, or administrator for guidance, or I might reach out after reassessing my inquiry and re-envisioning my course of action. I could reflect on my current practice to see what might be changed, or reflect upon the changes brought about by my inquiry to determine their effectiveness. Re-envisioning can, as well, be used at the start, or at any point during the inquiry. And of course, rejoicing takes place at most if not all stages.

One of the reasons why this graphic fits my view of teaching, learning, and researching is that it supports the idea that these are continual, iterative and evolving processes. I might have felt at one point that once I had researched something and written about it, I could close the book on that aspect of my education and move on to something else, but as my practice evolved and I developed the habit of self-study, I realized that there is no aspect of learning that I can consider “finished”; rather, learning builds upon itself to create further opportunities for deeper understandings. It brings to mind conversations I have had with two Ts’msyen Elders, Smooygit Gitxoon Alex Campbell and Lawilwel Ben Spencer, in which they described their experiences with students or young apprentices which are designed to pass on their knowledge and guide deeper understandings and learnings. Learning is ever evolving and continues on.

I keep a copy of this “metacognitive superhighway” graphic on the corkboard in my home office, (alongside Kelli’s five posters) to remind me that every step along the journey, be it sure-footed or unsteady, is an important part of the process. If my thinking or my actions at any point weren’t conducive to student well-being or didn’t move me through my data collection properly, I would take the time to reflect, perhaps reach out for guidance, re-envision what my goals were, reassess my methods, and revise my plan. Thus, I might enhance my sense of personal and professional identity through continued learning and reflection upon my practice (Bullock & Bullock, 2020).

My history with inquiry, both independent, through NOIIE, and through agencies such as my PSA and school districts around British Columbia, prepared and motivated me to transform my cohort member’s question of “how do you sleep at night” when teaching French on Indigenous land into a constructive teacher research topic of bringing Indigenous ways of knowing and content into the French classroom. How comforting it was knowing that any wrong turns I took in my research could be reflected upon and embraced as part of my learning process, and that my research wasn’t designed to produce a product, but to explain and reflect on my experiences (and those of my students) in a sincere and authentic way.

How did my “inquiry evolution” affect my approach to my research question? The largest impact that NOIIE-based and practitioner inquiry had was on how I thought about curating Indigenous materials for my Grade 9 class for this inquiry, and how I understood the process of imbuing my teaching with Indigenous ways of knowing. Having

conducted a few inquiry questions before beginning my doctoral program, I knew that there would be room for me to ask a lot of questions, provide feedback to the interested parties, and change course if needed, and that this would all be part of the process. Understanding the nature of practitioner inquiry also allowed my own history to play a role in the research process, and document my decolonization journey as important context for the formation and execution of the inquiry question. I received support and guidance from Wap Sigatgyet throughout the entire thesis process; they gave me a sense of direction as far as authentic content was concerned, as well as inspiration as to how Indigenous ways of knowing (such as those outlined in the First Peoples Principles of Learning) could be interpreted and adapted for the second language classroom. I can't help but feel that if I had not already understood my own place in my research and inquiry, I might have been asked to do a little introspection before requesting direction. I hope that the staff at my school realized that I had begun the work of situating myself on Indigenous land and in the important work of decolonizing a classroom, and thus trusted me to use their counsel and resources appropriately. I am looking forward to presenting my collaboration with our Indigenous Education department in the next chapter, and how vital their input was to this inquiry.

Let us move now from the general to the particular, and discuss the environment of my specific inquiry: my city, my high school and my French classroom. As we move through descriptions of Prince Rupert, Charles Hays Secondary School, and Room 307, we will discover the complex nature of the relationships between these three environments, and how I could find useful patterns to inform my inquiry in the area of Indigeneity.

3.3. My City, My School, My Classroom

I am fortunate to live and teach in Prince Rupert, in northwestern British Columbia. It is a place of spectacular natural beauty, with snow-capped mountains rising from the ocean. The rain forest is lush and full of life. As a port city, we are home to a diverse a variety of communities, all of whom weave their own patterns into the tapestry that is our city.

But we are not merely a multicultural city among a number of other multicultural cities in Canada. As of 2016, Prince Rupert boasted 11,733 inhabitants, 38% of them of

Indigenous heritage. According to the Law Foundation of British Columbia's *Diversity Profile of British Columbia*, that's the largest population concentration of Indigenous people of any city in BC.[20] Our downtown and our schools sit under the watchful eyes of numerous crest poles, and there are copious numbers of Indigenous murals gracing external walls around the city. Each February, Prince Rupert hosts the All Native Basketball Tournament, a huge basketball competition attended by Indigenous basketball teams from Vancouver Island to Alaska. The All Native Basketball Tournament is the largest basketball competition in British Columbia and the largest Indigenous cultural event in Canada. The opening and closing ceremonies feature beautiful ceremonies of Indigenous dancing in full regalia, and much of the city's population attend to watch the games and participate in the festivities.

Although the percentage of those who identify as Indigenous in Prince Rupert is 38%, the number of Indigenous students in our schools (elementary, middle school, and two high schools) far exceeds this number: according to the Ministry of Education's published district reports, 65% of students in Prince Rupert schools are Indigenous.[21]

Also of note is that over 12% of Prince Rupert's population is of Asian background, including such countries of origin (but not limited to) China, Japan, Vietnam, India, Iran, Pakistan, Hong Kong and the Philippines.[22] The rest of our population originates primarily from European countries. People of European descent are definitely in the minority in Prince Rupert; this is reflected in the demographics of my high school, Charles Hays Secondary School (CHSS), as 55% percent of students identify as Indigenous, be they members of the Ts'msyen Nation, or members of the neighbouring Haisla, Haida, or Nisga'a Nations.[23]

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[20] (n.d.). *Diversity Profile of British Columbia*. Diversity Profile of British Columbia. https://www.lawfoundationbc.org/wp-content/uploads/Diversity-Profile-November-2014.pdf

[21] (n.d.). *Prince Rupert (52) Contextual Information*. Student Success: Government of BC. https://studentsuccess.gov.bc.ca/school-district/052/report/contextual-information

[22] (n.d.). *Statistics Canada*. Census Profile, 2016. https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=POPC&Code1=0680&Geo2=PR&Code2=59&SearchText=Prince%20Rupert&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=All&GeoLevel=PR&GeoCode=0680&TABID=1&type=0

[23](n.d.). *Student Success: Government of BC*. Charles Hays Secondary: Contextual Information. https://studentsuccess.gov.bc.ca/school/05252018/report/contextual-information

As with most schools, CHSS's school culture is heavily influenced by student achievement and interests as much as by cultural backgrounds. Our outstanding basketball teams (the various junior and senior Rainmakers) are well-known around the province, and our basketball coaches are held in very high regard by students, parents, teachers, and administration alike. We have as well a much-loved drama department which puts on successful student musicals each year for the community. So "sports culture" and "drama culture" are important and powerful uniting forces in the school. As well, there's a math club, an e-sports club, a book club, a debate club, and a very active and inclusive Gay/Straight Alliance group, to name but a few.[24] Although CHSS is by no means perfect, our students not only tolerate but encourage exploration and expression of identity in themselves and in others.

In such a diverse community, there are of course many intersections and overlaps in people's sense of identity, including our high school students who have part time jobs, diverse academic strengths, and varying interests. While CHSS supports the wide variety of activities available to students, their commitment to the Indigeneity of our land and population over the last decade or so has been illustrated in many ways. Most obvious to visitors to our school is the Indigenous art decorating our hallways: in our foyer is a tiled design of a mother Raven and her child to commemorate the children lost to residential schools; this piece of art was guided by an Indigenous artist and created by students. There is also a large carved mask and wooden poppies in the same display; again, created by students and guided by Haida and Nisga'a artist Jason Watts. In our library is a carved talking-stick done by students and led by an Indigenous artist, and we expect a crest pole carved by Ts'msyen artist Russell Mather to be erected at the entrance to the library in May, 2023.

As well, the administration at CHSS has been involved in their own inquiry project with NOIIE for the last few years and has invited teachers from both the middle school and our own school to participate. Interested in observing the effect a "learning feast" might have on Grade 8 students entering our school for their Grade 9 year, our administration, the administration of our middle school, and our Indigenous Education

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[24] (n.d.). *Charles Hays Secondary*. Charles Hays Secondary: Teams and Clubs. https://chss.rupertschools.ca/index.php/teams-clubs/

department created an inquiry question to address the strains and anxiety related to the transition from middle school to high school, and how those might be mitigated by an invitation to a learning feast at our school each June.

I played a very small peripheral role in this inquiry, and we held our first learning feast (Luulgit in Sm'algyax) in 2018. Students from the middle school walked over to our school and entered into our Multipurpose Room one by one, announced in Sm'algyax by a "barker" (one of the high school Sm'algyax students). The students sat at tables decorated with crests and fresh cedar, as well as colourful placemats created by various high school classes (including mine). They were served homemade soup and buns (from our Foods classes) after being welcomed to the school by one of our district's Elders. Each table of students had a high school volunteer sitting with them in order to ease their nervousness (or manage their excitement), and at the end of the feast each student was given a homemade gift (a necklace, bracelet, a beaded item, or a circle of cedar with a design stamped on it, for example). These gifts were made by high school students from a variety of classes from the English, Socials, and Languages departments.

The Learning Feast is a wonderful experience for all involved. Months before it is to take place, meetings are called to which all teachers are invited, and we are all encouraged to participate in any way we can. Teachers encourage their students to create the placemats as well as create the gifts and act as "table buddies"; in this way the ownership of the day is spread to a wide number of people.

CHSS has many other examples of commitment to reconciliation and Indigenization that can be seen on a school-wide level, such as the recent formation of a Truth and Reconciliation Committee which oversees the commemoration of National Truth and Reconciliation Day on September 30 of each year, Indigenous Veteran's Day on November 8, Red Dress Day on May 5, and National Indigenous People's Day on June 21. I am part of this committee and have volunteered to paint windows with appropriate designs for the occasion, make announcements over the PA system for school-wide observances, and facilitate the display of red or orange clothing. My school is very diligent in their support of Indigenous students and their learning, as well as in their acknowledgement of Ts'msyen unceded territory, and in their support of Indigenous learning on our Professional Development days. But they cannot control what goes on

in our classrooms, and the level at which individual teachers embrace Indigenous content and ways of knowing. That responsibility is up to the teacher themselves, and it is an individual choice to what extent one's curriculum is Indigenized or decolonized, the method by which this is done, or whether it is done at all.

The study of Indigenous language plays an important role in my school district. Since its formation in 1997, the Ts'msyen Sm'algyax Language Authority (a group of Ts'msyen Elders and fluent speakers) has worked with our Indigenous Education department to bring a district-initiated (and Ministry of Education approved) Kindergarten to Grade 9 Sm'algyax language and culture curriculum to our schools.[25] But their dreams and efforts did not end with secondary school Sm'algyax instruction. In 2005 a pilot project was put into effect by our district to have Sm'algyax speakers come into elementary classrooms (Kindergarten to Grade 4) for a short while, once or twice a week, to initiate children to the language through games and songs. Then in 2015 funding was made available so that all elementary schools in our district were required to teach Sm'algyax to all students, from Kindergarten to grade 4. This involved Sm'algyax speakers (approved by the Language Authority) visiting elementary classrooms for 45 minutes each week. [26]

The Sm'algyax classroom at my high school is a vibrant, busy place. Our Sm'algyax language and culture teacher, Tina Robinson, offers a specialized curriculum which directly links language acquisition to traditional Ts'msyen culture and land-based experiences. For example, her class learns about sacred medicines and traditional foods by hiking a local trail to collect plants to make into tea or salves. They learn about traditional North coast foods such as the tiny smelts (oolichans) (which run up the Skeena and Nass Rivers in the thousands and have been harvested by local Nations for hundreds of years) not through books or videos but by visiting the river with Tina and a Ts'msyen Elder to net the fish themselves, then cook it in class and eat it. They have built drying racks for halibut and displayed the drying fish down in the foyer of our school, and have walked with Elders by the waterfront to learn the sacred stories of that area and hear tales of the Salmon Prince. The teaching and learning which takes place

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[25](n.d.). *Ts'msyen Sm'algyax Language Authority*. About Us. https://www.smalgyax.ca/about_us

[26] (n.d.). *The Abbotsford News*. Part I: How Prince Rupert Schools Teach Indigenous Language to Hundreds of Students. https://www.abbynews.com/community/part-i-how-prince-rupert-schools-teach-indigenous-language-to-hundreds-of-students/

between Tina and her students is a wonderful example of community and land-based practice—an approach which "decentres the academy [in this case, our high school] as the primary site of knowledge production and dissemination" (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018). I have been fortunate to participate in this learning, as Tina generously invites all teachers and their classes to accompany her on these adventures. If we are unable to attend, she shares with us what was learnt that day, and how students interacted with the material, and shows us pictures. Below are some photos of Tina's classroom, and the colourful displays of Sm'algyax language and Ts'msyen culture.

Figure 13. Tina's Classroom

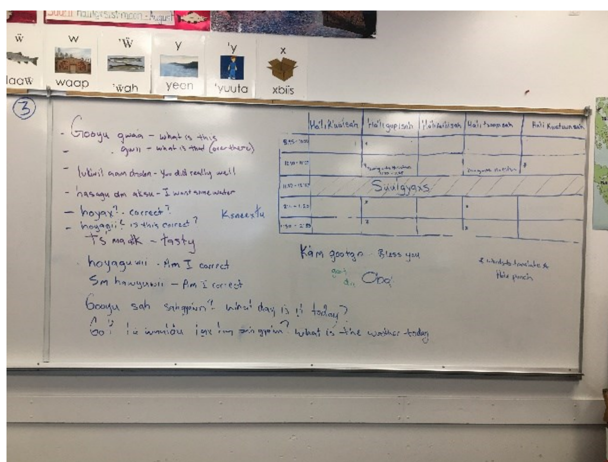

Figure 14. Tina's work on the board

Figure 15. Sm'algyax phonetics in Tina's classroom

There is some overlap in pedagogy between the Sm'algyax and core French classrooms, in that both involve a fair amount of instruction in English, especially at the beginning of a term. Students in either classroom have a varying level of comfort with the target language, and are taught throughout the term to use their vocabulary and grammar in a communicative, experiential way, supported by a richness of context. For example, Sm'algyax students will learn vocabulary about their clans, crests, and village of origin (or their family's village of origin) through the context of welcoming people to the land and introducing themselves at important events (such as graduation ceremonies or potlatches). In the same manner, French students will learn vocabulary and grammar about ecology, for example, and use it to teach the "Trois R's" to younger students through plays and skits, or will do an ocean cleanup and talk or write about it in French.

The overlap between the two classes can extend beyond pedagogy, however. I am asked each year to emcee our school's graduation ceremony, which includes welcoming parents and other guests to the Performing Arts Centre and thanking them for their attendance. When I was first invited to perform this role five or six years ago, I felt it appropriate to honour the fact that our school supports three languages. I asked Sm'oogyit Gitxoon if he would help me with my pronunciation. He kindly obliged, and each year I have endeavoured to improve my use of Sm'algyax out of respect for Ts'msyen language and culture.

In May of 2022, Tina suggested that her students help me in my endeavours. She invited me into both her morning and afternoon classes, supplied a podium, and encouraged me to rehearse my opening address in front of her students so that they could correct my accent and intonation. I went into her classroom to practice twice a day for five days, each day improving slightly, so that by the end of the week the students were clapping and congratulating my improvements. Their attitude toward the French teacher coming into the classroom to speak Sm'algyax quickly moved from confusion and discomfort at the beginning of the week to relaxation and camaraderie (I as well started to be less nervous after our first session together). Their attention to my efforts and their thoughtful guidance to help improve my skills in the language created an atmosphere of trust and collaborative learning. When I gave the address the next week at the graduation ceremonies, several of her students congratulated me for my efforts and achievements. I was pleased with their praise, but primarily humbled by the experience and in awe of the educational experiences we had just shared. By taking ownership of their knowledge of Sm'algyax and becoming teachers in turn, they were given agency and pride in their culture and in their own expertise. This shared learning space supported the formation and strengthening of relationships. Students realized that when Madame Griffith-Zahner needs help with Sm'algyax (or other aspects of Ts'msyen culture), she would seek their help for guidance.

I didn't fully realize the importance of having a vibrant Sm'algyax program and a welcoming language teacher in our school until Tina came to teach with us. Her work is, of course, very important for the Ts'msyen students in our school, as well as any other students who take her classes. But her influences stretch beyond her classroom, and beyond her students. She mediates a safe space for teachers like me to walk the path toward reconciliation and decolonization, both as the challenging process of going inward and gain pedagogical clarity into how I (we) can reproduce and/or disrupt power structures in our classroom teaching. This journey can be difficult and intimidating; no one likes making mistakes, especially if those mistakes might cause offense to Elders or other members of the Ts'msyen community, or perhaps showcase one's lack of cultural or historical knowledge of Indigenous matters (Côté, 2019). Tina's management of the Sm'algyax program not only inspires place-based teaching and appreciation of Ts'msyen culture, but also provides numerous opportunities for all teachers to embrace their decolonization journey in an authentic and meaningful way. On numerous occasions I

have discussed my work with her, and my belief that French instruction on unceded Indigenous land should support that land's Indigeneity. She offers her support in many ways, the most vocal of which involves singing out to me in the hallway every morning: "Good morning! Ama g̲anłaak![27] Bonjour!" An important signal to show that all languages are important and that the French and Sm'algyax teachers support each other, which I hope is not lost on the listening students.

Considering that students from kindergarten to Grade 4 are mandated to receive Sm'algyax language instruction, it's not surprising that most Ts'msyen students continue their study of Sm'algyax as an optional subject from when they enter Grade 5 until they graduate from high school. The majority of the French students in my class are therefore non-Indigenous (in a typical class size of 25 to 30 students, the largest student demographic is those of Asian descent, followed by those of European descent). However, each term there are two to three Indigenous students in my French classes. I have been asked why an Indigenous student would take French, a troubling question considering that all classes are open to all students in our school. But during parent teacher interviews, some parents have offered up unsolicited explanations, which include that their child likes French, or more commonly, their child isn't Ts'msyen and therefore has "no reason to take Sm'algyax". It is indeed not uncommon for me to teach students from the Nisga'a, Tahltan, or Haida nations as well as Ts'msyen. In fact, it is more likely that an Indigenous core French student at CHSS is not Ts'msyen. This diversity brings opportunities for cultural awareness to my classroom which would exist differently if the student population were more homogenous. For example, when we discuss in class Ts'msyen clans' protocols and symbols (*Laxsgiik*/Eagle, *Gisbutwada*/Killer Whale, *Ganhada*/Raven, and *Laxgibuu*/Wolf[28]), students from other Nations will, of their own accord, often compare, contrast and relate what we learn together with their own protocols and symbols (like how a Haida Raven might view a Ts'msyen Raven as a cousin).

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[27] "Good morning" in Sm'algyax

[28] The clan "adabiis" (butterfly) was added in the modern day for non-Ts'msyen people who wished to participate in potlatches. When the clans are called up during a welcoming dance, the adabiis are called up after the four traditional clans to dance and represent their non-Ts'msyen culture.

I am always grateful for the diversity of my classroom, as we all have so much to learn from each other. When an Indigenous student joins my French class, my first thought is to ask them about their nation, especially if they're Haida and might be related to my daughter-in-law. But I've learned to be more sensitive to students' feelings and their need for belonging in the classroom, so I don't single them out unless the opportunity organically presents itself. For example, you'll read about my Grade 9 "La Ville" unit in Chapter 4, which involves a project about our town, what stores it has, who works there, and what one can buy there. As we live on unceded Ts'msyen land, we begin our oral project with stating that we are guests on this territory, and our crest is adabiis. At that point in our project preparation, I ask the class if anyone is Ts'msyen, so that we can change their introduction to reflect that. I also let other Indigenous French students know that even though they might be Raven, Wolf, Killer Whale, or Eagle in their own Nation's clans, on Ts'msyen land they do not belong to the Ts'msyen clans, and so they are adabiis. These questions about our cultural identities aren't seen as inappropriate in this context, and students are quite forthcoming in sharing their backgrounds. But I always need to be careful not to assume that these students wish to be "ambassadors" of their nation; some are well acquainted with their Indigenous culture, and others are not. I am wary not to put my curiosity at the centre of their experiences in my classroom; if I am embarking on this inquiry of Indigenizing the French classroom, it is for the students to develop their own personal relationship with the Indigeneity of the land, not for me to put them into a role which they are not comfortable with or do not wish to explore.

3.4. Core Values in My French Classroom

Teaching core French in Prince Rupert has always been a challenging experience for me. Initially my difficulties lay with learning the language myself as I was teaching it, and acquainting myself with second language pedagogies as they existed two decades ago when I started my professional journey. As a new teacher, I had to find my way amongst numerous viewpoints about how to decorate the classroom (or whether to decorate it at all), the joys and evils of worksheets, the appropriateness of using English in the classroom, and many other issues.

As I became more confident in my abilities to teach core French, different challenges arose. I found that fewer students were finding core French courses to be

useful, or necessary for university admission. Once students realized that they might be able to avoid secondary core French entirely, I had to re-think my pedagogies so that students would want to join my class in Grade 9 and continue their language development journey throughout high school. I found that I needed to take a hard look at the nature of language learning, and how I could make my language classes more attractive and relevant to students in my high school. Prior to the doctoral journey, these were the main questions driving my professional development, and it seems worthwhile to describe where they had taken me by the time of my inquiry,

The study of second language, I had come to believe, is part academic, and part drama. What sets a language classroom apart is the immersive, experiential quality of the material, and the need for *performance*. If students don't engage in the classroom learning, which includes *speaking* and *listening to* French, they will lessen their success of learning the language. There is very little book-learning, meaning that there are seldom opportunities where one can just "catch up" missed work over a weekend. Language muscles need to be flexed on a daily basis, and that often means lots of risk-taking in the form of standing up, taking a deep breath, and *communicating*.

There is also art, and food. There are field trips that can require an overnight ferry or just a walk down to McDonalds with an Elder. There are fashion shows, improv, and painting. There are cooking shows and plays to write and perform at the middle school. Second language learning is an all-or-nothing endeavor, in my opinion, and should be a fun and crazy ride. If it isn't fun and crazy, I feel that fewer students in my school district would participate. As well, fun and crazy allows for us to make mistakes, laugh about them, and continue on. And imagine the relationship-building potential between student and teacher! When we laugh together, there is the potential for trust. With trust, the student can find the courage to tell what is important to them, even if it might get them in trouble. With trust, the student might believe the teacher when she tells him that he can succeed in her class. With trust, the second language learning experience allows the student to find his or her own measure of success.

3.4.1. Fun and Games

One way in which we laugh together and share fun experiences is through the gamification of the curriculum. At the beginning of a term, the class divides itself up into

a number of teams and they sit together in a cluster of tables. The students get to choose their own names, which can have its own additional layer of fun due to our generational gap.

After the students choose their team names, we create a team leader board on our whiteboard. We discuss as a class the methods by which students can earn points, and we stick to their choices. They usually feel that points should be given for doing homework (but not necessarily doing well on the homework), a perfect score on our daily spelling tests, points for volunteering to help out, points for answering a difficult question, and points for winning at games. In the four or so years that I have been using this technique, there has been a 100% buy-in on the part of the students, and for the most part, students have been good sports. When the term ends and the winning team is determined, they can choose their own prize. Several times the team has chosen that the final test be optional, once or twice a pizza party has been requested, and twice the team has asked to have a meal at our swankiest restaurant with myself and my husband.

The games we play in French class have language acquisition as their primary purpose, either actual vocabulary, or perhaps just practising speaking French in a fun context. These games encourage students to speak to each other in French, asking and answering questions which access our current unit's vocabulary. If a student is having difficulty with a certain question, they have the option of passing their turn to someone else in order to avoid embarrassment.

One game which we play regularly is "Je Passe", which challenges the students' knowledge of French numbers and their ability to think strategically. As the game doesn't frame itself around thematic vocabulary, it can be played at any time during the French term. Students see this game as a fun activity rather than an educational exercise; as it doesn't directly access information that is part of their current unit, they see the game as a bit of a reprieve from the day's lessons and an opportunity to explore more relaxed interactions with their peers and their teacher.

The games that we play in the classroom are the foundation for important relationship-building, and for a relaxed, fun atmosphere. While not rooted in Indigenous traditions, they give the students an opportunity to feel a sense of belonging and

community, and to succeed at something other than academic study. Johnny may not excel in French language acquisition, but he does very well at Je Passe, and the students openly praise him for it. In this way we are building his sense of belonging in the classroom which could have a positive effect on his learning.

3.4.2. The Power of Narrative

Presenting information as stories, building tensions and resolving them, honours and respects the rich, instructive experiences that can take place between students, and between students and teachers. In my classroom, all of our activities are framed as part of a larger narrative, be it the story of how my students will create the next great graphic novel, or how they will design clothing that could be presented in a spring fashion show. Grammar and verb work is woven into stories about Adam and Vanessa and their adventures in Haida Gwaii, my husband, or ongoing sagas about my older son Ben and his eccentric cat. I took inspiration *Wilwilaaysk* as I constructed narratives and anecdotes to illustrate French concepts or put vocabulary into context. I could just as easily tell stories about friends or peers who work with me in my high school, but there is something personal and compelling about not only listening to stories about family, but telling them as well. As social beings, we can develop our understanding of the nature of social relationships through story and perhaps stories arising from my own family experiences can ground the student in their own family relationships. My students understand the importance of *Wilwilaaysk*, be it in relation to community or to blood-relations; we made certain to honour our relations in our *La Famille* unit.

I may begin the stories, but my students play their role in the co-construction and maintenance of these tales. They expand our imaginary scenarios and infuse them with their own creativity, and in the case of my own family stories, they encourage me to supply increasing amounts of detail and often ask me for updates. Some of the stories which I tell elicit a mere smile or perhaps a sad shake of the head (coming up with stories about how to form the negative which include Negative Town and a group of outlaws was not my most entertaining effort, although it did amuse them and help them remember the grammar rules). But there is one story which has taken on a greater meaning than my usual tales, and that is the story of Zimmerman.

Zimmerman is the nickname for my husband Martin, who is a criminal and family lawyer. The nickname was bestowed upon him by a former client when she hailed him by the wrong name while we were shopping in Safeway. Rather than correct her, my husband had a nice conversation with her and did not correct her mistake. What makes this story all the funnier is that several weeks later the same client found herself shopping at the same time as Martin, and approached him asking if she had accidentally called him by the wrong name. Rather than correcting her, he put her mind at ease by telling her that his name is in fact Zimmerman. I'm not sure if it was Martin's sense of play in action here, or if he didn't want to embarrass her, but the nickname "Zimmerman" stuck.

One day a few years ago, I decided to use the name in my French stories. I drew a picture of Zimmerman on the board (a striking likeness, if I might say), and told a story about some adventure that "Zimmerman" had had, which in fact illustrated a French concept we needed to learn: "Voici Zimm… qu'est-ce qu'il porte?" (Here's Zimm. What's he wearing?) or "Il était une fois un beau prince qui s'appelle Zimmerman qui habite un château dans un royaume magique avec sa femme Mme GZ." (Once upon a time there was a handsome prince named Zimmerman who lived in a castle in a magic kingdom with his wife Mme GZ). In no time at all, as new students entered into my class term by term, they all accepted the fact that Mme GZ's husband's name was Zimmerman, and that he had no last name. No one challenged this fact, no one said that they didn't believe it. They started calling him "ZimZam" or "Zimmy" or "Zimz". I knew this had become part of our classroom lore when one day Martin came home in the evening and asked me, "Would you happen to know why a bunch of teenagers whom I've never seen before pointed at me downtown and shouted, 'YO ZIMM!'?"

Although my use of Zimmerman in the French classroom does not embody the important Indigenous elements of respect, reverence, responsibility, reciprocity, holism, interrelatedness, and synergy (Archibald, 2008, p. 2), it does create a sort of trickster figure—someone "who sometimes is like a magician, an enchanter, an absurd prankster, or a Shaman, who sometimes is a shape shifter, and who often takes on human characteristics. Trickster is a transformer figure, one whose transformations often use humour, satire, self-mocking, and absurdity to carry good lessons" (Archibald, 2008. p. 5). At one and the same time, the Zimmerman character embodies the foolishness of his name and image (the cartoon of him which I draw on the board), but also the

honourable characteristics of love, respect, loyalty, and sense of community which the students know from my husband's legal work in Prince Rupert and the way in which I describe him. Martin has been to the school many times to bring treats to the students, or speak to them about legal issues, and when he does, it's as if there's a rock star in the room.

Embedded in this web of stories, the foolish Zimmerman helps to create a safe place in which the students can learn. In that way he brings accessibility not only to the learning of French, but to the complicated world of adults: jobs, responsibilities, parenthood, all of which might seem daunting to most teenagers. Students have drawn their own pictures of Zimmerman; one made a felt doll, another carved Zimmerman's head out of wood; thus co-constructing the "mythos" of Zimmerman while preserving their respect for his role as French class icon and the real-life husband of Mme GZ.[29]

Figure 16. Various Zimmermen

3.4.3. Co-creating our Classroom as a safe and respectful place

An essential part of my pedagogy is to find out as much as I can about my students' likes and dislikes. At the start of a new class, I give students a written survey in which they indicate to me how they learn, what their interests are, and other questions about their lives as they pertain to being a student in a classroom. I have learned a lot from these surveys, which I staple into each student's portfolio cover so that they have access to them. Students may not always understand why I ask them about their hobbies, sports, or favourite bands, but knowing a little something about a student other

[29] We will see more of Zimmerman in Chapter 4.

than their second language proficiency means that we can have conversations outside of academic periods (so before school, on breaks, lunch, after school, etc.) about things they like to do, sports they play, etc. It also means that I can attend their basketball games or dance recitals (as a member of a large audience, of course) and thus solidify the fact in their minds that I care about the "whole student", not just about their French. One of my favourite ways to have fun with this information is to talk about music to the students and say something a bit controversial such as "I really don't see the point of country music" or "I sure do love Justin Bieber" and observe the play-outrage. This sort of mutual, harmless teasing can stretch over days, or even weeks, and has always served as a bonding experience.

I also give out surveys at the end of every term, with just two questions: "*What worked for you in GZ's French class?"* and "*What would you advise GZ not to do with next term's students?"* The vast majority of answers are constructive and useful, such as "I hated the spelling tests at the time but I see that they're necessary," or "The games really worked for me." Some students write that homework, the spelling tests, and the projects should all be abolished as they "weren't useful"; these were often the same students who had very challenging schedules between school, sports, drama, and jobs, and found time management difficult. Last year one student just wrote "Votre maman" (*Yo mama*) as their feedback; I held on to that one.

I also ask students to give me feedback every couple of weeks or so in the form of an *auto-évaluation* (self-evaluation). I tell the students that just as I must self-assess and re-evaluate my own work, they must also conduct evaluations of their learning. But doing a proper self-evaluation isn't easy, and done carelessly it is meaningless. So I teach the students how to dig down into their motivations and actions to discover the true reasons for unsatisfactory marks or work not getting done. Sometimes I have to take a risk to get my point across, as I did during one of my classes. I asked for a volunteer, telling him that the conversation might be a bit bumpy but I thought he could handle it. When he agreed, I asked the question, "Why did you get the mark that you did?"

Student: Because I didn't study.

Mme GZ: I'm going to ask you questions until I get the answer I'm looking for. Is that ok? Remember, this is just so that

you can see what you need to be doing, and it's helping the whole class.

Student: Sure.

Mme GZ: Ok. Why didn't you study?

Student: I dunno.

Mme GZ: If you don't know, who does know?

Student: Ok, it's because I was too busy.

Mme GZ: Doing what?

Student: (recites a lengthy list of last night's activities)

Mme GZ: Why do you make time for those activities and not for your French homework?

Student: I dunno.

Mme GZ: Try harder.

Student: Because French is hard.

Mme GZ: What's hard about it?

Student: I dunno.

Mme GZ: Try harder.

Student: I don't understand (names particular point).

Mme GZ: Why don't you understand that?

Student: Because I zoned out when you explained it and I didn't want to think about it, so I didn't do my homework.

Mme GZ: Excellent! Now we're getting somewhere! (applause)[30]

When a student fully understands the actual reason why they aren't fulfilling their obligations, the journey to positive classroom and work habits, and to second language fluency can begin. What can the student and the teacher learn from this exchange?

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[30] It should be noted that a conversation like this would take place only after a strong sense of trust and community had been created and nurtured in the classroom. If I felt that a student would feel unsafe in this exercise, I wouldn't single them out in this way. Students send very strong signals to the teacher through tone of voice, facial expression, and body language to indicate their lack of comfort, and teachers should be constantly on watch for these signals.

The student learns not only a bit about his own motivations, but also that the teacher can be trusted with the truth and that the two of them are a team. The teacher not only enjoys an opportunity for bonding with the student, but also learns that perhaps her style when teaching that particular aspect of French was not very enthralling, and she should re-examine her teaching methods. Each time I witness a student recognizing and facing up to a miscalculation they made, I am reminded of my experiences in Kiel with the sea urchin, and how important it is to have a high level of openness and trust between a mentor and student. Perhaps that sense of trust is a necessary element of the nature and purpose of knowledge.

Here is another conversation, between myself and a student, that illustrates the value of students being co-creators of a classroom where truth and honesty are shared values. To give a bit of context: I have taught an ecology unit in French 11 for a number of years ("Pensez Vert": Think Green"). One of the assignments is to answer the question, "Suis-je écolo?" (Am I environmentally aware?). The two areas they are to concentrate on are the contents of their recycling bin, compost pile, garbage can, a bag of things to be donated, as well as how they conduct themselves while shopping for groceries. At one point one day, while the class was working on this assignment, I got up from my desk to throw out a banana peel. The following conversation ensued:

Student: Mme GZ, pourquoi est-ce que tu as jeté la pelure de banane dans la poubelle? (*Mme GZ, why did you throw the banana peel in the garbage can?*

Mme GZ : Parce que je ne la voudrais pas sur mon bureau. (*Because I didn't want it on my desk).*

Student : Mais vraiment, la pelure n'appartient pas dans la poubelle, on doit la mettre dans le tas de compost. *(But really, the peel doesn't belong in the garbage can, one must put it in the compost pile).*

Mme GZ : Tiens, il n'y a pas de tas de compost dans la salle de classe, hé? *(Sure, but there isn't a compost pile in the classroom, hey?)*

Student : Évidemment pas, mais tu as un tas de compost chez toi, oui? (*Evidently not, but you have one at home, right?)*

Mme GZ : Umm…. malheureusement, non. *(Um… unfortunately, no)*

Student : Pourquoi pas? *(Why not?)*

Mme GZ :	Il n'y a pas de bonne raison. Je suis paresseuse, peut-être. *(There's no good reason. Maybe I'm just lazy).*
Student :	Alors, tu n'es pas très écolo. C'est vrai? (*So, you're not very ecological. Right?)*
Mme GZ :	Hmmm.

It is exchanges such as the one above which allow students to use the French language to expand not only their thinking but their roles in the classroom. Through their authentic opinions and inquiries, they are not only making excellent contextual use of French, but are also establishing their role as stakeholders in the classroom. As well, they observed my actions alongside my teaching, and found some dissonance, and encouraged me to delve a little deeper into my own actions.

3.4.4. My Pedagogy as a Site of Inquiry

When I think of my inquiry question for this thesis and how it is supported by the pedagogies discussed in this chapter, I can see that although I didn't bring Indigenous content into my teaching until a few years ago, I had been using teaching pedagogies which support Indigenous understandings and the First Peoples Principles of Learning. When I first started developing my pedagogies, I had had no exposure to Indigenous learning or ways of teaching, and thus was searching for and adopting methodologies which simply supported second language learning. As I was not a French speaker or experienced teacher when I started teaching French in the early 2000's, I took advantage of every professional development opportunity I could, not only to learn the language myself, but to educate myself in the proper methodologies for teaching a second language.

My priorities at that time were not to enhance my teaching with Indigeneity and try to shed my settler's biases, but simply to do the best I could at a job I didn't feel qualified for. It was through these early workshops and discussions with peers that I learned, for example, the value of games in the classroom, and how they could make even the most dry second language concepts seem fun. Through workshops I learned about different ways in which students can show their learning (placemats, Venn diagrams, plays, posters, etc.) and that a teacher should respect the individual talents of each student when providing options for evaluation. I also learned about the various literacy strategies I could teach my FSL students, including accessing prior knowledge,

recognizing cognates, and paying attention to subtitles and diagrams (Anderson et al., 2008). Other strategies I learned involved how to recognize vowel sound combinations, how to sound out words, and methods for practicing intonation. Some of these strategies were taught explicitly, while I kept the purpose of our games to myself and just let the students have fun (who enjoys a game whose express purpose is to learn French?). One thing that all of these strategies had in common is that they not only promoted second language acquisition, but potentially supported the students' efforts to be respected in the French classroom and feel like a valued member of our little community.

One aspect of this worth commenting on is the question of how much English is appropriate when teaching in a FSL program. I have debated this with colleagues across the province over the past twenty years; many of them feel that the more French spoken the better, which makes sense if one's main goal is second language acquisition. According to this perspective, English might be used to explain cultural observations or to talk about the day's learning, but core French teachers should make an effort to speak as much French as possible in order to make full use of the limited time made available for second language learning in the school year (Anderson, Carr et al, 2008).

I have always spoken a bit more English in my classes than my peers in other BC school districts, however, as I feel that there are many opportunities for important emotional connections to be made between teachers and students when there is clear understanding. One year I did an experiment with one of my Grade 10 classes whereby I told them that on a specific day, we were going to only speak French during class. I suspected that there would be far less chatter in the "between times" in my teaching (when they would begin desk work, when I would ask them to get out a certain piece of work, etc.). Nothing could have prepared me for the absolute silence that permeated that classroom. Questions were answered, and requests for the bathroom were given in French, but any heartful discussions or comments were lost. We all felt a little shell-shocked after that. One of the students told me that it felt as if they had received some bad news, or that they were being punished. I'm sure that if I had kept up the "no English" rule we would have improved our second language literacy, but I wasn't willing to pay the cost of lost emotional connections. I don't want to imply any negative judgment of my colleagues who choose differently; for myself, as we will see in Chapter

4, the commitment to building connection has only been strengthened by my efforts to decolonize my classroom.

As I became more comfortable in my role of secondary French teacher, I allowed aspects of my personality to show themselves in my teaching and interactions with my students. For example, I have always loved sharing stories with people, and so as I relaxed in my classroom I began integrating interesting little pieces of news into my teaching (mostly in English, at this point). My students began to benefit from a fairly steady supply of baked goods, as baking is a passion of mine. Back in these early days I wasn't sharing stories or food for any other reason other than to create a more comfortable classroom environment for myself and for my students. I had not yet begun my journey towards decolonization of my thinking and teaching, but simply wanted to bring my own personality into the classroom and make it "my own". I was unaware back then that I might be setting the stage for evolving pedagogies that could support sharing and relationality as core values for my journey towards Indigeneity and decolonized teaching.

As the years passed and I expanded my knowledge through a Master's and doctoral program, I was able to curate resources designed to help teachers decolonize their classrooms (not necessarily French classrooms, though) and use them to build upon what I had already been doing. As my comfort level increased and I began to see myself as an experienced teacher-researcher, I found space in my mind and heart to be open to different ways of teaching, different ways of viewing the world, and a new attitude about my place on Indigenous land. When I actively, mindfully began my journey toward decolonization, my existing pedagogies coupled with the decolonization efforts of my school and district allowed for consistent opportunities for Indigenization of curriculum.

It was in this context that I developed my approach to investigating the inquiry question. I considered the pedagogies that I had been using, and how they had evolved to reflect my own comfort with students and with the academic material, and I took note of how this evolution eventually incorporated Indigenous content and ways of learning as I myself discovered my place as a white settler on Indigenous land.

As I continued to investigate bringing Indigenous content and ways of knowing into the French classroom, I learned through my studies and through conversations with Elders and other Indigenous knowledge-keepers that this process involves the development of trusting relationships, an appreciation and respect for the land, and a shift in my professional identity as a language teacher on Indigenous land, that needed to expand in crucial ways beyond applying rigid rules regarding due dates, content and frequency of tests. It also involves students playing a greater role in the co-creation of lessons and the timetabling of evaluations. As I planned out the nature of the data-collecting section of this inquiry, I realized that the games, the stories, and the desire to build a trusting community of French learners through conversation and food could act as a springboard and inspiration for decolonization efforts in my classroom. I certainly had to expand my research through reading and through consultation with knowledge-keepers so that I was mindful in my changes in pedagogy, but I felt that even before the data-collection period I had a good foundation upon which to build my decolonization strategies.

In my next chapter I provide details as to how I made changes to my content and ways of teaching in order to provide French content which honour the Indigeneity of Prince Rupert, and utilise Indigenous ways of teaching and learning in our classroom community. I considered these efforts during the classroom inquiry to be a work in progress, just as I consider my current work to be constantly evolving and enhanced by the guidance of our Elders and local knowledge-keepers. As I was preparing my inquiry, I imagined expanding my Grade 9 units to prioritize the crest poles in our city, and the Ts'msyen artifacts in our museum. I was looking forward to teaching the students how to respectfully situate themselves when giving oral presentations, stating that they are guests on Ts'msyen land (or they were Ts'msyen, and were of a specific clan). I found inspiration in my readings as well as in my interactions with Elders, and wondered how allowing students more class time to learn concepts and vocabulary would affect not only their French proficiency, but their feelings of self-worth and belonging. I scheduled in circle times at the beginning of every Grade 9 class for the inquiry period, complete with tea and muffins, through which we could discuss how we were feeling about our French learning, the activities in the classroom, and life in general (students who did not want to participate on any given day could say "je passe"). I also adjusted our units so that students could create videos of themselves out on the land,

interacting with crest poles, the ocean, or other aspects of nature rather than presenting an oral report with a poster. I think an important change though, was based on what I had learned from Jody Hill in Kiel: that true learning takes place when one observes, attempts, accepts when attempts aren't successful, and tries again. Embracing one's mistakes and not enduring punishment from failed attempts was a powerful lesson for me from Kiel, and I looked forward to expanding my pedagogy by including the sense of mentorship, and the sense of give and take with learners that had so affected me in Kiel.

To paraphrase Wilson, one interpretation of the nature of knowledge is that its acquisition isn't the ultimate goal, but rather the change that knowledge can bring to individuals or society as a whole (Wilson, 2008, p. 36). In taking a metacognitive approach to both my own learning and to the teaching that I do in the classroom, I encourage the students to think about their learning, understand their own motivations, advocate for themselves, and see themselves as valuable members of the classroom, their families, peer groups, and society as a whole. Through storytelling and joke-making we create fun in the classroom; through mutual respect and a desire for relationship-building, we develop a sense of trust which gives students "permission" to make mistakes and learn from them. We accept our shortcomings and celebrate all victories, large and small. And when we work toward a core French classroom imbued with Indigeneity, we wonder if the classroom zeitgeist combined with Indigenous culture might encourage those changes that Wilson spoke of. What changes might take place in the hearts and minds of my students during the data collection period? Will they enjoy the journey? When the time came to begin my data collection, I was excited, and ready to find out.

Chapter 4. The Classroom Story

4.1. Preparing for Data Collection

As of December 2018 I had been working through the doctoral process for several years, journeying through decolonizing my own thinking and embracing the Indigeneity of the land I teach on through classwork, comprehensive exams, and the lengthy process of receiving permission to conduct research from SFU's Office of Research Ethics. The completion of this work led up to the moment when I could bring my learning (and my own questions) into my classroom to see what might happen if I shifted the focus from French culture (as it manifests in France, Quebec, and other French regions of the world) to Indigenous culture (with a heavy focus on the Ts'msyen Nation). I would be using the FPPL, the Indigenous Principles of Learning (Sanford et al., 2012), and the philosophies offered by Kelli's posters to guide me in a mindful implementation of Indigenous content and ways of teaching. After years' worth of ideas and questions swirling around in my head, it was exciting and a bit daunting to be facilitating this learning with my students; it felt at the same time both academic and very personal, as practitioner inquiry should be.

Prior to commencing the data collection, I ensured that I had received all the appropriate permissions from SFU, my district, and my administration (these letters can be found in Appendix B). I met with the superintendent of schools and our district principal of Indigenous education in November of 2018, and permission was granted for the study by that superintendent. Soon after, the superintendent moved to another district and was replaced, and the meeting was repeated for the new incumbent's benefit. Unlike with the previous superintendent, we needed four lengthy meetings to discuss in general terms what I would be teaching, how it would be taught, how I would assess, and how I would collect and manage the resulting data. I was in fact very grateful for the chance to reiterate the scope of my research in further detail; the new superintendent had many questions and comments, which included helping to shape the Informed Consent forms (Appendices D through G). The superintendent and our IE district principal gave their approval to my proposal after that fourth meeting; neither found it necessary to re-issue the written approval I had received from the former superintendent (Appendix B). I was asked by our IE district principal to send a request

for approval letter to our Aboriginal Education Council; their reply was conveyed to me verbally by the IE district principal.

Once I had received all the appropriate permissions from SFU, my district, and my administration, I wanted to start working with my students right away. As I had met with the superintendent of schools and our district principal of Indigenous education in November of 2018, which was in the middle of a school term (we were on the trimester system at the time, so in November we were in Trimester 1), my intention was to begin working with a class from my Trimester 2 schedule, which began in early December.

In Trimester 2 I had classes spanning from Grade 9 to Grade 11, and could have chosen any of those classes for my study, but I chose my Grade 9 students as they would be available for me to touch base with in the years following the inquiry period. I also liked the idea of having the new students' first experience with me be in a French classroom where we were trying to move to a less colonized space through incorporating Indigenous content through *Ama goot, Wilwilaaysk, La̲x yuup, Nda'aamx,* and *Łoomsk.* In truth, all of my classes would have benefited from the shift away from colonized teaching, and as I conducted the inquiry with my Grade 9s, I found myself making improvements to my Grade 10 and 11 units as well, such as my French 11 Ecology unit, which greatly benefitted from the inclusion of Indigenous stewardship, and my French 10 art unit, which I overhauled from a study of French artists to an immersive experience with local Indigenous artists in which my students not only learned about north coast Indigenous form line design, but were given permission to use it to create their own works of art. In my efforts to facilitate transformative learning in my Grade 9 class, I found that my usual way of teaching would no longer suffice for the rest of my students, and thus began the journey of transforming my own pedagogy for all of my students. And in the years following my Grade 9 inquiry, students from all grades would occasionally comment to me that although they couldn't remember certain verb conjugations or specific thematic vocabulary, they did remember expressing their respect for the Indigeneity of Prince Rupert and their place in it.

I couldn't really predict what I might learn from the information I collected in that three-month period, but I had hopes that I might observe a shift toward *Ama goot* in the form of some transformative changes in the hearts and minds of the students that might reflect the changes that I myself had gone through and was continuing to experience. I

wanted them to catch my enthusiasm, and was excited to see if they would. Before planning out my units for the Grade 9 trimester, I looked over my previous years' lesson plans and course outlines, noting to myself how, in earlier years, my assessment was fairly strict and rigid to begin with (no retests, lots of summative evaluation, few opportunities for differentiation based on student need and ability), then moved toward a more student-centered method which included student input into format, content, and timing of tests, opportunities for conversation if retests were requested, and a greater emphasis on classroom observation for assessment. But I knew that there was a great deal of room for growth, and the three-month data collection period could be an impetus for that growth. I hoped that I might find out whether we, as a class, could create a new space from which the study of French could be used as a vehicle for reconciliation, and what that reconciliation might look like.

The information in this chapter is vital to this dissertation; it gave meaning and purpose to my previous coursework and to my personal journey of decolonization, as well as inspiration for current and future efforts in my French classroom. Up until the data collection period, knowledge gained from readings, presentations, and discussions with Indigenous knowledge-keepers might have been relegated to the hypothetical or even meaningless; I could learn about the process without actually experiencing it, or perhaps go through the motions of decolonization without making any real change (Jones & Jenkins, 2008; King, 2016, Styres, 2019). But bringing my learning and questions into the classroom provided me with a strong sense of accountability, and knowledge that I would be building upon the experience for future teaching and learning. During the data collection process, I employed my metacognitive superhighway to return often to my original thoughts and questions, wondering if what I thought I believed or knew matched with what I was finding out. The data collection experience served as a home base, in a way, from which I could journey back to my previous ways of thinking and refine/disrupt them, and journey forward to imagine how my students might use their new insights in their other coursework or future experiences. As I continued teaching after the data collection period had ended, the experiences I shared with my students and the insights I gained gave me direction for my future teaching and my own sense of identity as a non-Indigenous teacher of a colonizing language teaching on Indigenous land. The information I learned, and the insecurities which I uncovered through the data-

collection process paved the way for future learning and constructive interactions with other educators, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous.

Much has taken place in the time between my data collection and the present day, and I'm grateful for the perspective I've gained since 2019. Before the data collection period, I was full of questions about what the three-month experience would mean, how it would affect my students (or whether it would affect them at all), and what my place was as a teacher, a researcher, and a learner. I wondered if my learning from this period could lead to future growth on my part and on the part of my students. After the inquiry period I was able to move forward with the confidence needed to ask questions, initiate dialogue, and mentor others. I will discuss the ramifications of the inquiry period in detail in Chapter 5.

4.2. Co-Creating the French 9 units

I first turned to a resource which I mentioned in Chapter 2: "First Peoples Principles of Learning" (FPPL), which outlines nine Indigenous principles of teaching, learning and assessment:[31]

[31] http://www.fnesc.ca/learningfirstpeoples/

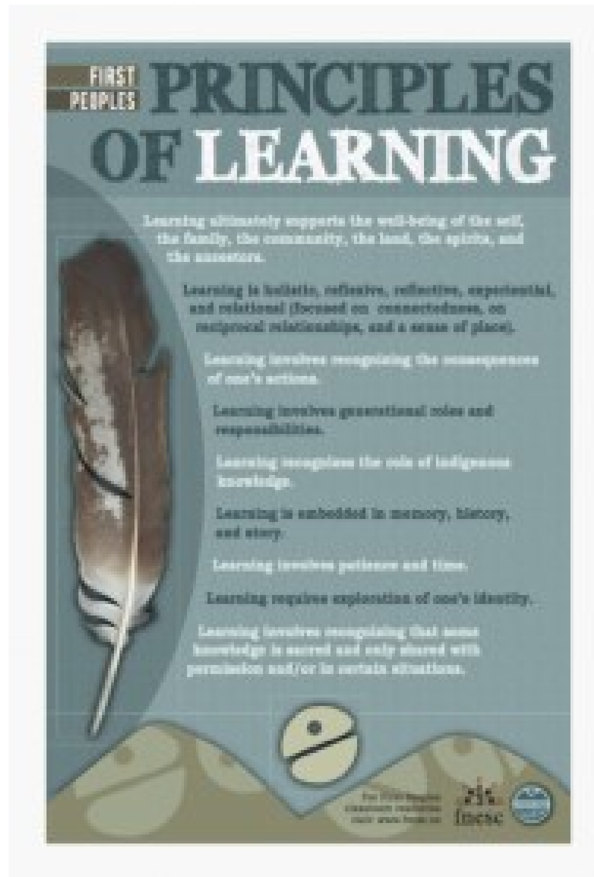

Figure 17. The First Peoples Principles of Learning Poster

There have been numerous workshops available to educators for a number of years about how to incorporate the FPPL into the classroom. These workshops, in my experience, concentrated on the disciplines of Language Arts, Socials, Science, and Math; I've never encountered any for the French classroom. Despite this lack, however, I have found that time and reflection have helped the FPPL open my mind and heart to a more student-centered set of pedagogies, encouraging growth and change in the minds and hearts of students as well as myself. Taken with the qualities expressed in Kelli's posters, I can see that in order to do the good work encouraged in the FPPL, I can use Amagoot, Wilwilaaysk, Lax yuup, Nda'aamx, and Łoomsk as inspirations to move toward a more Indigenized way of teaching.

I found when I was designing my Indigenized Grade 9 course that I needed help and guidance that was a bit more detailed that what was found in the FPPL. I found additional guidance in the summary of "Ways of Knowing" from a paper authored by

Kathy Sanford, Lorna Williams, Tim Hopper, and Catherine McGregor (2012), contrasting Indigenous teaching and assessment philosophies with those of a more Western, traditional nature. The contrast was useful to me, but with a few caveats.

Ways of knowing		
Euro-American-Centrism/Neoliberalism (Predetermined Curriculum)		***Indigenous (Learner/teacher Collaboration)***
Prescribed learning; expected outcomes pre-determined	➔	Learning is emergent
Teacher to student focused	➔	Focus on students and teacher interaction
Learning happens in the classroom; classroom is quiet	➔	Learning happens in many locations, inside and outside the school; classroom can be noisy
Knowledge is transmitted	➔	Students construct knowledge through gathering and synthesizing information
Students work independently	➔	Students work in pairs, groups, or alone depending on the purpose of the activity
Teacher evaluates student learning	➔	Assessment is used in context to promote and diagnose learning
Teacher monitors and corrects students' responses	➔	Learners are guided to find their own solutions and answer their own questions
Teachers evaluate student learning; teaching and assessing are separate	➔	Students evaluate their own learning; teachers also evaluate; teaching and assessing are intertwined
Students are ranked according to pre-determined criteria	➔	Students have multiple opportunities for success and quiet recognition
Teacher chooses what is to be learned	➔	Students have some choice of learning activities and topics
Focus is on a single discipline	➔	Approach is compatible with multi and inter-disciplinary investigation
Culture is competitive and individualistic	➔	Culture is cooperative, collaborative, and supportive

Figure 18. Indigenous Ways of Knowing

While I found the above chart useful, it's important to note that the left-hand column doesn't represent the full range of "Western" ways of knowing, nor does the label "Euro-American-Centralism/Neoliberalism" feel completely appropriate for these teaching methods. While neoliberalism does place economic and professional competition at the centre of citizens' lives and encourages a market-based individualism, (Wilson, 2018), I would not agree that teachers deciding what is to be learned in a classroom or taking on the task of evaluating student learning are appropriate examples of neoliberalism. As well, using the term "Euro-American Centrism" seems a bit misplaced as it implies that educators prefer any teaching methods which originate from

Europe or the United States, whether or not those methods are actually useful (Blaut, 2000). What I do find helpful in this column is using the entries as prompts for me to determine how I need to change my teaching and assessment methods to better serve my students. For example, the “Knowledge is transmitted” entry (left hand column) implies, in my mind, that the teacher begins speaking and knowledge is poured into the students with little dialogue or conversation. Although I have attended classes which are crafted in this way, when paired with “Students construct knowledge through gathering and synthesizing information” (right hand column), the two seemingly opposite philosophies can in fact be combined in a way so that students receive the information that they need in order to interact creatively with it. To place the two approaches in opposition to one another is not necessarily the most fruitful way to think about them.

By the same token, the “Indigenous (Learner/teacher collaboration)” column contains suggestions which are perhaps not unique to Indigenous cultures, but simply play a role in good teaching generally, and support formative assessment: understanding that assessment should be used to promote and diagnose learning, students evaluate their own learning, etc. As well, emergent learning[32] enjoys a following in an adapted Western teaching framework, especially in earlier grades (Stacey, 2009; Osbert and Biesta, 2008). It should also be said that the power of the teaching methods in the right hand column is more evident if the methods are not used in isolation but are intertwined with local Indigenous culture: bringing an Elder or knowledge-keeper into the classroom to discuss crests, sacred stories, or the horrors of residential schools, for example, fulfills many of the methods in the “Indigenous” column while making the Indigeneity of the learning front and centre.

The main function of Sandford et al.’s chart for me personally is to remind me that these pedagogies have been isolated from their cultural inspirations and thus must

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[32] “Emergent curriculum is based on the premise that children are most successful at learning when curriculum experiences account for their interests, strengths, needs, and lived realities. Educators committed to this philosophy use observations of children throughout their day as a tool for constructing curriculum content. Meaningful learning opportunities are then provided in support of key developmental skills relevant to a specific age group. When ongoing opportunities for practice lead to skill mastery, educators respond by enriching the learning experience through the planning and implementation of increasingly difficult tasks.” (https://elc.utoronto.ca/about-us/emergent-curriculum/)

be viewed as a partial guide. When paired with the cultural world views of one's local nation, these pedagogies rise from generalities to useful guideposts. In my studies, I solicited help from peers and Indigenous knowledge-keepers to find the connection between these pedagogies and Ts'msyen world views, such as those in the First Peoples Principles of Learning, and in Kelli's posters. My classroom can never be an "Indigenous" space, but I can strive to inhabit that ethical third space between Indigenous and non-Indigenous styles of teaching and learning in order to best meet student needs.

One example which comes to mind of how emergent learning, mentioned in the right hand column, might take place when grounded in Indigenous protocol. I remember several occasions when I have been sitting in a classroom or auditorium, listening to a sacred, true telling from an Indigenous Elder. As they wove their story, perhaps starting with a personal anecdote, the audience (myself included), listened intently as the story progressed. If we were expecting a traditional Western narrative arc with a neat resolution, we were out of luck. The sacred story may have been told in order to illustrate good behaviour, often through descriptions of the inter-connectivity of *La̲x yuup* and the relationship between people and the land, or perhaps it was told to inform us as to the history of a certain family, or how a clan's crest came to be (Campbell, 2005). But by their nature, such sacred stories don't include pat moral conclusions such as one might find with tales such as Aesop's Fables. Rather, as "true tellings" they encourage the listener, whose participation is a vital element of the story (Archibald, 2008), to create meaning from the story in their own way; it is through this experience that we can discover for ourselves what it means to be human. The "space of emergence" is made possible by learning from others different from us, and it is this space which educates us (Osberg & Biesta, 2008). Thus, after the Elder finished their true telling, we sat in silence, reflecting on what we had heard in the context of our own lives and personal journeys.

Thus, it is when the Ways of Knowing listed above are deeply linked to Indigenous content and world views that one might be said to be "Indigenizing" one's practice. When I weave these Ways of Knowing with the philosophies of Kelli's posters, their mutual support is clear. *Łoomsk* for students and for their learning processes, for example, is evident when one believes *that learning is emergent,* or when a *focus on students and teacher interaction* is taking place as an Elder guides us on the land or as

the student is encouraged by the teacher to mentor others and take a leadership role in the learning. When students *evaluate their learning*, and have *multiple opportunities for success and quiet recognition*, they are given the space for *Ama goot*, hopefully replacing any negative feelings they might have if they felt pressured by an unyielding assessment and evaluation process.

I have been exposed to the Indigenous/ collaborative method of cooperative, and supportive learning through many sources and opportunities, including workshops, and conversations with and observations of Indigenous knowledge-keepers. Two consistent inspirations for me are the First People's Principles of Learning (as mentioned earlier), as it encourages relational and reciprocal learning. The second inspiration is and continues to be Kelli's posters which encourage not only respect and a connection to nature, but also a sense of family, of reconciliation, and of good-heartedness.

I was interested in adopting the practice of beginning each learning day in circle, as it can be an element of collaborative and supportive learning. Most of my doctoral classes began this way, with participants sharing information about whatever was on their mind that day, and most professional workshops I have attended began this way as well. So I was very interested to see how incorporating time for circle in our French classroom would support students' sense of community and collaboration.

I knew that I could be doing a better job with how I assessed learning and how I provided space and opportunities for student agency in the classroom; also that I needed to further explore the idea of how students construct knowledge, and how I could support learners to see themselves as co-constructors of their learning experience rather than simply passive participants. Keeping my guiding principles in mind, I turned back to the authors whom I had read during my program and the knowledge-keepers whom I had spoken to, and wrote out some preliminary ideas. I then asked whether our Indigenous Education Department representatives could meet with me in late November of 2018 to collaborate in co-creating French 9 units that would be respectful of the local Ts'msyen Nation and their lands, as well as promote student engagement and advocacy.

I met with Roberta Edzerza (District Principal of Indigenous Education) and members of her staff in the conference room of their dedicated building I brought

descriptions of the units that I planned to teach, and my fledgling ideas as to how I might incorporate Indigenous content and ways of teaching. I brought descriptions for four units, as outlined in the following table.

The unit	Current content
La Salle de Classe (the classroom)	Various items in the classroom (shelves, pens, pencils, stapler, etc.) Asking where an item is, and answering with directions such as "over here"; "at the back of the classroom"; "to the left of the bookcase", etc. Indicating that one wants an item, asking for it; Negatives and questions.
La Ville (The City)	Numerous stores that one might find in an European city, such as bakery, pastry shop, butcher shop, smoked meat shop, etc.; Verbs involved in going to the shops, looking for and finding items, speaking to the workers Vocabulary for the items in a shop, and the people who work there Adverbs of progression (first, then, next, after that, finally).
La Famille (The Family)	Vocabulary for family members, including adoptive, foster, and step families Physical and personality traits of family members (and agreement and placement of these adjectives) Hobbies of family members Use of possessive adjectives (my, your, his, etc.) and the use of "de" to show possession (*la soeur de ma mère est ma tante – My mother's sister is my aunt*);
Au Restaurant (At the Restaurant)	Making a telephone reservation Courses in a restaurant Cultural food in a French restaurant Questions and replies when ordering each course, and asking for the bill

I knew that I would only have the time to teach three units, but I wanted to have an extra unit ready to go so that I could offer some choice to the students as to what they wanted to study. But as Roberta and her staff worked with me to co-construct the units with Indigenous content, I realized that our vocabulary with the "La Salle" unit did not offer much opportunity for meaningful change; as the purpose of the unit was simply

to introduce classroom vocabulary, our proposed additions and changes were a bit underwhelming:

Unit	Proposed additions/changes
La Salle	Include drums, blankets, posters with crests, in both French and Sm'algyax

After consideration, I felt that I could easily achieve the proposed changes in the "La Salle" unit by incorporating them into any of the other three units rather than just adding them on to this particular unit. After all, some of these changes had already been made in my classroom: Kelli's posters were already on the wall (they also adorn the walls of most classrooms in the district); so was a drum which a student had made during a drum-making workshop my class took a few years earlier. I didn't feel that the "La Salle" unit would offer enough of an opportunity for Indigenous content, so I decided not to offer it to my students during the data-collection period.[33] Instead, I concentrated on the plans that Roberta and I made for the other three units:

Unit	Proposed additions/changes
La Famille	Introduce vocabulary so that all students are able to introduce themselves as either a guest on Ts'msyen land, or identify themselves according to their crest if they are Ts'msyen. Part of introduction is to acknowledge that we are on unceded Ts'msyen land. Discussion of matrilineal nature of crests, and understanding that people of the same crest cannot marry in the Ts'msyen culture (or in the culture of many other north coast nations). When discussing hobbies of students and their relatives, leave space for hunting, fishing, and other traditional activities
Au Restaurant	Inclusion of traditional north coast foods on our restaurant menus (oolichan, seaweed, frybread, salmon, etc.) Discussion of how seasons affect availability of local food Discussion as to how our location affects availability of local food
La Ville	Add the museum and the artifacts found there (woven cedar hat, bentwood box, rattles, masks, etc.); Trip to the museum; Discuss a longhouse and what happens there; Acknowledgement of crest poles in Prince Rupert.

[33] This change in plan was one of the first in a long list of re-imaginings and re-assessing of units, assessment, and teaching style.

I planned for the following schedule: *La Famille* would start at the beginning of December; *La Ville* would begin in the third week of January, and *Au Restaurant* would be scheduled to start the third week of February. Each unit would have a summative test as well as project (all three of which would involve oral and visual presentation), and a great deal of formative assessment which would inform my evaluations as well as my classroom inquiry.

4.3. Final Preparations: Ethics, Data Collection, Classroom Setup

I spent some time reconstructing my units for a seamless integration of Indigenous content, and rethought how I might include student voice and advocacy in assessment and evaluation of student progress.[34] During this time I often conferred with peers in order to ensure that I was mindful of the Indigenous content that I was including, and that my assessment and evaluation were fair and student-based. For example, I conferred with members of our English as well as Social Studies staff members, often during lunch breaks, brunches at restaurants or other moments when teachers get together during their spare time, and discussed my methods for assessment. I found that encouraging constructive critique of my methods by non-Indigenous as well as Indigenous colleagues was invaluable. A member of the English department, for example. reminded me that just as my formative assessment is multi-faceted, evaluation can as well take many forms. If a student was having difficulty with writing, for example, I could encourage them to show me their learning through oral production while we continue working on their writing skills. On another occasion, I was conferring with Kelli Clifton and Elder Ben Spencer about how to best teach my French students about the acquisition of crests in the Ts'msyen nation. After I shared my understanding, I received a thoughtful reply from both of them that perhaps I was relying too heavily on my knowledge of Haida social structures and that I shouldn't assume that Ts'msyen crests

[34] Since 2018 I have increased my knowledge of local Indigenous cultures (including the culture of the Haida nation), as well as my confidence in my ability to mindfully position these cultures in my French classroom; thus, when I look back on these unit plans I realize that if I were conducting this research today I would incorporate much more local Indigenous content into the units, and facilitate many more trips outside of the classroom. But this three-month period had great value to both myself and to my students, as it was a mindful and deliberate foray into a new way of teaching and learning for us, and served as a waypoint for continued growth and learning. I'll speak more to this in Chapter 5.

are acquired in the same fashion as crests for the Haida nation. I deeply appreciated not only the guidance but the kind fashion in which it was imparted.

During this time I also prepared the letter to parents and the consent forms that would give my students an opportunity to participate in or opt out of my inquiry. Data collection for doctoral work during the course of a school semester isn't the norm in our school, so I imagined that not only would the students have questions and concerns, but the parents would as well. All students (and their parents) were given the standard consent forms approved by Simon Fraser University, complete with all the pertinent information they would need to make an informed choice as to whether participation in the inquiry was in the student's best interest. I did not anticipate any confusion or surprise from the parents, as increasing the Indigenous presence in our school (both visually and through our teaching) has been a goal of our district for a number of years. I tried to anticipate questions or concerns which the parents might have, and address those concerns in the consent form. As well, I encouraged parents to confer with me before, during, and after the study with any questions or comments. I suspected that if parents had concerns after signing the consent form, they might be based on anecdotal information from their children as the inquiry proceeded, so I wanted to encourage ongoing communication between myself and the families,

Before I handed out the two sets of consent forms (one for the student and one for the student to take home to their parents), I had a thorough conversation with the class about the method for opting out of my study. I made it clear to the students that if they did not want to participate in the study, the following would ensue: 1) no one would know, other than the student, their parents, and myself, that they were not participating in the study; 2) their education and treatment in the class would not be lessened or changed in any fashion, and 3) they would receive the same opportunities for learning and excelling in my class that the rest of the students would receive. Their work and participation in the class would only be used for the normal purposes of assessing their progress in French and in the curricular competencies. The information and consent forms are included in Appendices D-G. In the event, one student did choose not to participate in the inquiry.

In practitioner inquiry, assessment and data collection strategies are often closely intertwined. I turned to the BC Ministry of Education's *A Framework for Classroom*

Assessment document [35] to ensure that my assessment and evaluation was based on the students' competencies (skills and strategies) as laid out in the core French 9 curriculum. As the students read texts, engaged in conversations, narrated stories, and shared their understanding of the relationship between French and the unceded Ts'msyen land which we live and learn upon, I needed to made sure to clarify their learning objectives, offer questions which might develop their learning, and scaffold their assessment so that what they had already learned had the same weight as what they were aiming to achieve (Clarke, 2005).

As I was conducting the classroom inquiry as a practitioner-researcher[36], I would have a wide range of "data" at my disposal: not simply summative data on learning outcomes, for example, but also observations and samples of student work gathered in the context of discussions, art projects, plays, and any number of other pedagogical activities and formative assessment pieces. Practitioner-researchers consider their work to be their site of inquiry, and thus "all sorts of questions emerge from all sorts of data and artifacts that not only represent but also shape and embody that work. From this perspective, practitioners are regarded as generators of knowledge that is usable in, and often beyond, the local context…." (Cochran-Smith & Lyle, 2009, p. 56).

Thus, my formative assessment methods included observation of the students, conversations (group and individual), general student work during the course of a class, student self-assessments, and surveys. My summative assessment included quizzes and tests, as well as a project at the end of each unit (students had the option of receiving tutoring from me at any point in the term, including before tests, and were permitted to rewrite tests or redo projects if they desired). That said, I did not, for example, test them on their viewpoints regarding the ethical place of French on unceded Indigenous land; while their growth in this area was of central interest to my inquiry, it was not the kind of outcome I felt it would be appropriate to measure through summative assessment.

I did make a change in my plans for assessment between the time that I sent out permission forms to parents and the commencement of the classroom inquiry: in the

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[35] https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/sites/curriculum.gov.bc.ca/files/pdf/assessment/a-framework-for-classroom-assessment.pdf

[36] See Ch. 3.2

permission forms I indicated that the students would be keeping a "self-assessment journal", but they in fact did not. This is not to say that I didn't appreciate the value of student self-assessment (Schimmer, 2012). Rather, as the students were already maintaining a binder of notes as well as a dedicated booklet of quizzes, I felt that another booklet would pose organizational difficulties for some of the students. Thus, their self-evaluations were either done in their quiz booklets, through a survey, or on a sheet of loose-leaf paper, depending upon the material and aspects of learning they were self-assessing.

In order to acquire the richest and most meaningful data from my students, I planned to make careful observations, engage in meaningful and frequent individual and group conversations, take pictures[37], collect written and artistic work, and make use of my metacognitive superhighway to reflect upon their work and my observations, re-assess my methods, re-envision, and revise as necessary. I anticipated that the students might feel empowered by the attention given to their work and their opinions, and that I too would be able to experience growth through this iterative process (MacDonald, 2007; MacDonald & Hill, 2018). Such collection of pedagogical documentation encourages reflection for the practitioner as well as the students (MacDonald, 2006), and creates an environment where students can learn from observing each other's work as well as from their own reflections. This approach ensures that both teacher and students are "reconceptualised as being competent, having agency, enjoying collaboration, as leading figures and co-authors of learning" (Oliveira-Formosinho & de Sousa, 2019, p.35).

As ever, I had Kelli's posters in mind as I prepared myself for data collection. Collecting pedagogical documentation allows teachers to have a window into students' strengths and challenges, and demonstrates very clearly that teachers are listening mindfully and with *Łoomsk* to what students have to say. One could say that the process of pedagogical documentation can itself be a decolonizing activity, as it acts to disrupt any perceived traditional power relationships as students and teacher co-create and learn together (MacDonald & Hill, 2018). Done mindfully, I thought, it would enable

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[37] All of my students in the class gave their permission to appear in class photos, in accordance with school policy. However, in order to err on the side of caution, when I have included student pictures in this dissertation, the students' faces have been blurred.

both teacher and students to feel the spirit of *Ama goot* in the classroom, perhaps a sense of *Wilwilaaysk*, and certainly *Łoomsk*.

Before we examine my thoughts over the three-month period, let's take a look at my physical classroom and how it was set up to support student learning. This was my interpretation of what a positive learning environment should look like, as I understood it at the time, while still working within the confines of the four walls of an educational institution. In order to make it more inclusive, welcoming, and engaging, I had organized the room as follows:

- on the whiteboard on the left-hand side of the classroom: a schedule for each of my classes, plus a chart for their daily homework, unit projects and tests;
- on the back wall: a huge Tintin display, donated by our local theatre in 2011, and under the clock (which seldom tells the correct time), are Kelli's posters;
- seating is organized in table groups;
- there's a foam mat and several pillows on the floor, upon which students can lounge while they're working;
- posters of Van Gogh and Chagall's work (neither were French, but they both spent time in France and had great impact on French art movements);
- posters offering information in French and English about Indigeneity and reconciliation;
- lots of student work on the walls.

Figure 19. **My classroom during the classroom inquiry period.**

My classroom setup has changed significantly since my classroom inquiry. The changes reflect not only my increasing commitment to Indigeneity and love of Indigenous carving, weaving, and painting, but also my teaching evolution and journey toward decolonization. I will speak more to these changes in classroom environment in Chapter 5.

In Appendix A you can find my curated notes from my data collection period of December 2018 to March, 2019. These draw on both the classroom webpage, which I regularly updated so students had an ongoing account of our term to look back on as well as reminders about things to prepare for, and on my journal entries, which were written each day during the data collection period. They are intended to highlight details of our experiences in the classroom; I speak about specific students and their personalities, about issues and challenges we faced, and about the community we created through student advocacy, games, and conversation. Not all our activities were explicitly Indigenous, but are nonetheless noted to illustrate the full range of teaching methods employed to support comprehensive learning. As they are quite detailed, I will

summarize them in this chapter, quoting a few of them for illustrative purposes, and weave reflections through the classroom narrative. I invite the reader to peruse Appendix 1 if they wish to learn the specific details of each day.

What I am including in this chapter are my thoughts and reflections upon the classroom activities, situated within the guiding framework of Kelli's posters and informed by my metacognitive superhighway. These reflections, written after the data collection period, include thoughts about the day's activities, how my teaching and the students' reactions to the lessons related to my research, and whether I felt I had been successful on a particular day in creating a sense of community and trust, and in imbuing Indigenous content and ways of knowing into my teaching. For ease of reading and analysis, I have divided the data collection period into three sections: December, January, and February-March. At the end of each section, I have included reflections of a more general nature on our activities during that time period.

A couple of weeks before I began the data collection for my classroom inquiry, I reviewed my research paradigms, and reached out to our Indigenous Education department and my administration to let them know that the inquiry was about to begin. I also reached out to our local college. I had worked with the college in the past when I taught BC First Peoples 12 (a Socials course in which students learn about the cultures, histories, worldviews, identities, and governance of BC Indigenous nations[38]). I had high hopes for further collaborations with the college in my French classroom, but there had been funding and personnel changes at the college since our last collaboration, and I was not able to kindle a connection for the purposes of this study. At the time I felt frustrated, but in hindsight I'm reminded of the work of Jones and Jenkins (2008): I needed information and guidance, and having placed myself at the centre of the learning, felt unhappy that the information wasn't readily available to me when I needed it.[39] After consideration I realized that, as the FPPL states: "learning takes patience and time", and that principle also applies to a teacher's learning, not just a high school student. What I needed to learn was that others do not necessarily share my schedule

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[38] https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/curriculum/social-studies/12/bc-first-peoples

[39] See pp 9-10.

or needs, and if I'm teaching according to *Łoomsk*, I shouldn't expect to be everyone's top priority.

I also learned in the data collection period of the classroom inquiry that the plans I made pre-data collection were a bit unrealistic. Originally, I outlined a schedule for forming a focus group of students with whom I would meet with once every couple of weeks or so and discuss our shared decolonizing journey in depth, and for meeting with our counselling department to arrange a counselor visit to my classroom to discuss the focal group and hand out forms. What I didn't anticipate was that my students were not interested in being part of such a group and participating in meetings with me. Upon reflection I wondered if I didn't explain the nature of the focal group correctly; perhaps I overwhelmed the students with my own enthusiasm? Perhaps the students were simply shy. There was therefore no meeting with the counselling department, and no classroom visit from a counsellor.

4.4. Section I: December, 2018

On the first day of the classroom inquiry I had my 25 students sit in a circle in order to facilitate conversation[40]. Although we discussed the protocols of sitting in circle (don't interrupt the speaker, don't cut through the circle if you need to leave, etc), our activity was not a true Indigenous-inspired circle experience as I gave the students each a question card from a pre-packaged set which I had purchased from an educational vendor[41]. I did this so that the students would have a straightforward entrance into classroom discussion; having been in high school for only two months, the students were shy and needed encouragement to speak, despite the fact that the cards and discussion were in English. Much of our discussion that day was in English, despite the fact that this amount of English in a core French class is frowned upon by many second language teachers (see my discussion of this issue in Chapter 3). Many of the students who enter my core French classroom for the first time feel that they "can't learn French"

[40] Twenty-four students in the class and their parents had agreed to be part of the study, and one student (and his parents) had declined participation. This one student participated in all events during the three-month inquiry period, but was not observed and assessed as a part of the inquiry.

[41] We would have circles modeled more carefully on Indigenous circles later on as students got to know one another and develop *Wilwilaaysk.*

(often their parents will enable this attitude, saying that they themselves hated French in high school), or perhaps they find French quite difficult to learn, or irrelevant to their lives. I therefore strive to create a non-threatening environment, based on *Ama goot* and *Łoomsk,* which builds upon students' prior learning and (hopefully) puts them at ease. Not surprisingly, this has increased the amount of English spoken in class increased. Earlier in my career, I was more interested in promoting the learning of French and enjoyment of the French culture as it exists around the world; once I began to understand the hard truths of colonization, I became less interested in supporting French culture and more interested in engaging in truly transformative learning. I wanted my students to feel differently about living on Indigenous land once they had taken my French course. During my data collection period, I strove to find a balance between second language acquisition for the sake of acquisition, and using French to learn about unceded Ts'msyen land.

So during our circle time, which is technically French instructional time, we spoke English. It is our language of connection with each other. We may never reach the same level of mutual emotional understanding and *Wilwilaaysk* when speaking French; we aim for increased language acquisition, but not at the cost of building relationships, community, and trust. Without those basic elements, we won't be able to affect any meaningful change to our colonized classroom.

Later in the week we co-created our rules for the classroom. This is one area of teaching which involves both Western and Indigenous paradigms; while "classroom rules" sounds like a colonizing concept, they are necessary so that students understand not only their responsibilities, but their rights. For example, a rule which restricts cell phone usage makes it very clear to the students when their phones should be put away, thus reducing the possibility of misunderstandings and unnecessary conflict. If the cell phone rule makes it clear when students are able to use their phones, it gives the students agency to decide on their own if they need their phones during the appropriate windows, or if they can leave the phone in their backpack. Students, parents, educators, and administrators expect that the classroom teacher will be explicit about classroom behaviour at the beginning of the teaching term and be consistent with expectations as the term progresses.

But classroom rules do not need to be created by the teacher alone with no room for discussion. When my Grade 9s and I began our discussion of classroom behavioural expectations, I encouraged them to come up with the rules themselves, which I put up on the board for us to discuss as a class. I had hoped that the students might use Kelli's posters as a guide for our rules, as they were visible on the wall and had been previously pointed out to them. Many of the rules that the students created revolved around *Łoomsk*, but didn't take into account any of the other principles (such as *Wilwilaaysk*, which could be interpreted as not just "family" in the traditional sense, but the sense of community we wanted to create in the classroom). In hoping the students would make the connection between the posters' principles and our "classroom guiding principles", I missed the opportunity to make explicit the range and scope of what the posters could teach us. I have remedied this oversight in other classes since the classroom inquiry period, and asked students to frame our classroom guidelines under the umbrella of *Ama goot, Wilwilaaysk, La̱x yuup, Nda'aamx,* and *Łoomsk.*

Our first unit was *La Famille*, and the first thing we learned was how to situate ourselves:

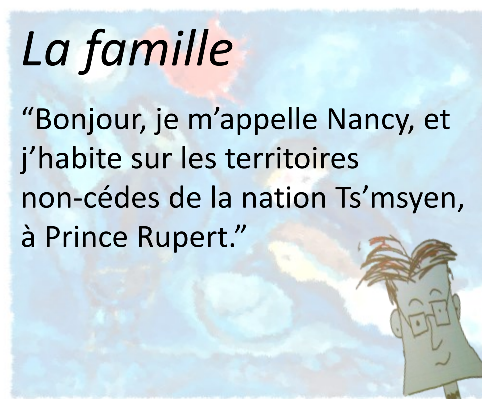

Figure 20. Situating ourselves in our "La Famille" unit

Later in the unit we learned about the matrilineal nature of crest identity in the Ts'msyen culture, and therefore amended our introduction to include our own clan names:

- *Ganhada*: Raven (le corbeau)
- *La̱xgyibuu:* Wolf (le loup)

- *Gisbutwada:* Killer whale or blackfish (l'orque)
- *Laxsgyiik:* Eagle (l'aigle)
- *Adabiis*: Butterfly (le papillon).[42]

It was during this unit that one of our district's Elders, Sm'oogyit Gitxoon (Alex Campbell) paid his only visit to our classroom. When I look back on my classroom inquiry, I regret that Elders were not more often present in my classroom, teaching students about clans and crests, connection to the land, and the importance of the Ts'msyen villages lining the banks of the Skeena River. In fact, Wap Sigatgyet was inundated with requests from dozens of classrooms in the district to arrange for Elder visits; there are only so many Elders available to visit classrooms and the demand is very high. Thus, although I made requests for Elders and knowledge-keepers to visit my classroom throughout the three-month classroom inquiry period, I was often informed that unfortunately, there was no one available at that time, or on that day. This is part of the reality of teaching in an era when more and more teachers are looking for ways to integrate Indigenous content in their practice in authentic ways. I am always grateful for the work that Wap Sigatgyet undertakes, and for their patient co-ordination of "supply and demand" when it comes to our Elders and knowledge-keepers.

Sm'oogyit Gitxoon's visit to our classroom was a great success. Most students knew him from visits he had made to their middle-school classes, and were pleased to see him; his stories and true-tellings about his life were fascinating, and he graced us with a mixture of both English and Sm'algyax, which illustrated to the students that the Sm'algyax language has a place in the French classroom.

As Mr. Campbell shared his stories with us, I had a sense of what Linda Tuhiwai Smith refers to when she speaks of "the story and the storyteller both [serving] to connect the past with the future, one generation with the other, the land with the people and the people with the story" (Smith, 1999, pp. 144-145). Mr. Campbell spoke of his own personal life history, not only that which related to his job and interests, but also to the role that the land played in his life, and the importance of the connection between people and the land when thinking about crests. I can't determine exactly what my

[42] See footnote 32.

students were thinking during Mr. Campbell's talk, but I could see that they were paying attention and seemed interested. I personally could feel the weight of the generations as he talked about his youth, and his deep connection with the land which he recounted in a way which seemed to invite us all to feel that deep connection. His sense of belonging did not only extend to the land; through his descriptions and stories of his family, his sense of identity as a member of his nation, clan, and family was evident. Through his stories about receiving his Chief's name (Gitxoon), the role of aunts and uncles in caring for and educating nieces and nephews, and reverence in which grandparents were held, I found myself thinking about the tenuous relationships in my own family; did my students also feel a emotional pull toward the close and meaningful relationships in traditional Ts'msyen families? When Mr Campbell was introducing and situating himself to my class at the beginning of his visit (see page), he gave not only his own name, but that of his grandmother as well, as is customary (in knowing Mr. Campbell's grandmother's name, one might better situate him in his family and clan). What a difference from my own experiences, where providing my mother's or grandmother's name would be neither usual nor useful when introducing myself to people. There are any reasons why this is so (I come from a city thousands of kilometers from where I reside; my family isn't organized into a clan structure, etc), but I can't help but admire the family bonds illustrated through Ts'msyen culture and the Sm'algyax language.

As this was the only visit that Mr. Campbell was able to make to my classroom this trimester, I hoped that my students appreciated his presence as much as I did. I was heartened when my students reminded me that we needed to give him a gift, as it meant that they knew and appreciated the proper protocols to follow when an Elder offers stories and information. Their behaviour during class was very respectful, and all listened intently. When I spoke to the students after Mr. Campbell had left, I asked them if they had enjoyed his visit, and their responses were quite interesting: some of the non-Indigenous students felt that his stories were a bit disjointed and that he was wordy, but those who were Ts'msyen felt that Mr. Campbell's stories were supposed to be that long, and that the listeners couldn't always immediately figure out what we were supposed to learn from them. I didn't feel that I had any authority to comment on the Ts'msyen students' thoughts, other than to acknowledge them, and praise the class's good behaviour. I was grateful for the opportunity which Mr. Campbell had created for

the class to not only learn from him through story, but be exposed to an Indigenous way of storytelling.

Throughout the course of my inquiry, my path crossed with Mr. Campbell in circumstances other than visits to my classroom. He often could be found in the Sm’algyax language and culture classroom, and I enjoyed popping in whenever he was there to practice saying good morning (Ama ga̲nłaak) or good afternoon (Ama g̲awdi süügyax), and ask him how he was feeling (Ndeeyu wila waan?). As mentioned in Chapter 2, I conferred with him on several occasions to get his feedback on work I was doing in my doctoral program. I also very much enjoyed attending his Sm’algyax language and culture classes each Tuesday evening in our high school, which I did for several months in 2018-2019. It was through those classes that I learned traditional introductions and acknowledgements, as well as the Sm’algyax terms for various family members. One of our assignments for his class was to create our own family tree in Sm’algyax; I put my completed tree on my whiteboard where it remains to this day.

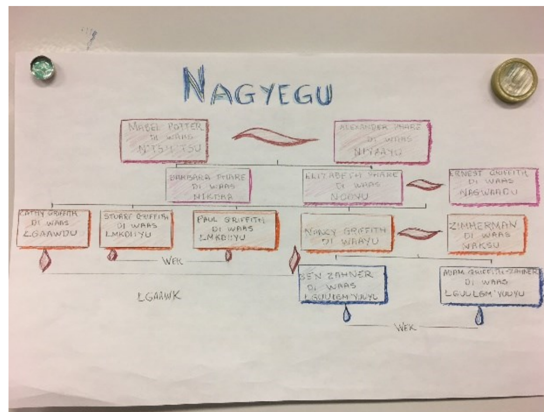

Figure 20. My family tree in Sm’algyax

As our *La Famille* unit continued on, I kept my metaphoric eye on the principles of Kelli’s posters, asking how my teaching style could enhance the sense of *Wilwilaaysk* in the classroom. I kept to a slow pace of introducing new content, allowing opportunities for discussion about the nature of our homework, tests, and quizzes, and encouraging student self-advocacy by soliciting their opinions and discussing them respectfully. Trying to force fluency in the artificial language learning environment of a classroom creates unnecessary stress, especially considering that for most of my Grade 9 students (and all of the Grade 9 students in this study), my classroom is their first

exposure to a French specialist teacher and the first time that correct spelling is mandatory. So a slower pace of teaching, as far as the school schedule will allow, has the potential to ease student stress and create a calm atmosphere in the classroom. I hoped that, as the term progressed, my students and I would observe each other, build knowledge and familiarity, and ultimately, trust and respect.

I remember thinking back to my microsite experience, outlined in Chapter 2, and how the repeated visits and slow learning in that setting were transformational for me. Could that sort of slow learning environment exist in the classroom, if teachers created an atmosphere of patience and trust, of gentle learning and open minds? Although I followed the Ministry of Education's core French curricula, there is nothing in that document which mandates in what atmosphere I teach the material. So I presented the material in a way that felt similar to how the microsite and I interacted: a slow, peaceful way that allowed for mistakes, the need for extra time, and the fear of looking foolish in front of the class. I certainly wanted my students to build their second language fluency, but I was more interested in how they *felt* about learning a second language, how they *felt about themselves* as language learners, and how they *experienced themselves as members* of our little language community.

The language classroom has to transcend the four walls which define it, just as the microsite transcended its boundaries of soil, leaf, bark, and stone. By opening itself to me, the microsite became something very special in my mind and heart, and opened me to experiences which rose above the mundane and were profoundly transferable to other areas of my life. I wanted my students to feel that way about the French classroom: not so much because of the items within the boundaries of its four walls, but because of the emotions that they felt when they're in there: acceptance, community, trust, respect, love. When they feel those qualities, and let them flow into their hearts, the true and important learning can take root and grow, including of course, acknowledgement of and respect for Ts'msyen land and culture.

As we continued on with our unit, and true to the second-language pedagogy I described in Chapter 3, the students and I took every opportunity to play games (some of which provided opportunities to practice French, but not all of them). What all the games are designed to do, however, is to foster community and a sense of trust and fun. Sanford et al's Ways of Knowing (2012; Figure 17) state that in a learner-teacher

collaborative classroom, “students have multiple opportunities for success and quiet recognition”; when we all played games together, the playing field between teacher and student was levelled; without the cliques and hierarchies which inevitably exist in a high school classroom (including the power imbalance between teacher and student), we were all equals.

The last week of school before Christmas break (December 13-December 19) was spent continuing on with our vocabulary for La Famille, and preparing for Hanukkah and Christmas parties. At these parties I taught my students how to play the dreidl game, with a bit of Hanukkah history thrown in. We played our favourite games, had a secret Santa gift exchange, and of course ate a lot of food. I love any occasion which allows me to have a party in class, as not only do we enjoy ourselves with food and games, but we participate in stress-free shared experiences which not only build community, but also create a common history. I was looking forward to my Christmas holiday, but I would be happy to be back in the classroom in January.

4.4.1. Section I (December): Reflections

Each new term seems to begin in the same way in my Grade 9 French classes: new to the school and certainly new to the rigours of secondary core French, many of the students are nervous about their new French teacher (who has a very undeserved reputation amongst the middle school students as a slave driver), as well as unsure and perhaps a little defensive about their perception of required French skills for Grade 9. Thus, usual behaviour patterns in the first couple of weeks involve sullen glares; endless chatting, pencil and eraser throwing; and mumbling answers to my questions in a volume indecipherable in any language, sleeping, and declarations that they don’t like being in French class and are going to drop it at the counseling office at their earliest opportunity.

Certainly some students remain steadfast in their view that my classroom is not for them as we move through the term; there is always some level of attrition which takes place at the Grade 9 level. I found with this French 9 class however, that although one student didn’t want to participate in the study, all students remained in my class for the duration of the trimester. I can’t point to any one aspect of my teaching which may have contributed to this welcome occurrence; perhaps it had nothing to do with my

teaching at all. Yet it does suggest that, to some extent at least, all the students experienced a sense of *Wilwilaaysk* in our class, and that makes me happy.

I think the highlight of December for me was our visit from Mr. Campbell. As I've noted previously, the importance of consultation with Elders when imbuing Indigeneity into the classroom cannot be overstated:

> Classroom visits by Aboriginal elders, experts, and role models from the Aboriginal community were…found to motivate all the students, enhance the pride of Aboriginal students in Aboriginal knowledge, culture, and achievements, inform Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students about Aboriginal issues, and create connections between curriculum topics and the real world of Aboriginal students (Kanu, 2011, p. 151).

As I stated earlier, however, a one-time visit from an Elder is not the ideal situation for a teacher who is trying to decolonize her classroom. My classroom experiences might have been more meaningful and authentic if I had put more time into building relationships between myself, Wap Sigatgyet, and our Elders. As well, our Indigenous knowledge-keepers would have had more knowledge of our efforts at decolonization, and could have offered further guidance through their observations and questions (Wilson, 2008; Battiste, 2013). Despite the real limitations in the Elders' availability noted earlier, to the extent that I could have tried to have more Elder visits in my classroom, I did my students a disservice.

Other questions came to mind as I reflected back on our experiences in December. We live on culturally rich Indigenous land, but we also live in a rainforest, and in the month of December, winds are high and the rain is heavy. My class and I didn't venture outside for any of our learning, partly because arranging for Elders was challenging, but also because of the inclement weather. Since this data-collection period in 2018-19, I have often taken my French classes outside, together with our Sm'algyax teacher as well as with other knowledge-holders, both when the weather is nice and also when it's rainy. It must be said, though, that based on my experiences, little learning takes place in the pouring rain. But perhaps that's an excuse that I've formulated so that I don't have to feel cold and wet, and a perspective that doesn't take account of the long, slow arc of learning I experienced in the microsite and in other connections with the land.

Although I made daily use of the metacognition superhighway in my teaching and in my own personal transformative journey, I took special care to reflect on my practice and my own progress at the end of each month. I had been teaching in this classroom inquiry just shy of three weeks, but I felt that I had made progress in examining my own biases and taking a hard look at the role I played when interacting with Elders and Indigenous knowledge-keepers. I scrutinized my commitment to *Nda'aamx* and whether I understood the true meaning of *Ama goot* and the role it played in my classroom, in interactions with my peers, and in my personal life. I reflected upon how *Wilwilaaysk* manifested itself in our classroom, and how I might further support that sense of community. I noted that so far we had not developed our relationship to *La̲x yuup* very effectively, and that would be an element of our classroom experiences that I would have to re-imagine. But I felt that my actions, and the actions of my students reflected our commitment to *Łoomsk*, and set us on a good path to meaningful and respectful learning.

What did we accomplish in December 2018? I look back on my notes, my webpage, and revisit our classroom experiences in my memory, and I can see that alongside our learning of French language, we learned about Ts'msyen matrilineal crests and their importance in Ts'msyen life. We learned about the villages which line the Skeena River and the importance of adaawx. We also learned a few words in Sm'algyax, and found ourselves surrounded by Indigenous art on my classroom walls. Was this enough to weave a new narrative between Indigeneity and the French classroom? Had I made clear to the students the importance of Ts'msyen culture through my French teaching? It was hard to tell after one month of teaching, but my spirits and hopes were high that there remained a great deal of potential for transformation and growth on the part of my students, and myself.

4.5. Section II: January, 2019

The return to the classroom after Christmas break is tough for everyone, not just students. We all needed to get back into the habit of early rising and the expectations and routines of school, so I was sure to begin our first few days in circle with muffins and tea, and respectful interactions about our holidays, our viewpoints, or whatever else the students wanted as a conversation topic. This served to ease us into our learning and act as a bridge between holiday and school day schedules.

Our plan for the next few weeks included preparing ourselves for our capstone project for *La Famille* (a family tree poster with a verbal presentation), and beginning our next unit, *La Ville* (The City). During the course of our family unit I quite enjoyed using members of my own family to illustrate grammar and verb concepts, as well as content; it was my hope that by personalizing my teaching the students would feel a greater sense of connection and belonging—and perhaps a sense of fun, as my stories are sometimes a bit exaggerated for the sake of humour. This has resonance with Indigenous traditions; Archibald tells us that "humour through teasing, joking, and telling funny stories is a very important cultural interaction. Humour indicates that the group is comfortable with and open to each other… I believe that humour has a healing aspect for both the story teller and the listener…" (Archibald, 2008, p. 60).[43] Through these and other strategies, I hoped to keep *Wilwilaaysk* in our minds as we told stories about family, as well as *Łoomsk* as we worked together to adapt the capstone preparation process to suit the individual needs of the students. In fact, I found that the students worked hard to do the best job that they could, and I adapted the evaluation process for each in order to reduce their stress (more on this in the early January entries in Appendix A). As part of this, I asked them to do a self-evaluation, both for their own benefit but also so I could check (triangulate) my own impressions of their learning and participation in the class (see further comments below).

The next unit, *La Ville,* was an exciting one for me, as my plan for it involved highlighting and celebrating the Indigeneity of our city. Not only would we be acknowledging the crest poles, carving shed, and longhouse in Prince Rupert, but we would be learning the French vocabulary for numerous cultural artifacts, including woven cedar hats and bentwood boxes (more on this in Appendix A). My plan was to include the students' introduction from *La Famille* (in which they situate themselves on Ts'msyen territory) then have them weave Indigenous content into their descriptions of visiting various shops around our city.

Wilson (2008) speaks of the importance of the connection between the reader of a document (such as his books, or this dissertation) and the people involved in the document's research study. If you read the details of this study in Appendix A, you'll see

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[43] Those interested in the context for these references can find it in "Appendix A: My Classroom Journal" under January 7's entry.

that as my students and I journeyed through the first few weeks of the trimester and finished our first unit, fledgling relationships between myself and the students were forming. Daily observation and engaging in activities with students builds relationships, but I found that I learned a great deal from my students' January 21st self-evaluations. Self-evaluations are a unique and powerful assessment tool for both students and teachers, as students can document their experiences without having to share them verbally with the class, but still need to work within the constraints of a "formal" document (so they need to keep their language appropriate, as their teacher will be reading their words and possibly sharing with parents if appropriate). For example, I was delighted that students who didn't seem to enjoy the class much had completed their self-evaluations and had provided useful information. Others realized that, as there was a local Indigenous element to our French learning, our units could not be taught in a different location without adaptation. Some of these discoveries were small, but I appreciated the students' honesty and felt a strong sense of community with them, even those who resisted my attempts at informality in our learning.

A few days after we returned from our break, I had to remind my students to check our webpage, which was a "soft" requirement for the course ("soft" meaning that I had instructed the students that the webpage is a vital resource which they should check each day, but I didn't penalize them in any way if they didn't). Not only did the daily entries summarize the activities from that day, but I also included pictures of my notes on the whiteboard, links to any online resources we might have referenced, links to websites which might help the students with tricky verb or grammar points, and a recap of the day's homework. (In the last couple of years I have also been linking my worksheet files to the page, so that students who have been away can do the homework before they come back to class.) Providing such a comprehensive resource is, to my mind, a way of encouraging and supporting students to find their own solutions and take responsibility for their own learning (Sanford et al; First Peoples' Principles of Learning). It is an important expression of Łoomsk, in keeping with a conception of Indigenous education as a strengths-based, learner-centered practice that "begins with educators knowing their students as individuals and configuring instruction to connect with their interests and build on their strengths to engender confidence and enjoyment in learning" (Government of BC, 2015, p. 12).

One day in January we were discussing what sort of activities students enjoyed, as well as what their families enjoyed recreationally (this was near the end of our *La Famille* unit). We came up with the following activities:

To draw

To play video games, volleyball, hockey, golf

To swim

To read

To dance

To write music

To cook

To watch tv

To nap

To run

To make models

One of the students suggesting hunting, and as soon as he made that suggestion, it occurred to me that we could have had a discussion previous to this exercise about traditional activities that people in this area might participate in. How might I have included some local content in this list without overtly influencing the students? This wasn't just a list of "what people like to do", it was a list of what their particular family members like to do, and they were being comprehensive and honest. But this would have been a wonderful opportunity to discuss such activities as berry picking, fishing, gathering seaweed, harvesting abalone, and other activities which are conducted by Indigenous nations in the appropriate seasons. This would have been a wonderful tie-in to the seasonal rounds posters which are already in my classroom[44], and as well could have encouraged the students to tell us a story about parents, aunts and uncles, grandparents, cousins, and siblings, creating "personal narratives of place, happenings, and experiences" which not only serve to entertain and educate the listeners, but also reinforce the strong relationship between stories and knowing

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[44] These are a series of twelve posters depicting the Sm'algyax name for each month, with a pictorial representation of traditional activities for that month. For example, the month of January, Ha'lisuwiliinsk (trapping month) has an illustration of a hunting camp in the mountains. These posters are available to all SD52 teachers through our Indigenous Education Department.

(Kovach, 2009, p. 95). Perhaps I could have made it an exercise for the students to describe what the characters in the seasonal rounds were doing, then ask them if they wanted to include those activities in their list?

Sadly, it was too late by the time I had thought of it; it would have felt a bit as if I was trying to crowbar in Indigenous content rather than it flowing organically. I felt that shifting gears like that would be disingenuous and a bit disloyal to what I wanted to do. But it was still a missed opportunity, and in classes since this time I have made use of the seasonal rounds (which I put up in my classroom in the same week that Mr. Campbell had noticed that they were missing) to suggest traditional activities for our list. Harvesting abalone never made it to the list, but berry picking and fishing certainly did, with rich conversation (in English) ensuing about the relationship between the ripeness of salmonberries in relation to the schedule of salmon spawning, and the breathtaking run of oolichan in the Skeena and Nass rivers which takes place each March.

This lost opportunity for including Indigenous content in an organic way caused me to reflect on the mindfulness of my approaches, and what I could realistically expect as an outcome. I wrote to my thesis advisor about it:

> *I spend a lot of time each day thinking and writing about the progress of the research… I know that the Grade 9 class is going really well; the kids are very engaged and aren't stressed about their French abilities. I have to think that this is partially due to my teaching according to Indigenous ways of knowing… but I have to ask myself how successful I'm being in relation to my actual guiding thesis thought [how the teaching of French can earn the ethical right to be taught on unceded Indigenous land]. I'm trying to have my French class support and respect the fact that we're on Indigenous land, Ts'msyen land specifically, but I'm not sure that my students are actually more aware of the Indigeneity of Prince Rupert or how important it is to support and respect local Indigenous culture. I'm wondering if I'm just putting a fresh coat of paint and new curtains on the same colonized house that I've always lived in, so to speak.*

Looking back, I'm not surprised that I felt some uncertainty as to the "success" of my inquiry; reflection often highlights doubts and second thoughts. There was nothing inherently simple about acknowledging and respecting Indigeneity in a core French program; I was trying to create an environment in my classroom that not only had the students' best interests at heart but also could be a place where Indigenous Elders might feel that their culture is recognized. To do so optimally and authentically, I needed much

more experiencing weaving together Western and Indigenous practices in the language classroom. This is a journey which is still ongoing today.

We began our second unit, *La Ville,* in the third week of January, and we discussed what the unit would entail. We would learn the names of various shops (bakery, deli, pharmacy, etc.), who worked there, and what one might buy there, but we would also discuss aspects of Indigeneity visible in Prince Rupert, both in public spaces and in our local museum. The capstone project would be a narrative constructed by the students describing a trip around town: where they went, to whom they spoke, and what they bought (or didn't buy).

In the first days of the unit, we did some verb and vocabulary work before we sat in circle to discuss our options for outings. I had three options to present to the class: to go to our local museum, to go to the All Native Basketball tournament (a must for any BC north coast fan of basketball), and to watch the movie *Edge of the Knife* (a movie written and produced by and starring members of the Haida Nation, presented in the Haida language *Haad Kiil* with English subtitles). The class voted for the first two options, and a tentative yes to the movie if there was time to watch it in class.

In hindsight I can see that I missed the opportunity for a deeper sense of connection to land and to the concept of colonized and decolonized spaces by not considering the value of walks along trails, into parks, along creeks, and even into downtown stores to discover for ourselves the ways in which our city is presented to us, and what these spaces are saying about the Indigeneity (or lack thereof) of Prince Rupert. For example, our museum, which I discuss further in the next section (February), is considered an Indigenized space by our school district and our townspeople in general; tours are held there which have an option of observing dance, song, and other protocol in a nearby traditional structure, as well as visits to artists in an adjacent carving shed. Rich discussion could have been generated by this métissage of Indigenous culture housed in a Western paradigm of "hours open to the public" and admission fees (not to mention the Starbucks across the street from the museum, nestled in a corner of a Safeway). We might have asked ourselves, "which voices and faces are imagining and shaping urban public spaces? Do I see myself here?" (Jawanda, 2022); and if we don't, whose faces do we see? And of course, acknowledging the Indigeneity of Prince Rupert in an active way (by going out of the

classroom and experiencing it first hand) would afford many opportunities for my students to use French language as a medium for showing knowledge of and respect for Ts'msyen culture.

4.5.1. Section II (January): Reflections

There was much that was accomplished in January which was very positive and moved us forward in our goal of normalizing Indigeneity in the core French classroom. With the First Peoples Principles of Learning and the Ways of Learning documents as my guides, I was able to facilitate relationships and situations which created a sense of community in the classroom and benefitted many of the students. Stories about grammar points and verbs with hurt feelings eased tensions in the room and encouraged students to remember not only their French but also the laughter associated with the learning. As well, I was pleased with the Indigenous content present in our "La Ville" unit, and how seamlessly the students incorporated Ts'msyen artifacts into their descriptions of their trip around the city.

January saw growth on the part of the students, and for me as well. Students were developing their French language competency, but at the same time were settling into their roles in the classroom: class clowns, "cool" girls, and students who were eager to "do school" successfully. Cliques such as these are a common part of the human experience (especially in schools), and my main concern was to ensure that I was connecting with each student successfully. The class clowns simply needed a receptive audience, and I found that the more enthusiastic I appeared at their antics, the more motivated they were to create situations where they could "perform" in front of the class: in other words, they completed their daily work well enough for them to be ready to come to the front of the class and entertain us. The students who wanted to do well at school craved positive affirmations several times per class, and I was careful to show *Łoomsk* by giving them that affirmation (or gently guiding them to a more realistic outlook if they were becoming stressed) in order to give them the motivation they needed to do their best work.

The "cool girls" were more of a challenge as on the surface they seemed to have little interest in developing a relationship with me other than a "crossing of paths" in the classroom. Again, with *Łoomsk* in mind, I interacted with this group in a way that I

thought they would appreciate: I was open and friendly, helpful when they needed it, but didn't try to force a "fun" relationship with them. As the weeks passed some of the "cool group" students let down their guard a bit and shared a smile or laugh with me on occasion, but for others, we didn't develop any sort of meaningful communication until after the inquiry period was over (see Chapter 5.1 and 5.1.1 for more detail).

I learned a lot in January about which methods achieved good results, and which methods didn't. As I reflected on my classroom experiences, I thought about my microsite experience, and how necessary things such as moss, mushrooms, and fronds contributed to the environment in a positive way; unnecessary things such as beer cans and pieces of plastic caused damage. As a teacher I needed to continue determining what is necessary and unnecessary in the classroom; put another way, I needed to differentiate between what was useful and supported the guiding principles of Kelli's posters, and what was not useful and perhaps interfered with not only the aims of the classroom inquiry but with general student learning and comfort.

As I reflected on January's learnings, I saw that I could have been more mindful of my end goal when interacting with students. The failure of my focus group plan was a good example of this, as was the missed opportunity in the *La Famille* unit to facilitate a discussion of traditional activities.   I reflected upon and re-envisioned my pedagogy: would it be possible for me to increase the Indigenous content of the lessons in a mindful way, while reinforcing *Łoomsk , Ama goot, Wilwilaaysk, La̲x yuup* and *Nda'aamx* in my teaching and in my relationships with my students? I examined our plans for February and March, and realized that our field trips in February would be a wonderful opportunity for me to increase our emphasis on Ts'msyen culture while maintaining our respectful, community-based atmosphere in the classroom.

4.6. Section III: February – March 2019

We finished up our *La Ville* unit this month, then embarked on our restaurant unit. This unit involves a student-created narrative (in skit form in front of the class) in which a pair of students decide they're hungry and make a telephone reservation at a restaurant. When they arrive at the "restaurant" (a table and chairs in my classroom), they interact with the waiter through confirming their reservation, requesting the location of a table (by the window, for example), and engaging in a conversation about available appetizers, main courses, desserts, and drinks. The students can decide how they want to end the skit (many decided to do a dine-and-dash, or argue about a mistake on the bill). Throughout the years this has always been a popular project with students, as they can customize the tone of their project to match their personalities: class clowns could have over-the-top dialogue, while the shyer students could simply perform the skit without any attempts at humour.

Before the restaurant unit began, however, we still had work to do on *La Ville.* One of the highlights of this time period was our long-planned trip to *Na Xbiisa Łagigyet* (the Museum of Northern BC), on February 7. The museum overlooks our waterfront, and is housed in a traditional cedar longhouse full of North Coast Indigenous artifacts used both in past times as well as in the present.[45] The rich collection includes argillite carving, Chilkat weaving, cedar bentwood boxes, spoons, rattles, and other important potlatch items, regalia, woven cedar mats and aprons, as well as many other items grounded in Ts'msyen culture and place. The museum has a magnificent, spacious front room filled with crest poles; its sheer size coupled with the importance of the artifacts inspired awe on the part of the students as well as myself. We began our tour in the room and listened to our guide read a Ts'msyen adaawx (sacred true telling) which described events depicted by one of the crest poles. The significance and depth

[45] A visit to a museum might not appear, on the surface, to be closely aligned with Indigenous ways of teaching. As a community-approved and supported endeavour, however, Na Xbiisa Łagigyet is a well-used and beloved organization in our community. It's true that artifacts are contained in glass cases, but the fact that the collections are housed in a longhouse which retains its aroma of cut cedar, that the guides are always Ts'msyen, and there is a view of water and cedar trees from every window encourages the visitor to overlook the colonized nature of walls and glass cases, and concentrate on the flow of Indigeneity which permeates our experiences there.

of meaning which existed between the adaawx and the pole were evident by the tremor in our guide's voice and the rapt attention paid by the students.

I was immersed in our learning during this tour; even to this day I remember how privileged I felt to be living in Prince Rupert, and to be offered such a rich amount of information about the thousands of years of Ts'msyen habitation in this area. Items that I had seen pictures of, or seen in jewelry or at potlatches, came to life as our Ts'msyen guide explained their significance in Ts'msyen historical and present-day life. I learned as much as the students, and I was very pleased to see that they all wrote down notes and were able to discuss their visit the next day in class.

The "Zimmerman" character[46] made an appearance this month to help the students with a narrative structure for their *La Ville* sentences, and he was greeted with much enthusiasm. As mentioned earlier, I feel the most comfortable situating my teaching in a narrative format; a peer once told me that stories are his love language, and I believe that most teachers enjoy storytelling, at least to varying degrees. (I spoke about the power of narrative in Chapter 3.4.2.) My love of bringing my family members into my stories to illustrate numerous points in my classroom also seemed to fit naturally with the value of *Wilwilaaysk* that we were trying to cultivate throughout the term.

Figure 21. The real Zimmerman

[46] Zimmerman is first mentioned in Chapter 3.4.2

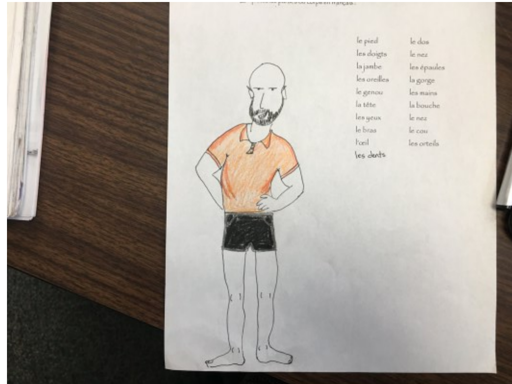

Figure 22. One of my better renditions

How did this work? Well, for example, when I was explaining the definition of a French word that is a bit slangy, rather than just tell the students what the word translates to in English, I'd tell them a story which always began with, "Imaginez que (Adam/Ben/Vanessa/Zimmerman) entre dans la sale de classe…" (Imagine that Adam/Ben/Vanessa/Zimmerman comes into the classroom…). Whomever I chose, be it my husband, one of my two sons, or my son's wife, they'd enact an imagined situation which led the students to the definition of the word in question. Other times I'd simply relate what I considered to be an amusing or relevant (true) story about the adventures of various family members. My students became used to seeing my cartoon renditions of my children, and especially Zimmerman, on the whiteboard. And, just like with the Zimmerman figure, the personae of my children (and daughter-in-law) got into all sorts of mischief as well as illustrating our experiences as a family.

As Vanessa is Haida and she and Adam now live in Old Masset on Haida Gwaii, their stories in my classroom—across all grade levels—often revolve around adventures on the beach in which they find all sorts of shells and agates, interactions they have with Haida artists and writers who are related to Vanessa, and the Vanessa persona explaining the meaning of crests on Haida crest poles. I often juxtapose these stories of Adam and Vanessa with tellings of my own life in Toronto, and how alienated I was from land-based learning and any aspect of Indigeneity growing up there in the 1970s. Thus I use my own stories, and the stories of my family, to illustrate my own lived experience as it applies not only to our French concepts but also as it applies to being a settler on Indigenous land. In this way, I hope to create a decolonizing space (Regan, 2010).

We had another guest visit us this month, and this experience, too, got me thinking about my classroom as an ethical third space. Our visitor was one of our vice-principals, Lori Burger, who as a member of both the Nisga'a and Cree Nations has a unique view of Indigeneity as it applies to her in Prince Rupert. As described in Appendix A, Lori spoke all about crests, sacred stories, the clan system, and the protocols of potlatch as they applied to her Nations. Lori spoke in English, of course, and I didn't want to stop her every few sentences to translate her words into French—a process which struck me as potentially tedious and disrespectful to a visitor. Indeed, it was the immediacy of Lori's words affirming the vital importance of the clan and crest system in her life, coming from a woman who is regarded as a kind authority figure by the students, that struck me as essential to her impact on the students. I sensed that it could help Sm'algyaxthem understand that expressions of Indigeneity through welcoming speeches and the teachings of Elders aren't simply part of an older generation's protocols; they are part of a living fabric of Indigenous relationships and ways of knowing. Thus the opening up of the French classroom to such first-hand Indigenous perspectives helps shape a third space for my students and myself where Indigenous and Western thought can come together in a meaningful way, even when French itself is temporarily in the background.

At this point in the trimester (toward the end of February), I felt that I was having some success with my project, as students were taking it as a matter of course that we would be weaving Indigeneity into our lessons. Not only were they receptive to vocabulary relating to Ts'msyen and north coast life, but they were now expecting that they would be consulted on content and format of lessons and evaluations, and were used to the format of receiving feedback from a partner or a group of four, then showing their learning to others. Almost all of the students in the class would volunteer to present a few lines of French (from the last night's homework, or work we were doing in class that day), and it was evident that the performers enjoyed showing off in front of the class, and the class enjoyed the performers' antics. Even the "mean girls" volunteered to present occasionally; this was a huge shift from their attitudes at the beginning of the trimester. Students were less likely now to ask me questions when doing group work than they were at the beginning of the trimester; rather, they talked amongst themselves to solve any problems they were having.

Teaching is never perfect, and there were still occasions when students didn't do their homework or feel a sense of involvement in what I was teaching. But my experiences with practitioner inquiry, self-study, and my metacognitive superhighway taught me to reflect upon the experiences and re-examine how I was presenting a learning outcome, revise my methods or perhaps content, and try again. If I expected my students to learn from their mistakes, I should do the same.

At the end of the trimester (and the end of the classroom inquiry period), I distributed a survey to the students which was designed to show me how useful the students found certain aspects of my pedagogy: tests, quizzes, use of circle, field trips, etc.[48] Looking back now, several years later, on this survey and these survey results, I find myself reliving the frustration that I felt when I first read the students' responses. It seemed that, in spite of all my learning and good intentions, I had created a dry and static structure to collect information from students, allowing them to provide their answers to me in a way which required the least amount of effort (ticking off entries in a chart). I doubt that any of my students felt that their viewpoints were adequately captured, or that the survey helped them experience or express any sense of accomplishment or passion about their journey and growth (Battiste, 2013). Nor had I found a way to help them reflect on whether, or how, infusing Indigenous culture into the units had helped them further their learning.

I have created many surveys since 2019, and I took the lessons I learned during the data collection period to heart as I wrote them. This included avoiding simple yes/no questions, along with any charts, graphs, or other visuals which might give students the false impression that a checkmark or circle could properly represent their points of view. In these later surveys I asked a lot of "why" and "how" questions, which would have served my 2019 Grade 9 students well. If I were to rewrite the questions in the chart with the benefit of hindsight, I would ask how those elements of our learning (tests, quizzes, projects, circle time, etc.) were useful, and why. I would also have found a way to ask the students about the effect of our Indigenous content and ways of knowing on their French learning, perhaps asking how they felt they were enhanced by the Indigenous inclusion. And of course, I would encourage them to reflect upon our

[48] The survey itself can be found in Appendix A, under the "March 11" entry.

learning through the lens of *Łoomsk, Ama goot, Wilwilaaysk, Lax yuup,* and *Nda'aamx*, which were our guiding principles from Kelli's posters throughout the semester.

4.6.1. Section III (February-March, 2019): Reflections

Although I had much to learn about the appropriate way to facilitate written feedback from students, I was pleased with the growth that I had experienced in this last part of the trimester, and in the increase in interest on the part of the students in Indigenous content. Unlike in the first month of the trimester where I facilitated the introduction of Indigenous content in the *La Famille* unit and the students took on a more passive role, by the time we reached the *Au Restaurant* unit, the students found it natural to introduce Indigenous content in the form of having their imaginary restaurants include traditional Indigenous food. Not only was the French vocabulary learned, but conversation about personal experiences with the food ensued; the experience felt inclusive and very positive.

On the surface, it seems that I did a good job at facilitating a museum outing for my students in our *La Ville* unit, and making the Indigeneity of Prince Rupert relevant to our French program. And I admit that the outing was successful on many levels: the students learned quite a bit of Ts'msyen history, we all had fun together, and everyone behaved well. But when I look back on it now, I'm reminded of the vision put forward by Linda Tuhiwai Smith as to what such learning could be like: "[there is a] centering of the landscapes, images, languages, themes, metaphors, and stories in the indigenous world and the disconnecting of many of the cultural ties between the settler society and its metropolitan homeland" (Smith, 1999, p. 146). I wonder, now, how an Indigenous educator might have tied the knowledge we gained from our museum visit to the land around us, and created assessment activities which properly contextualized our new knowledge? When I look at the sentences I gave my students to express the knowledge we'd gained, one could easily remove any of the Indigenous terms and slot in other, more Western words and concepts. Had I centered Indigenous landscapes, themes, or metaphors in this exercise? Certainly not as much as I should have. The students did what I asked them to do, in that they learned from the museum experience, and incorporated their vocabulary into their daily work and their end-of-unit project. But to what extent was this experience transformative for them? Or for me?

We of course discussed what we might see at the museum before we went there, and when we returned to class we had discussions as to the significance of what we witnessed and how the items related to the personal lives of the students (more on this on the February 7 and 8 entries in Appendix A). Several students were able to make a personal connection to items in the museum, and do so in a class discussion. This felt like a significant step towards normalizing the idea for my students that Ts'msyen culture (and a little bit of Sm'algyax) belong in the French classroom as well as everywhere else in the school. If I had been teaching French immersion, my students and I could have delved much more deeply into our roles as colonizers on Indigenous land as part of our Sciences Humaines course. But core French has at its foundation the development of French language competency, not the use of French to learn about other subjects, and thus my hands were tied to a certain degree. Incorporating key vocabulary into formulaic sentences was arguably a necessary first step, but I was still feeling my way into what might be possible.

I was also experimenting in a more comprehensive way with allowing students to have input into the format and content of instruction and assessment According to Sanford et al,.(2012), this is congruent with Indigenous teaching philosophies, as it encourages teachers to think of different ways to connect with and honour the individuality of students. Thus I gave students agency to have input into almost every aspect of assessment and evaluation, with lots of conversation about content. Encouraging students to trust their own viewpoints about our curriculum created an environment which was rich with ideas and enthusiasm (for most of the students). And student input served me well; giving up some of the control which is often hoarded by teachers was liberating, reduced my stress, and played a part in creating a feeling of *Wilwilaaysk* between myself and my students.

Since the time of this study, I have continuously delegated decisions to students, and their input has always been creative and appropriate. This attitude has also worked well in non-academic pursuits: I delegated a great deal of decision making and legwork for the fundraising for a Grade 12 trip to Haida Gwaii to a selection of students, and they were so successful at raising money at their two-day bake sale that they were commended by our administration. "Learners are guided to find their own solutions and answer their own questions" is an important part of Sanford et al's Ways of Knowing,

and these diverse forms of learner-teacher collaboration worked very well during the course of this study, and to the present day.

When teachers are teaching Indigenous content, emphasis is often put on the "supposed damage of Indigenous people in the supposed aftermath of colonization" and the lessons are "damage-centered" (Smith, Tuck, & Yang, 2018, p. 13). We as Canadians have a lot to unlearn about colonial history with Indigenous nations, and as our curricula in BC is inclusive of Indigenous content, it behooves all educators to learn the truth of Indigenous history in Canada before we are able to embark on a pathway toward reconciliation. If I was teaching Social Studies or History at my high school, there would be an emphasis on stolen lands, residential schools, the Sixties Scoop, and other atrocities, as is mandated by the BC Ministry of Education. A teacher would have to be mindful to avoid "damaged-centered" lessons in those subjects. But in the core French classroom, we can learn about Ts'msyen culture by concentrating on content which the students can relate to from their everyday lives. Our lessons learned from Mr. Campbell and Lori Burger were joyful, as was most of the Indigenous content in the units49. This coupled with the positive reception on the part of the students of Indigenous teaching and learning philosophies (as offered my guiding documents) made for a generally joyous classroom and positive associations with the learning of French.

4.7. Summative Reflections: Looking for Truth

As I sifted through the data generated by my various data collection methods (group and one-on-one interviews, classroom observations, conversations, tests, and projects), it was tempting to look for convergences and divergences in order to locate a "truth" which could be born from the classroom inquiry. Earlier in this thesis I discussed the various types of triangulation (data, investigator, theory, and methodological). At one time I thought that, by looking at the data through a methodological triangulation lens, I

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[49] I am not of course advocating shying away from darker elements of Indigenous history (and current challenges). That would not be a truthful or respectful way to acknowledge the Indigeneity of our city and province. There are many ways in which our school addresses this type of learning, including the commemoration of specific days such as Red Dress Day, which brings attention to Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/) or Orange Shirt Day, which educates us on the atrocities of Residential Schools (held on the same day as National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, September 30; https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/campaigns/national-day-truth-reconciliation.html). What took place in our classroom was only a small part of this larger context.

might find a definitive Truth to share with my readers. I sifted through my own knowledge, based on my experiences not only as a teacher but also as someone who has lived more than 60 years on this planet, and re-examined much of what I held to be true in light of what I was learning from student observations, my own research (books, webinars, workshops), guests in my classroom, guides (such as at our museum), Indigenous knowledge-keepers, and of course our Elders. The Truth that I found is that ongoing growth and refinement inevitably reshapes our perceptions and beliefs. And just as my own personal beliefs underwent (and continue to undergo) a strong shift, so did my views on my role in the classroom (less authority figure, more guide and facilitator), the content being discussed (less based on French culture, more consciously oriented towards Indigenous and local content), and the role of the students in this learning (less objects of my perceptions and intentions as a teacher, more respected co-learners whose viewpoints should always be considered and put into effect when viable).

If I had been looking for a definitive statement regarding the effect of my inquiry on the students, such as drawing a direct correlation between their output and attitudes and their exposure to Indigeneity, I would have missed the point of this thesis. The classroom inquiry was not designed to prove or disprove a hypothesis, and was so rife with factors beyond my control that it would have been counter-productive to attempt to do so. Useful insights were generated, however, through the triangulation of information gleaned from my own classroom observations and conversations I had individually (or in groups) with my students. The topics could range from the fairly mundane (a student didn't like our circle sharing times simply because we sat too close together; this was easily remedied, and thus my observations about the efficacy of sitting in circle could be more accurate) to something a bit more important (such as discovering the difference between what I thought was successful in the classroom and what students actually thought about whether an activity supported our journey of decolonization. For example, although I didn't learn this until our post-inquiry interview (see Chapter 5.1), one student felt that in order to show true respect for Indigenous nations we should have spent a lot more time outdoors).

Other insights came through triangulating data which was generated solely by students. By examining cross-method notes on a certain student, for example, I was able to determine how they best learned, what elements of a French classroom appealed to them, (such as games and competitions, for example), and which elements

did not appeal to them (for most students, it was speaking French in front of others). I could therefore adjust my approaches with a particular student, perhaps encouraging a pairing with another student who felt similar anxieties (there's strength in numbers), or, through a private conversation, co-constructing a plan for eventual "public" French conversation which might begin with practice with me, practice with a friend, then building up gradually to a more public demonstration of their oral language skills (on the student's terms, honouring the student's proposed "conversation timeline"). Although this shift in teaching doesn't centre around Indigenous content, it was fueled and supported by *Ama goot, Wilwilaaysk,* and *Łoomsk:* I was consciously striving to make the students feel respected, included, and important as members of our small family. I judged the efficacy of these accommodations by observing, among other things, the demeanor of the student, their willingness to make an effort toward a difficult task, and whether they were able to complete the task.

Although I was the only practitioner directly involved with the classroom inquiry, there was opportunity for investigator triangulation in that three month period; however, the usefulness of that triangulation may be small. I have always had an open-door policy and welcome any visitors to my classroom, and during the inquiry I would often track down these visitors during lunch, break, or after school and have an informal conversation with them about what they had witnessed in my classroom—keeping in mind that, whether I had asked them to pay me a visit or they had just dropped in of their own accord, the visits were very informal. Their comments on my classroom were always very positive and complimentary, and while it was difficult to know how seriously to take them, I paid attention to the aspects of my teaching that the visitors mentioned—usually student engagement and classroom management. A thought for my own future growth is that if a teacher, administrator, district staff member or community member accepts an invitation to my classroom, I might ask them to watch for a particular concept or teaching method to help me determine its efficacy, and have a more structured discussion with them after the class. Not all visitors would be comfortable doing that, as many of them don't speak French or are perhaps in a different place on their personal decolonization journey, but I would value the viewpoints of all who wished to share them with me.

In her article "Indigenous and Authentic", Manulani Aluli Meyer (2008) discusses a different sort of triangulation: the Triangulation of Meaning. Urging us to "put on the

tea, here we go" (p. 217), she outlines the triangulation of body, mind, and spirit, offering many examples of this triangulation from various cultural sources, including Buddhist, Māori, Hawaiian, Indigenous, and philosophers such as Plato, Spinoza, Hawkins, and Wilber. Examples, starting with body, then mind, then spirit, include *objective/ subjective/cultural*, *emotion/feeling/awareness*, and *hearing/thought/meditation.* (p. 227)

I am drawn to these examples of body/mind/spirit triangulation experiences; they remind me of the LUCID tools of engagement taught during my Master's program[50]:

TOE - Tools Of Engagement

Somatic Understanding	Mythic Understanding	Romantic Understanding	Philosophic Understanding	Ironic Understanding
bodily senses emotional responses & attachments rhythm & musicality gesture & communication referencing intentionality	story metaphor abstract binary opposites rhyme, meter, & pattern joking & humour forming images sense of mystery games, drama & play	sense of reality extremes & limits of reality association with heroes wonder humanizing of meaning collections & hobbies revolt & idealism context change	drive for generality processes lure of certainty general schemes & anomalies flexibility of theory search for authority & truth	limits of theory reflexivity & identity coalescence particularity radical epistemic doubt

Figure 23. LUCID Tools of Engagement

Imagine, then, triangulating data obtained through body, mind, and spirit as framed by these tools of engagement:

…observing students finding the rhythm and musicality of French while they form emotional responses to the fauna and topography of the land,

…watching them draw inferences from Indigenous story and metaphor,

…describing heroic acts of Indigenous artists and activists in French,

…and perhaps finding their own identity through situating themselves as a French learner on Indigenous land, taught by both a French teacher and Indigenous

[50] Developed for LUCID by Calder, Griffith-Zahner, Pudsey and Sawka • September 22, 2009, these can be found at https://circe-sfu.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/LUCID-toolkit.pdf

Elders with the shared aim of respecting Indigeneity in a classroom formerly steeped in colonialism.

For me, this is an inspiring endeavour, and a definite professional goal. Although we didn't always engage the Somatic tools of engagement (other than through eating and sitting in circle), we found ourselves learning through the Mythic and Romantic tools, as we wove narratives to find our way through grammar concepts, as well as to show our appreciation of the Indigenous artifacts in Prince Rupert (through our *La Ville* unit). We let our imaginations wander as Mr. Campbell told us stories of his early life which illustrated Ts'msyen custom and protocol, as well as Lori Burger's informative stories about her life and her culture. And certainly our journey toward reconciliation involved a shake-up of classroom content, with an emphasis on moving away from the idea that the study of core French didn't include any Sm'algyax or mindful Indigenous content; could we interpret this as an act of idealistic revolt, which is a Romantic tool? Perhaps there wasn't much a revolution during the inquiry period, but it certainly created a setting through which further efforts could expand beyond my specific classroom.

Nonetheless, I can see some missed opportunities to weave together the tools of engagement during the three-month inquiry period. For example, in other time periods we enjoyed visits from Elder Marlene Clifton, who taught my various classes how to drum and sing welcoming and warrior songs in Sm'algyax. (She unfortunately was not available during our inquiry period, and is the only Elder who teaches drumming in our district.) As well, additional trips outside for my Grade 9 class would have engaged their bodies, minds, and spirits, but due to inclement weather and perhaps a lack of organization on my part, our trips outside were limited.

Perhaps it is too much to expect that high school students might reach the Philosophic tool of engagement, as it requires deep and sophisticated thinking. But I tend to think that my students and I took a step or two on that pathway as we acknowledged our doubts surrounding Canada's innocence in their relationships with Indigenous nations, and examined our own feelings and emotions in regard to living on Indigenous land. As well, might we imagine that our searching for an ethical third space between Western and Indigenous cultures from which to teach and learn was a kind of Philosophic striving for truth? Whether or not we achieved this sophisticated level of

thinking, there is always further opportunity for all of us to reflect upon our roles as visitors on this territory, and what our place might be in the journey toward reconciliation.

Chapter 5. The Ongoing Learning Journey

Five years have passed since I worked with the Grade 9 class in 2018-2019, and in that time I have continually reflected upon my experiences with my students and how those experiences furthered my decolonization journey. I'm grateful that I had the opportunity to embark upon this long road and am excited to continue this trek.

My classroom may be decorated with plants, shells, and driftwood, and may have weavings and posters from Indigenous artists on the walls, but these things, despite evoking feelings of calmness and connection to the land, are only surface representations of the teaching and learning which takes place there. There was certainly a time when I considered the look of my classroom to be, in and of itself, an indicator of my commitment to Indigeneity. But as I continued on my journey and was guided by Elders and knowledge-keepers, I came to realize that what I considered "decorations" were imbued with meaning and depth, and although beautiful to look at, held deeper messages about community, respect, relationships, and trust as viewed through an Indigenous lens. For example, in the past I would think nothing of taking shells, driftwood, and even dropped eagle feathers from the beaches of Haida Gwaii to decorate my home and my classroom. But when I learned about the important symbolism of these items (especially the eagle feather, as it comes from the living representation of the Haida moiety Ts'áak',[51] and is often used for ceremonial purposes), I consulted with Haida Elders and matriarchs to see how I should proceed. It was suggested to me that I consider the driftwood and shells to be gifts from my Haida family, and that when I have no future use for them, I might return them to the beaches whence they came, or perhaps gift them to another educator. Knowing that I (retroactively) received permission to obtain these items imbues the items with additional meaning for me, and I'm grateful that I was permitted a graceful recovery from my oversight.

This level of transformative learning is what I want to encourage in my students: not just superficial understandings but a continual examination of our ways of thinking

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[51] More information about Haida moieties can be found at https://www.historymuseum.ca/cmc/exhibitions/aborig/haida/hapso01e.html

and of our commitment to respecting Indigeneity, uncovering new layers of understanding and appreciation as we journey.

In this final chapter I will reflect further on what I learned from my experiences during the inquiry period, and how those experiences shaped my further journey in the years which followed. I'll begin with the post-inquiry interview I held with my Grade 9 students three years after our work together, then offer some lessons learned from that interview. I will then discuss how my teaching practice has changed, highlighting shifts in my teachings as well as in my professional and personal relationships. Returning to some of my doctoral readings with fresh eyes deepened my appreciation of certain authors, and I will offer my reader those insights. I will also examine some of the work that I have done since 2019 which was inspired and informed by my inquiry in the classroom, and will finish with some insights based on my own experiences, for other second language teachers who might be on their own decolonization and Indigenizing journey.

5.1. Post-Inquiry Interview

I've often been asked by peers if my inquiry with my students was successful. With a study such as this, it is difficult to measure "success", or even be sure of what it might look like. If my aim was just to bring Indigenous content and ways of knowing and learning into my core French classroom to the best of my ability, then the study was a success. If my aim was to continue my journey to self-decolonization and the decolonization of the French classroom, then the study was also a success, as Indigeneity plays a much larger role in my teaching than it did previously, and I feel that I am in a better place in my journey than I was before the study.

But whether or not the students were affected by my efforts at decolonization is difficult to measure in any meaningful way. How does one get inside the mind and heart of another? There were plenty of conversations, many opportunities for observation, and countless formative assessment pieces as well as six summative evaluations. Nonetheless, there was no way for me to pinpoint the reason why a certain student might be happy in my class; high test marks could result from a number of factors, with my deliberate changes to my pedagogy only one part of the picture; and recognition of

the Indigeneity of Prince Rupert on the part of students might have been sincere, or based on their desire to give the teacher the answer she's looking for.

One way that I might learn more about the effect that this three-month experiment on students' minds and hearts would be to talk to them after the inquiry had ended and they could reflect back on their experiences through a more mature lens. This opportunity came in the spring of 2022.

On the Thursday before Easter break in April 2022, I made an announcement over the PA system at school inviting any of my students who were part of my inquiry project back in 2018-2019 to come to my classroom for a short and informal chat. I didn't expect all of them to attend, and in fact only eight out of twenty-four students dropped by. We sat around a large round table with mugs of our familiar vanilla tea and a plate of homemade cookies to share, and spent a few minutes catching up, as none of these eight students had continued with their French past Grade 11 (they were in Grade 12 and about to graduate at the time of this meeting). They told me all about how their classes were progressing and the attention to detail they had to muster for the numerous applications they had to fill out (admission, bursaries, etc.). After we had settled, I asked them if we could discuss their memories of our inquiry period, using their Grade 12 lens to interpret what we had done and what they were able to take away from the teachings of our classroom. I asked them a couple of questions to help direct and focus the conversation:

<u>Question #1</u>: What, if anything, was memorable about your Grade 9 French class?

One student indicated that what stuck out in her memory was the way in which we introduced ourselves at the beginning of each project. She added that it was the respectful thing to do (*Łoomsk)*, as we live on Indigenous land. Another student offered the view that we could still do more to show our respect for the Indigeneity of the land, and that politicians could show their acknowledgement of Indigenous land ownership "a bit better"; he also mentioned that land acknowledgements done at assemblies and at the beginning of meetings at our school seemed a bit perfunctory, and often a bit rushed.

One student said that what stood out for her was the fact that we talked about "aboriginal things" and that Indigeneity was integrated into everything taught in the classroom (in "full on sentences", which I presumed meant that we didn't just learn

random nouns, but rather put them into context. (This comment reminded me of the curriculum Big Idea, “We can have meaningful conversations in French about things that are important to us”.) She felt that Indigeneity was talked about more in my class than in other classes.

She continued her thought by noticing that her Grade 9 French experience was “such a different way to teach French”, and that it was a bit overwhelming. But another student added that none of the Indigenous content was “forced” but “happened naturally”, and there was no expectation of a big “aha” moment (meaning that there was no buildup of content, then a “big reveal” as to why we were acknowledging Indigenous culture).

One student felt that I could have done more to show respect and acknowledgement of the Indigeneity of Prince Rupert, and she indicated that as she loved nature and the outdoors, we should have had more of an outdoor focus (*La̲x yuup*). She indicated that “as a white person”, she loved “native culture”, and it’s a privilege to be exposed to it. She said that a lot of courses were done in the “white way”, and that we should have more Indigenous educators. I asked her what she meant by “white way”, and she answered that she meant in the way of content. She also indicated that as a white person, she doesn’t have her own culture. When I asked her to expand on her statement, she said that her traditions were more just “birthday stuff”, so she loved learning about Indigenous culture.

One boy added that he recognized my effort to try to talk about “what happens in other cultures”; when I asked him if he thought it was an appropriate subject for the French classroom, he answered, “Why wouldn’t we talk about it?”

Question #2: What does respecting Indigeneity in a second language class look like?

One student dominated the conversation at this point, with the other students listening and nodding, or occasionally offering a supportive “um hmm”. I was gratified that this student had so much to say, as she had ranged from indifferent to hostile during our inquiry period. Perhaps she had been looking for an opportunity such as this to air her views, or perhaps the three years which had passed since I had taught her had given her some perspective.

She started off by saying that a French room which respects Indigeneity will teach French with a deep focus on local land and issues. She added that I had molded her to learn about the land and not just about French: “You didn’t have to, but you did.” She went on to say how much she disagreed with the fact that French is the only choice for language learning other than Sm’algyax in our school, then shared with me why she and her sister had been so unhappy in my class: the two of them, despite begging their mother to allow them to take Sm’algyax, were forced to take French. Neither of them wanted to, and were very resentful not only that they weren’t allowed to take their language of choice, but also that they were being forced to learn a language they had no interest in. I sat back and looked at the two of them, dumbfounded. My first impulse was to apologize, which I did, and tell them that I had had no indication from their mother of the situation, and no inkling from the two of them regarding how they felt being in the class. I think I was so dumbfounded that I began to laugh. I told them that the three of us had missed out on the opportunity for important discussion three years before, but had also wasted time and energy avoiding each other’s eyes whenever we passed in the hallway. They both agreed that it had been an unfortunate situation; I said, “so we can be friends now,” and they both agreed. The student finished off the conversation by saying that it wasn’t “wrong” for me to teach Indigenous content and be guided by Indigenous ways of knowing, as I had “taken the proper steps”.

5.1.1. Reflections on the Interview

The interview with the eight students was productive and pleasant; it was wonderful to be sitting around a table with them again, and very meaningful to me to learn why the two sisters mentioned above had been so resentful during their Grade 9 French year. I can think of several more questions that I might have asked them, including why none of them would form a focal group, or how the inquiry period might have affected them during the rest of their high school careers. But I did learn two important lessons from the interview:

1. **Communications with students need to be open, honest, and consistent.**

There is a difference between “learning” and “living”; back in 2018-2019 when I conducted this inquiry, I had a copy of the First Peoples Principles of Learning and Sanford et al.’s Ways of Knowing taped to my desk at school and pinned to my

corkboard at home. I referenced them constantly to make sure that I was adhering to these ways of knowing and teaching. Since that time, I have internalized these principles in deeper ways, and no longer need to constantly remind myself of how I should be teaching (although the two documents remain where I had originally placed them). I journeyed from acquainting myself with the principles, which were separate from who I was as a teacher, to embedding them into my daily practice and discovering their deepening potential as I became more mindful in my teaching.

So, when I look back at the interview of my students in 2022, I'm surprised at myself for not being more proactive right from the first days when the two sisters started acting out in the classroom. Why did I not sit down with them in their first month with me and give them the opportunity to share their thoughts and perhaps work with me to come up with some sort of solution (having them take more ownership of their French, more student choice, more self-advocacy)? Why did we not put Kelli's posters on a table in front of us and revisit *Łoomsk, Ama goot,* and *Wilwilaaysk* to guide us toward an improved relationship based on trust, good-heartedness, and community? I can only note the fact that the journey to Indigenizing the classroom is very iterative; one observes a situation and builds an idea, tries it, reflects upon it and revises as necessary, then tries again. Perhaps, as I was trying to build an ethical third space between Indigenous and non-Indigenous world views in my classroom, I forgot to consider my own potential reactions to student behaviour, and how those reactions (disappointment, hurt feelings, etc.) might get in the way of facilitating the tough conversations I should have with students such as the two sisters. Part of my decolonization journey includes accepting my own shortcomings, and through this life-long process I'm learning that facing my personal flaws is a difficult process, but a vital one. I'm relieved to say that the further I travel through my decolonization efforts, the easier it is to recognize my own biases and shortcomings, and take constructive action to deal with them.

2. **My French classroom is an appropriate place for a decolonization and Indigenizing journey.**

I've spoken to many people about the subject of this dissertation: friends, colleagues, and peers, as well as people (such as my doctor, my optician, and student parents) who, when making small talk, ask me what I'm up to and what my dissertation

is about. I was surprised when some of them displayed some disbelief or displeasure in my thesis topic: some indicated that they wouldn't want their own children responsible (through tests, projects, and quizzes, I'm imagining) for learning Sm'algyax words; others have indicated that as French is an official language of Canada, its importance shouldn't be downplayed or "diluted" by including mention of Indigenous culture (my optician strengthened his argument by stating that he has French relatives, and therefore was quite offended by my studies).

To be honest, I was never much affected by these opinions, and made little comment on them. Ever since I was told by my colleague, back on the very first day of my doctoral studies, that I should be ashamed of teaching a language on unceded Indigenous land, I knew that sweeping changes needed to be made in how I taught, what I taught, and how I saw myself as a resident of Prince Rupert. The journey to accept that I was taking advantage of my white privilege was a long one, but vital. And my journey's learning curve was steep. But if I had ever felt intimidated at the thought of a core French classroom imbued with Indigenous content and ways of knowing, our post-inquiry interview in 2022 showed me that my students not only understood my intent, but thrived in their learning. During the inquiry period, students indicated that they understood why learning about Indigeneity was important; but their insights had matured in our later interview to include why acknowledging and respecting Indigeneity was important *in the French classroom*.

I realize that I don't teach in a vacuum. Students in my school district benefit from the Ts'msyen language and culture lessons of Indigenous knowledge-keepers from kindergarten to grade four, as well as immersive learning through visits from Indigenous artists, trips to the museum, and other local opportunities . Students have a choice to switch to French or stay with Sm'algyax from Grade 5 onward, but all continue to learn through an Indigenous lens in their various classes through elementary school, middle school, and high school. All of the schools in our district display Indigenous art as well as Indigenous–based student projects in hallways and front common areas. Our middle school has an impressive house front carved by Ts'msyen artist Russell Mather, and in the past year he finished a 360-degree crest pole for display in our high school library. When I experience these Indigenous pieces of art, I feel renewed in my commitment to decolonize my thinking and further develop my pedagogies to respect and honour the land's Indigeneity. If I want my students to feel the same transformative shift, it is not

enough for them to merely be surrounded by poles and paintings, or be able to recite random words in Sm'algyax. It is what these things represent which is vital: a shift in thinking, a movement away from places of privilege and ignorance, and a heartfelt commitment to view ourselves and our community through a different lens. It is the putting aside of spectator empathy in order to listen/educate ourselves about colonization and our role in it (Regan, 2010). I am grateful that I have been, and continue to be guided by Elders and knowledge-keepers who gently and generously share their wisdom and experiences so that my students and I might embark upon transformative learning and adopt it as a way of life.

As my core French students have a great deal of exposure to Indigeneity long before they came into my Grade 9 classroom, and long after as well, perhaps they would not be surprised to find Indigenous content and ways of teaching in a French language and culture classroom once they started high school. I wondered during the inquiry process and in the years which followed how the inquiry might have unfolded if our high school (and district) had not already been actively committed to reconciliation and decolonization. Certainly these concepts would not be new to students entering the high school, thus easing our path. I am grateful to have stood on the shoulders of those who worked hard to infuse Indigeneity into our school district, and honoured to continue my own decolonization journey under the guidance of Elders and knowledge-keepers. And I am very grateful for the guidance I have received in shifting my teaching pedagogies and thus being able to offer my core French students a program which values *Łoomsk, Ama goot, Wilwilaaysk, Lax yuup,* and *Nda'aamx,* and honours and respects Indigeneity through our use of French and our attitudes toward the land, community, and each other.

5.2. How Have my Practices Changed? New Outlooks, New Experiences

The most profound change in my practice and ways of thinking is my shift away from a colonized classroom and colonizing ways of teaching. The most obvious shift to a casual visitor would be in the actual décor of the classroom: when I first started teaching at my high school (in year ten of my teaching career), I decorated the classroom with posters in French, pictures of landmarks in France, a huge Tintin display from the Spielberg "Tintin" movie, Tintin and *Le Petit Prince* plush toys and plastic

figurines, and French stickers. As time went on and I became more involved in NOIIE, I very gradually started including posters such as The First Peoples Principles of Learning, and the TRC Education recommendations; not specifically to move away from a colonized-looking classroom, but because everyone was doing it. However, as the work of my doctorate opened my eyes as to the colonized nature of my classroom and my teaching, I began to plan the décor of the classroom to reflect how I wanted my students to feel: I arranged local plants, driftwood, and shells on various surfaces; I displayed books (both fiction and non-fiction) on shelves and window ledges; and I eventually dispensed with the huge Tintin display and replaced it with Indigenous art, blankets, and student work from our Indigenous art unit (Grade 10). Students, parents, other teachers, and administration have commented on how “calm” and “peaceful” my classroom feels; this is the sort of atmosphere I want for my students.

Figure 24. **A reminder of my classroom setup in 2018-2019**

Figure 25. Current views of my classroom.

As I commented earlier, however, décor alone indicates very little if it is not representative of new methods and attitudes. While my classroom is a visual reflection of the shifts in my critical thinking, my teaching methods have also undergone a substantial change since I started my doctoral inquiry. The rigour required to collect and analyze data created the perfect opportunity for deep reflection and introspection on a regular basis for an extended period of time. The lessons I learned about the efficacy of certain teaching and assessing methods were further examined and honed in the years after the inquiry, not only in my classroom but also in presentations which I did (over Zoom) for various French groups (the *Canadian Association for Second Language Teachers*, *le Bureau des affaires francophones et francophiles [SFU]; Researchers and Educators of English as an Additional Language*, for example*)* and various districts around British Columbia. As time went by, I found myself delving more deeply into my teaching methods and motivations, examining whether certain activities were meaningful steps toward decolonization, or simply an example of how French translations of Indigenous content could be placed into a standard second language exercise. Having come to understand how land is deeply tied to language (Fettes, 2016), I began incorporating Sm'algyax into my lessons during my classroom inquiry, and have gently (and mindfully) increased the amount of Sm'algyax in our French learning, not only as part of the units, but outside of instructional time as well (such as saying "Ama g̲anłaak da txa'niis nüüsm / Bonjour à tous!" when I enter my classroom or see students in the hall). Tina Robinson, our Sm'algyax language and culture teacher whom you met earlier in this dissertation, greets her students in this same fashion, thus further illustrating the bond which we want to model between our respective classes.

As well, I found myself wondering if I was truly facilitating student agency and fostering respect for Indigeneity on a consistent basis. When I was tired, when students were restless, when we were keeping an eye on deadlines, did I revert back to more familiar teaching methods (lecture-style teaching, rules designed to control students, etc.), or was I true to my commitment to decolonization? There were definitely some instances of that sort of backsliding; however, as I deepened my commitment to decolonization and Indigenizing the classroom, I found that I was deriving less comfort and ease from the teacher-centered methods, and relying more habitually on student-centered pedagogy.

A turning point occurred in late 2022 when I was putting together a presentation for a Zoom webinar. I had taken a number of pictures of myself and my classroom, and wanted to use some of them to illustrate my decolonized practice. As I sifted through them to choose which ones to include, I found a picture of myself wearing an orange shirt for Orange Shirt Day, complete with the writing "Chaque Enfant Compte" and a multi-coloured feather; I also had a picture of myself and a colleague painting a design for Orange Shirt Day on the front windows of our school:

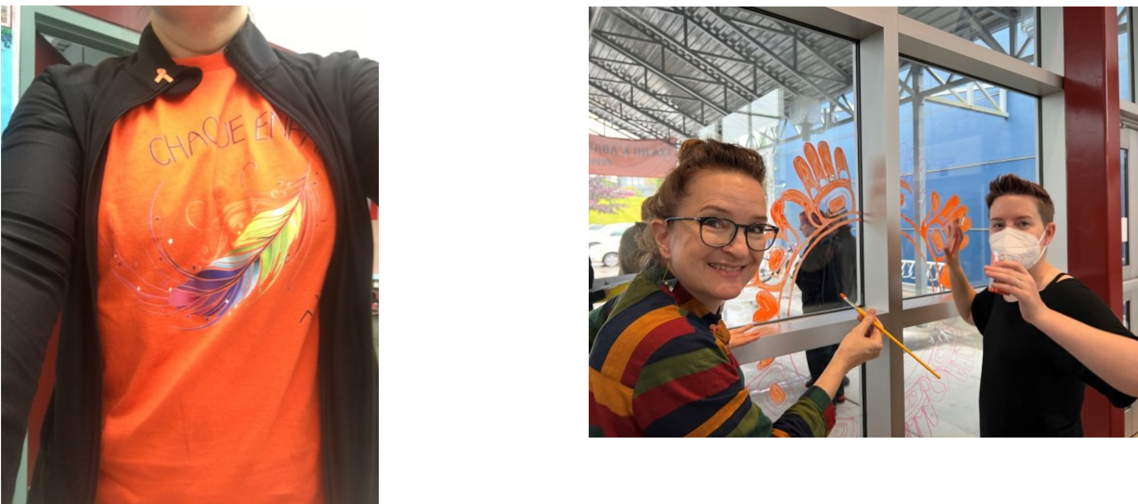

Figure 26. My orange shirt, and my colleague Danielle and I painting our school's front window.

I had photos of Truth and Reconciliation walk posters I had put up, and a "Welcome" sign we had put together in Sm'algyax for a school event earlier in the year. While I was curating these photos, I also came across photos of decorations I had put up in my classroom to celebrate Hallowe'en: jack o'lanterns, bats, etc. At that moment it

occurred to me that my use of clothing and décor might have been a bit performative; it could be seen in the same light as putting up Hallowe'en, Easter, Christmas, or other holiday decorations. I immediately rewrote part of my presentation to include the question: "Are our commitments to Indigenization heartfelt, or seasonal?" I mentioned to my audience that although we all wore Orange Shirts and red clothing on the appropriate days, we also wore pink shirts on anti-bullying day, rainbow clothing during Pride Week, and myriad other colours to show our support for various causes (it's not unusual for our student council to designate an entire week where certain colours are to be worn to support a particular cause). Do I wear the various colours for the right reasons? How committed am I to the dozen or so causes that are honoured throughout the school year? Has decolonization and Indigeneity been "lumped in" with other social justice causes, against which Tuck & Yang (2012) have cautioned? And if I question my commitment to the green, or yellow, or rainbow shirts, should I also question my commitment to the orange or red shirts, or indeed all of the décor in my classroom?

I might not have asked myself these questions before the inquiry, but time and introspection, as well as countless conversations with Indigenous knowledge keepers and a strong commitment to *Nda'aamx* and *Ama goot*, have put me in the right place to not only recognize that some of my actions might be performative, but also to know how to proceed. What comes to mind is the popular iceberg image that educators use to teach about culture.[52] The top of the iceberg, visible above the water, represents "surface" aspects of culture such as food, dance, art, clothing, etc. The bottom half of the iceberg, under the water, represents aspects of culture that are harder to see: politics, world views, ethics, biases, etc. I imagined my classroom décor, my t-shirts, and even my Indigenous jewellery as belonging to the "surface" of my teaching, and after the classroom inquiry, wondered what "below the surface" efforts I was making to support the Indigeneity of the land and bring that acknowledgement and respect into my classroom. Through this introspection I was able to reflect on my student-centered methods that promote student success through self-advocacy, positive relationships, mentoring, trust, and of course, *Łoomsk*. I was able to re-examine the content of my lessons and see how far I had come from the inquiry period, where I occasionally fell into a more Western way of teaching by slotting Indigenous vocabulary into standard French

[52] There are many renditions of this image, and an example can be found here: https://www.celestialpeach.com/blog/cultural-iceberg-cultural-appreciation

sentence construction (see Chapter 4). And when I was ready, I revisited Indigenous knowledge-keepers in my school (the Sm'algyax teacher, one of the Socials teachers, and one of the education assistants) to ask for further guidance and triangulate their viewpoints to find common ground (or divergence). I discussed with them the thinking behind the creation of my displays, and how I hoped the displays would encourage students to consider the classroom a tribute to the land. I explained that the art and weavings on the wall were meant not only to acknowledge and respect the Indigeneity of our land but also to inspire a sense of inclusivity in the students, encouraging them to appreciate not only the responsibility but the privilege of learning through an Indigenous lens, whether we are adults or teenagers. Many productive and enlightening conversations have taken place between myself and my peers in regard to my place as a teacher on Indigenous land, and I feel enriched and gratified by these discussions. The support of the Indigenous knowledge-keepers gave me the confidence to create a classroom which offers support and authentic local knowledge for all students, and the courage to recognize when I need to re-assess and re-imagine my pedagogies. Their gentle instruction inspired me to be gentle in *my* instruction, as well; their genuine interest in our classroom influenced me to take the time to develop deeper relationships with my students. And these conversations continue to this day, and are vital to my continued decolonization journey and my commitment to a core French program which recognizes and supports the Indigeneity of the land.

Each day during the inquiry project I reflected upon the day's activities and my teaching methods, and I hoped that I had done well by our Elders who were trusting that students at our high school were being taught, both explicitly and implicitly, about the Indigeneity of Prince Rupert, and that Indigenous ways of knowing and teaching were being respected and embedded in our classroom. I often stopped by Tina's Sm'algyax classroom to see Sm'oogyit Gitxoon or Lawilwel, and if they had a moment or two I would talk to them about the classroom inquiry, filling them in on what we were doing and asking if we were still heading in a good direction. They were always interested and supportive. When this thesis was completed (but before the very final revision), I sent a copy to all those friends and mentors mentioned by name and asked them to read it over (or at least search for their name) to ensure that I had correctly situated them and portrayed their teachings honourably. All those I contacted responded favourably, be it through email, texts, Facebook, or orally. I was careful not to insist that the Elders give

me their consent in any particular format, but rather accepted whatever format of response they gave. I continued to work with our Elders and other knowledge-keepers after the classroom inquiry ended, and was able to take what I learned from the inquiry to better support my students and more effectively recognize and support the Indigeneity of Prince Rupert through attendance at cultural activities, an increase of Sm'algyax usage in the French classroom, increasing Indigenous content, and continuing efforts to uphold the philosophies of Kelli's posters, the First Peoples' Principles of Learning, and the Indigenous Ways of Knowing (Sanford et al)[53] through use of my "metacognitive superhighway" (revision, re-imagining, re-assessing, reaching out, revising, and rejoicing).

I felt that each day during the classroom inquiry I was making progress towards teaching in a better way, and that my students could benefit from my developing mindset if they were ready and willing.[54] And as I met with members of the Indigenous Education Department or with other teachers in the school, my heart was light and my mind was clear as I was striving to respect and honour Indigenous ways, as best I could do so as a non-Indigenous person. I eventually felt a strong sense of place in my role as Indigenist: as much a learner as teacher, and placing my students at the centre of our decolonizing journey.

5.3. New Opportunities: The Decolonization Journey Continues

Journal Entry: My Love Letter to the Haida Nation

> My son and daughter-in-law are walking along North Beach with my husband, and I've asked them if they mind that I sit for a while, propped up against this old log, and just absorb the beauty of the sand and the sea. The beach stretches on for miles, and they're now just specks in the distance. The breeze is warm and mild, and there's such a pleasant and inviting aroma of sea life in the air; it's as if the land itself is inviting me into a silent, peaceful conversation of inclusion. My eyes close and I sink into a deep feeling of contentment and gratitude. How I love Haida Gwaii, and the culture of the Haida people. And I'm deeply appreciative to have been welcomed into my daughter-in-law's huge and boisterous Haida family.

[53] See Figure 18.

[54] Of course some days showed more progress than others, as is evidenced by my comments in Chapter 4 and Appendix 1.

North Beach invites reflection, and my mind wanders to my doctoral work, which is at times a stressful topic, but usually brings me a great feeling of purpose. The work is about finding the ecology of teaching a language of colonization (French) on unceded Indigenous territory (that of the Ts'msyen and Sm'algyax speaking people, specifically Prince Rupert, BC), and although my data collection is taking place on Ts'msyen land, I want, or perhaps need, to bow my head in appreciation to the Haida Nation in some way. The pull to include them in my work is strong, based perhaps upon not only their rich, living history, but how the land and the people whom I've met have made me feel about myself. Through the land and the Nation, I feel enriched, loved, and included.

I had been to Haida Gwaii a couple of times before my son met his future wife Vanessa, a wonderful Haida woman from Old Masset, and made not only Vanessa but Haida Gwaii an official member of our family. I had loved the ocean, the forests, the hills, and the outdoor activities afforded our little family, but after Vanessa and her family entered our lives, Haida Gwaii began to represent so much more to us than simply a nice place to take a vacation. Through Vanessa's relatives we learned much about the Haida culture: the history of relationships between Haida and colonizers, protests made at Athlii Gwaii in the 1980's against logging, the creation and meaning of many different types of art, the histories and vitality of the two moieties of Raven and Eagle, to name but a few. My desire to include Haida culture in my doctoral thesis led me to the idea of not just incorporating information about the Haida into one of my French classes, but immersing the class completely in Haida history, art, and culture. Perhaps a trip to Haida Gwaii with the class as a capstone? This dreaming took place pre-pandemic, of course. But I was determined to make the dream a reality. How to begin?

The opportunity to reach out for guidance presented itself 2016 in when I was working on the new curricula with the BC Ministry of Education (while still teaching at my high school and working on the doctorate; it was a very busy time). While I was in Victoria on one of the work weekends, I spoke to my contact there about whether I could immerse my French class (I decided on French 12) in a study of the Haida. After a long conversation about what the content would look like, I was told that I didn't need to have a new curriculum written on the provincial level, and didn't even need to obtain a district-approved course, as I would be sticking to the French 12 curriculum as far as grammar went. This was wonderful news, but I still needed to get local approval.

I went first to my administrator and explained what I wanted to do, and got permission. I then went to our district Indigenous Education department, to make sure they approved of me teaching about a Nation whose territory was across the water. I then went to our Superintendent of Schools, armed with the information that I had received three levels of permission prior to speaking to her; I knew she would want to hear about prior consultation before giving me her decision. Once I had received all my permissions, I began writing the course.

I have taught *Les Haïdas* four times as of the writing of this thesis, including field trips to Haida Gwaii as experiential learning capstones to the course. Immersing myself in a core French class which has an Indigenous nation as its only subject matter has been personally rewarding and fulfilling, and my students have enjoyed it greatly. We learn all about the geography, topography, flora, and fauna of Haida Gwaii through photos, videos, and Haida stories published online and in books. We learn about traditional Haida culture as well as activism and the Haida world views as they are expressed through story, crests, art, and activism. Throughout our *Les Haïdas* course, the students and I constantly asked ourselves, "Why are we learning this? How does this learning change us?" We talked about the different levels of learning: first, there is the surface level, where you memorize facts or stories and enjoy them just as stand-alone items. An example the students gave was reading a sacred Haida story and not investigating its significance, but enjoying it for what it offered on the surface. If one digs a bit deeper though, one can learn of connections with other important learning, one can compare and contrast the learning with that from other sources (such as comparing Ts'msyen and Haida sacred stories), thereby discovering connections and insights which weren't immediately evident. Further digging might reveal something which strikes a chord in the heart of the learner and changes how they feel about the material, or how they feel about themselves.

There were many examples of this deeper learning in *Les Haïdas*, and many "aha" moments from the students. We would learn about the topography of the land not only by watching videos and looking at photographs, but also through reading or listening to Haida sacred creation stories. We had many discussions as to the similarities and differences between local and Haida customs, stories, and art. In 2022 we were able to put our learning into action by attending a pole raising in Old Masset and learning about the pole's significance from Haida Elders and matriarchs. In May of 2023 my Grade 12s and I immersed ourselves in Haida culture by spending six days in Haida Gwaii and dividing our time between museums, school tours, hiking, and beach walks. It was through this visit to Haida Gwaii that I was able to witness the extent to

which my Grade 12 students had internalized the guiding philosophies of Kelli's posters, and the relationship between those Ts'msyen principles and Haida ethics and values[55]:

Ts'msyen Principles from Kelli's posters	*Haida Ethics and Values*
Łoomsk (*respect*)	Yahguudang or Yakguudang (*respect)*
Ama goot (*good-heartedness*)	Isda ad diigii isda (giving and receiving)
Wilwilaaysk (*family*)	Gina 'waadluxan gud ad kwaagiida (interconnectedness) Gina k'aadang.nga gii uu tl' k'anguudang (seeking wise counsel)
La̲x yuup (*nature*)	Laa guu ga kanhllns (responsibility to care for sea and land) Giid tll'juus (balance with the natural world)
Nda'aamx (*reconciliation)*	

(It should be noted that in creating this chart, I am not trying to reduce the individuality and uniqueness of the world views of these two Nations, but simply illustrating the applicability of Kelli's posters not only to my Grade 9 classroom inquiry students, but to all students I've taught since then, including those who, through my Grade 12 course, turned their minds to the Haida Nation.)

When we had the opportunity to visit the locations we studied, students were awe-struck, barely able to tear themselves away when it was time to leave. I have memories (and pictures) of students perched on the edges of rocky outcroppings, looking out at the ocean and just "being" (unfazed by the high winds):

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[55] Haida ethics and values are listed on this website: https://haidamarineplanning.com/issues/culture/

Figure 27. Enjoying nature in Haida Gwaii

Through our discussions on beaches, on trails, in restaurants, and any other time we were all together, they spoke of their love for Haida Gwaii, the connection they felt between the areas (or items) they studied and then visited, and their desire to bring their family members over as soon as they could. They were often reminded of Haida world views as we roamed the beaches and trails, and of their classroom learning of Haida true tellings as we visited important sites on the island. It was an enlightening experience to observe the students' ongoing transformations as they connected to the land and culture of the Haida during our visit. Their words as well as actions showed the sense of connection that they felt to the land, as did their deep engagement at the Haida Heritage Centre, Christian White's carving shed, and at numerous crest poles.

I have made smaller but still significant changes in the content of my French units since my initial inquiry project. Motivated by my experiences with my Grade 9s, in 2021 I put together some ideas for my Grade 10 French art unit, and discussed them with the staff at Wap Sigatgyet. For over 15 years I had been teaching an art unit in Grade 10 which concentrated on Manet, Monet, and Van Gogh, touching upon their lives and how they were leaders of their specific art movements. We of course learned all the vocabulary for what one might find in an artist's studio as well as the appropriate verbs needed to describe an artist's work.

Although this unit was very successful with my students, I decided to make it more appropriate for our part of the world, and re-wrote it so that the main focus was on BC North Coast Indigenous art, and the form line design used to create that art, and how

it relates to the land. We would of course keep all of the French vocabulary for the artist's workshop, but would now include terminology around weaving, carving, and painting murals. I researched both Haida and Ts'msyen artists to use as examples in the units, and received permission from Wap Sigatgyet to be talking about Indigenous art in my classroom. Through Wap Sigatgyet I also arranged to have a local artist come into my classroom for two consecutive classes to teach the students how to use form line to draw in an Indigenous manner. Nisga'a artist Lucy Trimble came to teach us twice; the first time she visited she taught us how to draw a frog in the Nisga'a art style, and the second time (for a subsequent group of Grade 10s), she taught us how to draw a Nisga'a style moon to celebrate the Nisga'a lunar new year (Hobiyee) which takes place in late February or early March. She explained to the class that Hobiyee starts when the crescent moon lines up with the nearest star and looks similar to a traditional Nisga'a spoon. The students were delighted to learn that they themselves could "predict" when Hobiyee might start by keeping an eye on the shape of the moon. She also told us that when the moon is in that position at that time of year, it signals the start of the oolichan run in the Nass River; my students could relate this information to the highly anticipated and well-attended oolichan run which takes place at the same time in our local river, the Skeena. We all felt a deep connection to *La̲x yuup* from Lucy's teachings.

I was able to continue my journey in Indigeneity and decolonization outside of my classroom, as well. I was hired for the position of Faculty Associate when Simon Fraser University offered a Professional Linking Program[56] to take place from 2020-2021. I re-worked some pre-existing resources offered to me by SFU (and also created many of my own), so that they reflected local Indigenous worldviews (including the teachings of Kelli's posters) and content specific to our local area. Every aspect of teaching required in this program was taught through an Indigenous lens (in so far as that could be facilitated by a non-Indigenous person like myself), with much assistance given from Indigenous knowledge-holders within SFU as well as local educators.

In the first months of the PLP, my pedagogy revolved around creating engaging lessons which could be delivered through Zoom (due to Covid restrictions at the time). Our classes took place twice a week, for four hours at a time. Each class would begin

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[56] This is a 16-month program for educational professionals (educational assistants or teachers teaching with a letter of permission, for example) to receive their teaching certificate while still maintaining their jobs in the educational field.

with a "soft start" during which I would play music recommended by students, followed by a land acknowledgement led by a different student each time. Our classes were thematic, and we often had guests join us virtually to discuss how their own experiences related to our topics at hand. For example, Haida artist Michael Nichol Yahgulaanas spoke to us about how his art reflects his political activism; Yahlnaaw, a queer Indigenous youth, spoke to us of her transgender journey and how we, as teachers, might navigate the Sexual Orientation Gender Identity (SOGI) issues at our prospective schools. We enjoyed presentations from experts as to how to teach according to the Guiding Dispositions of the PLP, how to write essays, and other advice for navigating a teacher training program. I brought in my prior knowledge of Indigenous writers, artists, and singers, and designed activities around these resources. The materials for each class were carefully created to showcase Indigenous art in order to spark conversation and inspire deeper learning.

We did eventually have some face-to-face classes, held in a lofty space in a decommissioned school used for district meetings. These were followed by our first "small" practicum, then our larger, three-month hands-on school experiences. Although I enjoyed the Zoom and face-to-face sessions, the one-on-one practicum observations that my students and I shared were by far the most rewarding part of the PLP for me. The observations were a lot of work; each day I visited several schools to have a pre-observation meeting with my student, then observe their lesson, then have a post-observation conversation, all of which was written up. The deep communication with my students during these discussions was a truly moving experience. Having immersed myself in Indigenous ways of teaching and knowing previous to my PLP experience, I felt able to continue facilitating a student-centered atmosphere of trust and respect during the observations; my assessment of their lesson plans and delivery of teaching was targeted to promote their confidence and learning, and I often encouraged the students to work with me to find solutions to their problems rather than having me solve them.

One more aspect of my ongoing journey stands out. I have long enjoyed putting together and presenting webinars and workshops, both online and in person; since my experiences with my Grade 9s in 2018-2019, I have given a number of presentations specifically on Indigenizing the core French classroom. The knowledge I gained from my inquiry's iterative process and the generous guidance I received from Elders and

other Indigenous knowledge-keepers motivated me to assist other second language teachers in British Columbia to journey toward a classroom imbued with Indigenous teaching and assessment methods, as well as content.

I'm grateful to share the experiences of my decolonization journey with my peers around the province, and I appreciate that I have the opportunity to present my experiences and receive feedback from other educators. Each time I present, I learn new viewpoints and perspectives which I hadn't considered, and am very appreciative to enhance my learning as well as offer my own perspective to others. Imbuing Indigenous ways of teaching, learning and assessing into my pedagogy has not only been a transformative personal experience, but has also enhanced my previous learnings to create a more inclusive, place-based, and respectful environment in which my students can not only learn but feel a strong sense of community and trust. This experience has influenced the ways in which I share my pedagogy with other teachers; rather than position myself as an expert in my field, I bring my learnings to them as offerings from someone who wishes to share her decolonization journey.

5.3.1. Revisiting My Readings

I do my best to keep my home office neat[57], but a great deal of real estate on my desk is taken up by the books which I've been reading and re-reading—not only as part of my doctoral process, but out of interest and commitment to ongoing learning. When I revisit my doctoral readings, I often find that the comments I've written in margins or in my notebooks are telling indicators of where I was in my decolonization journey. For example, in Chapter 2 I mentioned my shift in understanding of decolonization upon re-reading Smith's *Decolonizing Methodologies* (1999). I had first read it as part of my Master's degree, and I had trouble with statements such as researchers being "the human carriers of research" (p. 3); when I read that I wrote "yeesh" in the margin. When she imitated the speech patterns of non-Indigenous people, I wrote "that's cold" (p. 14). Later on in the book, the author discusses the western tendency to concentrate on Indigenous "biological essentialism" (purity and clarity of ethnic identity) rather than on expression of culture to determine who is in fact Indigenous, and who, according to

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[57] You might believe this if I had not included pictures of my home office earlier in this dissertation.

Western standards, is not (and therefore "not worth saving"). I underlined that section with "Jeez" written beside it (p. 74).

As previously mentioned, returning to Smith's work with fresh eyes throughout the inquiry process encouraged my understanding of her point of view and a re-working of my own. I was a different person when I first read Smith; a new Master's student, I was full of my own worldview which definitely included a desire to be taught everything, be exposed to everything, and to have all knowledge given to me if I requested it, whether or not this knowledge was accessible or relatable to any of my own experiences. As I noted earlier in the thesis, this attitude is often found amongst non-Indigenous people who are learning about Indigenous culture and issues; it's a common expression of privilege and entitlement (Jones & Jenkins, 2008).

There are many examples of resources which made me uncomfortable when I first read them, but made complete sense to me after much learning and reflection. But there are an equal number of resources which I loved when I first read them, yet upon re-reading my appreciation for them intensified. A good example of this is Shawn Wilson's *Research is Ceremony* (2008). Dog-eared, full of marginal comments and bookmarks, Wilson's work has inspired me for years, and my understanding of his words has deepened as my journey continues. For example, toward the beginning of the book, Wilson talks about the nature of advice as given by Elders; rather than a direct set of instructions, the Elder might weave a story in which they faced a similar situation, and it is the listener's responsibility to find the lesson or moral of the tale (p. 27). When I first read that, I appreciated on a theoretical level the value of the Elder's actions; upon re-visiting the material after several years of inquiry into my efforts to decolonize and Indigenize my classroom, I am able to relate Wilson's words to many stories told by Elders in my classroom, at assemblies, at meetings, and in their own extra-curricular language and culture classrooms: lacking the narrative arc of Western literature, their stories wind and weave through the actions of magical and non-magical characters, and it's up to the listener to draw their own conclusions. I remember several years ago feeling a bit bored when listening to particularly lengthy stories from Elders, but as time went by and my heart opened more to the nature of Indigenous storytelling, I came to learn the many purposes of these stories, appreciate their wisdom, and understand how to listen and open to them.

Many authors speak to relationality, and Wilson devotes an entire chapter to it. What seemed like a novel idea to me several years ago—the thought that an Indigenous person might situate themselves by speaking about their relationship with their families, with the land, sea, and sky, with beings both mystical and earth-bound—seems logical and proper to me now. When I interact withTs'msyen or Haida individuals for the first time, I often ask them, if it's appropriate at that moment, "Oh, you're a member of the Ts'msyen nation? Who is your mother? Perhaps I know her." And if I happen to meet a member of the Haida nation in Prince Rupert, be they a student or an adult, I ask them if they are from Old Masset (if I feel the question is appropriate). If they are, I don't wait for any further information, I tell them that we are probably related by marriage, and the conversation which follows is always filled with excited exclamations as we discover that they are a cousin, an aunt, or an uncle of my daughter-in-law. I am deeply grateful for these interactions, even though many are quite fleeting. Even that short moment of connection sparks a powerful feeling of community for me. Back when I first read Wilson, I didn't imagine that relationality would play much of a role in my life, but time and introspective learning has fostered an openness to and desire for connection in me. Relationality in my ongoing journey is not limited to family connections; I feel it when I walk Butze Rapids and smell the Devil's Club, and I feel it when I hear one of the many varied calls of a raven, I feel it when I see Mr. Campbell's friendly face and hear his gently-paced stories, and I feel it when I walk down by the ocean on a cloudy Prince Rupert day. And these feelings of connection and relationality help me bring a sense of calm and peace into my classroom, and help me examine my role as a French teacher here on Ts'msyen land.

The First Peoples Principles of Learning and Sanford et al.'s Ways of Knowing have been mentioned many times in this dissertation, as they guided me throughout the inquiry process with my class (and continue to guide me). When I examine the Ways of Knowing, I feel that I have the same appreciation for them that I did before I began my inquiry, but I have a different relationship now with the FPPL than I did when I was first introduced to them. When I spoke of the FPPL in Chapter 4, I mentioned that although they are ubiquitous in British Columbia classrooms, I found that I needed guidance that was a bit more specific to help me truly understand those principles, and guidance to improve my praxis through my self-inquiry. As time went on, I spent more time reading and thinking about the FPPL and how I could embed these values into my day-to-day

teaching, and found that my teaching had been deeply influenced by the first two principles:

Principle #1: *Learning ultimately supports the well-being of the self, the family, the community, the land, the spirits, and the ancestors.*

Principle #2: *Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational (focused on connectedness, on reciprocal relationships, and a sense of place).*

Through examination and utilization of these two principles in my classroom, I developed a deeper and more personal understanding of the rest of the document: "Learning takes patience and time", and "Learning involves understanding the consequences of one's actions", for example support and clarify the understanding that learning is reflexive and reflective. The Principles addressing the role of ancestors in learning, the importance of exploring one's identity, and the sacredness of certain bodies of knowledge help me to achieve a better understanding of the role of spirits and ancestors in learning, as well as the connectedness and sense of place necessary for deep learning.

5.4. Encouragement for Second-Language Teachers

My journey is ongoing, and I have a lot yet to learn about the nature of colonialism, my own biases, and whether a truly decolonized and Indigenized second language classroom might look like. Yet I have gained some insights, based on the work done before, during, and after this doctoral inquiry, with the help and guidance of Elders, my peers, and community members. If I were able to give advice to the teacher I was when I started my decolonization journey, I might share these insights with my younger self, urging her to face her shortcomings and enter into this important work with humility and gratitude. At the same time, this effort to distill some of my most important learnings reminds me of how none of this is or ever will be complete. The older Nancy I am now has made some progress on her path; I hope that, in another ten years, a still older Nancy will look back at this thesis and say, "Ah, if I could only talk to the author and point out the things she still has to learn…"

5.4.1. Examine one's personal history and biases

When I first started my education into Indigeneity, I was completely unaware that my understandings were biased by my own cultural frameworks. I certainly recognized that my parents and grandparents had views of cultures other than our own that clashed with my sensibilities, but I didn't realize the extent of my own entrenchment in my white, privileged, middle-class life until I was compelled to self-reflect during my doctoral program. I wrote many journal entries and papers explaining my fears, hopes, likes and dislikes; looking back on them now, I see that my frames of thought were not so different from those of my parents. It wasn't until I had openly examined my thoughts, opinions, and motivations that I realized the lengthy journey I had just begun. I was unaware of how much I had to learn, and unlearn.

Many of us were never given a multiperspectival view of the history of the relationships between European settlers and Indigenous nations, neither in our high school nor our university Canadian history courses. When I was in high school, the only viewpoint presented was that of the European settlers, and emphasis was put on the difficulties of a settler's life, never on how their arrival affected the lives of Indigenous peoples, nor the land. The histories of Indigenous peoples, outside of banal generalities, seemed outside of the concerns of non-Indigenous Canadians (Donald, 2009). There is a profound shift today on how historic events and their significance are represented in schools. There are many such resources available now which teachers can utilize to promote critical historical literacy and awareness of the ethical dimensions of history: taking historical perspective and responsibility involves to revisit the relationships between European settlers and the Indigenous nations in Canada, starting with first contact and continuing on through Confederation; one can learn about smallpox in Hudson's Bay blankets, about residential schools, the Sixties Scoop, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, and other atrocities, and how they still impact the life of Indigenous people, and of the land we all inhabit.

For young Nancy, for myself now, and for all of us who are guests, visitors, settlers on Indigenous land, this difficult history still pervades my/our views, beliefs, perspectives and relationships with each other and with the land. She/I/we are called to an ongoing reflection: Do I feel discomfort? Disbelief? Shame? How do I realize and accept the personal role that I play, even unwittingly, in the marginalization of Indigenous

people? What is the meaning of reconciliation? I continue to find these questions challenging. But I would encourage young Nancy to embrace the discomfort she feels and accept that there is often no substantial change without disruption.

5.4.2. Read, listen, learn

Once I had accepted my discomfort at learning some truths about Canadian history (I have never overcome all of the discomfort, and I don't think anyone should), I read Indigenous authors, listened to Indigenous podcasts, attended workshops, webinars and MOOCs [58], and observed Indigenous teaching (when invited and given permission to do so), and kept careful note of what I learned there, and what resources were recommended. I would encourage young Nancy to dive into this learning—to read about Indigenous world views, ways of knowing, and ways of teaching (one could start with the BC Curriculum) and reflect upon how those views and philosophies might be woven into one's own teaching, as I continue to do on a daily basis. I would advise her to avoid assuming that she "gets it" right away; as noted earlier, I continue to learn from re-reading certain authors and texts, and in retrospect I often did not have a good understanding on my first encounter with unfamiliar ideas. I would tell her to be patient with herself and her learning.

I am very appreciative of my district's Indigenous Education department and the Elders and knowledge-keepers who generously guide and enhance not only my classroom teaching but my personal journey of decolonization. My initial thoughts when first approaching the Indigenous Education department was that I could email them thematic unit ideas in order for them to "Indigenize" them for me; I learned quickly to understand and respect of the important work that they do, and the vital nature of collaboration. When I collaborate with them now, I am careful to be respectful of their time and their mandate. I am also very careful to resist the temptation of centering myself in my learning rather than respecting protocol. If I could, I would share these hard-won insights with my younger self, saving us all time and trouble.

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58 An excellent Massive Open Online Course is Jan Hare's "Reconciliation Through Indigenous Education (edX)": https://www.mooc-list.com/instructor/jan-hare

5.4.3. Make one's learning personal and place-based

When I moved to Prince Rupert, I had the opportunity to get to know the incredible geography of our island: surrounded by ocean, mountains, and forest, there is a potential for deep connection and appreciation, if one takes the opportunity to foster it. Looking back, I wish I could tell myself to worry less about day-to-day anxieties, and take myself outside to appreciate the privilege of living on this beautiful Ts'msyen territory. A deep connection to and personal relationship with the land is a key element of Indigenous worldviews, and there is no better way to understand this than to create our own personal relationship to the land that we teach on.

So I would encourage my younger self to spend more time outside. The adoption of a small patch of land as a microsite was a particularly meaningful way to learn deeply in place: sitting with the land and experiencing myself as a student and the land as my teacher. I would urge young Nancy to develop a relationship with her own microsite by returning as much as she could, and seeing what lessons from that experience she could bring back to the classroom. I would tell her to continue and extend her relationship with the land by familiarizing herself with the Indigeneity of the area (where is Indigenous art displayed, how is it displayed, and by whom? Does the local museum present the Indigenous history of the land where we stand, and how is it done, and in what ways are Indigenous mediators involve in that process?). And I would hope that she would work relentlessly, as I do today, on finding ways to better include those experiences and places in her daily teaching.

5.4.4. Co-learning and collaboration with others

When I first started teaching, I was woefully underqualified to teach secondary core French. I was hired to replace a teacher and the administration of the high school simply needed a qualified teacher to step in immediately; a working knowledge of French was not required. Thus, I spent every waking moment holed up in my classroom trying to learn French vocabulary and grammar in order to keep a step or two ahead of my students. I didn't have the confidence or (I thought) the time to collaborate with any of my peers in the school.

I wish I could send a message back to that exhausted, panic-stricken Nancy and encourage her to take a deep breath and work collaboratively as much as possible with other teachers. Any learning journey can be intimidating, and although there might not seem to be common ground at first, it is always possible to find some commonality in our strengths and our challenges when we work with other teachers. It is also important not to restrict those collaborations to teachers in our own school or discipline; but to reach out to teachers in other districts (through Provincial Specialists Associations, from organizations such as NOIIE, or through the school administration). By doing this, there is a potential for professional and personal relationships and growth.

I would also let young Nancy know, much earlier than I realized it, that practitioner inquiry is a powerful tool to assess what needs to be done, develop a plan, reflect upon it, revise if necessary, and keep honing one's teaching as the decolonization journey continues. But I would also caution her how difficult that path can be if embarked upon alone. Looking back, I can see that it took me far too long to reach out to others in my school to discuss resources, pedagogies, or even just to chat about events in the school or in our personal lives. I used to think that I could never make the time to visit the staff room at lunch, for example, but taking time to sit with one's peers a couple of times a week over a sandwich or salad not only helps to cement relationships and foster a sense of community, but gives one the opportunity, through discussion, to hone and improve one's teaching pedagogies and enjoy new ways of thinking.

5.4.5. Remaining accountable

Long before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission published their recommendations (2015a), our district expected teachers at my high school to include Indigenous content into their units. Unfortunately, we hadn't been given any guidance as to how to do that, or where we might find Indigenous content, nor at the time did we have the level of Indigenous support and guidance in our school district that we do now. Our administration realized this dilemma, and thus didn't insist upon accountability for the inclusion of Indigenous content and perspectives in our classrooms.

Now, however, I would tell young Nancy that the lack of immediately available resources and sources of guidance should not deter us, as committed educators bearing an ethical responsibility, from doing whatever we can to include Indigenous views,

viewpoints, values, and perspectives in respectful and meaningful ways. I would let her know that embarking on an inquiry project with NOIIE or the BC Teacher's Federation's *Teacher Inquiry Project*[59] can be an important step forward in the decolonizing process of classrooms; it was certainly extremely beneficial to my professional development. I would encourage her to commit herself to a process of life-long learning alongside Indigenous peers, family members, students, and most especially the Elders who choose to give of their time with patience and care.

I recall, of course, how my younger self struggled with insecurity in her role as a core French educator for several years, and how this made embracing of collaboration and accountability more of a challenge for her. I would reassure her that recognizing and embracing the gentle guidance of Indigenous Elders and knowledge-keepers helped to cleanse me of self-doubts and enable me to accept my shortcomings, to the extent that I could be vulnerable with my peers, admit ignorance and lack of experience, and embrace the value of my decolonization efforts. As I moved towards self-acceptance, the anxiety surrounding my accountability for infusing Indigeneity into the classroom lessened, and I was able to embrace and document my own efforts and the collaborative efforts of my department. These efforts in personal and professional self-improvement no longer hold the same level of stress for me, something I think my younger self would have been glad to know, although of course the journey is ongoing as there is always the potential for further improvement and understanding.

5.4.6. Starting small

Including Indigenous content into French units seemed daunting to me when I was first introduced to the idea. In retrospect, I would suggest young Nancy start her decolonization journey by infusing Indigenous ways of knowing, teaching, and assessing into her pedagogy, rather than curating content. She could examine her procedures for the creation, timing, and content of tests, for example, and find ways to increase student agency in those decisions. She could allow that agency to spill over into student-led ideas for types of formative and summative assessment. I would strongly encourage her to develop relationships with learners and their families, and find ways to share

[59] https://www.bctf.ca/topics/services-information/professional-development/apply-for-teacher-inquiry-program

experiences with them outside of the classroom (such as attending basketball games, dance recitals, or other activities and community events). Through these various means, she would increase student voice in her classroom and come to better know them as whole persons—something I have found essential as a foundation for other changes in my classroom.

I would share with young Nancy how, as I gradually developed a more student-centred pedagogy, I began to bring content into my French lessons through the use of Sm'algyax. After receiving permission to do so, and learning pronunciation and context from a Sm'algyax speaker, I included words such as crest names and family titles, then moved on to include concepts such as the matrilineal nature of crests in the Ts'msyen culture. I wold let her know that, by approaching the idea of Indigenizing my classroom slowly and respectfully, and being mindful of protocols, I feel that I am able to properly acknowledge and respect the Ts'msyen culture, and feel hopeful that my methods will continue to be appropriate and accepted by our Elders and our Indigenous Education department. Such accountability never stops, I would tell her, and I continue to reach out for guidance and validation. When I need help to find or maintain the correct path, I can find comfort knowing that I will receive wise counsel.

5.5. In Conclusion

Looking back on my own journey, I realize that it has been one of the most transformative events of my personal and professional life. I view the world around me with new appreciation and I feel more connected to the Indigeneity of the land upon which I live and teach. My studies gave me an enhanced sense of identity which I had previously been unable to achieve; since my inquiry in the classroom, I have improved my existing personal and professional relationships and now comfortably seek out new ones. When I look back on my personal and professional life, I realize the significance of my feelings of increased self-worth, paired paradoxically with increased humility in consideration of all I still need to learn. I am still walking my inquiry path.

I had very little self-confidence when I entered my doctoral program, and in hindsight recognize that my insecurities surrounding being in this program and entering into this field of study showed themselves in defensive attitudes and months-long bouts of depression and anxiety. I was fortunate to have found a program which encouraged

the exploration of trust, respect, identity, and community, yet trust-building is a long and difficult endeavour and my path was riddled with anxiety and self-doubt, which made it difficult for me to form personal attachments with many of the cohort members. The relationality and reciprocity that is so important in Indigenous epistemologies and ways of being was challenging for me to achieve, even during my day-to-day interactions with my peers.

My breakthroughs occurred when I immersed myself in Indigenous readings, both fiction and non-fiction, and was inspired by the quiet wisdom in those works. I worked hard to accept that I would still have worth even if I did not do things quite right, if I still did not understand, if I wasn't at the centre of all activities. I was inspired by our Elders to embrace the idea of patient listening and watching, rather than letting myself be drive by urgency and accomplishment. I was helped immeasurably by my daughter-in-law's Haida family, who gently reminded me (and it took more than one reminder) that knowledge-keepers need to have their privacy respected and not have endless demands put upon them (I cringe at the number of times I contacted my daughter-in-law's cousins, who are all well-known Haida artists and writers, to ask for help with my studies). I am still learning, and still journeying toward a calm acceptance of who I am, and I honestly feel that if I had not begun my learning of Indigenous ways of knowing, I would not have the peace that I feel today.

Just as importantly, I feel a greater sense of trust and connectivity with my students. Through our commitment to *Łoomsk, Ama goot, Wilwilaaysk, La̱x yuup,* and *Nda'aamx*, as well as other aspects of Indigeneity, I have hope that their French language journey was enhanced and made more meaningful. I know that my own relationship to the French language has changed since I began this journey. Earlier, I had moved from feeling a crippling intimidation to an insatiable desire to learn as much French as possible; once I was firmly situated in my doctoral program and learned more about the history of colonialism, however, I found that my desire to laud *la francophonie* waned. Where I had once delighted in the number of countries where French was spoken, I became aware of the power dynamics and processes of colonization that made it so, and the violence and trauma it carried in its wake (Bouamer & Bourdeau, 2022), and I became ashamed and self-conscious in my role as a French teacher on Indigenous land. Where I had once thought that a high school education wasn't complete without a strong grounding of core French, I came to realize that although

second language acquisition is a beneficial process and French is a beautiful language, it has been “une langue et une culture de colonisation dans notre propre pays et ailleurs dans le monde” (a language and culture of colonization in our own country and elsewhere in the world) (Côté, 2018, p.1). In my view, the study of secondary core French for its own sake isn’t as powerful and meaningful as using French to acknowledge and support the Indigeneity of the land upon which it is taught.

Jeremy Dutcher, a member of the Tobique First Nation in New Brunswick, wrote this tweet back in 2018:

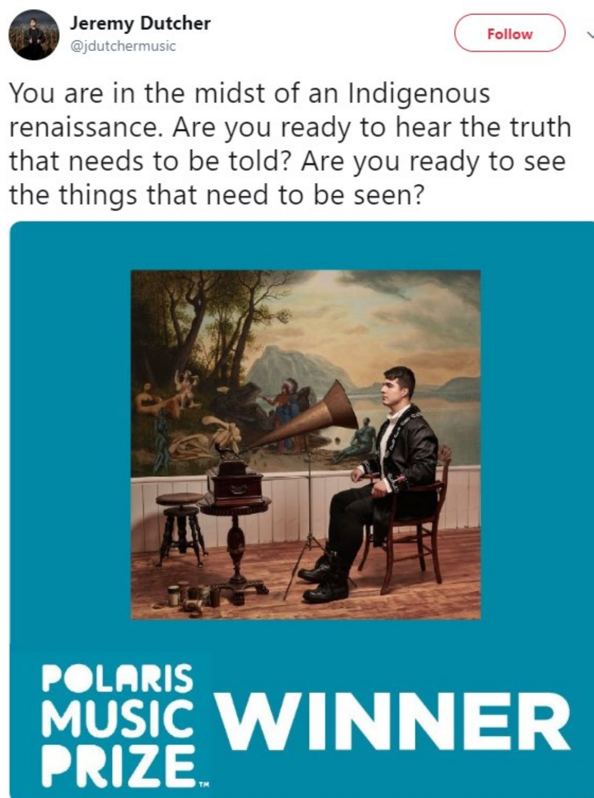

Figure 28. Jeremy Dutcher's reconciliation tweet, 2018

If asked now, as I was on the first day of my doctoral studies, how I could sleep at night teaching a language of decolonization on unceded Indigenous land, I would not withdraw into a cloud of self-doubt as I once did. Rather, I would harken back to Jeremy Dutcher’s tweet, and answer that I am ready to hear the truths uncovered by the Indigenous renaissance, and ready to see the things that need to be seen.

"Education is the belief in possibilities," states Marie Battiste; it "can be liberating, or it can domesticate and maintain domination. It can sustain colonization in neo-colonial ways or it can decolonize" (Battiste, 2013, p.175). In my own journey I discovered the undesirable results of attempting to introduce the core French classroom to Indigeneity without first truly understanding *why*. Until I held a deep understanding of the ethics of upholding Indigenous ways of learning in my classroom, my commitment to decolonization was shallow and disingenuous. And this understanding is very much still a work in progress as I further learn from Elders, from knowledge-keepers, and from my students whose stories and shared knowledge inspire and educate me on a daily basis. I remain accountable to them, and to everyone who walks through my classroom door, as well as to my peers, family, the people of Prince Rupert, and to the beautiful land upon which our city sits; the land which encourages calm self-reflection and reminds us of the potential for renewal and growth.

Battiste describes the "in-between space that connects Indigenous and Eurocentric knowledge systems" when these two systems are brought together: "It is not a merge or a clash, but a space that is new, electrifying, and even contentious, but ultimately has the potential for an interchange or dialogue of the assumptions, values, and interests each holds" (Battiste, 2013, p. 105). This space, where a lived and shared curriculum has the potential to reside, is the space I aspire to exist in, not only in my classroom but in my mind and heart.

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Appendix A. My Classroom Journal

What follows are my journal entries for a selection of days during the Grade 9 classroom inquiry. These entries were alluded to (and some were highlighted) in Chapter 4.4. As well as my personal note-taking during this time, I kept track of our daily activities through a webpage which was accessible by parents and students. The information in the daily entries is a thorough snapshot of the day's activities for the class, including photos of board notes, explanations of what we learned and why we learned it, as well as audio files, links to other websites, and a thorough explanation of the next day's homework assignment. Some excerpts from my Grade 9 webpage for the data collection period are included in this chapter.

As mentioned in Chapter 4.4, I have divided the data collection period into three sections: December, January, and February-March.

Pre-data Collection Notes

November 22, 2018

<u>Journal Entry</u>

My ethics proposal was approved yesterday; now the extensive planning begins. It's hard to know where to start. Here are my areas of planning:

- review my research paradigms from my notes;
- finalize changes from current Grade 9 curriculum to Indigenized curriculum, and get that document to administration and district staff;
- set up a meeting with administration and counseling as to how to recruit participants, give them the consent forms;
- talk to the College about Elder visits and cultural projects with the college; maybe sit down with them with my curriculum and see where they think their contributions could fit;

- talk to Kelli about how we can develop a greater relationship between the French and Sm'algyax classes.

November 27, 2018

Journal Entry

Met with Sandy today about admin playing a role in talking to my Grade 9s regarding being in a focal group in my research. She was very supportive. Here is a proposed schedule for the next 7 weeks:

Week of December 3-7	I get to know the class, keeping in mind to work carefully on developing early relationships with the students in order to foster a sense of trust and community in the classroom.
December 10	Bring up idea of research with the Grade 9s; give them the two sets of forms with their course outlines and tell them to please bring them back by the end of the week either saying they'll be part of the research or they won't be participating. All forms must be returned.
Week of Dec 10-14	Make sure all forms are in.
Week of Dec 15-19	Begin general observation, if all the forms are in.
January 14	Begin process of choosing subset of class for focal group.
January 16	Meet with Sandy and any other interested parties to discuss my choice of focal group.
January 18	Admin or counsellor meets with the proposed set of potential focal students, give out forms and envelopes. Students should be told that the forms are due back January 25, whether or not they want to participate.
January 21	Begin taking notes on focal group, if forms are in. Meet with them to discuss schedule of interviews.
January 21-March 13	Observation and interviews.

These dates are flexible. I may be able to move the schedule up, or it may be delayed slightly, depending upon what works for the students in my classroom.

December 3, 2018

Webpage entry:

> **le 3 déc:** Bienvenue à la classe! Today we got to know each other by sitting in a circle and using cards to ask and answer questions about ourselves. I then gave you some sheets with information about the class so that you could formulate rules. We took some time in class to work on them; if you didn't get them done, please do them for homework. See you tomorrow! ☺

Journal Entry

Today begins my first day of teaching this particular batch of Grade 9 students: 24 students in all (11 girls and 13 boys). They've all had over three months of experience in the high school environment, this is the first time they've met me, and engaged in high school core French. I've learned in my years of teaching that many students enter into the secondary core French program with a good amount of baggage: some students didn't care for French in the middle or elementary years for a variety of reasons; some students feel that they "can't learn French" and certainly might feel that French has no relevance in their lives. It's my job not only to deliver the curriculum, but illustrate the ways in which French is indeed relevant. In the past I've concentrated on three areas of relevance when teaching students:

a) Neurolinguistic: Second language learning plays a role in the development of other learning skills and strategies;

b) Global: French is spoken in many countries in the world;

c) Educational: Some universities require a Grade 11 second language credit for some of their programs.

These areas of relevance are becoming less interesting to students as the years go on. Many of my students, for example, aren't interested in continuing their education in a university setting. As well, informing my students that 300 million people in the world

speak French and that 29 countries have French as an official language[60] is exciting when talking about traveling, but not as impressive when France is seen as a colonizing empire. And I'm not sure that the students believe me when I tell them that second language learning will help them be better at video games.[61]

But today we will start our brand new French 9 class with a fresh attitude and perspective, with high hopes that imbuing our curriculum with Indigenous content and ways of knowing will create a safe, creative environment for the students and that they will see that the study of French in Prince Rupert does not compete with the study of Sm'algyax; rather, it supports and respects Indigenous language and culture.

We started in a circle, which surprised the students. There was some giggling and confused looks, but everyone participated. We sat on the floor with lots of pillows, and had a discussion as to what it means to sit in a circle, and whether there are any rules or protocols to the procedure. I was happily surprised to hear several students chime in that when in circle, only one person may speak at a time, (the person holding whatever object is being circulated). I added that if we needed to leave or re-enter the circle, we must always go around the perimeters rather than cutting through the middle. When I asked why that was so, a student answered that it would "interrupt the flow" of the circle. I was very pleased with this. I also mentioned that it would be disrespectful to the circle to cut through it.

We got to know each other using a pre-packaged card set of questions which I had purchased from an educational vendor. The questions were basic and non-threatening, and no one opted out of participating.

While still in circle, I gave the students some information about the class structure and content, and asked them to come up with some class rules that we could all follow. We'll take up the rules tomorrow. Most of today's class was conducted in English, which is certainly frowned upon by many second language teachers, but considering the students'

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[60] https://www.babbel.com/en/magazine/how-many-people-speak-french-and-where-is-french-spoken/

[61] http://www.extraclass.it/2017/01/07/the-brain-benefits-of-learning-a-second-language/

level of French comprehension and the importance of the work we were doing today, I felt it more important to make a connection with the students and have them feel a sense of agency rather than lose their attention and raise their stress levels in a sea of unknown French vocabulary.

December 4, 2018

Webpage Entry (partial):

> **le 4 décembre:** We noticed that the major theme that runs through our rules and suggestions is "Don't be a jerk". lol :)

Journal Entry

We got back into circle today; students didn't find it as strange as they did yesterday. There was a bit of horseplay over the pillows, but nothing extraordinary. I noticed that many of the boys are lying on top of each other or have their arms around each other. Liam, Oliver, Elijah, and Jackson look like a pile of intertwined puppies. David and Sam are playfully pushing at each other and sharing some funny (and secret) conversation. I observe them for 15-20 seconds or so, and during this time several students notice that I'm sitting quietly and shushed each other. The boys become quiet but do not disentangle themselves. There are obviously strong friendships in the group and a deep sense of comfort and ease between some of these boys. Not all boys are part of this though; Mason and James, who sat together yesterday and today at a table designed for six, haven't as yet interacted much with the rest of the class but seem to find comfort in the proximity of the other.

Once the circle had quieted, we all fell into "circle manners" and the students sat up, kept their hands to themselves, and listened quietly when others were speaking. I had had an idea last night as I was cleaning and making Rice Krispies squares for my classes that considering I have Kelli Clifton's dual-language posters on my wall with words of

inspiration written in both French and Sm'algyax, could I somehow use those heroic qualities as inspiration for our rules of conduct in French 9?[62]

I brought out some pastries and tea for us to eat as we discussed the rules that the students had come up with. Most everyone helped themselves to something to eat as the discussion ensued, and about half of them enjoyed the hot, sweet tea. I paid close attention to the ideas that were being offered, hoping that someone would notice Kelli Clifton's dual language posters underneath the clock and comment on them. As we went around the circle and ideas for classroom rules were discussed, I excused myself from the circle to make notes on the board:

Be responsible and thoughtful with school supplies.
Be thoughtful about cleaning up your mess.
Don't let your food/drink be the focal point of the class' attention.
Don't use the microwave and the kettle at the same time.[63]
Be thoughtful about making noise with your friends at your table.
Respect the pillows: don't throw the pillows, don't eat on the blankets.
Be mindful of any mess you make with the toys, and don't play with them during inappropriate times.
Games are for when we have the time to play them, we need to play them, or we've earned them.
Take charge of your learning by checking the webpage and the yellow folders at the back of the room if you need to.

I changed the students' wording slightly in order to achieve clarity and to introduce a common language through which we might grow together as learners in the small community I was trying to create in my classroom. For example, rule #9 uses the expression "Take charge of your learning", which connects with the "Personal Awareness and Responsibility" Core Competency section of the BC Curricula:

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[62] The words of inspiration, written in French and Sm'algyax, are *respect, reconciliation, good-heartedness, connection to family,* and *connection to nature.* There is a further explanation of these posters in December 4's "Further Thoughts" section.

[63] We learned this the hard way yesterday.

> Personal awareness and responsibility includes personal efficacy and self-advocacy — the abilities that students use to understand and take responsibility for their actions, including their learning; to make constructive and ethical decisions about their personal and social behaviour; and to recognize and accept consequences, understanding how their actions affect their own well-being and that of others.[64]

After I had checked with the students that they were satisfied with how I had represented their opinions, I went back to the board and underlined key words:

Be **responsible** and **thoughtful** with school supplies.

Be **thoughtful** about cleaning up your mess.

Don't let your food/drink be the focal point of the class' attention.

Don't use the microwave and the kettle at the same time.

Be **thoughtful** about making noise with your friends at your table.

Respect the pillows: don't throw the pillows, don't eat on the blankets.

Be **mindful** of any mess you make with the toys, and don't play with them during inappropriate times.

Games are for when we have the time to play them, we need to play them, or we've earned them.

Take charge of your learning by checking the webpage and the yellow folders at the back of the room if you need to.

I asked the students if they knew why I had underlined those words, and after a couple of false starts, it was determined that "being thoughtful, mindful, responsible, and respectful" would be key elements of the rules of the classroom. I asked them if there was anything in the classroom that might help them remember these ideas, and live by them on a daily basis. The students still did not make a connection to Kelli's posters, so I suggested that the five heroic qualities which the posters displayed in French and Sm'algyax might be useful to us:

Łoomsk / le respect

Ama goot / la bonté

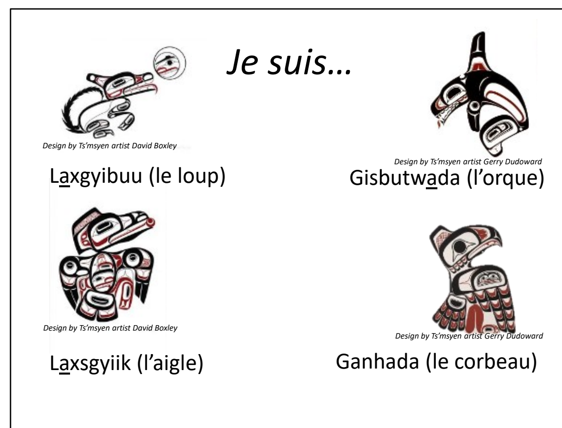
Wilwilaaysk / la famille

64 https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/sites/curriculum.gov.bc.ca/files/pdf/PersonalAwarenessResponsibilityCompetencyProfiles.pdf

La̲x yuup / la nature
Nda'aamx / la réconciliation

When asked which quality might best represent the spirit of the rules which they had come up with, the unanimous response was "le respect". I told them that from now on, we would use the term "Łoomsk ".

I attached a Sm'algyax and French poster of the four traditional crests of the Ts'msyen nation (Wolf, Orca, Eagle, and Raven) onto the whiteboard, to remain there for the rest of our unit:



We also discussed the fifth crest, *adabiis* (the butterfly), created by the Ts'msyen nation for non-Indigenous people. We discussed that when a person from the Nisga'a, Helsik, Haida, or Taltan nations (or any other Indigenous nation) come to visit Prince Rupert, they belong to the clan *adabiis* despite the fact that they have a clan identity on their own nation's land.

Figure 29. Slide from introductory La Ville notes

I told the students that our first unit would be "La Famille", and gave them a quick overview of what they could expect for grammar and vocabulary. I'm taking this part slowly, so that the students aren't overwhelmed by lengthy lists right at the beginning of a unit; for example, instead of writing out each individual relative that they would learn in French, I told them that we'd learn about close family, distant family, and the different types of families that exist outside of blood relations. Putting the vocabulary into categories feels a bit more manageable, and I hope the students feel that way as well. I also let them know that we would learn how to gossip about their family members by talking about their physical and emotional traits, as well as their ages and hobbies. When I did this, Sam hooted and Jackson's group started laughing and poking each other, but what they haven't yet realized is that they'll be limited by the type of vocabulary I give them, and I don't plan on giving them too many insulting adjectives (perhaps "annoying" for a younger sibling, but nothing worse than that).

I reminded the students that part of the role that French instruction would play in my classroom is to recognize and support the Ts'msyen nation, so I put four Ts'msyen crests on the board for them in Sm'algyax and French, and we went over meaning and pronunciation. We will review the information a bit further on in the unit, after we have learned a bit of French.

I'm very interested in what the students will think about the mixture of Sm'algyax and French in the sentence, and what Elder Lawilwel (Ben Spencer) will think about it.

December 5, 2018

Journal Entry

We started our Family unit today by reviewing the five Ts'msyen crests and how to indicate that one identifies with a certain crest. We also learned how to say that we live on unceded Ts'msyen territory:

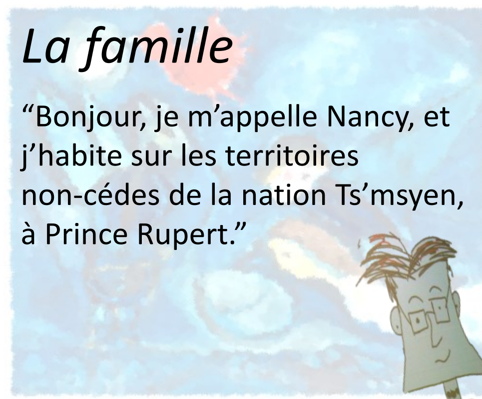


Figure 30. Second slide from La Ville unit

I asked the students if anyone identified as Ts'msyen in the classroom. Several students did, so I pointed out to them that they can substitute in their own clan name in Sm'algyax and French rather than use "adabiis/le papillon". I was pleased that the students were very open about discussing their clans.

After class my soft-spoken student Olivia came to speak to me. I had noticed how polite and attentive she had been during our lesson, which made me happy. She told me that she had enjoyed the lesson, and that in her mind, there was no reason why every student in the high school shouldn't know the names of the five Ts'msyen clans in Sm'algyax. I asked her why she felt that. "Because this is their land", she answered.

I knew that Sm'oogyit Gitxoon (our Elder Alex Campbell) was down the hall from us today, but we were still able to include him in the periphery of our learning by giving him a piece of the birthday cake that I had brought in for a student. I asked Harper to take it

to him, and when she returned she had a note from Sm'oogyit saying, "Lukwil Aam K'eeks, Tooyaxsut Nüüsn. Sm'oogit Gitxoon". (The cake is really good. Thank you. Chief Gitxoon"). Harper, who is Ts'smyen, helped us with the Sm'algyax pronunciation, and was pleased to be put into the role of teacher for that short amount of time.

December 7, 2018

Webpage entry:

> **le 7 déc:** Today we spent a bit of time talking about Mme GZ's research project and whether or not you wish to be part of it. I gave you a consent form for yourselves, and one for your parents. Please show them to your parents and explain the situation to them. Your parents can email me any questions they have. If we get all the forms back (whether or not you want to participate) by Wednesday, we'll do something fun on Wednesday. If we by some miracle get all the forms back by **Monday**, we'll take Wednesday off and do no French at all! Woo!

Journal Entry

I handed out the consent forms today (see Appendix I), one for students and one for their parents. I'm also going to hand out forms for a focal group, but I'll do this a little later on, once they get used to me and my style of teaching. I told the students that if they all brought in their forms by Monday, we would take Wednesday off and do no French. "Woo!" said Sam. I agree. I also let them know, as I was handing out the forms, that they were in English for ease of understanding for students and for parents; students were pleased with this. "Woo!" said Sam again.

We sat in circle while I explained that I was changing up how I would be teaching this trimester of French 9, but not in a way which demanded more from them intellectually, or time-wise. Some of the boys (Henry, Liam, Jackson, Wyatt, and Oliver) broke circle a bit by lying down in each other's laps and stroking each other's hair. I looked around the circle to gauge the responses to this impromptu show of affection, but none of the students seemed perturbed or even surprised. This must be something that they're used to seeing this group of boys doing in middle school, or perhaps in a different classroom

during last semester. I didn't feel that it compromised the respectful attitude that was being shown by the students, so I continued on without commenting.

I wanted my students to interact with me rather than sit and listen, so I asked them some questions. I'm including their most popular answers:

- What do you enjoy about French? (games)
- What scares you about French class? (making a fool out of myself in front of the class)
- How would you like to learn French? (games, music, stories, fun)

After question three I thought it would be a good idea to have a brief discussion as to the relevance of learning French here in Prince Rupert. My students were already aware of my intentions to bring Indigeneity into the classroom, but most of them answered that French might be needed for travelling, or government jobs. Gabriel indicated that French might be fun to learn so that he could swear in front of his parents and they wouldn't know what he was saying (interesting that he assumed that swearing was a part of the core French curriculum).[65] We discussed the role of Elders in classrooms, and to no surprise, students felt that Elders paid visits primarily to the Sm'algyax classes and perhaps to some social studies classes (but would have no reason to visit math, science, English, or certainly French classes). I asked my next question:

How do you think our Ts'msyen Elders feel about French being taught here? *(I don't know / they don't like it?)*

I was very interested in why the students felt that Elders wouldn't appreciate French being taught in Prince Rupert, but the students declined to take that point further. To facilitate the discussion I asked the question, "Suppose that an Elder was to come and visit this classroom. What could we do with our French learning that would make me happy, make the Elder happy, and make you happy?" "Not speak any French" quipped Jackson, much to the delight of his group of friends. I have to admit that I stepped right

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[65] Poor Gabriel; he and his parents went to brunch at the same restaurant every week that my friends and I did, and I think that he was sure that in that informal setting I might tell them the real reason he was taking French.

into that one, so I wasn't upset and I laughed with them. After a few more joke answers, Aria raised her hand and offered, "Make the class more aboriginal". A few of the students nodded. Jackson and his friends amused themselves by nudging each other with their feet. Buoyed by Aria's insight, I smiled and said, "Yes, let's do just that."

We were able to proceed from that point to a discussion of what "making the class more aboriginal" might look like. The students came up with the following (with a tiny bit of help from me):

- Learn more about Ts'msyen culture as it presents itself in Prince Rupert, including clans, crests, lineage information, food, song, and landmarks;
- Learn more from "doing" than having me lecture to them (although there would be a bit of lecturing);
- Learn from Elders who would be invited into our classroom;
- Participate as full partners in (most) classroom decisions, just as we had done with the rules of the class earlier. This would include unit content, capstone projects, format and content of quizzes and tests, etc.;
- Develop self-advocacy by writing self-evaluations after every summative assessment experience (and perhaps more often than that) in order to fully understand not only what they're learning, but how and why;
- Understand and believe that mistakes are not only welcome in my classroom, but are a necessary part of learning and are helpful to everyone. There will never be shame associated with making a mistake.
- Help fellow students through peer mentoring and peer evaluations;
- Conduct ourselves in a respectful manner at all times.

There is a huge difference between discussing future goals and plans while sitting and relaxing with friends, and actually maintaining those goals throughout a period of

months. We will see if we can maintain our commitment to these philosophies as we navigate our French learning.

We finally went back to our tables, and learned some French by decoding the family tree that I drew on the board (stick people joined by their heads are blood-related, those joined by hearts are married) and learn some family member vocabulary so that not only can we say, “I have a mother. My mother is my father’s wife”, but eventually, “I am Raven because my mother is Raven. My mother’s husband, my father, is Killer Whale.”

We went over the following vocabulary:

mon arbre généalogique - my family tree
mon fils - my son
mes fils - my sons
mon mari - my husband
ma belle-fille - my daughter-in-law
ma tante - my aunt
ma soeur - my sister

We also figured out that if we want to say "my aunt is my mother's sister", we can't use apostrophe "s" to show possession in French. We have to say "my aunt is the sister of my mother": *Ma tante est la soeur de ma mère.* And of course, we went over our introduction, as well will do each class, identifying ourselves as guests on unceded Ts’msyen land, or as members of a traditional clan.

I modeled the sentences a few times and had the entire class repeat it after me. Keeping Sanford et al’s “Ways of Knowing” in mind, I asked students to first go over the sentences themselves a few times, then practice the sentences with a partner, and then with a group of four. While this happened, I wandered around the classroom, unobtrusively listening to the students’ interactions, and encouraging them to help each other with pronunciation (I of course helped as well, when I was asked to). Students therefore assessed each other in a low-stress manner, and found “their own solutions [to

issues with pronunciation] and answer[ed] their own questions', as well as "evaluate[d] their own learning" and had "multiple opportunities for success and quiet recognition" (Sanford et al, 2012). When I asked if anyone would like to tackle the sentences by themselves in front of the class, several students volunteered. I'm noticing, however, that there was a group of girls who chose not to participate in any meaningful way, and they seemed to take their cue from Scarlett. Even Aria, who despite her earlier suggestion that we "make the class more aboriginal", did not want to practice her French at this time. I'll have to keep my eye on that group.

I arranged with Wap Sigatgyet today to have Sm'oogyit Gitxoon visit our classroom to speak about crests on December 13.

December 10, 2018

Journal Entry

Lots of oral practicing of our introduction this morning. As I wrote it again on the board for them, some students seemed a bit confused by my spelling of "Ts'msyen"; they are used to the anglicized "Tsimshian" (including the Ts'msyen students in my class). I told them truthfully that I had always said "Tsimshian" and had spelled it accordingly, until a couple of years previously when I was told, by a member of the Ts'msyen nation, that "Ts'msyen" was closer to the correct spelling and pronunciation of the word. But I did say to the students that many people used the spelling and pronunciation "Tsimshian", and they could continue to use it as well, or use "Ts'msyen", whatever they preferred. I was pleased that the students were already exercising their abilities to question and self-advocate.

I wanted at this point to try a little experiment. The students had been doing a lot of oral work in groups, then in pairs, and some had volunteered to come up in front of the class and present the tiny sentences they had learned so far. I wanted to give them a worksheet to help cement their learning, but I needed to see how they felt about it. After all, worksheets are seen by some educators to be a lazy, sloppy way of teaching, an old-

fashioned "school-as-factory" way of educating, and should be avoided at all costs. Yet I had a somewhat different view, and wanted to see if my students agreed.

"Les étudiants, faites attention s'il vous plâit », I began. All eyes turned to me. "Qu'est-ce que c'est?" I held up the worksheet. "C'est un *work-sheeeet*", David called out. "Yas, David!" Sam chimed in.

"Oui, c'est un *work-sheeeet*; en français, une feuille de travail. Est-ce que vous aimez des feuilles de travail ? » I hugged the worksheet and said « Mmmmm ! »

Well, that lost them. David looked at me as if I had lost my mind. Olivia shot me a slanted smile, but Aria and her friends rolled their eyes. I switched to English.

"Ok, let me rephrase that awkwardness", I said with a laugh. "Here's a worksheet. I assume you've all done them before. Some fill-in-the-blank, some short sentences, some terms you need to match up with other terms…"

"Matchums!" said Gabriel from the back of the room.

"Ok, matchums" I continued, "How do you all feel about worksheets?"

Answers ranged from "they're ok I guess" to "I hate them" to "meh", with a couple of "I like them". "Why do you like them?" I asked Anna, who had indicated as much. "Because then I have questions and answers all on one sheet for studying."

"And that would make you all feel more comfortable with your French? Anyone disagree?" A couple of wavering hands, some making the "so-so" see-saw motion. "How about if you could do the worksheet with a partner? And I give you class time?"

"Sounds good, GZ!" said Olivia.

"Yeah!" said David.

"Now we're talking", said Sam.

As one part of the worksheet needed the family tree which I drew on the board, I told the students they could take out their phones and take a picture (in case they wanted or needed to finish the worksheet at home). You would think they had won the lottery, they were so happy to have access to their devices. Too bad they had to be put away again after the picture was taken.

And thus was their first foray into advocating for themselves and co-creating assessment with me.

December 11, 2018

Website entry:

> **le 11 déc:** Today we practiced a bit for our quiz, then took it. Our first quiz ever in Mme GZ's French class... whoo hoo! We laid down the ground rules for quizzes and tests, and hopefully that'll make our quiz time smoooooth and easy Don't forget that tomorrow we're going to have a bit of a celebration so that Mme GZ can say thank you for bringing in your forms! If you haven't brought your form in yet, please try to bring it in ASAP.

Journal Entry

Today we practiced for a short quiz on the one line, "Bonjour, je m'appelle *x* et j'habite sur les territoires non-cédés de la nation Ts'msyen". Rather than just jump right into the quiz (as I would have done in previous years), we talked a bit about how they felt about the quiz (nervous), how much they had studied for it (not much despite the advanced warning. Despite this disheartening news I was happy that the students were being honest with me), and what might help a bit now. Liam shouted out that 10 minutes of study time would help, and I agreed. I told the students that they could work alone, work with a partner, or come to the front of the room and sit with me to get some "one-on-one" time (so to speak). Each student gravitated to what worked best for them, and as a few came to the front of the room, I cast my eyes around and kept half an ear cocked to see

whether the other students were staying on task. So much good work was being done that I allowed the 10 minutes to come and go. Students were still helping each other, sharing tricks they had come up with for memorizing spelling, quizzing each other, etc. Finally, I asked the class if they might like to get started. No one complained.

We decided together what the rules surrounding quizzes should be (surround yourself with your open binder so that your work can't be seen; no communicating with others during the quiz; proofread!), then wrote the quiz. The students were a bit surprised when I told them that we would be marking the quizzes in class; I asked them why they supposed I was doing that. "Less work for you", Scarlett said, a bit under her breath. "Sure", I answered, "although I do look them over to check the marking and see for myself how you're doing. Any other reasons anyone can think of?" I was happy to see that the next couple of answers included "so we can have one more look at the work", "so we can get to know the work even more", and ideas of that nature. But when one student said, "So that we can help someone else if they're having trouble", I stopped and thought a bit. Help how? So I asked him. He indicated that after we marked the quizzes, if someone did really poorly, the student who marked that quiz could help him out by explaining the material. "That's brilliant", I said, "And you thought of that on your own. Ok, after we mark the quiz, if you would like someone to help you out with whatever it is you didn't understand, I'll give the class 5 minute to do that. You can ask me too, of course". But to be honest, no one did. They preferred to get the help of their classmates. I hoped that the feeling of community in the classroom wasn't all in my imagination.

December 12, 2018

Webpage entry:

Today we had our celebration of you bringing in your orange forms. Yay! Tomorrow we have our quiz; it's on the following: my father, my mother, my sister, my brother, my aunt, my uncle. In French, of course! ☺

Journal Entry

Not everyone brought their forms in by Monday, but they were all in by Tuesday, so today we played game that used a bit of French and one that didn't, but what they both had in common was community building and setting foundations of trust. The students' favourite so far is a game that I learned back when I was a Scout leader: "Zig Zag Zog". The way it works is that students stand in a circle, and Student #1 points at another student and says "zig". Student #2 then points at another student and says "zag". Student #3 then points at another student, says "zog", but has to clap on the "zog". It sounds simple, but it's really easy to zig when you should have zagged, zagged when you should have zogged… you get the idea. And it's tricky remembering that you have to clap on "zog", and only "zog". We played a couple of practice rounds and discovered that it was easy, in a circle that size, to misjudge at whom the student was pointing, so we made a new rule that you needed to make eye contact and point with emphasis at the next player. You can imagine how loud and silly things got at that point, but they settled down as the students got into the game. At first it was "students v. GZ", everyone working hard to get me out, which happened when I forgot to clap on a "zog". After that it devolved into a "girls v. the boys" scenario, but all were laughing and encouraging each other, so I didn't think I needed to intervene. "Ooh, you goin' DOWN!" Sam said to Aria, laughing and pointing. "In your DREAMS!" she laughed back. We played this game three times before I finally asked if they wanted to move on to a different game. Most didn't.

Something interesting happened when we finished the first game of "ZZZ". I showed the students a wooden bin of wrapped chocolates I have by my desk, and said that I thought the winner of the game might take a chocolate as a reward. The class didn't think that was fair to the others, and decided that the top three students in each game should each get the same prize.

The second game we played is called "Je Passe", which has always been a student favourite.[66] There were a couple of students who were a bit shaky with their numbers, so

[66] The rules of Je Passe are explained in section 3.4.1 (My Classroom as a Site of Inquiry: Fun and Games).

I told them that I would help them out for the first few games (it wouldn't be much of a sense of community if some of the students couldn't play the game). We played a practice game which was a bit of a disaster, but we used it to work out the kinks, then played a game for real.

No big surprise was that the class ganged up on me to "get GZ out". Between rounds groups of students would whisper to each other, trade places in the circle, all in the hopes that when the person to my right said "vingt" (20), all of the "je passe"s would be used and I'd be forced to say "vingt et un". It didn't happen right away, but when it did, there was such an uproar that the teacher next door poked her head in my classroom to see what was going on. "What can I do, French is loud", I thought to myself, smiling.

The grouping that took place in "ZZZ" took place in "Je Passe" as well; once I had been eliminated, it became a gender war. But it seemed that for every "You're gonna lose!" between the genders, there was also, "C'mon, you can do it!" within the gender. The teasing seemed very good natured, and the support very sincere. Plus, the practice they were getting with their numbers was fantastic. I've never seen a group so anxious to get proficient at French counting.

December 13, 2018

Website entry:

> **le 13 déc:** We were very lucky to have Mr. Campbell as our guest today, who talked about the importance of the clan system in Ts'msyen culture. It was wonderful to feel so included when he was talking about the role of the adabiis crest.

Journal Entry

My administrator Sandy Pond came in to my classroom today for the first of three official evaluations she is conducting for our school district. Teachers are supposed to have these

sorts of evaluations every five years, but after numerous years working in this district, I had not been evaluated until today. I have always wanted my administration to come into my classroom and see the work we're doing, and so I'm thrilled that she's here.

I wish that Sandy could have been in the classroom yesterday and enjoyed the fun of our games day, but perhaps it's just as well that her first visit shows her the more academic side of our classroom. As I mentioned earlier, I decided to forego my usual "La Salle" unit and start instead with a unit into which we could incorporate a good amount of Indigenous learning early in the trimester. I chose "La Famille", as talking about our families will not only afford a logical reason for situating ourselves with where we live and to which Ts'msyen clan we belong, but we can also learn about the matriarchal nature of clan identity in the Ts'msyen nation. I had told my students on the first day of the trimester that we would start the unit by learning the five crests of the Ts'msyen Nation in English, Sm'algyax, and French, and learn how to say that we live on traditional Ts'msyen territory. It was important that we cover this information today, as Sm'oogyit Gitxoon was visiting later in the morning, and his talk with the students would be more powerful if we had previewed the material. I referred the students back to the graphics that I had shown them on the first day of class, and we practiced situating ourselves and identifying our clans. I drew a family tree on the board, labeling some of the people by their clan affiliations; we then did an exercise together to learn how clan membership is passed through the generations, and whether we could identify a family member's clan with the small amount of information I provided:

> Mon père est Laxgyibuu; est-ce que je suis Laxgyibuu? (Non). (My father is Wolf; am I Wolf? No.)
>
> Ma mère est Ganhada; est-ce que je suis Ganhada? (Oui) (My mother is Raven; am I Raven? Yes.)
>
> Mon grand-père est Laxsgyiik, et mon père est Laxsgyiik; est-ce que mon frère est Laxsgyiik? (Non) (My grandfather is Eagle; is my brother Eagle? No).

We had a bit of time to practice these riddles in French, then Sm'oogyit Gitxoon (Alex Campbell) came in for his visit. It was a perfect day for me to lean into his teachings, as I woke up this morning feeling a little overwhelmed with what felt like an enormous task

ahead, the culmination of over two years of classwork and endless hours writing and rewriting my ethics proposal. Was I conducting this research properly? Am I asking the right questions, doing well by my students? I'll review my notes, talk to members of my cohort, and find my bearings again.

Mr. Campbell's topic for the students was the importance of the Ts'msyen clan structure. The fact that he wouldn't hesitate to come into this language of colonization class to share his wisdom and experience was a poignant moment for me. I couldn't help but ask myself if this might mean that he sees a place for Indigeneity in the French program. During my Master's degree, I had showed him some of my work (the painting of my microsite at Butze Rapids), and he had been very interested and supportive. When I saw him walk into my classroom, I felt a wash of gratitude.

Yesterday when I told the students that Mr. Campbell was going to come in, most didn't know who he was, as they had only been in the school for a few months and didn't have the occasion to meet him. A few students knew of him, and asked me, "You're going to give him a gift for coming in, right? You have to give a gift to the Elder." "Of course", I replied. "What do you suggest?" We decided together that since I love to bake and Mr. Campbell has a sweet tooth, I'd make him some cookies from the class.

When Mr. Campbell came into the classroom, the students settled down immediately and showed almost a hushed reverence to his presence. Even Jackson and his crew faced front and kept their hands off each other. I introduced our guest to everyone, and said that they could use his English name, Mr. Campbell.

Mr. Campbell started off his lesson by shouting out the Sm'algyax word "Wai!" ("Hey!") in order to get everyone's attention. His shout wasn't very loud, and didn't need to be as my class was silent. He has a quiet and gentle way of speaking which, rather than demanding the attention of the students, suggests that something important and interesting might follow. He then went on to introduce himself in Sm'algyax, using the proper Ts'msyen protocol:

Luaam goodu nii wil niism.	I am happy to see you all.
Sm'oogyit Gitxoon di Waayu.	My name is Sm'oogyit Gitxoon.

La̲xsgyiik di Pdeegu.	My crest is Eagle.
Gispa̲xloots di wil 'Waatgu.	I come from Gispa̲xloots.
_____ *di Waas 'Nt'I'itsu*	My grandmother's name is _____.
Lax Kxeen di wil Dzogu.	I live in Prince Rupert.

(I left out Mr. Campbell's grandmother's name, as I didn't quite catch it when he said it, and didn't think to ask him about it after the fact).

Mr. Campbell then talked to the class about the four traditional (and one non-traditional) crests of the Ts'msyen nation, and the protocols surrounding inter-marriage between the crests (one can't marry someone of the same crest). He also went on to talk about the matrilineal nature of crests; I watched the students at this point to see their reactions and was thrilled that they were still paying close attention despite the fact that they had already been taught this information, and were hearing it again in a very slow, quiet way.

Mr. Campbell then started talking about how his experiences growing up in the Prince Rupert area, about the Ts'msyen villages lining the Skeena River, and about the importance of knowing one's clan. He spoke of how the *adaawx*, or sacred true tellings of the Ts'msyen nation, explained the origin of protocols, were stories of creation, and described the natural order of flora and fauna in our area (why the five species of salmon head to their spawning sites in a specific order, for example, or how the height of certain plants will tell us if it will be a good fishing season). As he said this, he was glancing around the room, and I was happy that our lesson about situating ourselves on Ts'msyen land was prominent on the front board. But my pride was short-lived as he turned to me and asked me where the posters of the seasonal rounds were located.[67] I usually had the current month's poster on the whiteboard, but had taken it down to make room for test

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67 Wap Sigatgyet sells copies of 12 posters, one for each month, as a set to illustrate the activities of each month in Ts'msyen culture. For example, the month of March is called *Ha'lila̲x six'w̓a̲h* or "The Month for Gathering Oolichan" (a smelt-like fish which runs in the hundreds of thousands each March in the Skeena and Nass Rivers).

dates. Embarrassed, I apologized to Mr. Campbell and vowed to put all twelve posters up as soon as possible.

Mr. Campbell told the class an adaawx about an area quite close to the school, then wrapped up his talk by asking if the students had any questions. There weren't any, unfortunately. I asked Aria if she would thank Mr. Campbell and give him our little bag of cookies; she was shy bit did a wonderful job. Before he left, I wanted to get a picture of Mr. Campbell in front of our whiteboard. As I was about to snap the picture, a shuffling noise startled me: ten students were moving up to the front of the class to have their picture taken with Mr. Campbell. Sandy then joined in. I love that picture, and put it on the webpage.

Figure 31. Mr. Campbell, Ms. Pond, and several of my Grade 9 students

January 7, 2019

Webpage entry:

le sept janvier: Bienvenue! I hope that everyone had a wonderful and restful holiday. We started class slowly today, as we were all tired.

Journal Entry

The first day back from our Christmas holidays. To say that no one was excited to be back in French class is an understatement. Many heads were down on the desks; the eyes that I could see were half-closed and blurry; chins were in hands and the general atmosphere was very low energy.

It would have been tempting to scold the students about their online and gaming habits: many stayed up until 3:00 or 4:00am each night online, then slept in until early afternoon. Could they not predict that their first day of school would be ridiculously hard to get through under those circumstances? But my nagging wouldn't be useful, and to be honest, I was a bit sleepy too, but much happier to be in the classroom than the students were.

We began the morning in circle, and I provided homemade muffins and hot vanilla-flavoured tea (I provided tea every morning, but my budget didn't allow for feeding 24 students breakfast every day; bringing muffins in each Monday was the best I could do). We ate in circle and the students chatted with each other a bit, then I asked them to say one thing that they had done over the holidays (in English). Some had gone skiing or snowboarding, but most had stayed home and played video games. Once we had gotten ourselves used to being back in class, we cleaned up, sat at our tables, and continued on with our family tree work. Today we learned how to say not only which relatives we have, but which we don't have (necessitating the learning of the negative ne…pas).

Normally teaching a grammar point can be a bit dry. Wanting to give students some input into the content of this lesson, I asked them if they would rather learn about

negatives through board work and a worksheet, or through a story. Perhaps sensing an opportunity to do less work, the students opted for a story. I decided to bring a little imagination and humour into it, and concocted a ridiculous story about how constructing the French negative is like making a sandwich. To spice it up a bit, I also told the students that I wasn't allowed to tell them this story as they were too young, and supplemented my words with a surreptitious glance out into the hallway to see if anyone could hear me. I spoke in almost a whisper. Olivia laughed and shook her head, so I made her my volunteer for this activity.

One would think that asking a student what sort of sandwich they like would be a fairly straightforward question, but this in fact was not the case. Not only could Olivia not tell me what sort of sandwich she liked (other than to say, "meat"), neither could Jackson or Gabriel. Thank goodness for Sam, who piped in, "I be likin' me some ham!" Much hilarity ensued, even among Scarlett and her friends, as we worked through the lesson, using the two slices of bread and the filling as the stand-ins for ne, a verb, and pas.

We continued our lesson on negatives by learning about the use of partitive articles after pas; it's a tricky bit of French grammar which seems illogical to students, but must be learned. Again, I asked them if they were tired of hearing "gossip" about French words and would prefer to learn in a different way, but the story version won out again. I started off by telling the students that what happened in the French classroom stayed in the French classroom, then proceeded to tell them another story about outlaws and Negative Town and a verb's hurt feelings. When the story was completed, I offered my students the actual grammatical reason why one can't have partitive articles after the negative, but they preferred the outlaw version.

January 9, 2019

Webpage entry:

> **le 9 janvier:** Today we took up the homework from yesterday; a lot of us didn't get it done because you forgot to check the webpage. Try to make it a habit! There's lots of important information here.

Journal Entry

As we move closer to our capstone for the Family unit, I want to make sure that the students know exactly what it expected of them, so I've drawn a family tree on the whiteboard (always with the same style of stick people, but mixing up the relationships each time), each day since the beginning of the unit. I have coloured in one of the people to show the point of view of the speaker, and done a sample presentation: Bonjour, je m'appelle GZ, et j'habite sur les territoires non-cédés de la nation Ts'msyen, à Prince Rupert. Je suis adabiis (le papillon). Voici mon arbre généalogique. Combien de personnes y-a-t-il dans ma famille? Dans ma famille, il y a 20 personnes. Each day I added another line or two, depending upon what we had learned that day, modelling the process then giving the students time to practice in groups, then in pairs, then present in front of the class (for formative assessment only ; it took a bit of time for the shyer students in the class to feel comfortable coming up, but as there was no feedback for them other than praise and hints for increasing fluency, even the shyest student lost their fear and didn't want to be "the only one not going up". I have to give a nod of thanks to my dear class clowns (Henry, Liam, Jack, Jackson, Oliver, and especially Wyatt, who made it a point of honour to somehow throw himself on the floor in every presentation), who always volunteered to perform in front of the class, always provided a hilarious skit, and only sometimes followed the actual directions. Their attitude made it easier for the shyer students to realize that coming up to the front of the class could be a lot of fun, and always earned a resounding round of applause from the class and me.

After my little daily presentation today, I gave the class some time to practice in our usual manner, then we did a little puzzle whereby I asked students about the relationships in the tree: "Barb est la tante de…? Betty est la grand-mère de…? Herrat est la …. de Nancy", and so forth. Since the beginning of the unit I had used my own family as examples, in part so that I would find it easier to remember the relationships I had put on the board from day to day, but also to show the class that one should use their true families in their family tree and be proud of whatever structure ensued. For example, my mother was married and had a child before she met my father, so I was sure to include that in the family tree, so that divorces, deaths, adoptions, foster children, etc could find

their rightful place in the family structure. And of course, teaching the French vocabulary for the different types of families is high on my agenda.

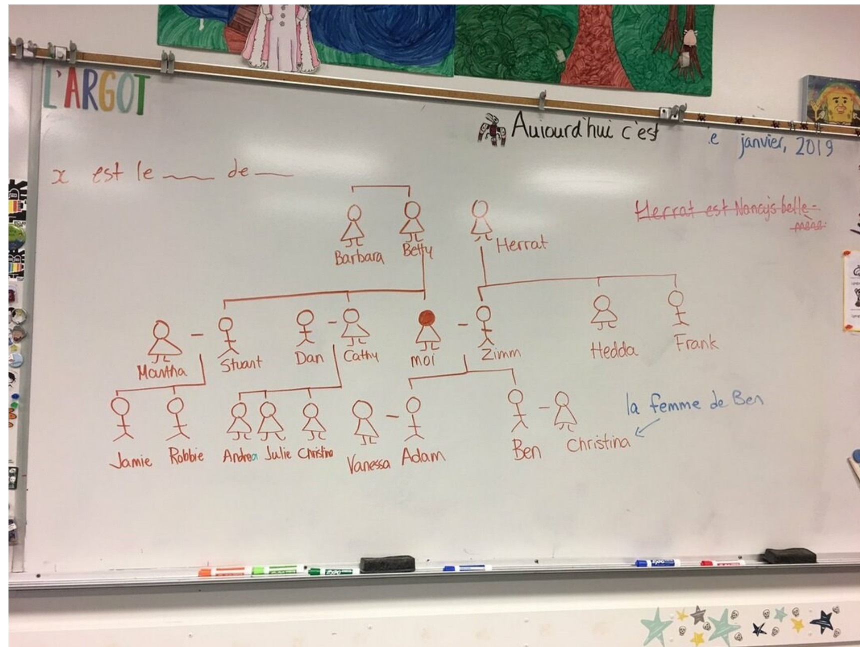

Figure 32. My family tree

After the exercise, we had a discussion to see what activities our family members like to do, so that we could include that in our family tree presentation. The class came up with the following list:

To draw
To play video games, volleyball, hockey, golf
To swim
To read
To dance
To write music
To cook
To watch tv
To nap

To run

To make models

To hunt

We did some work with the verb “aimer”, so that we could indicate not only that we draw, for example, but also that we like to draw. The students appreciated this part of the lesson as not only was “aimer” easy to learn as it is a regular “er” verb, but it also meant that when using it, students could avoid conjugating the second verb.

I also let my students know that they would be presenting their family trees on January 15 through 17. Most seemed a bit nervous about this, but I reminded them that they had been practicing fragments of their presentation, word for word, since day one of our unit.

January 14, 2019

Webpage entry:

> **le 14 janvier**: We have our presentations for "La famille" tomorrow, and today we had a practice day. Two of you practiced with me today and did such a good job that I just gave you a mark! Remember, even if you practice with me and I give you a mark, you can still re-do on your assigned day and take the better mark of your two attempts.

Journal Entry

We continued on with our learning by practicing for our presentations tomorrow. I made the offer to the students that they could practice their presentations with a partner for some critical feedback (critical in a positive way, of course), then if they wanted, they could practice with me to receive some really useful hints on how to sound fluent on project day. Most of the students took me up on the offer, including Sophia and Olivia.

Sophia is a calm, hard working girl who always seems to have a smile on her face, and Olivia, mentioned already in this journal several times, is friendly and outgoing, perhaps less of a hard worker than Sophia, a little more prone to emotion, but a lovely girl. Olivia wanted to practice with me, so we did. Then Sophia wanted to do the same, so I listened to her presentation as well. I sat them both down together (after asking them if it was ok to discuss my comments in front of the two of them), and told them that they had both done a stellar job, and if I were marking the presentations, I would have given them both 100%. I let that sink in a bit as I watched their beaming faces, then said, “Why don’t we just pretend that this was your actual presentation, and now you’re finished the unit?” I felt that if they could do a perfect job on January 14th, they could probably do a perfect job on the 15th as well, so for me it was a no-brainer, and a nice thing to do besides. Olivia and Sophia were ecstatic, and rushed off to tell their friends. I found that a lineup quickly formed in front of me for hopefuls who wanted to see if they too could earn the 100% early. I listened to then all, but we decided one by one that they could probably do a better job after one more day’s practice. But I like the idea of “surprising” students with what they thought was practice being their actual presentation (as long as they have done the best job they can). They can of course choose to do their project on the proper day, but I feel that the offer itself opens the door for bonding as the students see my sincere admiration for them and want to reward them for their efforts.

I took another stab today at trying to drum up some interest in a focal group meeting with me to discuss scheduling and other issues. Everybody was too busy after school to meet, and no one wants to “stand out” by meeting during class in my office. I’m getting the distinct feeling that having a focal group is not in the cards for this study. I have to wonder if I handled this poorly.

January 21, 2019

Webpage entry:

> **le 21 janvier:** We start our new unit, "La Ville", tomorrow, but first we have a celebration of our learning. If you can bring in a little something for us to eat, that would be great. :)

Journal Entry

Today the students did their first auto-évaluation on a project (self-evaluation), and to help them create a useful evaluation, I created some questions for them to answer on a worksheet:

1. Is there something that we didn't learn in the family unit that you wish we had learned?
2. Which activity in the family unit did you enjoy the most? The least?
3. What was the most fun in this unit? The least fun?
4. What was useful for learning the material? What wasn't useful?
5. Do you think that GZ could have taught this exact unit in another location? (Y/N) Why or why not?

In writing these questions, I was trying to strike a balance between innocuous questions about second-language learning in our unit, and gentle opportunities for students to talk about the Indigeneity of the unit; not only the content, but how the classroom learning might have been different from other classes they have, especially other second language classes.

When looking over the results of the self-evaluations, I made note of how I could better teach the unit next trimester ("put in more information about ages") and of course I appreciated Scarlett's comment that "there wasn't something that was boring to death." I carefully watched for was any mention of respect, trust, community, self-advocacy and of course, any mention of the Indigenous content. Here are some of the relevant comments:

What was the most fun in this unit?	• Sitting in circle (Grace) • Going into circles (Mia) • Circle (Scarlett) • When food was presented to accompany the learning (Sophia)
Could GZ teach this exact unit in another location?	• If the intro wasn't specific to the Ts'msyen Nation, it would be teachable in another area (Olivia)

	• No, because we included that land we were on and that's not in every location (Zoey) • No, because with this unit especially we are on the Aboriginal peoples land and if we went somewhere else, it wouldn't relate (Hailey) • No, because we also learned about Indigenous land in Prince Rupert (Layla) • No, she wouldn't be able to teach this unit in a different location because this is Ts'msyen land (Julian) • No, in our mandatory introduction we were to state that we live on non-ceded land of the Ts'msyen people (Sophia)
What was the least fun in this unit?	• Some of the circles because we crammed together (Gabriel)

None of the other questions garnered answers which related to my study, but I was gratified at how positive the students were about the unit, the contents, and the way in which it was taught. Jackson wrote that the unit "was very well explained and simple to understand"; Oliver wrote that he thinks I can teach the unit "anywhere, because I forgot most of my French but still learned a lot about a family tree….keep up the good work!". I think that Anna might have misinterpreted the question about whether the unit could be taught in exactly the same way in another location: "I say you should keep up with what you're doing because you're truly an amazing teacher!" Such a lovely vote of confidence, but I hope she doesn't think I am leaving my job. James wrote, for the same question, "No, because some schools that are prestigious have a strict rule of teacher." Sounds ominous. And finally, my favourite: Henry feels that I could teach this unit anywhere, because "if Mme GZ can teach Sam, she can teach anyone." High praise!

So what am I to find from these comments? Six of the students have realized that I have, to a small extent, offered local content into their French vocabulary. All of the students seem very satisfied with how the teaching is going, but they don't articulate why. Almost all like the games; a couple don't think they're fun or useful. I feel from observing the class and reading their evaluations that we are developing a sense of community, based

on mutual interests (they want to do well, I want them to do well, we do our best by working together), respect on many levels (self, process, environment, others), and a general sense of fun. But I'll have to have far more experiences with them under my belt before I can say anything definitive.

Our next unit is "La Ville" (The City). I'm really looking forward to this unit; Prince Rupert has many beautiful and meaningful examples of Ts'msyen culture for all to enjoy, and I think that they will lend themselves well in a unit about the city. In the past, I have taught this unit using an anonymous French city as my guide, and made sure to give a nod to French culture by explaining the existence of *les boulangeries* (bakeries) as separate from *les patisseries* (pastry shops), and why that's important to know while in Europe. For this unit, I will still teach them the names of the shops, but I'll put my concentration on places and items that are specific to Prince Rupert, just as my mentors at Wap Sigatgyet advised. For example, instead of just mentioning that a city has a museum, we will go to our local museum and learn about the ten thousand years of Indigenous presence on the Northwest coast of BC. We will learn vocabulary for transformation masks, woven robes with cedar bark, woven baskets, woven blankets, and other items that are found in the museum and in Prince Rupert. But I won't shortchange the students on the vocabulary they need to be learning to be able to discuss a city; they will still learn about butcher shops and libraries, candy stores and dairies, and all of the other usual vocabulary.

I spoke to the class about what they would like for their capstone (final) project for La Ville, and many of them chose to do a video. Some opted for a poster, and a couple of them asked to do an essay with visuals. All of the various ways in which students wish to show their learning are appropriate and welcome, as long as throughout the trimester they can show me their oral proficiency in some way (we practice oral communication daily). We'll start off this unit's capstone project in the usual manner: by situating ourselves. They will repeat the introduction I taught them in the previous unit, then tell a story about shopping around town, speaking with workers, and buying (or not buying) items. And after we have visited the museum tomorrow and have learned some new vocabulary, it will be interesting to see how many students include that vocabulary in their capstones.

After all, we'll be learning about quite a few stores, and many items one might find throughout the city. Will the students think to include the Indigenous items they learned about in class, and at the museum?

But first, a celebration of our learning with tea and baked goods.

January 23, 2019

Journal Entry

No interesting class notes today, but I did have a fantastic meeting with Lori Burger from Wap Sigatgyet. We talked about having more Elders come into my classroom, but the problem is that there are so few Elders who are available to come into the classrooms, and there are in very high demand. We don't want to stress our Elders, as many of them are senior citizens. But I did make it clear to Lori that it was a priority of mine to be guided by not only her department but by Elders as well, and hoped that there would be more opportunities for Elders to visit my French classroom. I have to respect the fact that priorities lie with Sm'algyax and Social Studies classrooms.

We talked about the museum visit we're planning; Lori would really like to come with us, but has other commitments on our proposed morning visit. We can only get a tour from 9:00 to 9:30 in the morning; it seems short to me but perhaps given student attention spans, it's the perfect amount of time. Lori has promised that she will come to the classroom on February 12 and talk to the class about crest poles, incorporating in information that the students learned at the museum.

February 7, 2019

Webpage entry:

le 7 février: We went to the museum today; what a great trip! You guys were really wonderful; thank you so much for your excellent behaviour.

I asked you to write down three things that you learned at the museum. Hopefully some of those things will relate to our vocabulary. I'm going to add a bit of vocab based on what we learned today:

a transformation mask:	une masque de transformation
some woven robes with cedar bark:	des robes tissées avec de l'écorce de cèdre
some woven baskets:	des paniers tissés
some woven blankets:	des couvertures tissées

We'll take up our three things that we learned tomorrow in class. :)

Journal Entry

We met at the museum this morning at 8:45am. Some kids were a little late as they stopped off at Starbucks to get something cold and frothy; I can't really blame them as I have my usual cup. We went to the museum today. Some students who hadn't brought in their forms had promised that a parent would be driving them to the museum and would give verbal consent, and I was thrilled when all needed verbal consent arrived and was given. We all waited outside (it was a bit blustery, but at least not raining) until everyone arrived (luckily I had asked them to arrive 15 minutes before we were expected), and I told the kids to finish up their drinks before we entered the museum.

I asked the students to bring paper and a pen with them, so that they could write down three things they learned during the tour that we could discuss tomorrow. We started off in the big, bright front room which looks out over the harbour (if I had been living in Prince Rupert back in 1984, I would have gotten married in that room. It's breathtaking). We learned about the various artifacts on display, including their history and their importance to the Ts'msyen people. As we walked through the museum, we learned how each item had a place in traditional culture, as well as those which still have a place in

Ts’msyen culture today. For example, we saw a great many carved spoons. One of the students said that she’s seen lots of carved spoon pendants, and wasn’t sure what their significance was. Our guide explained that spoons were an important symbol of status at potlatches. She also explained how copper shields, highly prized as copper wasn’t readily available to all Nations, would be broken into parts by a Chief at a potlatch and given out to guests, to show his wealth. This might happen to woven blankets, as well. It was truly fascinating. Tomorrow when we meet up in class, we’ll go over what the students wrote down.

Figure 33. Outside the museum

Figure 34. Curated Ts'msyen artifacts

Figure 35. Learning about potlatch items

February 8, 2019

Journal Entry

We got into circle and talked about what the students liked about the museum trip, and what they learned. Most of the students mentioned the ceremonial items that were important for a potlatch; many mentioned the masks, carved into the shapes of animal heads, which could be manipulated by the wearer to open and close the mouth. There was a lot of vocabulary generated from the visit that we could add to what I had already provided, including le totem, le chapeau de cèdre tissé, le conservateur du musée, and la boîte en bois courbé. We were able to incorporate our new vocabulary into sentences which supported the grammar and verbs we needed to practice:

Combien coûte la boite en bois courbé?
Qui travaille au musée?
Le conservateur du musée travaille au musée.
Je vois le totem et le chapeau de cèdre tissé.

February 10, 2019

<u>Journal Entry</u>

The students requested some sample sentences to help them out with their presentations, and I decided to solicit the help of the Zimmerman character, who would be asking the questions and supplying the answers. I've used Zimmerman many times before in other classes, and students love him[68]. One of my favourite interactions with students is when they rush into class at the beginning of the block, breathless and full of excitement, and tell me that I would never guess whom they had seen running along the highway. My husband is an avid runner, and is very visible with his bald head, bright orange shirt, and tiny running shorts, and when students spot him, they react as if he's a rock star.

Figure 36. The real Zimmerman

[68] Zimmerman is first mentioned in Chapter 3.4.2

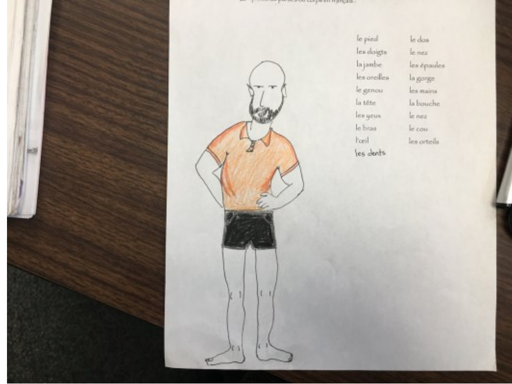

Figure 37. One of my better renditions

I offered the students, or perhaps I should say that Zimmerman offered the students, this list to practice with:

Hello, my name is x, and here is "The City".
First, I leave my place.
I'm looking for the museum, where is the museum?
Where does one find the museum? I want the museum!
Oh there it is. There's the museum. It's the museum!
I see the museum. I walk to the museum.
I pass by the pharmacy.
I'm coming to the museum. Then, I enter the museum.
I see the bentwood box, the totem pole, and the woven cedar hat.
Where is the curator? Oh, there he is. Hello! I speak to the curator.
How much does the bentwood box cost?
Whoa, that's expensive!
I don't buy the bentwood box.
I leave the museum.

(A quick note of clarification: for some reason, my students don't have any trouble with numbered sentences, or sentences offered in a bulleted list, but panic when I give them a slab of a paragraph to work with. As well, I realize that there is a lot of repetitive vocabulary in there; I don't expect that students will use all of those sentences for each

store when they do their capstone, but will pick and choose from the myriad of choices that they have).

As expected, the students responded well to Zimmerman's participation in the exercise, and had lots of fun criticizing my art skills.

February 11, 2019

Webpage entry:

> **le 11 février:** We had our first project day today. Those who went today received a bonus mark. Bon travail!
>
> Don't forget that **WE'RE MEETING AT THE ALL NATIVE TOURNAMENT AT THE CIVIC CENTRE AT 8:30 WEDNESDAY MORNING.** Don't come to class first, I won't be there!

Journal Entry

We had our first of two project days, and I'm pleased to report that each student who did their project today mentioned at least two items one might find at our local museum. I can't really speak to the significance of this; it could be that because I mentioned those items so many times and they actually saw the items at the museum (not to mention all the other opportunities the students would have to see the items around Prince Rupert) that the students put them into their project. As well, I probably made it very clear how important these items are to me, evident not only because I took them to the museum to see them, but also because I used them in their example sentences from yesterday. I can't make any assumptions that there was any sort of transformative effect on the students through my teaching of this vocabulary. All I can guess at, is that they knew it was important to me, and thought it wise to put it in their reports. What I can say is that the students are learning a lot of French while having fun and respecting the territory they're on.

We went to the All Native Tournament today, which is a decades-long tradition in Prince Rupert in which the top teams from Northern Nations compete every February for the

championship title.[69] There is both a men's and a women's league, and attendance at the games is by ticket only, and much coveted. I booked ahead for this adventure, and I was excited to offer it to my students.

Well, it didn't exactly go according to plan. Only a few of my students showed up (they came straight from home), and during the games, which were loud and full of manic activity, many of the students were on their phones. I decided to just observe the students rather than shaming them about their phones. What I observed is that for the most part, the students weren't interested at all in the tournament, but they didn't want to be marked absent for the morning.

I have to ask myself why the students weren't interested. Could it be because the tournament has been a part of Prince Rupert culture since well before they were born, and was therefore not that big a deal? When we got back to the classroom, I asked the students if they had had fun. Some of the students tried to be quite polite about it and said that it was "ok", others said that it was boring. Apparently my class isn't that interested in basketball, unless it's being played by the Rainmakers (our school teams: junior and senior, as well as a girls' team). "Why do you prefer the Rainmakers?" I asked them. "We know them!" was the answer. So in the minds of my French students, there was no real reason to attend the tournament. There was no appreciation of Indigenous culture today. But that's ok; nothing disrespectful has been done or implied. If my students thought that showing interest in everything Indigenous in Prince Rupert was a "requirement", how would they be able to find and develop a genuine interest of their own? I didn't find this a disappointing experience; rather, a learning one.

February 12, 2019

Journal Entry

Today Lori Burger of Wap Sigatgyet came in to talk to the class about the importance of crest poles. As Mr. Campbell had done, she situated herself by naming her nation and

[69] The All Native Basketball Tournament is described in more detail in Chapter 3.3

clan (she is Nisga'a and Cree). She went on to explain the relationship of crests, sacred stories, and the clan system in her culture, as well as the various reasons one might erect a crest pole (to honour a loved one who has passed, to commemorate a specific event, to celebrate one's nation, etc.). She also explained the function of the potlatch which followed a pole raising, and the many levels of protocols necessary to observe. It was a fascinating talk, and through the question and answer section, it was clear to me that students were seeing the connection between what Lori was telling them, and what they had already learned about Ts'msyen crests and crest poles from local Elders and from their elementary school classes. Lori's talk did not contain any French, of course; I'm not sure how to bring more French into the lessons taught to us by guests without forcing an additional layer of colonization onto the experience by translating everything they are saying into French.

February 21, 2019

Journal Entry

Today we began our new and final unit, "Au Restaurant" (At the Restaurant). Being able to conduct oneself in a French restaurant (or even understand the French on a menu in any restaurant) is an important element of core French, and this unit pairs nicely with my wine unit in which my students will take in French 11.

I turned to my students today to ask them how we might weave Indigenous content into this unit. I thought it might be a bit more difficult to do so with this unit than with our previous two, but my students didn't hesitate to suggest that the food that's served in the restaurant can include traditional foods from the northern BC nations. I thanked the students for their input, and told them that they are always more creative than I am when it comes to content and format in the French program. We'll get to the lists of food tomorrow.

I went over what the unit will entail and when the summative assessment will take place, as I do for each unit. Students know that everything I teach them can (and should) be used in their projects, and we build on one day's learning the next day until we have

woven together a lovely narrative about whatever our unit topic is. For “Au Restaurant”, it will be about getting hungry, deciding to go out to eat, making a reservation, and what happens at various stages once you arrive (alone or with a friend) to the restaurant.

We divided ourselves into two groups: waiters (les serveurs) and customers (les clients). We brainstormed what waiters and customers might say to each other, then listened to a tape of two people doing exactly that. I also gave them a graphic version of the tape (a short comic) for them to follow along and use as notes later. I reached for my loyal partner Pierre (a doll dressed like a chef), and went through several versions of a conversation, using the vocabulary given in the tape and in the comic, first with me as the waiter and Pierre as the customer, then I reversed the roles. The students then broke up into pairs to practice on their own, swapping partners several times as we always do.

When I asked who might like to come to the front of the room to present, just to practice their skills, I wasn’t surprised that Wyatt and Liam volunteered. What those two lack in French skills they make up for in participation and humour. Wyatt, the server, became quite frustrated with Liam-as-customer, and started doing judo moves during his lines. At one point Wyatt pretended to choke Liam, then, of course, threw himself down on the floor as Liam did a dine-and-dash. The class was roaring with laughter and Wyatt and Liam were kings yet again. I know they always volunteer because they like being the centre of attention, and love the reaction they get from the class, but I wonder if they realize the wonderful service that they are providing to the rest of the class: by always wanting to perform, they are modelling for the other students that it’s not only ok but sort-of-fun to get up there and do whatever you do. It presents the possibility of being highly thought of by peers. They are also motivating the class to bring a little humour into their own presentations, be they for practice or for marks. It will be a sad day if Wyatt ever decides against falling in one of his presentations.

As the days went on, we learned more vocabulary about ordering drinks and appetizers. I taught them how to say, “Oh désolé, il n’y en a plus” (I’m sorry, there isn’t any more), which Wyatt and others immediately made good comedic use of in their practice skits.

We learned several different types of sandwiches, and by this time I was ready to start introducing some Indigenous content into my teaching.

February 27, 2019

Journal Entry

Today we went over some more vocabulary for items we might eat in a restaurant, and I was interested to see how the students might introduce some Indigenous foods. We wrote down several different types of salad and some onion soup, then Sam asked me, "Does the food have to be French?" "Of course not", I replied. "Anything you like". "Ok, burgers and fries". The class laughed, but I put it on the list. Harper chimed in: "Fry bread". Now we're getting somewhere! "Do you like fry bread, Harper?" I said casually as I wrote "Le pain frit" on the board. "Sure", she answered. "I eat it at home all the time". "Anyone else like fry bread?" I asked. The majority of the class put up their hands. At this point, other students began to ask for vocabulary that was a little more specific to the North coast:

Le saumon fumé (smoked salmon)
Les oeufs de saumon (salmon eggs)
Les œufs de flétan (halibut eggs)
La salade à l'algue (seaweed salad)
Le saumon avec le riz (salmon and rice)
Le flétan (halibut)
La pieuvre – (octopus)

"Do you notice a difference at all in the last few foods we put up on the board from the first few we chose?" I asked. "Yeah", someone answered, "it's all Native food" (I wish I could remember who said that). We had a discussion as to why we thought of it as "Native" food, and I was impressed with the amount of knowledge that some of the students had about traditional Indigenous Northcoast food. I asked how many students had eaten things like seaweed salad (some), salmon and rice (almost all), halibut (almost all), halibut eggs (no one), and octopus (again, no one). I was happy to witness their

branching out into local foods in this unit; it didn't necessarily mean that they were developing positive viewpoints about Indigeneity, but they certainly felt that the foods from their part of the world belonged in a French restaurant unit.

The rest of the unit (and in fact, the rest of the trimester) was taken up with preparing for our capstone project and our final test. For some reason, many students were going to be away in the final week of the trimester, so we had a lot to work out as far as new and individualized due dates for students.

February 28, 2019

Webpage entry:

> **le 28 février:** We…had circle today and talked about our stresses, and how to deal with them; then we did a short survey for me; merci beaucoup! Because we spent time in circle, we missed the quiz (woot). We took up the homework in little skits (bon travail!) and time ran out at this point.

Journal Entry

The stress in the classroom is palpable today. Could it be due to the end of the trimester? We still have 12 days left, but it's not for me to judge anyone else's stress. So we dropped what we were doing, and got into circle.

We talked a great deal about the stresses everyone is under. For the most part, the stresses had to do with end-of-trimester due dates, late homework, and the sinking feeling that time, previously seeming endless, was now short. I asked the class if it was just my course, or all their courses, to which they replied that it was all their courses. "What can I do to help?" I asked. "Cancel everything" said Sam. Some kids laughed, but other said, "Nooooo, we need to raise our marks!" "Well, no wonder you're feeling stressed", I said. "Don't worry about raising your mark. Just work on improving your fluency, and the rest will take care of itself. If you haven't been working hard this trimester and you don't feel your fluency or your mark is where it should be, you're wrong. Your fluency

and mark is your most accurate indicator of where you are with your French. Not everything is about talent, it's also about working hard and managing your time. Remember we talked about that on the first day, how it's part of Łoomsk, respect for yourself and for the learning process? So don't try to cram, it will only hurt you. Just take the time that you have left and do your best. Then, when you get your mark, whatever it is, you can receive it with pride and hold your head up."

"I thought you said you were going to do something for us", said Liam, a little mopey.

"Oh, right. Well, how about we do a little survey about how you're feeling, then we'll skip the quiz for today and just do some fun skits to prepare for our project. Then we'll do a bit of work on Monday, but Tuesday and Wednesday will be reserved for practice and studying for the test Thursday and your projects on Friday. How's that?"

I don't think I've seen such a large collection of relieved faces before or since. The class did the survey, we did some little skits to get our mojo back, and ended the class.

For these surveys, I didn't ask any questions about Indigeneity, but kept the questions general so that I could see where their heads were at. I was going to do another survey on the last day of class (March 11), so I knew I had another chance to see how Indigenous content and ways of teaching/knowing affected their view of French class (if they did affect the students' views at all). For this survey, I was hoping to see how their self-evaluation and metacognition skills had developed over the trimester. Part of the focus of my teaching was to improve the students' view of themselves not only as French speakers but as learners in general, and of course to see how the students felt about our Indigenous ways of learning and content.

The questions I asked on the February 28 survey were:

What are you learning in French class?
Why are you learning it?
How is your learning going?
How do you know how your learning is going?
What are the next steps in your learning?

I was ready for whatever answers the students gave, but I'll admit that I was hoping for an indication that they had taken the foci of the self-evaluations from something their teacher was making them do, to something they internalized and would continue to do even outside of the French classroom.

For the first question, what are you learning in French class, most of the students answered that they were learning the vocabulary of our current unit. David, Zoey, and Olivia said that among other things, they were learning about the land they're living on. Sam and Henry (of course) said that they was learning "French". Comedians right till the end! Layla said she was learning good study habits; quiet Ryan, the artist at the back of the room, said that he was "learning how to break out of my shell". Sophia said that she's "learning to communicate and have confidence while presenting but also to listen and stay alert."

I expected that question #2 (Why are you learning it [French]) would be a little difficult for the students to answer, and most of them did reply that they would use it if they ever travelled to a French-speaking place. Olivia, however, felt that "it is very important to acknowledge the land and the first peoples living on the land". Can I assume from this that Olivia agrees that a French classroom is a good place for this acknowledgement to take place? I'm not going to ask her; she will of course say yes due to her polite nature. But I am happy nonetheless that in a question that was not meant to lead her to a recognition of Indigeneity, she found her way there on her own.

Ryan answered this question with "I've always found myself to be a really quiet person. Too quiet in some cases. Standing up in front of people to say something has always scared me for some reason, and I don't want that". Considering that speaking a foreign language in front of a group is a nightmare for most students, the fact that Ryan would actively seek it out in order to improve himself is commendable.

For the other questions, the students answered the in a predictable manner: if they were doing well, they knew it because of how they felt about the subject matter, and their next steps would be to continue doing what they were doing. If the learning wasn't going well, students said that they were distracted at their table (but didn't want to move to

another table; I already knew this), or that they had missed some days and had fallen behind (there is a very specific and successful plan in the classroom which helps students catch up if they've been away, but they have to participate in the plan in order for it to work), etc. As for what their next steps would be, they echoed the steps that we had been discussing since the beginning of the trimester, the steps that proved that you not only respected yourself, but the learning process: come to class, pay attention, ask questions, focus, do your homework, get extra help when you need it, pay attention to time management. This survey was completed on February 28 for a trimester that ended on March 11; it was a bit late to be coming to these realizations, but the students still had a third of their summative assessment yet to go (one project, one test). If they meant what they said on their survey, they could certainly show some improvement in their fluency by the end of the trimester, and in tandem, increase their mark.

March 11, 2019

Journal Entry

Final day of the trimester, and it has been an adventure teaching this group of students. I hope that all of them will go on to French 10, but I know that some won't: Grace and Scarlett have kept sullen for most of the trimester and I'm sure will be happy to never see my face again; our own dear Sam will have to repeat French 9 if he wants to go on to French 10, as will David, Luke, Hailey, and Gabriel. Harper is moving out of town. But I have high hopes for Aria, who despite being part of the Scarlett's friend group who kept to themselves much of the time and didn't show any desire to form a connection with me, improved in her mark greatly over the trimester. So today, I made a little speech about an award I was giving out to the most improved student. I didn't tell the class I was doing this, it was a spontaneous decision. I talked about what's important in learning: the attitude that the material is worth learning and that the student is worth teaching, and of course, a deep respect for oneself, the learning process, and one's environment (including the people around them). I then announced that the Starbucks gift card would be going to Aria. Her friends' mouths dropped open, as did hers. But she shouldn't have been surprised. I was proud of how hard she worked, and wanted her to know so in front of

her peers. I hope that she will continue on with her French, or at the very least, come to visit and pick up a wrapped chocolate (as long as she asks me in French).

The survey I handed out on the last day was useful in some ways, and a disappointment in others. It had some predictable questions: how do you feel now that French 9 is over? What worked for you? What didn't? What was difficult? What wasn't? Each student answered according to their own individual experiences. One question which I was very interested in seeing the answers to was: What do you think was the most important thing that you learned? Would any of them mention anything about Indigeneity, or about the various qualities (respect, community, self-advocacy) we had tried to live by this trimester?

Most students answered that the restaurant unit was the most important thing they learned in class. Poor Grace wrote that her most important piece was that she "stayed up all night to do a project and had a mental breakdown in the middle of it, just so that [she] could remember and learn for the test". If only she had trusted me enough to let me help her with her time management, and perhaps give her an extension if needed. Sophia however, answered that the most important thing she learned in French class was "to respect not only the French in French class, but the process as well." Ryan wrote "I think the most important things I learned was that the world is not as scary a place my mind makes it out to be". Layla said "I think the most important thing I learned was good study habits and how to prioritize school work." Hailey wrote that "The most important thing I learned in French was learning about the Ts'msyen culture with French. Like when we translated 'cedar hat' to French." I have often said to my students that "the least important thing we do in the French classroom is French". I was gratified to see that some of the students took that to heart.

Less useful was Question 7, which was in the form of a chart, in which I asked students to indicate how "useful" the following aspects of their French study were:

	Very useful	**Somewhat useful**	**Not very useful**
tests			

quizzes			
homework			
projects			
oral work in class			
group work			
circle			
field trips			

I didn't realize this at the time, but creating the three categories of usefulness for the students took away any imagination, creativity, or individualism they might have brought. Some students found tests useful, some didn't. Some found the homework useful, some didn't. As well, the various activities in the classroom, listed as they were, were taking completely out of context and made anonymous, in a way, with no relationality to the philosophies and purpose of the class. Having this sort of information definitely falls into the "not very useful" category for a teacher. But what made me the most disappointed in myself was the fact that the majority of students did not find our use of circle to be useful, although they had indicated in an earlier survey that they found it fun. I was truly upset with myself when I discovered this. It's one thing to think to oneself that homework is or isn't useful, as one can extrapolate from the question that the usefulness applies to increased fluency or marks. Why did I ask the students if they found the circle "useful"? Useful for what? "Useful" is definitely not the correct term to use for sitting in circle, and checking off boxes in a chart is not the way to discover how students feel about it. I was disappointed that I had made such a blunder, and that I had wasted the students' time and my own with that question.

Appendix B. Letters of Support from School District #52 and Charles Hays Secondary School

June 27, 2018

To whom it may concern,

Nancy Griffith-Zahner has made a proposal to do a research study for SFU investigating the effect of embedding Indigenous content and Ways of Knowing into the French 9 curriculum.

I applaud Nancy for her passion to investigate this powerful and timely notion. If her assumption is correct, then a revised French curriculum will further enhance student awareness of local indigenous culture. It will also strengthen the ideal of embedding First People's Principles of Learning into courses so that students can learn in more holistic way.

To this end, I give Nancy Griffith-Zahner full support to proceed with her research study, *A Stranger on Indigenous Land: Interpreting the Ecology of Teaching French on Indigenous Territory,* Study # 2017s0325.

Sincerely,

Ken Minette

Superintendent, SD52

August 18, 2018

To whom it may concern,

Nancy Griffith-Zahner has made a proposal to do a research study for SFU investigating the effect of embedding Indigenous content and Ways of Knowing into the French 9 curriculum.

Her presentation to the Superintendent and I was very inspirational. I am excited that Nancy is revising the French curriculum to further enhance student awareness of local indigenous culture. Her work will support the work that teachers at Charles Hays are doing to strengthen the ideal of embedding First People's Principles of Learning into courses so that students can learn in more holistic way.

I fully support Nancy with her research study, A Stranger on Indigenous Land: Interpreting the Ecology of Teaching French on Indigenous Territory, Study # 2017s0325.

Yours truly,

Sandra Pond
Principal

Appendix C. Aboriginal Education Council Consent Request: October 13, 2018

Aboriginal Education Council
SD52, Prince Rupert BC

October 13, 2018

Dear Council members:

re: request for consent for doctoral thesis

I would like to start by thanking the Aboriginal Education Council for taking the time to consider my request for consent.

I will start by introducing myself: my name is Nancy Griffith-Zahner, and I teach core French and BC First Nations 12 here on unceded Ts'msyen territory at Charles Hays Secondary School. I have only been teaching BCFN12 for two semesters, but I've been teaching French for the last 15 years.

I am in my third year of doctoral studies at Simon Fraser University in the specialty of Culturally Inclusive, Place-Based Education. My senior supervisor is Dr. Mark Fettes, who has worked closely with this district for several years.

I have finished my course work and have passed my comprehensive exams, and am in the process of preparing to do research for my doctoral thesis. My thesis title is: "A Stranger on Indigenous Land: Exploring the Ecology of Teaching French on Indigenous Territory."

The ideas of the thesis are as follows:

- the study of French in British Columbia has an undeserved reputation of privilege;

- the study of French language and culture in the high school can interfere with exposure to and appreciation of local Indigenous language and culture in language classes;
- the partnership of Indigenous and non-Indigenous methods of teaching, learning, evaluating, and assessing in the secondary core French classroom will enhance the education of all learners. As well, it will provide a previously unavailable opportunity for core French students to understand what it means to be learning a language of colonization on unceded Indigenous territory.

This thesis topic has been approved by a committee of professors at SFU.

My proposed research will consist of the following:

- when I have received consent, I will provide an Indigenized core French curriculum to one of my Grade 9 classrooms, beginning on December 3 and concluding on March 10.
- the curriculum will strictly follow the guidelines of the Ministry of Education's Core French curriculum.
- teaching will be guided and shaped by the First People's Principles of Learning, as well as the Lillooet Principles of Learning as laid out by Lorna Williams.
- content of the core French 9 class will include local information, shaped and curated by Indigenous Elders, knowledge-keepers, and other Indigenous educators.
- assessment and evaluation will be guided by, among other sources, suggestions provided in the BC First Nations 12 textbook (p. 13-14):

1. Mastery, belonging, generosity, independence.

2. Modelling and observation.

3. Watching, then doing.

4. Respecting the learner and the choices the learner makes.

5. Teaching and speaking with a language of respect.

6. Accepting and honouring the contributions of all.

7. Building on the strengths of the learners.

8. Using reflective thinking.

9. Building on the ideas of others (as opposed to offering a critique).

10. Patience.

11. Humour.

12. Understanding that learning in a group context such as the family can transfer to the classroom situation.

13. Valuing the oral tradition and storytelling.

14. Encouraging harmony, acceptance, and understanding.

15. Connecting with each other in a close, caring relationship.

16. Incorporating hands-on experiences.

17. Recognizing that real, relevant experiential learning can occur outside the classroom.

18. Understanding that everything is connected and concepts cannot be isolated from other concepts.

19. Mentoring.

I will be maintaining journals of observational assessment throughout the trimester, as well as interviewing students and conducting surveys in order to determine if a) students have journeyed toward a place of reconciliation through their study of French, and b) they have reached the learning outcomes of the Big Ideas and Curricular Competencies of the Ministry's Grade 9 French curriculum.

This is a very qualitative project; its aim is to document the journey that I have taken in the last few years toward understanding my place as an educator and a learner on Ts'msyen territory. As well, the project will be a story of my students' journey, and what they have learned (or not learned) about their role as French learners and speakers on this territory.

SFU's Ethics Review Board is very strict about transparency and consent, and all participants in the research will have full knowledge of the nature of the research (as will my students' parents), and will receive information in writing. Each student will fill out a consent form, stating whether or not they wish to be part of the research. There will be no negative impact on the student if they decide to opt out of the research project, either at the beginning of the trimester, or at any point during the research process.

Appendix D. Informed Consent Form (Parents of Student Participants

Informed Consent Form: Parents of Student Participants

A Stranger on Indigenous Land: Interpreting the Ecology of Teaching French on Indigenous Territory

Study # 2017s0325

Study Team:

Principal Investigator: Nancy Griffith-Zahner

Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Mark Fettes, Simon Fraser University

This research is in partial fulfillment of an Educational Doctoral degree in *Culturally Inclusive, Place-Based Education,* and will form the basis of a doctoral thesis, which is a public document.

Invitation and Study Purpose:

Your child is being invited to participate in a research study investigating the role that French language learning can play in the appreciation of Indigenous language and culture in Prince Rupert. This study will involve Grade 9 core French students over the course of the first two trimesters of the 2018-2019 school year.

We are conducting this research study in order to learn more about how the study of French can increase student awareness of the Indigenous land upon which we live. We plan to introduce elements of Indigenous content and ways of knowing into the core French 9 curriculum for targeted classes in order to enhance student cultural awareness and appreciation. We will of course still be guided by the Ministry of Education core French curriculum and will work with the mandated curricular competencies.

Our hope is that we will use the information learned from this study to help produce a core French program which better supports and acknowledges the Indigeneity of Prince Rupert, while maintaining the rigour of a second language program.

Study Procedures:

As Grade 9 core French is being taught to students in the first two trimesters of 2018-2019:

- observational notes will be taken to determine their level of engagement and language acquisition;
- interviews will be held in order to determine their levels of achievement and satisfaction with the program
- students will complete self-assessment journals.

This data will be woven into the doctoral thesis.

Voluntary Participation

Your child's participation is voluntary. You have the right to refuse participation in this study, and you can withdraw at any time. Your child will continue to receive the core French Grade 9 curriculum as mandated by the Ministry of Education. Any formative or summative assessment collected from your child will not be included in the study.

Potential Risks of the Study

There are no anticipated risks for students participating, or for those who wish to opt out of the study. Confidentiality will always be maintained, as will the privacy of those who do not wish to participate in the study. There is no academic, cultural, or social risk of any kind for students.

Potential Benefits of the Study

There may or may not be direct benefits to your child for participating in this study. General benefits, however, may include an increased awareness of local culture, and an enjoyment of a more holistic way of being assessed and evaluated.

Confidentiality

The confidentiality of students will be protected and maintained throughout this research. Information which discloses the identity of your child will not be released without your consent. Images of any kind, including video, which might disclose the identity of your child will not be used without your consent. Participants will not be identified by name at any point.

Data collected through this research will be kept on a USB drive in my possession, as well as on the hard drive of my personal computer at home. The principal researcher will be the only person with access to this information. Files will be identified by unique code numbers known to the principal researcher only. I will not be collecting data through email or telephone conversations, as these are not secure methods of communication.

Withdrawal

Your child may withdraw from this study at any time with no risk, and without having to supply reasons. Any data specific to your child will be deleted from the research (but certainly not from their general classroom assessment and evaluation).

Organizational Permission

Permission has been sought and granted to conduct this research from the Superintendent of Schools of School District #52.

Study Results:

The results of this study will be reported in a doctoral thesis and may also be published in journal articles and books, as well as presented at academic conferences. I intend to keep copies of the non-digital raw data and data analysis for five years after the publication of my findings; after that time, that data will be destroyed. If you wish to receive reports on data collection or findings, please contact the principal investigator.

Contact for Information about the Study

If you wish to receive more detailed information about the nature of this study, please contact the principal investigator at any point during the research.

Contact for Complaints

If you have any concerns about your child's rights as a research participant or their experiences while participating in this study, you may contact the Office of Research Ethics.

Future Use of Participant Data

It is possible that at some point in the future, de-identified electronic data from this study might be submitted to an online repository or archive to aid other academic researchers. Audio and video recordings, however, will be destroyed soon after information has been transcribed, as they are considered to contain identifiable information.

Participant Consent and Signature Page

Your child's participation in this study is entirely voluntary. As their parent or guardian, you have the right to refuse their participation. If you do decide that your child will take part, you may choose to have your child withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and without any negative impact on your child's participation and enjoyment of core French 9. The privacy of withdrawal from the study will be maintained, and no other students in the class need to be aware of the withdrawal.

Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.

Your child does not waive any rights, legal or otherwise, by participating in this study.

____

*"I consent / I do not consent to my child's participation in this study" (*please circle one*)*

Name of student: ____

Name of Parent or Guardian (please print): ______________________

Parent Signature: _______________________________________

Date: _______________________________________

Appendix E. Informed Consent Form (Student Participants)

Informed Consent Form: Student Participants

A Stranger on Indigenous Land: Interpreting the Ecology of Teaching French on Indigenous Territory

Study # 2017s0325

Study Team:

Principal Investigator: Nancy Griffith-Zahner, Department Head, Languages
Charles Hays Secondary School
Doctoral Candidate, Doctorate of Education
Simon Fraser University

Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Mark Fettes, Associate Professor
Faculty of Education, Simon Fraser University

This research is in partial fulfillment of an Educational Doctoral degree in *Culturally Inclusive, Place-Based Education,* and will form the basis of a doctoral thesis, which is a public document.

Invitation and Study Purpose:

As a member my French 9 class in Trimester 2 (2018-2019), you are invited to participate in a research study investigating the role that French language learning can play in the appreciation of Indigenous language and culture in Prince Rupert. This study will involve Grade 9 core French students over the course of Trimester 2 of the 2018-2019 school year.

I am conducting this research study in order to learn more about how the study of French can increase student awareness of the Indigenous land upon which we live. I

plan to introduce elements of Indigenous content and ways of knowing into the core French 9 curriculum in order to enhance student cultural awareness and appreciation.

My hope is that I will use the information learned from this study to help produce a core French program which better supports and acknowledges the indigeneity of Prince Rupert, while maintaining the rigour of a second language program.

Why You?

One of the reasons I chose Grade 9s to be the focus of this study is because you are new to Charles Hays Secondary School and new to secondary core French. I would like to work with students who are in their first year of high school, so that if we come up with a more enjoyable and successful way to teach high school French in Prince Rupert, you can enjoy that new way of teaching in Grades 10 and 11.

What about your parents?

Your parents will also receive a consent form with this information on it, and a place for them to indicate if they agree that you can participate in the study, or that they don't agree that you can participate. Both you and your parents need to approve of your participation.

Study Procedures:

The sorts of things I will do include the following:

- I will take notes of how much French you're learning, and how much fun you're having;
- We'll have little interviews to see how you're enjoying the program;
- You'll put together portfolios of information showing how much you're learning;
- You will complete a self-assessment journal.

This information we create from our talks, your journals, portfolios, and my observations will make up a part of my doctoral thesis. **You won't have to do any extra work if you participate!** All of my students create portfolios and do self-assessments as part of their French learning.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation is voluntary! You have the right to refuse participation in this study, and you can withdraw at any time. Being part of the study or not being part of the study doesn't affect any part of your French education.

Potential Risks of the Study

There are no anticipated risks, whether or not you wish to participate in the study, not participate in the study, or opt out of the study. Confidentiality will always be maintained, as will the privacy of those who do not wish to participate in the study. There is no academic, cultural, or social risk of any kind for students.

Potential Benefits of the Study

There may or may not be direct benefits to you for participating in this study. For example, you will not receive payment of any kind. General benefits, however, may include an increased awareness of local culture, and an enjoyment of a more holistic way of being assessed and evaluated.

\Confidentiality

I will protect your privacy throughout this study. Information about you, including videos, images, or anything which identifies you, will not be released without your consent. You will not be identified by name at any point.

Data collected through this research will be kept on a USB drive in my possession, as well as on the hard drive of my personal computer at home. I will be the only person with access to this information, although your parents have the right to see information which pertains directly to you at any time. Files will be identified by unique code numbers known only to me.

Withdrawal

You may withdraw from this study at any time with no risk, and without having to supply reasons. Any information about or from you will be deleted from the research (but certainly not from your general classroom assessment and evaluation; you need that to get a grade!).

Organizational Permission

Permission has been sought and granted to conduct this research from the Superintendent of Schools of School District #52, the Principal of Charles Hays Secondary School, the Principal of Aboriginal Education for School District #52, and the Aboriginal Education Council.

Study Results:

The results of this study will be reported in my doctoral thesis for SFU and may also be published in journal articles and books, as well as presented at academic conferences. If you wish to receive reports on data collection or findings, please contact me.

Future Use of Participant Data

At some point in the future, information from this study might be submitted to an online database to aid other academic researchers. **Don't worry! Your name will not be listed, or any information that can identify you.**

Student Consent and Signature Page

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and you have the right to refuse to participate in this study. If you do decide to take part, you may choose to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and without any negative impact on your your participation and enjoyment of core French 9. The privacy of withdrawal from the study will be maintained, and no other students in the class need to be aware of the withdrawal.

By signing this form, you are indicating that you have received a copy of this form for your own records.

You do not waive any rights, legal or otherwise, by participating in this study.

____

Please circle one of the following statements:

"I would like to participate in this study."

"I do not want to participate in this study".

Name of student: ____

Student Signature: ____

Date: ____

Appendix F. Informed Consent Form: Student Participants in Focus Group

Informed Consent Form: Student Participants in Focus Group

A Stranger on Indigenous Land: Interpreting the Ecology of Teaching French on Indigenous Territory

Study # 2017s0325

Study Team:

Principal Investigator: Nancy Griffith-Zahner, Department Head, Languages
Charles Hays Secondary School
Doctoral Candidate, Doctorate of Education
Simon Fraser University

Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Mark Fettes, Associate Professor
Faculty of Education, Simon Fraser University

This research is in partial fulfillment of an Educational Doctoral degree in *Culturally Inclusive, Place-Based Education,* and will form the basis of a doctoral thesis, which is a public document.

Invitation and Study Purpose:

You have already received a consent form for this study entitled *Informed Consent Form: Student Participants.* You're receiving this second form because I would like to ask you to be part of a small focus group in order that I might more deeply learn about the effectiveness of Indigenous content and ways of teaching in the Grade 9 classroom. You'll receive the same instruction and assessment as the rest of the class, but will have the opportunity to discuss your viewpoints about my teaching methods either in a one-on-one interview with me, or group interviews with the other students in the focus group. Having a focus group of students will allow me to include the student voice in the

doctoral thesis, allowing the work to more authentically represent the effectiveness of the program.

My hope is that I will use the information learned from this study to help produce a core French program which better supports and acknowledges the indigeneity of Prince Rupert, while maintaining the rigour of a second language program.

Study Procedures:

As well as the study procedures outlined in the Informed Consent Form for Student Participants, you'll be asked periodically (perhaps three times in the course of the trimester) to discuss questions with me (or with the focus group) which relate to our learning. The questions will just ask you for your opinions on various aspects of our classroom routines and learning. There will be no wrong answer!

I may record your answers on my iPhone, just to make sure I don't make any mistakes when quoting you. Don't worry, I won't use your real name! And you'll be able to read over what I've written about our conversation to make sure I haven't made any mistakes.

Why You?

You are being asked to be part of the focus group simply because the school's administration, counselling department, and I think that you're a good representative of the classroom. You don't have to be good in French or be getting high marks.

What about your parents?

Your parents will also receive a consent form with this information on it, and a place for them to indicate if they agree that you can participate in the focus group, or that they don't agree that you can participate. Both you and your parents need to approve of your participation.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation is voluntary! You have the right to refuse participation in this study, and you can withdraw at any time. Being part of the study or not being part of the study doesn't affect any part of your French education.

Potential Risks of the Study

There are no anticipated risks, whether or not you wish to participate in the focus group, not participate in the focus group, or opt out of the focus group. Confidentiality will always be maintained, as will the privacy of students who do not wish to participate in the study. There is no academic, cultural, or social risk of any kind for you.

Potential Benefits of the Study

There may or may not be direct benefits to you for participating in this focus group. For example, you will not receive payment of any kind. General benefits, however, may include feeling that you're more involved and in charge of your learning, and feeling that your viewpoints matter to a lot of people.

Confidentiality

I will protect your privacy throughout this study. Information about you will not be released without your consent. You will not be identified by name at any point.

Data collected through this research will be kept on a USB drive in my possession, as well as on the hard drive of my personal computer at home. I will be the only person with access to this information, although your parents have the right to see information which pertains directly to you at any time. Files will be identified by unique code numbers known only to me.

Withdrawal

You may withdraw from this study at any time with no risk, and without having to supply reasons. Any information about or from you will be deleted from the research (but certainly not from your general classroom assessment and evaluation; you need that to get a grade!).

Organizational Permission

Permission has been sought and granted to conduct this research from the Superintendent of Schools of School District #52, the Principal of Charles Hays Secondary School, the Principal of Aboriginal Education for School District #52, and the Aboriginal Education Council.

Study Results:

The results of this study will be reported in my doctoral thesis for SFU and may also be published in journal articles and books, as well as presented at academic conferences. If you wish to receive reports on data collection or findings, please contact me.

Future Use of Participant Data

At some point in the future, information from this study might be submitted to an online database to aid other academic researchers. **Don't worry! Your name will not be listed, or any information that can identify you.**

Student Consent and Signature Page

Your participation in this focus group is entirely voluntary, and you have the right to refuse to participate in this focus group. If you do decide to take part, you may choose to withdraw from the focus group at any time without giving a reason and without any negative impact on your participation and enjoyment of core French 9. The privacy of withdrawal from the study will be maintained, and no other students in the class need to be aware of the withdrawal.

By signing this form, you are indicating that you have received a copy of this form for your own records.

You do not waive any rights, legal or otherwise, by participating in this focus group.

____

Please circle one of the following statements:

"I would like to participate in the focus group involved in Mme GZ's doctoral thesis about bringing Indigenous content into the core French classroom (December 3, 2018 -March 10, 2019)."

"I do not want to participate in the focus group".

Name of student: ____

Student Signature: ____

Date: ____

Appendix G. Informed Consent Form: Parents of Student Focus Group Participants

Informed Consent Form: Parents of Student Focus Group Participants

A Stranger on Indigenous Land: Interpreting the Ecology of Teaching French on Indigenous Territory

Study # 2017s0325

Study Team:

Principal Investigator: Nancy Griffith-Zahner, Department Head, Languages
Charles Hays Secondary School
Doctoral Candidate, Doctorate of Education
Simon Fraser University

Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Mark Fettes, Associate Professor
Faculty of Education, Simon Fraser University

This research is in partial fulfillment of an Educational Doctoral degree in *Culturally Inclusive, Place-Based Education,* and will form the basis of a doctoral thesis, which is a public document.

Invitation and Study Purpose:

Your child is being invited to participate in a research study investigating the role that French language learning can play in the appreciation of Indigenous language and culture in Prince Rupert. This study will involve Grade 9 core French students over the course of the second trimester of the 2018-2019 school year (December 3 to March 10).

We are conducting this research study in order to learn more about how the study of French can increase student awareness of the Indigenous land upon which we live. We plan to introduce elements of Indigenous content and ways of knowing into the core French 9 curriculum in order to enhance student cultural awareness and appreciation.

We will of course still be guided by the Ministry of Education core French curriculum and will work with the mandated curricular competencies.

Our hope is that we will use the information learned from this study to help produce a core French program which better supports and acknowledges the indigeneity of Prince Rupert, while maintaining the rigour of a second language program.

We would like to ask your child to be part of a small focus group in order that I might more deeply learn about the effectiveness of Indigenous content and ways of teaching in the Grade 9 classroom. The focus group will receive the same instruction and assessment as the rest of the class, but will have the opportunity to discuss their viewpoints about my teaching methods either in a one-on-one interview with me, or group interviews with the other students in the focus group. Having a focus group of students will allow me to include the student voice in the doctoral thesis, allowing the work to more authentically represent the effectiveness of the program.

Study Procedures:

As well as the study procedures outlined in the *Informed Consent Form for Parents* which you have received, your child will be asked periodically (perhaps three times in the course of the trimester) to discuss questions with me (or with the focus group) which relate to our learning. The questions will include:

1. How do you feel about your experiences in the French classroom? Are they enjoyable, do you feel your French is improving?
2. Do you feel that a French program in Vancouver, Winnipeg, or Toronto should look the same as a French program in Prince Rupert? Why or why not?
3. How do you feel about yourself as a French learner? Do you feel comfortable with your learning process? Do you feel you're being given enough time and help to get your work done? Do you feel welcome and valued in the French classroom?
4. How do you feel about making mistakes, giving wrong answers, doing poorly on a test?
5. Do you think there's any connection between learning French and learning about the Ts'msyen nation?

Interviews may be digitally recorded (with the student's knowledge) for the sake of accurate transcription into the written thesis. Student names will be changed to protect confidentiality. Any direct quotes from students used in the written thesis will be vetted by the student themselves in order to ensure accuracy.

Students will be told that they will be quoted in the doctoral work (under a pseudonym), and they will have the opportunity to read their quoted remarks and edit them for accuracy before publication.

Voluntary Participation

Your child's participation is voluntary. You have the right to refuse participation in this study, and you can withdraw at any time. Your child will continue to receive the core French Grade 9 curriculum as mandated by the Ministry of Education. Any formative or summative assessment collected from your child will not be included in the study.

Potential Risks of the Study

There are no anticipated risks for students participating, or for those who wish to opt out of the study. Confidentiality will always be maintained, as will the privacy of those who do not wish to participate in the study. There is no academic, cultural, or social risk of any kind for students.

Potential Benefits of the Study

There may or may not be direct benefits to your child for participating in this study. General benefits, however, may include an increased awareness of local culture, and an enjoyment of a more holistic way of being assessed and evaluated.

Confidentiality

The confidentiality of students will be protected and maintained throughout this research. Information which discloses the identity of your child will not be released without your consent. Images of any kind, including video, which might disclose the identity of your

child will not be used without your consent. Participants will not be identified by name at any point.

Data collected through this research will be kept on a USB drive in my possession, as well as on the hard drive of my personal computer at home. The principal researcher will be the only person with access to this information. Files will be identified by unique code numbers known to the principal researcher only.

Withdrawal

Your child may withdraw from this study at any time with no risk, and without having to supply reasons. Any data specific to your child will be deleted from the research (but certainly not from their general classroom assessment and evaluation).

Organizational Permission

Permission has been sought and granted to conduct this research from the Superintendent of Schools of School District #52, the principal of Charles Hays Secondary School, the Principal of Aboriginal Education for School District #52, and the Aboriginal Education Council.

Study Results:

The results of this study will be reported in a doctoral thesis and may also be published in journal articles and books, as well as presented at academic conferences. If you wish to receive reports on data collection or findings, please contact the principal investigator.

Contact for Information about the Study

If you wish to receive more detailed information about the nature of this study, please contact the principal investigator at any point during the research.

Contact for Complaints

If you have any concerns about your child's rights as a research participant or their experiences while participating in this study, you may contact the Office of Research Ethics.

Future Use of Participant Data

It is possible that at some point in the future, de-identified data from this study might be submitted to an online repository or archive to aid other academic researchers.

Participant Consent and Signature Page

Your child's participation in this focus group is entirely voluntary. As their parent or guardian, you have the right to refuse their participation. If you do decide that your child will take part in the focus group, you have the right to have your child withdraw from the focus group at any time without giving a reason and without any negative impact on your child's participation and enjoyment of core French 9. The privacy of withdrawal from the study will be maintained, and no other students in the class need to be aware of the withdrawal.

Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.

Your child does not waive any rights, legal or otherwise, by participating in this study.

____

"I consent / I do not consent to my child's participation in the focus group involved in the doctoral thesis "A Stranger on Indigenous Land: Interpreting the Ecology of Teaching French on Indigenous Territory"

(*please circle one*)

Name of student: ____

Name of Parent or Guardian (please print): ________________________

Parent Signature: ____

Date: ____